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***Literary Mediality
in the Long Eighteenth Century***

*A Textual, Paratextual, and Print-Cultural Study of
James Thomson's The Seasons, 1730-1820*

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Introduction

James Thomson's descriptive long poem *The Seasons*, originally published in 1730, had a profound impact on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature and print culture in Britain and in Europe more generally. This dissertation aims to produce a textual, paratextual, and print-cultural study of Thomson's poem, from 1730 to 1820. It adopts an interdisciplinary methodological framework, drawing on methodologies of genre theory, print culture studies, book history, and translation studies, to generate a novel understanding of the text by examining the ways in which the poem was mediated both textually and materially throughout the period. Building on an extensive tradition of textual scholarship and criticism, it will start with an examination of the Ur-text, which Thomson extensively revised during his lifetime. It will then proceed with an investigation of the paratextual apparatuses and material packaging of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century editions of *The Seasons* to make sense of their interpretative and cultural ramifications. Engaging with the latest developments in print culture research, it will identify the economic impulses and editorialising strategies informing developments in the paratextual and material make-up of editions of the poem to offer insights into the history of the production and marketing of books in Britain. Finally, it will study the dissemination of *The Seasons* outside of Britain, in France more specifically, and will examine some of the ways in which translators appropriated Thomson's poem to new cultural contexts.

Text and Mediation

This dissertation adopts an expansive definition of textuality. It employs the tested methodologies of Gérard Genette's paratextuality, Jerome McGann's textual condition, and Peter Wagner's iconotext to examine the relationship between the literary text of Thomson's poem and illustrations, prefatory biographies, and the format and printing

quality of editions, aspects which have traditionally been marginalised in literary scholarship.

Genette confirms that those texts, both within ('peritext') and outside ('epitext') of a book, are related to, and often give an interpretation of, the primary text.¹ Expanding Genette's linguistic notion of the paratext, McGann stresses that the materiality of the text object, "the physical form of books and manuscripts (paper, ink, typefaces, layouts) or their prices, advertising mechanisms, and distribution venues," is an integral part of the construction of a text's meaning.² A combination of these methodologies facilitates an examination of the ways in which a reader's approach to a text is considerably influenced by the paratextual and material make-up of an edition.³

Title-pages, for instance, not only provide information about the contents of books and their imprints, but also function as important gateways into their respective editions. The use of capitalisation, italicisation, and different fonts and font sizes establishes a hierarchy of importance among the various elements on the title-page and, by extension, among the paratexts in the edition. **[Figure 1]** J. French's edition of *The Seasons*, produced in 1777, features an engraved, rather than a conventional letterpress title-page. The elegantly engraved text, together with the vignette, which occupies a significant portion of the title-page, increases the commodity value of the edition. Three sections of the text above the vignette are highlighted through their size and/or capitalisation: the title of the poem, the name of the author, and the name of the editor, George Wright. The prominence of the latter draws attention to the role of Wright as an intermediary between the poem and the reader by means of the textual notes and the index. **[Figure 2]** The letterpress title-page to an edition produced in 1809, by contrast, accentuates different features. The words "Hymns, Ode, and Songs" stand out through their size and execution to indicate that the edition offers more than just Thomson's descriptive poem. Even though the nineteenth-century edition features the same biography of Thomson as French's, the former prints the biographer's name to stress that it includes an authoritative account. The separation of "with wood-cuts" from the rest of the text by means of a rule foregrounds the presence of illustrations in the edition. More pronouncedly, the booksellers indicate that the edition is stereotyped.⁴

¹ Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 2 & 5.

² Jerome J. McGann, *The Textual Condition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1991), 12.

³ The usefulness of these methodologies has recently been confirmed by Janine Barchas who examines the implications of, among others, frontispieces, title-pages, and punctuation on readers' interpretations of eighteenth-century novels in *Graphic Design, Print Culture, and the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁴ The process of stereotyping implied that the producers printed from a metal plate, which was cast from a plaster mould of a page, rather than directly from the typeset printing frame. The technique was used to

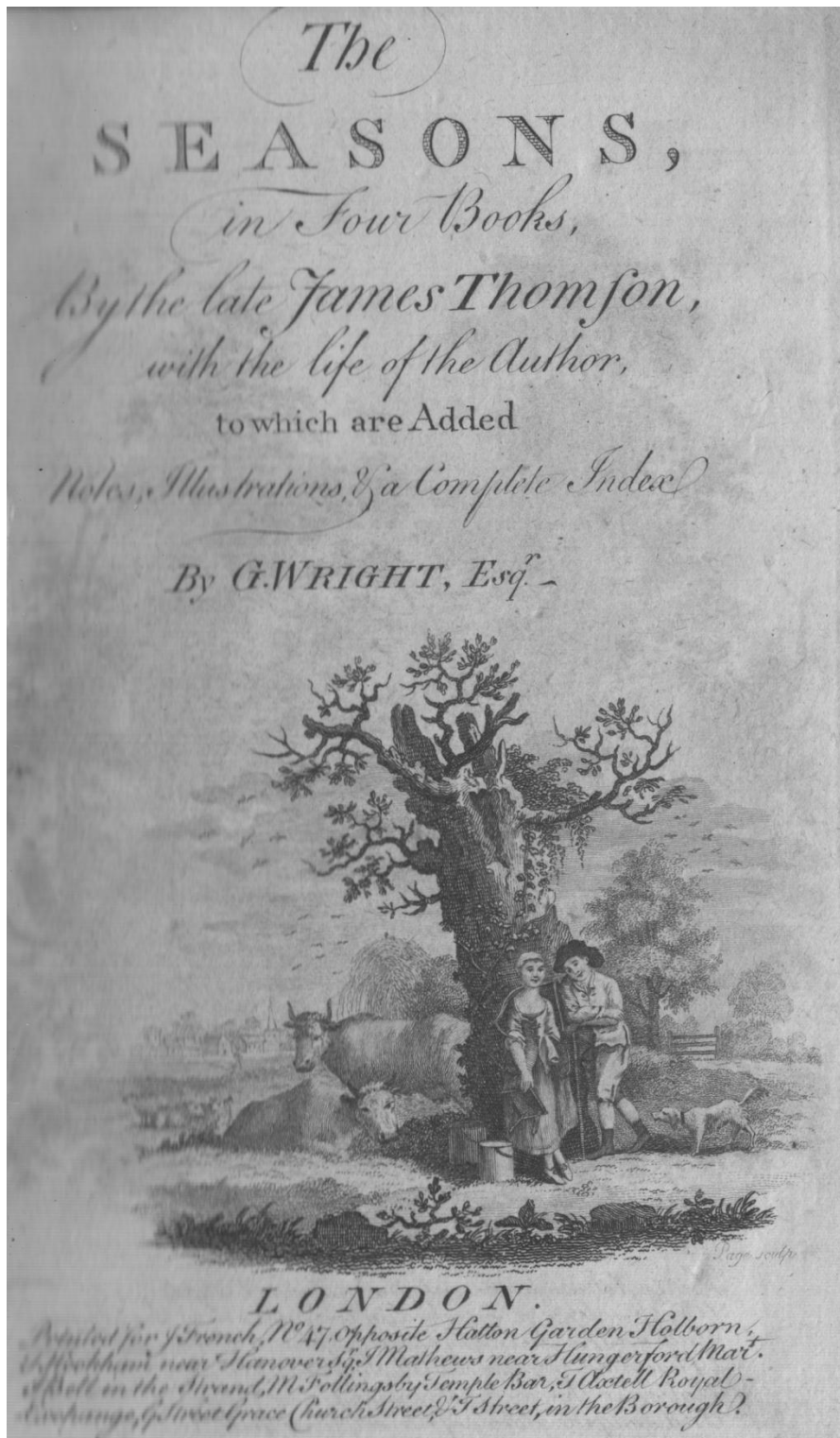


Figure 1 Title-page for *The Seasons* (London: J. French, 1777). Reproduced from a copy in the author's possession.

reduce labour investment: the printer no longer need to typeset the page again for a next print run and new plates could be cast from the mould if the previous one was worn out.

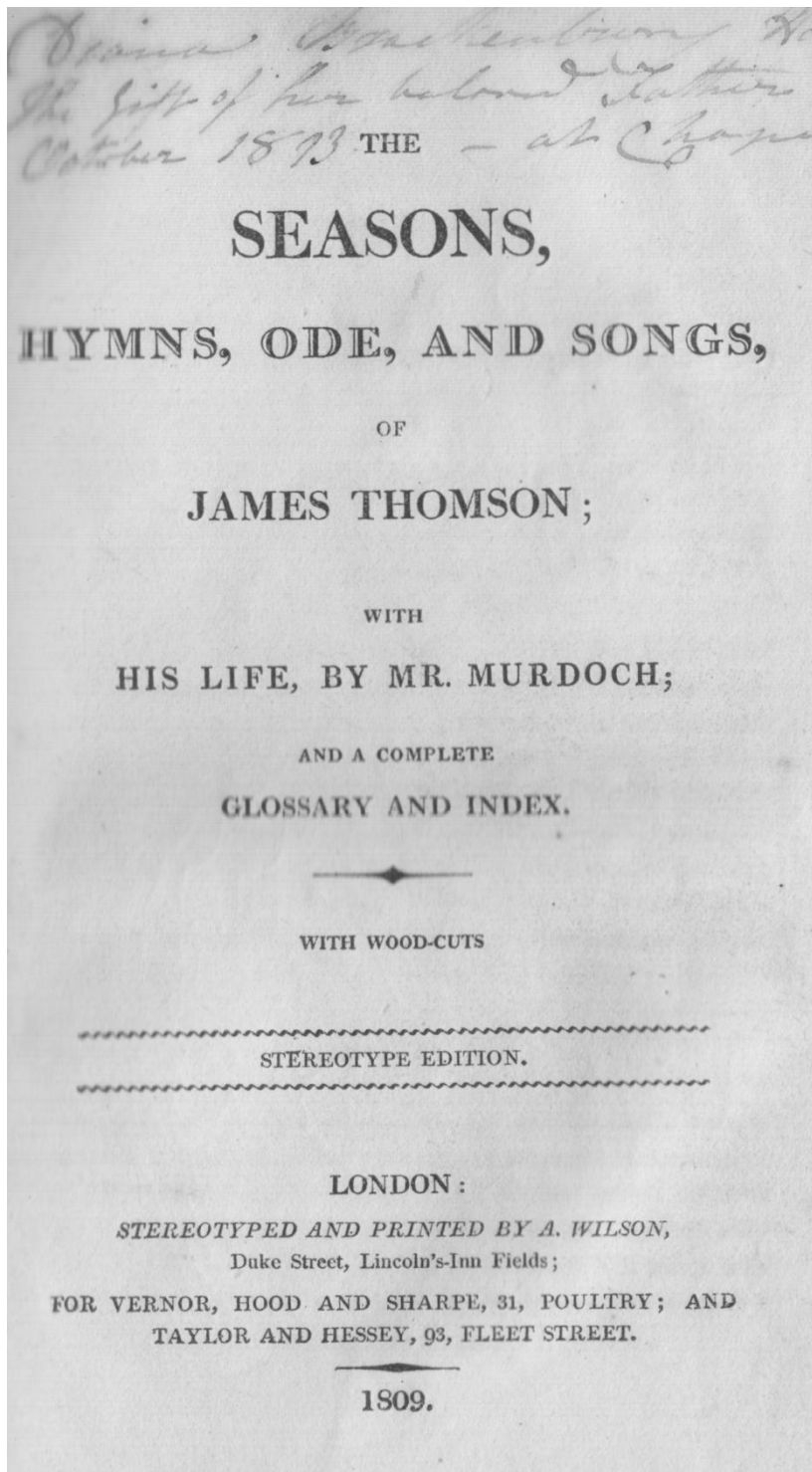


Figure 2 Title-page for *The Seasons* (London: Vernor, Hood, et. al., 1809). Reproduced from a copy in the author's possession.

Singling out the phrase “Stereotype Edition” with two longer, more ornate rules, they draw special attention to the use of this printing process for the production of the edition.

In spite of their broad applicability, Genette and McGann’s methodologies do not provide the means to examine the ways in which visual paraphernalia facilitate new interpretations of texts. Wagner utilises the term ‘iconotext’ to explore the ways in which visual and verbal components of a print form an interpretative framework, which conveys meaning to the reader.⁵ The vignette on the title-page of French’s edition not only reflects that *The Seasons* was considered successful and valuable enough to be illustrated; rather, it also offers a specific (re-)reading of the poem, which is further developed in the other engravings to the edition. It provides a secularised interpretation of *The Seasons* by focusing on mankind’s laborious relationship with nature: the woman and the man in the foreground are taking a break from the milking of the cows and the tending of the sheep respectively, while a hunter appears in the background to the left. In this manner, the illustrator promotes a naturalistic reading of Thomson’s poem, in the process abandoning the mythopoeic-allegorical dimensions of the original text. It is important to note that illustrations in this dissertation are comprehended as texts so as to overcome the artificial distinction that has traditionally been made between illustrations and typographic texts proper.

This holistic view of textuality is based on the basic premise that a text, any text, is always presented to the reader in a mediated form. An author’s translation of his or her cognitive processes into the medium of an oral or a verbal text, a visual rendering of a text by a designer and/or an engraver through the medium of an illustration, the transferral of a text into a more durable form of an edition with a specific material make-up, the translation of a text into the linguistic medium of a different language; all of these processes reveal the ubiquity of mediation. This dissertation abandons the narrow notion of literature as abstract instances of textuality; instead, it examines texts as text objects, i.e., in their material form. The medium functions as a material container for, and is a determining factor in, the interpretation of texts.

The implications of mediation processes for the interpretation of texts are inextricably linked to readers and consumers’ interactions with these mediated texts. Every text object is embedded within networks of relationships, as a result of which it

⁵ Peter Wagner, *Reading Iconotexts: From Swift to the French Revolution* (London: Reaktion Books, 1995), 173–4. Note that Wagner uses the term ‘print’ synonymous with ‘illustration’. This dissertation makes a clear distinction between illustrations, which are primarily produced for inclusion in a book, and prints, which are single-sheet visual media manufactured for individual consumption.

can be encoded with different meanings. By recognising the “social life” of texts,⁶ the dissertation abandons the stable concept of the abstract text to consider the ways in which the numerous material and textual mediations of the text generate a multiplicity of interpretations according to the social and economic-historical contexts within which the text objects are produced and consumed. McGann confirms that “the double helix of a work’s reception history and its production history” are central to the textual condition and confirms that texts, as a result, “exhibit a ceaseless process of textual development and mutation.”⁷ He defines this process as ‘autopoiesis’. Applying the metaphor that texts grow like biological cells, he posits that they “operat[e] as self-generating feedback systems that cannot be separated from those who manipulate and use them.”⁸

Book History and Print Culture Approaches

The text-theoretical methodologies described in the previous section will be applied to a print culture and book-historical examination of editions of *The Seasons*. The dissertation will examine the ways in which Thomson’s text was mediated and reinvented time and time again by means of print culture media and the material packaging of editions. In this manner, the textualities of the poem will be linked to the extra-textual world of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century economics and culture.

The dissertation is informed by recent scholarly works, which have contributed significantly to the mapping of book production practices in the period under consideration. William St Clair and, more recently, James Raven have produced detailed studies of the developments and transformations of the British book market.⁹ Richard Sher has examined the ways in which the dissemination of Scottish Enlightenment

⁶ The phrase was coined by Arjun Appadurai in “Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value,” in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 3.

⁷ McGann, 16 & 9.

⁸ McGann, 15.

⁹ William St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). Chapters five to seven are centrally concerned with the main developments of the market in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. James Raven, *The Business of Books: Booksellers and the English Book Trade* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007); *Bookscape: Geographies of Printing and Publishing in London before 1800* (London: The British Library, 2014). Raven’s works have served as a repository of detailed information on the London book trades for this dissertation.

thought was an important factor in these developments.¹⁰ Thomas Bonnell supplemented these accounts with his study of multi-volume poetry collections, which were central in the establishment of an economically generated canon of successful texts in the second half of the eighteenth century.¹¹

The book-historical accounts of the production and consumption of books in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries serve as essential backgrounds for an examination of the print-cultural responses to *The Seasons*. In this dissertation, print culture is used to denote printed objects such as texts, engraved illustrations, and furniture prints—as opposed to the products of oral and manuscript culture—as well as the agents, technologies, and economies involved in the production of these objects. Eisenstein has argued that the introduction of the printing press in early modern Britain (and the rest of Western Europe) and other technological advancements facilitated a wider dissemination of knowledge and culture.¹² It also fundamentally transformed the relationship between the different branches of the publishing and engraving businesses. Involved in the collaborative production processes of printed objects, the various agents enter into complex social networks, thus resulting in what Lisa Maruca has termed the “polivocality of print.”¹³ The author is no longer the only agent which attributes meaning to a text; other agents such as the bookseller, printer, and engraver also contribute to the interpretation of texts through their material mediation of these texts.

The mediation of culture through printed media considerably affected consumer practices and increased the accessibility of culture to a wider audience. The expanding British economy in the eighteenth century resulted in increased wealth for a growing (upper-)middle class. Unable to afford expensive objects of luxury, such as paintings or sculpture, these consumers spent their money on more affordable print culture objects, such as elegantly produced and illustrated books. Maxine Berg confirms that “industrialization and commercial modernity in the eighteenth century was, above all, about consumer products. This was a ‘product revolution’ made by inventors and manufacturers, merchants, retailers and advertisers, and above all by the people who

¹⁰ Richard B. Sher, *The Enlightenment & the Book: Scottish Authors & Their Publishers in Eighteenth-Century Britain, Ireland, & America* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2006). Chapters four to six, in which Sher studies the business connections between London and Edinburgh booksellers, were especially useful for this dissertation.

¹¹ Thomas F. Bonnell, *The Most Disreputable Trade: Publishing the Classics of English Poetry 1765–1810* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

¹² Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early-Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 1:71–80.

¹³ Lisa Maruca, *The Work of Print: Authorship and the English Text Trades, 1660–1760* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2007), 21.

bought ‘new luxury’.”¹⁴ Booksellers recognised that there was a growing market for commodities or “non-essentials,”¹⁵ i.e., objects that did not serve a merely pragmatic purpose, but also “function[ed] in the symbolic and aesthetic realm of bourgeois sociability.”¹⁶ The large number of editions and paratexts of *The Seasons* resulted in the commodification of the poem on the British book market and advanced multifarious reinterpretations of the text. An examination of the print-cultural mediations of Thomson’s poem as part of the wider domain of British print culture allows for a better understanding of the ways in which print media were essential for the promotion and accretion of the cultural value of *The Seasons* in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The interdisciplinary approach to literary history has only recently come into its own.¹⁷ The principal model for the examination of the print-cultural and material mediations of Thomson’s poem is Sandro Jung’s wide-ranging research on the topic.¹⁸ His book *James Thomson’s The Seasons, Print Culture, and Visual Interpretation, 1730–1842*, forthcoming in 2015, represents a landmark in Thomson studies and will be the standard work on the illustration history of *The Seasons*.¹⁹ While offering a comprehensive account of all illustrated editions of the poem, it does not systematically discuss the great range of other paratexts such as ‘lives’ of the poet, critical essays, and textual notes, or the developments in the material production of editions. This dissertation aims to supplement Jung’s account by focusing on just these unexplored aspects of the print-material history of *The Seasons*. It will study the mechanism underpinning the various textual reincarnations of Thomson’s poem to determine the

¹⁴ Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 6.

¹⁵ Ann Bermingham, “Introduction. The Consumption of Culture: Image, Object, Text,” in *The Consumption of Culture 1600–1800: Image, Object, Text*, ed. Ann Bermingham and John Brewer (London: Routledge, 1997), 6.

¹⁶ Bermingham, 12.

¹⁷ Tom Keymer and Peter Sabor have examined the print-cultural responses to Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela* in *Pamela in the Marketplace: Literary Controversy and Print Culture in Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). W. B. Gerard has studied the illustrations of Laurence Sterne’s works in *Laurence Sterne and the Visual Imagination* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006). James McLaverty has charted Pope’s experiments with the various components of the printing process in *Pope, Print and Meaning* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

¹⁸ Sandro Jung “Packaging, Design and Colour: From Fine-Printed to Small-Format Editions of Thomson’s *The Seasons*, 1793–1802,” *Essays and Studies* 66 (2013): 97–124; “Print Culture and Visual Interpretation in Eighteenth-Century German Editions of Thomson’s *The Seasons*,” *Comparative Critical Studies* 9:1 (2012): 37–59; “Print Culture, High-Cultural Consumption, and Thomson’s *The Seasons*, 1780–1797,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 44:4 (2011): 495–514; “The Visual ‘Life’ of James Thomson’s *The Seasons*, 1730–c.1800,” in *Book Practices & Textual Itineraries: Tracing the Contours of Literary Works*, ed. David Ten Eyck (Nancy: Presses Universitaires de Nancy, 2011), 183–206; “Visual Interpretations, Print, and Illustrations of Thomson’s *The Seasons*, 1730–1797,” *Eighteenth-Century Life* 34 (2010): 23–64.

¹⁹ I am grateful to Professor Jung for allowing me to read an early manuscript version of his monograph.

ways in which it became an integral and pervasive part of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British (and European) culture.

Periodisation

For the purpose of the dissertation, I would like to establish a brief periodisation of the production and dissemination history of the text and editions of *The Seasons*. This periodisation is not absolute, but is intended as a general overview of the autopoietic transformation of the poem in Britain, as well as a useful tool to reflect the structural organisation of the different chapters of the dissertation. Factoring in alterations to the text, developments in copyright legislation, editorialising practices, and paratextual variation, I have identified five different stages:

I. 1726–1746: the first phase involves the textual revision as well as the changes in the generic and ideational composition of the poem as it was developed by Thomson in the course of his lifetime, between the publication of the first edition of *Winter* in 1726 and the finalised authoritative version of *The Seasons*, produced in 1746.

II. 1747–1773: This period was characterised by the publishing monopoly of Andrew Millar and his successors,²⁰ who issued several editions of *The Seasons* and of Thomson's collected works in various formats ranging from quarto to small duodecimo. The illustrated editions all included the same engravings after designs by William Kent. Another notable paratext was Patrick Murdoch's biography of Thomson, which was included in editions from 1762 onwards. At the same time, cheap, pirated editions were imported from Scotland and Ireland and sold at lower prices than the English editions. These piracies represented a threat to the booksellers' monopoly because they not only threatened to undercut the sales of the authorised editions, but also questioned the copyright owners' claim to perpetual copyright. Even though the first competitive alternatives to Millar's editions only appeared from 1777 onwards, I have chosen 1773 as the cut-off date of this period, since, in the following year, the decision of the House of Lords in the *Donaldson v. Beckett* case allowed booksellers to manufacture new editions of

²⁰ Technically, John Millan and Andrew Millar, the copyright owners of *The Seasons*, had established their monopoly in 1730, when the first edition of Thomson's poem was published. Millar bought the copyrights of *Summer*, *Autumn*, and *Winter* from Millan on 16 June 1738. For a detailed account of publication history of *The Seasons*, see James Sambrook, introduction to *The Seasons*, by James Thomson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981), xxxiv–lxxix.

The Seasons without having to fear legal repercussions from the consortium of leading publisher-booksellers.

III. 1774–1798: The last quarter of the eighteenth century saw a steady increase in the publication of new editions of *The Seasons*. Most of these editions were characterised by a distinct set of paratexts, as booksellers were looking for ever new ways to enhance the appeal of their editions on the market. Publishers introduced a wide range of newly commissioned illustrations, textual notes, explanatory essays, and biographies to distinguish their editions from others on the market, introducing alternative interpretations and methods to approach Thomson's text in the process. The production of fine-printed edition of *The Seasons* peaked in the 1790s, the decade in which a multitude of new sets of illustrations were produced. This surge in market interest culminated in the production of Pietro William Tomkins's luxurious folio edition, ambitious in terms of its material execution and embellished with superbly executed engravings by the engravers Francesco Bartalozzi and Tomkins after designs by William Hamilton, one of the leading painters at the time. Tomkins's edition is only one example of the distinctly elite and high-cultural niche market which developed around *The Seasons* at the time, as print culture spin-offs such as furniture prints, porcelain figures, and pocket watches with designs of passages from the poem were produced.

IV. 1799–1842: Tomkins's edition represented the apex of the print-cultural mediation of *The Seasons*. The variety of fine-printed editions of the poem executed in large to medium formats obliged booksellers at the beginning of the nineteenth century to negotiate an increasingly satiated market. As a result of the rapid expansion of the book market and in response to the popular late eighteenth-century series of selected British poetry such as the ones issued by John Bell and Charles Cooke, booksellers increasingly produced their editions in smaller formats to cater to a demand for portable books. Nevertheless, some booksellers in the 1810s still attempted to cater to the market for fine-printed editions in medium-sized formats by experimenting with illustrative media such as wood engraving or colour printing. The 1842 edition of *The Seasons*, which was edited by Bolton Corney, concludes this phase in the reception history of Thomson's poem. It was embellished with the largest set of illustrations (seventy-seven in total, produced by members of the Etching Club), which were still directly related to the text.

V. 1843–1895: After the publication of Corney's edition of *The Seasons*, illustrators presented realistic natural landscapes that functioned as evocations of mood rather than providing an interpretation of the text. The period was also characterised by a more scholarly engagement with the historical background of the poem. Prefatory biographies became longer and increasingly included an abundance of original letters

written by or addressed to the author.²¹ More attention was paid to the textual variants and Thomson's revisions to the original text.²² The publication of the first scholarly biography of Thomson by Léon Morel represents the ending of this period,²³ as it facilitated a more systematic analysis of *The Seasons* by late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century academics.

Dissertation Chapter Division

The first chapter of the dissertation will focus entirely on the first phase, as it will examine the first editions of the poems comprising *The Seasons* in their original order of appearance: *Winter* (1726), *Summer* (1727), *Spring* (1728), and *Autumn* (1730). By analysing the poems as individual, self-contained texts, it will chart the ways in which Thomson adapted his earliest poetics in response to changing trends and in accordance with his developing thoughts on descriptive poetry. This chapter will represent the most complete account of Thomson's developing notions of the textual composition of his poetry to date by considering the ways in which the poet uses generic strategies and stylistic devices to construct a comprehensive vision of nature. It will significantly expand previous studies, which only superficially considered the chronology of the various parts.

The second and third phases in the textual mediation of *The Seasons* will be the subject of the second chapter. Embedding my discussion of the paratextual composition, material execution, and distribution of some of the most important eighteenth-century editions of the poem within the contemporaneous contexts of print culture and book production, I will examine the ways in which booksellers adopted different

²¹ Sir Harris Nicolas's account of Thomson's life and works, originally produced in 1830, was expanded in 1847 by the editor himself and annotated by Peter Cunningham for the 1860 reissue of the Aldine edition of Thomson's poetical works. In the course of these revisions, an increasing amount of original letters were included and appended to the original account, which already reproduced several letters. In its latest variant, the account covered 138 pages, which included a total of forty-one letters to and by Thomson, and an additional eight were added in an appendix (Sir Harris Nicolas, "Memoir of Thomson," in *The Poetical Works*, by James Thomson (London: Bell and Daldy, 1860), 1:ix–clxi).

²² The discovery of an interleaved edition of the 1736 text with manuscript contributions by Thomson's close friend and executor, George Lyttelton, was the subject of an extensive discussion on the authorship of *The Seasons*. For a detailed account of this debate, see Cohen, *Discrimination*, 57–63.

²³ Léon Morel, *James Thomson: Sa Vie et ses Œuvres*, (Paris: Hachette, 1895).

editorialising practices and marketing strategies to promote their editions as novel commodities to middle- and upper-middle-class consumers.

The third chapter will concentrate on the paratexts and the material make-up of three editions that were produced in the early nineteenth century. I will examine the ways in which the booksellers tried to capitalise on the successful practices of their eighteenth-century predecessors, at the same time experimenting with new media such as colour printing and wood engraving in an attempt to appeal to the market for fine-printed editions in medium-sized formats.

The fourth, and final, chapter will examine the textual mediation of *The Seasons* in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century France. It will integrate all of the methodologies of the previous chapters in a comprehensive study of the French translations from 1759 to 1818, as it will consider the transformation and reinterpretation of Thomson's text both in the French translations and the paratexts included in the editions. The periodisation of the British reception history of *The Seasons* cannot be transferred onto the French context, but attention will be paid to moments of transnational exchange between booksellers from various linguistic areas.

The second and third chapters mostly provide micro-histories and paratextual studies of a number of editions that are representative of the various ways in which publisher-booksellers gauged the market for consumer interest in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Since these chapters were centrally developed from two articles, they do not cover the entire spectrum of editions of *The Seasons* produced in their respective time periods. The third chapter, especially, focuses centrally on a publishing venture which represents one of the last attempts to cater to a market for expensive editions of Thomson's poem in the early nineteenth century. In order to compensate for the selective remit of these chapters, and in order to provide a detailed account of the mediation of *The Seasons* in the period under consideration in the dissertation, the rest of this introduction will provide an account of one specific type of paratexts. It will compare prefatory biographies in editions of *The Seasons* to examine the ways in which editors fashioned a particular literary reputation for Thomson, thus influencing the ways in which his poetry was read and mediated in the edition. The third chapter will conclude with a discussion of the paratexts and material packaging of early nineteenth-century editions of *The Seasons* to trace the shifts in production practices from the previous century. My discussion of British editions of the poem concludes with a consideration of the edition produced by Charles Whittingham in 1820. I have selected this edition as the cut-off point of the dissertation, because British booksellers in the 1820s and 1830s mostly recycle the paratextual material of earlier editions. As a result, there is little paratextual innovation until the publication of Corney's edition in 1842.

The Construction of Thomson's Literary-Critical Reputation in the Prefatory 'Lives'

From 1753 onwards, when Robert Shiels produced the first 'life' of Thomson, editors, literary critics, and, at a later stage, antiquarians repeatedly revised biographical accounts of the author of *The Seasons*. As a result, the biographies included as prefatory paratexts in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century editions of Thomson's works display a considerable degree of variation. Earlier narratives were transformed and revised, as biographers and editors altered the accounts of their predecessors or included new anecdotes from the author's life. In this section, I will examine the prominent eighteenth-century accounts which were most frequently reproduced, or served as the basis for other biographies, in editions of *The Seasons*. Analysing biographers' responses to, and expansions of, earlier accounts, I will consider the ways in which Thomson's life and works were represented and how an authorial persona was constructed or refashioned in these narratives. A study of the changes to the 'lives' of Thomson facilitates an understanding of the historical construction of the poet's critical reputation and its development in the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The author biography is one of the most commonly featured paratexts in literary history and considerably affects readers' perception of an author's work and critical reputation. Genette identifies the various functions of the biographical account, which he defines as an important source of "information and guidance for the reader."²⁴ It not only presents readers with facts about the author's life, the genesis of his works, and a historical contextualisation, but frequently also serves as an initial critical commentary on, and recommendation of, the text(s) in the edition. Biographical narratives provide readers with an initial framework which directs the interpretation of the primary text which they precede.

The impact of author biographies on the reception of literary works not only resulted from the direct correlation between the paratext and the main text, but also from the historical significance of the genre as an important marketing device. Literary biographies had featured more centrally as tools of literary criticism from the seventeenth century onwards. The practice of producing narratives of the lives of contemporary authors derived from a long-established tradition of biographies of classical authors. Modelling their narratives on the works of Plutarch, Suetonius, and

²⁴ Genette, 209.

Tacitus,²⁵ Renaissance scholars and editors developed--frequently moralising--biographical accounts of the lives of classical authors, which highlighted those characteristics and qualities that confirmed their significance for literary historiography.

Aware of their function as an indicator of cultural capital, booksellers started to prefix author biographies to their editions of the works of contemporary authors in an attempt to elevate their status and to increase their market value. In this manner, the 'life' was intended to bridge the temporal distance and to establish cultural equivalence between the modern and the classical authors. The narratives often adopted a discourse of appreciation and celebration, as the personal life of the author was turned into a large-scale community experience to create the idea of a shared cultural background.²⁶

An anonymous biographer of Thomson confirms the ways in which the inclusion of author biographies in editions of their works functions as a strategic device of value attribution. Before commencing his biographical account, the biographer reflects on the merits of the practice of adding prefatory biographies to editions of eminent authors:

The works of an author of eminence present us with a very different view of him. When we consider the greatness of his genius, the pleasure and instruction we have received from the perusal of his writings, and that the character and fame even of a nation itself depend more perhaps on its authors, than on any other class of men in it, we are filled with love and admiration, and become interested even in the minutest circumstances that relate to him. We look on him as an extraordinary production of Nature, and wish to trace the steps he has taken in forming such an uncommon appearance. Hence we become anxious to know every particular with regard to his birth, education, and character; and hence also has arisen the almost universal custom of prefixing accounts of the lives of authors of eminence to their works.²⁷

²⁵ Mark Longaker, *English Biography in the Eighteenth Century* (University of Pennsylvania Press: Pennsylvania, 1931), 6.

²⁶ Isobel Rivers identifies a similar double motivation, the providing of information as well as the establishment of a pantheon of notable British historical figures, at work in eighteenth-century biographical dictionaries (Isobel Rivers, "Biographical Dictionaries and Their Uses From Bayle to Chalmers," in *Books and Their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England: New Essays*, ed. Isabel Rivers (London: Continuum, 2001), 136).

²⁷ Anonymous, "An Account of the Life and Writings of Mr James Thomson," in *The Works of James Thomson. With his Last Corrections and Improvements. To Which is Prefixed a New Account of his Life; with a Criticism on his Writings*, by James Thomson (Edinburgh: R. Clark, 1772), 1:5-6.

He argues that a biographical account is the ideal tool for readers to discover the origins of the author's genius in the particularities of his life. He also establishes that the prefatory biography can serve to establish "the character and fame" of a nation by indicating which authors are culturally most significant.

In spite of the poet's popularity at the time of his death in 1748, it took five years before Robert Shiels produced the first biography of Thomson. His death was announced in the *London Evening Post* of 27 August 1748:

This Morning at Four o'Clock died of a violent Fever at his House in Kew-Lane, the celebrated Mr. James Thomson, Author of the *Seasons*, &c. an honest Man, who has not left one Enemy behind him. His Abilities as a Writer, his Works sufficiently witness to all the World, but the Goodness of his Heart, which overflowed with Benevolence, Humanity, universal Charity, and every other amiable Virtue, was best known to those who had the Happiness of his Acquaintance; by every one of whom he was most tenderly beloved, and now most sincerely and most deservedly lamented.²⁸

The account was reprinted in a number of provincial newspapers.²⁹ *The Gentleman's Magazine* contained a short notice on the author's passing: "Mr. James Thomson, the celebrated author of the *Seasons*, the *Castle of Indolence*, and several dramatic pieces, [died] at his dwelling, *Richmond, Surry*, of a violent fever. His inoffensive benevolent disposition, and excellent genius, make his death a public loss."³⁰

That Thomson's passing did not go unnoticed is indicated by the fact that it prompted several poetic responses. A number of anonymous and pseudonymous poems were published, in which the writers bid farewell to the deceased author and memorialised him as the poet of nature and liberty.³¹ In these poetic tributes, Thomson is memorialised and mythified as a genius. In the *Newcastle General Magazine*, a poet

²⁸ *London Evening Post*, 27 August 1748.

²⁹ *Birmingham Paper*, 27 August 1748; *Caledonian Mercury*, 1 September 1748; *Derby Mercury*, 2 September 1748.

³⁰ *The Gentleman's Magazine*, September 1748, 380.

³¹ "On the Death of the celebrated Mr James Thompson, In His Manner" (*The Gentleman's Magazine*, September 1748, 423); Thirsis, "To the Memory of the Celebrated Mr. James Thomson" (*Newcastle General Magazine*, September–November 1748, 487); "To the Memory of Mr. Thomson, Author of The Seasons" (*Newcastle General Magazine*, September–November 1748, 542); "Occasion'd by Mr Thomson's Death" (*The London Magazine*, September–November 1748, 424 & 518); Juba, "On the Death of Mr Thomson" (*British Magazine*, October 1748, 451); De La Cour, James, "Epitaph on Mr. Thomson" (*Universal Magazine*, November 1748, 224). Amintor, "Corydon, a Reflection on the Death of Mr. James Thomson" (*Kapelon, or Poetical Ordinary*, January 1751, 246–9).

writing under the pseudonym of Thirsis hails Thomson as “Nature’s darling Friend, and Nature’s Boast” and petitions his “departed Shade” to teach him “To tune my Dorick Reed, and touch each Thought / To swell into Perfection.”³²

The large number of poetic tributes and the relative lack of prose obituaries can possibly be explained by changes in the reporting of death in periodicals in the eighteenth century. Elizabeth Barry reports that short notices of death only gradually expanded into obituaries by the last quarter of the eighteenth century.³³ The rise of the newspaper obituary coincided with a decline of the literary epitaph.³⁴ Since Thomson’s death occurred during the transition period in the middle of the century, the commemorative verses served as lyric epitaphs, the poetic composition of which was more suitable for the celebration of Thomson’s own accomplishments as a poet.

The first full prose account of Thomson’s life would finally be produced in 1753. The biographer, Robert Shiels, hailed from Roxburgshire, the same county Thomson was born in, and had already contributed to the poetic memorialisation of his countryman in his *Musidorus: A Poem Sacred to the Memory of Mr. James Thomson*.³⁵ The celebratory mode of the panegyric, the title of which was modelled on Thomson’s *Newton*, is transferred to the biography as Shiels extensively acknowledges Thomson’s poetic genius, “from whom his country has derived the most distinguished honour.”³⁶ Included in a five-volume collection of *The Lives of the Poets of Great Britain and Ireland, to the Time of Dean Swift*, Shiels’s biography not only represents the first prose narrative of Thomson’s life, but also situated the poet within an anthology of culturally valued authors. Adopting a Plutarchian methodology,³⁷ Shiels makes abundant use of anecdotes to represent Thomson’s character and virtue. The theft of Thomson’s letters of recommendation, as he was awed by “the magnitude, opulence, and various objects” upon his arrival in London, for instance, is used to demonstrate the susceptibility of Thomson’s imagination to his surroundings, his “curiosity” and “honest simplicity.”³⁸

The significance of Shiels’s biography not only lay in the fact that it was the first account of Thomson’s life; rather, it also provided some detailed critical observations on

³² Thirsis, 487.

³³ Elizabeth Barry, “From Epitaph to Obituary: Death and Celebrity in Eighteenth-Century British Culture,” *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 11:3 (2008): 267.

³⁴ Joshua Scodell, *The Poetic Epitaph: Commemoration and Conflict from Jonson to Wordsworth* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 260.

³⁵ Robert Shiels, *Musidorus: A Poem Sacred to the Memory of Mr. James Thomson* (London: R. Griffiths, 1748).

³⁶ Robert Shiels, *The Lives of the Poets of Great Britain and Ireland, to the Time of Dean Swift* (London: R. Griffiths, 1753), 5:190.

³⁷ Robert DeMaria Jr., “Plutarch, Johnson, and Boswell: The Classical Tradition of Biography at the End of the Eighteenth Century,” *Eighteenth-Century Novel* 6–7 (2009): 81.

³⁸ Shiels, *Lives*, 195.

author's works and his literary significance both as a poet and a playwright. The narrative is interspersed with excerpts from Thomson's poetry to comment on his "picturesque scenes,"³⁹ the "tenderness of [his] sentiments,"⁴⁰ and his "tow'ring sublimity."⁴¹ There is some scholarly debate about the originality of Shiels's venture due to his appropriation of material from biographical dictionaries and earlier biographies and his reliance on Samuel Johnson, who had employed the Scotsman as an amanuensis while working on the *Dictionary*, for his critical observations.⁴² The originality of Shiels's life is undeniable, however. His 'life' is significantly longer than Johnson's later account, which is a compilation of a number of different sources, and his literary criticism is far more detailed and positive.⁴³ Only abbreviated for an entry on Thomson in the *Bibliotheca Biographica*,⁴⁴ Shiels's account was never included in any editions of *The Seasons*.⁴⁵ Produced at the time when Millar still held the monopoly for editions of Thomson's works, it did not become the standard account of the author's life, due to the appearance of an officially approved biography produced in 1762.

The second prose biography was written by Patrick Murdoch, a fellow countryman and close friend of Thomson. He had been commissioned by Millar in 1762 to edit a new edition of the collected works of Thomson.⁴⁶ Murdoch was a Scottish clergyman who probably met Thomson at the College of Edinburgh where they studied divinity at the same time. In their later lives, the most straightforward connection between the two Scotsmen is their acquaintance with John Forbes, the son of Duncan Forbes, the Lord Advocate in Scotland. Murdoch had been appointed tutor to John in 1729; Thomson belonged to the circle of friends surrounding the politician's son, amongst whom were Millar, the physician John Armstrong, and the poet Joseph Mitchell. In spite of this connection, it is remarkable that Murdoch was commissioned to write his biography

³⁹ Shiels, *Lives*, 199.

⁴⁰ Shiels, *Lives*, 199.

⁴¹ Shiels, *Lives*, 203.

⁴² James L. Battersby summarises the debate and concludes that "[Shiels's criticism] is remarkably consistent with the critical principles and particular judgments enunciated by Johnson in *The Lives of the Poets*, and other writings as well" (James L. Battersby, "Johnson and Shiels: Biographers of Addison," *SEL: Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 9:3 (1969): 522-4).

⁴³ Hilbert H. Campbell develops a similar argument in "Shiels and Johnson: Biographers of Thomson," *SEL: Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 12:3 (1972): 535-44.

⁴⁴ Thomas Flloyd, *Bibliotheca Biographica: A Synopsis of Universal Biography, Ancient and Modern* (London: J. Hinton et al., 1760), 3:no pagination. The six-page account in the biographical dictionary is mostly an abbreviated reproduction of Shiels's biography.

⁴⁵ It was used for the biography prefixed to an edition of Thomson's works, produced in Edinburgh in 1768, but this account is a compilation of Shiels and Murdoch's 'lives'.

⁴⁶ James Thomson, *The Works of James Thomson With His Last Corrections and Improvements. To Which Is Prefixed a New Account of His Life*, ed. Patrick Murdoch (London: printed for A. Millar, 1762).

only in 1762. He would have been about sixty years old and Thomson's death had occurred fourteen years earlier. It seems unlikely that Murdoch wrote the life by drawing exclusively from his own knowledge. Perhaps Millar supplied him with most of the information, as the bookseller had been involved closely with Thomson since publishing his works in 1730. A letter by Murdoch to Millar provides insight into the clergyman's editorial decisions on the choice of text for *The Seasons*,⁴⁷ but contains no information on the production of the life of Thomson. It is likely that the decision to produce a new biography in 1762 was market-driven. The biography and the inclusion of engravings for some of Thomson's other works served as important marketing devices to attract more subscriptions,⁴⁸ the profits of which were used to finance the erection of a funeral monument for Thomson in Westminster Abbey.

Murdoch's "An Account of the Life and Writings of Mr. James Thomson" was the most widely disseminated of all of the biographies of Thomson. It was included not only in the subsequent editions of *The Seasons* and collected *Works* produced by Millar, but also in a majority of editions issued by other British booksellers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁴⁹ Furthermore, it was adapted for inclusion in literary encyclopaedias such as the *Biographical Dictionary*.⁵⁰ The impact of the biography even extended beyond British borders, as it was included in continental editions of *The Seasons*, whether in its original English form or translated into French and German, for

⁴⁷ John Wooll, *Biographical Memoirs of the Late Rev^d Joseph Warton, D.D. Master of St. Mary Winton College; Prebendary of Winchester Cathedral; and Rector Of the Parishes of Wickham and Upham, Hants* (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1806), 252–7.

⁴⁸ A review of the edition in *The Scots Magazine* draws particular attention to the engravings and the biography: "This edition is also decorated with a considerable number of engravings: but the most valuable addition is, the account of the life and writings of the author, by the learned Mr Murdoch" (*The Scots Magazine*, January 1762, 253).

⁴⁹ This list, which does not claim to be exhaustive, records the different British editions produced by booksellers after Millar's death in 1768 in which Murdoch's account is reused (often with minor changes to the text): *The Seasons* (Dublin: J. Exshaw, 1770); *Works* (Edinburgh: R. Clark, 1772); *Works* (London: Bowyer et al., 1773); *The Seasons* (London: W. Strahan et al., 1773 & 1774); *The Seasons* (London: J. French, 1777); *The Seasons* (Aberdeen: J. Boyle, 1777); *Works* (Glasgow: A. Foulis, 1784); *The Seasons* (London: Rivington et al., 1787); *The Seasons* (London: for the Booksellers, 1790); *The Seasons* (Perth: R. Morison and Son, 1790); *Works* (London: C. Cooke, 1794); *The Seasons* (Edinburgh: R. Ross, 1795); *The Seasons* (Edinburgh, Ross & Blackwood, 1800); *The Seasons* (London: G. Cawthorn, 1801); *The Seasons* (London: Baldwin et al., 1802 & 1803); *The Seasons* (London: F. I. Du Roveray, 1802); *The Seasons* (Dundee: Chalmers, Ray, and Co., 1803); *The Seasons* (London: Lackington, Allen, and Co., 1808); *The Seasons* (London: Vernor, Hood et al., 1809); *The Seasons* (London: Wilkie and Robinson et al., 1811); *The Seasons* (London: J. W. H. Payne, 1813); *The Seasons* (Belfast: J. Smyth, 1816).

⁵⁰ *A New and General Biographical Dictionary; Containing an Historical and Critical Account of the Lives and Writings of the Most eminent Persons in Every Nation* (London: T. Osborne, J. Whiston et al., 1761–2), 11:142–51.

instance.⁵¹ Murdoch's account would thus become the standard biography of Thomson, serving as the primary source for the British--and even European--establishment of Thomson's private and authorial character. It differed from Shiels's in that it aimed to produce a more objective account. Murdoch relies far less on diverting anecdotes and does not develop a critical consideration of the author's works. The chronological narrative of Thomson's life is followed by an elaborate character sketch, which comments on the author's physical appearance and personality traits,⁵² his leisure pursuits,⁵³ and provides a brief consideration of the reception of the poet's work around 1762.⁵⁴

The importance of Murdoch's narrative for the paratextual mediation of Thomson's literary persona is also enhanced by the fact that it was used as one of the primary sources for Johnson's account, produced in 1781 for his *Lives of the Most Eminent Poets*.⁵⁵ The biography mostly represented a combination and condensation of Shiels and Murdoch's accounts, but also included letter material (for example, a letter by Thomson to his sister, which James Boswell had obtained during his travels in Scotland),⁵⁶ and some new information provided by the poet Richard Savage, former friend turned rival of Thomson, on the poet's character.⁵⁷ In line with his other biographical narratives, Johnson also offered a critical consideration of Thomson's poetry. Adopting a generally positive attitude towards Thomson, Johnson praises the author's originality, his use of blank verse, and the splendour of his natural descriptions.⁵⁸ At the same time, however, the biographer also offered one of the most persisting criticisms of *The Seasons*, insisting that the poem was characterised by a "want of method."⁵⁹

⁵¹ Murdoch's account was translated into French in 1800 (Paris: F. Louis). It was also reproduced in its original English form in editions of *The Seasons* produced in Germany (Leipzig: J. J. C. Timaeus, 1794) and in France (Paris: T. Barrois, 1803).

⁵² Patrick Murdoch, "An Account of the Life and Writings of Mr. James Thomson," in Thomson 1762, xvi-xvii.

⁵³ Murdoch, xviii.

⁵⁴ Murdoch, xix-xx.

⁵⁵ Samuel Johnson, *The Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets; With Critical Observations on Their Works*, ed. Roger Lonsdale (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 4:96-104.

⁵⁶ Johnson, 4:101-3.

⁵⁷ Johnson, 4:103. For a long time, it was assumed that Savage also served as the main source for an anecdote on Thomson falling out of favour with the Countess of Hertford by "[taking] more delight in carousing with lord Hertford and his friends than assisting her ladyship's poetical operations" (Johnson, 4:98). The falsehood of the anecdote has been proved (James Sambrook, *James Thomson, 1700-1748: A Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 60-4) and Clarence Tracy questions the attribution of Savage as the source of the story (Clarence Tracy, *The Artificial Bastard: A Biography of Richard Savage* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953), 107-8).

⁵⁸ Johnson, 4:103.

⁵⁹ Johnson, 4:104.

Johnson's account became the second most popular biography in the history of Thomson's works. Like Murdoch's biography, it was included in various editions of *The Seasons* and Thomson's collected works.⁶⁰ Johnson's biography featured especially in nineteenth-century editions, when his critical observations on Thomson's poetry and works by other English poets were increasingly used for the definition of literary standards and the construction of an aesthetic canon. I will discuss the role of Johnson's author biographies in the establishment of an economic and, at a later stage, an aesthetic canon within the context of the serialised poetry collections, as well as a critical reworking of Johnson's account of Thomson, in the second chapter of this dissertation.

As the impact of Johnson's account on the future reception of Thomson's works indicates, biographers' reworking of earlier lives could mark an important intervention in the tradition of Thomson biographies and the critical reception of his works. David Steuart Erskine's "Essay on the Genius, Character, and Writings of James Thomson the Poet,"⁶¹ in that respect, represents an important shift in the representation of Thomson's poetic persona. Published in 1792, the essay was only one of several ventures undertaken by the eleventh Earl of Buchan to reappraise what was considered one of Scotland's finest poems.⁶² As announced in the subtitle, Buchan intended his essay as "a Basis for writing properly the Life of that truly excellent Man."⁶³ At the start of the essay, he states his aims more fully:

It is my purpose in the following Essay to honour and describe the chief maker of Scotland; to shew the superiority of his genius, to do justice to his character as a man, and to illustrate his merit as an author, by exhibiting examples of them all.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ This list, which does not claim to be exhaustive, records the different British editions which include Johnson's biography: *The Seasons* (London: Strahan et al., 1792); *The Seasons* (London: A. Hamilton, 1793); *The Seasons* (London: J. Stockdale, 1794); *The Seasons* (London: Creswick, 1794); *The Seasons* (London: T. Chapman, 1795); *The Seasons* (London: J. Wallis, 1805); *The Seasons* (London: W. Suttaby et al., 1806); *The Seasons* (London: Walker and Edwards, 1816); *The Seasons* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1824); *The Seasons* (London: Baynes and Son et al., 1825); *The Seasons* (London: C. and J. Rivington, 1826); *The Seasons* (London: Scott, Webster, and Geary, 1837).

⁶¹ David Steuart Erskine, *Essays on the Lives and Writings of Fletcher of Saltoun and the Poet Thomson: Biographical, Critical, and Political. With Some Pieces of Thomson's Never Before Published* (London: J. Debrett, 1792), 176–280.

⁶² Buchan was the driving force behind the organisation of an annual celebration of Thomson's birth in Ednam, the poet's birthplace. I will discuss the significance of Buchan's initiatives in more detail in the second chapter of this dissertation.

⁶³ Erskine, 176.

⁶⁴ Erskine, 179.

Buchan's main purpose corresponds notably with the rationale of earlier biographies: to show how the poetic genius at the heart of *The Seasons* is revealed in the life of the author itself. By producing an essay for the benefit of future biographers of Thomson, however, the Earl implicitly criticises the earlier biographical narrative and signals that these had not yet succeeded in presenting a precise account of the poet's character.⁶⁵

The deficiencies of the earlier accounts become clear as Buchan considers the elements which constitute poetic genius. Convinced that "the genius of a poet will bear witness to itself,"⁶⁶ he alters the angle of his approach, by "inquir[ing] what kind of culture is most friendly to the attainment of taste, which is the handmaid of genius."⁶⁷ Opposing "mystery and technical institution" to "natural knowledge and sentiment" as important factors in the development of a poet's imagination, Buchan stresses the influence of Thomson's Scottish childhood as the determining factor for the poet's talent for natural description:

Thomson passed his infancy and early youth in the picturesque and pastoral country of Tiviotdale in Scotland, which is full of the elements of natural beauty, wood, water, eminence and rock, with intermixture of rich and beautiful meadow. The horizon was bounded by the Cheviot, a land of song and of heroic achievement; the venerable ruins of Jedburgh, Dryburgh, Kelso, and Melrose, were at hand, to add suitable impressions to the whole.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ The *Essays* also included a printed version of the eulogy which Erskine had delivered on the occasion of the first Thomson anniversary on 22 September 1791. In it, the Scottish nobleman explicitly directs his criticism against Johnson's account: "I think myself happy to have this day the task assigned to me of endeavouring to do justice to the memory of Thomson, which has been prophanelly touched by the rude hands of the pedantic Samuel Johnson, whose fame and reputation indicates the decline of taste in a country that, after having produced an Alfred, a Wallace, a Bacon, a Napier, a Newton, a Buchanan, a Milton, a Hampden, a Fletcher, and a Thomson, can submit to be bullied under the rod of a schoolmaster, or to be led by the strings of the satchel of a petulant school-boy!" (Erskine, 251). For a more detailed account of the Earl's opposition to Johnson's critical reputation as an act of appropriating Thomson to Scottish culture, see Michael Edson, "Scotland, the Earl of Buchan, and Percival Stockdale's 1793 Commentary to *The Seasons*," *Studies in Literary Imagination* 46:1 (2013): 91–113.

⁶⁶ Erskine, 180.

⁶⁷ Erskine, 181.

⁶⁸ Erskine, 183.

The passage reveals the precise nature of the Earl's criticism towards the earlier biographers of Thomson. In his opinion, they disregarded the poet's Scottish roots and failed to recognise the importance of his native country's landscapes.

Even though Shiels and Murdoch, both Scotsmen, report on Thomson's childhood and education in Scotland, they do not establish a link between his poetic genius and his Scottish heritage. Instead, they construct the narrative of Thomson's upbringing in Scotland in terms of his decision to develop his literary career in London. The English capital is characterised as a cultural metropolis, "where works of genius may always expect a candid reception and due encouragement."⁶⁹ Scotland, by contrast, is considered unsuitable for the young author's poetic talents. Thomson's native country is conceived as culturally inferior to England's capital and as too limiting in terms of career prospects.⁷⁰ During the 1790s, an entirely different image of Scotland was being promoted by the Scottish nobility and intelligentsia. Under the impulse of the Scottish Enlightenment, the country had increasingly emancipated itself from the political sphere of London. As a result, Scottish booksellers and antiquarians attempted to construct a distinctly Scottish literary history to reinforce its cultural independence from England.⁷¹ Buchan's essay, with its emphasis on Thomson's upbringing in Scotland, should be interpreted within the context of the reappropriation of prominent Scottish authors as an integral part of a Scottish cultural heritage.

Buchan's essay caused a marked shift in the tradition of Thomson biographies. Robert Heron responded to the essay in 1793 by producing a new biography for an ambitious Scottish edition of *The Seasons*, which monumentalised Thomson as a distinctly Scottish poet. Heron's biography will be discussed in more detail in the second chapter of this dissertation. Even though the Scotticisation of Thomson's life occurred most prominently in Scotland, editors of English editions of *The Seasons* also drew attention to the author's Scottish background. In an adaptation of Johnson's biography for a 1792 octavo edition of *The Seasons*, for instance, the editor copies Buchan's remarks on the

⁶⁹ Murdoch, v.

⁷⁰ This characterisation is actually historically accurate, as a great number of Scotsmen moved to London in the beginning of the eighteenth century. For more information on the large community of Scottish expatriates in London, see Stana Nenadic's essay collection: *Scots in London in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Stana Nenadic (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2010). For an account of another Scottish poet traveling to London to make his career, see Sandro Jung, *David Mallet, Anglo-Scot: Poetry, Patronage, and Politics in the Age of Union* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2009).

⁷¹ The publication ventures of the Perth-based publishing firm of the Morisons were central to the establishment of a Scottish literary canon, as indicated by Jung in "'A Scotch Poetical Library': Print Culture, and the Construction of an Enlightenment Scottish Literary Canon," *Journal of the Edinburgh Bibliographical Society* (2014): forthcoming. The Morisons unsurprisingly published a number of editions of *The Seasons*, as Thomson featured prominently in their construction of a national canon. These editions will be discussed in more detail in the second chapter of this dissertation.

impressions the Scottish landscape left on the poet in his childhood, adding that “[Thomson] was the better enabled to give beautiful descriptions of extended scenes, the effects of which bring before us the whole magnificence of Nature, whether pleasing or dreadful.”⁷²

After the publication of Heron’s biography of Thomson, editors of editions of *The Seasons* increasingly recycled or combined earlier accounts. In 1795, Robert Anderson, the editor of *A Complete Edition of the Poets of Great Britain*, an expansion of the collection of 1779–82 which included Johnson’s biographical accounts, produced an eight-page biography of Thomson, which was mostly a compilation of earlier accounts. The editor specifically refers to Murdoch, Shiels, Johnson, and Buchan,⁷³ but also occasionally borrows from Heron’s account without acknowledging his source. Anderson’s narrative is brief and factual and concludes with Johnson’s critical observations on Thomson’s poetry, embedding them explicitly as a quote rather than appropriating the text without acknowledging the source.⁷⁴ Apart from Anderson’s account, however, no new narratives were produced until Sir Harris Nicolas produced his elaborate biography for the Aldine edition of Thomson’s works in 1830, after which point biographers would increasingly adopt a scholarly approach in providing as accurate and historically correct an account as possible.

In this section, I have mapped the paratextual mediation of Thomson’s life in the various eighteenth- and nineteenth-century biographies. I have provided an examination of the individual accounts and have attempted to determine the ways in which they can be related to each other. The predominance of Murdoch and Johnson’s accounts in the tradition of Thomson biographies shows that they functioned as the basis for a fashioning of Thomson as the author and creative genius behind *The Seasons*. The changes made to these primary narratives and the introduction of new material not only indicate the ways in which later editors critically engaged with earlier biographies; but they also reflect shifts in readers’ perception of, and approaches to, the author and his works.

⁷² “Life of James Thomson,” in *The Seasons*, by James Thomson (London: J. Strahan et. al., 1792), xiv.

⁷³ Robert Anderson, ed., *A Complete Edition of the Poets of Great Britain* (London and Edinburgh: J. & A. Arch, Bell & Bradfute, and J. Mundell, 1794), 9:273.

⁷⁴ Anderson, 9:279–80.

Chapter 1 The Hypertextual and Generic Transformation of Thomson's Poetics (1726–1730)

Thomson scholarship has traditionally adopted an approach primarily focused on the ideational complexity of *The Seasons* and has mainly examined James Thomson's long poem in terms of its totality and within its historical contexts. In an initial phase, lasting to the mid-1960s, the focus was primarily on contextual studies of Thomson's literary works and his uses of the history of ideas. Herbert Drennon, Patricia Meyer Spacks, John Arthos, Alan Dugald McKillop, and Marjorie Hope Nicholson studied the poem within the context of contemporary developments in science and natural philosophy.¹ Ralph Cohen and, more recently, Stefanie Lethbridge have produced intertextual readings of *The Seasons*. They examined the ways in which Thomson engaged with the works of his literary predecessors and responded to contemporaneous developments in British culture and politics to produce an original poem, which would please as well as instruct readers.² John Chalker, Maren-Sofie Røstvig, and Kevis Goodman have considered the ways in which Thomson adapted the generic repertoire of the Georgic tradition.³ With the emergence of reception studies, as developed by theorists such as Wolfgang Iser and

¹ Herbert Drennon, "James Thomson's Contact with Newtonianism and His Interest in Natural Philosophy," *PMLA* 49 (1934): 71–80; Patricia Meyer Spacks, *The Varied God: A Critical Study of Thomson's The Seasons*, (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1959); John Arthos, *The Language of Natural Description in Eighteenth-Century Poetry* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1949); Alan Dugald McKillop, *The Background of Thomson's Seasons* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1942); Marjorie Hope Nicholson, *Newton Demands the Muse: Newton's Opticks and the Eighteenth-Century Poets* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966).

² Ralph Cohen, *The Unfolding of The Seasons: A Study of James Thomson's Poem* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970); Stefanie Lethbridge, *James Thomson's Defence of Poetry* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2003).

³ John Chalker, *The English Georgic: A Study in the Development of a Form* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), 90–140; Maren-Sofie Røstvig, *The Happy Man: Studies in the Metamorphoses of a Classical Ideal* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1971), 2:163–188; Kevis Goodman, *Georgic Modernity and British Romanticism: Poetry and the Mediation of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 38–66.

Hans Robert Jauss,⁴ new theories of reading were developed which went beyond the remit of traditional textual studies. They focused on new dimensions of the composition and interpretation of texts, such as how readers contribute to the meaning of the text through acts of interpretation. Thomson studies took a new turn in the 1980s with Marxist readings of *The Seasons* by John Barrell.⁵ With the rise of New Historicism, scholars in the 1990s were mostly concerned with the political backgrounds of Thomson's text and the ways in which it was informed by notions of national identity. In this respect, James Sambrook and Christine Gerrard embedded their discussions of Thomson's life and works within the context of the Patriot Opposition against Sir Robert Walpole.⁶ Mary Jane Scott, by contrast, has unsuccessfully attempted to provide a cultural-patriotic reading of *The Seasons* as a poem propagating Scottish values.⁷ More recently, Gerard Carruthers and Rhona Brown have argued for a revision of Thomson's relationship with Scotland.⁸ Robert Inglesfield and Shaun Irlam have analysed Thomson's use of the sublime.⁹ Apart from Carruthers and Brown, who acknowledge Thomson's "plurality of voice,"¹⁰ all of these scholars have centrally been preoccupied with establishing unifying interpretations of *The Seasons* to account for the apparent contradictions in and eclectic nature of the poem,¹¹ which literary critics have generally struggled with since Samuel Johnson identified "the [poem's] want of method" as its "greatest defect."¹²

⁴ Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1978). Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1982).

⁵ John Barrell, *Poetry, Language and Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 100–36.

⁶ Sambrook, *James Thomson, passim*; Christine Gerrard, *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole: Politics, Poetry, and Myth, 1725–1742* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), *passim*.

⁷ Mary Jane Scott, *James Thomson, Anglo-Scot* (Athens, GA, and London: University of Georgia Press, 1988).

⁸ Gerard Carruthers, "James Thomson and Eighteenth-Century Scottish Literary Identity," in *James Thomson: Essays for the Tercentenary*, ed. Richard Terry (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), 165–90; Rhona Brown, and Gerard Carruthers, "Commemorating James Thomson, *The Seasons* in Scotland, and Scots Poetry," *Studies in Literary Imagination* 46:1 (2013): 71–89.

⁹ Robert Inglesfield, "James Thomson, Aaron Hill, and the Poetic 'Sublime'," *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 13:2 (1990): 215–21; Shaun Irlam, *Elations: The Poetics of Enthusiasm in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 113–70.

¹⁰ Brown and Carruthers, 87.

¹¹ A contradiction frequently highlighted was Thomson's desire to return to a prelapsarian golden age of innocence and primitivism as well as his strong belief in the progress of civilisation, especially as he perceived it in contemporary Britain. This contradiction would feature even more prominently in Thomson's progress poem *Liberty* (1735–6). Raymond Dexter Havens, "Primitivism and the Idea of Progress in Thomson," *Studies in Philology* 29 (1932): 41–52; Chalker, 100–9; William Levine, "Collins, Thomson, and the Whig Progress of Liberty," *SEL: Studies in English Literature 1500–1900* 34:3 (1994): 553–577.

¹² Johnson, 4:104.

In recent years, however, the individual seasons poems in their own right have received more attention. Taking into account that the four poems making up *The Seasons* were separately written and published, collected into one publication in 1730, and extensively revised until the publication of the final version in 1746,¹³ Sandro Jung and Phillip Ronald Stormer have examined some of these texts (*Winter*, *Summer*, and *Spring*) as self-contained, independently structured poems.¹⁴ Even though scholars since Otto Zippel's genetic account of *Winter*¹⁵ have acknowledged that Thomson extensively revised the poems in the course of his life, they usually focus on the end product and only refer to earlier editions to support their arguments about the structural organisation of the finalised 1746 version of *The Seasons*.¹⁶ Jung has been the only one to examine the parts individually to explore the heterogeneity of Thomson's generic experimentation.

In this chapter, I will examine the poems in their original form in their chronological order of publication. I will analyse the ideational and generic nucleus of each of the poems to identify the ways in which Thomson engaged with the literary past and how he attempted to establish a reputation for himself at the beginning of his career. In order to make sense of the ways in which the poet incorporates and transforms the generic conventions of his literary predecessors, I will adopt Gérard Genette's concept of hypertextuality. Recognising that texts are part of an entire spectrum of textual production and that they derive their meaning from the ways in which they relate to other texts, Genette has defined hypertextuality as the processes by which a text (hypertext) is formally and thematically grafted onto an earlier text (hypotext).¹⁷

¹³ *Winter*, *Summer* and *Spring* had been published as separate book ventures respectively in 1726, 1727 and 1728. *Autumn* was published for the first time in the collected editions of *The Seasons* in 1730.

¹⁴ Stormer has examined the revisions to *Winter* to explore the changes in Thomson's political and moral ideas in "Holding 'High Converse with the Mighty Dead': Morality and Politics in James Thomson's *Winter*," *English Language Notes* 29 (1992): 27–40. Jung has analysed the generic composition of *Winter*, *Summer*, and *Spring* in "Thomson's *Winter*, the Ur-text, and the Revision of *The Seasons*," *Papers on Language and Literature* 45 (2009): 60–81; "Updating *Summer*, or, Revising and Recomposing *The Seasons*," in *On Second Thought: Updating the Eighteenth-Century Text*, ed. Debra Taylor Bourdeau and Elizabeth Kraft (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2007), 66–82; "Epic, Ode, or Something New: The Blending of Genres in Thomson's *Spring*," *Papers on Language and Literature* 43 (2007): 146–165.

¹⁵ Otto Zippel, *Entstehungs- und Entwicklungsgeschichte von Thomsons 'Winter': nebst historisch-kritischer Ausgabe der 'Seasons'* (Berlin: Mayer & Müller, 1907).

¹⁶ The problematic nature of this approach can easily be illustrated in *The Unfolding of The Seasons*. Cohen develops his reading according to the order of the seasons as they were collected in 1730, starting with *Spring* and ending with *Winter*, which were respectively published third and first.

¹⁷ Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 5.

By embedding generic conventions from earlier texts into a new textual construct, Thomson transforms and rewrites the works of his literary models. By means of these hypertextual processes, he enters into a literary dialogue with his predecessors to develop his poetic creativity and to clarify the generic experimentation at the centre of his poetry. An analysis of the individual poems will enable me to examine the ways in which Thomson's hypertextual engagement with the literary tradition changes over time, as his notions of the complex generic dynamics of his descriptive long poem change.

1.1 Negotiations of Tradition in *Winter* (1726)¹⁸

None of the individual seasons was more profoundly affected by Thomson's revision process than *Winter*, the definitive 1746 version of which counts more than twice the number of lines as the original 1726 edition. First published in March 1726, the poem was enthusiastically received, running through three new editions in the course of one year.¹⁹ Of vital importance to a consideration of Thomson's poetics is the fact that these editions contained a "Preface" by the author, in which he offered the reader a unique and invaluable insight into his earliest ideas on the characteristics and function of poetry. Significantly, the "Preface" was deleted from the fifth edition of *Winter* in 1728, not to be reintroduced in the course of the work's publication history. Revising his text in accordance with changing literary fashions, Thomson adopted his employment of generic concepts in such a way that the "Preface" no longer corresponded with his notions of the role of his descriptive poetry. This section of the chapter will consider the manner in which the earlier editions of *Winter* and the "Preface" represent the initial stage in Thomson's evolution as a poet and his engagement with literary traditions. I will analyse *Winter* as the longer poem's nucleus, which reflects Thomson's use and transformations of genre and the interaction with his models. I will devote attention to the passage featuring the poet's "high converse with the mighty dead" and its evolution because this intricate dialogue is particularly revealing of Thomson's developing poetics.

¹⁸ The research detailed below was published as "Negotiations of Tradition in James Thomson's *Winter* (1726–44)," *English Studies* 93:6 (2012): 668–682.

¹⁹ A second edition was published in June 1726, the third in September, the fourth in February 1727.

A fundamental characteristic of Thomson's poetic practice is his preoccupation with accomplishing a reactivation and adaptation of literary traditions. Reflecting on the eighteenth-century literary landscape in the "Preface," Thomson reacts against the "Abuses of POETRY" and the "low, venal, trifling Subjects" it is subjected to and expresses his desire to "let POETRY, once more, be restored to her antient Truth, and Purity."²⁰ Thomson's enterprise can be comprehended as an intervention in the eighteenth-century debate on the appropriate treatment of the literary past, specifically the "quarrel" between Ancients and Moderns. Ever since Sir William Temple had published his "Essay upon Ancient and Modern Learning" in 1690, authors, philosophers, scientists, and other members of the British intelligentsia had engaged in an on-going debate about whether or not the classical authors and philosophers still held authority over their modern successors who had benefitted from recent developments in Enlightenment thought. Within the field of literature, this debate applied to the concepts of imitation, innovation, and originality, and "whether to abide by the rules and examples of classical life and literature in coming to grips with the modern world, or whether to be allowed to exercise some measure of freedom and invention."²¹

Eighteenth-century authors' understanding of the early modern cultural heritage has often been framed by what Walter Jackson Bate has termed "the burden of the past." Bate expands on Harold Bloom's "anxiety of influence," which understands the poet's relationship with his predecessors in terms of a father-son relationship, in which the son is continually haunted by the authoritative rules and conventions set by a dominating father figure. The poet feels inspired by his illustrious predecessor, while at the same time experiencing an anxious need for originality so as to be able to liberate and distinguish himself successfully from his literary model. In order to achieve this goal, "the poet must *misinterpret* the father, by the crucial act of misprision, which is the re-writing of the father."²² Bate argues that eighteenth-century poets faced a two-fold challenge in dealing with their literary past:

The poet was now becoming flanked, in his own effort, on both sides – the parental as well as the classical-ancestral. At the same time, in a deeply disturbing

²⁰ Thomson 1981, 304. Thomson had already expressed his discontent on the contemporary state of poetry in more explicit terms in a letter to William Cranstoun dated 20 July 1725: "As for Poetry, she is now a very Strumpet and so has lost all her life, & Spirit, or rather a common Strumpet, passes herself upon the world for the chaste Heaven-born Virgin" (James Thomson, *James Thomson (1700-1748): Letters and Documents*, ed. Alan Dugald McKillop (Lawrence, KA: University of Kansas Press, 1958), 13).

²¹ Joseph M Levine, *The Battle of the Books: History and Literature in the Augustan Age* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), 1.

²² Harold Bloom, *A Map of Misreading* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 19.

way, the features of the dead parent (more removed now and therefore more susceptible to the reverential and idealizing imagination) seemed to be settling into a countenance more like that of the ancestor. Almost – to the mid-eighteenth-century poet – the parental and ancestral seemed to be linking arms as twin deities looming above him.²³

Not only were poets required to compete with the parental legacy of their immediate predecessors; they also had to assess their own works against the standards of the classical works of antiquity, on the basis of which contemporary literary standards had been developed.

This negotiation of traditions affected a poem's creative process in the form of established genres and conventions. The challenge for an aspiring poet consisted in engaging with this past by incorporating, reevaluating, and revising his literary models in an original manner, while at the same time producing a text which would meet with success on the book market. In many ways, this originality could be realised at a generic level. Alastair Fowler's *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* provides a useful framework for this process. Fowler identifies the mutability of literary genres and indicates the extensive generic transformations that have historically taken place. A method that frequently occurs is that of generic modulation, a process in the course of which the characteristics of one genre are transferred onto a text composed according to a different set of literary conventions.²⁴

The eighteenth century witnessed such a transformation of the epic genre: poets discovered that they were no longer able to produce epics that applied the neoclassical principles of unity and decorum without becoming slavish imitators of Spenser and Milton. They recognised that it was not feasible to produce a comprehensive representation of the world order, as it had been achieved by their predecessors, in the form of a structurally unified poem. This generic destabilisation forced poets to find new ways to capture the scope and sublime quality of the epic. Jung notes that this goal was best achieved by “a departure from the poetics of completeness and perfection to a more openly fragmented structure that uses thematic rather than structural unity as an organizing principle.”²⁵ The principal forms that were most suitable for this purpose

²³ W. Jackson Bate, *The Burden of the Past and the English Poet* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1970), 43.

²⁴ Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 191.

²⁵ Sandro Jung, *The Fragmentary Poetic: Eighteenth-Century Uses of an Experimental Mode* (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 2009), 74.

were the Pindaric ode and the long poem, due to their repeated association with the sublime.²⁶ Thomson chose the latter as his new platform for generic experimentation, applying an epic modulation to his poem in an attempt to produce generic integration and to generate an important intervention in terms of originality.

The period's generic engagement with the literary past and the general preoccupation with originality can be exemplified by several contemporary readerly responses. Aaron Hill, an important supporter of the arts in the first half of the eighteenth century, characterised those aspects that were to become defining features of aesthetics in eighteenth-century literary debates. He expressed his approval of *Winter* and its novel style in a letter to David Mallet, Thomson's close friend and fellow poet:

There is an elegance, & Clearness, in the Language which I shou'd never have done wondering at, if It were not still more distinguishable by a Certain Fullness, & luxuriant Richness, without Waste, which I have very rarely met with; and which can never be too much commended. – There is also a Magnanimity, and moral Dignity of Sentiment, that glitters aptly, and endears the Author, while it ornaments the Poem.²⁷

In a letter to the *London Journal*, an anonymous reader echoes Hill's encomia. He praises Thomson's natural descriptions and "the *new* and *masterly manner* in which he has introduced his Reflections, and made them to succeed his several Descriptions throughout the whole Performance."²⁸ An essential quality for which Thomson is praised is his Miltonic diction, which, in spite of its luxurious richness, cannot simply be rejected as an uninspiring exploration of dead metaphors. He successfully adopted and adapted this diction and its effective use of epithets as a medium for a greater level of accuracy in rendering internal and external experiences. The second characteristic that is highlighted in the reviewer's comments is the successful manner in which Thomson uses natural description as a structural device to organise the poem.²⁹ Even though the poet regularly deviates from his subject, his descriptions, often introduced as part of extensive digressions, organically derive from his observation of external nature. The

²⁶ Jung, *The Fragmentary Poetic*, 62.

²⁷ Thomson, *Letters and Documents*, 23.

²⁸ *London Journal*, 4 June 1726.

²⁹ Cohen presents a concise overview of the complex eighteenth-century debate on natural description in which Thomson is frequently embedded in *The Art of Discrimination: Thomson's The Seasons and the Art of Discrimination* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964), 131–87.

new structural organisation that Thomson develops in *The Seasons*, with its strong emphasis on the fragmentary, indicates a departure from the foregrounding of narrative in the epic tradition.³⁰ Above all, critics from the eighteenth to the early twentieth century have commended Thomson for the reflective passages alternating with those of external natural description;³¹ it is the reflective passages that I will centrally explore in this chapter.

Even though *The Seasons* represents the prototype of the genre of the descriptive long poem, it introduces concerns that are embedded within a framework that John Barrell and Harriet Guest have defined as “contradictory.”³² The poem is “as much about a mind transported with its subject as about the subject (the seasons) itself.”³³ In *Winter*, Thomson initially portrays the wintry elements and their destructive potential, especially in his description of storms and frost. These wild and indomitable aspects of nature impress themselves on the poet’s mind and fire his imagination. The enthusiastic poet subsequently translates nature’s inspiring influence in terms of rhapsody. Yet, the poet does not allow this emotive ecstasy to cloud his presence of mind: rather than allowing elation to direct his poetic endeavours, Thomson processes the emotions in solitude through composed rational reflection. He retreats to his solitary, rural shelter to reflect upon and internalise his perception of tangible nature in terms of philosophical abstractions. Retreating from external nature, Thomson’s speaker develops a dialogue with a number of literary traditions. This dialogue is borne out on two levels: Thomson interacts with his literary models in an implicit manner through

³⁰ Jung, *The Fragmentary Poetic*, 61.

³¹ Patrick Murdoch reports on the positive evaluation of Thomson’s digressive style in the eighteenth century in his biography of Thomson: “In a short time, the applause became unanimous; every one wondering how so many pictures, and pictures so familiar, should have moved them but faintly to what they felt in his descriptions. His digressions too, the overflowings of a tender benevolent heart, charmed the reader no less; leaving him in doubt, whether he should more admire the *Poet*, or love the *Man*.” (Murdoch, vii). Allan Cunningham by the middle of the nineteenth century praised Thomson for his capacity “to raise the beauties of nature out of the low regions of sensual delight, and make them objects of moral grandeur and spiritual contemplation” (Allan Cunningham, “Life of James Thomson with a Critical Notice of *The Seasons*, and *Castle of Indolence*,” in *The Seasons, and The Castle of Indolence*, by James Thomson (London: Tilt and Bogue, 1841), xlv). In 1919, George Gregory Smith, even though his brief account of the role of Thomson’s poem in his historical narrative of Scottish literature is deprecatory in many respects, recognised Thomson’s “turning to Nature for more than decorative purposes” and reproduces part of the “Preface” to highlight the “personal devotion” which the poet achieves in his descriptive poem (G. Gregory Smith, *Scottish Literature: Character & Influence* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1919), 164–6).

³² John Barrell, and Harriet Guest, “On the Use of Contradiction: Economics and Morality in the Eighteenth-Century Long Poem,” in *The New Eighteenth Century: Theory, Politics, English Literature*, ed. Felicity Nussbaum and Laura Brown (New York, NY: Methuen, 1987), 121–43.

³³ David Reid, “Thomson’s Poetry of Reverie and Milton,” *SEL: Studies in English Literature 1500–1900* 43 (2003): 668.

intertextual references to and adaptations of Virgil's *Georgics* and Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Virgil's influence is most obviously noticeable on a structural level, since *Winter* was conceived as a Georgic poem.³⁴ The inspirational importance of Virgil is textually confirmed by Thomson himself, as he establishes an intertextual relationship through the use of epigraphs in the earliest editions of *Winter*. In fact, Thomson's choices indicate the increasing importance of Virgil's *Georgics* as a model for adequate external nature description. The first edition contains one epigraph from Ovid and one drawn from Virgil's *Georgics*, the latter highlighting the transitoriness of the seasons.³⁵ By contrast, the second edition, and all subsequent editions until 1728, contain only one Virgilian epigraph, which focuses on winter's harshness: "horrida cano / Bruma gelu."³⁶ In his "Preface," Thomson also acknowledges "rural Virgil" as one of his principal models.³⁷ Milton's intertextual presence is clearly felt in the poem's Christian eschatology, and Thomson also acts as a successor to Milton in his use of blank verse, a formal quality for which Thomson was praised by Johnson.³⁸ In fact, in *Autumn*, Thomson designates himself as the third in the blank verse tradition line after Milton and John Philips.³⁹ Milton is assigned the role of the father of blank verse, liberating poetry from the bondage of rhyme; a process continued by John Philips, who successfully adapted blank verse to new genres, most notably his georgic *Cyder* (1708), which, according to David Fairer, "set a fashion for poems . . . describing the cultivation of nature's raw material and the processes used to transform them."⁴⁰

Above all, Thomson's engagement with the literary tradition occurs on a more explicit level, when he literally refers to the authors who acted as models for the poem. A unique example of such a dialogue can be found in *Winter*'s passage featuring the converse with the dead. After describing a heavy snow storm and its effects on man and animal, the poet retreats to his country seat, where he chases away "the cheerless Gloom" with a comfortable fire and expresses his desire to "hold high Converse with the

³⁴ For a detailed analysis of *The Seasons* as a Georgic poem, see Chalker, 90–140.

³⁵ "Rapidus Sol / Nondum Hyemem contingit Equis. Iam praeterit aestas." (Publius Vergilius Maro, *Opera*, ed. R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), *Georgica* II, ll. 321–322).

³⁶ Vergilius, *Georgica* III, ll. 442–3.

³⁷ Thomson 1981, 305.

³⁸ "As a writer, he is entitled to one praise of the highest kind: his mode of thinking, and of expressing his thoughts, is original. His blank verse is no more the blank verse of Milton, or of any other poet, than the rhymes of Prior are to Cowley. His numbers, his pauses, his diction, are of his own growth, without transcription, without imitation." (Johnson, 4:103).

³⁹ Thomson 1981, "Autumn," ll. 645–7: "PHILLIPS, *Pomona's* Bard, the second thou / Who nobly durst, in Rhyme-unfetter'd Verse, / With BRITISH Freedom sing the BRITISH Song."

⁴⁰ David Fairer, "Creating a National Poetry: The Tradition of Spenser and Milton." *The Cambridge Companion to Eighteenth-Century Poetry*. Ed. John Sitter. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. 188.

mighty Dead.”⁴¹ Initially, this converse is conceived of as a reading activity. Yet, as the poet reads about the illustrious deeds performed by these mighty dead and how they “blest mankind” (*Wi* 1726: 262), he is aroused by the inspiring thought of the “*Sages of ancient Time*” (*Wi* 1726: 260) and enters into a mental dialogue with his predecessors. Enraptured by his meeting with the apotheosised dead, the persona is inspired by their presence and articulates an emotive prayer to the representatives of the epic tradition. Thomson develops a tripartite structure in this passage: first, he introduces the setting of the retreat (*Wi* 1726: 253–58). Then, he develops a bipartite catalogue of Greek and Roman political figures on the one hand (*Wi* 1726: 259–84), and prominent poets on the other (*Wi* 1726: 285–92). The prayer for inspiration concludes the passage (*Wi* 1726: 293–300), after which Thomson once again turns his eye outwards towards nature.

The passage of the “high Converse” is substantially expanded and receives a more central position in the final version of the poem. Stormer has explored the hypotextual transformations that take place in the different versions from 1726 to 1746, and aptly explains the increasing number of political and moral implications as a result of Thomson’s own increased political activities in real life. Even though Stormer’s observations focus on an interpretation of the final version, they can nevertheless serve to enhance our understanding of the passage in its original state. A first crucial transformation affects the political catalogue. Whereas the catalogue is systematically developed in the 1746 version in ninety verses—first in a Greek, than in a Roman catalogue—it only counts eighteen lines in the 1726 version and a lesser number of Greek and Roman exempla appear in random order. The detailed elaboration and its central position in the 1746 version reveal that the political catalogue received considerably less importance in 1726. The emphasis in the first edition was instead placed on the poetic catalogue and the prayer for inspiration. In 1726, these two components occupy sixteen (or one third) of the forty-eight verses. This strongly contrasts with the text in 1746, where an elegy for James Hammond and a passage of moral-philosophical reflection shift the attention away from the catalogue and the prayer. These additions, combined with the expanded political catalogue, diminish the importance of the inspirational verses. The catalogue in the later variant only occupies twenty-five out of 193 verses (or approximately one eighth of the text passage). In the original edition, three poets are introduced in the following order: Virgil, “the best of Poets, and of Men!” (*Wi* 1726: 289); Homer, “*Parent of Song!*” (*Wi* 1726: 290); and Milton, “the *British Muse*” (*Wi* 1726: 291). Thomson is unmistakably evoking the epic tradition and utilises the prayer for inspiration to express his desire to inscribe himself into that

⁴¹ Thomson 1726, ll. 258–9. Line references for all subsequent citations are given in the text and are indicated with *Wi* 1726.

tradition. In this passage, Thomson indicates the manner in which he positions himself towards the epic genre. Not only does he reveal a strong awareness of the literary success that his predecessors achieved, he also signals that his literary ambitions are in line with the evoked epic tradition. In other words, Thomson expresses a desire to rework the conventions of the epic genre in the new medium of the descriptive long poem.

A closer look at the correlation between the different versions of the political and the poetical catalogues will help to gain a better understanding of Thomson's developing poetics. An important aspect of the 1746 version is the systematic development of the catalogues, which reveals a stronger emphasis on the interaction between morality and politics.⁴² Stormer states that the extended political catalogue depicts historical figures that are "confronted with moral choices when they and the law (or its representatives) come into conflict."⁴³ The ensuing poetical catalogue can then be interpreted as an enumeration of exemplary authors who wrote about characters faced with such a moral conflict or who lauded exemplary moral conduct. The address to the mighty dead consequently becomes more than just a plea for inspiration; it serves as a plea for "correct moral resolve to act politically."⁴⁴ "The virtues of the heroic, political, and literary heroes of the past find a place in his catalogs because they represent values that the virtuous moderns also possess."⁴⁵ By contrast, the emphasis in the 1726 version is placed on the poetical implications of the conversation. The political catalogue consists of a small group of renowned historical figures functioning as an evocation of a glorified, sacred past. Thomson's treatment of Socrates can illustrate this technique. The Greek philosopher prominently heads the catalogue in both versions. But, whereas Thomson in 1746 dedicates seven lines to Socrates,⁴⁶ "Great Moral Teacher! *Wisest of Mankind!*" ("Wi" 1746: 445), praising his moral righteousness in singly defying the state's corruption and "the Rage of Tyrants" ("Wi" 1746: 441), the philosopher is originally simply hailed as "Truth's early Champion, Martyr for his God" (*Wi* 1726: 267). This description—together with those of such other famous political figures as Solon, Numa, Cato, and Scipio—stresses the heroism and self-sacrifice of these legendary figures, rather than providing a framework of moral exempla for the contemporary reader. *Winter* 1726 features the political figures under the general banner of heroism; by contrast, *Winter* 1746 provides more detailed accounts of the individual characters and

⁴² Stormer, 35.

⁴³ Stormer, 37.

⁴⁴ Stormer, 37.

⁴⁵ Cohen, *Unfolding*, 5.

⁴⁶ Thomson 1981, "Winter," ll. 439–45. Line references for all subsequent citations are given in the text and are indicated with "Wi" 1746.

their personal moral conflicts. The significance of this political catalogue lies in the transitional lines to the poetic catalogue:

Thousands behind, the Boast of *Greece* and *Rome*,
Whom *Vertue* owns, the Tribute of a Verse
Demand, but who can count the Stars of Heaven?
Who sing their Influence on this lower World? (*Wi* 1726: 281–4)

The question is quickly answered when the epic poets appear before Thomson's eyes. The catalogue of epic poets had already implicitly been announced by the use of the verb "sing". Walking hand in hand, they are presented as equals, united on the "Way to Fame's Ascent" (*Wi* 1726: 291). Thomson here uses a variation on a classic *praeteritio* to link himself implicitly to the group of authors he immediately afterwards introduces. By investigating who is capable of bestowing the appropriate tribute to these historical characters, Thomson seemingly questions his own capacities and subordinates his poetic skills to those of the three epic poets. Nevertheless, Thomson does associate himself with the epic poets, since he has just proven himself capable of singing heroes' praise in the preceding political catalogue.

In spite of this adherence to the epic tradition, Thomson does not construct his long poem as a conventional epic. An indication of how to interpret the poet's hypertextual reactivation of this major genre can be found in Thomson's address to the mighty dead:

SOCIETY divine! Immortal Minds!
Still visit thus my Nights, for you reserv'd,
And mount my soaring Soul to Deeds like yours.
Silence! thou lonely *Power!* the Door be thine:
See, on the hallow'd Hour, that none intrude (*Wi* 1726: 293–7)

The first three lines function as a prayer for inspiration, and Jung indicates the imitative, aesthetic implications in Thomson's wish to soar to his predecessors'

heights.⁴⁷ The subsequent lines, however, help to define Thomson's descriptive nature poem in relation to the epic tradition. Having just associated himself with the epic poets, Thomson commands the divine wintry powers to remain outside and not to intrude on his reflections. He reveals that his long poem's main concern is not merely the naturalist's description of external and real-life landscapes; rather, that internalisation is an essential part of the poetic process. The descriptive passages are not merely the result of the spontaneous impressions of the natural landscape on Thomson's mind. Instead, nature stirs the imagination, which "effects introspection, a concentration on the inner self by means of escaping from the 'outward Sense'."⁴⁸

The importance of a solitary retreat for the poetic mind is confirmed by Thomson's "Hymn on Solitude."⁴⁹ First, Solitude is hailed as a benign deity who appears in various shapes, after which Thomson elaborates on the allegorical train that accompanies her: Innocence ("Solitude": 40), Contemplation ("Solitude": 41), Religion ("Solitude": 42), and Urania, the heavenly muse ("Solitude": 43). These companions are symbolically associated with the benign influence of solitude on the poetic imagination. Thomson implies that a poet's solitary retreat provides several benefits: it enables a return to a state of innocence away from any corrupting external influences; it inspires contemplation and religious piety; and it creates the best conditions for epically inspired poetry.⁵⁰ Moreover, Thomson confirms his preference for solitude in two letters that were written in October 1730. In a letter to Valentine Munbee, one of the subscribers to the 1730 quarto edition of *The Seasons*, Thomson reflects on the ways in which rural retirement enables a poet to "cultivate the muses, inlarge his internal views, harmonize his passions, and let his heart hear the voice of peace and nature."⁵¹ A couple of days earlier, Thomson, reflecting on true poetic genius, contrasts the solitary retreat with a distinctly epic concept:

⁴⁷ Sandro Jung, "The Descriptiveness of James Thomson's *Winter* (1726) and the Early Eighteenth-Century 'Winter' Poem," *Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik* 126 (2002): 163.

⁴⁸ Jung, "Descriptiveness," 166.

⁴⁹ A first draft of the "Hymn on Solitude" was included in a letter to Mallet dated July 10, 1725. My discussion of the poem is based on the B version of the text, which was tentatively dated to 1727 or 1728 and reproduced by Helen Sard Hughes from the manuscripts of Frances Seymour, the Countess of Hertford who supported Thomson early in his career. For a detailed account of the composition history of the hymn, see "Thomson and the Countess of Hertford," *Modern Philology* 4 (1928): 445-52. Line references for all subsequent citations are given in the text and are indicated with "Solitude."

⁵⁰ Milton had addressed Urania, the muse of astronomy, in an apostrophe at the beginning of the seventh book of *Paradise Lost*, thus embedding the classical deity within an epic context.

⁵¹ Thomson, *Letters and Documents*, 76.

One would not however climb Parnassus, any more than your mortal hills, to fix forever on the barren top. No, it is some little dear retirement in the plain below that gives the right relish to the prospect; which without that is nothing but enchantment, and, tho' pleasing for sometime, yet at last leaves us in a desert.⁵²

In Thomson's view, Mount Parnassus, the mythological seat of the Muses which had frequently been invoked by classical epic authors as a source of divine inspiration, has become a dead metaphor through frequent overuse in the course of literary history that it is no longer productive for a poet in the eighteenth century. In the context of his characterisation of his poetry, Thomson here explains why he chose not to pursue his ambitions according to the conventions of the epic: he was aware of the genre's destabilisation and the concomitant necessity for its reactivation in new ways. Rather than rejecting the traditional epic in its totality, however, Thomson in his converse reveals that he adopts the aesthetics of the epic poets as the modal frame within which he can develop his theme of description of and reflection on external nature.

This aesthetic stance towards nature is supported by the link that Thomson introduces between his own poem and that of his friend David Mallet, *The Excursion*. Commanding the natural forces to stay outside to guard his solitude, Thomson significantly allows one person – “*Lycidas, the Friend*” (*Wi* 1726: 298) – to enter to participate in his abstract musings. The characteristics for which *Lycidas*—or Mallet⁵³—is praised, correspond with Thomson's own poetical enterprise. He wants his long poem to exhibit the same refined sense (*Wi* 1726: 298), well digested learning, and exalted faith (*Wi* 1726: 299) that Mallet displays in his long poem. Even though *The Excursion* was published only in 1728, correspondence with Thomson reveals that Mallet had already been working on his long poem as early as 1726. Thomson expresses his approval of and admiration for the poem in his correspondence with Mallet. In a letter dated August 2, 1726, he defines *The Excursion* as “a Description of the grand Works of Nature, raised, and animated by moral, and sublime, Reflections” and exhorts Mallet to “Leave no great Scene unvisited. . . . Sublimity must be the Characteristic of your Piece.”⁵⁴ In the same month, Thomson expresses his thoughts even more strongly:

⁵² Thomson, *Letters and Documents*, 73.

⁵³ For the identification of *Lycidas* with Mallet, see Thomson 1981, 388, note 546a.

⁵⁴ Thomson, *Letters and Documents*, 40.

There is an inimitable Mixture of animated Simplicity, and chastised Sublimity in what You write. It strikes one forcibly, at first, and yet still unfolds brighter, penetrates to the Heart, and yet still mixes deeper. . . . This is Poetry! this is arousing Fancy! Enthusiasm! Rapturous Terror!⁵⁵

Thomson highlights the successful manner in which *The Excursion* reflects nature's inspiring qualities.⁵⁶ A poet should endeavour to reproduce these aspects in such a manner that the poem achieves the same rapturous effect on the reader's mind as nature does on the poet's imagination. A characteristic highlighted in these letters is that of the sublime, which plays a crucial part in the early literary careers of both Thomson and Mallet. Their shared backgrounds and complementary poetical notions of the sublimity of nature can account for the support they received from Aaron Hill, a theorist of the Longinian sublime.⁵⁷

Thomson's conception of the sublime, as it appears in the letters to Mallet and in *Winter* 1726, is more extensively and systematically developed in the "Preface" to the second edition of *Winter*. His evocation of and adherence to the epic tradition and its aesthetics should be understood as part of his wish to restore poetry to its former glory. The "Preface" also provides clear insight into Thomson's choice of subject. He states that the subject of a poem plays a crucial role in the intended restoration of poetry: a poet should choose grave and momentous subjects that simultaneously "amuse the Fancy, enlighten the Head, and warm the Heart."⁵⁸ For Thomson, nature becomes the most appropriate subject to accomplish his poetical goals. Thomson's fascination with nature corresponds with a general influence of Newton's scientific writings on the eighteenth-century literary imagination. In this respect, the young Thomson was unmistakably influenced by the Newtonian Robert Stewart who taught ethics and natural philosophy at the University of Edinburgh, which Thomson attended from 1715 to 1719, before moving to London.⁵⁹ The author thus assimilated "the philosophic outlook which found in the world of nature constant demonstration of God's wisdom and power."⁶⁰ Thomson felt it was his poetic duty to lay bare the workings of God in

⁵⁵ Thomson, *Letters and Documents*, 48–50.

⁵⁶ A similar contemporary response to the long poem can be found in Sandro Jung, "An Unnoticed 'Review' of Mallet's *The Excursion*," *ANQ* 20 (2007): 22–4.

⁵⁷ Jung explores Thomson and Mallet's relationship and correspondences in the context of the development of the sublime long poem in *David Mallet, Anglo-Scot*, 33–50.

⁵⁸ Thomson 1981, 304.

⁵⁹ Drennon, 72.

⁶⁰ Spacks, 50.

nature, thus adhering to “the concept of nature as revelatory of divinely ordained order.”⁶¹

He starts his search for the manifestations of this divine order in the harsh and barren elements of winter, a season seemingly devoid of beneficence and equally relentless towards fauna and flora. “Feeble Man” (Wi 1726: 169) cannot escape the “Terrors” (Wi 1726: 168) of the wintry season:

The Mountain growls; and all its sturdy *Sons*
Stoop to the Bottom of the Rocks they shade:
Lone, on its Midnight-Side, and all aghast,
The dark, way-faring, *Stranger*, breathless, toils,
And climbs against the Blast—
Low, waves the rooted Forest, vex'd and sheds
What of its leafy Honours yet remains.
Thus, struggling thro' the dissipated Grove,
The whirling Tempest raves along the Plain;
And, on the Cottage thacht, or lordly Dome,
Keen-fastening, shakes 'em to the solid Base.
Sleep, frighted, flies; the hollow Chimney howls,
The Windows rattle, and the Hinges creak. (Wi 1726: 173–85)

The struggling man nearly disappears among a series of personifications, in which the “whirling Tempest” is the most active element. Even the protective sphere of the home cannot guarantee the safety of the inhabitants, whose presence is only suggested by the personification of fleeing sleep. Rather than simply presenting a harrowing image of a chaotic and uncontrollable season, however, Thomson foregrounds the divine by revealing the aesthetic beauty inherent in winter’s destructive potential, which is developed in a mythopoeic representation of the season as an awe-inspiring deity.

In acknowledging the religious relevance of nature in poetry, Thomson utilises nature’s enrapturing and inspirational qualities to develop a religious-sublime poetics which attributes a strong devotional character to *Winter*. Thomson’s conception of the sublime, as it appears in his letters, the “Preface,” and his early poetry, is inspired by John Dennis who developed his theory in the treatise *The Advancement and Reformation of*

⁶¹ Spacks, 50.

Modern Poetry (1701).⁶² Dennis defined “passion” as the essential characteristic of poetry. The strongest form, “Enthusiasm,” is characterised as “a Passion guided by Judgment, whose Cause is not comprehended by us.”⁶³ The stronger this enthusiasm, the more pervasive its impact on the imagination. Dennis designates religious and enthusiastic subjects in poetry as those capable of enhancing the desired elating effect on the mind of the reader. His conception of the sublime can easily be applied to the overall structure of *Winter* and Thomson’s desire for the restoration of poetry. Thomson pays significant attention to the sublime qualities of nature in all its various wintry forms. His descriptions are meant to awe readers so that they—just like the poet—are transported to religiously inspired, enthusiastic rhapsody. They help explain the hymnal mode that Thomson frequently uses in the 1726 version of *Winter*. This devotional mode is visible, for example, in the opening of the poem, where Thomson—in a typical hymnal “strain of self-intoxication”⁶⁴—describes the coming of Winter and “his rising Train, / Vapours, and Clouds, and Storms” (*Wi* 1726: 2–3) and announces those to be his theme, “These that exalt the Soul to solemn Thought, / And heavenly Musing” (*Wi* 1726: 4–5). With a solemn invocation Thomson invites Winter, here personified as a deity, to reveal himself in nature. This opening, abounding with imaginative power, already reveals that *Winter* is conceived as a mythopoeic poem, meant to “convey the majesty of the Creator [and to] enable the beholder (and reader) to partake of the sublimity of the divine.”⁶⁵ [Figure 3] William Kent’s visual rendering of the deity with his train of followers in his design for the illustrations to the 1730 edition of *The Seasons* confirms the central importance of this allegorical device for the development of the poem. Nature is depicted as a mythic anthology, which, in spite of its wide topical diversity, is characterised by a sacred interconnectedness meant to carry “the reader from meditation on nature to the praise of divine providence.”⁶⁶ This inter- and paratextual framework of Thomson’s early poetry reveals that *Winter* is more than just a poem of observation: the passages of natural description gain their full meaning only when the external experience is internalised. *Winter* in its first edition is thus ultimately

⁶² Thomson and Dennis were acquainted with one another, as several references to Dennis and his works are found Thomson’s correspondences (Thomson, *Letters and Documents*, 47 & 86). Thomson also subscribed to Dennis’s *Miscellaneous Tracts* in 1727. It is likely that Hill had introduced Thomson to Dennis, who was acquainted with Hill’s circle. Hill was himself a strong advocate of Dennis’s theory of the sublime and possibly encouraged Thomson’s conceptualisation of the sublime in the “Preface” (Inglesfield, 217).

⁶³ John Dennis, *The Critical Works of John Dennis*. Vol. 1. Ed. Edward Niles Hooker. Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins Press, 1943), 217.

⁶⁴ Chalker, 128.

⁶⁵ Jung, “Thomson’s *Winter*, the Ur-text,” 71.

⁶⁶ David R. Anderson, “Emotive Theodicy in *The Seasons*,” *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Literature* 12 (1983): 59.



Figure 3 Full-page plate, designed by William Kent, engraved by Nicolas Tardieu, for “Winter,” from *The Seasons* (London: J. Millan and A. Millar, 1730). Reproduced from a copy in the author’s possession.

constructed and theorised as a poem of reflection, more specifically a poem of religiously inspired reflection on the sublime potential in natural phenomena.

As part of the revision process from 1726 to 1746, the importance of *Winter's* sublime-devotional poetics gradually decreased. This is strikingly exemplified by Thomson's far-reaching adjustments to the "high converse" passage in the later versions of *The Seasons*, which were introduced to ensure correspondence with his changing notions. Whereas the passage in *Winter* 1726 acts as a retrospective reflection on the classical past to evoke its epic splendour, in the final 1746 version the emphasis shifts towards the present. A first indication of this transformation is visible in the conclusion of the political catalogue quoted earlier. Significantly, in the final version, Thomson deletes the appositive postmodifier "the Boast of *Greece* and *Rome*" (*Wi* 1726: 281). The classical exempla are thus no longer evoked in their specific historical background, but are evoked for the universality of their moral principles and conduct.

Apart from diminishing the historicity of the passage, Thomson also establishes an explicit link with the present. Firstly, a five-line tribute to Pope ("Wi" 1746: 550–4), who was still alive at that time and with whom Thomson entertained a friendship, is added to the prayer for inspiration. Secondly, the prayer is followed by the elegy for Hammond, politician and fellow poet. The reference to this contemporary figure immediately establishes associations with the group of Patriot Poets surrounding the influential Frederick, Prince of Wales, to whom Hammond had been appointed equerry in 1733, a position he retained until his death in 1742. Thomson, who had become acquainted with the close circle surrounding Prince Frederick through the influence of David Mallet, had aligned himself with the Opposition cause of the Patriot Poets in the course of the 1730s.⁶⁷ Due to his involvement in contemporary politics, the poet attaches greater importance to the moral-philosophical reflections and their potential to motivate readers to assume social responsibilities. Rather than pursuing a solitary retreat, the poet invites the company of "Friends of pliant Soul" ("Wi" 1746: 573) to unveil the mysteries of "Nature's boundless frame" ("Wi" 1746: 575) with a great deal of attention for "the moral World" ("Wi" 1746: 583), "*general* Good" ("Wi" 1746: 587), and "the public Soul" ("Wi" 1746: 596). The political catalogue functions as a gateway into present-day philosophical reflections. Thomson's focus in this passage shifts towards a contemplation of the interaction between politics and morality. As Percival Stockdale writes in his notes to *The Seasons*: "We are invited, by all the eloquence and power of

⁶⁷ Thomson's affiliation with the Patriot Poets culminated in three Opposition tragedies at the end of the 1730s: *Agamemnon* (1738), *Edward and Eleonora* (1739), and *Alfred: a Masque* (1740). The latter was written in collaboration with Mallet, for whom Thomson had written the prologue to his *Mustapha* (1739). For a more detailed account of Mallet's role in Thomson's career as an Opposition poet, see Jung, *David Mallet*.

numbers, to a contemplation of the great objects of morality and of natural religion.”⁶⁸ By bringing the past explicitly into the present in the 1746 version, Thomson shifts his attention from imitation of the literary past towards the political present and the part that poetry has to play therein. Thomson consciously distances himself from his initial poetical emphasis on the epic tradition and his motivation to follow their aesthetic ideals. This evolution is also reflected in the revised poetic catalogue and address to his predecessors and models. Firstly, by the time the final variant of *Winter* is published, Thomson demonstrates that his poetry covers a wider spectrum than before through his reference to Greek dramatists and lyrical poets (“Wi” 1746: 539–40). Secondly, the reference to Lycidas, a covert compliment to Mallet, is replaced by the unspecified “a few chosen Friends, who sometimes deign / To bless my humble Roof” (“Wi” 1746: 546–7). Whereas the 1726 version highlighted the importance of solitude in the process of internalising and reflecting on the divine order in external nature, the stress is here put on a socially engaged community of friends who gather to ponder moral questions. Finally, in the tributary lines to Pope, Thomson’s focus does not primarily celebrate Pope’s translation of the *Iliad*;⁶⁹ rather, he praises his friend’s way of life, referring to Pope’s “successful self-cultivation as the virtuous recluse or Horatian happy man” (Thomson 1981, 388). The evocation of Pope is not made in the context of his epic enterprise, but in approval of his moral conduct.

The revisions to this central passage correspond with Thomson’s changing poetics and the dynamic writing process of *The Seasons*. The religious-sublime poetics, so intricately developed in *Winter* 1726, did not remain intact in the later versions. Even though the divine qualities of nature are still present in the final variant, the concentration of their sublimity is dispersed as a result of the many additions. Thomson focused more and more upon the position of man within the natural system, causing the whole of *The Seasons* to receive a more anthropocentric scope. The increasing importance of Thomson’s moral-political intentions has already been illustrated in the revisions of the “high converse” passage. Thomson similarly introduced more sentimental elements that became increasingly popular with the reader audience. In *Winter*, the homely tableau of villagers telling ghost stories near the fireplace is an example of the sentimentalising and domesticating impulses in the later version of the poem (“Wi” 1746: 617–29). Moreover, Thomson’s natural descriptions reveal a progressively stronger Newtonian influence with natural phenomena being depicted with minute precision rather than with the intention to evoke sublime awe. An example of this kind of revision can be found in the description of a wintry sea storm. This

⁶⁸ Percival Stockdale, “Notes to The Seasons of Thomson,” in *The Seasons*, by James Thomson (London: John Stockdale, 1794), Sig. T2 Recto.

⁶⁹ Thomson states that Pope does not sing sweeter than Homer (“Wi” 1746: 553).

passage, consisting of seventeen lines in the original version (*Wi* 1726: 155–172), highlights the sublime qualities as shown in phrases such as “Ethereal Force” (*Wi* 1726: 164); “dreadful Rift” (*Wi* 1726: 165); “the rising, wat’ry, War” (*Wi* 1726: 166). The vocabulary is continued in the description of the destructive potential of the storm, which is contrasted with man’s helplessness:

Whitening, the angry Billows rowl immense,
And roar their Terrors, thro’ the shuddering Soul
Of feeble Man, amidst their Fury caught,
And, dash’d upon his Fate: Then o’er the Cliff,
Where dwells the *Sea-Mew*, unconfin’d, they fly,
And, hurrying, swallow up the steril Shore. (*Wi* 1726: 167–72)

In the 1746 version, this passage comprises fifty-six lines and a significant proportion of the sublime vocabulary disappears (“*Wi*” 1746: 118–174). The passage cited is even completely deleted. The scene receives a milder character that breaks away from the original sublime mode by the inclusion of a description of the stars (“*Wi*” 1746: 126–9) and of man and animal’s response to the approaching storm (“*Wi*” 1746: 132–47). The focus on the sublime is weakened as scientific and georgic elements are introduced. The revision to this passage is characteristic of the generic hybridisation introduced in the 1746 version of *Winter*, resulting in the poem’s transformation into a heterogeneous mixture of literary modes and genres.⁷⁰ This heterogeneity developed into the increased digressive fragmentariness which changed *The Seasons* into “a dynamic and multifaceted poem that resists classification.”⁷¹

The examination of the original form and contents of *Winter*, together with the “Preface” to the second edition, has provided significant insights into Thomson’s initial ideas on poetry and his treatment of the literary tradition. The poem in its 1726 version is composed as a dense and cohesive poem that describes the season and its harsh elements in all their sublime potential. Thomson creates a devotional-meditative structure within which the persona reflects upon the divine characteristics of nature in its wintry guise. An exploration of the “high Converse” passage revealed how he treats the literary burden of the past in an inclusive manner by evoking his predecessors in a spiritual dialogue and by having them participate in his divinely inspired, ecstatic

⁷⁰ Jung, “Thomson’s *Winter*, Ur-text,” 74.

⁷¹ Jung, *The Fragmentary Poetic*, 76.

nature reflections. Thomson thus incorporates the tradition of the destabilised epic in a new medium and by means of a newly-defined poetics. However, Thomson's production did not retain its religious-sublime poetics. Responding to changing fashions and socio-cultural developments, he revised his poem by expanding the scope of his generic experimentation and by looking for ways to reactivate past literary experience. The ideational and generic complexity of *The Seasons* was an important reason for the poem's success, both during and after Thomson's lifetime. The poem's success resulted in Thomson becoming a part of the literary tradition that he had set out to imitate and develop. Later critics in hindsight credited the poet with the creation of the new genre of the descriptive long poem. Once the literary value of his text had been established, Thomson became an influential literary model himself, the result of which was that the long poem would be interpreted in ever new and varying ways. In this regard, *Winter* 1726 represents the initial phase in Thomson's development and the successful basis upon which the rest of his career was built.

1.2 Milton's Hypotextual Presence in *Summer* (1727)⁷²

Even though literary critics and scholars have generally recognised that Milton serves as one of the principal literary models in *The Seasons*,⁷³ the full extent of Thomson's hypertextual reworking of Milton's epic poetics in *Summer. A Poem* has not yet been determined. In line with the previous section, I propose an examination of Thomson's second seasonal poem to reveal a continuation as well as an adaptation of *Winter*'s poetical premises. The poet structures *Summer*, which was published by John Millan in 1727, around the same dynamic alternation of external nature descriptions and internal reflective passages and reintroduces several of *Winter*'s generic contexts, especially the epic modulation transferred to the genre of the descriptive long poem. Like *Winter*,

⁷² The research detailed below was published as "Milton's Hypotextual Presence in James Thomson's *Summer* (1727)," *Ranam* 45 (2012): 115–27.

⁷³ McKillop discusses the ways in which Thomson adopts a "Miltonic contemplation" in his passages of religious reflection (McKillop, *Background*, 94); Douglas Grant indicates how Thomson's recognition of the epic poet as an author of central importance for British literature is reflected in his preface to a new edition of Milton's *Aeropagitica* (Douglas Grant, *James Thomson, Poet of The Seasons* (London: The Cresset Press, 1951), 177); Raymond Dexter Havens examines Thomson's Miltonic blank verse in *The Influence of Milton on English Poetry* (New York, NY: Russell & Russell, 1961), 123–40. Dustin Griffin also explores the influence of Milton's poetry on Thomson's blank verse as well as how he borrowed from both "Il Penseroso" and *Paradise Lost* in *Regaining Paradise: Milton and the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 179–201.

Summer is preoccupied with incorporating and adapting literary traditions. The close proximity of the publication of the first edition of *Summer* and the fourth edition of *Winter* reveals that Thomson still closely adheres to the poetical programme he developed in the “Preface.”⁷⁴ At the same time, Thomson develops *Summer* more strongly within a Miltonic framework. Singling out his countryman from the catalogue of epic poets invoked in *Winter*, he designates Milton as his principal literary model and adopts a profoundly Miltonic poetic diction. Thomson’s treatment of the literary past in *Summer* focuses on a national tradition, thereby contributing to a contemporaneous canonising impulse of British indigenous poets. However, Thomson does not adopt a Miltonic diction in an unimaginative way: instead, he redeploys the Newtonian interest already displayed in the external nature descriptions in *Winter* and in an attempt to establish a fusion between an epic-Miltonic and a scientific diction. Thomson thus further develops his generic experimentation to find new ways to reactivate past literary experiences.

Thomson’s *Summer* opens with a continuation of the poetical process that had been initiated in *Winter*. Part of a solemn invocation, the opening lines closely resemble those of *Winter* in that Thomson personifies Summer as a deity with an accompanying allegorical train of followers (“the sultry *Hours*, / and ever-fanning *Breezes*”⁷⁵). Thomson resumes the epic-hymnal mode of his first poem and indicates that *Summer* also focuses on the indomitable characteristics of the season’s natural elements. This focus had already been indicated in the Horatian epigraph, which highlights Summer’s scorching heat.⁷⁶ The epigraph likewise announces the poet’s immediate flight from Summer’s “hot Dominion” (*Su* 1727: 8) and subsequent retirement “into the mid-wood Shade” of a grove (*Su* 1727: 9) at the beginning of the poem. In this manner, Thomson reintroduces the poetically important ideal of retirement. Retreating from Summer’s blaze, he initiates a moment of internalisation and inspiration:

COME, INSPIRATION! from thy Hermit-Seat,
By Mortal seldom found: may I presume
From thy fix’d, serious Muse, and raptur’d Glance
Shot on surrounding Heaven, to steal one Look,

⁷⁴ Published in February 1727, the first edition of *Summer* appeared in the same month as the fourth edition of *Winter*, the final variant to contain the “Preface.”

⁷⁵ Thomson, *Summer*, ll. 4-5. Line references for all subsequent citations are given in the text and are indicated with *Su* 1727.

⁷⁶ “Sole Dies referente siccos” (Quintus Horatius Flaccus, *Opera*, ed. D. R. Shackleton Bailey (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1985), “Carmen III,” l. 29).

As in *Winter*'s retirement scene, Thomson prays for inspiration and articulates his poetics in terms of the Dennisian religious-sublime enthusiasm, thereby creating the impression that *Summer* is also conceptualised as an "emotive theodicy" intended to inspire readers to reflect on and praise the divine origins of the season.⁷⁷

Rather than simply adopting the same textual strategies that he employed in *Winter*, Thomson consciously and explicitly directs the enthusiastic rhapsody towards praise of God and the divine order in the seasons. In his description of the rising summer sun and the effect of its warmth and energy on nature, Thomson writes how "Musick awakes, / The native Voice of undissembling Joy; And thick around the wood-land Hymns arise" (Su 1727: 47–9). As dawn arrives, nature spontaneously bursts into joyful hymns to God, a hymn to which Thomson joins his own poetic song.

Thomson's shift of focus towards a description of nature's awing splendour in praise of its Creator can be interpreted within the context of an adaptation of Miltonic poetics in *Summer*. Milton's increased hypotextual presence works on two levels. Griffin reports how Thomson modelled *Summer* intertextually on Milton's poetry, especially "Il Penseroso."⁷⁸ Just like Milton's poem, Thomson structures his poem around the description of the progress of a summer's day. The poet also borrowed the concept of Milton's pensive wanderer seeking shelter from the oppressive heat in "twilight groves" and "in close covert by some brook,"⁷⁹ on the occasion of which he engages in melancholy contemplation. It is in the passages of solitary retreat in *Summer* that Thomson introduces further echoes of Milton's poetry to signal the hypertextual reworking of his predecessor. On a second level, Milton's influence reveals itself in Thomson's altered style. Jung has stated that "*Summer*, more than any other season, represents a preference for Miltonic diction."⁸⁰ Similarly, Sambrook notes that "the language of *Summer* is more conspicuously Latinate than that of *Winter* . . . There is more of what an eighteenth-century reader would have recognized as Miltonic in the obsolete diction, inversion, dropping of prepositions, and transposition of parts of speech."⁸¹ Thomson's use of Miltonic diction can be identified in Thomson's reflection on the heavenly bodies and the cycle of the seasons:

⁷⁷ Anderson, 59.

⁷⁸ Griffin, *Regaining Paradise*, 187–8.

⁷⁹ John Milton, *Complete Shorter Poems*, ed. John Carey (Harlow: Pearson, 2007), "Il Penseroso," ll. 133 & 139.

⁸⁰ Jung, "Updating *Summer*," 80.

⁸¹ Sambrook, *James Thomson*, 51.

WITH what a perfect, World-revolving Power
 Were first th' unweildy Planets launch'd along
 Th' illimitable Void! thus to remain,
 Amid the Flux of many thousand Years,
 That oft has swept the busy Race of Men,
 And all their labour'd Monuments away,
 Unresting, changeless, matchless, in their Course;
 To Day, and Night, and the delightful Round
 Of Seasons, faithful; not excentric once:
 So pois'd, and perfect, is the vast Machine! (*Su* 1727: 21–30)

The first three lines are built around the inversion of “th’ unweildy Planets,” and the enjambment in line 23 places strong emphasis on “Th’ illimitable Void!” The succeeding lines elaborate on the subject of the previous clause, but the syntax is interrupted by the relative clause in lines 25–6, emphasising the eternal grandeur of the firmament’s movement. Thomson introduces another Miltonic inversion in lines 28–9 to stress the constancy of the annual cycle. The passage closes with an expression of admiration for the holistic perfection and harmony of the heavenly spheres. The passage is also distinctly Miltonic in its use of vocabulary. Words like “unweildy” and “Void” are drawn from *Paradise Lost*; both terms occur in Raphael’s account of the Creation.⁸² Likewise, words such as “revolving,” “illimitable,” “labour’d,” “Flux,” and “excentric” are derived from Latin and resemble the Latinate diction characterising Milton’s epic. Finally, the idea for the phrase “Race of Men” is drawn from *Paradise Lost*, a cosmic poem which explored the splendour of the Creation and the fall of God’s chosen kind.

Thomson infuses his epic modulation in *Summer* with distinctively Miltonic elements, thereby distinguishing the poem from his earlier *Winter*. While Thomson, in *Winter*, evoked Milton as an equal of Virgil and Homer to represent the epic tradition (*Wi* 1726: 290), he now consciously singles him out as his primary model. By aligning himself more closely with the legacy of his British predecessor, he signals that the key to understanding *Summer* lies in the way he hypertextually adapts Milton’s poetry. At a primary level, Thomson’s adoption of a more Miltonic diction can be aligned with his more pronounced hymnal praise of God. Thomson hypertextually reworks Adam and

⁸² John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Alastair Fowler (Harlow: Pearson, 2007), VII, ll. 233 & 409.

Eve's morning hymn in the fifth book of *Paradise Lost*, indicating that *Summer* should be conceived of as a cosmic poem of admiration on the Creation.⁸³

Thomson intertextually acknowledges Milton as his model at the beginning of *Summer*, when he retreats into the shaded grove and, lying down beside a "haunted Stream" (*Su* 1727: 12), "sing[s] the Glories of the circling Year" (*Su* 1727: 14). These lines echo the passage in *Paradise Lost* where the epic narrator wanders "where the Muses haunt / Cleer Spring, or shadie Grove."⁸⁴ Thomson not only resumes the ideal of poetic retirement in *Winter*, but also continues his incorporation, reinterpretation, and reworking of the literary past: the poet's solitary retreat from nature provides him with the opportunity to reflect upon and develop his poetics. The shade and the haunted stream symbolise the literary tradition in which Thomson wishes to position himself.

Having retreated into the shades and having invoked the spirit of his predecessors, the poet contemplates God's power in a state of enraptured meditation. More specifically, he explores the ways in which God sets everything in motion in a lengthy personification of the sun (*Su* 1727: 68–159). Thomson describes the effects of the "INFORMER of the planetary Train" (*Su* 1727: 94) on plants, fruits, and gems by means of an elaborate apostrophe, thus hailing the sun as a first embodiment of God's benign presence on earth.

Thomson's enthusiastic encomia on the celestial power of the sun quickly results in a questioning of the suitability of his poetic medium to represent the full glory of God. He asks himself: "How shall I then attempt to sing of Him, / Who, LIGHT HIMSELF, in uncreated Light, / Invested deep, dwells awfully retir'd / From mortal Eye, or Angel's purer Ken" (*Su* 1727: 160–4). Evoking Milton's dialogue between Adam and Rafael and the latter's advice "to recount almighty works / What words or tongue of seraph can suffice, / Or heart of man suffice to comprehend,"⁸⁵ Thomson recognises that the openly hymnal strain of his lines will not suffice to reveal the full extent of God's powers. Instead, he once again explains why nature is the most suitable subject to obtain his poetic goals:

And yet, was every faltering Tongue of Man,
ALMIGHTY POET! silent in thy Praise,

⁸³ Milton, *Paradise Lost*, V, ll. 153–208. Joseph Addison confirms the devotional character of the morning hymn: "Invocations of this nature fill the mind with glorious ideas of God's works, and awaken that divine enthusiasm, which is so natural to devotion" (Joseph Addison, *Critical Essays from The Spectator*, ed. Donald F. Bond (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 118).

⁸⁴ Milton, *Paradise Lost*, III, ll. 27–8.

⁸⁵ Milton, *Paradise Lost*, VII, ll. 112–4.

Thy matchless Works, in each exalted Line,
 And all the full, harmonic Universe,
 Would tuneful, or expressive, Thee attest,
 The Cause, the Glory, and the End of All!
 To Me be *Nature's* Volume, wide, display'd;
 And to peruse the broad, illumin'd Page,
 Or haply catching Inspiration thence,
 Some easy Passage, raptur'd, to translate,
 My sole Delight; as thro' the falling Glooms,
 Pensive, I muse, or, with the rising Day,
 On *Fancy's* Eagle-Wing, excursive, soar. (*Su* 1727: 170–82)

Even though the “faltering Tongue of Man” is unable to do justice to God’s divine powers, the poet recognises that nature, the world, and the entire universe “attest [to] / the Cause, the Glory, and the End of All!” Accepting the limitations of his human knowledge and capacity to comprehend the workings of God, he contents himself with an exploration of that which is readily available to him: nature, the “broad, illumin’d Page” of which is open for him to peruse and which allows him to explore the splendour and magnificence of God’s plan. The use of vocabulary in this passage (“awfully,” “matchless,” “exalted,” “raptur’d,” “Delight,” and “soar”) strongly confirms that Thomson intends to maintain the sublime mode that he had used in *Winter* and at the beginning of *Summer*. He adopts this mode in the early passages of natural description following his poetical reflections, when he focuses on the effects of “Tyrant *Heat*” (*Su* 1727: 191) on man and beast and the swarming activities of insects during summer.

In spite of achieving a state of enraptured receptiveness towards nature in the earlier retirement scene, the sublime force of summer is still too overwhelming and forces the poet to retreat once more. After a description of the “raging Noon” (*Su* 1727: 307), Thomson seeks shelter from the “PREVAILING Heat!” (*Su* 1727: 331) and finds refreshment in a shaded grove with an “adjoining Brook” (*Su* 1727: 367): “Welcome, ye Shades ! ye bowery Thickets hail! / Ye lofty Pines ! ye venerable Oaks! / With Ashes wild, resounding o’er the Steep!” (*Su* 1727: 356–8). The location, at first sight, seems to be conceptualised as a conventional *locus amoenus*. It provides the poet with “Shelter to the Soul” (*Su* 1727: 359) and functions as a suitable observation point for a contemplative exploration of nature in the Summer season. However, the trees casting their shadow over the retreat echo Milton’s “Il Penseroso”⁸⁶ and signify a departure from the classical

⁸⁶ “And shadows brown that Sylvan loves / Of pine, or monumental oak” (Milton, “Il Penseroso,” l. 135).

literary *topos*, as they are symbolically linked to druids, the legendary poet-priests of Britain's ancient Celtic past.

Thomson's meditative retreat hints at a distinctly more national conceptualisation of the role of his poetry. He assigns a central place to Milton within a British literary tradition, which dates back to a glorified pre-classical era in the country's history. The nationalistic aspect of this process should be understood within the context of the patriotic formation of a British identity in the eighteenth century. After the Act of Union, the ruling classes attempted to promote an image of Britain as unified by its Protestant religion and its burgeoning trade against the threat of a hostile, Catholic France.⁸⁷ Within this context, authors, painters, and musicians made "conscious attempt[s] to enshrine and glorify national culture,"⁸⁸ so as to reinforce the sense of national unity. The ancient bards, as "members of a shared national culture" and as "bearers of an illustrious national history," played a significant role in this fashioning of a British identity, as they provided a "new sense of history and collective identity."⁸⁹ Thomson distinguishes this nationally inspired tradition from the classical heritage and contends that the greatest British authors, with Milton as its chief exponent, can equal and even surpass their continental counterparts. By assigning cultural capital to, and at the same time engaging with, an indigenous literary tradition in his poem, Thomson attempts to attribute cultural significance to his generic experimentation and the literary interaction with his predecessors.

The suggestion of Thomson's engagement with a nationally defined literary tradition is made explicit in a further retreat of the poet and a more extensive reflective passage. Withdrawing even deeper into the shades of the trees, he "pierce[s] into the midnight Depth / Of yonder Grove" (*Su* 1727: 403–4) until "At every Step, / Solemn, and slow, the Shadows blacker fall, / And all is awful, silent Gloom around" (*Su* 1727: 406–8). The solemn and awful atmosphere of the grove provides the poet with an ideal opportunity for reflection:

⁸⁷ For a detailed consideration of the formation of a British identity in the eighteenth century, see Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837* (London: BCA, 1992). She especially confirms the importance of Protestantism: "Protestantism was the dominant component of British religious life. Protestantism coloured the way that Britons approached and interpreted their material life. Protestantism determined how most Britons viewed their politics. And an uncompromising Protestantism was the foundation on which their state was explicitly and unapologetically based" (Colley, 18).

⁸⁸ Colley, 85.

⁸⁹ Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 24.

THESE are the Haunts of Meditation, these
The Scenes where antient Bards th'inspiring Breath,
Extatic, felt; and, from this World retir'd,
Convers'd with Angels, and immortal Forms,
On heavenly Errands bent --- . . . (Su 1727: 409–13)

Thomson's retreat entails a conscious search for the inspiring legacy of the literary past. Not surprisingly, he uses the same vocabulary of poetic ecstasy as in the "high Converse" passage in *Winter*: suddenly overcome by "A sacred Terror, and severe Delight" (Su 1727: 428–9), the poet initiates another conversation with his literary predecessors, who "prompt the Poet, who, devoted, gives / His Muse to better Themes" (Su 1727: 418–9).

This conversation with the dead displays meaningful differences with the one encountered in *Winter*. Whereas Thomson reads about the illustrious deeds of the "Sages of ancient time" before the appearance of the apotheosised dead in *Winter* (Wi 1726: 260), in *Summer* he actively seeks out their inspirational presence. Furthermore, Thomson bestows a more active presence on the dead by endowing them with the faculty of speech, as opposed to the silent catalogue in *Winter*, where he reached back to the Greek and Roman figures of a glorified classical past by means of "The long-liv'd Volume" (Wi 1726: 264). In *Summer*, by contrast, Thomson retreats to a native English grove (which will later be contrasted with the geographical situation in the African deserts), where he aligns himself with the "antient Bards" (Su 1727: 410). The oblique references to druidic society are thus made explicit, as Thomson focuses on a national rather than a classical literary tradition. This focus corresponds with the eighteenth-century preoccupation with bardic culture. In the 1720s, the vision of the pastoral age as the golden age for which Virgil's *Georgics* had provided a model was endowed with an indigenously British civilising impulse, whereby Britain's political, economic, and cultural dominance was considered to stem from a bardic golden age. The main proponent of this bardic tradition was the sixteenth-century poet Edmund Spenser. E. M. W. Tillyard, commenting on *The Faerie Queene's* choric function, i.e., the way in which it reflects the "temper of the age," observes that this epic poem also contained imaginative perspectives that appealed to audiences beyond Spenser's time, especially its medieval dimension which proved particularly appealing because of its invocation of a glorious past.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Eustace Mandeville Wetenhall Tillyard, *The English Renaissance: Fact or Fiction?* (London: Hogarth Press, 1952), 86–7.

At a contextual level, this celebration of a bardic tradition should be read in the context of important literary-critical developments in the eighteenth century that Jonathan Brody Kramnick has identified. As a result of changing reading habits, the progressive narrative of an ever-improving modern English literature evolving away from “barbarized antique English writers” characterised by their “rough” versification, “impolite” diction, and “puerile” language, was gradually replaced by a narrative of decline mainly motivated by a nostalgia for the literary past.⁹¹ A devaluation of modern literature, which was caused by a marked increase in literary production and consumption, was accompanied by a revaluation of the older literary tradition, as “critics discover[ed] an abstruse, quasi-Latinate vernacular in older, canonical English” which was opposed to the conversational language of everyday life.⁹² This revaluation produced an inversion of the distinction between “ancient” and “modern” and promoted the inclusion of Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton into a narrative of high-cultural literary language.⁹³

This literary conceptualisation, which would eventually lead to the establishment of a cultural canon, was the result of an economical canon developed in the literary marketplace. The driving forces behind this canonising process were the printers and the booksellers who set “the not necessarily coherent new trends in literary production and historiography:”⁹⁴ as owners of the copyright to the works in print, they became the active agents in ensuring a literary work’s success in the marketplace through proper editorialising strategies and promotions. A work became part of the economical canon as it achieved popularity and was bought by a large number of consumers. Once its position in the marketplace had been established, its symbolic capital could be increased through literary adaptations and critical essays.⁹⁵ Thomson’s Miltonic conception of *Summer* can easily be fitted into this aesthetic revaluation of literature in the eighteenth century. Electing Milton as the most important of the “antient Bards,” Thomson highlights his predecessor’s poetic achievements and recognises him as a monolithic literary figure in the cultural canon of eighteenth-century England.

Thomson’s recognition of the importance of Milton’s poetry for English culture is displayed in *Summer*, when the poet returns from the shaded grove and proceeds towards “a pleasing Prospect . . . / Of Hills, and Vales, and Woods, and Lawns, and Spires

⁹¹ Jonathan Kramnick, *Making the English Canon: Print-Capitalism and the Cultural Past, 1700-1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 25.

⁹² Kramnick, 43.

⁹³ Kramnick, 43.

⁹⁴ Sandro Jung, “William Hymers and the Editing of William Collin’s Poems, 1765–1797,” *Modern Language Review* 106:2 (2011): 334.

⁹⁵ This canonisation would especially gain momentum in the latter part of the eighteenth century as a result of the abolition of perpetual copyright in 1774.

/ And Towns betwixt, and gilded Streams” (Su 1727: 494–6), whence he embarks upon a panegyric on Great Britain, “HAPPY BRITANNIA!” (Su 1727: 498).⁹⁶ This panegyric can roughly be divided into two parts: Thomson first bestows general praise on Britain, highlighting its richness, economic power, and virtuous inhabitants (Su 1727: 502–34), before focusing on a bipartite catalogue of famous English scientists and philosophers, on the one hand (Su 1727: 535–48), and English poets, on the other (Su 1727: 548–57). This catalogue is related to the “Converse” catalogue in *Winter*, the main difference being that the focus has shifted from classical exempla to native figures of renown. It demonstrates Thomson’s altered alignment with his literary models. After hailing Shakespeare as “Nature’s Boast” (Su 1727: 549), Thomson dedicates eight lines to Milton:

And every greatly amiable *Muse*
 Of elder Ages in thy *Milton* met!
 His was the Treasure of Two Thousand Years,
 Seldom indulg’d to Man, a God-like Mind,
 Unlimited, and various, as his Theme;
 Astonishing as *Chaos*; as the Bloom
 Of blowing *Eden* fair; soft as the Talk
 Of our *grand Parents*, and as *Heaven* sublime. (Su 1727: 550–7)

No longer flanked by his classical forebears, Milton represents the culminating figure of the epic genre, who amalgamated a generic tradition spanning over two thousand years. He is especially praised for his rendering of the sublime qualities of nature and the

⁹⁶ Extratextual, political conditions also induced Thomson introduce a national panegyric into *Summer*. In a letter to Mallet in August 1726, Thomson expressed his hope that the passage “may perhaps contribute to make my Poem popular. The English People are not a little vain of Themselves, and their Country” (Thomson, *Letters and Documents*, 48). Having established himself as a poet on the literary scene of eighteenth-century London with the publication of *Winter* in 1726, he sought the favour of distinguished literary patrons. Together with Mallet, he would enter into acquaintance with the Opposition circle surrounding Frederick, Prince of Wales. For more information concerning Thomson’s political life, see Sambrook, *James Thomson, passim*. For a consideration of the patriotic dimension of several passages in *The Seasons*, see Suvir Kaul, *Poems of Nation, Anthems of Empire: English Verse in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Charlottesville, VA: The University Press of Virginia, 2000), 131–82; Dustin, Griffin, *Patriotism and Poetry in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 74–97. Even though the search for patronage is an aspect which should certainly be taken into consideration, I will consider the ways in which the panegyric reflects developments in Thomson’s poetics.

cosmos, an aspect for which the epic poet was generally recognised by Thomson's contemporaries.⁹⁷

Thomson's descriptive poem represented an important intervention in eighteenth-century poetic diction because he did not simply imitate Milton's style; rather, he infused his predecessor's diction with the scientific language of natural philosophy. Natural philosophy had developed substantially, especially with the publication of Isaac Newton's *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* (1687) and his *Opticks* (1704). Arthos has identified the ways in which eighteenth-century poets drew on the scientific discourse to develop a stock diction, "a pretty well defined store of terms and figures as not merely the proper but the indispensable instrument of poetic expression."⁹⁸ This store was available to and commonly utilised for descriptive poetry, until it was discarded by the Romantic poets who rejected the need for a poetic diction distinct from everyday language. Arthos identifies some of the most common elements of this stock diction, several of which occur in *Summer*: an abundant use of epithets, many of which are adjectives formed by adding -y to the noun, e.g., "streaky East" (*Su* 1727: 36) and "mossy Cottage" (*Su* 1727: 51) or present participles, e.g., "the lessening Cloud" (*Su* 1727: 69) and "The Kindling Azure" (*Su* 1727: 70). Undoubtedly, the element most characteristic of eighteenth-century descriptive poetry was the distinct use of periphrasis, whereby "a thing is referred to by an adjective, and the adjective modifies a general term to form a phrase whereby a substitute is supplied for the name of the thing."⁹⁹ Thomson frequently uses periphrasis in his natural descriptions, especially to introduce catalogues. For example, he starts a catalogue of jewels with "the *lucid Stone*" (*Su* 1727: 129) and a catalogue of desert predators with "savage Race" (*Su* 1727: 669). This construction is used mainly for purposes of classification. As an introductory phrase to catalogues periphrasis functions as the main denominator under which to classify the listed objects or animals. In line 212, Thomson uses the phrase "the homely Fowls" to create a contrast with the free-roaming birds, the rook and the magpie, which he described in the preceding lines. This collection of common elements and phrases, which ultimately provided poets with a repertoire to draw from, bore a close relation with and was greatly influenced by the scientific language of natural philosophy. Periphrasis, in particular, was a device which was generally used as a method of

⁹⁷ Addison testifies to the eighteenth-century attitude towards Milton in his critical essay on the beauties of *Paradise Lost*. Labelling the epic as "the greatest production, or at least the noblest work of genius, in our language" (Addison, 109), he highlights its main merit: "Milton's chief talent, and indeed his distinguishing excellence, lies in the sublimity of his thoughts. There are others of the moderns who rival him in every other part of poetry; but in the greatness of his sentiments he triumphs over all the poets both modern and ancient." (Addison, 72)

⁹⁸ Arthos, 1.

⁹⁹ Arthos, 3.

classification. Scientific language also adhered more closely to poetic language, due to the fact that scientists were still raised in the humanist tradition. As a result, they were concerned with a proper style to convey their desire “to write pleasingly and gracefully.”¹⁰⁰ and often modelled their language on the poetic diction of classical authors, especially drawing extensively from didactic nature poems such as Lucretius’s *De Rerum Natura* and Virgil’s *Georgics*.

Thomson announces his appropriation of this stock diction and its central importance for the composition of his poetry in the first part of his bipartite catalogue of the British worthies (*Su* 1727: 535–48). Whereas the figures in the catalogues of *Winter* were mostly introduced to evoke a glorified, heroic past, the characters in *Summer* belong to a more recent philosophy-inspired period. Britannia, according to Thomson, only achieved her political, economic, and cultural prominence through the benign influence of philosophy, proof of which is present in characters such as Francis Bacon (*Su* 1727: 535), Thomas More (*Su* 1727: 535), Robert Boyle (*Su* 1727: 542), and Isaac Newton (*Su* 1727: 547). Thomson carefully establishes a catalogue of national worthies and endows Britain with a vision of her own more modern past, filled with illustrious figures that can vie “with the noblest Names / Of ancient Times, or Patriot, or Sage” (*Su* 1727: 536–7).

The merging of the scientific-philosophical discourse with Milton’s epic-sublime mode should be interpreted within the context of Thomson’s objective to provide detailed nature descriptions in order to display and praise God’s universal powers. Thomson’s description of the summer season in the torrid zones is clearly composed according to these poetical conventions. After the contemplation of the positive effects of the temperate climate on his native soil and the hypertextual configuration of his poetry, Thomson is fully prepared to expand the boundaries of his natural descriptions as he turns his eye to “The various Summer-Horrors, which infest / Kingdoms that scorch below severer Suns” (*Su* 1727: 614–615). The description of a forest fire provides a suitable example of Thomson’s poetical discourse:

And oft amid their aromatic Groves,
Touch’d by the Torch of Noon, the gummy Bark,
Smouldering, begins to roll the dusky Wreath.
Instant, so swift the ruddy Ruin spreads,
A Cloud of Incense shadows all the Land;
And, o’er a thousand, thundering Trees, at once,
Riots, with lawless Rage, the running Blaze:

¹⁰⁰ Arthos, 44.

But chiefly, if fomenting Winds assist,
And, doubling, blend the circulating Waves
Of Flame tempestuous, or, directly on,
Far-streaming, drives Them thro' the Forest's Length. (Su 1727: 631–41)

The spontaneous combustion of the trees after a long drought and the rapid spread of the fire take on sublime proportions through the use of “Torch of Noon,” “the ruddy Ruin spreads,” “lawless Rage,” “the running Blaze,” and “Flame tempestuous.” At the same time, Thomson introduces a variety of epithets (“gummy,” “dusky,” “ruddy,” “fomenting,” and “Far-streaming”) to enhance the accuracy of his descriptions. As a result, Thomson succeeds in producing a mimetic representation of nature, all the while foregrounding the sublime and unfathomable vastness of God’s power.

The central importance of natural philosophy to Thomson’s poetic diction is explicitly acknowledged at the end of *Summer*. Shortly before he addresses the deified personification Philosophy herself, the poet describes the different reactions of the common man and the philosophical man to the sight of a meteor storm:

From Eye to Eye, contagious, thro' the Crowd,
The *Pannic* runs, and into wonderous Shapes
Th'Appearance throws:
...
As the mad People scan the fancy'd Scene,
On all Sides swells the superstitious Din,
...
Not so the Man of *Philosophic* Eye,
And Inspect sage, *the waving Brightness*, He,
Curious surveys, inquisitive to know
The Causes, and Materials, yet unfix'd,
Of this Appearance beautiful, and new. (Su 1727: 1051–3, 1058–9, 1071–5)

The poet establishes a stark contrast between the superstitious common man who panics at the sight of the storm and interprets it as an omen of ill tidings and the philosophically endowed learned man who curiously observes nature in its awe-inspiring form and attempts to discover the origins and the causes behind the perceived phenomena. While once again confirming the importance of the process of internalisation in his descriptive poetry, he distinguishes the process in *Summer* from

that developed in *Winter*. Whereas Thomson at the conclusion of his first poem urges “Ye vain *Learned*” (*Wi* 1726: 386) to trust in God’s higher plan and to “adore that *Power*, / And *Goodness*, oft arraign’d” (*Wi* 1726: 387–8), he adopts a more positive attitude towards the power of reason in his praise of Philosophy:

TUTOR’D by *Thee*, hence POETRY exalts
Her Voice to Ages, and informs the Page
With Music, Image, Sentiment, and Thought,
Never to die! the Treasure of Mankind,
Their highest Honour, and their truest Joy! (*Su* 1727: 1099–103)

At a literary level, Thomson indicates that natural philosophy is essential for the development of this new genre of descriptive poetry. Not only does it serve as the primary tool to engage productively with and emulate literary predecessors, it also represents an “Effusive Source of Evidence, and Truth” (*Su* 1727: 1078) to explore “that *round Complex* / Of never-ceasing Wonders, to conceive / Of the Sole Being right” (*Su* 1727: 1128–30). The poet indicates how he conceives of his poem as a testimony to the God’s divine power and truth.

Similar to *Winter*, *Summer* underwent significant changes in the course of the revision process, which continued until 1746. The poem was significantly expanded from 1146 lines in 1727 to a total of 1805 lines in 1746. The sublime-devotional poetics of the poem was significantly reduced. The later variant of *Summer* not only featured more moral-political reflections and popular sentimental narratives, such as the interpolated episode of Damon and Musidora, but the passages of natural description were usually expanded and the proportion of sublime vocabulary decreases significantly. The description of the African desert lands, for instance, which consisted of only 119 lines in 1727, received a more central position in the poem in the 1746 version as it was expanded to 473 lines. Thomson added fruit and animal catalogues, as well as descriptions of a sandstorm and a typhoon, which resembled a pure scientific description rather than an evocation of the destructive potential of these natural phenomena.

The revisions and additions to the catalogue of British worthies also confirm the developments in Thomson’s poetics. The original catalogue of notable natural philosophers who had advanced human knowledge and represented the scientific

discourse which Thomson aimed to incorporate in his poetic diction is substantially politicised by 1746. The addition of such figures as King Alfred,¹⁰¹ Walter Raleigh (“Su” 1746: 1499), and John Hampden (“Su” 1746: 1514) clearly carries patriotic implications in line with Thomson’s political affiliation with Prince Frederick’s opposition court: King Alfred, hailed as “the best of *Kings*” (“Su” 1746: 1483), appears as the role model for every benign sovereign; Raleigh and Hampden are both evoked as paragons of patriotic virtue, especially because of their challenge to absolute monarchy. Thomson likewise presents More and Bacon for moral-political reasons in the later variant: the former is praised for the zeal with which he “Withstood a brutal Tyrant’s useful Rage” (“Su” 1746: 1490) and the latter for upholding his virtue “thro’ the smooth Barbarity of Courts” (“Su” 1746: 1537). Moreover, Thomson links these figures with characters from classical history, thus abandoning the distinctly British orientation of the original. More is compared to the steadfast and austere politicians Cato, Aristides and Cincinnatus (“Su” 1746: 1491–2); Bacon is said to possess and combine the qualities of Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero (“Su” 1746: 1542); one of the notables is even simply hailed as “the BRITISH CASSIUS” (“Su” 1746: 1528). Consequently, the main purpose of the catalogue is no longer to ground the poem within a British tradition; rather, it serves to establish “a pantheon of English patriotism, liberty, enlightenment, and humanity,”¹⁰² comparable to and equalling that of Classical Antiquity.

The changes to Thomson’s poetics and the overall development of his poem are also visible in his reworking of one of the passages of meditative reflection discussed earlier in this chapter. The later variant of Thomson’s recognition of the ways in which nature attests to God’s glory (*Su* 1727 170–5) reads:

And yet, was every faltering Tongue of Man,
 ALMIGHTY FATHER! silent in thy Praise,
 Thy Works themselves would raise a general Voice,
 Even in the Depth of Solitary Woods,
 By human Foot untrod, proclaim thy Power,
 And to the Quire celestial THEE resound,
 Th’eternal Cause, Support, and End of all! (“Su” 1746: 185–91)

¹⁰¹ Thomson 1981, “Summer,” l. 1479. Line references for all subsequent citations are given in the text and are indicated with “Su” 1746.

¹⁰² Thomson 1981, 359.

The dropping of “matchless,” “exalted,” and “Glory” substantially decreases the sublime quality of the passage. While in 1727, the poet attempted to convince the reader that even the seemingly destructive elements in nature were part of a divine harmony ordained by God, the focus in 1746 is more on the ways in which all natural phenomena join in one song to their Creator. Even though this element was already present in the first edition of *Summer*, it was only centrally foregrounded in the later variants as Thomson aimed to achieve what Cohen has termed an “associative unity” between the generically distinct parts of *The Seasons*.¹⁰³

Summer, in spite of its continuation of *Winter*’s alternation between passages of external description and internal reflection, signified a new stage of development in Thomson’s earliest poetics. Selecting *Paradise Lost* as the primary model and hypotext for the composition, structure, and interpretation of his own poem, he imbued his scientific nature descriptions with a Miltonic epic modulation so as to attempt to produce a new genre of poetry. Havens confirms the success of Thomson’s poetic formula: “It showed how real nature could be dealt with effectively in poetry, and how blank verse could be successfully devoted to the treatment of everyday subjects; but it did both by virtue of its popularity, by being enjoyed by all, the people as well as the poets.”¹⁰⁴

1.3 *A Poem Sacred to the Memory of Sir Isaac Newton* (1727) and the Incorporation of the Philosophic-Scientific Discourse in Thomson’s Developing Poetics

The philosophic-scientific discourse, which had become an integral part of the process of hypertextual composition of *Summer*, became increasingly more prominent in Thomson’s developing poetics. In May 1727, three months after the publication of *Summer*, the poet produced *A Poem Sacred to the Memory of Sir Isaac Newton*. In this panegyric poem, Thomson further explored the relationship between science and descriptive poetry. Carson Bergstrom, who has recently investigated the poet’s revision process in relation to his *Newton*, confirms that “it clarifies Thomson’s stance towards

¹⁰³ Cohen, *Unfolding*, 93.

¹⁰⁴ Havens, 124.

nature and science, science and poetry, poetry and society.”¹⁰⁵ It is also around this time that the copies of the fifth edition of *Winter* no longer included the “Preface.” Whereas Thomson at the beginning of his career deemed it necessary to argue explicitly for a revival of poetry and to defend its value as a medium of socio-cultural instruction able “to please, instruct, surprise, and astonish” in his “Preface,”¹⁰⁶ *Newton* represented an active implementation of the governing principles of, and the function he envisaged for, his poetry.

Rather than composing a poem of reflective lamentation on the death of the illustrious natural philosopher, Thomson conceives of *Newton* as a celebratory poem.¹⁰⁷ Explaining that other “Tombs . . . claim the tender Tear, / And Elegiac Song,”¹⁰⁸ he announces that “NEWTON calls / For other Notes of Gratulation high” (*Newton*: 188–9). Nature’s song, which in *Summer* was devoted to a praise of God, is temporarily redirected to celebrate Newton’s “Arrival on the Coasts of Bliss” (*Newton*: 7). Thomson revisits the theme of adding his voice to the communal song of the natural elements, by joining “Nature’s general Sympathy” (*Newton*: 11) in commemoration of Newton and his scientific achievements. The largest part of the poem is dedicated to a description of Newton’s discoveries and natural theories, such as the laws of planetary motion and universal gravitation developed in his *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* (“by the mingling Power / Of Gravitation and Projection” [*Newton*: 40–1]) and the discovery of the refraction of light into the colours of the spectrum as a result of his experiments with prisms, which were published in his *Opticks* (“his brighter Mind / Untwisted all the shining Robe of Day” and “educ’d the gorgeous Train / Of Parent-Colours” [*Newton*: 99–100, 103–4]). Praised for the ways in which he “trace[d] the boundless Hand of PROVIDENCE, / Wide-working thro’ this universal Frame” (*Newton*: 15–6), the scientist is hailed as the epitome of the philosophically enlightened man who gains insight into the mysterious workings of the universe as ordained by God. Characterised as Britain’s “Philosophic Sun” (*Newton*: 92), an obvious pun on Newton’s substantiation of the heliocentric model, he symbolises the knowledge which can save mankind from the shadows of ignorance by means of “the awakening Force / Of Truth” (*Newton*: 89–90).

¹⁰⁵ Carson Bergstrom, “James Thomson’s *A Poem Sacred to the Memory of Sir Isaac Newton* and the Revisions to *The Seasons*: New Science and Poetics in the Eighteenth Century,” in *Experiments in Genre in Eighteenth-Century Literature*, ed. Sandro Jung (Ghent: Academia Press, 2011), 40.

¹⁰⁶ Thomson 1981, 304.

¹⁰⁷ The poem was only one of many celebrations of Newton as an iconic figure in English history and, like *The Seasons* in 1730, contributed to the popular diffusion of Newton’s natural philosophy. Philip Connell, “Newtonian Physico-Theology and the Varieties of Whiggism in James Thomson’s *The Seasons*,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 72:1 (2009): 2.

¹⁰⁸ James Thomson, *A Poem Sacred to the Memory of Sir Isaac Newton* (London: John Millan, 1727), ll. 187–8. Line references for all subsequent citations are given in the text and are indicated with *Newton*.

Thomson's poem not merely represents a celebration of the insights which Newton passed on to his contemporaries, but also provides the poet with an opportunity to explore the ways in which Newton's works can be utilised to enhance his nature descriptions. Reintroducing the setting of a philosophical retreat of *Summer*, Thomson initiates a reflection on his earlier poetics and his approach towards the literary tradition:

Did ever Poet image ought so fair,
Dreaming in whispering Groves, by the hoarse Brook!
Or Prophet, to whose Rapture Heaven descends! (*Newton*: 121–3)

He comments on the suitability of his literary predecessors as models for his descriptive poetry. Both classical poetry, as represented by the “whispering Groves” and biblical poetry, characterised by its religious “Rapture,” are found lacking as a medium to explore the intricate designs of nature. Science and natural philosophy, by contrast, offer a repertoire of textual devices which facilitates a proper examination of nature. Thomson concludes his poem with an apostrophe to Newton. He petitions the scientist to “look with Pity down / On Humankind, a frail, erroneous Race!” (*Newton*: 201–2) and transforms him into a Genius (*Newton*: 205), a source of inspiration not only for his country, but also, by extension, to Thomson's own poetry. Newton becomes the modern counterpart to the prophetic, literary bards of the past and a new model for the poet.

In spite of the panegyric mode of the poem, Thomson does not develop *Newton* into an expression of unequivocal belief in scientific progressivism and sets a clear limit to the remit of natural philosophy. He stresses that Newton, admitted “into TH' ALMIGHTY'S Councils” and “allow'd to scan / The rising, moving, wide-establish'd Frame” (*Newton*: 73–5), had only managed to achieve such a high level of insight because God had granted him the necessary skills to unveil the mysteries of the universe and to become “the lonely *Monarch* . . . of Science” (*Newton*: 142–3). “Even when Thomson grounds true knowledge in the scientific method and in the laws of nature as Newton employed them, his hierarchy of worlds end with God, with Nature the mediating reality between man and God.”¹⁰⁹ By analogy, Thomson imposes the same limitations on his descriptive poetry: it is of vital importance for the poet “to see the limits of knowledge and of art and to accept his place in the universal scheme.”¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Bergstrom, 49.

¹¹⁰ Bergstrom, 50.

Newton highlights a key component of the hypertextual conflation of genres in Thomson's poetry, a component which would become more important to the overall design of *The Seasons*. Reassessing the role of his literary predecessors, he attributes a higher importance to the philosophic-scientific discourse for a mimetic representation of nature in all its forms. Abandoning his predecessors' abstract and symbolic representations of nature, Thomson attempts to achieve mimesis in his poetry: the aim is to imitate the variety of external nature and the ways in which it reflects the harmony of the world as ordained by the divine Creator. In this manner, *Newton* represents a shift in the "ceaseless process of textual development and mutation" of Thomson's descriptive poetry. The "[realisation] that "a 'Revival of Poetry' would only ever occur if poetry was rooted in the real experience and study of nature,"¹¹¹ resulted in a more central role of scientific discourse in Thomson's generic experimentation. The mimetic representation of nature became the main rhetorical strategy to stir readers' imagination towards a celebration of God's power.

That Thomson at this stage in his career was still preoccupied with the demarcation of the constituent elements of his descriptive poetry is suggested by the subscription proposals for the quarto edition of *The Seasons*. Issued from the beginning of 1728 onwards and included in copies of the first edition of *Spring*, the proposal not only announced the inclusion of the four seasons, the hymn, and *Newton*, but also of "an Essay on Descriptive Poetry."¹¹² The essay never materialised.¹¹³ As his plan for *The Seasons* took shape and as the ideational complexity of the poem increased over the following two years, Thomson developed a more amorphous structure and generic heterogeneity in his poetry, as indicated by a detailed examination of *Spring* (1728) and *Autumn* (1730).

¹¹¹ Bergstrom, 42.

¹¹² "Proposals for Printing by Subscription The Four Seasons," in *Spring*, by James Thomson (London: Andrew Millar, 1728).

¹¹³ This in spite of the fact that the essay was still included in the assignment of copyright to Millan, which was drawn up on 18 July 1729 (Thomson, *Letters and Documents*, 64).

1.4 Thomson's Generic Experimentation with the Georgic and the Hymnal Modes in *Spring* (1728) and *Autumn* (1730)

Unlike *Winter* and *Summer*, *Spring* and *Autumn* were originally never intended for individual publication. The concluding note to the subscription proposal to *The Seasons* reads: "N. B. The Pieces already published, viz. Winter, Summer, and a Poem on the Death of Sir Isaac Newton, will be corrected and enlarged in several places."¹¹⁴ After the success of the early poems, Thomson and his publishers had anticipated a steady number of subscriptions for the quarto edition of the poem, but the publication of *Spring* suggests that subscriptions were only coming in slowly.¹¹⁵ The original plan to immediately include *Spring* and *Autumn* in the collected edition suggests that both poems, in terms of their generic composition, would utilise the same textual strategies that were to become prevalent in *The Seasons* in general. The marked decrease in passages of contemplative retreat indicates that the poet had developed a satisfactory notion of his descriptive poetry. An analysis of the discursive passages in *Spring* and *Autumn* reveals that, even though both poems were developed from a distinct ideational nucleus, they displayed the complex generic hybridity that would characterise the 1730 variant of *The Seasons*, the complexity of which would increase even more in the course of the revision process up to 1746.

In May 1728, *The Present State of the Republick of Letters* announced the publication of *Spring* and opened with a brief appreciation of Thomson's poetic style:

Mr. Thomson, the ingenious Author of the admired Poems *Winter* and *Summer*, and that upon Sir Isaac Newton's death, is now publishing *The Spring*. This gentleman excels in the real sublime, in a strength and justness both of thought and expression, in such beautiful, natural, and affecting descriptions, as are rarely to be met with in any of our Countrymen since Shakespear and Milton. But the judicious and well-placed reflexions of piety, virtue and humanity which run through his works, are the strongest recommendations of them to me, and ought to be so to all. Without these, poetry of any kind is but an idle and a fruitless amusement, whereas the true design of it should be

¹¹⁴ Thomson, "Proposals."

¹¹⁵ Consumers' hesitance to subscribe to an edition of *The Seasons* may have been due to the fact that the full price of one guinea had to be paid at subscription (Sambrook, *James Thomson*, 78). Thomson's complaints about the practice of subscription in a letter to Mallet likewise suggest that the poet was worried about the number of subscriptions (Thomson, *Letters and Documents*, 65).

To wake the Soul by tender strokes of art,
To raise the genius, and to mend the heart.

This is what Mr. Thomson aims at more than any of our modern Poets, and succeeds in it very happily.¹¹⁶

The advertisement demonstrates a shift in readers' approaches to Thomson's work when compared to the initial reviews of *Winter* in 1726. The sublime quality of his lines, even though still acknowledged and considered alongside his talent for natural description, becomes secondary to his moral-philosophical reflections and sentimental scenes. This assessment demonstrates the passages for which *The Seasons* would increasingly be commended and which Thomson would try to capitalise on by appealing to changing fashions.¹¹⁷ The preference of morality and sentimentality over the devotional sublime reveals that Thomson's poetry would be informed by additional impulses apart from his objective to convince the reader to praise God's glory.

Compared to *Winter* and *Summer*, *Spring* was by far the most openly Georgic poem. Thomson reveals his indebtedness to "the *Rural Maro*" (*Sp* 1728: 55) and signals that his hypertextual engagement with Virgil's *Georgics* is one of the main structural premises in the poem, the epic being the primary premise for the previous poems. Chalker has explored the ways in which Thomson reworks various themes from Virgil's poem in his *The Seasons*.¹¹⁸ Many of the recurrent themes identified by Chalker appear in *Spring*. The poet expands on, and adopts an ambivalent attitude towards, the contrast between an idealised Golden Age and a civilised Iron Age (*Sp* 1728: 259–361); he depicts "laborious Man" (*Sp* 1728: 48) as he takes measures to protect his orchards and fields from the pernicious assaults of insects and other animals (*Sp* 1728: 118–35); he adopts Virgil's patriotic strain when praising the way in which industrious labour engendered a flourishing of British economy (*Sp* 1728: 65–75, 787–94); he describes the effect of love on animals (*Sp* 1728: 534–776).

Just like in *Winter* and *Summer*, Thomson's hypertextual engagement with the literary tradition in *Spring* extends well beyond the reworking of themes from the hypotext, since the Virgilian pretext features centrally in his generic experimentation. Cohen

¹¹⁶ *The Republick of Letters*, May 1728, 430.

¹¹⁷ The changes in the appreciation of specific passages is confirmed by the excerpts printed in the advertisement, which were bound to charm the reader and inspire "the tenderest emotions in his breast" (*The Republick of Letters*, 431): descriptions of the passion of the groves and of man's harsh dominion over animals (Thomson, *Spring*, ll. 567–84 & 385–419). Line references for all subsequent citations are given in the text and are indicated with *Sp* 1728).

¹¹⁸ Chalker, 90–140.

confirms that the *Georgics* serves as “[Thomson’s] authority for combining various genres and fragments into a unity.”¹¹⁹ The passages of Georgic instruction and natural description in *Spring* alternate with passages of hymnal celebration of God as he manifests himself in nature. Jung has examined the ways in which “the speaker’s subjective discursive invocations of various entities and descriptions represent the lyrical and epic elements inherent in the hymnal ode.”¹²⁰ By way of relief from the descriptive passages, Thomson introduces apostrophes to establish a rapport with, and to achieve an active involvement of, the reader. Early in the poem, Thomson addresses “YE generous *Britons*” and urges them to “cultivate the Plow” (*Sp* 1728: 65) so as to be able to partake of Nature’s fruitful bounty for the benefits of their empire.

The most prominent apostrophes in *Spring* are preoccupied with a celebration of God’s pervasive influence on the season. At the end of a catalogue of flowers, Thomson’s imagination is fired by the “Infinite Numbers, Delicacies, Smells” (*Sp* 1728: 505) and “The Breath of *Nature*, and her endless Bloom” (*Sp* 1728: 507), as a result of which he launches into an enthusiastic address to God:

HAIL, Mighty Being! Universal Soul
Of Heaven and Earth! Essential Presence, hail!
To Thee I bend the Knee, to Thee my Thoughts
Continual Climb, who, with a Master-Hand,
Hast the great Whole into Perfection touch’d. (*Sp* 1728: 508–12)

Acknowledging God’s creative power, the poet proclaims his submission and reiterates his aim to commit his poetry of natural description to an exploration of the divine order in the universe. He applies a similar strategy after his description of love among animals and before exploring the effects of love on man, designating “Inspiring GOD! who boundless Spirit all, / And unremitting Energy, pervades, / Subsists, adjusts, and agitates the Whole” (*Sp* 1728: 799–801) as the source of love pervading all aspects of nature. By introducing an apostrophe between two descriptive passages, Thomson temporarily interrupts the sequence of descriptive passages to avoid monotony and triggers the readers’ attention by providing them with an opportunity for contemplation. The explicit passages of contemplative retreat on the part of the poet’s speaker in *Winter* and *Summer* are replaced by discursive invocations which invite the

¹¹⁹ Cohen, *Unfolding*, 243.

¹²⁰ Jung, “The Blending of Genres,” 152.

reader to actively participate in a reflection on the manifestation of God's glory in nature.

An important difference between *Spring* and Thomson's earlier poems is that the moments of meditation on nature occur within the natural landscape. In *Winter* and *Summer*, the sublime potential of the seasons induced the poet-speaker to seek shelter from the harmful natural elements. The temperate climate of spring, by contrast, is significantly milder to the senses and the imagination of the poet, who can now wander around in the landscape to soak in and describe the wonders of nature:

But who would hold the Shade, while *Heaven* descends
In universal Bounty, shedding Herbs,
And Fruits, and Flowers, on *Nature's* ample Lap?
Imagination fir's prevents their Growth,
And while the verdant Nutriment distils,
Beholds the kindling Country colour round. (*Sp* 1728: 205–10)

Rejecting the need for solitary retreat, Thomson expresses a desire to immerse himself in the splendour of nature, which provides ample sights to stir the imagination and to inspire the reader to a consideration of God's force of creation. Thomson had already announced the milder quality of the season in his prose dedication to the Countess of Hertford: "I have attempted, in the following Poem, to paint some of the most tender Beauties, and delicate Appearances of Nature."¹²¹ Sambrook confirms the difference between *Spring* and Thomson's previous poems: "Though there are references to tempests, insect-blight, and the self-induced miseries of pining or jealous lovers, and though the mythical-historical account of the Golden Age draws attention to the modern Iron Age, *Spring* is to a far greater extent than *Winter* and *Summer* a representation of joy, kindness, harmony, and beauty in external and human nature."¹²² *Spring* thus represents a hymnal celebration of the pervasive power of God's love, as it is exhibited in the revitalisation of nature and the revival of love among animals and men.

¹²¹ James Thomson, dedication in Thomson, *Spring*, no pagination.

¹²² Sambrook, *James Thomson*, 70.

Autumn, the final part of *The Seasons*, was immediately included in the 1730 quarto edition of the poem, even though it was also published individually. Because of its publication as an integral part of Thomson's complete long poem and because it was the poem which was least affected by the revision process,¹²³ scholars have not examined *Autumn* within the context of Thomson's developing notions of his poetry of natural description. In this section of the chapter, I will analyse the fourth part of *The Seasons* as an individual poem to indicate the ways in which *Autumn* was clearly conceived as the concluding part of Thomson's project and how it was composed in accordance with the poetic principles of the 1730 variant of *The Seasons*.

Even more explicitly than in *Spring*, Thomson signals the central importance of the Georgic mode for the structural composition of his poetry. In an extensive reworking of Virgil's "O fortunatos" passage,¹²⁴ the poet explores the main advantages of a life in the countryside, away from the corrupting influence of the bustling city life.¹²⁵ Even though he retains the core of Virgil's original by expressing strong disapproval of the "public rage" of urban hypocrisy (*Au* 1730: 1137) and the "hollow moments" of a luxurious life (*Au* 1730: 1157) in favour of "the pure pleasures of the *rural life*" (*Au* 1730: 1139), characterised by "simple truth" and "plain innocence" (*Au* 1730: 1174) of "primæval ages, incorrupt, / When God himself, and Angels dwelt with men!" (*Au* 1730: 1252-3), Thomson adds an important new dimension to the poetic promotion of a secluded countryside life. Whereas Virgil depicts an idealised, carefree version of the primitive existence of farmers, Thomson represents the merits of countryside retirement for the philosophically enlightened man.¹²⁶ This passage in *Autumn* serves as an explicit demonstration that a retreat to nature provides the ideal context for a close observation of nature. He relates how the poet-philosopher, "from the world escap'd, / In still retreats, and flowery solitudes" (*Au* 1730: 1206-7):

To Nature's voice attends, from day to day,
And month to month, thro' the revolving Year,

¹²³ *Autumn* consisted of 1275 lines in 1730. In the 1746 edition of *The Seasons*, it was expanded to a total of 1373 lines. The most substantial changes were an update of the theory on the origins of rivers and a description of the landscape garden at Stowe (Thomson 1981, "Autumn," ll. 756-835 & 1037-81).

¹²⁴ Vergilius, *Georgica* II, ll. 458-540.

¹²⁵ James Thomson, *Autumn. A Poem* (London: John Millan, 1730), ll. 1136-253. Line references for all subsequent citations are given in the text and are indicated with *Au* 1730.

¹²⁶ Thomson reiterates his views on the benefits of a rural retreat in a letter, dated October 27, 1730: "Happy he! who can comfort himself amidst this general night; and in some rural retirement, by his own intellectual fire and candle as well as natural, may cultivate the muses, enlarge his internal views, harmonize his passions, and let his heart hear the voice of peace and nature" (Thomson, *Letters and Documents*, 76).

Admiring, sees her in every shape:
Feels all her fine emotions at his heart;
Takes what she liberal gives, nor thinks of more. (Au 1730: 1208–12)

It is in the natural landscape, with all its rich hues and various shapes, that “imagination roams; / Or truth, divinely breaking on his mind” (Au 1730: 1237–8). Thomson, once again, confirms that nature should be the central focus and the main source of inspiration for the descriptive poet.

Thomson’s hypertextual engagement with the Georgic tradition not only allows the poet to define the instructive purposes of his descriptive poetry, but the ways in which the Georgic mode provides the structural framework to develop a generic hybridity in his poem. *Autumn*, even more than the earlier poems, functions as a platform for generic cross-fertilisation. Apart from the Georgic mode as utilised in the scientific description of the origin of rivers (Au 1730: 731–79) and the panegyric on industry and commerce and their benefits for British society (Au 1730: 43–162), Thomson introduces sentimental passages of moral instruction such as the episode of Palemon and Lavinia (Au 1730: 189–312) and a description of hunting activities (Au 1730: 362–502), which culminates in the tragic death of a stag assaulted by a pack of dogs (Au 1730: 428–59). He also continues to utilise the generic pattern of the hymnal ode by alternating between descriptive passages and apostrophes to ensure a continued involvement of the reader. Thomson opens his prospect scene of George Bubb Dodington’s estate with an apostrophe to the baron himself (Au 1730: 646–61), which transitions into a reflection on the relationship between nature and poetry, as he “meditate[s] the book / Of *Nature*, ever-open; aiming thence, / Hearth-taught like thine, to learn the moral song” (Au 1730: 661–5).

In spite of the generic similarities of *Autumn* and *Spring*, Thomson considerably tempers the enraptured hymnal strain of the latter in favour of a more melancholy contemplation of nature. Whereas the joyful descriptions of the spontaneous rebirth of nature in *Spring* stimulated the poet’s imagination to consider the ways in which the season displayed the benign effects of God’s omnipresence, the scenes which develop before his eyes in *Autumn* represent nature in all its fertility and maturity. “The blushing orchard shakes” with heaps of fruits as “a various spirit, fresh, delicious, keen, dwells in their gelid pores” (Au 1730: 634–5); Dodington’s estate presents a “boundless prospect, yonder shagg’d with wood; / Here rich with harvest, and there with white flocks” (Au 1730: 652–3). At the same time, however, the season also shows early signs of decline in anticipation of the approaching winter. *Autumn* transforms into “the pale, descending year” (Au 1730: 933), as “The fading, many-colour’d woods, Shade deepening over shade, the country round / Imbrown” (Au 1730: 899–900), “Fled is the blasted

verdure of the fields” (Au 1730: 943), and “the flowery race / Their sunny robes resign” (Au 1730: 944–5).

The fading bloom of nature triggers another moment of reflective meditation. Inspired by “the desolated prospect” of “the woods, fields, gardens, [and] orchards” (Au 1730: 947–8), the poet senses the approaching “*Power / Of philosophic Melancholy*” (Au 1730: 949–50):

His near approach the sudden-starting tear,
The glowing cheek, the mild dejected air,
The soften’d feature, and the beating heart,
Pierc’d deep with many a secret pang, declare.
O’er all his soul his sacred influence breathes;
In all the bosom triumphs, all the nerves;
Inflames imagination; thro’ the sense
Infuses every tenderness; and far
Beyond dim earth exalts the swelling thought. (Au 1730: 951–9)

The passage represents a recurrence of the sublime poetics of *Winter* and *Summer*, where the impressions of nature transported the poet to an emotive ecstasy. The effects of a personified melancholy on the poet’s state of mind are borne out in the physical responses of a rising blush, a spontaneous eruption of tears, and an increased heartbeat, after which he explores how Melancholy arouses “the mind’s creative eye” with “Ten thousand thousand fleet ideas” (Au 1730: 960–2).

Thomson’s deliberate return to the hypertextual strategies of his earliest poems is confirmed by the fact that this section, as well as the subsequent passages, are adaptations of lines that were transferred from the first editions of *Winter* and *Summer*. After a description of the effects of melancholy on the poet’s imagination, Thomson suddenly reintroduces the element of hypertextual engagement with the literary past in moments of reflective retirement:

Oh bear me then to vast, embowering shades!
To twilight groves, and visionary vales!
To weeping grottoes, and prophetic glooms!
Where angel-forms athwart the solemn dusk,
Tremendous sweep, or seem to sweep along;
And voices more than human, thro’ the void
Deep-sounding, seize th’enthusiastic ear. (976–82)

The passage is reminiscent of Thomson's solitary retreat in *Summer*, as apparent from the many hypotextual transpositions. Thomson not only adopts the same vocabulary—"Shadows" (*Su* 1727: 407), "embowering" (*Su* 1727: 405), "Grove" (*Su* 1727: 404), "visionary" (*Su* 1727: 451), "Gloom" (*Su* 1727: 408), "Angels" and "Forms" (*Su* 1727: 412) "Dusk" (*Su* 1727: 426), "Voices" (*Su* 1727: 447), "Ear" (*Su* 1727: 430)—but also refers to the dialogue with the inspiring spirits inhabiting the "Haunts of Meditation" (*Su* 1727: 409).

Thomson's reintroduction of earlier generic modes of natural description complicates the linear development of Thomson's poetics. The poet's confrontation with the transience of life and the resulting realisation of the limits to his understanding of the innate order of the natural landscape prompt him to reaffirm the importance of the application of the textual strategies of his literary models to compensate for the fact that "the imagination, no matter how powerful or soaring, must fail before nature's complexity because the task of reproducing a complete scene from nature lies beyond its power."¹²⁷

Through the re-employment of the processes of hypotextual composition developed at the beginning of his career, Thomson brings the conflation of genres in his descriptive poem full circle. The reincorporation of the sublime poetics of *Winter* and *Summer* confirms the complex hybridity of his poetry, which Thomson attempted to achieve in *Autumn* and, by extension, in *The Seasons* by means of a far-reaching synthesis of literary traditions. That Thomson conceived of *Autumn* as the concluding part of his long poem and as the culmination and consolidation of the hypertextual transformation of his literary predecessors initiated in his earlier poems is supported by a brief description of the various appearances of nature in each of the seasons, which serves as a miniature summary of the poems comprising *The Seasons* (*Au* 1730: 1213–34).

Aware of the ideational complexity of *Autumn*, Thomson introduces a final apostrophe to Nature to reiterate the main objective he attempts to accomplish in his poem. He petitions Nature to continue to serve as his main source of poetic inspiration. The poet expresses the wish that Nature "all-sufficient! over all!" (*Au* 1730: 1254) continue to display its beauty and splendour to his "ravish'd eye" (*Au* 1730: 1267), to "Enrich [him] with the knowledge of [her] works!" (*Au* 1730: 1255), and to fire his imagination to "A search, the flight of time can ne'er exhaust!" (*Au* 1730: 1268). Thomson reminds the reader that, in spite of its diversity of subjects and generic hybridity, *Autumn* is still centrally preoccupied with a celebration of God's omnipotence, which represents the only source and objective of his poetry: "From *Thee* begin, / Dwell all on *Thee*, with *Thee*, conclude my song; / And let me never, never stray from *Thee*!" (*Au* 1730: 1273–5).

¹²⁷ Bergstrom, 51.

1.5 Conclusion: “A Hymn On the Seasons” and of *The Seasons* (1730)

The central concern of the hymnal petition to Nature at the end of *Autumn* is also at the heart of Thomson’s concluding “A Hymn On the Seasons.”¹²⁸ In this 121-line hymn, the poet outlines the plan of his poem of natural description and reinforces the overall meaning of *The Seasons* as a celebration of God’s creative power. The “Hymn” “restates and harmonizes some of the key scientific, philosophical, and religious notions introduced in the other *Seasons*.”¹²⁹ Thomson also develops a final consideration of the generic and thematic heterogeneity of the poem, as well as providing a reflection of the revisions made to the first editions of the individual parts.

The “Hymn” is almost entirely composed as a sequence of apostrophes and functions as a microcosmic representation of the natural order which Thomson aimed to depict in *The Seasons*. In a first apostrophe to the “ALMIGHTY FATHER” himself,¹³⁰ the poet relates the ways in which the protean character of Nature displays “the VARIED GOD” (“Hymn” 1730: 2). Just like in *Autumn*, the poet provides a brief description of the different guises which nature assumes each season and highlights their main characteristics as they appeared in each of the poems (“Hymn” 1730: 3–23). Spring is characterised by God’s “Beauty,” “Tenderness,” and “Love” (“Hymn” 1730: 4); summer, “With light, and heat, severe” (“Hymn” 1730: 9), by the sun (“Hymn” 1730: 9), “awful thunder” (“Hymn” 1730: 11), and “hollow-whispering gales” (“Hymn” 1730: 13); autumn is the season of “Bounty” (“Hymn” 1730: 14); winter, finally, is a manifestation of a “dreadful” God (“Hymn” 1730: 19) of “Horrible blackness” (“Hymn” 1730: 21). After reflecting on the physical transformation of nature throughout the year, Thomson focuses on the cyclical regularity of the seasons, the “Mysterious round” (“Hymn” 1730: 24), in which the seasons are “so harmonious mix’d, so fitly join’d” (“Hymn” 1730: 26) to “[form] such a perfect whole” (“Hymn” 1730: 29). Stressing the mysterious intricacies of this cycle, he deplores man’s “brute unconscious gaze” (“Hymn” 1730: 31), which often fails to

¹²⁸ Just like *Autumn*, the “Hymn” had not previously been published before its inclusion in the 1730 edition of *The Seasons*. Until 1735, apart from appearing in new editions of *The Seasons*, it would be issued together with *Newton* in the revised editions of *Winter*. In this manner, the original publication order lost its significance and the different parts of the long poem were given equal importance.

¹²⁹ Sambrook, *James Thomson*, 100.

¹³⁰ James Thomson, “A Hymn On the Seasons,” in *The Seasons* (London: John Millan & Andrew Millar, 1730), l. 1. Line references for all subsequent citations are given in the text and are indicated with “Hymn” 1730. Line references to the other parts of the 1730 edition of *The Seasons* will also be given in the text and are indicated with “Sp” 1730, “Su” 1730, and “Wi” 1730.

comprehend the innate harmony of these natural processes. By contrast, the poet of nature is able, by means of close observation of the landscape, to discern the ways in which the various natural elements testify to the grandeur of God's creation. Modelling this passage on Psalm 148, Thomson petitions nature to "join every living soul" (40) in adoration of God's omnipotence and invites a multitude of elements, such as "gales" ("Hymn" 1730: 43), "forests" ("Hymn" 1730: 62), and animals to "raise / An universal Hymn" ("Hymn" 1730: 42-3), before urging man "Ye chief, for whom the whole creation smiles; / At once the head, the heart, and mouth of all" ("Hymn" 1730: 88-9), to "Crown the great *Hymn*" ("Hymn" 1730: 90).

The contemplation of mankind's position in the natural order of things and its contribution to the hymn to God provides the poet with an opportunity to reflect on the generic diversity of his poem:

Or if you rather chuse the rural shade,
To find a fane in every sacred grove;
There let the shepherd's flute, the virgin's chaunt,
The prompting seraph, and the poet's lyre,
Still sing the GOD OF SEASONS, as they roll. ("Hymn" 1730: 96-100)

Referring to the passages of contemplative retirement and his hypertextual adaptation of the literary tradition, Thomson reiterates that his generic experimentation with such genres as biblical psalms ("prompting seraph") and the ode ("poet's lyre") had all been conducted in search of the best way to represent and praise God's Providence. In this manner, he has attempted to achieve, in his poetry, a blending of genres, which would reflect the diversity as well as the harmony also present in nature.

The consideration of Thomson's generic experimentation in the "Hymn" provides a clear indication of the heterogeneity of *The Seasons* in 1730. *Winter* and *Summer*, because they were published respectively four and three years earlier and because they represent the initial stage in the poet's developing poetics, were most substantially altered by the revision process. In previous sections of the chapter, I have compared the texts of the first editions to the 1746 variant to indicate the extent of Thomson's revisions. However, the poems already underwent significant changes in 1730. *Winter* was expanded from 405 to 881 lines. Even though "Summer" only counted fifty-nine lines more than the text of the original (1,205 instead of 1,146 lines), several passages were relocated to *Autumn* and new sections were introduced. As a result, the ideational nucleus and the central generic precepts of the first editions were extensively weakened in the first edition of *The Seasons*.

Three major categories of changes to the 1730 variant of the texts can be identified, all of which would be developed further and expanded upon in 1746. A first major alteration is the increase in scientific descriptions of natural phenomena and of passages based on contemporary and historical travel accounts.¹³¹ Thomson replaces his sublime description of frost by a scientific account (“Wi” 1730: 650–717) and introduces a depiction of winter in the northern wastes (“Wi” 1730: 465–80) in “Winter.” The latter passage functions as an equivalent to his exploration of summer in the torrid zone in *Summer*, which he expands in 1730 by including a description of a city buried in a sand storm (“Su” 1730: 718–48). Secondly, Thomson’s increasing involvement in politics, central to some of the passages in 1746, is already apparent in the 1730 variant of *The Seasons*. In “Winter,” he added lines in praise of the Jail Committee, which was charged with an investigation of the living conditions in London prisons (“Wi” 1730: 434–64);¹³² in “Summer,” he expands the catalogue of British worthies, especially adding important patriotic figures in British history, such as Francis Drake (“Su” 1730: 576–8), Walter Raleigh (“Su” 1730: 580–90), and the Earl of Shaftesbury (“Su” 1730: 611–5). Thirdly, Thomson increasingly adopts an anthropocentric focus in his poem, both by concentrating on mankind’s position within nature and by introducing more sentimental and domestic scenes. The human element already featured more centrally in *Autumn*. In his description of an autumn storm (*Au* 1730: 313–361), for instance, significant attention is given to the farmer’s precarious condition, resulting from the destruction of the harvest and the drowning of his cattle, before concluding with an appeal to the landed gentry to be mindful of the fate of their labourers (*Au* 1730: 341–61).¹³³ The poet introduces new sentimental passages as a result of the positive responses to the description of the effects of love and to the interpolated episodes of Celadon and Amelia and Palemon and Lavinia. Most important for the later reception and print-cultural mediation of *The Seasons* is the inclusion of two new interpolated episodes: the tale of the perishing shepherd (“Wi” 1730: 350–95) and the episode of Damon’s spying on three beauties bathing in the brook (“Su” 1730: 979–1036), the account of which would later be reworked into the story of Damon and Musidora.

The generic and thematic heterogeneity of *The Seasons*, achieved by means of a first round of revisions in 1730, demonstrates the ways in which Thomson’s notions of the composition of his poetry had developed extensively since the appearance of the first

¹³¹ McKillop provides a detailed account of the sources Thomson used for his revisions in the second and fourth chapters of his *Background*, 43–88 & 129–71.

¹³² For a contextualisation of Thomson’s passage on the activities of the Jail Committee, see Alan Dugald McKillop, “Thomson and the Jail Committee,” *Studies in Philology* 47 (1950): 62–71.

¹³³ This central role of man contrasts strikingly with the description of a winter storm in 1726, discussed earlier in the chapter, where man almost disappeared to the background.

edition of *Winter* in 1726. In the earliest versions of the different parts to *The Seasons*, the poet experiments with various generic traditions and attempts to devise new methods to productively incorporate the works of his literary predecessors. With the plan of his descriptive long poem progressively taking shape, Thomson realises that the wide diversity of, and divine harmony in, the natural landscape cannot be encapsulated by means of one single poetic formula. Instead, he recognises that stylistic and generic diversification of his poetry is the most proficient way to explore and display nature in all its facets. Thomson consequently adopts various persona in *The Seasons* to reflect the many roles he attributes to the figure of the poet, namely that of the “poet-priest, *poeta doctus*, georgic husbandman, descriptor of the beauties and the sublimity of nature, as well as an instructive bard and pastoral shepherd looking after his flock of characters within *The Seasons* but also without, that is, the readers of the poem.”¹³⁴

This chapter has attempted to trace Thomson’s changing notions of the composition of his descriptive poetry. Applying Genette’s theories of hypertextuality, it has examined the ways in which the poet engages with the literary tradition to produce a new kind of poem. The analysis of the four parts of *The Seasons* in the order in which they were originally published has focused on the most prominent processes of hypertextuality employed by Thomson while writing and revising the poem from 1726 to 1730 and up until 1746. It has revealed that Thomson’s text was autopoietically expanded according to an incorporation of new generic concepts and strategies. The epic modulation of his sublime description of nature in *Winter* is expanded in *Summer* by means of a hypertextual reworking of Milton’s epic poetics and the introduction of a more philosophic-scientific discourse. The latter became more prominent for the development of *The Seasons* after Thomson’s celebration of Newton’s natural-philosophical achievements in *Newton*. The foregrounding of the fusion between the georgic and hymnal modes in *Spring* and *Autumn* highlighted the complexity of the generic composition of Thomson’s poem even further. As a result of a combination of all of these features, *The Seasons* in 1730 transformed into a dynamic, structurally amorphous poem with multiple foci, the hybridity of which was expanded upon until the publication of the definitive version in 1746. In this manner, the first chapter has examined the ways in which Thomson significantly expanded the original nucleus of *The Seasons*, by gradually transforming his sublime-devotional projection of a providential order into a complex poem on the interaction between nature and mankind.

¹³⁴ Jung, “The Blending of Genres, 159.

Chapter 2 Editorialising Practices, Competitive Marketability, and Eighteenth-Century Editions of *The Seasons*

A study of the editorialising practices surrounding *The Seasons* in the eighteenth century offers insights into the history of the production and marketing of books in Britain. After its first appearance in 1730, Thomson's poem quickly became a bestseller, as indicated by the fact that it was reprinted in various formats at regular intervals until Millar's death in 1768.² As other booksellers also wanted to explore its economically lucrative potential, *The Seasons* became central to developments in copyright law. In 1774, the copyright to Thomson's poem was successfully challenged. Thomas Beckett sued the Scottish bookseller Alexander Donaldson for issuing and selling a pirated edition of the poem.³ Motivated by "a desire to encourage and promote the advancement of learning, to nurture a buoyant marketplace of ideas,"⁴ the House of Lords decided against the notion of perpetual copyright in favour of the finite,

¹ The research detailed below will be published as "Editorialising Practices, Competitive Marketability, and James Thomson's *The Seasons*," *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* (2015): forthcoming.

² Editions were issued by the copyright owners in 1730 (*The Seasons*), 1735 (*The Four Seasons*), 1736 (*Works*), 1738 (*Works*), 1744 (*Works; The Seasons*), 1746 (*The Seasons*), 1749 (*Works*), 1750 (*Works*), 1752 (*Works; The Seasons*), 1754 (*Works*), 1757 (*Works; The Seasons*), 1758 (*The Seasons*), 1762 (*Works; The Seasons*), 1766 (*Works; The Seasons*), 1767 (*The Seasons*), and 1768 (*Works; The Seasons*).

³ Beckett had bought a share of the copyrights to *The Seasons* at an auction held on 13 June 1769 after the death of Millar (Ray, L. Patterson, and Stanley W. Lindberg, *The Nature of Copyright: A Law of Users's Rights* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1991), 36). Donaldson, who had opened a bookshop in the centre of London, posed a serious threat to the established members of the Stationers' Company, since he was selling books at 30–50 per cent under the usual prices (Alexander Donaldson, *Some Thoughts on the State of Literary Property* (London: A. Donaldson, 1764), 24).

⁴ Ronan Deazley, *On The Origin of the Right to Copy: Charting the Movement of Copyright Law in Eighteenth-Century Britain (1695–1775)* (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2004), 216.

protective measures of the “Statute of Anne” (1710).⁵ As a result, new and competing editions of *The Seasons* emerged on the English and Scottish book markets from the last quarter of the eighteenth century onwards. Booksellers differentiated their editions of Thomson’s poem by issuing it in different formats and by adding various paratexts, such as illustrations and critical essays, in an attempt to appeal to consumers.

In this chapter, I will examine three editions of *The Seasons* to explore the publishing practices surrounding the poem in the 1790s—the first by John Murray, issued in 1792, which was a revisiting of an edition issued in 1778⁶; the second by Archibald Hamilton, of 1793⁷; the third by the Scottish bookseller Robert Morison Jr., also of 1793.⁸ The editions appeared in a large royal octavo or a small quarto format, which implies that they were similar in size.⁹ The booksellers targeted upper-middle-class buyers, selling their products at a price range from 12s. 6d. to £1 10s. In terms of production standards, the editions can be characterised as fine-printed editions: they were printed on high-quality paper; the booksellers paid particular attention to the typography and the layout; they included new sets of illustrations which were engraved after original designs; and their publishers each employed an editor to produce textual supplements to the original text.

By examining booksellers’ late eighteenth-century approaches towards *The Seasons*, I aim to contribute to the study of processes of paratextual reinterpretations and transformations of texts. A comparison of the physical and editorial make-ups of the editions not only offers insights into the distinctive strategies booksellers devised, in response to earlier successful models such as Millan and Millar’s, to attract as many consumers as possible; it also indicates the ways in which the editors and illustrators refashioned *The Seasons* and promoted alternative interpretations of the poem. Moreover, an examination of a Scottish alongside two English editions will allow me to identify regional variation in the editorial practices and the different methods of appropriating Thomson’s poem to specific cultural contexts. Whereas the editors of the English editions responded to earlier commentaries to engage in debates on what constituted literary classics, the producers of the Scottish edition, capitalising on and contributing to the rapid expansion of Scottish Enlightenment publishing identified by

⁵ According to the copyright act, the bookseller was granted legal protection and ownership of the essay for a period of fourteen years (renewable for another fourteen years), after which the copyright would return to the original author.

⁶ James Thomson, *The Seasons* (London: J. Murray, 1792).

⁷ James Thomson, *The Seasons* (London: A. Hamilton, 1793).

⁸ James Thomson, *The Seasons* (Perth: R. Morison and Son, 1793).

⁹ The dimensions of the editions under discussion are approximately 16 cm by 22.7 cm (Murray), 15 cm by 23 cm (Hamilton), and 17.5 cm by 23.6 cm (Morison).

Sher, attempted to redefine *The Seasons* as part of a national canon of Scottish Enlightenment authors.¹⁰

Essential for an understanding of the (para)textual mediation and the production of print culture objects related to, *The Seasons* in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is an attribution of a sense of cultural capital to Thomson's text. Pierre Bourdieu has identified the inextricable link between the economic capital, which is "immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights," and the cultural capital of objects in society.¹¹ The economic capital of an object, like a text, increases when it meets with success on the market. This success is directly dependent on the number of consumers that choose to purchase the object in question. The more successful the object is, the higher the cultural value that is attached to it by consumers. In this manner, the economic capital of the object is transformed into cultural capital. The object becomes a status symbol. It is associated with the particular social group of which consumers strive to be a part. An increase in the cultural capital of an object will feed back into its economic capital, as it becomes more desirable for a wider audience that wishes to partake of prestige attached to it.

The cultural impact of *The Seasons* in Britain can be explained in terms of this accumulation of economic and cultural capital. From its earliest printing, Thomson's poem was attributed a high-cultural status through the production of the quarto edition of *The Seasons*. A total of 457 copies were subscribed to by 388 subscribers, among which were several nobles, such as Queen Caroline, Lord Bolingbroke, and the Countess Dowager of Caernarvon, and other notable members of society, such as Arthur Onslow, Speaker of the House of Commons, and John Ker, Professor at King's College. This public recognition of Thomson's poem further enhanced the fashionable status and popularity of the poem, which the copyright owners also made available in smaller octavo format for a wider, more socially diverse reading public. The economic capital of *The Seasons* was significant enough for Donaldson to risk the ire of the consortium of London booksellers by producing a pirated edition of the poem in an attempt to capitalise on its success. The publication of new editions of *The Seasons* after the copyright lawsuit in 1774 further objectified and increased the cultural capital of the poem, especially by means of the paratexts and material packaging of the editions.

This chapter will provide an overview of the most important developments in the production of editions of *The Seasons* before the 1790s. The study of marketing strategies

¹⁰ Sher has extensively explored the production, dissemination, and influence of Scottish Enlightenment thought on the Anglo-Scottish book market in his seminal work, *The Enlightenment & the Book*. See especially chapter 5 for a discussion of the rapidly expanding Scottish book market after the lapse of copyright in 1774.

¹¹ Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," in *Education: Culture, Economy, Society*, ed. Halbert H. Halsey et. al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 47.

in the final decade of the eighteenth century is done by means of case studies. The editions under consideration are representative of the production practices of editions of Thomson's poem aimed at the middle to upper ends of the consumer market. Other editions will be introduced when relevant, but will not be discussed in as much detail as the central case studies in the chapter. Jung's recent work has extensively focused on the visual paratexts in other editions, as well as on epitextual print-cultural responses to Thomson's poem, in the 1790s and thus serves as the backdrop of this chapter.

2.1 The British Book Market in the Late Eighteenth Century

The rejection, in 1774, of the London booksellers' claim to perpetual copyright profoundly affected the printing and making available of texts previously under copyright in London. St Clair confirms that the legal judgement "was a decisive moment for the whole subsequent development of notions of intellectual property, for the price of books and of access to texts, for the progress of reading, and for the subsequent course of the national culture widely defined."¹² As the legal decision made impossible the booksellers' monopoly, which had facilitated the manipulation of the prices of books on the market,¹³ the publishing trade became increasingly competitive. Booksellers made their products more cheaply available to meet the growing demands of a rising entrepreneurial middle class with greater spending power and provincial cities became prominent loci for the production and distribution of books.¹⁴

The increased productivity of the book trade in the eighteenth century coincided with an expansion in readership, which had a significant impact on the manufacturing and marketing of books. Since more and more reprints of texts that were no longer under copyright protection appeared, booksellers were continually looking for new ways to maximise the attractiveness of their products so as to encourage consumer interest. Barbara Benedict contends that "publishing booksellers competed to provide the most exquisitely or cheaply packaged collection of those authors or texts deemed canonical. . . . Books were plentiful things in a culture dedicated to accumulation: ephemeral figments of fashion, and material commodities to be bought. Books were the

¹² St Clair, 111.

¹³ John Feather, *A History of British Publishing* (London: Routledge, 1988), 82.

¹⁴ Raven, *The Business of Books*, 141–3. For an examination of the rise of provincial book production centres in England, see John Feather, *The Provincial Book Trade in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

latest, *new things*.”¹⁵ Booksellers invested in the material characteristics of their editions and promoted them as valuable print objects to attract as wide a readership as possible. Murray advertised his 1792 edition as “the most elegant and beautiful edition of the book ever” “to the lovers of fine printing,”¹⁶ while Hamilton similarly promoted his “splendid edition of Thomson’s *Seasons*” “to the lovers of the fine arts.”¹⁷ Keeping up with the latest technological developments in paper, type, and printing, the booksellers enhanced the novelty value of their editions.¹⁸ Hamilton commissioned a typesetter to cast “a new and beautiful Type.”¹⁹

The sophistication of the editions was also enhanced by the quality of the paper used for the printing. Murray and Hamilton’s editions were executed on high-quality wove paper, while Morison used a more exclusive vellum paper.²⁰ The latter variety was produced from animal skin. Wove paper was characterised by a smooth, level surface and was distinct from common laid paper, which was characterised by a coarse, ribbed grain. The smoothness of wove paper was achieved by the replacement of the conventional wired laid cover for the paper mould by a piece of woven wire cloth. The quality of the paper was further determined by the density of the paper, as well as the quality of linen rags used in the paper production process. Even though wove paper was first introduced around the middle of the century, it was only in the 1790s that it was more frequently used for book productions.²¹

Apart from experimenting with the material execution of their editions, booksellers included various paratexts to distinguish their editions from competing alternatives on the market. Booksellers aiming at the upper regions of the market most frequently invested in a set of illustrations. The importance of engravings to generate appeal with the buying public is confirmed by the fact that at least thirty-eight illustrated editions of *The Seasons* were produced in Britain in the final quarter of the eighteenth century.²² All of the supplementary material—illustrations, biographies, critical essays, indices, and glossaries—formed an interpretative matrix through which Thomson’s poem was

¹⁵ Barbara M. Benedict, “Writing on Writing: Representations of the Book in Eighteenth-Century Literature,” in *Producing the Eighteenth-Century Book: Writers and Publishers in England, 1650–1800*, ed. Laura L. Runge and Pat Rogers (Newark, De.: University of Delaware Press, 2009), 279–80.

¹⁶ *Sun*, 14 January 1796.

¹⁷ *General Evening Post*, 1 January 1793.

¹⁸ James Raven, “The Book Trades,” in *Books and Their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England: New Essays*, ed. Isabel Rivers (London: Continuum, 2001), 6–9.

¹⁹ *General Evening Post*, 1 January 1793.

²⁰ Wove paper provided publishers with an alternative to laid paper, which was characterised by a coarser quality and which was less ink-absorbent.

²¹ Richard L. Hills, *Papermaking in Britain 1488–1988* (London: Athlone, 1988), 76.

²² Cohen has compiled an extensive, yet incomplete, list of editions of *The Seasons* and of collected works by Thomson (Cohen, *The Art of Discrimination*, 472–507).

mediated. Subject to change over time, the paratextual and material make-ups of the editions of *The Seasons* not only reflect innovations in marketing strategies; they also allow for a reconstruction of the interpretative and cultural contexts within which particular editions were produced and read.

2.2 Paratextual (Re)fashionings of *The Seasons*

To provide insight into the economic and cultural appropriation of *The Seasons*, this section will present a diachronic overview of a range of earlier eighteenth-century editions. John Millan and Andrew Millar, the original publishers of Thomson's poem, had already recognised the value of including additional material to their editions of *The Seasons*.²³ They issued a subscription edition in quarto format in 1730 with four specially commissioned engravings by Nicolas Tardieu after designs by William Kent. These full-page copper-plate tableaux provided holistic narratives corresponding to Thomson's mythopoeic rendering of the divinely ordered universe. In the same year, Millan and Millar also produced an octavo edition of *The Seasons*, a gathering of the separately published instalments of the different seasons, issuing them with a collective title-page. **[Figure 4]** This edition contained four plates depicting allegorical renderings of the seasons after designs by Bernard Picart. Whereas Picart's plates were reused only once in 1735, Kent's engravings were reissued up to 1765. From 1766 onwards, engravers focused on new subjects drawn from the poem, thus taking note of alternative interpretations which had developed in the arts, as exemplified by a furniture print of the interpolated episode of Celadon and Amelia, produced by William Woollett after a design by the landscape painter Richard Wilson.²⁴ When Millar issued a two-volume edition of Thomson's works in quarto format in 1762, he included two allographic texts, which memorialised and mythified the poet: William Collins's memorial "Ode on the Death of Mr Thomson" and Murdoch's "An Account of the Life and Writings of Mr James Thomson." Since these texts were regularly included in other editions of *The Seasons*, both in and outside of Britain, they were central to the textual construction of Thomson's reputation.

²³ Thomson had sold the copyright for *Summer, Autumn, and Winter* to Millan on 18 July 1729 and the copyright for *Spring* to Andrew Millar on 16 January 1730 (Sambrook, "Introduction," xlvii).

²⁴ Jung has examined Woollett's print in relation with other visual renderings of the interpolated episode of Celadon and Amelia in "Painterly 'Readings' of *The Seasons*, 1766–1829," *Word & Image* 26 (2010): 68–82.

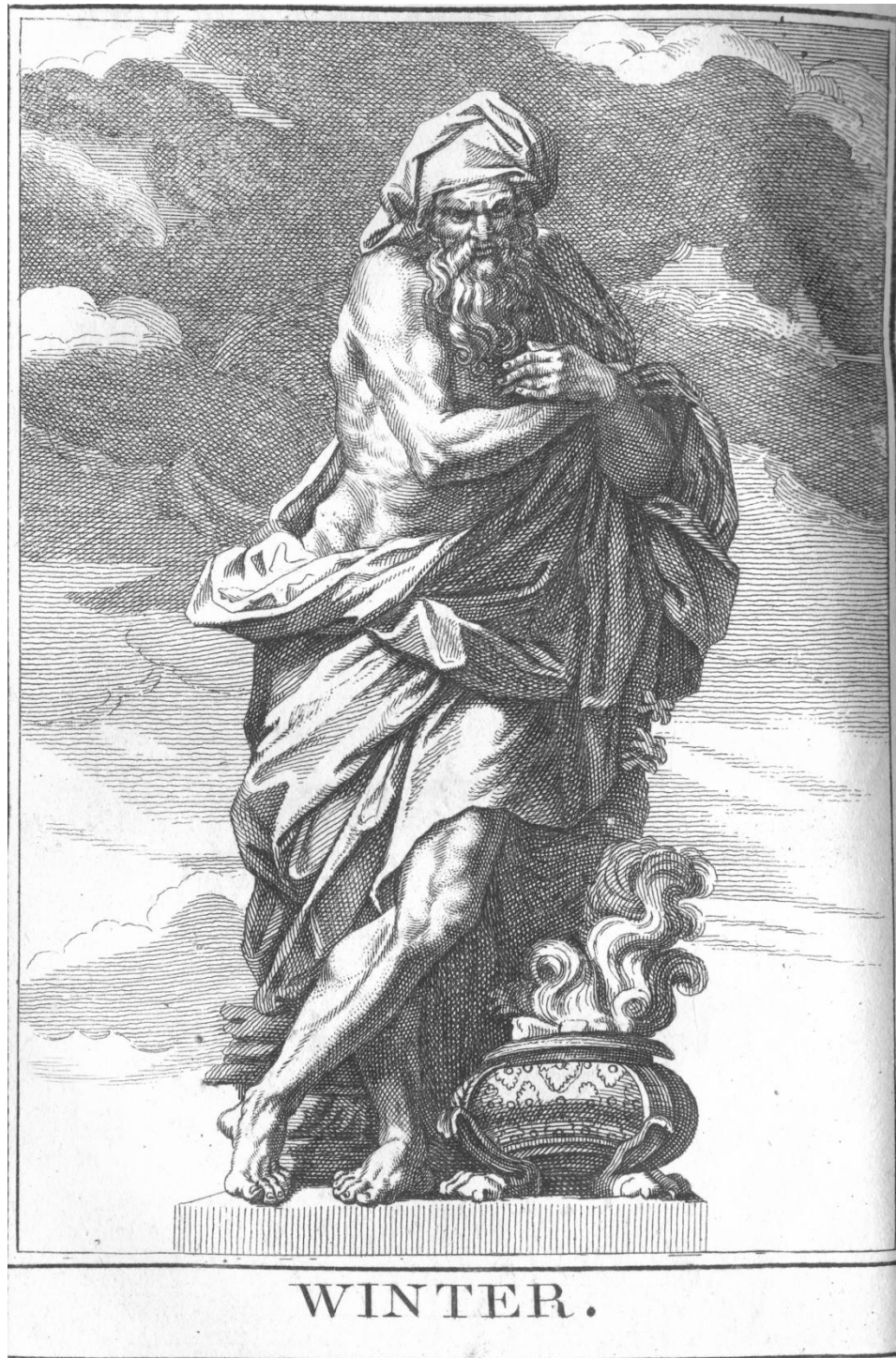


Figure 4 Full-page plate, designed by Bernard Picart, engraved by John Clarke, for “Winter,” from *The Seasons, A Hymn, A Poem Sacred to the Memory of Sir Isaac Newton* (London: J. Millan and A. Millar, 1730). Reproduced with permission from a copy in professor Sandro Jung’s possession.

Particularly in the final decade of the eighteenth century, a significant number of—often illustrated—editions of *The Seasons* were produced for upper-class and upper middle-class readers at considerable expense in terms of paper quality, text design, and print-cultural make-up.²⁵ This expansion in production of new editions was the result of a renewal of interest in Thomson both in Scotland and in England. The Earl of Buchan's initiatives were crucial factors in the increased fashionability of Thomson in the 1790s. The founder of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, Buchan was a keen patron of the arts and scholarship related to Scottish culture. A year before publishing his *Essays*, he erected a classical monument and organised a literary festival in honour of Thomson in Ednam, the poet's birthplace in the south of Scotland. The festival, which became an annual event until at least 1825,²⁶ reflected a growing recognition of the poet's literary accomplishments and facilitated a Thomson cult in Scotland.²⁷ Wishing to make Thomson's text available in as impressive a format as possible, Buchan commissioned Giambattista Bodoni in 1790 to print a folio and a quarto edition set in the Italian typographer's new type.²⁸ The edition outclassing all previous efforts would be produced by Peltro William Tomkins in 1798. This folio edition was issued with furniture prints, which were engraved after paintings by William Hamilton, who, since serving as one of the illustrators for Murray's 1778 edition, had been inducted as a Fellow into the Royal Academy in 1789. Tomkins, who had been circulating proposals for his edition as early as 1787,²⁹ had hosted an exhibition of the paintings at his workshop in New Bond Street from 1793 onward.³⁰ The engraved illustrations to the edition were also made

²⁵ For a discussion of the most important illustrated, high-cultural editions of British editions of *The Seasons* in the 1790s, see Jung, "High-Cultural Consumption."

²⁶ John Mason, *The Border Tour Throughout the Most Important and Interesting Places in the Counties of Northumberland, Berwick, Roxburgh, and Selkirk. By A Tourist*, (Edinburgh: Walter Grieve et al., 1826), 64. William Howitt's account of his visit to Ednam in 1847 suggests that the annual celebration will not have taken place much longer, since he reports that it "ha[s] long fallen into desuetude" (William Howitt, *Homes and Haunts of the Most Eminent British Poets* (London: R. Bentley, 1847), 215).

²⁷ The festival in Ednam was not the first event which was organised in celebration of Thomson's memory. Brown and Carruthers report how the Edinburgh Cape Club, a prominent gentlemen club, organised a jubilee for Thomson every ten years from 1770 onwards (Brown and Carruthers, 75–9). In contrast to the annual festival in Ednam, the Cape Club jubilee was a private event.

²⁸ For more information on the collaboration between the Earl of Buchan and Bodoni, see Brian Hillyard, "David Steuart and Giambattista Bodoni: On the Fringes of the British Book Trade," in *Worlds of Print: Diversity in the Book Trade*, ed. John Hinks and Catherine Armstrong (New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll, 2006): 113–25.

²⁹ *World*, 12 April 1787.

³⁰ An announcement of the opening of the exhibition was printed in the *Star* on 21 May 1793. The price for admittance was 1s. and included a fifteen-page descriptive catalogue (Peltro William Tomkins, *Description of Pictures, Illustrative of Thomson's Seasons, Now Exhibiting at Tomkins and Co.'s, No. 49, New Bond Street* (London: P. W. Tomkins, 1793)).

available in the form of colour-printed plates to enhance the exclusiveness of the product.³¹

2.3 John Murray's Revisiting of his Earlier Edition of *The Seasons*

John Murray recognised and tried to profit from the demand for fine-printed editions of *The Seasons*. In 1792, he advertised proposals for an ambitious subscription edition in four parts in quarto format,³² which was scheduled to be executed with twenty-two engravings by William Sharp after paintings by Robert Smirke, an Associate Member of the Royal Academy specialising in paintings for literary and historical texts. The presence, in the market, of other large-format, high-quality editions proved too strong, however: John Strahan had produced a fine-printed, illustrated edition of *The Seasons* earlier that year; Tomkins was already circulating proposals for his folio edition; and Morison had issued a print specimen *The Beautiful Episode of Palemon & Lavinia, from The Seasons, by James Thomson*.³³ Due to the competition, Murray probably did not receive enough subscriptions, causing him to abandon the project and to focus on a more modest edition instead. It was executed on "very fine woven paper" and was available in two formats: an edition in royal octavo selling at 19s. in boards or at £1 1s. handsomely bound; a more affordable crown octavo at 9s. in boards or at 10s. 6d. neatly bound.³⁴

With this edition, Murray capitalised on the success of his first octavo edition of *The Seasons*, printed twice in 1778, and again in 1779 and 1792 just before revising it. Murray had become a bookseller in 1768, after a military career, when he bought the well-established business of William Sandby. He had established a reputation for himself as a producer of fine-printed books in London printing circles through his edition of Thomas Gray's poems (1776), the high quality of which he achieved with a level of technical

³¹ For an extensive discussion of Tomkins's edition, especially in relation to the colour-printed variants, see Jung, "Packaging, Design and Colour," 100–14.

³² *Diary or Woodfall's Register*, 12 April 1792.

³³ James Thomson, *The Beautiful Episode of Palemon & Lavinia, from The Seasons, by James Thomson; Intended as a Specimen of a Superb Edition of that Inimitable Poem* (Perth: R. Morison & Son et al., 1792). The specimen, selling at 3s., was produced and distributed by a number of Scottish booksellers in Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Aberdeen, as well as a London collaborator (T. Kay).

³⁴ *Sun*, 14 January 1796.

competence which very few of his fellow booksellers could rival.³⁵ He applied the same production standards to his 1778 edition of *The Seasons*, “a New and Uncommon Edition, beautifully printed on a fine Writing Paper” selling at 4s. in boards.³⁶ The additional material in the edition indicates, however, that Murray realised that the success of his publishing venture not only depended on its material execution.

Recognising that illustrations significantly enhanced consumer appeal, he commissioned eight designs to be engraved in copper by James Caldwell. Four of these full-page plates were based on designs by the Scottish portrait and genre painter David Allan. Allan, who would later become renowned for the illustrations accompanying the 1788 edition of Allan Ramsay’s pastoral *The Gentle Shepherd*, had just returned from a tour of Italy and offered Murray “four allegorical figures in the latest and best neo-classical style.”³⁷ These renderings of the seasons are loosely based on the 1730 illustrations by Picart: “While not specifically referring to episodes or description from the poem, [they] captured the general allegorical impulse characterizing the text.”³⁸ **[Figure 5]** The plate for “Autumn,” for instance, depicting a classically draped female figure, incorporates the characteristic attributes of a sheaf of wheat to symbolise the harvest and a cornucopia to suggest the abundance of the season.

The other illustrations after designs by Hamilton focus on different subjects. Hamilton specialised in the production of portraits and history painting and would become a distinguished Royal Academician in 1789, exhibiting in a number of print galleries such as Boydell’s Shakespeare Gallery. He would play a pivotal role in the art industry surrounding the works of Thomson in the 1790s.³⁹ **[Figures 6 & 7]** Apart from a frontispiece illustration of the Westminster Abbey monument to Thomson, which memorialised the poet as a divinely inspired poet of Nature and Liberty,⁴⁰ Hamilton produced designs of three interpolated episodes in *The Seasons*: “Musidora,” “Palemon and Lavinia,” and “A Shepherd Perishing in the Snow.” These episodes, which include the tales of the bathing Musidora secretly being spied on by her lover Damon and the

³⁵ William Zachs, *The First John Murray and the Late Eighteenth-Century London Book Trade* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 184.

³⁶ *General Evening Post*, 3 September 1778.

³⁷ H. A. Hammelmann, “The Poet’s Seasons Delineated,” *Country Life Annual* (1970): 52–4.

³⁸ Jung, “Visual Interpretations,” 28.

³⁹ Hamilton would produce three different sets of illustrations for editions of *The Seasons*: Murray’s octavo edition here under discussion; Tomkins’s expensive folio edition issued in 1797; an 1802 edition in large octavo format produced by Francis DuRoveray. Moreover, Hamilton would also contribute to the lucrative ephemeral market of furniture prints to be put on display in the home. See Jung, “High-Cultural Consumption,” 505–7.

⁴⁰ Philip Connell embeds his discussion of the memorial within a general consideration of the literary monuments in Westminster Abbey and their influence on the creation of a national cultural canon (Philip Connell, “Death and the Author: Westminster Abbey and the Meanings of the Literary Monument,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38:4 (2005), 573–6).

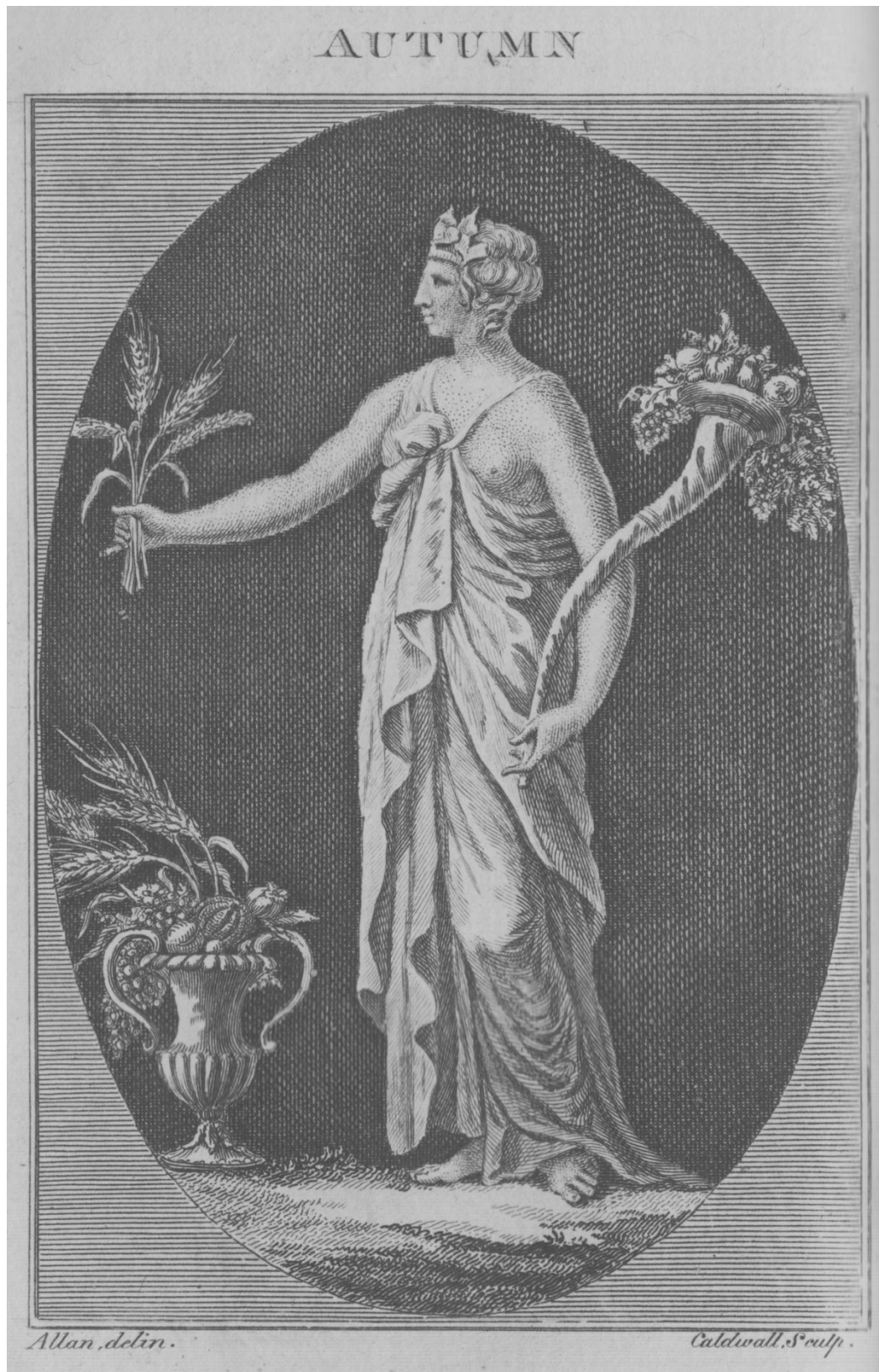


Figure 5 Full-page plate, designed by David Allan, engraved by James Caldwell, for "Autumn," from *The Seasons* (London: J. Murray, 1778). Reproduced from a copy in the author's possession.

From M^r. Thomson's Monument in Westminster Abbey.



Caldwall Sculp.

*Tutor'd by thee, hence Poetry exalts
Her voice to Ages; and informs the Page
With Music, Image, Sentiment, and Thought,
Never to die!*

April 1st 1778. Published by J. Murray N^o 32 Fleetstreet.

Figure 6 Frontispiece, designed by William Hamilton, engraved by James Caldwell, for *The Seasons* (London: J. Murray, 1778). Reproduced from a copy in the author's possession.

A SHEPHERD PERISHING in the SNOW.



Hamilton Delin.

Caldwall Sculp.

— and down he sinks
Beneath the shelter of the shapeless drift,
Thinking o'er all the bitterness of Death.

London 1st April 1778. Published as the Act directs, by J. Murray N^o. 32 Fleetstreet.

Figure 7 Full-page plate, designed by William Hamilton, engraved by James Caldwell, for "Winter," from *The Seasons* (London: J. Murray, 1778). Reproduced from a copy in the author's possession.

shepherd losing his way in the winter landscape and meeting his untimely end in a winter storm, are some of the anthropocentric passages for which Thomson's poem would prove popular, as they were frequently chosen as the subject for illustrations in later editions of *The Seasons*. These plates reflect the sentimental and dramatic subjects for which Thomson's composition was increasingly commended.

Introducing two different illustrative narratives--the one allegorical, the other realistic-sentimental--Murray offered iconographic alternatives to Kent's tableaux. Kent, who was active as a painter, architect, designer of gardens and interior furnishings, combined neoclassical pictorial elements with conventions drawn from Italian landscape painting. The designs for the 1730 edition of *The Seasons* corresponded with Thomson's "poetic pictorialism" by means of which he reflected on the religious position of man within the natural landscape.⁴¹ In each of the illustrations, Kent developed a dynamic narrative connecting the celestial sphere, represented by allegorical personifications of the seasons and their train of followers, and the human world, which was characterised by depictions of man within a natural environment.

[Figure 8] In Kent's plate to "Autumn," an allegorical representation of autumn is depicted with a sickle in his hand symbolising the harvest activities taking place in his season. He is assisted in his seasonal duties by a number of other allegorical figures: to his left, a female and putto figure are holding the cornucopia, representing the fruitfulness of the season; in the background to the right of the image, Ceres, the classical goddess of agriculture, is carrying a sheaf of wheat in her chariot drawn by serpents. The natural landscape in the lower half of the design serves as "a sympathetically interpretative stage setting" for human activities relation to the season.⁴² This section represents three passages in the poem. On the left-hand side, reapers are at work in "the ripen'd Field" ("Au" 1746: 153), while one of them stands "by the Lass he loves" ("Au" 1746: 155). Equally, a hunting scene is depicted, "the rude Clamour of the Sportsman's Joy, / . . . and the winded Horn" ("Au" 1746: 360-1), while a stag is being chased by a pack of dogs.

Even though the human remains separated from the divine sphere, Kent establishes an interrelationship between the deities and mankind. On the left hand side of the image, the sloping landscape ends in a hilltop, which reaches the height of Autumn's feet. The tree to the right establishes this connection more explicitly, as the top branch almost touches the leg of the figure pointing at the zodiac belt. The dog in the middle foreground is looking directly up at the sky. Moreover, not only do the sickle and the wheat reappear in both spheres; the posture of Ceres is echoed in that of the left of the

⁴¹ Jean H Hagstrum, *The Sister Arts: The Tradition of Literary Pictorialism and English Poetry from Dryden to Gray* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), xviii.

⁴² Hagstrum, 258.



Figure 8 Full-page plate, designed by William Kent, engraved by Nicolas Tardieu, for "Autumn," from *The Seasons* (London: J. Millan and A. Millar, 1730). Reproduced from a copy in the author's possession.

two reapers at work. In his design, Kent thus succeeds in reproducing Thomson's holistic view of the season's divine origin and its effect on humanity.

The illustrators of Murray's edition of *The Seasons* departed from Kent's unifying renderings by disconnecting divine and human iconographic elements. The allegorical plates provided concrete representations of the seasons that were mostly void of the dynamic dimensions of the earliest tableaux. By illustrating the popular interpolated episodes, Hamilton abandoned Kent's comprehensive interpretation in favour of selective readings of the poem.

Due to the need for differentiation in the market for editions of *The Seasons*, designers, by 1792, had explored various new themes and subjects in their illustrations. Murray consequently introduced an entirely new set of engravings, for which he commissioned Conrad Martin Metz. Metz was a German illustrator who had settled in London, where he specialised in engravings after "old Italian masters" such as Titian, Annibale Carracci, and Guercino.⁴³ The fact that Murray commissioned a new set of engravings carries profound implications. Whereas he spent £56 16s. on the engravings for the 1778 edition, the total costs for the plates in 1792 amounted to £93 14s. 10d.⁴⁴ This considerable financial investment indicates that Murray anticipated that the new illustrations would facilitate good sales of the edition.

The introduction of the second set of engravings offers insights into the changing illustration practices at the time. In the early eighteenth century, book illustrations had been influenced by the neoclassical mythologising impulse manifested in the arts. By the end of the century, this focus had considerably weakened, due to the development of a painting industry which was no longer solely determined by the church and the nobility, and the secularisation of representational media for the middle classes. Instead, anthropocentric scenes and sentimental tableaux became the most prominent representational modes. The deliberate decision on Murray's part to remove Allan's plates is a first indication that allegorical renderings of the seasons had grown unfashionable.

The visual patterns predominant in illustrations of the 1790s are manifested in the plate to "Spring," engraved by James Neagle. **[Figure 9]** In Metz's secular illustration, the upper part of the design focused on the landscape, the lower part on human elements. The depiction of a pastoral love tableau and maidens dancing to rural music in the plate characterised spring as the season of love. These anthropocentric scenes were set against a background of majestic trees, a convention drawn from the contemporary tradition of landscape painting as it was fashioned by Wilson. The primary function of

⁴³ Hammelmann, 54.

⁴⁴ Zachs, 284 & 388.



Figure 9 Full-page plate, designed by Conrad Martin Metz, engraved by James Neagle, for "Spring," from *The Seasons* (London: J. Murray, 1792). Reproduced from a copy in the author's possession.

Metz's designs was not to provide a holistic interpretation similar to Kent's, nor were they intended to illustrate specific passages such as those included in the 1778 edition. Rather, the illustrations were designed to display scenes typical of the season and to evoke a sentimental response from the reader by creating a blissful image of man's undisturbed life within the natural landscape. The diverging iconographical modes in the engravings to Murray's editions of *The Seasons* are indicative of the ways in which booksellers catered to changes in taste and reading practices and employed illustrations to negotiate the competitive eighteenth-century book market.

The illustrations were not the only paratexts which affected the production, marketing, and consumption of texts in the eighteenth century. Supplementary texts such as prefatory essays, biographies, and extensive footnotes equally influenced a reader's engagement with the primary text. In response to the increased recognition and prominence of critical reviews, editors of eighteenth-century literary works, many of whom also contributed to review journals such as the *Critical Review* and the *Monthly Review*, often introduced a commentary dimension in their editorial paratexts, so as to argue why a particular author or text was worthy of being read.⁴⁵ In this manner, editors not only affected the shaping of an author's critical reputation. Rather, they would also develop a literary-critical discourse and define a set of normative values which could be used to establish a literary canon.

Typographic paratexts had featured prominently in Millar's edition of Thomson's works in 1762, but also in 1777, when George Wright introduced a completely new feature, in the form of textual notes, in J. French's octavo edition of *The Seasons*. These notes were not aimed at a readership trained in the reading of *belles lettres*, as he "rather wished to draw some moral and entertaining reflections from the whole (where it could be done with propriety) to assist the reader's more private meditations, than to shew his own learning."⁴⁶ Wright's notes represent another instance of the accumulation of the cultural capital of *The Seasons* in the eighteenth century. The notes allowed readers to engage with the moral aspects of the text, thus offering a cultural-critical discourse to assess the poem and determine its cultural significance. The success of Wright's editorial innovation contributed to the wide use of annotation practices in later editions of *The Seasons*, which in this case culminated in the reprinting of French's edition three times in the course of the same year.

Murray, too, picked up on the growing importance of literary criticism by including an essay by John Aikin. In 1777, Aikin had examined the ways in which natural

⁴⁵ Antonia Forster discusses the impact of review journals on the development of a shared taste among consumers (Antonia Forster, "Review Journals and the Reading Public," in *Books and Their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England: New Essays*, ed. Isabel Rivers (London: Continuum, 2001), 170–90.

⁴⁶ Thomson 1777, 190.

description had featured in poetry in *An Essay on the Application of Natural History to Poetry*. In this work, he had already singled out Thomson's "truly excellent and original poem" as the most innovative in its "variety of genuine observations in natural history."⁴⁷ Whereas Wright's notes introduced individual moral observations and reflections to help readers make sense of obscure passages, Aikin offered a unifying interpretation of the poem in his "An Essay on the Plan and Character of Thomson's Seasons." Highlighting Thomson's poetic merits, Aikin provided the reader with a general framework to engage more deeply with the poem. He first places *The Seasons* in its literary context, presenting a generic consideration of the long poem and pointing out the pioneering role which Thomson played in the development of descriptive nature poetry. Examining the formal properties of Thomson's natural descriptions, Aikin defines the poem's unity within a narrative structure of progression in which the seasons resemble stages in the life of man: the poem works its way from the birth and youth of spring, through the vigour and energy of summer and the maturity and decline of autumn, all the way to bleak old age represented by winter.⁴⁸

Murray successfully capitalised on Aikin's critical reputation and exploited the commercial potential of his essay, which quickly became a standard commentary on *The Seasons*. In 1778, Murray paid Aikin £10 to obtain the exclusive rights to publish the text.⁴⁹ The copyright allowed him not only to publish the essay separately in 1788, making it available at the price of 2s.,⁵⁰ but also to use it as a commodity feature to promote his edition of Thomson's work. The essay is generally referred to in advertisements and is sometimes singled out as a unique addition nowhere else to be found: "Dr. Aikin's Essay upon Thomson's Seasons is to be found prefixed only to this edition."⁵¹ It does not come as a surprise, then, that Murray included the essay in the 1792 edition of *The Seasons*. In fact, Murray published his second edition at an opportune time. As his copyright was about to lapse in 1792, fourteen years after the initial publication of the essay, Murray managed to capitalise on this valuable sales asset one last time in his new edition. In effect, he thus skilfully established a copyright monopoly over the most frequently produced critical essay on *The Seasons*.⁵²

⁴⁷ John Aikin, *An Essay on the Application of Natural History to Poetry* (London: J. Johnson, 1777), 57.

⁴⁸ John Aikin, "An Essay on the Plan and Character of Thomson's Seasons," in Thomson 1778, xi.

⁴⁹ Zachs, 345.

⁵⁰ Zachs, 284. John Aikin, *An Essay on the Plan and Character of Thomson's Seasons*, (London: J. Murray, 1788).

⁵¹ *Morning Chronicle*, 23 November 1791.

⁵² The popularity of Aikin's essay is also confirmed through its inclusion and translation in editions of *The Seasons* published in continental Europe. It was included in its original version in 1790 and 1794 in an edition published by J. J. C. Timaeus in Leipzig, Germany. For more information on Timaeus's production, see Jung, "German Editions," 51–3. The essay was also translated for inclusion in a Dutch translation by Joannes Lublink den Jongen, published in Amsterdam in 1787.

2.4 Archibald Hamilton's Competitive Market Alternative

Around the same time as Murray, Archibald Hamilton produced another fine-printed edition of *The Seasons* in royal octavo format in 1793. The edition, which sold in boards at 12s. 6d. or in a five-part instalment at 2s. 6d. per part,⁵³ not only represented a competitive alternative to other editions on the market; it also appeared as a direct rival to Murray's octavo edition, published a year earlier and reissued in 1793 with a cancel titlepage. Hamilton, who had worked for the highly successful printing business of William Strahan, had become a prominent printer in his own right in 1756 when he printed the lucrative first edition of Tobias Smollett's *Complete History of England* for the bookseller James Rivington. Through his close friendship with the Scottish writer, Hamilton became the publisher of the *Critical Review* in 1758 and its chief proprietor and editor in 1763. Involved in the production of the *British Magazine, or Monthly Repository for Gentlemen and Ladies*, the *Lady's Magazine*, and the *Town and Country Magazine*, Hamilton was the leading periodical printer and publisher by 1770 and possessed an extensive knowledge of editorial and publishing strategies. To compete more effectively with Murray's editions, Hamilton realised that his edition of *The Seasons* also required a distinct print-cultural make-up, both in terms of its visual and textual material.

The fourteen engravings to Hamilton's edition demonstrate booksellers' continuous search, in the 1790s, for complementary formats, especially the combination of differently sized and shaped illustrations. **[Figure 10]** A frontispiece engraving after a portrait of Thomson by Allan Ramsay, the younger, serves as "a miniature surrogate of the book's absent author."⁵⁴ It not only identifies Thomson, dressed in a velvet turban, a linen shirt, and silk drapery, as the author of the poem;⁵⁵ rather, it also asserts his cultural status, which is projected onto the edition. The author adopts a composed attitude, as the classical symbols of the laurel and lyre around and above the portrait's oval acknowledge his literary merits. **[Figure 11]** The second engraving is located on the titlepage, which differs significantly from Murray's. Whereas Murray, in both 1778 and 1792, featured a sober, nicely balanced titlepage with the letter type set in different

⁵³ *Morning Chronicle*, 15 February 1793.

⁵⁴ Barchas, 22.

⁵⁵ Millar had been the first to introduce an engraving of the author by James Basire after a portrait by John Patoun in his 1746 quarto edition of *The Seasons*. Patoun's image, together with William Aikman's rejuvenating portrait produced in 1726, were the most frequently recurring authorial representations of Thomson in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century editions of *The Seasons*. The poet is depicted in an outfit similar to that in Ramsay's portrait.



Figure 10 Frontispiece, painted by Allan Ramsay, engraved by Burnet Reading, for *The Seasons* (London: A. Hamilton, 1793). Reproduced from a copy in the author's possession.

THE SEASONS,
By
James Thomson;
With his Life, an Index, and Glossary.
A
Dedication to the EARL of BUCHAN,
and
Notes to the Seasons,
By
PERCIVAL STOCKDALE.



London.
Printed for A. Hamilton, Gray's Inn Gate, Holborn.
1793.

Figure 11 Title-page for *The Seasons* (London: A. Hamilton, 1793). Reproduced from a copy in the author's possession.

sizes, Hamilton introduces an ornately engraved titlepage with a vignette by Thomas Stothard.⁵⁶ This vignette displays four putto figures, each symbolising one of the seasons. The allegorical mode of illustration, central to earlier editions of *The Seasons*, is decoratively relocated to the fringe, thus indicating the departure from the mythologising interpretation of the poem.

The remaining engravings are a combination of head- and tailpieces, which are noticeably larger than traditional vignettes, and full-page plates. Even though all of these illustrations contribute to the visual mediation of *The Seasons* in the edition, a clear distinction should be made between the vignettes and the full-page illustrations. The latter, based on paintings by Henry Singleton and Thomas Stothard, depicted well-known passages from the poem. Two of the plates rendered scenes from two of Thomson's interpolated episodes ("Musidora" and "Palemon and Lavinia"), while the others offered visual interpretations of two other iconographic moments in the poem ("The Lovers Dream" and "The Shepherd's Care"). The anthropocentric scenes of these plates were characterised by their overt sentimental appeal. **[Figure 12]** The plate to "Spring," for instance, depicts a moment of despair as a young woman helplessly has to watch as her lover is torn away from her by a violent sea storm.

The head- and tailpieces of the edition, by contrast, develop a romanticized notion of the middle-class man's relation to nature. Even though these illustrations do not directly refer to a specific passage of the poem as opposed to Metz's illustrations, they share the naturalising tendency to represent scenes typical of the season. **[Figures 13 & 14]** The head vignette to "Winter" depicts characters at play on the ice. The tailpiece to "Autumn" portrays a hunter accompanied by his dogs, the hunt being an example of a leisure pursuit of the moneyed classes. The vignettes represent a departure from the Georgic concerns of the illustrations to J. French's 1777 edition of the poem.

[Figures 15 & 16] A comparison of Singleton's visual representation of Palemon and Lavinia in the "Autumn" engraving to William Hamilton's illustration for the 1778 Murray edition provides a further indication of the changes in the visual refashioning of *The Seasons*. The illustrators develop two diverging interpretations of Thomson's reworking of the biblical Ruth and Boaz story. Hamilton presents the reader with a moralising picture of the story. On the one hand, he highlights the class distinction between Palemon with his easily recognisable aristocratic garb and Lavinia and the other gleaners, characterised by their plain clothing. On the other, the theme of loyal

⁵⁶ Stothard, a prolific book illustrator who had been producing engravings for literary classics since the 1780s, designed multiple sets of illustrations of *The Seasons*: he designed fourteen engravings for a pocket edition issued by John Stockdale in 1794; he also provided two different sets of illustrations for *The Royal Engagement Pocket Atlas* in 1793 and 1796. See Sandro Jung, "Print Culture, Marketing, and Thomas Stothard's Illustrations for *The Royal Engagement Pocket Atlas*, 1779–1826," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 41 (2012): 27–53.

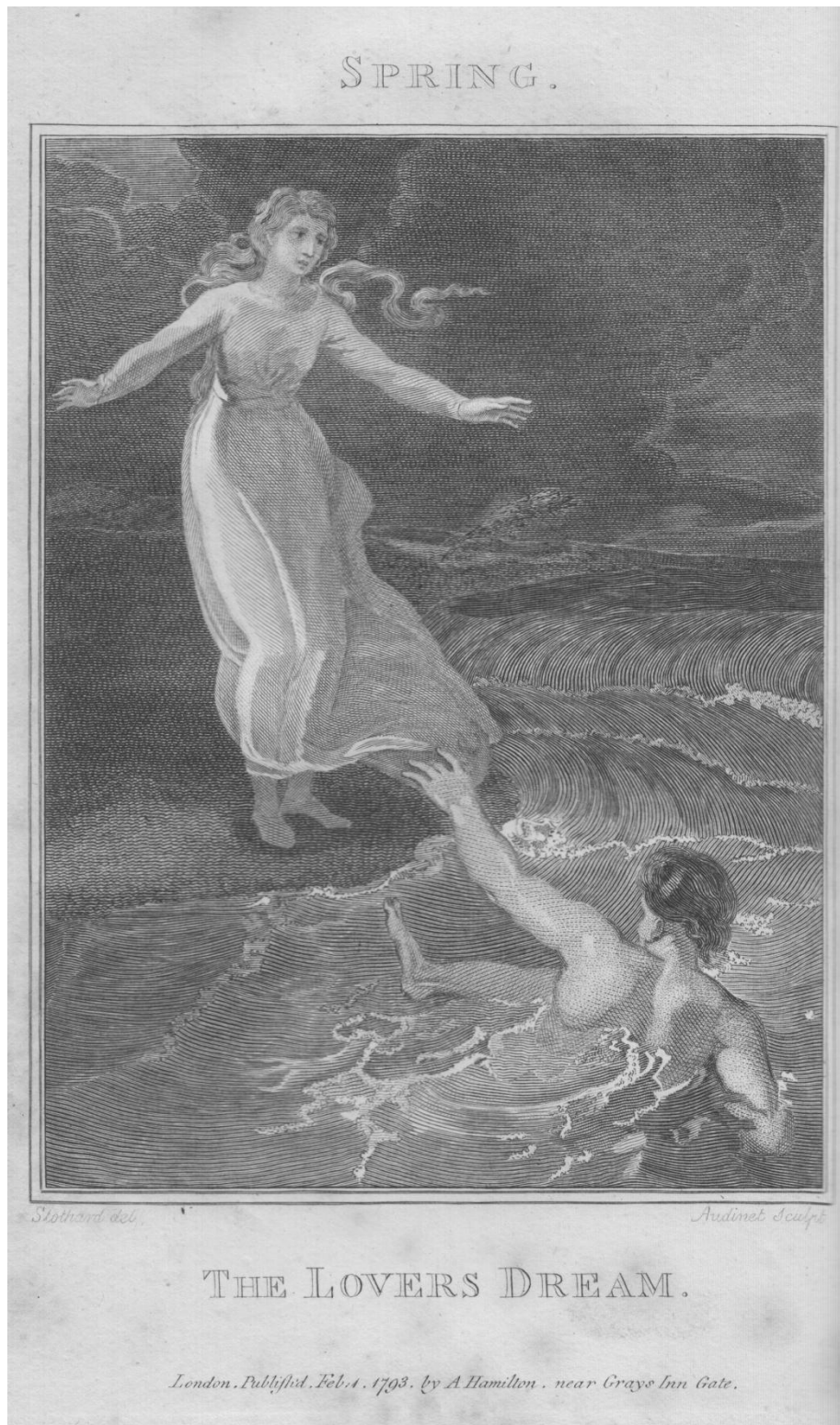


Figure 12 Full-page plate, designed by Thomas Stothard, engraved by Philip Audinet, for "Spring," from *The Seasons* (London: A. Hamilton, 1793). Reproduced from a copy in the author's possession.

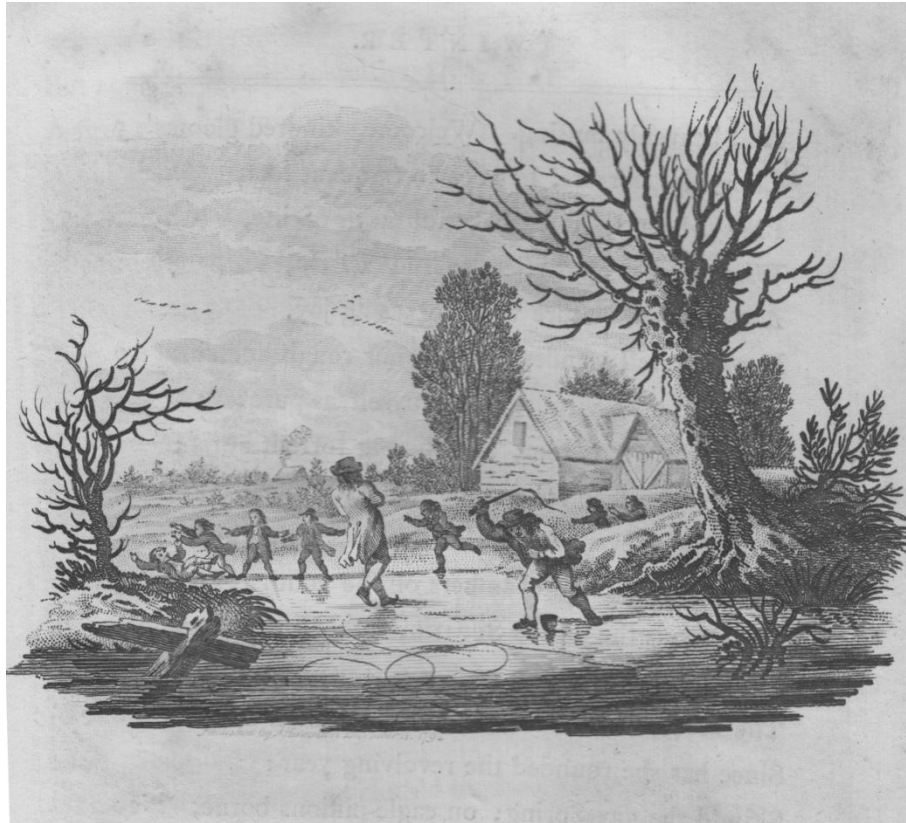


Figure 13 Headpiece vignette for “Winter,” from *The Seasons* (London: A. Hamilton, 1793). Reproduced from a copy in the author’s possession.

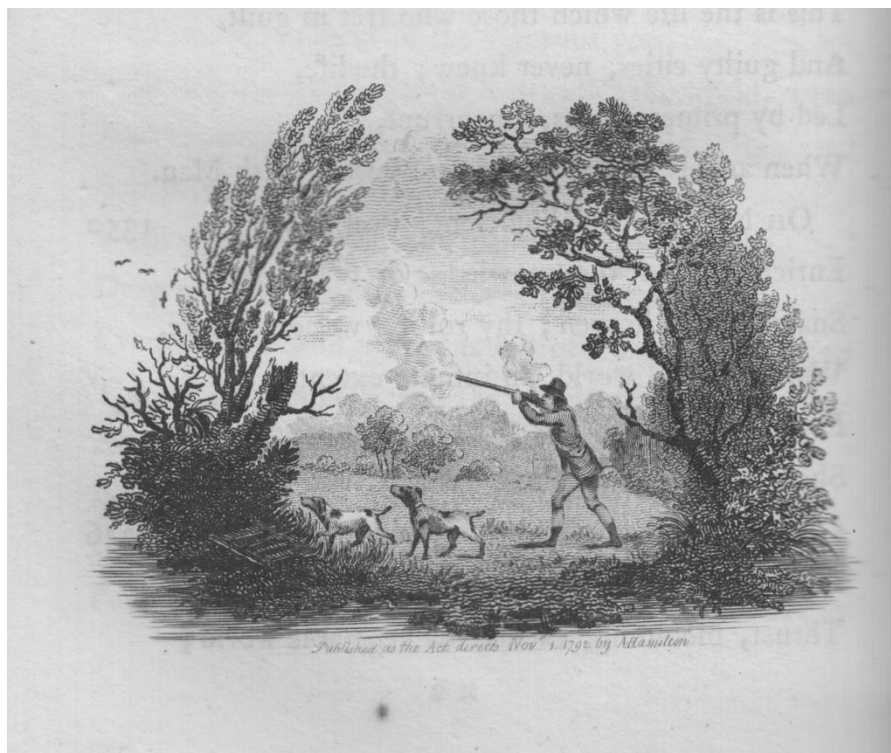
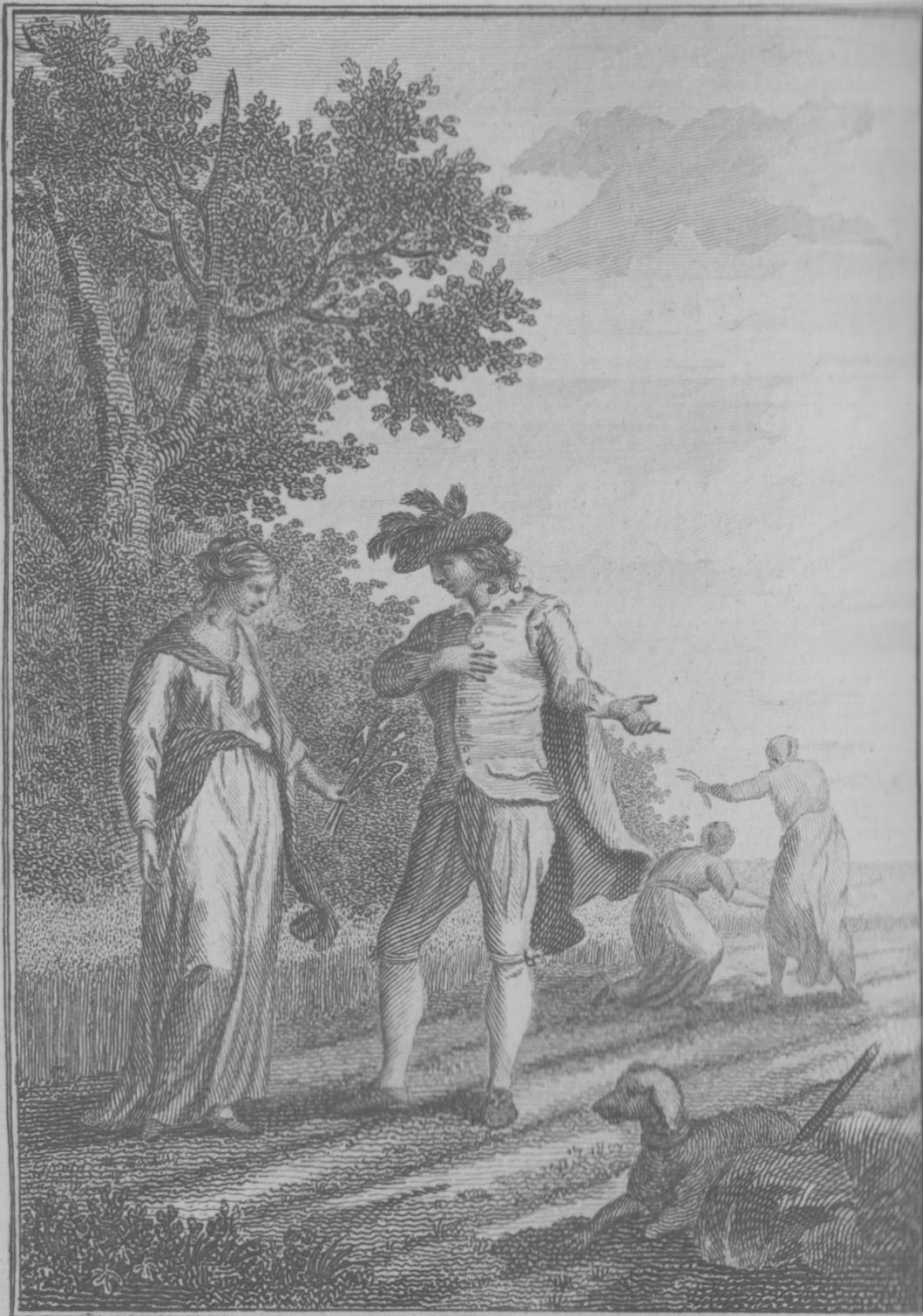


Figure 14 Tailpiece vignette for “Autumn,” from *The Seasons* (London: A. Hamilton, 1793). Reproduced from a copy in the author’s possession.

PALEMON & LAVINIA.



Hamilton Delin.

Caldwall Sculp.

*Then throw that shameful pittance from thy hand,
But ill applied to such a rugged task;
The Fields, the Master, all, my Fair, are thine.*

Figure 15 Full-page plate, designed by William Hamilton, engraved by James Caldwell, for "Autumn," from *The Seasons* (London: J. Murray, 1778). Reproduced from a copy in the author's possession.

AUTUMN.



H. Singleton pinxt.

J. Corner sculp.

PALEMON & LAVINIA.

Figure 16 Full-page plate, painted by Henry Singleton, engraved by John Corner, for "Autumn," from *The Seasons* (London: A. Hamilton, 1793). Reproduced from a copy in the author's possession.

love is central to Hamilton's pictorial interpretation of the episode. Palemon is depicted as he confidently gestures towards the surrounding fields which he offers to the modest Lavinia. In the foreground, a dog as a symbol of faithfulness and loyalty is depicted.

Singleton's illustration, by contrast, offers a different reading of the episode. The class distinction between the lovers is eliminated, as both Palemon and Lavinia are depicted in refined garments. Lavinia is no longer realistically rendered as engaging in manual labour: her clothes are too refined and the gleaned crop only functions as a prop of recognition. Moreover, the engraving provides a more intimate depiction of the two characters, with Palemon expressing his love for Lavinia by holding his right hand to his heart, while tentatively taking hold of her hand with his left. Hamilton's illustration adheres more closely to the moral message of class-transcending love originally introduced by Thomson, an aspect which is confirmed by the accompanying caption: "Then throw that shameful pittance from thy hand, / But ill applied to such a rugged task; / The Fields, the Master, all, my Fair, are thine." The relation of Singleton's illustration to the text of the poem is significantly less faithful, as the scene has been adjusted to appeal to the reader's refined taste and to evoke a feeling of sentimentality.

For the textual additions to his edition of *The Seasons*, Hamilton relied on Percival Stockdale, with whom he had collaborated in the context of the editorship of the *Critical Review* and the *Universal Magazine*. Stockdale had first established a reputation for himself as a literary critic through *An Enquiry into the Nature and Genuine Laws of Poetry, Including a Particular Defence of the Writing and Genius of Mr. Pope* (1778) in response to Joseph Warton's *Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope* (1756). Since copyright restrictions prevented the reprinting of Aikin's essay, Stockdale was obliged to look for new ways to inform the consumer's reading of Thomson's poem. In the first place, he introduced a biography of Thomson. Instead of incorporating Murdoch's account, Stockdale chose Johnson's 'Life'.

The decision to incorporate Johnson's account is surprising, considering that Stockdale was not on good terms with his fellow critic. In 1779, he had missed out on the opportunity to edit a series of affordable editions of the English poets, because the booksellers chose to contract Johnson instead. As a result, Stockdale became a bitter rival and strong critic of Johnson and his work, reproaching the latter especially for his prejudiced and conservative mentality in writing the *Lives*.⁵⁷ He would oppose Johnson's literary-critical legacy most vehemently in his *Lectures on the Truly Eminent English Poets* (1807). The epigraph confirms that the *Lectures* were conceived as a conscious riposte to

⁵⁷ For a discussion of the antagonistic relationship between Johnson and Stockdale, see Howard D. Weinbrot, "Samuel Johnson, Percival Stockdale, and Brick-Brats from Grubstreet: Some Later Response to the 'Lives of the Poets'," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 56:2 (1993): 105–34.

Johnson's *Lives*,⁵⁸ while Stockdale, throughout the work, fashions himself as the true defender of the British poetic tradition against the influence of "our great literary dictator."⁵⁹

Stockdale's opposition to and refutation of Johnson's biographical method is visible in his reworking of Johnson's life of Thomson, as well as in the critical notes to Hamilton's edition of *The Seasons*. The most profound change Stockdale made to Johnson's original text was the deletion of several sections which were critical of Thomson and his works. Reporting on the production of *Tancred and Sigismunda*, Thomson's popular tragedy of 1745, Stockdale ignores Johnson's scepticism about Thomson's skills as a writer of tragedy: "it may be doubted whether he was, either by the bent of nature or habits of study, much qualified for tragedy. It does not appear that he had much sense of the pathetic, and his diffusive and descriptive style produced declamation rather than dialogue."⁶⁰ In his notes, Stockdale repudiates his rival's infamous critique that "the great defect of the Seasons, is, want of method"⁶¹ as "absolute nonsense" and supports his claim with a positive evaluation of the ways in which "the poet surveys, paints, and enforces with a glowing, and animated pencil, with an affecting, and sublime morality, and religion, a Summer's morning, noon, evening, and night, as they succeed one another, in the course of nature."⁶² Even though both literary critics acknowledged the cultural value of Thomson's poetry, Stockdale uses this opportunity to produce a critical intervention against Johnson's biography and moralising evaluation, which was increasingly invoked as the authoritative account on Thomson's life and works.

Stockdale's revaluation of Thomson's poem was not only motivated by his rivalry with Johnson; rather, it also reflected the changed cultural status of *The Seasons* at the end of the eighteenth century. Whereas Aikin's essay in Murray's 1778 edition had been preoccupied with making Thomson's poem accessible to as wide a readership as possible to boost sales at a time when booksellers were still exploring which works—now no longer protected by perpetual copyright—would sell best, the marketability of *The Seasons* by the 1790s had been validated by the popularity of editions issued in the previous decades. Thomson had been mythified as a literary genius and *The Seasons* had

⁵⁸ "Johnson, with admiration oft I see / The Critick and the Bard conjoined in thee: / But prejudices, too, as oft I find, / Corrupt, debase, mislead thy noble mind. / Hence, against thee, I seize the cause of truth; / A cause that I adored, from early youth. / Oh! may her voice inspire my latest breath! / And soothe reflexion in the hour of death!" (Percival Stockdale, *Lectures on the Truly Eminent English Poets* (London: printed for the author, 1807), 2:title-page).

⁵⁹ Stockdale, *Lectures*, 1:101.

⁶⁰ Johnson, 4:100-1.

⁶¹ Stockdale, "Notes," no pagination.

⁶² Stockdale, "Notes," no pagination.

been attributed a place in the economically defined literary canon.⁶³ As a result, Stockdale was no longer required to provide reasons why Thomson's poem was worthy of being read; instead, he could simply identify those passages which would confirm the cultural status of the poem.

In this manner, Stockdale's notes are symptomatic of the fragmentary reading to which the poem was subjected at the end of the eighteenth century. With its status established and recognised, it was increasingly perceived as a collection of individual sections which could be read separately.⁶⁴ Inevitably, certain passages were more appreciated and read more frequently than others. Illustrators' departure from Kent's holistic representations of the seasons in preference to renderings of scenes drawn from the interpolated episodes is a first indication of this fragmentary approach towards *The Seasons*. The inclusion of certain passages of the poem in literary anthologies, such as *Roach's Beauties of the Modern Poets of Great Britain Carefully Selected and Arranged in Six Volumes*, confirms the changed engagement with the poem.⁶⁵ Stockdale's appendages to the edition also encourage a fragmentary reading of Thomson's work. In the notes, he selects a number of "pathetick" and "remarkably beautiful"⁶⁶ passages deserving of the reader's attention: comments are made on the four highly popular interpolated episodes and other well-known passages such as the contrastive description of passionate versus pure love at the end of "Spring." The index and glossary at the back of the edition provide an extensive alphabetical list of the subjects treated in the poem and their respective line references, enabling readers to locate the desired passages easily for a selective perusal of the poem.

Hamilton's edition--even more so than Murray's--was carefully designed to reflect and, at the same time, enhance the cultural status of *The Seasons*. The dedication to the Earl of Buchan and the subscription list were additional marketing devices to increase the prestige of the edition. The official approval of a high-ranking individual and

⁶³ In adopting an economic conceptualisation of the eighteenth-century canon, this dissertation adheres to book-historical and print-cultural paradigms, as developed by in Trevor Ross, *The Making of the English Literary Canon: From the Middle Ages to the Late Eighteenth Century* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998); Kramnick; and St Clair, especially chapter 7.

⁶⁴ The practice of engaging with *The Seasons* in a fragmentary reading was inherent to Thomson's composition of the poem. For a detailed consideration of Thomson's creation of a new, fragmentary genre in his complex long poem, see Jung, *The Fragmentary Poetic*, chapter 3.

⁶⁵ Stefanie Lethbridge attributes the selective perusal of the poem to the popularity of literary anthologies in Stefanie Lethbridge, "Anthological Reading Habits in the Eighteenth Century: The Case of Thomson's *Seasons*," in *Anthologies of British Literature: Critical Perspectives from Literary and Cultural Studies*, ed. Barbara Korte, et. al. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), 89–103. For a general discussion of the role of literary anthologies in developments of reading practices, see Barbara M. Benedict, *Making the Modern Reader: Cultural Mediation in Early Modern Literary Anthologies* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1996).

⁶⁶ Stockdale, "Notes," no pagination.

prominent Thomson enthusiast, as well as the subscribers' endorsement of the publishing venture, highlighted the edition's exceptionality and facilitated a symbolic confirmation of the cultural capital of *The Seasons*. The public recognition of the edition similarly applied to Stockdale's critical apparatus, thus adding to his attempts at establishing his critical legacy.⁶⁷

2.5 Robert Morison's Scottish Recasting of *The Seasons*

While Murray and Hamilton's editions are indicative of prevailing editorialising practices and consumer attitudes towards *The Seasons* in London in the 1790s, Morison's edition represents a more ambitious venture, in that it was part of a national cultural programme. Based in Perth, one of the "important centers for publishing the new books of the Scottish Enlightenment,"⁶⁸ the booksellers Robert Morison Sr. and Jr. by the late eighteenth century had established one of the largest publishing businesses in Scotland, mostly by means of reprinting English and Scottish literary texts. In the 1780s, in response to contemporary efforts by Scottish intellectuals such as Hugh Blair and Lord Kames to promote a Scottish cultural heritage, they produced a five-volume series of "The Scottish Poets" (1786–1789), so as to contribute to the development of a distinctly national canon of Scottish literature.⁶⁹

The Seasons became a central text in the Morisons' cultural-patriotic publishing programme. Not only did they issue the poem in quarto format in 1793, they also produced an illustrated two-volume duodecimo edition in 1790, a revised version of which appeared in 1794. Whereas the earlier edition was still closely modelled on English examples—it featured the frequently recurring phrase "with [Thomson's] last corrections and improvements" in its title-page and reprinted both Murdoch's biography and Collins's ode, the updated edition represented a distinctly Scottish

⁶⁷ Stockdale's editorial approach towards *The Seasons* and his attacks against Johnson's legacy should be considered within the broader context of eighteenth-century debates on the editing of—especially vernacular—texts, such as Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Shakespeare's works. See Marcus Walsh, *Shakespeare, Milton and Eighteenth-Century Literary Editing: The Beginnings of Interpretative Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Fiona Ritchie, "Shakespeare," in *Samuel Johnson in Context*, ed. Jack Lynch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 343–51.

⁶⁸ Sher, 268.

⁶⁹ For a discussion of the Morisons' development of a Scottish canon in their series, see Jung, "The Construction of an Enlightenment Scottish Literary Canon." I am grateful to professor Jung for allowing me to read an early draft of this article.

alternative to affordable English editions of Thomson's poem. Announcing itself as "A New Edition" on the title-page, it included both "An original life of the author" and "A critical essay on The Seasons," which the Morisons had commissioned for their quarto edition.

At the time, Morison's 1793 edition of *The Seasons* represented the most impressive Scottish edition of Thomson's poem and of Scottish print culture in general. This edition, just like Hamilton's, was issued in subscription format, but in four, rather than five instalments. A printed wrapper, used to distribute the first instalment, indicates that the edition cost 5s. 3d. per issue for subscribers and 7s. 6d. for non-subscribers.⁷⁰ Originally, the whole was offered to subscribers at the cost of £1, but by the time the first instalment was issued, the total expenses had already run significantly higher, inducing the publisher to raise the subscription price to £1 10s. The rising costs reveal that Morison did not shy away from considerable expenses in his attempt to monumentalise Thomson by producing one of the most pervasive high-cultural editions of *The Seasons* ever produced up to that point in time.

The paratexts in the quarto edition, more explicitly than in Murray and Hamilton's editions, refashion Thomson's poem as an important milestone in Scottish literary history. In the dedication to the edition, the Morisons emphasised the ways in which the poem had contributed to the development of a Scottish cultural heritage. The dedicatee was Dr Hugh Blair, emeritus professor of rhetoric and *belles-lettres* at the University of Edinburgh. An influential Church of Scotland minister who had developed a keen interest in culture and literature, Blair was closely associated with intellectual clubs and circles propagating a culture of politeness and sophistication in Scotland's capital. He had established himself as an international literary critic through his active promotion of Ossian's poetry in the 1760s.⁷¹ In 1783, he had established a new paradigm for the study of rhetoric and literary criticism in Scotland with his *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*. Blair's theories on taste, criticism, language, style, and elegance, together with his recognition of indigenous, often oral, traditions of literature, contributed greatly to the development of a Scottish nationalism which attempted to define a Scottish cultural identity within an expanding British empire.⁷²

⁷⁰ A copy of Morison's edition in its original wrappers is held at the National Library of Scotland (Shelfmark: Bdg.m.90).

⁷¹ Blair commissioned the publication of, and wrote the preface for, James Macpherson's supposed translation of the poetry of the ancient Celtic bard. With the publication of *A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian, the Son of Fingal*, issued in quarto format in London in 1763, Blair launched himself on the international scene and became a staunch defender of the authenticity of the Ossianic poems as an invaluable part of Scotland's cultural heritage.

⁷² Trumpener, 44. Susan Manning has explored the influence of antiquarian practices on the development of post-Enlightenment literary historiography in late eighteenth-century Scotland in "Antiquarianism, the

Morison's edition is dedicated to Blair, both in his capacity as a promoter of a Scottish cultural heritage as well as an instructor of the Scottish people.⁷³ Acknowledging Scotland's recent cultural and literary emancipation, the Morisons depict Thomson as the first Scotsman who "had distinguished himself by elegant, English composition," in the process freeing Scottish literature from "those peculiarities of dialect" which had long been held in disdain in the South.⁷⁴ Sher confirms that the publication of *The Seasons* occurred at a time when Scottish expatriates such as Millar and the printer William Strahan (formerly Strachan) invested in "patriotic publishing" "to promote Scotland's genius and glory."⁷⁵ In this context, *The Seasons* is read as a work which introduced a gradual diffusion of "the taste for polite writing" and as promoting "correctness, regularity, and grace" in Scotland.⁷⁶

Morison's promotion of Thomson as a central figure for the cultural emancipation of Scotland is further developed in Robert Heron's biography of Thomson and his critical essay to *The Seasons*. Heron, a former assistant to Blair, had already written a preface for another edition of the poem, produced in Edinburgh in 1789 by P. Hill. The scope of his contributions to Morison's edition in 1793 was far more substantial and ambitious, however. Consisting of fifty-two pages and including a number of authentic letters, Heron's account of Thomson's life was the most comprehensive biography of the author ever to have been produced.⁷⁷ Commenting on the merits of *The Seasons*, he discusses the ways in which Thomson negotiated innate poetic talent with a thorough knowledge and good command of the mechanical properties of poetry. Following the Earl of Buchan's example, Heron attributes the key to the poem's success to Thomson's Scottish background:

The scenery of his native situation might impress his youthful imagination with the elements of those enchanting pictures of rural nature which he afterwards produced through his works; and, he might catch from his mother the infection of that tender sensibility, and that affecting piety which all his writings breathe.⁷⁸

Scottish Science of Man, and the Emergence of Modern Disciplinary," in *Scotland and the Borders of Romanticism*, ed. Leith Davis, et. al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 57–76.

⁷³ Robert Morison, dedication in Thomson 1793 (Morison), 5.

⁷⁴ Morison, 3–4.

⁷⁵ Sher, 305.

⁷⁶ Morison, 4.

⁷⁷ Heron not only consulted Murdoch and Johnson's biographies, but also incorporated material from Boswell's *The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.* (1791) and from the Buchan's *Essays*, which included a number of letters and unpublished material.

⁷⁸ Robert Heron, "The Life of James Thomson," in Thomson 1793 (Morison), v.

The emphasis on the author's poetic talents and the fashioning of Thomson as a canonical figure in literary history is continued in Heron's critical essay on *The Seasons*. Developing a hierarchy of literary genres, he ranks descriptive poetry as second only to the epic.⁷⁹ The subsequent discussion of the individual seasons and his comparison of *The Seasons* to both historical and contemporary works of literature is supported by references to literary critics, such as Johnson and the Warton brothers, by means of which Heron develops a comprehensive, theoretical as well as historical, framework to evaluate Thomson's achievements.

Morison not only constructs a Scottish reputation for Thomson by means of Heron's biography and essay, but, at the same time, attempts to monumentalise the poet through the material execution of the edition. Jung has indicated that "Scottish booksellers, especially after the mid-1770s, invested in the physical quality of their publications by utilizing improvements in copper-plate engraving and printing, as well as type-founding."⁸⁰ Due to the material sophistication and the diligence with which it was produced, the edition represents a masterpiece of Scottish print culture. The Morisons, in their dedication to Blair, also explicitly draw attention to their efforts in producing a prestigious, high-quality edition of *The Seasons*: "In the present edition, we have endeavoured to give it every recommendation which can be derived from valuable Engravings, beauty of paper, elegance of type, and correctness of printing."⁸¹

The illustrations to the edition confirm that the Morisons wanted to pay tribute to Thomson by producing one of the most high-cultural renderings of the poem. As the wrapper indicates, the buyer of the edition could choose not to have the plates bound into the actual book, but to keep them as furniture prints to be put on display in the home instead.⁸² The illustrations to the quarto edition, eight in total, thus represent a significant improvement on Morison's earlier duodecimo edition, which was adorned with only three, less sophisticatedly executed engravings.⁸³ Moreover, the already elaborate plates to the 1793 edition were also made available in colour version, making this book venture the first colour-printed edition of *The Seasons* in the eighteenth century.

⁷⁹ Robert Heron, "A Critical Essay on *The Seasons*," in Thomson 1793 (Morison), 5.

⁸⁰ Jung, "The Construction of an Enlightenment Scottish Literary Canon."

⁸¹ Morison, 5–6.

⁸² By providing their buyers with the opportunity to frame the illustrations as furniture prints, the Morisons were tapping into a niche market of elite print commodities surrounding Thomson's poem, important contributors to which were Hamilton and Angellica Kaufman. See Jung, "High-Cultural Consumption," 505–11.

⁸³ Apart from a frontispiece portrait of the author, the duodecimo edition included a rendering of the dramatic conclusion to the tragic tale of Celadon and Amelia, and a portrait of Lavinia.

The frontispiece portrait to the edition provides another example of the ways in which the Morisons departed from his English predecessors to memorialise Thomson as a Scottish author. [Figure 17] Like most frontispieces included in eighteenth-century editions of the poem, the engraving in the 1790 edition sets Thomson's portrait in an oval frame, occasionally topped with a laurel crown symbolising his poetic achievements. [Figure 18] For the frontispiece of their edition of *The Seasons*, by contrast, the Morisons introduce an engraving after an entirely new portrait of the author.⁸⁴ It far exceeds the conventional purpose of frontispieces as a tool for identification and authentication. Thomson is dressed in a wig and a more formal coat, his head raised upwards and his gaze confidently fixed in the distance. He is here represented with an enhanced sense of sophistication and professionalism and is designated as a national symbol of Scottish literariness. The iconography of the portrait enhances the cultural importance of Thomson's status as the canonical poet of *The Seasons*. The portrait in Morison's edition is part of a bust-like structure, which is surrounded by visual components representing the four seasons. At the top of the emblem frame, a sickle holds in place a rich crown of fruit and crop symbolising the harvest activities central to autumn. The remaining seasons are represented in three oval emblems in the foot of the bust after designs by Stothard.⁸⁵ The 1793 edition also included an engraving of a design of a Thomson memorial which never materialised to further monumentalise the author's canonical status.

The remaining plates in the edition, produced after designs by Charles Catton and Richard Corbould, were strikingly different from the English tradition. [Figure 19] The illustrations are far more sophisticated than any of the visual paratexts produced for English editions up to that point in time. The size of the plates, as well as the level of detail, lends a particularly painterly quality to the illustrations. The images, executed in landscape orientation, cover almost the entire page: the margins above and to the left and right of the illustrations are very narrow; the captions underneath are barely visible once the prints are bound into the edition. These characteristics suggest that the Morisons tried to make good on their promise to give their edition "every recommendation" in terms of the material execution.⁸⁶ To achieve an optimal realisation of their illustrations and to compensate for their large format, the Morisons

⁸⁴ This portrait, which has not been traced, was in the possession of the Earl of Buchan, who had lent it to the Morisons specifically for the production of their edition, as indicated by a letter written by the Earl on 11 August 1812 to Dr. Anderson (The letter is held in the Forster Manuscript collection at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London).

⁸⁵ The scenes depicted in the emblems were after designs by Stothard for the 1793 issue of Baker's *Royal Engagement Pocket Atlas*.

⁸⁶ Morison, 5.



Figure 17 Frontispiece, painted by William Aikman, engraved by Daniel Lizars, for *The Seasons* (Perth: R. Morison and Son, 1790). Reproduced with permission from a copy in professor Sandro Jung's possession.



Figure 18 Frontispiece, painted by Thomas Hudson, engraved by David Blackmore Pyet, for *The Seasons* (Perth: R. Morison and Son, 1793). Reproduced with permission from a copy in professor Sandro Jung's possession.



Figure 19 Full-page plate, designed by Charles Catton, engraved by Francis Chesham, for "Autumn," from *The Seasons* (Perth: R. Morison and Son, 1793). Reproduced with permission from a copy in professor Sandro Jung's possession.

were compelled to work around the limitations of the print medium.

Even though the plates thematically corresponded with their Southern predecessors, they were distinct in terms of their representations of landscape. In contrast with the illustrations to Murray and Hamilton's editions, where nature serves as a nondescript background for sentimental tableaux, the landscape features more prominently in Catton and Corbould's designs. **[Figure 20]** In the first illustration to "Spring," a fishing scene is depicted. Even though Corbould adopts an anthropocentric mode by depicting a man and woman in upper-class garments as they exchange affectionate looks, he consciously engages with the English iconographic tradition in his depiction of nature. Particular attention is paid to a detailed and realistic rendering of the trees and the swirling currents. The illustrators highlight the energy and the beauty of the landscape to develop a more dynamic view of nature. By introducing imposing mountains, rolling hills, and raging sea storms in the other engravings, the illustrators adhered more closely to the (Scottish) image of nature which Thomson originally constructed in *The Seasons*.

2.6 Conclusion

The editions of *The Seasons* discussed in this chapter were products of the commoditisation impulses affecting the British book trade's exploitation of Thomson's work and its subsequent transformation into a cultural classic. To enhance the attractiveness and the market value of their editions, the booksellers diversified the material design and execution of their editions as well as the paratextual matrix within which they embedded Thomson's poem. Including distinct typographic and visual paratexts, they refashioned the original text in response to changes in consumer culture. Murray's revision of his 1778 edition of *The Seasons* in 1792 indicates the ways in which booksellers used added material--Aikin's popular essay in Murray's case--as a trademark for their publishing ventures. The illustrations included in the editions provide insights into the various iconographic transformations of Thomson's poem in the 1790s. The editorial strategies devised by the producers of the editions not only facilitated the construction of specific reputations of the poem and its author, it also enabled editors to produce an intervention in the field of literary criticism. The paratexts in the Morisons' 1793 edition reflect the ways in which the Scottish booksellers wanted to establish a programme of cultural advancement, thus facilitating the formation of an Scottish Enlightenment canon. Each of the editions met with success on the market, as indicated by the ways in which later editions of *The Seasons*



Figure 20 Full-page plate, designed by Richard Corbould, engraved by Francis Chesham, for “Spring,” from *The Seasons* (Perth: R. Morison and Son, 1793). Reproduced with permission from a copy in professor Sandro Jung’s possession.

recycled or adapted some of the paratexts.⁸⁷ Murray, Hamilton, and the Morisons' editions are part of the rich field of print-cultural production fed by *The Seasons*, providing new interpretations of, and further enhancing, the popularity and canonisation of Thomson's descriptive poem.

⁸⁷ Murray's revised edition was reissued twice afterwards: once in 1793 by Murray himself; once in 1794 by Thomas Cadell, partner and successor to Millar's business. Moreover, the engraving to "Spring," would be reused as the frontispiece for editions of French translation of *The Seasons*, produced in 1806 and 1817. After Hamilton's death in 1793, T. Chapman, the original printer of the edition, bought the bookseller's stock in trade and reissued the edition in 1795 without the full-page engravings after Singleton's designs. Stockdale's index and glossary were reused several times in the nineteenth century, for instance, by James Wallis in 1805. After 1793, two other booksellers would introduce colour-printed illustrations like the Morisons: Tomkins in 1798 and Thomas Hurst in 1802. The latter edition will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 3 The Print-Cultural and Material Experimentation in Early Nineteenth-Century Editions of *The Seasons*

The peak in popularity of *The Seasons* in the 1790s, as reflected in the highest number of illustrated editions of the poem, led to a saturation of the book market in Britain. Booksellers hoping to capitalise on Thomson's poem at the beginning of the nineteenth century consequently had to find new ways to appeal to consumers by experimenting with marketing strategies developed in the previous century. This chapter will primarily focus on James Wallis's production of three editions of the poem in 1805. It will examine the paratexts, especially the illustrations, and the material execution of the editions to reveal the challenges and risks involved in the production of a new edition of a work of such popularity and cultural status as *The Seasons*. The chapter will conclude with a brief overview of the most prominent early nineteenth-century editions of Thomson's poem up to 1820 to identify the general trends in the paratextual and material packaging of editions of *The Seasons* in response to the changing conditions of the book market.

3.1 James Wallis's Editions of *The Seasons* (1805)¹

In 1805, James Wallis, a young, entrepreneurial London bookseller, produced three different editions of the poem in three different formats. Even though Wallis included

¹ The research detailed below was published as "James Wallis's Editions of *The Seasons* (1805)," *Studies in Literary Imagination* 46:1 (2013): 115–37.

the same paratexts—a set of newly commissioned illustrations, a biography of Thomson, and an index, as well as a glossary—he distinguished his editions most explicitly in terms of their formal make-up. This section of the chapter will examine Wallis's editions of Thomson's poem in connection with contemporary editions of *The Seasons* as well as with Wallis's other publication ventures. It will consider the bookseller's paratextual and material repackaging of *The Seasons*, especially focussing on the latter to indicate the ways in which Wallis manufactured three distinct products, to appeal to as many consumers as possible.

Wallis's project not only serves as an insightful case study of marketing strategies adopted by booksellers in the competitive marketplace, but also testifies to developments in illustration practices at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The editions were embellished with finely-executed wood engravings, produced by Thomas Bewick and his workshop apprentices after designs by John Thurston. Negotiating the rich illustrative tradition of the late eighteenth century, the illustrators promoted new interpretations of Thomson's poem. At the same time, the collaboration between bookseller, designer, and engraver represented an experiment with the medium of the wood engraving as a viable alternative to the previously dominant reproductive technology of the intaglio engraving.

There is little information available about Wallis and his publishing enterprise. Registered as an apprentice to the Stationers' Company in 1789, he became a freeman in 1797 through redemption—i. e., the paying of a fee—and was elected liveryman on 7 October 1800.² He initially operated from Ivy Lane, but relocated to Paternoster Row in 1798.³ In the years after his apprenticeship, Wallis published mostly non-fictional works such as travel narratives, letter collections, and moral and philosophical essays, often in collaboration with fellow booksellers to share the production costs and to reduce financial risks.⁴ In the late 1790s and at the beginning of the new century, sales must

² In the Stationers' Company, one became a freeman, or a yeoman, after completing a seven-year apprenticeship. A freeman could exercise any of the trades regulated by the Company, such as papermaker, printer, and bookseller. Liverymen occupied a more prestigious and influential position in the Company, as they were allowed to attend annual meetings and decide over the future of the trade. John Adrians, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 202–5.

³ In this respect, Wallis should not be confused with two other booksellers sharing the same surname. John Wallis (active from 1775 to 1818; operating from Ludgate Street, Cornhill and Warwick Square) specialised in toys, games, and children's books. James Wallis (active from 1803 to 1825; operating from Berwick Street, Soho) published a number of morally instructive chapbooks between 1810 and 1822 under the series title of *Wallis's Juvenile Tales*.

⁴ Wallis's publications in this period include editions of Philip Falle's *Cæsarea: Or an Account of Jersey, the Greatest of the Islands Round the Coast of England* (1797), John Gale's *Cabinet of Knowledge; Or Miscellaneous Recreations* (1797), Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont's *Letters of Madame du Montier* (1798), and *An Essay on the Most Rational Means of Preserving Health* (1799).

have been poor or Wallis must have overstretched his resources, since he went bankrupt on 2 November 1801. Wallis's case is symptomatic of the fortunes of many ambitious minor booksellers who entered the London book trade after the copyright lawsuit in 1774. With the monopoly of the Stationers' Company effectively at an end, the book market became open to entrepreneurs attempting to benefit from the new commercial opportunities. However, the trade was as risky as it was profitable. Raven reports on the changing circumstances of the trade:

The profits of certain publishing booksellers soared, but so also did the number of bankruptcies. Unprecedented turnover in books matched unprecedented turnover in booksellers. Although joint ventures and *ad hoc* partnerships continued – many lessening risk and ensuring secure profits – the trade as a whole experienced a new vulnerability and rivalry.⁵

In spite of his initial setback, Wallis persisted and re-entered the trade in 1802. Instead of investing in a number of unrelated book projects, however, he initiated a more ambitious publishing programme, one component of which was his project of publishing editions of Thomson's poem in multiple formats.

Wallis was aware of late eighteenth-century publishing practices, as indicated by his incorporation of two of his predecessors' most widely reprinted non-visual paratexts. He included Johnson's biography of Thomson, as well as the index and glossary included in Hamilton's 1793 edition of *The Seasons*. Wallis's index and glossary were nearly identical to Stockdale's, as he retained all of the entries, replacing the original volume and line references with the new page and line references. These paratexts, together with the illustrations to the editions, suggest that readers still maintained an anthological reading habit toward *The Seasons*, which foregrounded the interpolated episodes and other passages of sentimental and moral instruction.

Even though Wallis strategically capitalised on the successful editorial practices of his predecessors, he could not rely exclusively on existing paratexts to generate consumer interest in his editions of *The Seasons*. The widespread dissemination of the numerous, paratextually refashioned editions of Thomson's poem at the end of the eighteenth century had led to a saturation of the book market, compelling booksellers at the beginning of the nineteenth century to develop new ways to compete with their rivals. Recognising the importance of product design, Raven identifies three main

⁵ Raven, *The Business of Books*, 295.

strategies that booksellers adopted to stimulate demand for their editions: “tailoring products to a particular clientele, experimenting in the design and packaging of products, and presenting these, as well as wider publishing activities, as fashionable and *avant-garde*.”⁶

The publication prospectus Wallis issued indicates the ways in which he differentiated his three editions of *The Seasons* from other editions on the market:

Mr Bewick’s Editions of Thomson’s Seasons. This day are published three elegant editions by Bewick, . . . all from Thurston’s Designs. 1. A Neat Pocket Edition on foolscap 8vo in five numbers at 1s. 6d. each. 2. Very Neat Edition on Pica Letter, printed on a fine wove demy Octavo, to match the Hume and the Shakespeare, in five Numbers at 2s. 6d. per number. 3. A splendid Royal Octavo edition, printed in the best style by Bensley, on a superfine wove Paper, upon a new and very large Type, in five Numbers, price 3s. each: all the editions are Hot-pressed.⁷

The prospectus highlights the most important and innovative aspects of the editions—namely, the illustrations and the variation in the material composition. The marketing strategies identified by Raven offer a useful matrix for my consideration of the design and production of Wallis’s editions of *The Seasons*. Both the material and illustrative make-up of the publications constitute an experiment in design and packaging, which Wallis applied with different goals in mind. He introduced the elaborate material diversification of his editions to cater to different groups of consumers so as to reach as socially diverse a buying public as possible. His engagement with the medium of the wood engraving not only served to increase the appeal of his editions. It also represented an attempt to make the most of the rapidly developing medium.

Wallis’s decision to issue his editions of *The Seasons* in octavo format signifies a first divergence from prevailing publishing practices. Since many fine-printed editions of Thomson’s poem had appeared in octavo and quarto formats in the 1790s, booksellers at

⁶ Raven, *The Business of Books*, 269.

⁷ Nigel Tattersfield, *Thomas Bewick: The Complete Illustrative Work* (London: British Library, 2011), 2:615. I will be referring to the editions by means of the formats indicated in the prospectus. The actual paper sizes of the editions do not correspond with the sizes established by the American Library Association, however. The format of the foolscap octavo edition, in particular, differs significantly, since its measurements correspond to that of a large duodecimo. For more information on paper sizes in the eighteenth century, see Philip Gaskell, “Notes on Eighteenth-Century British Paper,” *The Library* 12.1 (1957): 34–42; *A New Introduction to Bibliography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 66–75.

the beginning of the nineteenth century increasingly issued *The Seasons* in smaller and cheaper formats. In this manner, they not only avoided competing with the large-format editions, but were also able to meet the demands of a wider group of middle- and lower-middle-class consumers looking for portable editions of the poem. Wallis was only one of three booksellers who still opted to produce fine-quality editions in octavo format at the time. In 1802, Francis Isaac Du Roveray had issued an expensive, sophisticatedly executed edition of *The Seasons*, which was printed to a high standard by Thomas Bensley. [Figure 21] The edition included six newly commissioned copper-plate engravings, which were produced after paintings by the Royal Academicians Henry Fuseli and William Hamilton. The qualitatively impressive illustrations contributed to the prestige of the edition, which served as an affordable alternative to Morison and Tomkins's luxury editions. [Figure 22] In the same year, Thomas Hurst produced another edition of Thomson's poem, the illustrations to which he made available in monochrome and colour-printed variants. Because of the application of colour printing--a practice which was previously only used for large-format productions--Hurst's edition "occup[ied] an intermediary position between the large and expanding market for pocket editions of *The Seasons* and the more exclusive volumes for bibliophile collectors."⁸

As indicated in the previous chapters, Wallis was not the first to issue multiple editions of *The Seasons*. Eighteenth-century booksellers such as Murray, Morison, and William Lane,⁹ following Millar's example, had produced several editions of Thomson's poem in various formats to capitalise on its popularity. They consistently attempted to generate market demand by updating the paratextual make-up of their editions. Hurst also made his edition of *The Seasons* available in octodecimo format so as to cater to the growing market for pocket books.

By simultaneously publishing his editions in three different octavo formats, Wallis innovated a strategy frequently adopted in the eighteenth century. Booksellers issued a limited number of copies of their edition of *The Seasons* in a more expensive variant to entice wealthier consumers or book collectors to purchase the more exclusive and prestigious variant. Murray had produced his 1792 edition of *The Seasons* in royal octavo and in crown octavo formats. Du Roveray, in 1802, followed the same practice, issuing the more exclusive royal octavo copies with high-quality proof impressions of the plates. Morison and Tomkins also made their quarto edition of Thomson's poem available in two variants, in that the buyer could choose to acquire a copy with either monochrome or colour-printed illustrations.

⁸ Jung, "Packaging, Design and Colour," 118. For a detailed examination of Hurst's edition of *The Seasons*, which was reissued by James Cundee's Albion Press in 1805, see Jung, "Packaging, Design and Colour," 118–23.

⁹ William Lane's editions of *The Seasons* will be discussed in the second section of this chapter.

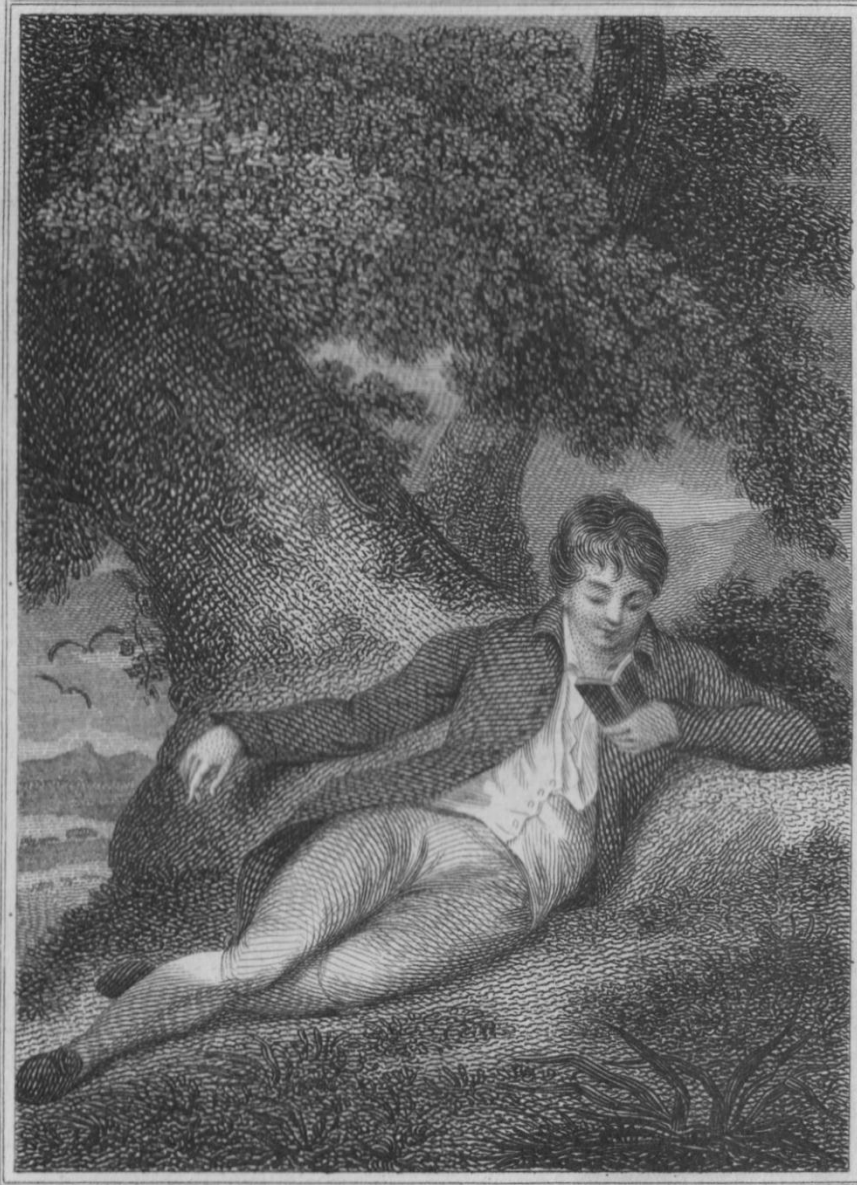


Painted by H. Fuseli R.A.

Engraved by W. Bromley.

Figure 21 Full-page plate, painted by Henri Fuseli, engraved by William Bromley, for "Summer," from *The Seasons* (London: F. J. Du Roveray, 1802). Reproduced from a copy in the author's possession.

S P R I N G .



Cranmer del.

Cook sc.

*Or lie reclin'd beneath yon spreading ash,
Hung o'er the steep; whence born on liquid wing
The sounding culver shoots; —*

Line 418.

Published Dec. 11 1801. by T. Hurst, Paternoster Row.

Figure 22 Full-page plate, designed by Charles Cranmer, engraved by Thomas Cook, for "Spring," from *The Seasons* (London: T. Hurst, 1802). Reproduced with permission from a copy in professor Sandro Jung's possession.

The new and striking feature of Wallis's venture was that he issued his editions of *The Seasons* in three, rather than two, octavo formats, each of which was printed to a different quality on a different type of paper. The second edition advertised in the publishing prospectus is the most conventional of the three editions, in that it appeared in the standard demy octavo format. The most expensive edition was issued in a larger octavo format on wove paper and was executed in a newly designed type. The first edition on offer, however, differed significantly from the royal and demy octavo editions. The foolscap octavo edition, printed on plain laid paper by Thomas Davison, was the smallest and least finely executed of the editions.

The differentiation between the foolscap octavo and the other editions is immediately apparent from the title-pages. [Figures 23 & 24] Whereas the royal and demy octavo editions feature the same title-page design, though recast in different sizes, the title-page of the foolscap octavo displays some significant variation. Apart from the full spelling of Thomson's name (in the other editions "James" is abbreviated to "J."), the use of "ornamented with" instead of "embellished with," and the variation on "from designs of Mr Thurston," the title-page of the foolscap octavo includes the phrase "a new edition," which suggests that Wallis likely advertised the edition as a fashionable commodity item. The typographical design of the title-pages also differs substantially. In the foolscap octavo, for instance, the title "The Seasons" has been cast in a Gothic type, while in the other editions the words are divided across two lines with "The" cast in small and "Seasons" in large capitals. The Gothic type in the latter editions is reserved for a different part of the title-page. Another variation occurs in the design of the title vignette. In the royal and demy octavos, the vignette--a radiant sun breaking through the clouds--is accompanied by a caption from the poem. In the foolscap octavo, by contrast, the caption is left out. As a result, the vignette is larger in design and appears more prominently on the title-page.

The variation in the design and execution noticeable in the title vignette occurs more markedly in the other wood engravings. Apart from the vignette, Wallis's editions include nine illustrations--two per season and one for the concluding hymn. The engravings were not only executed in various sizes; they also differed in the way in which they were included in the editions. In the royal and demy octavo editions, the wood engravings appear at the beginning and the end of every season. The former appear with the season title as full-page illustrations before the argument of each season (or before the text in the case of the engraving to the hymn). The latter illustrations are included as tailpieces and appear underneath the concluding lines of their respective season. By contrast, the foolscap octavo features full-page illustrations facing the appropriate sections of the text. A copy of the foolscap edition held at the

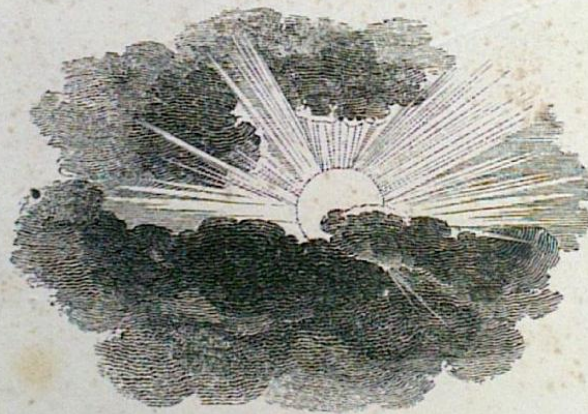
THE
SEASONS,

BY
J. THOMSON.

EMBELLISHED
WITH ENGRAVINGS ON WOOD

By BEWICK,

From Hurston's Designs.



..... and thou, O Sun!
Soul of surrounding worlds! in whom best seen
Shines out thy Maker! may I sing of thee?

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR JAMES WALLIS, PATERNOSTER-ROW,
By T. Bensley, Bolt Court, Fleet Street.

1805.

Figure 23 Title-page for *The Seasons*, in royal octavo format (London: J. Wallis, 1805).
Reproduced from a copy in the author's possession.

The Seasons.

BY

JAMES THOMSON.

A NEW EDITION.

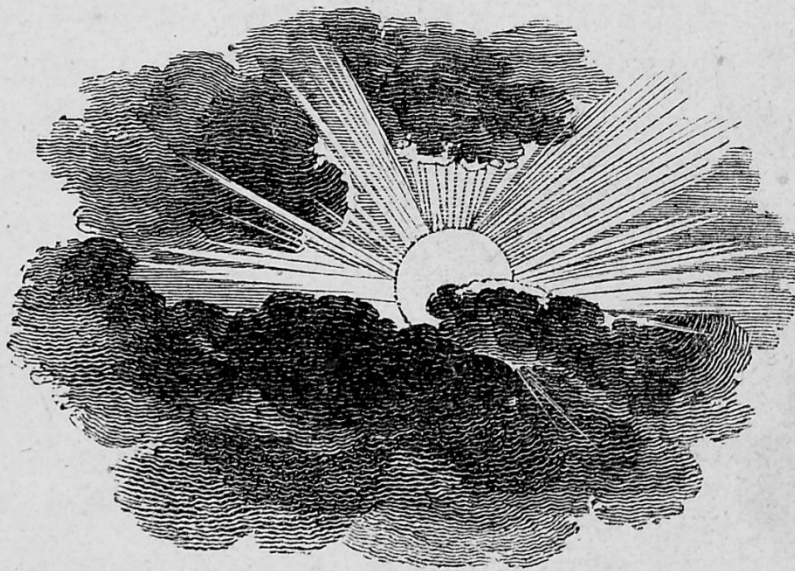
ORNAMENTED WITH

ENGRAVINGS ON WOOD,

BY BEWICK,

FROM

DESIGNS OF MR. THURSTON.



LONDON:

PRINTED FOR JAMES WALLIS, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

By Thomas Davison, Whitefriars.

1805.

Figure 24 Title-page for *The Seasons*, in foolscap octavo format (London: J. Wallis, 1805).
Reproduced with permission from a copy held at the National Library of Scotland.

British Library¹⁰ includes a sheet with instructions to the binder. The sheet contains a list of page references indicating which pages the wood engraving should be facing. The final and most substantial difference between the sets of illustrations lies in their layout. The engravings in the royal and demy octavo editions have been produced in portrait orientation and are accompanied by a caption. The wood engravings in the foolscap octavo, by contrast, have been executed in landscape orientation and are only accompanied by a line reference.

The differences in orientation and design of the illustrations profoundly affect the material appearance of the editions and the consumer's reading experience. In the foolscap octavo edition, the insertion of the wood engravings opposite the corresponding passages establishes a closer link between text and illustration. Readers are encouraged to consider the engravings in direct relation to the specific lines of the poem so as to add an extra dimension to their reading and interpretation of *The Seasons*. It also fulfils an indexical function. The reader could easily turn to the illustrated sections in the book, which visualised some of the most popular passages in the poem. The vertical orientation of the engravings did have one significant side effect, however: the reader was required to tilt the book sideways to examine the illustrations in close detail. This alternative form of engaging with the visual material disrupts a straightforward, uninterrupted reading of the poem, while also causing the reader to pause and to reflect on the relation between the text and the image. In the royal and demy octavo editions, by contrast, the wood engravings constitute an illustrative and interpretative matrix: the text of each part of *The Seasons* is embedded within two illustrations which evoke the atmosphere of a particular season. "Winter" is enclosed within an illustration of the desperate shepherd trying to find his way home in a snow storm and an illustration of a pack of ravenous wolves attacking a family. The engravings evoke the harsh and severe nature of the wintry season. Because of their inclusion at the beginning and the ending of the various parts of the poem, the visual paratexts did not entertain as close a connection with the text as the illustrations in the foolscap octavo edition. Removed from their context in the poem and equipped with an appropriate caption, the engravings allowed the reader to develop a more selective, illustration-oriented interpretation. The differences in design and execution of the wood engravings confirm the fact that Wallis envisioned different audiences and uses for the editions.

In spite of the discrete design and packaging of the foolscap octavo, Wallis also developed a clear distinction between the demy and royal octavo editions. He intended the royal octavo, the most qualitatively and beautifully executed of his editions of *The*

¹⁰ General Reference Collection 20098.b.18.

Seasons, to represent the competitive alternative to other finely produced octavo editions (such as Du Roveray's) on the market. Twice as expensive as the foolscap octavo, the royal octavo catered for a wealthier upper- and upper-middle-class public. Even though Wallis had commissioned Bensley to print both the demy and royal octavo editions, Bensley is acknowledged only as the printer of the royal octavo, both in the publishing prospectus and another advertisement that I have traced.¹¹

Bensley, who had established himself as a printer of luxury editions by 1790, was involved in multiple large-format book productions such as Robert Bowyer's folio edition of David Hume's *History of England* (1793–1806) and Thomas Macklin's folio editions of the Bible (1800–16). He had also played an important part in the market for editions of *The Seasons* around the turn of the century, as he had been involved in the production of Tomkins's monumental folio edition, which he would reprint in quarto format for Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme in 1807. Bensley had also printed Du Roveray's edition in 1802.¹² By associating Bensley solely with the royal octavo edition, Wallis most likely wanted to create an impression of exclusiveness to increase its prestige and consumer appeal. Whereas he clearly marketed the foolscap and royal octavo editions as stand-alone products, he adopted a different strategy for the third edition on offer.

Wallis linked the demy octavo edition to two of his other publishing ventures: editions of David Hume's *The History of England (from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution in 1688)* and *The Plays of William Shakespeare*. Even though he only issued his editions of *The Seasons* in 1805, surviving correspondence indicates that he had already begun preparations as early as 1802, when he also started work on his other projects.¹³ Like the editions of Thomson's poem, both *The History* and *The Plays* were issued in instalments in octavo format. In both cases, however, the scope of the publication far exceeded that of *The Seasons*, in that they constituted large-scale, long-running ventures, with individual numbers appearing on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. The edition of Hume's historiographical work consisted of ninety-six parts, the first of which appeared on 1 September 1803. The collected plays of Shakespeare consisted of forty

¹¹ The advertisement was part of a catalogue attached to the fifth volume of Tobias Smollett's *The History of England* (1805). Tobias Smollett, *The History of England, From the Revolution in 1688, to the Death of George II* (London: R. Scholey, 1805), 5:no pagination.

¹² Bensley worked as a printer for Du Roveray on several other occasions at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century. The bookseller commissioned Bensley to print his editions of Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* (1798), Richard Glover's *Leonidas* (1798), Thomas Gray's *Poems* (1800), John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1802), and Pope's *The Poetical Works* (1804). It is likely that Wallis established professional contact with Bensley via Du Roveray in 1800, when they collaborated on an octavo edition of *The Poems of Goldsmith (Porcupine, 23 December 1800)*.

¹³ Tattersfield, 2:614.

parts and its publication was scheduled to commence on 1 January 1803.¹⁴ Due to the ambitious scope and execution of these two titles, Wallis had to postpone the publication of his editions of Thomson's poem. Nevertheless, letters from the bookseller to Bewick from December 1802, up to the completion of the editions of *The Seasons* in 1805, as well as the publication prospectus mentioned earlier ("Very Neat Edition on Pica Letter, printed on a fine wove demy Octavo, to match the Hume and the Shakespeare"), indicate that Wallis had conceived of the publishing ventures simultaneously and that he considered them to be interconnected.

Wallis established uniformity in the material design and execution of his editions of Thomson, Hume, and Shakespeare. He produced the works in the same demy octavo format and commissioned Bensley to print the editions on fine wove paper and to have the works hot-pressed after production.¹⁵ By consistently using Bensley's services, Wallis could guarantee that all of his titles would be produced in the same fashion: with a uniformity in paper quality, page layout, and typefaces. Once subscribers acquired all of the instalments, they could have each of the works bound into ten uniform volumes. Apart from the print-material similarities, Wallis embellished his volumes with finely executed wood engravings. *The History* contained "upwards of a Hundred and Fifty Engravings on Wood . . . executed in the best style";¹⁶ *The Plays* were embellished with a total of fifty-three illustrations. Wallis employed the services of the same craftsmen for the production of the engravings. He commissioned the designs from John Thurston, one of the leading specialists in designs for wood engraving at the time.¹⁷ The rapid succession of the individual instalments of Hume's *History* and Shakespeare's *Plays* necessitated that Wallis had to hire the services of multiple wood engravers. He did, however, consistently employ leading contemporary engravers, such as Bewick, Charlton Nesbit, and Henry Hole. Since Bewick was involved in all three productions and since each of the other engravers had at one point worked as apprentices in his workshop, the illustrations were characterised by a similarity in design, as well as in

¹⁴ Wallis was unable to adhere to the publication schedule, as indicated by the fact that "the first Ten Numbers of Shakespeare's Plays" were advertised in the *Tyne Mercury* as late as 31 May 1803 (Tattersfield, 2:527).

¹⁵ Hot-pressed paper was either pressed between two heated cylinder rolls or heavy plates to increase the smoothness of the paper and to preserve the pristineness of the edition. Wallis also issued a number of copies of *The History* and *The Plays* in royal octavo format with proof impressions of the illustrations, but he only associated the demy octavo editions by means of a uniform material makeup, as indicated in various advertisements.

Due to the relentless pace of publication, Bensley was compelled to pass on some of the work on Wallis's edition of Hume's *History* to Thomas Davison, who printed the eighth and ninth volumes, and William Bulmer, who took care of the third and sixth volumes (Tattersfield, 3:58).

¹⁶ Prospectus in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, October 1804. Apart from the portraits of the English kings and queens, the illustrations were executed on wood.

¹⁷ William Andrew Chatto, *A Treatise on Wood Engraving, Historical and Practical* (London: C. Knight, 1839), 613.

stylistic execution. At the same time, Wallis used Bewick's name as a branding device, as well as to increase the commodity value of his editions.

In developing a marketing strategy--the publication in instalments, the use of a standard octavo format, and the stylistic uniformity of the illustrations--Wallis adopted a formula devised for the large-scope, small-format, serialised collections of English literary classics produced in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Developing a characteristic paratextual and material make-up for their editions, booksellers such as John Bell, Charles Cooke, and Joseph Wenman had each developed successful branding strategies to attract and maintain consumer interest. They produced their part-issues in a uniform design and enhanced the recognisability of their editions by means of series title-pages, similarly designed illustrations (visual representations of popular passages in the volume were contained within ornate framing devices), and other paratexts such as author biographies. Wallis's productions differed from these multi-volume collections not only because of their larger format and their innovative inclusion of the medium of the wood engraving, but also in terms of their scope. Wallis limited his selection to three generically different works rather than assembling a wide variety of popular texts. In response to the institutionalisation of literary criticism and the success of anthologies and collections of popular texts at the end of the eighteenth century,¹⁸ he singled out Thomson, Shakespeare, and Hume as the most important representatives in their respective fields of poetry, drama, and historiography.

As previously indicated, the illustrations to Wallis's editions of *The Seasons* formed an important part of the printing project. In that respect, the bookseller's collaboration with the designer Thurston and the engravers, Bewick and his workshop apprentices, merits closer examination. Applying Lisa Maruca's concept of the "polyvocality of print,"¹⁹ which abandons an author- and text-centred approach for a sociological examination of the collective processes of book production, I will argue that the production of the illustrations represents a collaborative experiment with the medium of the wood engraving. In an attempt to capitalise on and further contribute to the contemporary development of the medium, the illustrators explored the full potential of the wood engraving, at the same time adopting new approaches to and generating new visual interpretations of Thomson's poem.

Wallis's decision to embellish his editions of *The Seasons* with high-quality engravings on wood instead of copper represented a major departure from prevailing illustrative practice surrounding Thomson's poem. Wood engravings had already featured in one earlier edition of Thomson's poem, but they were not the primary illustrative medium.

¹⁸ John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London: HarperCollins, 1997), 463.

¹⁹ Lisa Maruca, 21.

This edition was issued for the London-based booksellers Brambles, Meggitt, and Waters in 1804 by Henry Mozley, a small-town Gainsborough printer. Apart from four full-page copper-plate engravings after designs by John Burnet, the edition featured four headpieces coarsely executed on wood. [Figure 25] The headpiece to “Winter,” inserted above the argument, depicts two figures ice-skating. Just like the head- and tailpieces to Hamilton’s edition, the wood engravings in Mozley’s edition represent scenes characteristic of the season. They identify the season visually, rather than providing a rendering of a specific passage from the poem, as was the case with the full-page plates, which were accompanied by captions from the text.

The quality of the visual paratexts in Mozley’s edition reflects the book trade’s predominant attitude towards the media of copper and wood around the turn of the century. Whereas booksellers usually reserved copper for fine printing, they mostly used wood engravings as an economical alternative for the manufacture of illustrations. The wood engraving was not only cheaper in terms of material investment; it also lowered production costs. Text and image could be set and printed at the same time, as opposed to illustrations executed by means of an intaglio process, which had to be printed separately. The wood engraver manufactured his illustrations according to an entirely different production method than the copper-plate engraver. The latter used an



Figure 25 Headpiece vignette for “Winter,” from *The Seasons* (London: J. Brambles et. al., 1804). Reproduced with permission from a copy in professor Sandro Jung’s possession.

intaglio engraving technique whereby the design was incised into the plate surface by means of a steel burin. This technique not only allowed for a relatively straightforward transfer of the design onto the plate; it also proved most suitable for an introduction of tonal and grey-scale effects. The wood engraving, by contrast, belonged to the group of end-grain production techniques. It required the design to be carved out of a block of hard wood, such as boxwood or oak, as a result of which illustrations on wood were produced by means of line patterns.

By 1805, developments in the book trades and the inclusion of finely executed wood engravings in a number of successful publishing ventures had resulted in an appreciation of the medium. Improvements in paper manufacture, especially the development of wove paper, had provided favourable conditions for the advancement of the technical possibilities of the wood engraving. The smooth, level surface of wove paper facilitated a better transfer of the ink from the woodblocks, as a result of which wood engravers were able to produce more sophisticated, highly detailed designs. Bewick capitalised effectively on these developments and raised the production standards for wood engraving to a new level in the course of his career. Having entered the trade under the apprenticeship of Newcastle-based Ralph Beilby at the age of 14, Bewick established his reputation as a formidable artist on wood through his engravings for *The History of Quadrupeds* (1790) and the first volume of *The History of British Birds* (1797). The wood engravings not only provided a realistic portrayal of the animals, but were also notable for the detailed rendering of the natural setting, especially the foliage, and for the ornamental vignettes offering a glimpse into the British countryside. Jacob Kainen reports that “the spontaneous expression of an observant but unimaginative nature, . . . so homely and common and yet so charged with integrity,”²⁰ contributed to the success of the engraver’s productions, which held a wide appeal for the buying public. Bewick quickly became a household name in Britain, as engravings by him became associated with high quality and fine printing.

Aware of the popularity of the engraver’s productions, Wallis recognised that Bewick’s name would considerably increase the prestige of his editions and enhance his commercial opportunities on the book market. That Bewick’s name functioned as an important marketing device is confirmed not only by the editions’ designation as “Mr Bewick’s Editions of Thomson’s Seasons” in the publishing prospectus and various book catalogues of the nineteenth century, but also by the fact that the engravings carry Bewick’s name, even though he did not produce them personally. Busily engaged on preparing the second volume of his *British Birds*, Bewick was not inclined to spend time

²⁰ Jacob Kainen, “Why Bewick Succeeded: A Note in the History of Wood Engraving,” *United States National Museum Bulletin* 218 (2009): 201.

or energy on Wallis's commissions. Instead, he passed on the order to his apprentices Luke Clennell, who was also involved in the production of the engravings for Wallis's edition of *The History of England*, and Henry White.

The hiring of Thurston's services for the designs of the woodblocks further facilitated the high quality of the engravings to Wallis's editions of *The Seasons*. Thurston had commenced his career as a copper engraver working under James Heath, who had achieved major success as the engraver for John Bell's serial publication of *The Poets of Great Britain*. For a short time, Thurston had engaged in the profession of wood engraver, before devoting himself almost exclusively to the production of designs for book illustrations at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Having executed engravings both on copper and on wood, Thurston recognised the technical advantages and disadvantages of each medium. His expertise in both media facilitated his contributing considerably to the sophistication of the illustrations produced for Wallis's publishing ventures.

The illustrations in Wallis's editions of *The Seasons* indicate the ways in which the producers identified the limitations and strengths of the medium of the wood engraving. A comparison between a rendering of a passage from the interpolated episode of the young Damon spying on the bathing Musidora on wood and on copper indicates the differences between the techniques of end-grain and intaglio engraving. **[Figures 26 & 27]** In the copper-plate illustration, after a painting by Henry Singleton, the engraver John Thorntwaite executed the surrounding trees and foliage in various grades of tonality, thus reproducing the different degrees of shading provided by the bushes. The medium of the wood engraving did not allow for the rendering of such tonal contrasts, however, since the engraver could produce black lines on a white background only. In the copper plate, Thorntwaite established a striking contrast between the pale skin of the naked woman and the dark hues of her surroundings. The beauty of the exposed Musidora thus becomes the focal point of the illustration. Since the medium of the wood engraving was less suited to the rendering of the subtle features of her uncovered body, the illustrators developed a more dynamic, narrative interpretation of the scene. For the first time in the visual history of the episode, the shy Musidora faces Damon, as she attempts to shorten the moment of exposure as much as possible. Even though she has not yet fully removed her robe, she is already descending into the water with her left foot. Damon is no longer depicted as a static onlooker, barely visible behind the bushes in the background. Instead, readers are made complicit in the act of spying as they look at Musidora over Damon's shoulder. Moreover, this specific angle also allowed for a rendering of Damon's moment of internal struggle between his desire to admire Musidora's beauty and his sense of decorum, which prompts him to flee the scene out of respect for her privacy.

The novel visual interpretation of the tale of Damon and Musidora provides an indication of the ways in which early nineteenth-century illustrators adapted and

SUMMER.



H. Singleton pinxit

J. Thornthwaite sculpit

MUSIDORA.

Figure 26 Full-page plate, painted by Henry Singleton, engraved by John Thorntwaite, for "Summer," from *The Seasons* (London: A. Hamilton, 1793). Reproduced from a copy in the author's possession.



Figure 27 Tailpiece vignette, designed by John Thurston, engraved by Thomas Bewick, for “Summer,” from *The Seasons* (London: J. Wallis, 1805). Reproduced from a copy in the author’s possession.

reinterpreted the numerous visual responses to *The Seasons* in the 1790s, when a variety of newly illustrated editions as well as ephemeral commodities such as furniture prints, illustrated pocket diaries, porcelain, and embroidered fabrics featuring visual renderings of scenes from the poem, appeared on the market. Furniture prints represented an important segment of this niche market for cultural spin-offs of Thomson’s poem. The large-format engravings, which were usually framed and put up for display in the home—even though they still constituted a form of elite consumption—were significantly less expensive than the production and acquisition of paintings. Moreover, booksellers such as Tomkins sometimes mounted exhibitions of the prints so as to provide access to visitors from diverse social strata.

An examination of the wood engravings included in Wallis’s editions of *The Seasons* reveals a conscious engagement with “the[se] patterns of upper-end, exclusive high-

cultural consumption.”²¹ The illustrators mostly adopted the sentimentalising impulse prevalent in the visual responses of the 1790s, especially responding to painterly renderings of passages from Thomson’s poem. The subjects of Lavinia and her mother for “Autumn” and the wolves descending from the Alps for “Winter” were both drawn from Hamilton’s paintings for Tomkins’s folio edition. The first wood engraving for “Spring,” the depiction of the young boy chasing the rainbow with his arms raised in amazement, resembles Robert Smirke’s rendering of the same scene produced in 1792 for Murray’s projected quarto edition of *The Seasons*.²² The illustrators adapted Fuseli’s painterly rendering of the poetic persona’s nature walk with his love Amanda for Du Roveray’s edition of *The Seasons* in 1802 for the tailpiece to “Spring.” As already indicated by the wood engraving of the tale of Damon and Musidora, the illustrators to Wallis’s editions did not simply imitate the original paintings; rather, they appropriated the designs, in the process generating new interpretations. [Figures 28 & 29] Hamilton develops a dramatic rendering of the attack of the wolves in his illustration for Tomkins’s edition. The fear and terror in the face of the male rider, the pale figure of the fainting woman, and the ominous setting of the storm clouds, as well as the towering mountainside, all add to the sense of impending tragedy. In Hurst’s design for Wallis’s editions, by contrast, the scene is transferred to a symbolic setting. The illustrator evokes a sense of distress and despair, as the wolves invade the safety of the private sphere. The caption, “The godlike face of man avails him nought,” confirms and reinforces man’s tragic subjection to nature’s destructive potential. Even though man is God’s chosen creature, he is still subservient to the divine order of the universe as ordained by the Creator. Once again, the producers of the later image provide a more narrative representation of the passage to compensate for the tonal limitations of the wood engraving.

The illustrators of Wallis’s editions of *The Seasons* not only revisited and revised the visual responses produced around the turn of the century; they also selected new passages previously not considered for illustration. [Figure 30] In his design for the first wood engraving for “Summer,” for instance, Thurston depicts Musidora as she is reading a note left by Damon just prior to his departure from the bathing scene.²³ This illustration, together with the rendering of Damon’s spying on Musidora discussed

²¹ Jung, “High-Cultural Consumption,” 510.

²² Even though the edition never materialised, as indicated in the second chapter of this dissertation, Sharp had already produced two engravings in proof impressions, which the bookseller probably made available as print specimens.

²³ Thurston had already produced an earlier design of the same scene for Hurst’s editions of *The Seasons* in 1802. The early nineteenth-century fascination with the conclusion of the episode of Damon and Musidora is further suggested by Richard Corbould’s visual rendering of Musidora’s writing of her response to Damon on the bark of a tree for another edition of Thomson’s poem, issued in 1799 and reissued in 1802.



THE WOLVES descending from the ALPS.

Figure 28 Full-page plate, painted by William Hamilton, engraved by Peltro William Tomkins, for "Winter," from *The Seasons* (London: P. W. Tomkins, 1798). Reproduced with permission from a copy held at National Library of Scotland.

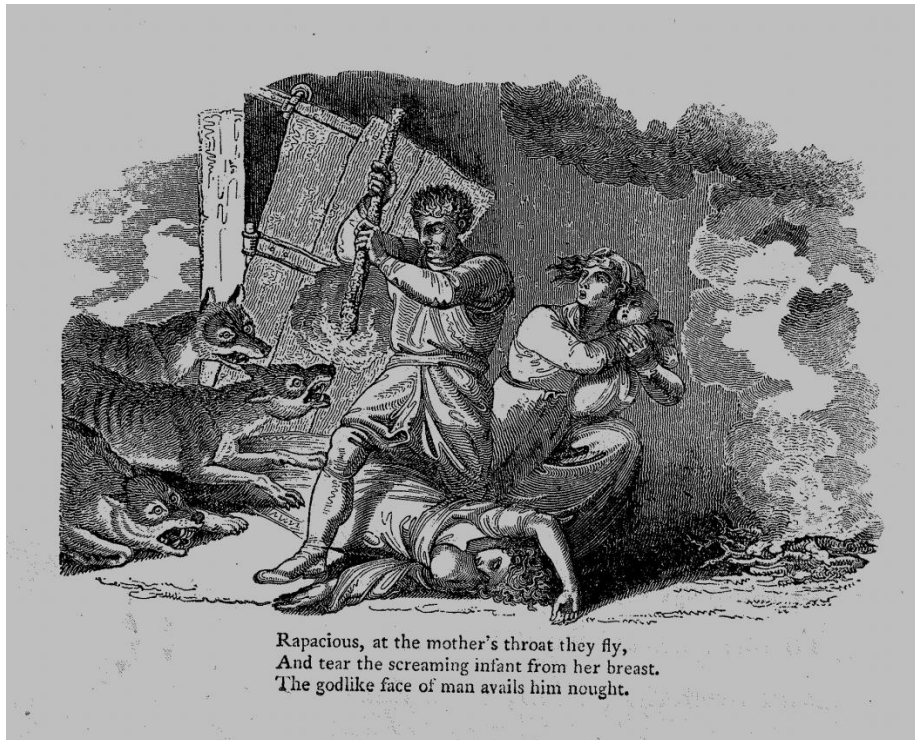


Figure 29 Tailpiece vignette, designed by John Thurston, engraved by Thomas Bewick, for "Winter," from *The Seasons* (London: J. Wallis, 1805). Reproduced from a copy in the author's possession.

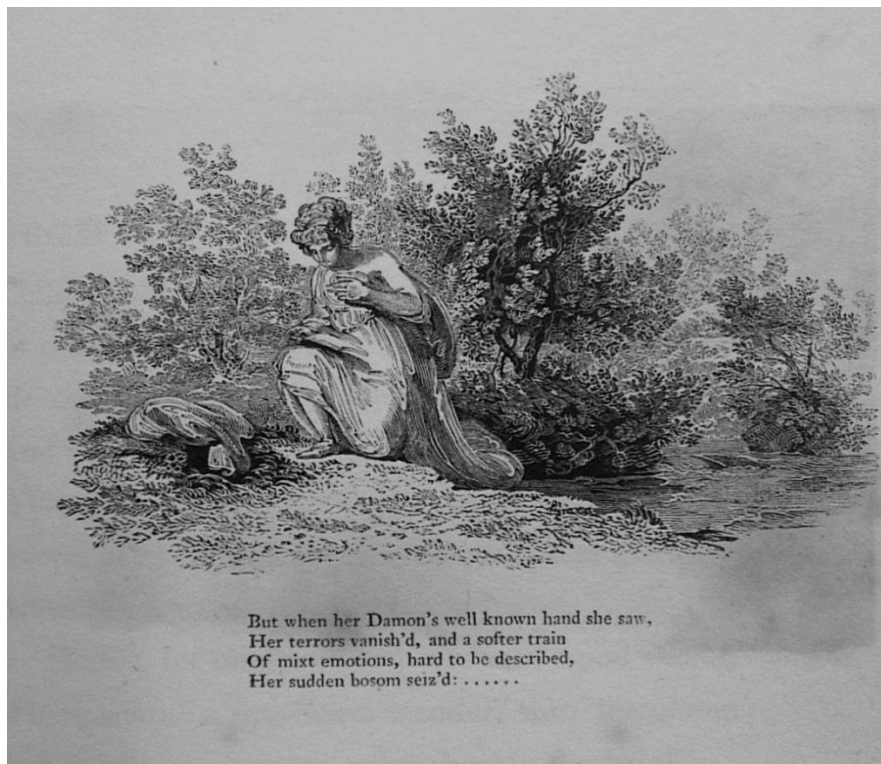


Figure 30 Headpiece vignette, designed by John Thurston, engraved by Thomas Bewick, for "Summer," from *The Seasons* (London: J. Wallis, 1805). Reproduced from a copy in the author's possession.

earlier, confirms the increased focus on narrative inherent in the wood engravings to Wallis's editions. This impulse would reach its climax in the illustrations by the members of the Etching Club for the 1842 edition of *The Seasons*. Printed on the text page and surrounding the printed lines of the poem, the engravings provide a parallel narrative of, and a visual commentary on, the illustrated passage. The second wood engraving to "Autumn" introduced a new topic for illustration as well as representing a more satirical approach to *The Seasons* emerging at the beginning of the nineteenth century. [Figure 31] This plate, rendering the end of Thomson's mock-heroic description of a hunting feast ("Au" 1746: 492-569), depicts a "Doctor, of tremendous Paunch, / Awful and deep, a black Abyss of Drink" ("Au" 1746: 565) deprecatingly looking back at "the social Slaughter" ("Au" 1746: 561) behind him. The illustration highlights the satirical dimension of Thomson's poem, as reflected in the grotesque figure of the doctor in the foreground and the disorder of the debauchery in the background. The image features an interplay of contrasts between various elements in the engraving. The figure of the doctor looms large in the foreground due to the contrast between the white wall and his dark shape, which thus becomes a "black Abyss" ("Au" 1746: 565). The

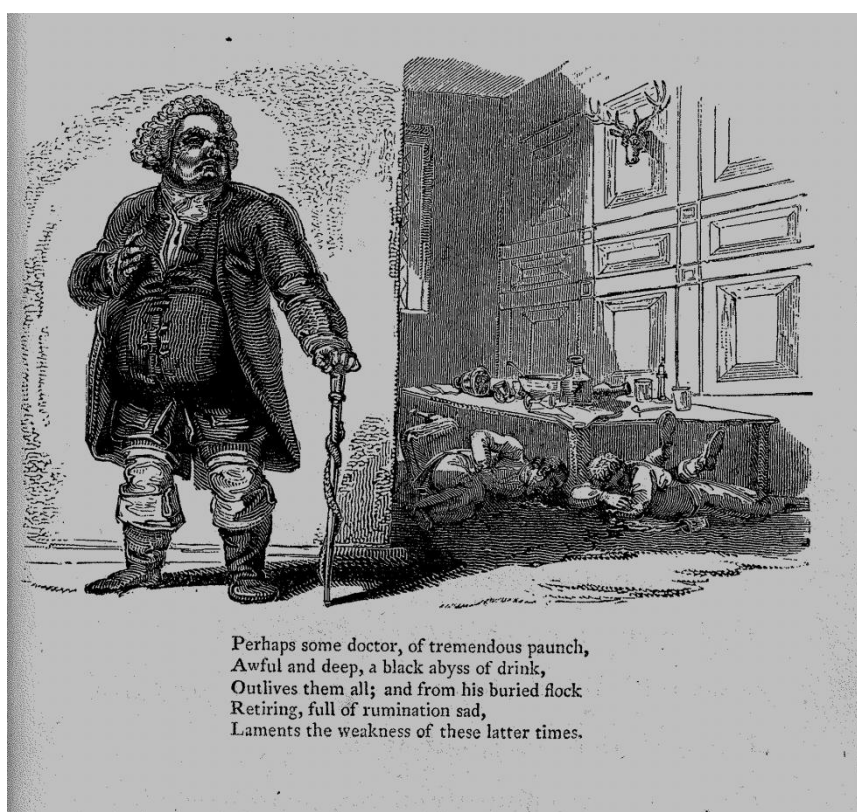


Figure 31 Tailpiece vignette, designed by John Thurston, engraved by Thomas Bewick, for "Autumn," from *The Seasons* (London: J. Wallis, 1805). Reproduced from a copy in the author's possession.

doctor's dark shadow on the ground then guides the reader's eye towards the dusky chaos in the background. The illustration reveals that a skilled wood engraver could overcome the limitations of the end-grain technique, in this case, by establishing a chiaroscuro effect to produce the desired gloomy atmosphere.

The involvement of Thurston and Bewick in the production of the illustrations for Wallis's editions of *The Seasons* constituted a major financial investment on the part of the bookseller. Since Bewick charged £5 5s. per engraving, Wallis had to pay a significant amount of money, not only for the images to his editions of Thomson's poem, but also for those included in his editions of Shakespeare's *Plays* (three in total) and *The History of England* (thirty-two in total). Since Wallis commissioned at least another 150 illustrations from other wood engravers, the total costs for the visual paratexts alone would have been exceedingly high. Correspondence with Bewick indicates that Wallis was unable to keep up with the production costs of his ventures. Already stretched beyond his limits by late September 1803, his financial problems only increased over the next two years. Bewick even retained the last woodblock for *The Seasons*, the illustration of "The Wolves," as a guarantee of payment.²⁴

Wallis's attempts to cater to all segments of the market failed, due to a decline of the market for fine-printed books during the Napoleonic wars.²⁵ Unable to recover from his financial overextensions, he went bankrupt for a second time on 16 November 1805.²⁶ Robert Scholey, with whom Wallis had collaborated on the production of Hume's *History* and Shakespeare's *Plays*, purchased the bankrupt bookseller's stock in trade and sold the remaining copies of *The Seasons*, the foolscap and demy octavo editions for 7s. 6d. and the royal octavo editions at 15s. per copy. In 1809, he would collaborate with a group of London and Edinburgh booksellers to reissue Thomson's poem in a smaller octavo

²⁴ Tattersfield, 2:614.

²⁵ Moreover, Wallis's editions of Hume's *History* and Shakespeare's *Plays* entered into competition with other, less expensively produced editions appearing at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Two other editions of *The History* appeared in octavo format around the same time as Wallis's: Thomas Cadell Jr. had already issued an eight-volume edition in 1802, which he continued to reissue until at least 1804, while a conger of London, Edinburgh, and Glasgow booksellers produced another eight-volume edition in 1805. A conger led by Joseph Johnson, Robert Baldwin, and Henry Lasher Gardner issued two editions of Shakespeare's *Plays* in 1803, an octavo edition in twenty-one volumes and a duodecimo edition in ten volumes. The London booksellers John Sharpe and Henry Delahay Symonds issued an eight-volume miniature edition in 1804. The Rivington firm published a nine-volume octavo edition of Shakespeare's plays in 1805 which was embellished with copper-plate engravings after designs by Fuseli.

²⁶ In a final attempt to make some profits, Wallis had produced a two-volume edition of James Ridley's *Tales of the Genii* in octavo format in the same year that he issued his editions of *The Seasons*. He embellished his edition of the popular collection of Oriental Tales with twelve copper-plate engravings after designs by William Marshall Craig.

format. Printed in Edinburgh by James Ballantyne, the edition included the Bewick plates without acknowledging the original engraver or designer.²⁷

Wallis's publishing ventures, even though unsuccessful, represent an informative case study of early nineteenth-century marketing practices. Confronted with a market that was saturated with fine-printed editions of *The Seasons*, Wallis developed an unprecedented differentiation of his editions by publishing the poem in three editions, each characterised by a distinct material design and execution. At the same time, Wallis's editions also testify to the transitional phase in the development of the technology of the wood engraving, as it became an alternative to more expensive media such as copper and, in due course, steel engravings.

3.2 The Paratextual Make-up and Material Packaging of Nineteenth-Century Editions of *The Seasons* up to 1820

The final section of this chapter will provide an account of the most important changes in the production practices of editions of *The Seasons* in the nineteenth century. Whereas Wallis's octavo editions were intended to cater to the market for fine-printed editions in medium-sized formats, which had expanded considerably at the end of the eighteenth century, nineteenth-century editions of Thomson's poem were predominantly issued in more affordable formats. Booksellers increasingly issued their editions of Thomson's poem in smaller formats to reduce production costs and to achieve a wider dissemination. The paratextual make-up of these editions never matched the ambitiousness of those characterising the eighteenth-century editions: hardly any new biographies or essays were produced; sets of illustrations rarely featured more than five engravings (one frontispiece and one image per season). Nevertheless, booksellers still relied heavily on—especially visual—paratexts to increase the consumer appeal of their editions.

²⁷ Ballantyne advertised the edition in an advertisement, which was included in the fifth volume of his edition of *The Novels of Daniel De Foe* [sic]. It sold at 7s. in boards. In an 1812 advertisement, the price had been reduced to 6s. Scholey not only made a profit from Wallis's editions of *The Seasons*. He also produced a second edition of *The Plays* in 1807 together with Peter Wynne, the third collaborator on the project. He also reissued Hume's *History* and Tobias Smollett's continuation from 1808 to 1811, and again from 1817 to 1818. He reused Wallis's engraved portraits of the English kings and queens, unless they had to be recommissioned because the original plates were too worn out.

The effect of changing market conditions on the production of nineteenth-century editions of *The Seasons* is demonstrated by the editions published by William Lane around the turn of the century. In the course of seventeen years, the owner of the Minerva Press issued three different editions of *The Seasons*, namely in 1791, 1798, and 1808. Considering that Lane specialised in the publication of novels and issued only a select number of poetry titles,²⁸ his decision to revisit Thomson's poem multiple times in the course of his career indicates that booksellers in the nineteenth century could potentially still expect a good return on their investment in the production of new editions of *The Seasons*.

A first development in the material packaging of nineteenth-century editions of *The Seasons* which is apparent from Lane's editions is the decrease in format size. The Minerva Press editions were issued respectively in duodecimo, sestodecimo, and vigesimo-quarto formats. Lane recognised that there was an increased demand for portable books, which allowed for an easier perusal of the works, and altered the format of his editions respectively so as to meet this particular demand on the market. The changes in format were also motivated by the different market niches for which Lane attempted to cater with his editions. An advertisement in 1794 categorises the first of Lane's editions as being part of "Cheap Books," which were promoted as "genteel presents for the New Year."²⁹ An advertisement bound into a copy of the 1808 edition of *The Seasons*, by contrast, associates the edition with "Books for the Improvement and Instruction of Youth," other works among which were John Gay's *Fables*, Johnson's *Rasselas*, and *Miniature in Wisdom*, a collection of literary passages of religious, moral, and historical instruction.³⁰ Whereas Lane had conceived of the 1791 edition as a cheap present for genteel consumers, he expanded the market value of his last edition by also promoting it for use in educational contexts.

Lane's editions also reflect developments in illustration practices regarding *The Seasons*. Whereas illustrated editions of Thomson's poem in the eighteenth century mostly include entire sets illustrations,³¹ illustrated editions in the nineteenth century

²⁸ Lane's publishing business was responsible for about one-third of all of the novels published in the 1790s in London (St Clair, 244). His editions of poems included, among others, Robert Blair's *The Grave* (1793), Edward Young's *Night Thoughts* (1793), Salomon Gessner's *Death of Abel* (1795), and John Gay's *Fables* (1795).

²⁹ *Morning Post*, 7 January 1794. The edition sold for 1s. Interestingly, by the end of the year, Lane increased the price of the edition to 2s. 6d. (*Morning Post and Fashionable World*, 6 November 1794).

³⁰ "Books for the Improvement and Instruction of Youth." Thomson, James. *The Seasons*. London: Lane, Newman, and Co., 1808. The copy of this edition is part of Professor Jung's private collection.

³¹ The only editions published before 1799, which included only a frontispiece, were issued more cheaply in smaller formats: *The Seasons* (London: Wenman, 1780; reissued in 1785 and 1790); *The Seasons* (London: William Lane, 1791); *The Seasons* (London & Gainsborough: Osborn and Griffin & Mozley and Co., 1794); *The Seasons*

frequently contain only one frontispiece engraving, which is occasionally supplemented by a vignette on the title-page. Since the illustrations appear prominently at the front of the editions, they each promoted a single visual refashioning of *The Seasons* and advanced a particular reading of the poem. [Figure 32] The frontispiece to Lane's 1791 edition draws on the secularised illustrative mode established in J. French's 1777 edition of *The Seasons*. It consists of four cartouches depicting activities typical of the seasons. The scenes are centred around intertwining trees, whose branches are depicted according to the season to which they belong. [Figures 33 & 34] The frontispieces for the 1798 and 1808 editions, by contrast, provide an allegorical representation of the poem to highlight the cyclicity of the seasons. The positioning of the figures, the directions of the gestures and attributes, such as the smoke rising from the fire, and the circular lines at the centre of the 1798 engraving represent the annual progression of the seasons. The symbolic rendering of the cycle of the seasons is recontextualised in the frontispiece to the last of Lane's editions of *The Seasons*. The allegorical figures perform a choral dance around an Apollo-like figure. Not only does the latter represent the sun as the facilitator of the natural course of the seasons; in his role as the god of poetry, he also symbolises the ways in which the seasons function as the author's source of poetic inspiration. The interpretation promoted in the third frontispiece is in line with the edition's refashioning of *The Seasons* as a poem of instruction. It is intended to help the reader comprehend the annual cycle of the seasons as effected by the "Almighty Father," addressed in the epigraph on the title-page.³²

Even though the frontispieces to Lane's editions reveal the various ways in which single illustrations can reinterpret Thomson's poem, they are not indicative of the predominant illustrative mode of nineteenth-century frontispieces. The increasing anthropocentric focus of the illustrations in eighteenth-century editions of *The Seasons*, which often depicted popular and sentimental passages, especially the interpolated episodes, culminated in the domestication and romanticisation of the poem in nineteenth-century frontispieces. [Figure 35] Even though the title vignette to the sestodecimo edition of Thomson's poem, produced by Suttaby, Crosby, and Co. in 1806, still provided an allegorical representation of the cycle of the seasons, the frontispiece advanced a fundamentally different interpretation. A mother and father affectionately look down on their children, praying by their bedside. The father is leaning on the pages of an open book, probably a copy of the bible from which he reads to his children. The caption, "Delightful task! to rear the tender though, / To teach the young Idea how to

(London: Printed for the Booksellers, 1795; the frontispiece was a slightly altered version of the plate used by Lane in 1791); *The Seasons* (London: William Lane, 1798).

³² Thomson 1808, title-page. The epigraph consists of an abbreviation of the first seventeen lines of the concluding "Hymn."

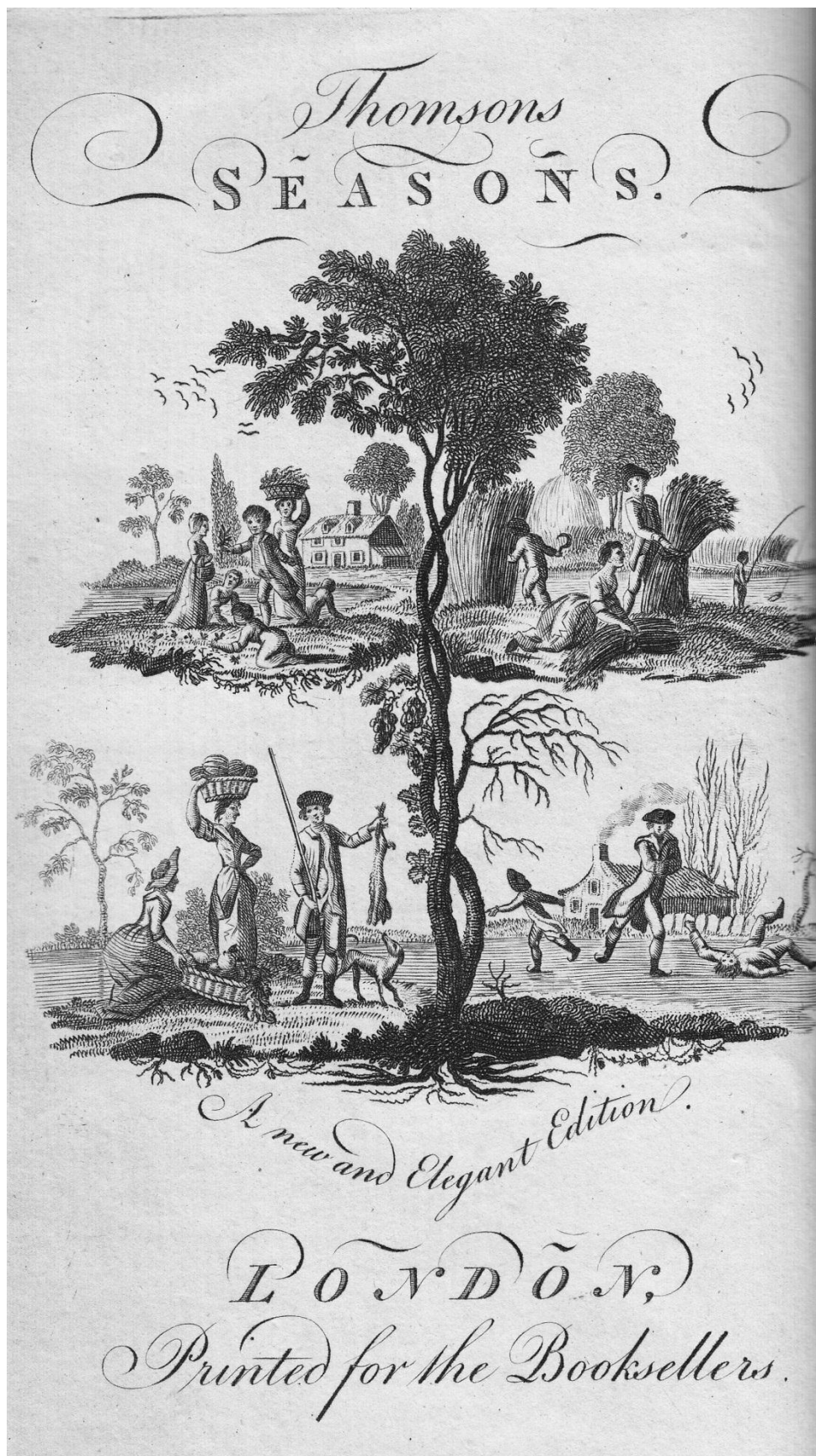


Figure 32 Frontispiece for *The Seasons* (London: W. Lane, 1791). Reproduced with permission from a copy in professor Sandro Jung's possession.

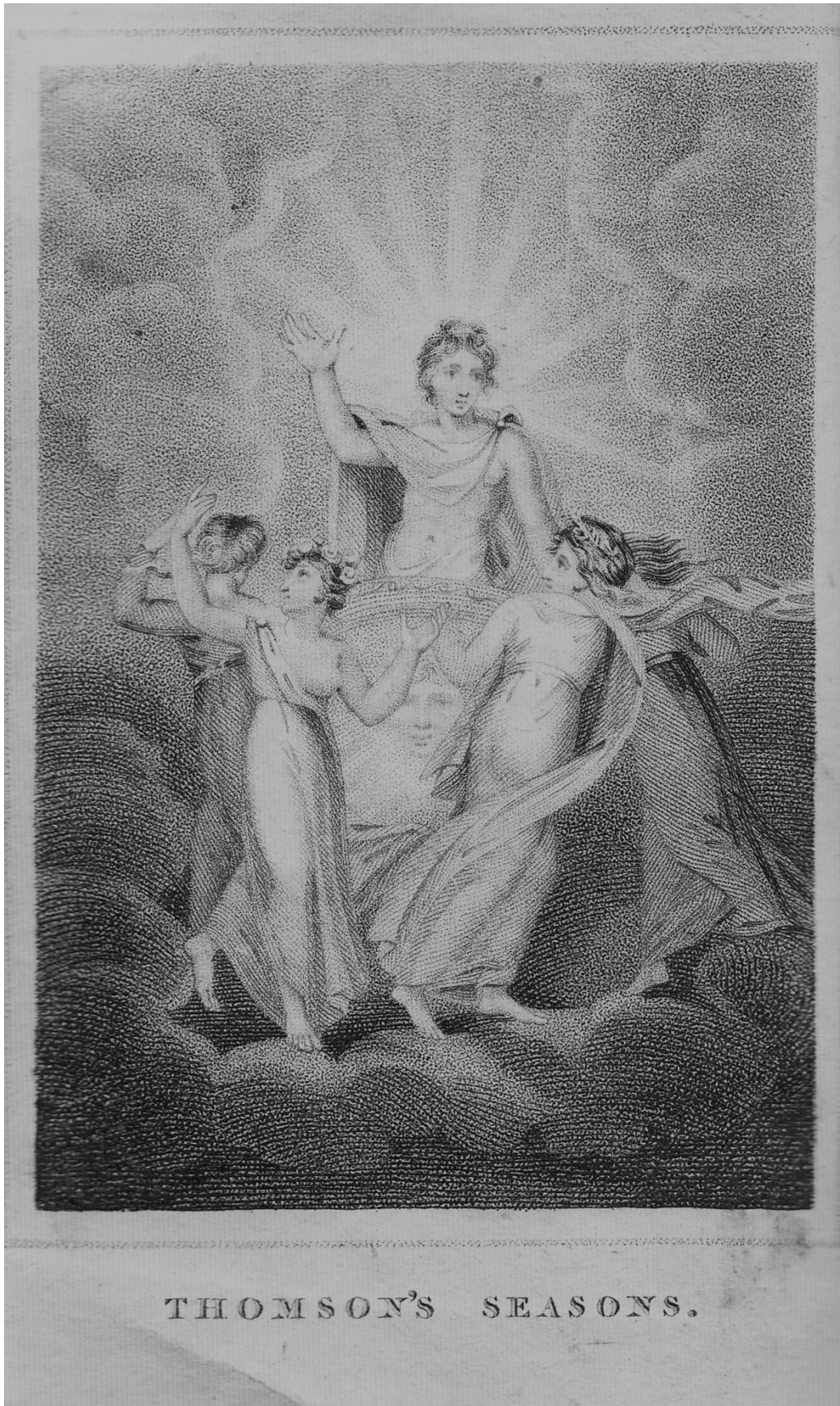
FRONTISPIECE.



THOMSON'S SEASONS.

Published Oct. 9-1797, by W. Lane, Leadenhall Street.

Figure 33 Frontispiece for *The Seasons* (London: W. Lane, 1798). Reproduced with permission from a copy in professor Sandro Jung's possession.



THOMSON'S SEASONS.

Figure 34 Frontispiece for *The Seasons* (London: Lane, Newman, and Co., 1808). Reproduced with permission from a copy in professor Sandro Jung's possession.



Figure 35 Frontispiece, designed by Henry Singleton, engraved by Isaac Taylor, for *The Seasons* (London: W. Suttaby et. al., 1806). Reproduced from a copy in the author's possession.

shoot,” confirms that the illustration depicts a scene of paternal instruction.³³ [Figure 36] A similar interpretation is developed in the frontispiece to another sestodecimo edition of *The Seasons*, published in 1816 by Walker and Edwards. Once again, the illustrators present a scene of domestic harmony. A father looks up from his writing desk to embrace his children, while the mother tenderly places her hand on her husband’s shoulder. The child standing on the right-hand side of the image is holding a book, which reintroduces the element of instruction and self-improvement of the frontispiece to Suttaby’s edition. The majority of nineteenth-century editions of *The Seasons* included illustrations produced according to the same sentimental-anthropocentric visual mode as the 1806 and 1816 editions of Thomson’s poem. Nature, which used to be the central determinant of meaning in earlier illustrations, is relegated to the background, as the focus shifts to the sentimental and moral-instructive dimensions of the poem. [Figure 37] This shift is visible in the title vignette of Walker and Edwards’s edition of *The Seasons*. Even though nature still features in the illustration, it merely serves as the pastoral backdrop for the tender feelings of the two lovers.

In spite of the increasing number of frontispiece-only editions, several booksellers issued editions of *The Seasons* with a small set of newly commissioned illustrations. One of the most successful nineteenth-century editions was produced by John Sharpe in 1816. The popularity of the edition is attested to by the fact that Sharpe reissued it in 1817, 1819, 1821, 1824, 1825. Moreover, the illustrations included in the edition were recycled for American editions in 1817, 1819, 1830, 1832, and 1842. As a result, the illustrations were the most frequently reproduced visual paratexts of *The Seasons* in the nineteenth century. The edition was issued uniform with editions of a number of other popular authors, such as Oliver Goldsmith (*Poems*), John Milton (*Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*), and Edward Young (*Night Thoughts*).³⁴ It was published in a duodecimo

³³ The popularity of this edition of *The Seasons* is indicated by the fact that it was reissued in 1808, 1812, 1817, and 1818. The frontispiece was re-engraved in 1808, probably because the plate had been worn out during the printing of the 1806 impressions or maybe because the plate was destroyed in the course of the production process. Regardless of the cause, the fact that the booksellers were willing to invest in a new engraving reveals that they considered the visual paratext an essential part of the edition’s appeal for consumers.

³⁴ Sharpe’s edition of *The Seasons* sold at the price of 8s. (advertisement included at the back a copy of *The Repository of Arts, Literature, Fashions &c* for October 1817, held at the Bavarian State Library). It should be distinguished from a two-volume edition of Thomson’s *Poetical Works* in sestodecimo format, which Sharpe issued as part of his multi-volume series *The Works of the British Poets* in 1805. The earlier edition, priced at 5s., was edited by Thomas Park and included two engravings (one per volume) after designs by Richard Westall and Thomas Stothard, the former of whom would also serve as the illustrator to Sharpe’s later editions of *The Seasons*. For a detailed description of Sharpe’s series of *British Poets*, which was published between 1805 and 1812, see Bonnell, 273–82. Bonnell does not refer to Sharpe’s later edition of *The Seasons*, which suggests that it was not conceived as part of a series. It is likely that Sharpe simply opted to produce additional stand-alone

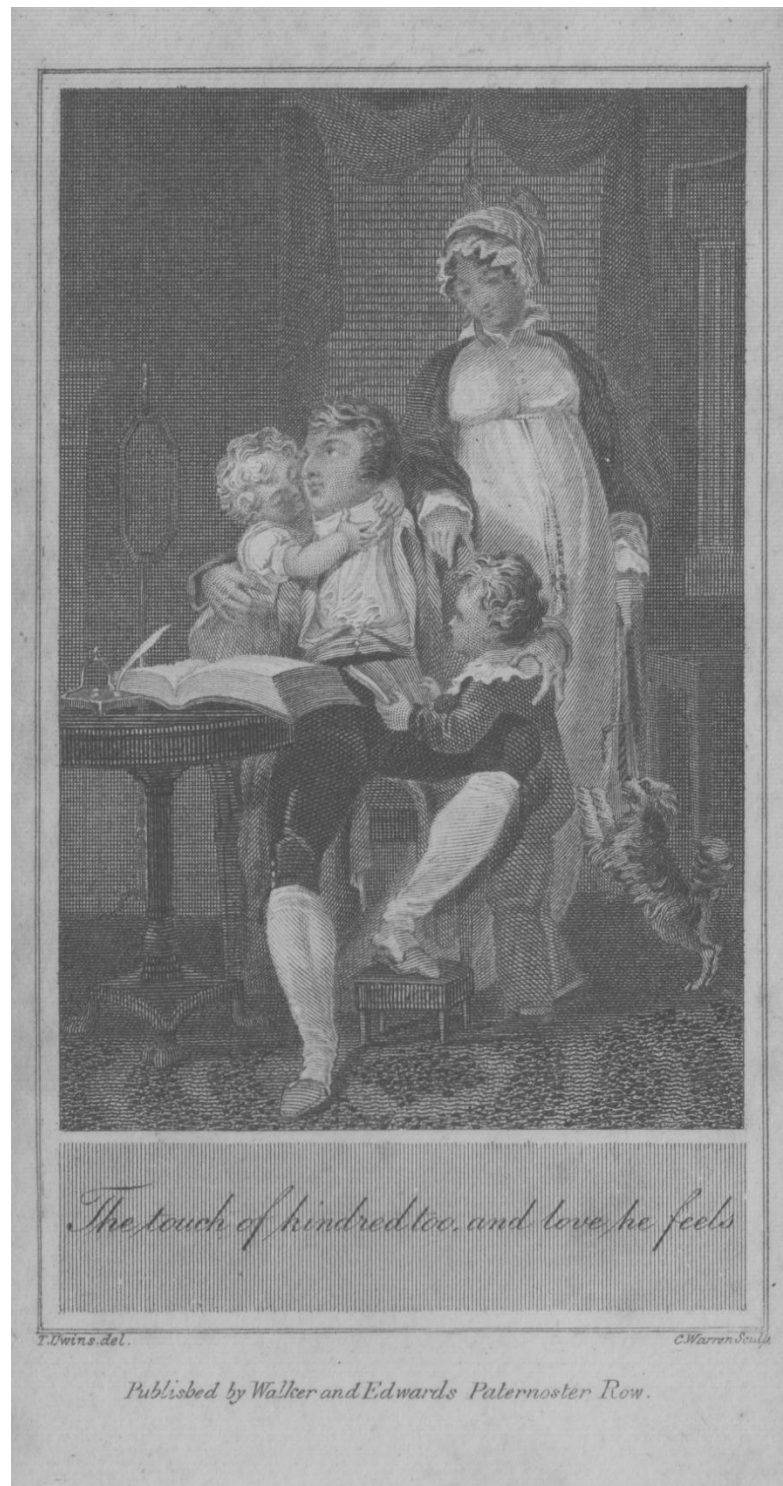


Figure 36 Frontispiece, designed by Thomas Uwins, engraved by Charles Warren, for *The Seasons and Castle of Indolence* (London: Walker and Edwards, 1816). Reproduced from a copy in the author's possession.

editions of these popular authors, many of which were included in his *British Poets*, so as to capitalise on these works even further.

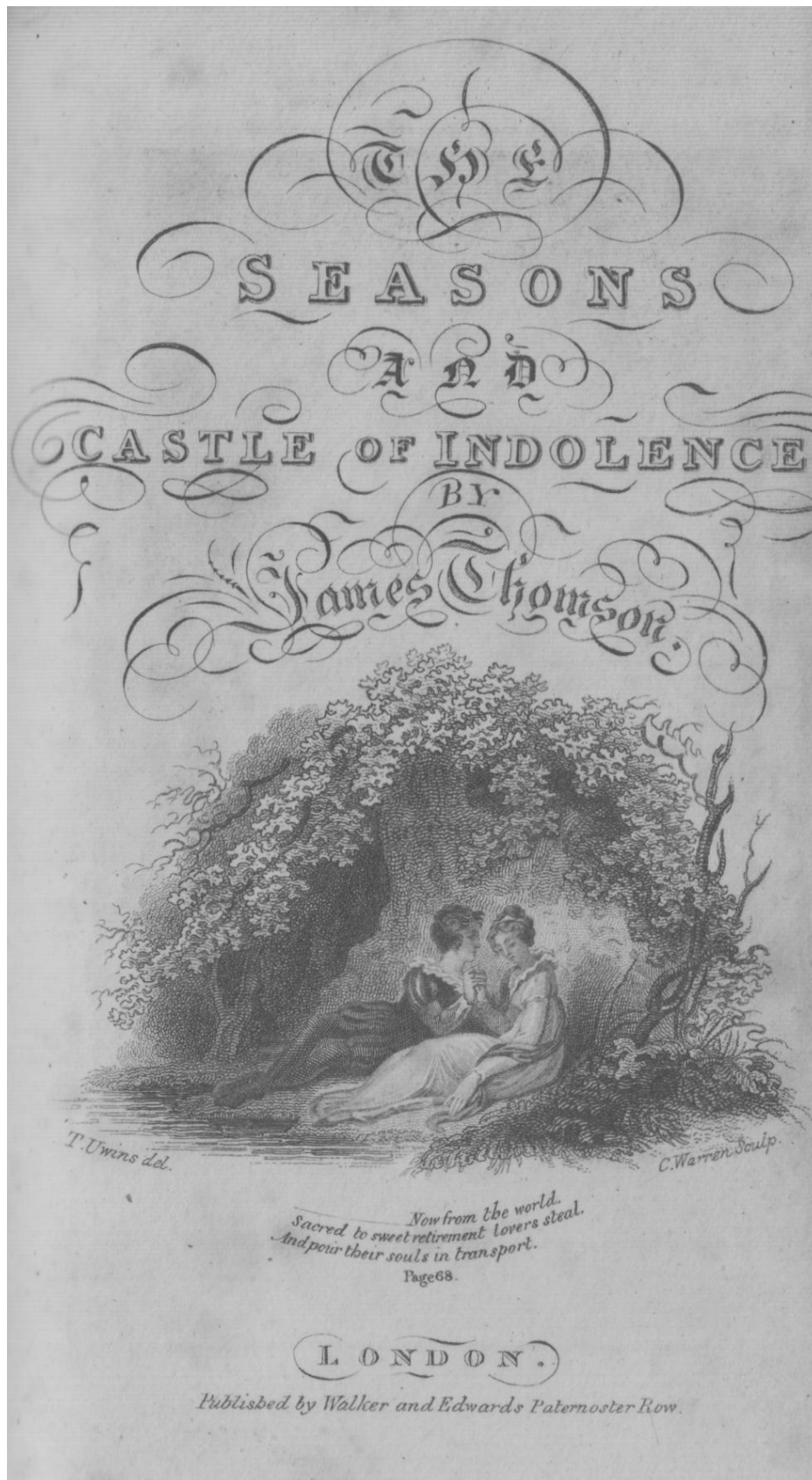


Figure 37 Title-page, designed by Thomas Uwins, engraved by Charles Warren, for *The Seasons and Castle of Indolence* (London: Walker and Edwards, 1816). Reproduced from a copy in the author's possession.

format, included illustrations engraved by Charles Heath and William Finden after designs by Richard Westall, and contained a prefatory essay with “Critical Observations.”

The visual paratexts to Sharpe’s edition of Thomson’s poem, six in total, displays the sentimental-anthropocentric impulse prevalent in nineteenth-century illustrations of *The Seasons*. [Figure 38] The title vignette, even though used to illustrate a line from the concluding “Hymn”—by far the most explicit expression of Thomson’s religious views on nature—provides a depiction of a pastoral retreat of the shepherd and the virgin. The illustration for “Spring” depicts the poet’s nature walk with his love Amanda. The engraving for the “Hymn” features a reaper who looks up at the moon in meditation as he returns home from the field. Even though the illustrations to “Summer,” “Autumn,” and “Winter,” are all renderings of scenes of the interpolated episodes, they depart from the visual narratives which had been promoted in the eighteenth century. [Figure 39] Rather than depicting a nude Musidora being spied upon by Damon, Westall portrays her in full dress as she carves her note to Damon in the tree bark. [Figure 40] Similarly, the illustration to “Autumn” does not focus on the encounter of the lovers on Palemon’s fields. Instead, it captures Lavinia as she bids farewell to her mother. The old woman has a look of worry in her face and claps her hands intensely, as she watches her daughter leave.

The prefatory “Critical Observations” in Sharpe’s edition of *The Seasons* likewise reflect the ways in which nineteenth-century readers and critics approached *The Seasons* differently from their eighteenth-century peers. The account develops a general critical discussion of Thomson’s poem, as it provides a clear overview of its main merits and deficiencies. The greatest defect of the poem is no longer its supposed want of method, as had been stated by Johnson in his biography of Thomson, but the “cast of its moral sentiments.”³⁵ The editor complains that “the Religion of the Seasons . . . has no reference to the quality of our belief, to the dispositions of the heart, or to the habitual tendency of the character,” a criticism which had never been raised before.³⁶ Furnishing readers with a basic means to engage with Thomson’s poem in terms of its aesthetic qualities and morally instructive merits, the editor responds to changes in cultural tastes and caters to “novice consumers. . . with an agenda of cultural self-edification.”³⁷

The last edition under consideration was produced by Charles Whittingham in 1820, and reprinted in 1822, 1825, and 1827. Even though the provincial printer-bookseller, who was based in Chiswick, also served as the printer of Sharpe’s editions, his edition differed from the latter in various ways. [Figure 41] The cover page of a copy of the book

³⁵ “Critical Observations,” *The Seasons*, by James Thomson (London: John Sharpe, 1816), x.

³⁶ “Critical Observations,” x.

³⁷ Bonnell, 266.

THE
SEASONS
BY
JAMES THOMSON
EMBELLISHED WITH ENGRAVINGS
FROM THE DESIGNS OF
RICH^d WESTALL R.A.



R. Westall R.A. del.

Cha^s. Heath sc.

— *The Shepherd's lyre the Virgins lay*
Hymn.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR JOHN SHARPE, PICCADILLY.
1816.

Figure 38 Title-page, designed by Richard Westall, engraved by Charles Heath, for *The Seasons* (London: J. Sharpe, 1816). Reproduced from a copy in the author's possession.

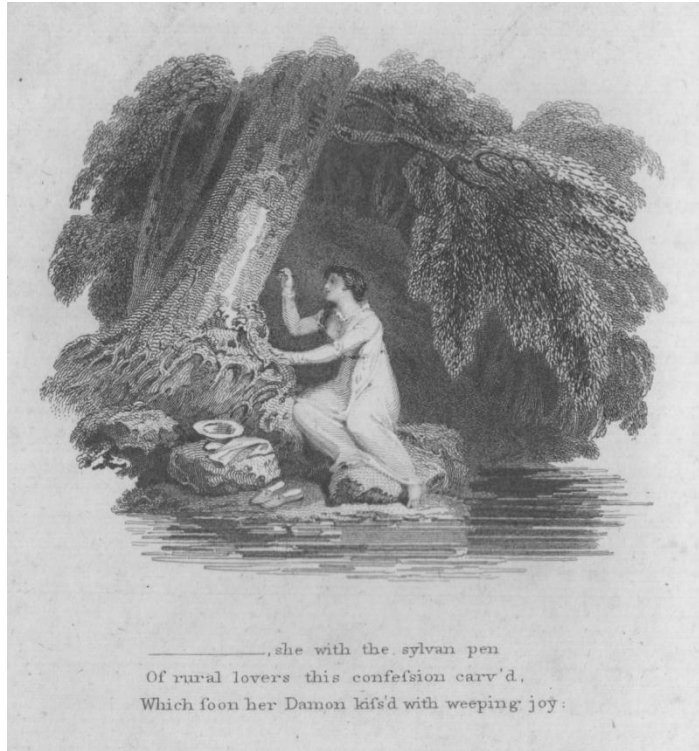


Figure 39 Vignette, designed by Richard Westall, engraved by Charles Heath, for “Summer,” from *The Seasons* (London: J. Sharpe, 1816). Reproduced from a copy in the author’s possession.

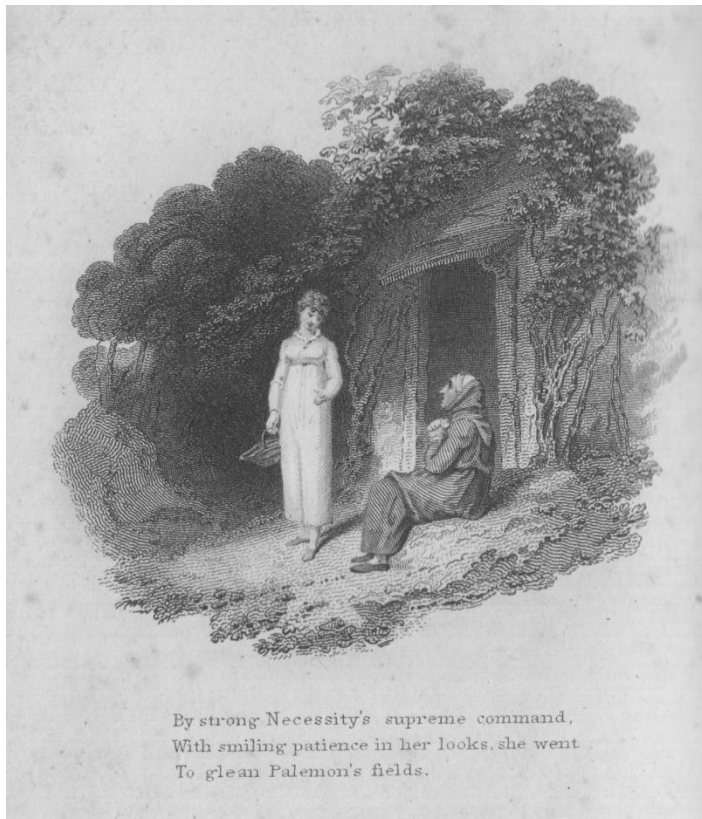


Figure 40 Vignette, designed by Richard Westall, engraved by Charles Heath, for “Autumn,” from *The Seasons* (London: J. Sharpe, 1816). Reproduced from a copy in the author’s possession.

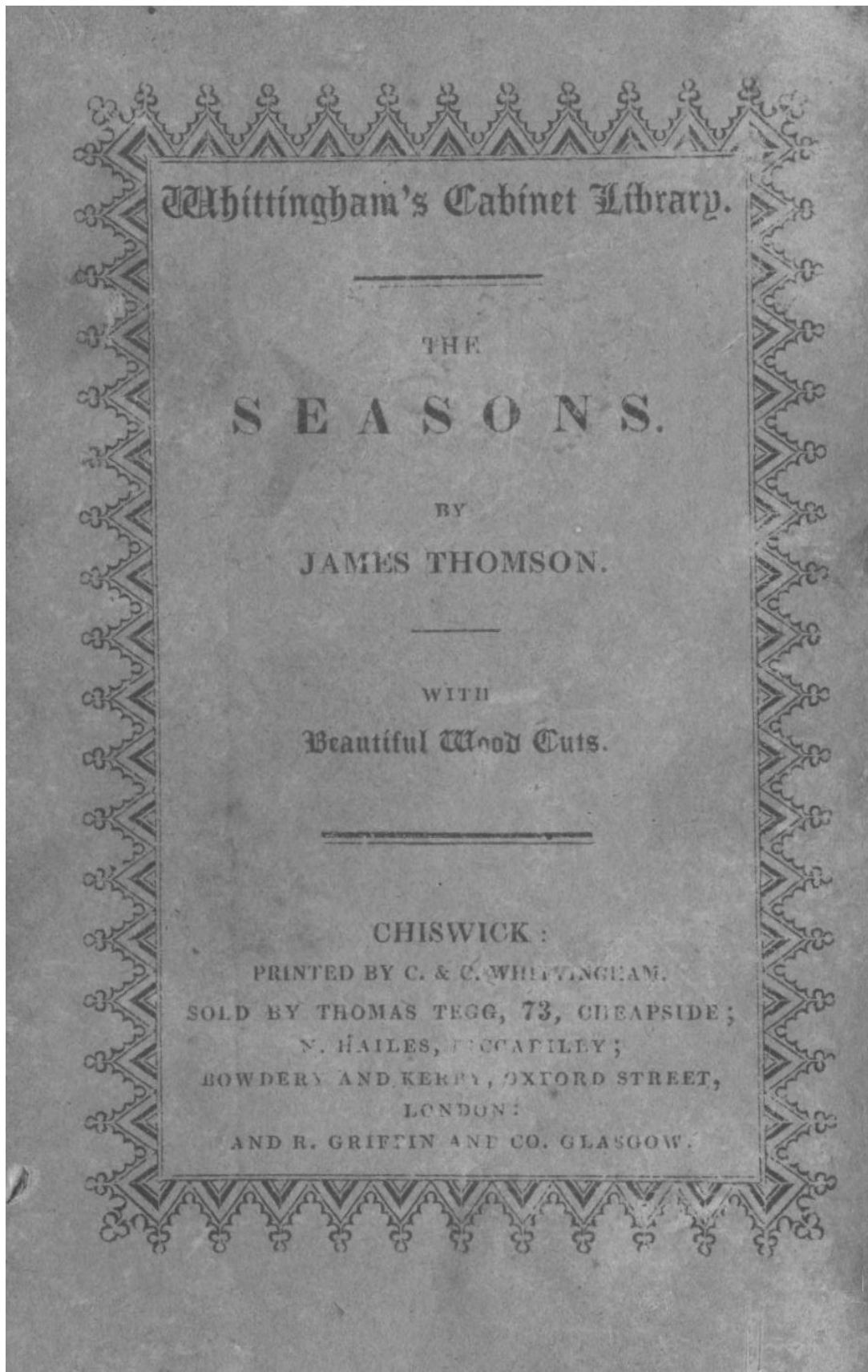


Figure 41 Trade binding cover design for *The Seasons* (Chiswick: C. Whittingham, 1827). Reproduced with permission from a copy in professor Sandro Jung's possession.

in its original trade binding reveals important information about the production and the marketing of the edition. Produced as part of *Whittingham's Cabinet Library*, the edition does not include a prefatory biography or a critical essay. Instead, attention is drawn to the "Beautiful Wood Cuts," which are inserted as head- and tailpieces to the various sections of the poem. Even though the cover page is engraved and features a decorative frame, it is printed skewed. Whittingham thus paradoxically invests in a more sophisticated cover page, but fails to execute it with the necessary care. The presence of the frame is intended to imitate more refined editions of *The Seasons*, but the sloppiness of the execution reveals that the edition was aimed at the lower reaches of the market for illustrated editions.³⁸

The wood engravings to Whittingham's edition, even though anthropocentric in nature, develop a different interpretation than the visual paratexts in Sharpe's edition. Apart from the title-page vignette and the headpiece to "Spring," which adopt an allegorical mode by depicting figures personifying the seasons, the images focus on representations of the harmony between mankind and nature. The headpiece to "Summer" features a shepherd reclining in the shade in an attempt to escape the summer heat. [Figure 42] The tailpiece to "Summer" portrays three harvesters resting under the shade of a tree while they engage in conversation. Just like in the headpiece, nature serves a beneficent role in the image. Its fields supply mankind with food and sustenance, while also providing natural shelter from the heat. [Figure 43] Nature is similarly portrayed in the headpiece to "Autumn," where the entire village community works together to reap the benefits of nature's bounty.

Sharpe and Whittingham's editions demonstrate the ways in which booksellers in the nineteenth century had to adapt their strategies to the changing book market. Both booksellers faced a stiff competition. Not only were they required to gauge a market for small-format editions of *The Seasons*, appearing in the first two decades of the century; they also competed with earlier and contemporary serialised editions of poetry on the market. Even though Sharpe's edition was not issued as part of a series, the success of multi-volume collections induced him to develop a uniform paratextual make-up for his stand-alone editions of popular texts. He distinguished his editions by means of fine, high-quality wood engravings, which were executed as large vignettes and designed by the same artist, and new critical prefaces. Whittingham, by contrast, produced cheaper editions for his *Cabinet Library*. He included more cheaply-executed wood-engraved head- and tailpieces executed and did not add any other paratexts. The paratextual simplification of Sharpe and Whittingham's editions was strategically decided upon by

³⁸ That Whittingham was catering for a mass market is confirmed by the print runs of the 1820 and 1822 editions. The first impression comprised 5,000 copies, the second 4,000 (St Clair, 529).



Figure 42 Tailpiece vignette for “Summer,” from *The Seasons* (Chiswick: C. Whittingham, 1820).
Reproduced from a copy in the author’s possession.

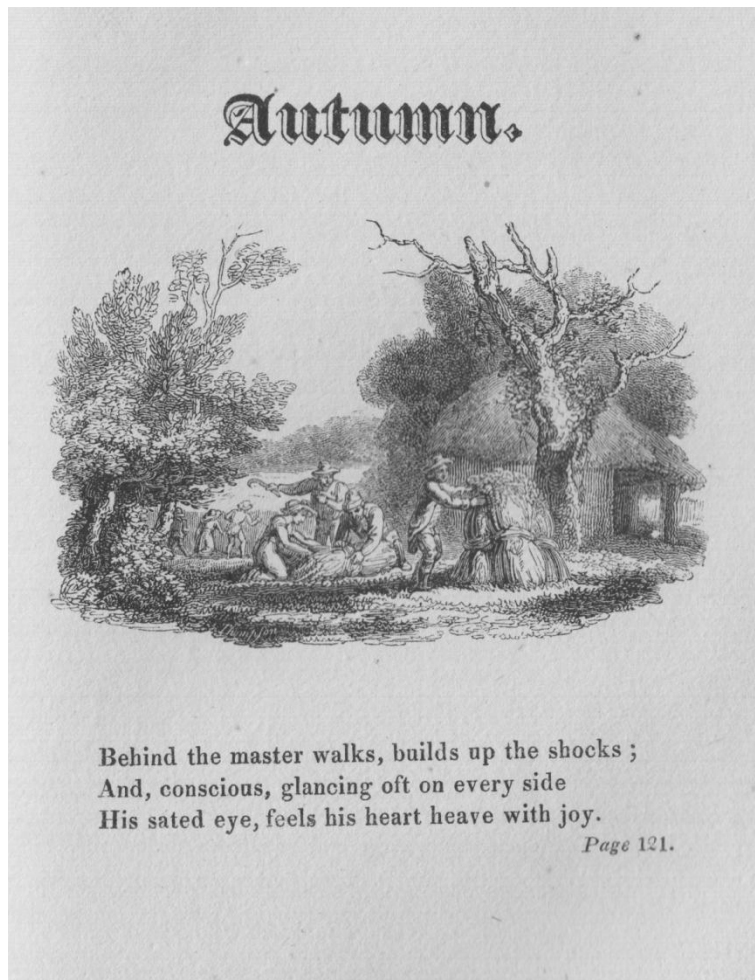


Figure 43 Headpiece vignette for “Autumn,” from *The Seasons* (Chiswick: C. Whittingham, 1820).
Reproduced from a copy in the author’s possession.

the booksellers to reach as many portions of the ever expanding reading public as possible. Making the literary texts available to less culturally sophisticated readers without the critical baggage of previous decades, their ventures represent some of the last editions with a reduced literary-critical apparatus before the increasing antiquarian and scholarly interest in the poem resulted in the production of ever-expansive prefatory accounts in the 1830s.

Chapter 4 The Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Translations of *The Seasons* in France (1759–1818)

In the previous two chapters, I have focused on the reception of *The Seasons* in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain by examining the ways in which the paratexts refashioned and reinterpreted the poem in accordance with the changing fashions of the consumer market. This final chapter will investigate the textual transformation of Thomson's poem in (editions of) the French translations. Whereas the wide dissemination of editions of *The Seasons* and the impact of print culture objects on the literary reputation of the work have extensively been examined in Britain, the transnational reception of Thomson's poem has not sufficiently been charted. Translations, just like illustrations and other paratexts, represent another mode of textual mediation, which can further demonstrate the pervasive force of texts.

By adopting the term transnational, this chapter aims to depart from traditional literary historiography as it has been advocated in *A New History of French Literature*, *A New History of German Literature*, and *A New Literary History of America*.¹ These literary histories adopt nineteenth-century conceptions of the nation-state and examine national literatures as having developed within geographically defined boundaries. They impose a narrow identity-defining concept of self and nationhood on heterogeneous linguistic communities. These accounts often interpret influences from foreign literatures as a unidirectional transfer of a text from one linguistic medium into another, while they should consider them within a context of dynamic cultural

¹ David E. Wellbery, ed., *A New History of German Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); Denis Hollier, ed., *A New History of French Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); Greil Marcus, and Werner Sollors, eds., *A New Literary History of America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

exchange and cross-fertilisation among the various linguistic communities in Europe. Margaret Cohen and Carolyn Dever confirm that transnational literary histories present

[stories] of cultural exchange and of cultures constituted through exchange, of novels imported and exported, published, reviewed, sold, circulated, and read together, of works translated from one national language to the other and then retranslated as their national origins are mislaid. Such processes both vindicate and challenge the imagined contours of the nation-state.²

Key to any transnational account is a recognition of networks. “It emphasizes connections, and . . . attends to regional as well as global scales, and to cultural and social as well as political and economic ties.”³ The examination of the ways in which *The Seasons* mutates as it travels beyond British boundaries to France can be considered within the context of a transnational connection of cultural exchange between Britain and France, which Cohen and Denver aptly call the Literary Channel.

The various agents involved in the production and consumption of translations demonstrate the ways in which these texts are not limited to one specific linguistic community and travel beyond national borders. Several editions of French translations of *The Seasons* were produced in Amsterdam to avoid copyright legislation.⁴ French booksellers would also have found a market for their translations in Germany, due to the close connections of Frederick II’s Prussian court with France. Within traditional accounts of national literary histories, translation as a cultural practice is often sidelined and is rarely considered as an integral part of cultural production. Bernard Fabian summarises the position of translations in literary histories adequately:

² Margaret Cohen, and Carolyn Dever, “Introduction,” in *The Literary Channel: The Inter-National Invention of the Novel*, ed. Margaret Cohen and Carolyn Dever (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002), 3.

³ Desley Deacon, Penny Russell, and Angela Woollacot, “Introduction,” in *Transnational Lives: Biographies of Global Modernity, 1700–Present*, ed. Desley Deacon, et. al. (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 3.

⁴ In eighteenth-century France, publisher-booksellers were required to submit the manuscript to the royal censors and were only allowed to publish a work once it had officially been approved. The bookseller could then either acquire an official “privilege” to gain the exclusive rights to publish and republish a title or a “permission” (7l. 2s.) for less important—often locally produced—books. Booksellers could also obtain permission to reprint a title, once the privilege had lapsed. Before 1777, an official privilege lasted for six years; after 1777, it was valid for ten years. This system of privileges and permits was dissolved by the new French administration with the advent of the French Revolution. For more information on copyright legislation in eighteenth-century France, see Robert L. Dawson, *The French Booktrade and the ‘Permission Simple’ of 1777: Copyright and Public Domain* (Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation, 1992), especially chapters 1 and 2. Robert Darnton relates how a number of French-speaking printers who specialised in the production of pirated editions or *contrefaçons*, established their business outside the French border (Amsterdam, The Hague, Maastricht, Brussels, Liège, Deux Ponts, Bouillon, Bâle, Berne, Lausanne, Geneva, and Avignon) to avoid the French authorities (Robert Darnton, “The Science of Piracy: A Crucial Ingredient in Eighteenth-Century Publishing,” *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 12 (2003): 3).

If we imagine the national printed archive as forming a series of concentric circles around the great works of the national literature, translations occupy a place in the outer regions. Though they establish contacts between national cultures, they exist in a kind of no-man's-land. They belong to two worlds and properly to neither. Their intellectual status is uncertain, and even their bibliographical status is not yet secure.⁵

The advertising of texts in the native language alongside translations of foreign texts in periodicals (such as magazines) in the eighteenth century suggests, however, that there was no rigorous distinction between original and translated texts at the time. The cultural equivalence between these texts indicates that the medium of translation should be examined as an integral part of literature and as a “crucial vehicle of diffusion” of foreign cultures.⁶

For the purpose of this project, I have focused on the transcultural reception and transformation of *The Seasons* within the French linguistic community only. The French translations and their editions, published in the course of about sixty years, make up a sufficiently sizeable and suitable corpus to examine the transnational mediation of Thomson's poem. At the same time, the corpus is not overly expansive, as was the case in the British context, as a result of which it is feasible to develop a comprehensive study of all translations without having to select a number of case studies. I have attempted to embed my discussion within a broader context of transnational exchange, in terms of the mobility of both texts and ideas across Europe.

Even though translations of *The Seasons* appeared in a variety of European languages, such as French, Dutch, Spanish, and Italian, only the German translations and editions have been dealt with so far.⁷ In this chapter, I will provide a comprehensive study of both complete and partial translations issued in France in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. I will examine the ways in which Thomson's poem was refashioned and transformed in the French translations. By investigating both the French translators' and booksellers' strategies, I will determine how *The Seasons* was reinterpreted in the course of the translation process and how it was both textually and paratextually appropriated to the target culture. In this manner, this chapter will

⁵ Bernhard Fabian, *The English Book in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (London: The British Library, 1992), 2–3.

⁶ Fania Oz-Salzberger, “Translation,” in Vol. 4, *Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment*, ed. Alan Charles Kors (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 181.

⁷ Jung, “German Editions,” 37–59.

produce a much-needed account of the transnational dissemination and transcultural impact of *The Seasons* in France.

Earlier studies on the reception of *The Seasons* in France have mainly adopted a traditional source studies approach. André Hirsch and Margaret Cameron have provided the most comprehensive accounts to date, but they focused mostly on the transferral of specific literary topoi from Thomson's text to the various translations.⁸ Their accounts were not objectively descriptive, in that they were more preoccupied with pointing out the shortcomings of the translations rather than examining the ways in which the translators productively engaged with the original text. I will go significantly beyond the remit of these traditional textual reception studies by taking into account the various paratexts related to the translations. I will not only examine translators' paratexts, such as prefatory essays, biographies of Thomson, and critical notes, to determine translators' idiosyncratic approaches to the original; I will also examine publishers' paratexts, mainly illustrations, to explore the ways in which Thomson's poem was refashioned and reinterpreted.

4.1 Antoine Yart's *Idée de la Poésie Anglaise* (1754)

Abbot Antoine Yart, translator, literary critic, and co-founder of the Académie de Rouen was the first to introduce a partial translation of Thomson's works in France in 1754. In the fourth and fifth volumes of his *Idée de la Poésie Anglaise*, an eight-volume collection of prose translations from the English, Yart included a translation of Thomson's concluding hymn to *The Seasons* and "A Poem Sacred to the Memory of Sir Isaac Newton."⁹ Yart's selection reveals a distinct interest in the religious dimensions of the poet's works. Characterising Thomson as a religiously inspired poet in his introductory essay on hymns, he defined the conclusion of *The Seasons* as one of the most accomplished English hymns. He identified three reasons why it was so successful: it adopted the poetic style of David's psalms; it was infused with the enthusiasm of the

⁸ André Hirsch, "James Thomson: Ses traducteurs et ses critiques en France," *Revue de l'Enseignement des Langues Vivantes* 42 (1925): 66–75 & 105–12; "L'Influence de Thomson en France," *Revue de l'Enseignement des Langues Vivantes* 42 (1925): 160–72. Margaret M. Cameron, *L'Influence de Thomson sur la Poésie Descriptive en France (1759–1810)*, (Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1927).

⁹ Like all of the French translators after him, Yart used the later version of Thomson's text as it had been issued in 1746.

biblical prophets; and it was written in a religious spirit.¹⁰ Not only did he incorrectly assess Thomson's hymn according to the biblical hymn tradition, but he also criticised the poet's proclivity towards drinking, attributing the elated quality of his poetry to his having written them in an intoxicated state. Associating Thomson with the mythological Silenus, the classical symbol of Bacchanalian poetry, Yart characterised his poetic genius as "plus élevé que délicat, plus de transports que de sentiments, plus de feu que d'esprit, plus d'imagination que de raison."¹¹ Yart's fashioning of Thomson as a religious poet was not representative of the French reception of *The Seasons*, since later translators would highlight different aspects of Thomson's multi-faceted poem.

Yart's translation derives its significance from the fact that the French critic was the first to include Thomson in a collection of translated passages from the works of (what he considered to be) the major English poets. The full title of the collection was indicative of the ambitious scope of the collection: *Idée de la Poésie Angloise, ou Traduction des Meilleurs Poètes Anglois, qui n'ont point encore paru dans notre Langue, avec un jugement sur leurs Ouvrages, & une comparaison de leurs Poésies avec celles des Auteurs anciens & modernes, & un grand nombre d'Anecdotes & de Notes Critiques*.¹² Setting out to present a general idea of what constitutes the best English poetry, Yart organised the collection according to genre and selected those English poems which he conceived to represent the best examples in their respective genres. In the preface to the first volume, he explained that it was an opportune time to turn to English letters. Perceiving that French poetry had utilised the works of Greek and Roman authors to their full potential under the reign of Louis XIV, he contended that nothing new could be gained from classical literature. Instead, he argued that his countrymen should turn to English authors to avoid contemporary poetry from becoming too imitative and unoriginal.¹³ Yart introduced an extensive critical apparatus to promote a better understanding of the translated poems. He wrote historical, genre-theoretical 'discours' or 'avertissements' to each section and included lengthy footnotes, in which he either provided explanations of specific

¹⁰ Antoine Yart, *Idée de la Poésie Angloise* (Paris: Briasson, 1749, 1753–6), 4:278.

¹¹ Yart, 4: 280–1: "More elevated than delicate, [characterised] more by rapture than by sentiment, more by fervour than by wit, more by imagination than by reason." All translations from the French are mine.

¹² "An idea of English poetry, or a translation of the best English poets, that have never appeared in our language before, with a critique of their works, & a comparison of their poetry to that of ancient and modern authors, & a great number of anecdotes and critical notes." This title, which Yart adopted for the third volume of his collection in 1753, is an expansion of the title he had used for the first two volumes in 1749. The original title did not yet refer to the anecdotes and the critical notes. In drawing increased attention to the paratextual devices, the expanded title pointed out the central importance of the critical apparatus for the structure and development of the collection.

¹³ Yart, 1:i–ii. By the 1760s, Yart's opinion would become commonplace in French literary criticism, even though increased attention was called to the danger of imitating English examples too closely. Constance West, "La Théorie de la Traduction au XVIIIe Siècle," *Revue de Littérature Comparée* (1932): 332.

passages or compared the text to French or classical texts. The translation tends to be inaccurate, since Yart regularly alters the original text to correct some of the religious precepts underlying Thomson's hymn in accordance with French catholic principles.

Yart's collection not only constitutes one of the earliest attempts at making a comprehensive range of English poetry available to a (mostly educated) French audience, it also is indicative of a wider interest in British culture which developed in France in the middle of the eighteenth century. French notables increasingly adopted a British style, as English literature, British cuisine, and British landscape gardening became popular and fashionable. The textual mediation of British science, letters, and philosophy in French translations facilitated an increased presence of British culture in France. Literary translations from the English were in vogue at the time as French editions of, for instance, Gay's *Fables* (1759), Hume and Smollet's *History of England* (1759–1764), and Johnson's *Raselas* (1760) were made available on the French book market. Scholars have even characterised the 1750s and 1760s as a period of cultural anglomania.¹⁴ Similar trends can be identified in the rest of Europe as well. Fabian defines the historical importance of this "Continental discovery of England" for European culture: "It had one of the most momentous literary and cultural impacts in the history of Europe. It was the first phase of the ascent of English culture to world-wide renown, and of the ascent of the English language to its present position as the lingua franca of the modern world."¹⁵

4.2 Marie Jeanne Châtillon Bontems's Translation (1759)

It is in the context of the French fascination with British culture around the middle of the eighteenth century that the first complete prose translation of *The Seasons* appeared on the French book market. It was issued in Paris in 1759 by the bookseller Hugues Daniel Chaubert and the printer-bookseller Claude-Jean-Baptiste Hérissant. The translator was Marie Jeanne de Châtillon Bontems. Information about her life is scarce. She was the wife of Pierre-Henri Bontems, war treasurer at the French court. She had received a distinguished education and had a broad knowledge of foreign languages.¹⁶

¹⁴ Ian Buruma, *Anglomania: A European Love Affair* (London: Atlantic Books, 1998), 38. Hirsch, "L'Influence de Thomson," 160.

¹⁵ Fabian, 3–4.

¹⁶ Nicolas-Toussaint Lemoyne Desessarts, *Les Siècles Littéraires de la France, Ou Nouveau Dictionnaire, Historique, Critique, et Bibliographique* (Paris: chez l'auteur, imprimeur-libraire, 1800), 1:312–3.

Throughout her life, Bontems displayed a particular interest in British literature and culture. Edward Gibbon was a frequent guest at her house during his stay in France in 1763.¹⁷ Her fascination with Thomson is also apparent from the fact that she subscribed to the expensively produced quarto edition of his collected works, issued in 1762. Even though the translation was published anonymously, Bontems was identified as the author as early as January 1761.¹⁸

Producing a full translation of Thomson's text, Bontems adopted an entirely different approach to *The Seasons* from the one that Yart had used in his collection. Instead of focusing on the religious sublime, Bontems commended the poem for its natural imagery, descriptive accuracy, and the sentiment of its idyllic tableaux:

On conçoit quelle prodigieuse variété de merveilles s'offre de toutes parts à l'œil perçant & attentif de l'observateur, & combien ces sortes de détails, & sur-tout les descriptions champêtres qui en résultent, toujours si intéressantes pour peu qu'elles soient peintes avec vérité, le deviennent encore plus sous la main d'un homme de génie, qui les embellit de ce que l'Imagination a de sublime & de brillant, la Langue de force & d'énergie, la Poésie de fleurs & d'agrémens. . . . Le

¹⁷ In a letter to his stepmother, Gibbon refers to Bontems's hospitality: "Madame Bontems is a very good sort of a woman, agreeable [sic] and *sans pretensions*. She seems to have conceived a real motherly attachment for me. I generally sup there three or four times a week quite in a friendly way." Edward Gibbon, *Private Letters of Edward Gibbon (1753-1794)*, ed. Rowland E. Prothero (London: printed for J. Murray, 1896), 1:31. Gibbon's autobiography includes a more extensive description of his acquaintance with Bontems: "I delivered a letter from Mrs. Mallet to Madame Bontems, who had distinguished herself by a translation of Thomson's *Seasons* into French prose: at our first interview we felt a sympathy which banished all reserve, and opened our bosoms to each other. In every light, in every attitude, Madame B. was a sensible and amiable Companion, an author careless of literary [sic] honours, a devotee untainted with Religious gall. She managed a small income with elegant economy: her apartment on the Quai des Theatins commanded the river, the bridges, and the Louvre; her familiar suppers were adorned with freedom and taste; and I attended her in my carriage to the houses of her acquaintance, to the sermons of the most popular preachers, and in pleasant excursions to St. Denys, St. Germain, and Versailles. In the middle of her life, her beauty was still an object of desire" (Edward Gibbon, *The Autobiographies of Edward Gibbon*, ed. John Murray (London: J. Murray, 1897), 204-5).

¹⁸ *Mercure de France*, January 1761, 1:20. In the introduction to the French translation of the first act of Thomson's tragedy *Tancred and Sigismunda*, the editor associates Bontems with the translation of *The Seasons*, which he had reviewed in the February 1760 issue of the journal. Her identity as the translator had already been known in her physiocratic social circle. Baron Friedrich Melchior von Grimm mentions Bontems by name in his review of the translation (*Correspondance Littéraire*, 15 June 1760). Friedrich Melchior Grimm, *Correspondance Littéraire*, ed. Sigun Dafjård Norén (Ferney-Voltaire: Centre International d'Étude du XVIIIe Siècle, 2012), 7:152. For a detailed discussion of the rationale behind the anonymous publication of Bontems's translation and her relation to the physiocrats, see Yves Châlon, "Les Saisons de James Thomson: Autour de leur Dédicace française," *Revue de Littérature Comparée* 32 (1958): 34-46.

sentiment, qui est l'ame de toutes les belles productions, & qui seul laisse dans notre esprit des traces durables, abonde dans cet ouvrage.¹⁹

Bontems not only provided a general introduction to Thomson's poem, discussing its subject range and its poetic style; she also expressed her desire to produce an exact translation of the original text. Convinced that a translator should not alter the spirit of the author, she argued that a good translation should be characterised by transparency: a translator should stay true to the original text by pursuing scrupulous precision in trying to reproduce the text's original meaning and to retain its original spirit.²⁰ In accordance with these principles, she attempted to replicate Thomson's eye for detail and the painterly skill with which he depicted nature in all its splendour, as well as to do justice to the sentimental mode of the interpolated episodes and his descriptions of country life.

Bontems also used her fidelity to the original text as a strategic device to compensate for any deficiencies in the poem which may have displeased her French audience. She apologised to the reader that, in adhering to the original text as closely as possible, she had been obliged to sacrifice the elegance which was so typical of French language and culture.²¹ In the minds of French readers, English literature was associated with individualistic writing characterised by a taste for freedom and not in accordance with the discourse of politeness and sensibility prevalent in the French literary salons.²² Her translation would inevitably also display the same shortcomings as the original, more specifically Thomson's fustian style and tiresome repetition.²³

In spite of her intended fidelity, Bontems regularly altered the original text. On a stylistic level, she adopts various strategies to resolve some of the textual complexities

¹⁹ "Avertissement" in Marie-Jeanne Châtillon Bontems, trans., *Les Saisons: Poème Traduit de L'Anglois de Thompson* (Paris: Chaubert & Hérisant, 1759), i–iii. "What a prodigious variety of wonders offers itself everywhere to the piercing and attentive eye of the observer, & how many of these kinds of details, & above all, the resulting countryside descriptions, always inherently interesting because they are painted with truth, become even more so when rendered by a man of genius, who embellishes them with what Imagination has of sublime & brilliance, what Language has of forcefulness & energy, what Poetry has of flowers [of speech] & charms. . . . Sentiment, which is the soul of all beautiful productions, and which [is the] only [thing that] leaves on our mind lasting impressions, abounds in this work."

²⁰ Bontems, iv.

²¹ Bontems, iv–v.

²² West, 334. For a detailed account of the development and the promotion of this cultural discourse in the salons and of the ways in which it shaped French literary tastes and fashions, see Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1994).

²³ Bontems, vii.

of the poem. Like most other French translators, Bontems struggled to render Thomson's extensive personifications, condense periphrastic phrases, and lengthy syntactical constructions involving both coordinate and subordinate clauses as well as parentheses.²⁴ Alterations of a different kind, by contrast, were not prompted by linguistic incompatibilities between the source and target language. Rather, they provided conscious adaptations and reinterpretations of the original text. They usually occur in the popular sentimentalising and moralising passages, such as the interpolated episodes or the description of marital bliss at the end of "Spring."

The changes to the translations of these passages exemplify the ways in which Thomson's poem was refashioned for a genteel French audience. The original description of the fateful moment in the episode of the lovers Celadon and Amelia, when Amelia is struck dead by lightning during a summer storm, reads: "From his void Embrace, / Mysterious Heaven! that moment to the Ground, / A blacken'd Corse, was struck the beauteous Maid" ("Su" 1746: 1214-6). The French version, "A ces mots, ô ciel impénétrable, la foudre la sépare de cet embrassement inutile, frappe cette belle Nimphe, & la réduit en cendres,"²⁵ even though stylistically less dramatic due to the explicit reference to the lightning ("la foudre") and the dropping of the inverted emphatic position of "the beauteous maid," intensifies the emotional response of the reader by reducing Amelia to a heap of ashes rather than transforming her into "a blacken'd Corse." In her translation of the episode of the young Damon secretly spying on his bathing lover Musidora, Bontems alters the description of Musidora's undressing.

From the snowy Leg,
And slender Foot, th' inverted Silk she drew;
As the soft Touch dissolved the virgin Zone;
And, thro' the parting Robe, th' alternate Breast,
With youth wild-throbbing, on thy lawless Gaze
In full Luxuriance rose. ("Su" 1746: 1307-12)

Quand Musidore dépouilla ses jambes d'albâtre, & ses pieds délicats de leurs vêtements de soie, qu'elle délia sa ceinture de vierge, & qu'à travers sa robe

²⁴ For a discussion of the various strategies employed by Bontems to translate adjectives and complex adjectival constructions in *The Seasons*, see Maria Napolitano, "La Prima Traduzione Francese delle *Seasons* di James Thomson," *Annali Istituto Universitario Orientale, Napoli, Sezione Germanica* (1967): 263-84.

²⁵ Bontems, 145.

ouverte, son sein alternativement palpitant avec la vigueur de la jeunesse, se découvre en entier à tes regards avides.²⁶

By translating “the virgin Zone” by “sa ceinture de vierge,” the translator drops the mythological reference to Venus’s magic girdle,²⁷ thus considerably simplifying the original text. Moreover, because of the linear syntax--the translator drops the inversion by placing the subject “Musidore” at the beginning of the sentence--and the use of multiple subordinate clauses in the translation, the staccato effect reflecting Damon’s excitement in the English text is lost. The suggestiveness of the text is reduced so as to remodel the episode as a tale about “amour respectueux.”²⁸

Reviews in French journals were generally positive about Bontems’s translation.²⁹ The *Mercure de France*, the most prestigious French literary journal at the time, complimented the translator on her successful rendering of the original British spirit in the French text. The little criticism expressed by the reviewer concerned small inaccuracies, unfortunate repetitions, and some expressions which could have been translated more precisely and in accordance with French sensibilities.³⁰ The reviewer specifically highlighted the translation of the description of the plague in the torrid zone in “Summer” as a passage which should have been made less repulsive.³¹ Overall, however, he praised the way in which Bontems managed to retain the English spirit of the original. At the same time, he expressed his disapproval of overly liberal translations:

On ne peut qu’applaudir au dessein & à l’exécution du Traducteur: ce qui gêne la plupart de nos Traductions, c’est ce prétendu air François, que nous voulons donner aux Ouvrages, que nous faisons passer dans notre langue; nous les dénaturons . . . en leur ôtant les traits qui leur sont propres: ce sorte, que nous créons des espèces de monstres qui n’appartiennent ni au goût national, ni à celui des étrangers. Ce défaut rétrécit la carrière des talents; . . . appesantit le vol

²⁶ Bontems, 150.

²⁷ For an exploration of the mythological subtext of ‘the virgin Zone’, see Sandro Jung, “William Collins and the ‘Zone’,” *ANQ* 19:2 (2006): 16–21.

²⁸ *Journal Encyclopédique*, March 1760, 2:2,123: respectful love.

²⁹ *Mercure de France*, February 1760, 140–54; *Journaux de Trévoux*, March 1760, 2:720–49; *Journal Encyclopédique*, March 1760, 2:2,107–25 & 2:3,83–98; *L’Année Littéraire*, 1760, 1:121–44; *Annales Typographiques*, January 1761, 1:541–2. The latter review was an abbreviated version of the review that appeared in the *Journaux de Trévoux*.

³⁰ *Mercure de France*, February 1760, 154.

³¹ *Mercure de France*, February 1760, 146.

du génie: il répand sur nos écrits, cette monotonie, qui nous enchaîne dans la médiocrité, & dans la servile imitation.³²

The reviewer takes a clear position in the contemporary debate on translation practice in France. Whereas French translators and literary critics at the beginning of the eighteenth century had predominantly favoured adaptive translation strategies to make foreign works more appropriate to French sensibilities, this practice would increasingly be criticised in the course of the second half of the century as the artificial imposition of a French style onto the original text.³³ Bontems's translation, according to the reviewer, represented an early example of a successful translation favouring fidelity to the original.

4.3 The Impact of Bontems's Translation on the French Reception of *The Seasons*

Bontems's translation functioned as an important catalyst for the reception of *The Seasons* in France. French reviewers and literary critics not only commented on the quality of the translation, but also used Bontems's text to develop a critical examination of the source text, in the process constructing a cultural reputation for Thomson's poem in France. Generally praised for its natural description, which was defined as an agreeable blend of poetry and natural philosophy, Thomson's poem was nevertheless criticised for its contrived structure, excessive length, and tiresome repetition of

³² *Mercure de France*, February 1760, 140–1. "We cannot but applaud the design of the Translator & the realisation [thereof]: what spoils most of our Translations, is this pretended French appearance, which we want to give to Works, which we aim to pass down in our language; we denaturalise them by depriving them of those traits which are proper to them: in this manner, we create kinds of monsters which do not agree with neither our national taste, nor with that of foreigners. This shortcoming narrows the reputation of talents; & prevents the flights of genius: it spreads over our writings, that monotony, which chains us to mediocrity, & to servile imitation."

³³ Stefanie Stockhorst, "Introduction. Cultural Transfer through Translation: A Current Perspective in Enlightenment Studies," in *Cultural Transfer through Translation: The Circulation of Enlightened Thought in Europe by Means of Translation*, ed. Stefanie Stockhorst (Amsterdam and New York, NY: Rodopi, 2010), 14. For more information on the theorisation of translation in eighteenth-century France, see West.

particular phrases.³⁴ Frequently singled out for praise were the interpolated episodes, the moral-philosophical digressions, and the sentimental passages of genteel instruction in the poem. The reviewer of the *Mercure de France* referred favourably to Thomson's description of love among both animals and man in "Spring" and especially directed the reader's attention to his concluding representation of true love in a blissful marriage, which was said to match the beauty and sentiment of similar passages by Milton and the classical authors.³⁵ In the discussion of the text in the *Journal de Trévoux*, admiration is expressed for the patriotic enthusiasm displayed in the panegyric to industry and for the successful hypertextual reworking of Virgil's text in his description of the pleasures of countryside life.³⁶ The interpolated episodes, in particular, featured repeatedly in the journals. The reviewer in the *Mercure de France* commented on the ways in which the tales of Celadon and Amelia and of the shepherd perishing in the snow would move the reader to tears, and referred to the episodes of Damon and Musidora and of Palemon and Lavinia as most agreeable.³⁷

The above reviews indicate the ways in which French readers engaged with Thomson's generically complex poem. They appreciated the novelty of the descriptive long poem, but perceived it as stylistically foreign. The repeated recommendations of the sentimental and moralising passages, by contrast, signifies that these passages were considered to accord better to French tastes. The main criteria by which works were judged in France at the time, taste (*le gout*) and propriety (*les bienséances*),³⁸ were defined according to the sophistication of polite conversation and civilised sociability prevalent in the literary salons. Moreover, the fact that these passages would feature repeatedly in partial translations, French imitations, and illustrations, indicates that they were popular with the reading public.³⁹

Bontems's translation not only established a positive reputation for *The Seasons* in France, it also played an important part in the development of a French tradition of descriptive poetry. The translation appeared at a time when science and natural

³⁴ *L'Année Littéraire*, 1760, 1:123 & 1:134.

³⁵ *Mercure de France*, February 1760, 142–3.

³⁶ *Journaux de Trévoux*, March 1760, 2:741–4.

³⁷ *Mercure de France*, February 1760, 146 & 148 & 150–1.

³⁸ Charles A. Porter, "Voltaire, Diderot, Rousseau and the *Encyclopédie*," in Vol. 4: The Eighteenth Century, *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, ed. H. B. Nisbet and Claude Rawson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 491.

³⁹ Margaret Cohen reveals that a similar appreciation of sentimentality is reflected in the popularity of sentimental fiction, which "dominated the literary landscape from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century," both in Britain and in France (Margaret Cohen, "Sentimental Communities," in *The Literary Channel: The Inter-National Invention of the Novel*, ed. Margaret Cohen and Carolyn Dever (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002), 106).

philosophy featured more centrally in French culture. Scientific experiments received increased public attention and became topics of debate in the salons; a wider dissemination of French Enlightenment thought was achieved by means of popularising texts, especially Diderot and d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie*. Thomson's poem, in this respect, became the model for French authors to incorporate scientific discoveries in poetic compositions. In 1769, Jean-François de Saint-Lambert became the first French exponent of the genre with the publication of his *Les Saisons*. In the preface, Saint-Lambert consciously defined his own work against his British predecessor's. According to the French author, Thomson was intent on rendering the sublime grandeur of nature because he wrote for a public that already knew and admired nature in all its aspects.⁴⁰ By contrast, writing his poem "pour les hommes chargés de protéger les campagnes, & non pour ceux qui les cultivent,"⁴¹ he wanted to display the beauty and the charms of nature so as to reacquaint his readers with the richness of nature and the advantages of a countryside life, which they had come to underappreciate. In order to achieve a reappreciation of nature with his readers, he was required to adopt a more openly moralising tone than his predecessor. A year later, Jacques Delille published his universally lauded translation of Virgil's *Georgics*, the preface of which included a short commentary on Thomson.⁴² As a result, the literary potential of didactic-descriptive poetry was increasingly being recognised in France. In the course of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, various French poets would either imitate Thomson's text or engage with the genre of the descriptive long poem in new ways, often declaring an indebtedness to Thomson.⁴³

⁴⁰ Jean-François de Saint-Lambert, *Les Saisons, Poème* (Amsterdam, 1769), xix–xx.

⁴¹ Saint-Lambert, xvii: "for men charged with the protection of the rural fields, and not for those who work them."

⁴² "Discours Préliminaire," in Jacques Delille, *Les Géorgiques de Virgil* (Paris: Bleuet, 1770), 28–9.

⁴³ For a complete overview Thomson's influence on French descriptive poetry, see Cameron. The interpolated episodes especially would prove to be a popular subject for imitation or adaptation. Below are some of the most prominent examples. Saint-Lambert himself included a number of sentimental episodes in his poem, several of which reworked Thomson's originals. His reworking of Thomson's episode of Damon and Musidora received a distinctly moralising and class-specific reinterpretation. Damon is now longer a simple swain, but the young master of the fields who is trying to win the hand of Lise, daughter of the manager of his fields and in love with farmer's boy Lucas. When Damon encounters Lise bathing, he is overcome with desire, jumps out of the bushes, and pleads her to become his. When Lise adamantly refuses because she wants to retain her honour and when her father offers his resignation upon discovery of the assault, Damon recognises his mistakes and orders Lucas and Lise to be married, at the same time offering Lucas a farm with rich soil in his estate to maintain Lise and his family. Saint-Lambert's reworking of the episode of the shepherd dying in the snow, introduced in the third edition of *Les Saisons* in 1771, is likewise characterised by a sentimentalising and happy ending. In this reworking, the shepherd does find his way home, but when his son comes out to meet him, the door to their home is covered by an avalanche, locking the mother inside. They start to dig to try and reach her, and just when all hope appears to be lost, they break through and the family is happily reunited. In

4.4 The Paratextual Make-Up and Material Packaging of Eighteenth-Century Editions of Bontems's Translation

The success of Bontems's translation and its impact on the reception of *The Seasons* in France was also determined by the paratextual make-up of the editions. Issued both in octavo and duodecimo formats, the translation was printed on laid paper with a double rectangular ruled frame surrounding the text on each page. The editions included eight copper-engraved illustrations by Jean-Charles Baquoy, after designs by Charles-Dominique-Joseph Eisen, one of the leading designers of book illustration at the time.⁴⁴ The booksellers also included an elaborately engraved title-page by the same artists, rather than a conventional letterpress title-page. The cartouche design resembled a monument. The title appeared on a curtain draped in front of an elaborately decorated frame of putti figures and elements evocative of the seasons. An allegorical personification of poetic inspiration was depicted on top of a pedestal, containing the imprint details. Apart from the title-page, the illustrators produced two full-page plates for each season. The first set of engravings, inserted before each season, are full-page plates depicting specific scenes from the poem. Importantly, the artists offered the first ever renderings of two of the interpolated episodes. [Figure 44] The illustration to "L'Été" depicts the nude Musidora about to descend into the water, while Damon eagerly looks on in the background. The plate to "L'Automne" captures the moment

his unfinished imitation of *The Seasons*, appearing in parts in the *Mercure de France* from 1770 to 1772 and 1777, Willemain d'Abancourt included sentimentalising imitations of the episodes of Palemon and Lavinia (Candor and Rose) and of Damon and Musidora (Hylas and Sylvie). Jean-Antoine Roucher included an imitation of the episode of the dying shepherd in *Les Mois* (1779), confessing his indebtedness to Thomson in a footnote to the text. Delille, who would compose three original works in the descriptive poetry tradition, each of which was influenced by Thomson's poem: *Les Jardins* (1782), *L'Homme des champs* (1782), and *Les Trois Règnes de la nature* (1809), imitates the episode of Damon and Musidora in the latter, evoking the presence of Thomson prior to the scene. The frontispiece to this work, engraved by Remi-Henri-Joseph Delvaux after a design by le baron de Myris, represents a conflation of two moments in the narrative, as Damon is spying on Musidora, while she is carving her message into the tree bark. At the end of eighteenth century, an imitation of the episode of Damon and Musidora was issued as an independent pamphlet publication. Finally, apart from the episode of Damon and Musidora, all of the episodes were also included in an anonymous imitation of *The Seasons* issued in 1818 and often mistakenly attributed to Lambert.

⁴⁴ Roger Portalis, *Les Dessinateurs d'Illustrations au Dix-Huitième Siècle*, (Paris: Damascène Morgand et Charles Fatout, 1877), 1:xiv. For more information on Eisen's life and works, see Adrien Carlier, *Charles Eisen de Valenciennes: Dessinateur, Peintre, Graveur, 1720-1778* (Valenciennes: Cercle Archéologique de Valenciennes, 1966); Vera Salomons, *Charles Eisen. Eighteenth-Century Book Illustrator and Engraver: An Annotated Bibliography of the Best Known Books Illustrated by Charles-Dominique-Joseph Eisen, 1720-1778, with Descriptions of the Plates and an Index, Preceded by a Sketch of His Life and Art* (London: J. and E. Bumpus, 1914).



Figure 44 Full-page plate, designed by Charles Eisen, engraved by Charles Baquoy, for “L’Été,” from *Les Saisons: Poème Traduit de l’Anglois de Thompson* (Paris: Chaubert and Hérissant, 1759). Reproduced with permission from a copy in professor Sandro Jung’s possession.

when Palemon discovers the identity of Lavinia, his former benefactor's daughter. The second set of illustrations are vignettes depicting a group of putti figures engaged in activities specific to the season illustrated.

The visual paratexts reflect predominating illustration practices at the time of publication of Chaubert and Hérissant's editions. Even though the production of book illustrations was a booming industry in the 1750s and 1760s, French booksellers mostly relied on the same artists to produce designs for their editions. Hubert Gravelot, Charles-Nicolas Cochin, and Eisen were the most prominent illustrators at the time and their similar styles are representative of contemporary fashions and tastes. Abandoning the grand, classical, and often mythologically inspired mode of the seventeenth century, artists selected sentimental and domestic subjects for illustration and opted for more refined and lavishly decorated designs characterised by a "soft, velvety and rich harmony."⁴⁵ Eisen's designs were not only executed in this style; they also visually refashioned Thomson's poem so as to make the scenes more familiar to their French audience. **[Figure 45]** In the plate to "Le Printemps," for instance, the nest-snatching passage has been relocated to a French setting. The scene takes place against the background of a baroque palace with a formal, symmetrical garden *à la française* and the boys are depicted in classically inspired French dress.

The set of engravings not only constituted an integral part of the booksellers' marketing strategies to increase the appeal of their edition, it also represented a major intervention in the illustration history of *The Seasons*. Produced thirteen years after Thomson had reissued the poem with extensive additions and revisions in London in 1746, the edition of Bontems's translation was not subject to the copyright laws which prevented other British booksellers from reissuing Thomson's poem with new illustrations. By opting to represent specific passages from the poem, the French artists were the first to depart from William Kent's mythopoeic-allegorical designs for the British editions of *The Seasons*.⁴⁶ The visual renderings of the interpolated episodes in particular constituted an important innovation. Not only were they indicative of the positive reception Thomson's anthropocentric narratives received in France, they also predate illustration practices that would develop in Britain in the late eighteenth century, after John Murray included engravings of three of the interpolated episodes in his 1778 edition of *The Seasons*.

⁴⁵ Salomons, 32.

⁴⁶ Earlier translations of *The Seasons* in Germany had also included illustrations, but these either reused Kent's designs (Brocke's 1744 translation) or introduced vignettes which did not engage with the text in any specific way (Gessner's 1757 translation of *Spring*). Jung, "German Editions," 41-2 & 44-5.



Figure 45 Full-page plate, designed by Charles Eisen, engraved by Charles Baquoy, for “Le Printemps,” from *Les Saisons: Poème Traduit de l’Anglois de Thompson* (Paris: Chaubert and Hérissant, 1759). Reproduced with permission from a copy in professor Sandro Jung’s possession.

The only complete French translation of *The Seasons* until 1801,⁴⁷ Bontems's *Les Saisons* became the standard and most frequently reprinted French translation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁴⁸ From the 1760s through to the 1780s, it was mostly reissued in cheaply-produced, often pirated editions, as indicated by the anonymous Berlin-Amsterdam or false London imprints introduced by the booksellers to avoid legal prosecution.⁴⁹ [Figure 46] Several of these editions recycled the engravings included in the first edition, either by including simplified recastings of the full-page engravings (as was the case in the 1760 edition) or by using one of the

⁴⁷ Two partial translations into French were produced between the publication of Bontems's text and Joseph Philippe François Deleuze's translation in 1801. In 1764, Élie de Joncourt, professor of philosophy, published an abbreviated translation of *The Seasons* as part of a two-volume collection of his works (*Élie de Joncourt, Œuvres Diverses de M. de Joncourt* (La Haye: Husson, 1764), 1:63–107). His translation of *The Seasons* was part of a collection of abbreviated translations of other English works by such authors as Addison, Dryden, and Hutcheson. Joncourt's translation hardly contained any natural descriptions, as he focused on the moral-philosophical passages of the poem instead. In his nine-page translation of *Spring*, for instance, he dedicates over half of the text to Thomson's exploration of love among animals and humans. Joncourt's translation did not enjoy the same success as Bontems's translation, witness the fact that the works were never reissued. A reviewer in the journal *Le Bibliothèque des Sciences et des Beaux-Arts* expressed his criticism towards the abbreviated translation and praised Bontems's as far superior: "Pour nous, nous aimerions à voir *Thompson* en entier, & Madame de *Bontems* a donné au Public cette satisfaction, par son admirable Traduction des Saisons, laquelle, soit que nous considérions la difficulté presque'insurmontable de l'entreprise, soit que nous fassions attention au succès qui l'a couronnée, lui mérite un nom immortel sur la Parnasse François" (*Le Bibliothèque des Sciences et des Beaux-Arts*, January–March 1764, 142: "In our opinion, we rather like to see *Thompson* in his entirety, & Madame de *Bontems* has given the Public that satisfaction, with her admirable Translation of *The Seasons*, which, if we either consider the nearly insurmountable difficulty of the enterprise, or if we pay attention to the success with which she has been crowned, has merited her immortality on the French Parnassus"). The second partial translation, published in 1798, will be discussed further on in this chapter.

⁴⁸ This list, which does not claim to be exhaustive, records the different editions of Bontems's translation which I have been able to trace. Paris (Chaubert & Hérisant), 1759 (reissued in 1769); Berlin and Amsterdam, 1760, 1761, 1762, 1763; Frankfurt (Essinger); 1763 (recorded by Cohen, but not traced); Dordrecht (A. Blussé et fils), 1769; Paris, 1777; Paris (Pissot & Nyon, 1779; Londres, 1779; Londres, 1780; Londres, 1783; Londres, 1788; Paris, 1792; Toulouse (N. E. Sens & A. Gaude), 1792; Paris (Patris), 1795; Paris (Didot Jeune), 1795 (reissued in 1796); Paris (E. Onfroy), 1799; Paris (F. Louis), 1800 (issued in one bilingual, one French, and one English edition); Londres, 1803; London (C. Nourse), 1809 (bilingual); Paris & Bordeaux (Brunot-Labbe & P. Beaume), 1810 (bilingual edition); Paris (Billois), 1813; Clermont (Landriot), 1815; Avignon (J. A. Joly), 1816; Tulle (Chirac), 1816; Paris (A. Delalain), 1818. Editions of Bontems's translation make up thirty out of the total of thirty-seven editions of complete translations of *The Seasons* into French.

⁴⁹ Chaubert and Hérisant had acquired a royal privilege for their edition of Bontems's translation in 1759 and renewed it, as indicated by the publication of their edition of the text in 1769. Other booksellers had to resort to false imprints and pirated editions because of Chaubert and Hérisant's exclusive copyrights. Dawson has attempted to identify the publishers of some of these editions by linking them to entries found in the French book trade registers (Dawson, 135–45). Since many of his identifications remain speculative and since it was not within the remit of this research project to trace the origins of the unattributed editions, I did not assign any names in my list of editions of Bontems's translation.

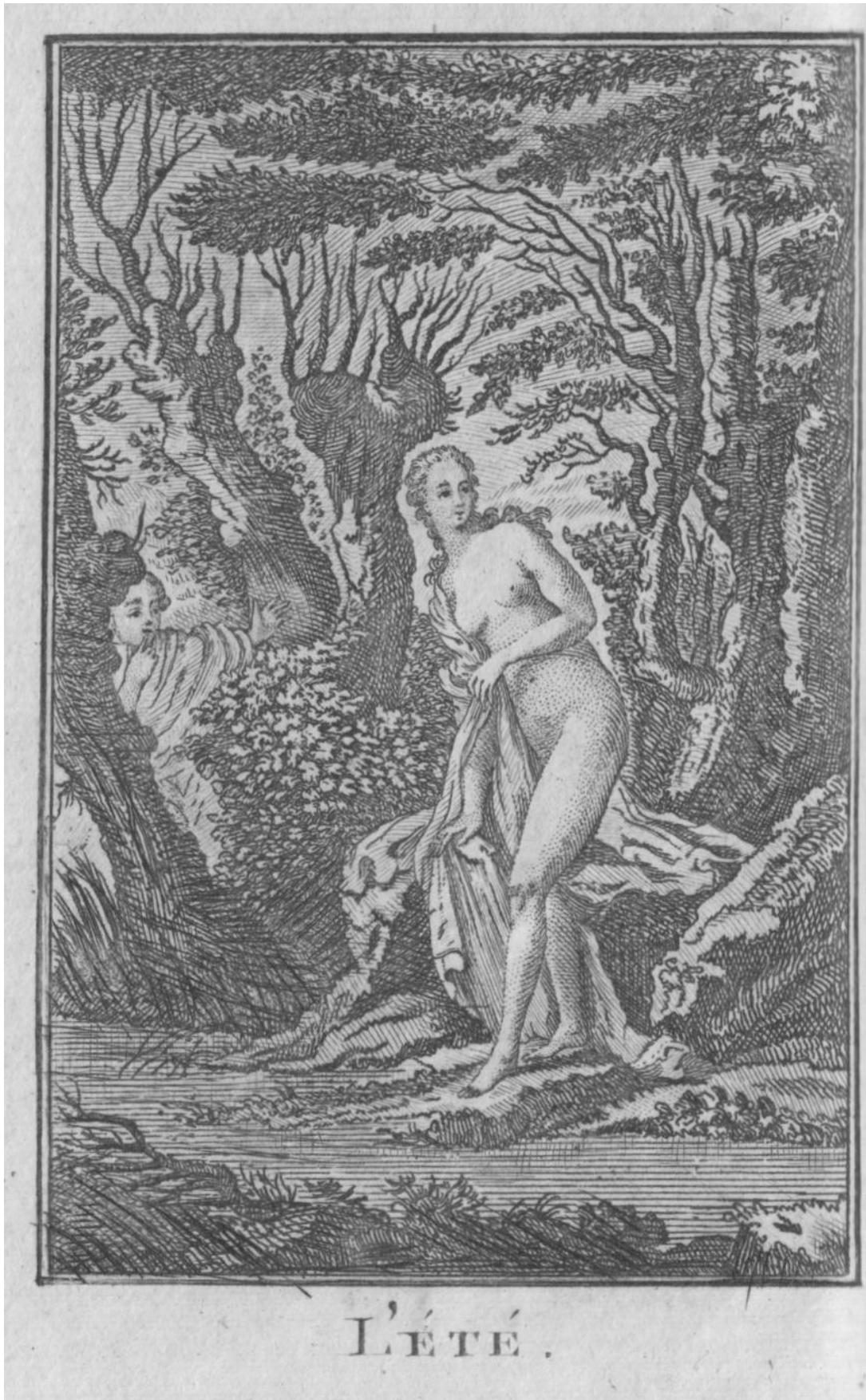


Figure 46 Frontispiece, designed by Charles Eisen, for *Les Saisons, Poëme: Traduit de l'Anglois de Tompson* (London, 1788). Reproduced from a copy in the author's possession.

engravings—most frequently that of Musidora—as a frontispiece (for instance, in the 1788 edition). In the course of its publication history, Bontems’s text underwent some minor changes. The revisions mostly entailed an updating of spelling, especially the consistent use of the *accent aigu* and *accent grave* and the replacement of the older simple past *oi*-endings by the *ai*-endings. Alterations which affected the content usually involved a simplification or clarification of more archaic vocabulary and phrases.

The paratextual features and the material packaging of the original edition, positively remarked on in the reviews, and the immediate market responses are revealing of the cultural status attributed to the translation. Not only does the willingness of booksellers to invest in the production quality of the edition and the inclusion of a set of newly commissioned illustrations to enhance the attractiveness of their edition suggest that they anticipated ample consumer demand; the ornateness of the edition and the cheap reprints also indicate that the translation and the illustrations became popular commodities on the French book market. Initially issued as an attractive, fine-printed edition and reproduced in more affordable formats for consumers unable to afford the original edition, Bontems’s text, and, by extension, *The Seasons* itself, became invested with cultural capital.

A clear shift in the production standard of editions of Bontems’s translation occurred with the publication, in 1795, of two finely-produced editions, each with a set of newly commissioned illustrations. The printer-bookseller Charles-Frobert Patris and the bookseller Jean-Baptiste Devaux issued their edition in duodecimo format.⁵⁰ The edition was issued with a set of five copper-plate engravings, exclusive proof impressions of which, printed on “papier vélin” or wove paper, were also made available to buyers.⁵¹ They were produced by Jacques Blanchard after designs by Louis Binet, whom Patris regularly employed to illustrate his publications. [Figure 47] An engraving depicting Thomson at his writing desk, looking up at the allegorical personification of nature as she is unveiled by an angelic figure symbolising poetic inspiration, fronts the edition. The other full-page plates depicted specific passages from the poem. In contrast to Eisen, however, Binet generally adopts a more pastoral representational mode, as displayed in the courting scenes in the plate to “Le Printemps” and the romanticised depiction of shepherds in the plate to “L’Été.” The illustrators also provided a

⁵⁰ The edition was one of several translations issued by Patris, sometimes in collaboration with Devaux, in the late eighteenth century, when he also produced editions of, amongst others, Burney’s *Cecilia* (1794), Salomon Gessner’s complete works (1796), and Samuel Hearne’s account of his journey through Northern Canada (1798).

⁵¹ A copy of this edition held at the National Library of Scotland (shelf mark: AB.1.201.08) has the proof impressions bound into the volume next to the regular engravings. It became common practice for booksellers in the 1790s to supply variant sets of engravings to buyers (Antony Griffiths, *Prints for Books: Book Illustration in France, 1760–1800* (London: The British Library, 2004), 142).



Figure 47 Frontispiece, designed by Louis Binet, engraved by Jacques Blanchard, for *Les Saisons, Poëme: Traduit de l'Anglais de Thompson* (Paris: Patris, 1795). Reproduced from a copy in the author's possession.

sentimentalising rendering of the tale of Palemon and Lavinia. [Figures 48 & 49] Binet departs from Eisen's design in his depiction of the two lovers. Eisen represents the age difference between the characters (Palemon was about as old as Lavinia's father), while Binet depicts him as a younger man. Palemon in the earlier engraving is depicted in a classical garb, as he declares his love for Lavinia with a dramatic gesture. In the later image, by contrast, he is dressed in more refined clothing and gently leans forward to address Lavinia, as a result of which the illustrator increases the intimacy of the scene. Rather than depicting Lavinia as a coy or shy girl in a stately posture, Binet presents the reader with a visibly unhappier Lavinia to evoke the sad state of her living in secluded poverty with her mother.

The designs for the second edition of Bontems's text issued in 1795, and reissued in 1796, marked a distinct departure from previous illustrations. Didot Jeune commissioned the renowned history painter and book illustrator Jean-Jacques-François Le Barbier to produce a set of new engravings for his large octavo edition of the translation. Elected to the Académie Royale in 1785, Le Barbier had established his reputation by developing a classical and grandiose illustrative mode, based on antique and Renaissance sculpture, in response to what he perceived as the rococo exuberance and excessive opulence of contemporary illustrations practices.⁵² His designs are characterised by symmetrical, balanced compositions and often introduce mythological and classical motifs, as apparent in the designs, executed in copper by various engravers, for Didot Jeune's edition. His designs for "Le Printemps" and "L'Automne," even though they are anthropocentric in nature, are significantly more stylised as visible in the classical garbs of the characters. His designs for "L'Hiver" and "L'Été" signify a return to Kent's mythopoeic-allegorical designs. [Figure 50] In the illustration to "L'Hiver," for instance, Winter is depicted as a king on a frozen throne, surrounded by mythological creatures controlling weather elements such as rain and wind. Le Barbier's illustrations represented a unique moment in the reception history of *The Seasons* in France, as he was the only French illustrator who steered away from sentimentalising impulses and reinterpreted Thomson's poem as a mythopoeic poem reflecting the divine origins of the seasons.

⁵² Portalis, xvii.



Figure 48 Full-page plate, designed by Charles Eisen, engraved by Charles Baquoy, for “L’ Automne” from *Les Saisons: Poëme Traduit de l’Anglois de Thompson* (Paris: Chaubert and Hérisant, 1759). Reproduced with permission from a copy in professor Sandro Jung’s possession.



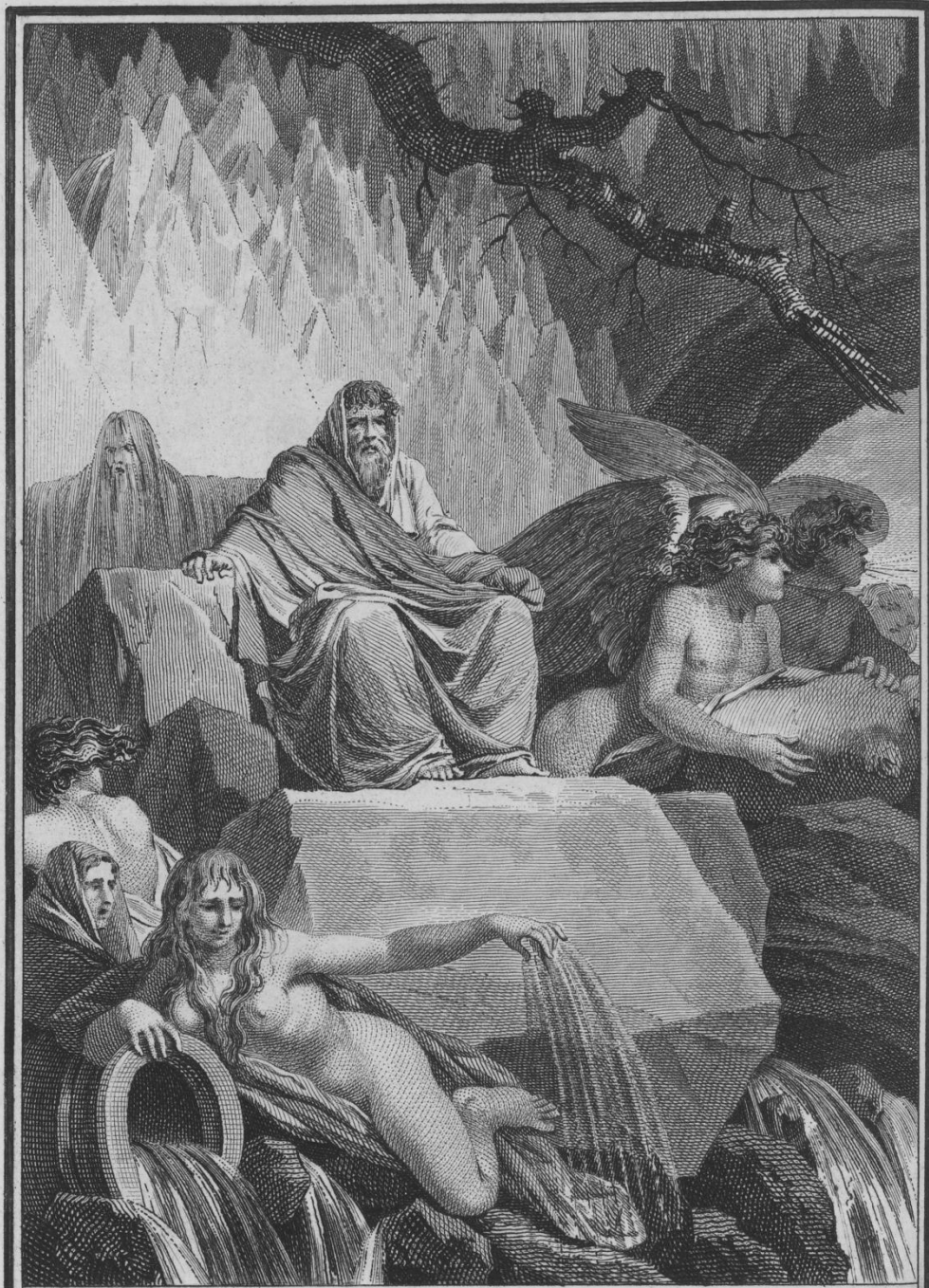
Binet del.

Blanchard sc.

Est-ce à la fille d'Acaste, grands dieux! à glaner
ainsi les restes d'une moisson que je dois à sa
bienfaisante amitié?

Figure 49 Full-page plate, designed by Louis Binet, engraved by Jacques Blanchard, for 'L'Automne,' from *Les Saisons, Poëme: Traduit de l'Anglais de Thompson* (Paris: Patris, 1795). Reproduced from a copy in the author's possession.

L' HIVER



Là l'Hiver, assis sur son trône, rassemble sa
cour dans son palais de glace azurée.

Page 401.

Dessiné par Le Barbier.

Gravé par Dambrun.

Figure 50 Full-page plate, designed by Jean-Jacques-François Le Barbier, engraved by Jean Dambrun, for "L'Hiver," from *Les Saisons, Poème Traduit de l'Anglais de Thompson* (Paris: Didot Jeune, 1795). Reproduced with permission from a copy held at the National Library of Scotland.

4.5 *Épisodes des Saisons du Thomson* (1798)

The publication in 1795 of two finely-produced editions of Bontems's translation with newly commissioned sets of engravings occurred at a time when the popularity of *The Seasons* peaked in France. A similar phenomenon occurred in Britain in the 1790s, when about thirty fine-printed, illustrated editions of *The Seasons* appeared, the culmination of which was Tomkins's 1798 folio edition. The renewed British interest in Thomson's poem crossed over to France as demonstrated by the continued publication of Bontems's translation as well as the appearance of one partial and three new complete translations of *The Seasons* in the course of about ten years.

Several passages of Thomson's poem were included in the bilingual collection *Épisodes des Saisons du Thomson, Fables de Gay, L'Hermitte de Parnell et autres pièces des meilleurs poètes anglais*. The edition was issued by a conger of three publishers and one citizen: Malherbe, Hyacinthe(-Éloi) Langlois, Victor Desenne, and Bercet. The original English excerpts were located on the left hand side, with the French prose translation—produced by the unidentified A.G.T.Br. —printed opposite. Reproducing the original English text, the edition differed from another edition of translations issued by the same conger. The second volume was a monolingual edition which included the translations of the bilingual edition as well as translated passages of popular Italian poetry.⁵³ As indicated by the advertisements and a publisher's note in the bilingual volume, the booksellers had conceived of the editions as companion volumes. The editions both appeared in the same octavo format, with the same amount of pages, printed on the same type of paper, executed in a newly designed type font, and were sold at the same price. By means of this marketing strategy, the producers tried to optimise the market potential of their editions. The first volume would have been of interest to French learners of English, while the similarity in design and execution would entice consumers into buying two matching, fine-printed volumes of translated texts.

The first volume also functioned as a short anthology of passages from the best English poets. Contrary to Yart's collection, which had been intended to be comprehensive in its scope, the focus of the bilingual edition was on passages of a moralising or sentimental kind, such as Gay's fables or the anonymous poem "Compassion to the Poor." Thomson featured centrally in the volume. The translator included the greatest number of passages from *The Seasons* in the edition, the only author with a comparable number of passages being Gay. Thomson's name appears in

⁵³ Both volumes were advertised in the *Journal Typographique et Bibliographique* (10 November 1798, 84; 8 December 1798, 107). They each sold at 2 fr. 50 cent. on fine and at 5 fr. on velum paper.

prominent first position in the title; the volume opens with a passage of *The Seasons* and concludes with William Collins's memorial "Ode on the Death of Mr. Thomson." The selection of passages from Thomson's poem provides an indication of which scenes the translator thought would have found favour with the French reading public. Apart from the interpolated episodes, he included such passages as Thomson's praise of marital love in "Spring" and his description of the ravenous wolves descending from the Alps in "Winter," passages which derived their popularity from the sentimental response that they usually evoked with the reader.⁵⁴

Completely detached from their original context in the poem, the selected passages were read as individual, self-contained narratives and facilitated new interpretations. In the overall structure of "Autumn," the episode of Palemon and Lavinia was originally preceded by the poet's advice to wealthy landowners to be generous and kind to poor gleaners, since their own children might one day have to rely on the benevolence of others. Because the account of how Lavinia benefitted from her father's generosity when Palemon decides to marry the daughter of his old benefactor was removed from the overall structure of the poem in the bilingual collection, the episode no longer functioned as an exemplification of the moral message and became a clear-cut sentimental love story instead. In a similar manner, the episode of Damon and Musidora is refashioned into a pastoral tale of romance, as both Damon and Musidora are explicitly characterised as a shepherd and a shepherdess.

4.6 The Production of New French Translations at the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century

In 1801, the bookseller Jean François Pierre Déterville issued the first complete prose translation of *The Seasons* since the appearance of Bontems's text in 1759.⁵⁵ The translation was produced by the natural scientist Joseph Philippe François Deleuze. Benefitting from new discoveries in the natural sciences as well as the increased precision of descriptive discourses in prose, the translator tends to be more exact in

⁵⁴ *Épisodes des Saisons de Thomson, Fables de Gay, L'Hermite de Parnell, et Autres Pièces des Meilleurs Poètes Anglois. Traduits en Prose par A. G. T. Br.* (Paris: Malherbe, et. al., 1798), 30–5 & 50–9 & 80–91 & 126–31 & 158–61 & 1–8. The only exception was the conclusive hymn to *The Seasons* (*Épisodes*, 174–85).

⁵⁵ Déterville, who specialised in the publication of scientific works by such authors as Georges-Louis Leclerc de Buffon, Jean-Baptiste de Lamarck, and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, recycled Le Barbier's illustrations included in Didot Jeune's edition of 1795.

terms of the description and explanation of natural phenomena. Nevertheless, he closely modelled his translation on Bontems's, often adhering closely to her phrases and expressions, while simply replacing a particular word by a straightforward synonym. Some of the revisions do alter the development and the interpretation of specific passages, however, as visible from a comparison of Bontems and Deleuze's translations of Damon's moment of intense excitement upon observing the bathing Musidora:

The latent Damon drew
Such madning draughts of beauty to the soul,
As for a while o'erwhelm'd his raptur'd thought
With luxury too daring. Check'd, at last,
By love's respectful modesty, he deem'd
The theft profane, if aught profane to love
Can e'er be deem'd. ("Su" 1746: 1330–6)

Au premier instant, l'ivresse de son amour le transportoit, & l'excitoit à tout entreprendre; cependant le respect inséparable du véritable amour, l'arrêta. L'idée du larcin lui parut un crime, si quelque chose peut être jugé crime en amour.⁵⁶

Damon s'enivre à longs trait de tant de charmes: hors de lui, transporté par l'impétuosité des desirs, il est prêt à tout oser; mais, retenu par cette modestie respectueuse, inséparable du véritable amour, il repousse l'idée d'un attentat sacrilège.⁵⁷

In Thomson's original, the "theft profane" refers to Damon's act of "[drawing] madning draughts of beauty to the soul." Bontems had introduced ambiguity in her translation of the passage. Musidora's beauty intoxicates Damon to such an extent that he would be willing to suspend all proper conduct and to undertake physical action. The "larcin" or theft in Bontems's text could apply both to the act of spying and to the implied act of rape. Deleuze, by contrast, dropped the ambiguity by straightforwardly translating the "theft profane" into "attentat sacrilege" or sacrilegious assault, a poetic paraphrase for rape. In this manner, Deleuze reinterprets the original text and expands on the moralistic dimensions of the episode.

⁵⁶ Bontems, 152.

⁵⁷ Joseph Philippe François Deleuze, trans., *Les Saisons de Thompson, Poème* (Paris: Déterville), 229.

In paratextual terms, Deleuze's edition provides the most comprehensive French critical engagement with Thomson's literary legacy. In the extensive eighty-two-page prefatory biography, Deleuze not only translated and compiled information gleaned from the various accounts English included in British editions;⁵⁸ he also examined and commented on the author's other works, supporting his statements with translations of short excerpts. Deleuze fashioned Thomson as a British cultural classic, thus indicating that he intended his translation of *The Seasons* to function as a gateway for his French audience into what he called one of the most sublime and captivating productions of modern literature.⁵⁹ Even though Deleuze's critical evaluation of Thomson's poem resembled Bontems's—he praised the author's exact description, the episodes, and the patriotic, religious, and moral passages; his criticism was aimed at the poet's floridness, vague ideas, repetitions and profusion of ornaments and epithets, his essay represented the culmination of a cultural revaluation of *The Seasons*.

The first complete verse translation of *The Seasons* was composed in rhyming couplets by J. Poulin and issued by the bookseller Durand in Paris in 1802.⁶⁰ The translator dedicated the text to Henry Herbert, first Earl of Carnarvon, under whose watchful eye and patronage he had written his translation in Wales. The new translation was apparently composed in response to various members of the intelligentsia who wanted him to produce a verse translation of Thomson's poem.⁶¹ In this respect, Poulin's text is the only French translation produced with a British, rather than a French, audience in mind and was disseminated well beyond Paris and London. Poulin, significantly, received a favourable commentary in *The Edinburgh Review* in January 1806. The reviewer praised the translator for his use of rhyme, calling it a significant improvement over the original blank verse, which he perceived as “one of the most

⁵⁸ Deleuze closely modelled his life of Thomson on the account produced by Patrick Murdoch for the 1762 edition of Thomson's works, but, as indicated in a footnote, he adds information gleaned from other accounts such as Samuel Johnson's (1779) and Robert Heron's (1793).

⁵⁹ Deleuze, 81.

⁶⁰ Durand, just like Déterville, adopted the strategy to include a set of existing illustrations, namely the engravings of putti figures which had been included in the first edition of Bontems's translation. The images are inverted and sit awkwardly on the large page, which suggests that the original designs were copied by means of transfer paper. Note also how the original vignettes for “L'Été” and “L'Automne” have mistakenly been attributed to the wrong season.

⁶¹ The only person mentioned by name was the Scottish Dr. James Thomson, editor of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and author of *The Rise, Progress, and Consequences of the New Opinions . . . Lately Introduced into France* (1799).

striking faults in Thomson's versification."⁶² Other characteristics highlighted in the review were Poulin's simplification of some of the "laboured, pedantic, and injudicious phraseology, which frequently destroys the effect of ideas the most happily conceived and skilfully detailed," and his use of a more transparent language, as a result of which "the whole poem assumes a more cheerful complexion in the translation."⁶³ Even though Poulin is criticised for not always having succeeded in reproducing Thomson's accurate descriptions of nature, the reviewer is generally pleased with Poulin's liberal approach, inducing him to claim that "upon the whole, without being unfaithful, it is perhaps an improvement on the original."⁶⁴

Writing at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Poulin not only had to compete with Bontems and Deleuze's translations, but he also had to position himself within the French tradition of descriptive poetry which had developed since the publication of Saint-Lambert's *Les Saisons*. Denouncing Bontems's translation as imprecise and unworthy of the British original in the concluding note to the preface,⁶⁵ he defines his own work as the first true French translation of *The Seasons*.⁶⁶ Poulin invites his readers to pass judgment on his translation, providing a basis for a comparison with the original by printing the corresponding English lines on the opposite page. In contrast with Bontems's apology for not always adhering to French tastes, Poulin expressed that it was necessary to abandon some of the stylistic features of the original so as to reproduce Thomson's thoughts and expressions and their intended effect on the reader as effectively as possible.⁶⁷

Poulin, by far, adopts the most liberal approach of all the French translators and introduces the most far-reaching changes to the poem. Stylistically, Thomson's blank verse, singled out for praise in Johnson's account, is translated into rhyming couplets, a metrical form which had been linked to the genre in the French tradition by Saint-Lambert and Delille. He adapts Thomson's dedications in the poem, replacing the original dedicatees with individuals, mostly from his patron's household, who were important to him personally.⁶⁸ Poulin's text is generally more emphatic, as the poet's

⁶² *The Edinburgh Review*, January 1806, 329. With this statement the reviewer adopted a surprisingly opposing view to the predominant view on Thomson's use of blank verse, which had been viewed as highly original.

⁶³ *Edinburgh Review*, January 1806, 331.

⁶⁴ *Edinburgh Review*, January 1806, 329.

⁶⁵ The preface was an abbreviated translation of Samuel Johnson's biography of Thomson.

⁶⁶ "Précis de la vie de l'auteur," in J. Poulin, trans., *Les Saisons traduites en vers français* (Paris: V.e Durand, 1802), xi. He does not mention Deleuze's translation.

⁶⁷ Poulin, xiv.

⁶⁸ "Le Printemps" was dedicated to lady Frances Herbert, the Earl of Carnarvon's daughter; "L'Été" to Thomas Herbert, eighth Earl of Pembroke and father of Poulin's benefactor; "L'Automne" to John Courtenay, a Member

persona is more explicitly present, and contains more interjections than the English original. This practice is clearly visible in his translation of the dying moments of the shepherd perishing in the snow:

His wife, his children, and his friends unseen.
In vain for him th' officious wife prepares
The fire fair-blazing, and the vestment warm;
In vain his little children, peeping out
Into the mingling storm, demand their sire,
With tears of artless innocence. Alas!
Nor wife, nor children, more shall he behold,
Nor friends, nor sacred home. ("Wi" 1746: 310–7)

Sa femme, ses enfans Providence infinie,
Faut-il sans les revoir renoncer à la vie!
En vain sa tendre épouse, en ces cruels momens,
Lui prépare un brâsier et de chauds vêtements:
Les fruits de son hymen, encore dans l'enfance,
Donnant un libre cours aux pleurs de l'innocence,
Et traînant vers le seuil leurs pas mal assurés,
Vont demandant leur père aux frimats conjurés:
Inutiles clameurs! . . . Hélas! . . . leur pauvre père
Répète en vain leurs noms pour tromper sa misère:
Sa femme! . . . ses enfans! . . . ah! désirs superflus!
Sa femme, ses enfans, il ne les verra plus.⁶⁹

The apostrophic exclamation to eternal providence, the innocent children demanding the conspiring winter storms to return their father, and the poor father's repeated shouting of his family members' names all increase the dramatic tenor of the passage. The tendency of the French translators to sentimentalise Thomson's poem, and the episodes more specifically, thus reached its climax in Poulin's translation with its inclination towards sensationalism and dramatisation.

of Parliament who was a strong critic of the war with revolutionary France; "L'Hiver," finally, was dedicated to the Earl of Carnarvon himself.

⁶⁹ Poulin, 2:144.

The last new—and unillustrated—prose translation of *The Seasons* was issued in 1806 by the printer-bookseller Le Normant, who specialised in the publication of translations, school books, and books of pragmatic instruction. It was produced in octavo format and sold at 4 fr. or 5 fr. for delivery via post.⁷⁰ The paratextual apparatus introduced by the translator Frémin de Beaumont strongly suggests that the new translation had been produced for teaching purposes. In the preface to the translation, Beaumont provided a historical contextualisation of *The Seasons*. Tracing the origins of the genre of descriptive poetry to Virgil's *Georgics*, he recognised Thomson's originality and poetic innovations. His critical evaluation of *The Seasons* did not simply recycle the arguments which had been commonplace since the appearance of Bontems's translations. Drawing on Salomon Gessner's writings, a part of which he translates to support his argument, Beaumont characterised Thomson as the poet of painters.⁷¹ He also drew specific attention to the cultural status of *The Seasons* in Britain:

Thompson n'est pas seulement le poète des peintres, il est aussi l'auteur chéri de tous ceux qui aiment la campagne et qui savent jouir du spectacle de la nature. Chez les Anglais, son Poëme est devenu un ouvrage classique; et il a pour eux le double mérite d'être un chef – d'œuvre littéraire dans un genre qu'ils prétendent avoir créé, et d'être un monument élevé à la gloire de leur nation: car Thompson quitte sans cesse son sujet pour vanter la constitution, la puissance et la prospérité de l'Angleterre, pour louer tous les grands hommes dont elle s'honora; et c'est ainsi qu'il a rendu son poëme national.⁷²

He adopted the least unbiased attitude of all the French translators with the aim of providing the reader with an objective assessment of the poem and its merits.

Maintaining the critical distance of his preface in his translation, Beaumont was considered to have been the translator who had succeeded the best at conveying the full

⁷⁰ *Mercure de France*, January 1807, 120.

⁷¹ "Préface," in Frémin de Beaumont, trans., *Les Saisons* (Paris: Le Normant, 1806), v. Beaumont translated a section from Gessner's letter on landscape painting, originally published in Johann Caspar Füssli's *Geschichte der besten Künstler der Schweiz* (1770–2) and included the various editions of Gessner's collected works.

⁷² Beaumont, v–vi: "Thompson is not only the poet of painters, he is also an author who is cherished by those who love the countryside and who know how to enjoy the spectacle of nature. Amongst the English, his Poem has become a classic work, it has for them the double merit of being a literary masterpiece in a genre they pretend to have created, and of being a monument elevated to the glory of their nation: because Thompson constantly deviates from his subject to praise England's constitution, power and prosperity, to laud all great men which did her honour, and has thus made his poem of national importance."

meaning of Thomson's verses.⁷³ He simplified Thomson's complex adjectival constructions and provided explanatory and precise translations of descriptions of natural phenomena as well as of the digressions in the poem. In his translation of the love bond between Celadon and Amelia, Beaumont deconstructs the metaphorical language of "talked the flowing heart / Or sigh'd and look'd unutterable things" ("Su" 1746: 87–8) with the unambiguous phrases "leurs bouches exprimoient le sentiment dont leur cœur étoit plein; leurs soupirs et leurs regards disoient tout ce que la parole ne peut exprimer."⁷⁴ In this manner, Beaumont sought to unravel what he himself called Thomson's vague abundance of style⁷⁵ and provided his readers with the appropriate means to interpret the poem as correctly as possible. The textual notes in the edition contributed further to Beaumont's informative translation. Apart from short footnotes, Beaumont included lengthy endnotes which consisted of detailed biographical or scientific information on specific passages in the poem. In a note to Thomson's apostrophe to Newton in a description of a rainbow, the translator expanded on Newton's theory of light and experiments with prisms, and referred to the elegy which Thomson wrote after Newton's death in 1727.⁷⁶

Beaumont's approach to *The Seasons* as a text that could be used for educational purposes is also adopted in a number of bilingual editions issued in the first decade of the nineteenth century. The most ambitious of these ventures was produced by the Paris bookseller François Louis in 1800. The edition, printed by Adrien Egron, was issued in two parts and contained four title vignettes.⁷⁷ The illustrations, executed in copper by Lambert with a bilingual caption, even though still related to the text, were generic depictions of activities specific to each season, such as the harvest in autumn and the hunt in winter.⁷⁸ In 1809, Charles Nourse produced another bilingual edition of *The Seasons*, issued in London in two volumes.⁷⁹ It was the first British edition of a French

⁷³ In his review for the *Mercure de France*, Guairard praised Beaumont's translation as "la plus fidelle, la plus élégante, la plus poétique" (the most faithful, elegant, and poetic) and evaluated it more favourably than Bontems's. *Mercure de France*, January 1807, 120.

⁷⁴ Beaumont, 119–20: "their mouths expressed the sentiments with which their heart was filled; their sighs and looks spoke all that words cannot express."

⁷⁵ Beaumont, v.

⁷⁶ Beaumont, 59.

⁷⁷ Louis also sold monolingual French and English editions of *The Seasons*. *Journal Typographique et Bibliographique*, 19 July 1800, 323. The bilingual edition, in two volumes, was sold for 5 fr. and 6 fr. in the provinces; the monolingual editions for 2 fr. 50 and 3 fr. respectively.

⁷⁸ The vignettes would be reused in an English edition of *The Seasons* published by Thomas Hurst in 1802 and reissued in 1805 by James Cundee. The bilingual captions were replaced by Thomson's introductory arguments. For more information on these editions, see Jung, "Packaging, Design, and Colour," 119–22.

⁷⁹ The edition also included translations of *Hesiod, or the Rise of the Woman* and *The Hermit* by Parnell, as well as Matthew Prior's *Emma*.

translation and included two French frontispieces. The frontispiece to the first volume was a reproduction of Nicolas de Launay's engraving of a design by Clement-Pierre Marillier, which had first been included in an edition of Bontems's translation issued under a false London imprint dated 1779. The illustration consists of four allegorical representations of the seasons, each linked to a specific stage in man's life as indicated by the age of the figures. The second image, by the same artists, depicting a poet offering his work to the god of love, was originally used in an edition of Cardinal de Bernis's works, produced in 1777. A final, unillustrated, bilingual edition of *The Seasons* was issued in 1810 by the bookseller Pierre Beaume and Claude-Brunot Labbe, based in Bordeaux and Paris respectively.⁸⁰ The refashioning of Thomson's text as a didactic tool by the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century is exemplified in *Les Saisons pour l'Enfance et la Première Jeunesse*, in which the author, in a series of dialogues, regularly cites passages from Bontems's translation of *The Seasons* to instruct her children on the cycle of the seasons and various natural processes.⁸¹

4.7 The Return to Bontems's Translation

The Seasons continued to enjoy success on the French book market until the end of the 1810s. Even though no new translations of the poem appeared, two of the existing translations were reissued in new editions. Deleuze's translation was reissued twice, once in 1806 by the brothers Levrault and the Swiss bookseller Frédéric Schoell, and once in 1817 by the Paris bookseller Artus Bertrand. [Figure 51] The publishers dropped Le Barbier's illustrations, and recycled an English illustration as a frontispiece to their editions instead.⁸² It was Bontems's translation, however, which came to dominate the market once more, as indicated by the fact that booksellers produced seven new editions of the text after 1806.⁸³ No new editions of translations appeared after 1818

⁸⁰ Beaume had already issued an English edition of Thomson's poem with the other texts in 1808, which he also reissued in 1810. Other English editions of *The Seasons* were issued in 1780 (Noël-Jaques Pissot and Theopilus Barrois; reissued in 1785 and 1803), 1809 (as part of *Parsons and Galignani's British Library*), and 1829 (as part of Louis-Claude's *European Library*; reissued in 1847).

⁸¹ Comtesse de Fouchécour, *Les Saisons pour l'enfance et la première jeunesse* (Londres: A. Dalau, 1809).

⁸² The illustration had originally been designed by Conrad Martin Metz for John Murray's 1792 edition of *The Seasons*. The French plate was engraved by Barthélemy-Joseph-Fulcran Roger. The inversion of the image indicates that the design had been copied by means of transfer paper.

⁸³ Two of these editions were issued with new sets of illustrations. The first one was issued by André-François Etienne Billois in 1813; the other by Jacques-Auguste Delalain in 1818. The engravings by unknown artists,



Figure 51 Frontispiece, designed by Conrad Martin Metz, engraved by Barthélemy-Joseph-Fulcran Roger, for *Les Saisons de Thomson, Traduites par J. P. F. Deleuze* (Paris: Levrault, Schoell et Comp., 1806). Reproduced from a copy in the author's possession.

rendering specific passages from the poem, mostly represented reworkings of and confirm the popularity of earlier sets of illustrations. Both editions include illustrations of the nest-snatching scene, the bathing of sheep in the river, and the episode of Palemon and Lavinia. The only difference in subject lies in the illustrations to "L'Hiver," with the plate for the 1813 edition representing the recounting of ghost stories in rural homes and the engraving for the 1818 edition depicting a group of hunters.

until Paul Moulas produced his scholarly verse translation of *The Seasons* for the “Société Nationale des Sciences, de l’Agriculture et des Arts” in Lille in 1850.

The production of four complete and several partial French translations of *The Seasons*, which appeared in a variety of illustrated and non-illustrated editions, in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century reflects the continued success of Thomson’s poem on the French book market. Bontems’s translation established Thomson’s reputation in France and facilitated the development of a national tradition of descriptive poetry. When interest in Thomson peaked in the 1790s, French booksellers capitalised on the economic success of *The Seasons* by issuing new translations and editions of Bontems’s text with new paratexts, thus substantially increasing the cultural capital assigned to Thomson’s poem. Most French translators in the second half of the eighteenth century had transferred the original verses into prose with the intention of making *The Seasons*, which was considered a fundamentally British poem, as accessible as possible to French consumers. Generally attempting to produce a faithful translation, the authors nevertheless tended to highlight and expand on the sentimental and moralising dimensions of the poem so as to adapt it to the literary tastes of the readers. Once its cultural status as an English literary classic had been established around the turn of the century, *The Seasons* was increasingly utilised as a tool of instruction to acquaint the reader with British culture, as indicated by Beaumont’s translation and the appearance of several bilingual editions in the first decade of the nineteenth century. The visual paratexts included in the various editions of French translations contributed to the appropriation of Thomson’s poem to a French cultural context, thus exemplifying some of the ways in which Thomson’s poem was reinterpreted and refashioned beyond British borders. The recycling of images both nationally and transnationally confirms that the illustrations also functioned as important marketing devices in France. They feature centrally in the history of the cross-Channel mediation and consumption of Thomson’s poem. Subject to “intersections and interactions among texts, readers, writers, and publishing and critical institutions that linked together Britain and France,”⁸⁴ *The Seasons* became part of a growing body of texts in an Enlightenment republic of letters and science, which was shaped by patterns of exchange in cultural, economic, and social networks in Europe.

⁸⁴ Cohen and Dever, 2.

Conclusion

Few innovations, especially in terms of illustrative apparatuses, in the product design of nineteenth-century editions of *The Seasons* were introduced between the publication of Charles Whittingham's edition in 1820 (which had been issued as part of *Whittingham's Cabinet Library* and included a set of wood-engraved head- and tailpieces) and the production of Bolton Corney's edition of the poem in 1842. The latter engendered a combination of earlier production practices as well as innovations that entailed the use of novel reproductive technologies (electrotyping¹) for the realisation of wood-engraved designs.² Earlier strategies developed by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century booksellers to exploit Thomson's text as a marketable object were perpetuated in a large number of reprints and editions recycling existing paratexts. The continued presence of editions of *The Seasons* on the book market had facilitated an ever-expanding dissemination of the work in Britain. Recognising the status and market potential of *The Seasons*, booksellers had experimented with the paratextual and material make-up of their editions as part of their marketing strategies to differentiate their productions from their competitors'. Product design was understood as a worthwhile investment that, if successful, could be retrieved through good sales. The paratexts (a term borrowed from Genette, used to denote illustrations, prefatory biographies, critical essays, and textual notes) and material make-up (which represents an essential part of the textual condition of, and contributes to the meaning of, texts, as confirmed by McGann) constituted the product design of the editions in which they were included, and advanced various refashionings and reinterpretations of the poem, all of which continued to circulate in the marketplace. Paratexts such as illustrations, prefatory biographies, and textual notes, had stimulated what Jung has termed an "accretion

¹ Electrotyping was a modern variation of the stereotyping process. Whereas a metal plate was cast from a plaster mould in the latter, a copper plate was cast from a mould of soft material, such as wax, by means of electricity in the former.

² James Thomson, *The Seasons*, ed. Bolton Corney (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1842).

process.”³ The generic and thematic heterogeneity of Thomson’s text—which the poet had achieved by means of a complex reworking of his literary predecessors, both classical and modern, as explored in the first chapter of this dissertation by means of the Genettian concept of hypertextuality—enabled the poem to absorb new layers of meaning. These semantic reorientations were affected by external factors such as the product design of editions of the poem. The second and third chapters of this dissertation have focused on the ways in which the product design of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British editions of *The Seasons* changed, in the process advancing new readings of the poem. In the process, the economic capital of the poem, i. e., its profit value, was effectively converted into cultural capital. Accepting the status of *The Seasons* as a fashionable commodity at face value, British readers from increasingly diverse social backgrounds purchased and continued to purchase editions of Thomson’s poem. As a result, *The Seasons* pervaded both polite and popular British culture, a pervasiveness which spread to France through the medium of translations, as discussed in the fourth chapter of the dissertation.

The ubiquity of Thomson’s poem was famously reported on by William Hazlitt. Writing about a weekend spent with Samuel Taylor Coleridge in North Devon in 1798, Hazlitt remembers a conversation with the Romantic poet at the breakfast table:

It was in this roem [sic], that we found a little worn-out copy of the ‘Seasons,’ lying in a window-seat, on which Coleridge exclaimed, ‘*That is true fame!*’ He said Thomson was a great poet, rather than a good one; his style was as meretricious as his thoughts were natural.⁴

The anecdote confirms the wide dissemination and huge popularity of *The Seasons* at the time. Editions of Thomson’s poem could be found well beyond the cultural saloons of the metropolis in a parlour in a countryside inn. As indicated by the book-historical and print-cultural study of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century editions of the poem in this dissertation, booksellers—such as Millan and Millan in 1730; Murray, Hamilton, and the Morisons in the 1790s; Sharpe and Whittingham in the 1810s—significantly altered the product design of their editions in response to contemporary fashions and market demands. All of these paratextual make-ups and material packaging of *The Seasons* mediated the poem in ever new ways and, by the middle of the nineteenth century, promoted a wide variety of interpretations of the text.

³ Sandro Jung, “Design, Media, and the Reading of Thomson’s *The Seasons*,” *Studies in Literary Imagination* 46:1 (2013): 139.

⁴ William Hazlitt, *Literary Remains of the Late William Hazlitt* (London: Saunders & Otley, 1836), 2:289.

The large octavo edition of *The Seasons* produced by Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans in 1842 represented a transitional moment in the cultural history of Thomson's poem, as it combined the variety of the editions which had been produced since 1730 into one single edition.⁵ The paratexts included in the edition incorporated and adapted several characteristics of paratexts produced in the course of the previous one hundred years, as well as reflected the ways in which Thomson's poem would be mediated from the second part of the nineteenth century onwards. The edition was edited by Bolton Corney. Active as literary critic and antiquary from the 1830s until his death in 1870, Corney published various treatises on antiquarian subjects such as the Bayeux Tapestry (1836) and Shakespeare's sonnets (1862), and responded in print to the works of other antiquarians such as Isaac D'Israeli (1837 & 1838) and Antonio Panizzi (1860).⁶ Apart from the 1842 edition of *The Seasons*, Corney also edited editions of Oliver Goldsmith's *Poetical Works* (1846), Sir Henry Middleton's seventeenth-century account of his voyage to the East Indies (1855), and John Locke's *The Conduct of the Understanding* (1859).⁷ When Longman's edition of *The Seasons* was announced at the beginning of an article on Thomson's revisions to the poem in *The Gentleman's Magazine* for 1841, the editor, John Mitford, confirmed Corney's reputation as a proficient editor: "Of Mr.

⁵ The edition was available to consumers in two different bindings: "in ultra-marine cloth" for 21s. and "in morocco in the best manner" for 36s. A few more exclusive copies on "prepared paper [treated with a ground of fine powder or a layer of coloured wash] of great beauty" sold at 2l. 2s. in the ultra-marine cloth, at 2l. 17s. in the morocco binding, and at 3l. in russia binding ("A Catalogue of New Works and New Editions Printed for Longman, Brown, Green, and Longman," in Mary Chalenor, *The Poetical Remains of Mary Chalenor* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1843), 29). The edition was also published in New York by the firm Harper & Brothers. It was issued in three different kinds of gilt-edged bindings: in a Muslin binding (\$2.75), an imitation Morocco binding (\$3.50), and a Turkey Morocco binding (\$4.00). Harper & Brothers would also republish the British conger's edition of Goldsmith's *Poetical Works*, which they sold at \$2.50, \$3.25, and \$3.75 for the respective bindings. Both editions were advertised as part of their selection of "Valuable Standard Works" ("Valuable Standard Works Published by Harper & Brothers, New York," in Mary Martha Sherwood, *The Works of Mrs. Sherwood*, Vol. 7 (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1834), 9).

⁶ Bolton Corney, *Researches and Conjectures on the Bayeux Tapestry* (Greenwich: n. p., 1836); *The Sonnets of William Shakespeare: A Critical Disquisition Suggested by a Recent Discovery* (London: F. Schoberl, 1862); *Curiosities of Literature*, by I. D'Israeli, Esq. Illustrated by Bolton Corney, Esq. (Greenwich: Printed by especial command, 1837); *Curiosities of Literature*, by I. D'Israeli, Esq. Illustrated by Bolton Corney, Esq. Second Edition, Revised and Acuminated. To Which Are Added, Ideas on Controversy (London: Richard Bentley, 1838); *Comments On the Evidence of Antonio Panizzi, Esquire: Before the Select Committee of the House of Commons of the British Museum A.D. 1860* (London: Private Impression, 1860).

⁷ Oliver Goldsmith, *The Poetical Works of Oliver Goldsmith*, ed. Bolton Corney (London: Longman, Brown, Green, & Longmans, 1845); Henry Middleton, *The Voyage of Sir Henry Middleton to Bantam and the Maluco Islands in 1604*, ed. Bolton Corney (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1855); John Locke, *The Conduct of the Understanding*, ed. Bolton Corney (London: Bell & Daldy, 1859).

Bolton Corney's ability and accuracy we think so highly, that we could not wish the new edition of the poet in other hands."⁸

The text of *The Seasons* in the 1842 edition is preceded by Murdoch's biography of Thomson, which was substantially annotated by Corney. In a headnote to the biographical account, the editor lists the most important narratives and justifies his preference for Murdoch's account over the others: "Murdoch . . . was one of his most intimate friends; and this circumstance, added to the merit of his narrative as a composition, stamps it with a peculiar value."⁹ The account is supplemented by a total of ninety-six notes, which frequently cover half of the page. They incorporate mostly additional information gathered from the different biographies, especially Sir Harris Nicolas's, and letter material or anecdotes from other sources, such as John Richmond.¹⁰ The inclusion of additional biographical material in the notes reflects the increasing antiquarian interest in Thomson's life, which would result in the most expansive 'life' of the author in the revised Aldine edition of Thomson's poetical works in 1860. Even though Corney includes the most frequently reproduced biographical narrative in his edition of *The Seasons*, the paratextual construction of Thomson's literary persona is different from the one developed by Murdoch because of a more scholarly preoccupation with an accurate reconstruction of the author's life story.

The most significant editorial innovation to the 1842 edition of *The Seasons* was the restoration of the version of the text as it was published in 1746. Corney had already published an essay in *The Gentleman's Magazine* in 1841, in which he made his case for a return to the 1746 variant.¹¹ In his search for the "text as the author left it,"¹² he collated the texts of three editions of Thomson's poem. The first was issued in 1746, while the author was still alive; the second in 1750, edited by George Lyttelton; the last in 1762, edited by Murdoch. Pointing out that there are a number of omissions in the later texts, Corney argued that the 1746 variant is the most faithful text, since it contained the last of Thomson's revisions.¹³ In the advertisement to his volume, Corney reveals that the publishers had commissioned him to edit the edition because they "were anxious to produce a volume which should merit confidence as to the fidelity of the text."¹⁴ Corney's aim to reproduce "a *faithful* . . . edition of [Thomson's] writings"¹⁵ signifies a

⁸ "Thomson's Seasons, and their Various Readings," *The Gentleman's Magazine*, December 1841, 564.

⁹ Bolton Corney, "Advertisement," in Thomson 1842, ix.

¹⁰ Richmond was the minister of Southdean who wrote a poem "To the Memory of Thomson" in 1818, on the occasion of the inauguration of a monument erected in Dryburgh.

¹¹ Bolton Corney, "Memorandum on the Text of *The Seasons*," *The Gentleman's Magazine*, February 1841, 145–9.

¹² Corney, "Memorandum," 146.

¹³ Corney, "Memorandum," 146.

¹⁴ Corney, "Advertisement," vii.

¹⁵ Corney, "Memorandum," 145.

departure from the editorial practices in earlier eighteenth- and nineteenth-century editions, which reprinted the text of Murdoch's 1762 edition of Thomson's collected works. That Corney's editorial decision represented an important intervention in the textual history of Thomson's poem is confirmed by the fact that later scholarly editions of *The Seasons*--the most recent one being Sambrook's variorum edition of 1981--would follow suit by using the 1746 variant as the basis for their text.

Corney's editorship was universally commended in reviews in periodicals.¹⁶ Whereas Mitford, in 1841, expressed his regret that Corney would not be supplying a new biography for the edition,¹⁷ in 1842, he praised the ways in which "the knowledge and accuracy of Mr. Corney [had contributed] to the fidelity of the text," especially through his restoration of the authoritative text.¹⁸ The reviewer in *The Spectator* declared that "a more competent person could not have been found" and commended Corney's "valuable notes" to Murdoch's biographical account.¹⁹ The repeated highlighting of the return to the 1746 variant of the text revealed a growing demand of readers to be supplied with a critical edition of the poem.

The edition also combined the multifariousness of the visual responses to *The Seasons* into one single set of illustrations. It included an unprecedented total of seventy-seven wood engravings after designs by eleven different members of the Etching Club. Founded in 1838, the Etching Club brought together a number of eminent artists--many of whom would become Royal Academicians--such as Charles West Cope, Thomas Creswick, and Richard Redgrave, to promote the medium of the wood engraving by publishing a number of copiously illustrated editions of popular works of British literature. The 1842 edition of *The Seasons* was the second of the Club's projects, after their edition of Oliver Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village*, which had been published a year earlier. In the following years, the Etching Club would also illustrate editions of, among others, Goldsmith's *Poetical Works* (1846), Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* (1847), and Milton's *L'Allegro and Il Penseroso* (1849).²⁰ The poem's repeated inclusion in sets of uniform editions of popular works of literature, such as multi-volume collections of British poets or the Etching Club's publishing programme, reveals how centrally *The*

¹⁶ *Morning Post*, 14 July 1842, 5; *The Examiner*, 16 July 1842, 452-3; *The Spectator*, 23 July 1842, 716; *The Gentleman's Magazine*, May 1843, 493-4.

¹⁷ *The Gentleman's Magazine*, December 1841, 563.

¹⁸ *The Gentleman's Magazine*, May 1843, 493-4.

¹⁹ *The Examiner*, 16 July 1842, 453.

²⁰ The edition of Goldsmith's *Poetical Works*, including seventy-six edition and edited by Borney, was published by the same conger which produced the 1842 edition of *The Seasons*. It was printed on the same paper, executed in the same type, issued in the same format, and made available in the same bindings as its predecessor. Adopting a similar strategy to Wallis's, the booksellers advertised the edition as uniform with their edition of *The Seasons* in the hope of attracting more consumers.

Seasons featured in both economically and aesthetically defined canons of British literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The illustrations in Corney's edition of *The Seasons* represent the most extensive visual mediation of the poem since its first publication in 1730. Abundant in number and surrounding the text on the page, the images develop a cohesive visual narrative which not merely compliments, but even partly replaces the literary narrative of the poem. [Figure 52] In the rendering of the episode of the shepherd dying in the snow, for instance, a stark contrast is developed between the warmth and safety of the home and the barrenness and destructiveness of the winter landscape, as embodied in the threatening branches which seemingly reach out towards the shepherd. When considered in conjunction with the lines of the poem, readers, upon reaching the last line of the page, turn to the image of the dying shepherd in the landscape, before following the gaze of the dog towards the depiction of the shepherd's family. By reading the images in this order, readers develop a visual interpretation of the episode which corresponds with the narrative of the poem. Read separately from the text, however, the visual paratexts invert the chronology of the narrative in the lines of the poem. Readers are first presented with the distressed family and, secondly, with the reason for the family's distress when turning their eyes to the illustration of the dying shepherd. In this manner, the proximity of the literary to the visual text allows for multiple interpretations.

As suggested by the illustrations of the story of the dying shepherd, the illustrations to the Etching Club edition of *The Seasons* revisit subjects which had been selected for visualisation in previous editions of the poem. The anthropocentric representational mode features predominantly in the engravings to the edition: the illustrators produce renderings of all four of the interpolated episodes; [Figure 53] some illustrations provide an idealised, pastoral depiction of man in the natural landscape, such as the depiction of peaceful relaxation and rural dancing in spring; [Figure 54] by contrast, other illustrations promote a Georgic interpretation of the poem, for instance, by displaying the burning of chaff and straw to protect the orchard from insects in spring. [Figure 55] The illustrators also reintroduce the mythopoeic-allegorical mode of Kent's designs for the first editions of *The Seasons*. In the first illustration to "Winter," the season is allegorically represented as an old man. He is surrounded by his followers, who unleash the harsh wind, rain, and snowstorms from the heavens. The chains on the figure to the



Smooth'd up with snow ; and, what is land unknown,
What water, of the still unfrozen spring,
In the loose marsh or solitary lake,
Where the fresh fountain from the bottom boils.
These check his fearful steps ; and down he sinks
Beneath the shelter of the shapeless drift,
Thinking o'er all the bitterness of death,
Mix'd with the tender anguish nature shoots
Through the wrung bosom of the dying man —
His wife, his children, and his friends, unseen.

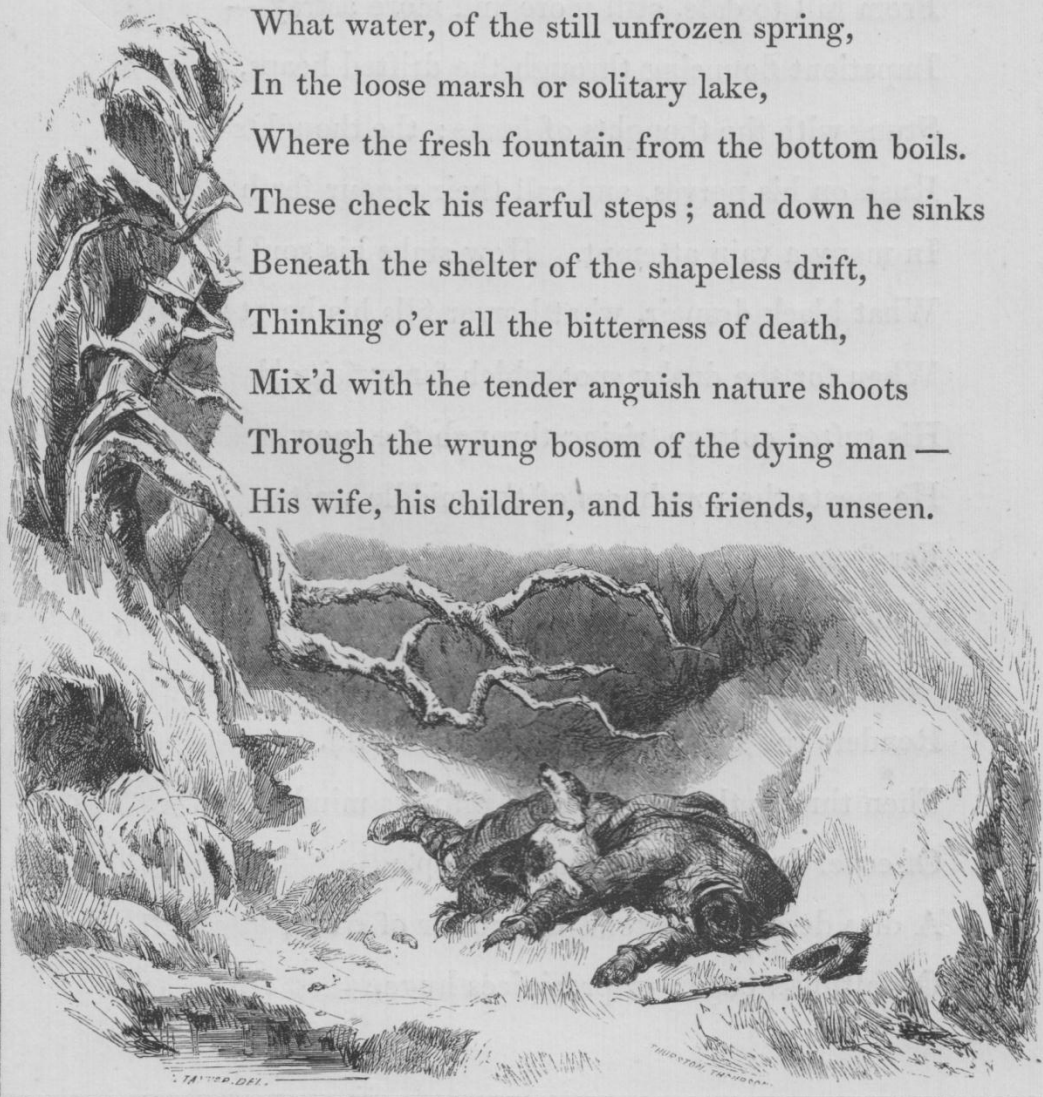
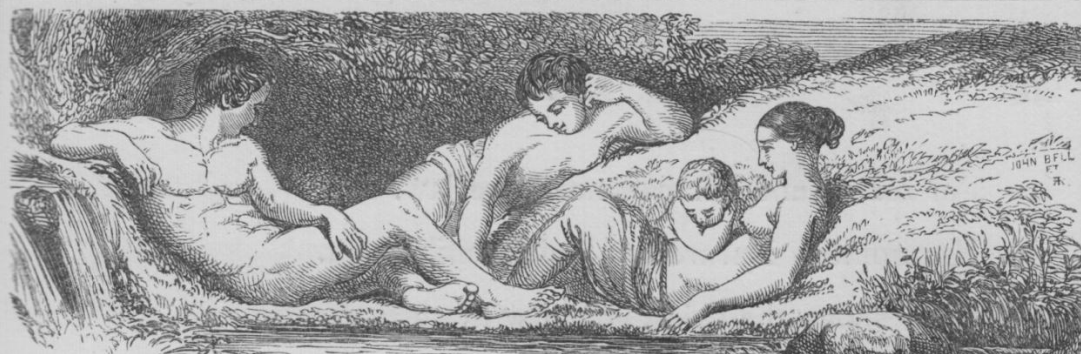


Figure 52 Full-page plate, designed by Frederick Tayler, engraved by T. Thompson, for "Winter," from *The Seasons* (London: Longman et al., 1842). Reproduced from a copy in the author's possession.



Or to the culture of the willing glebe,
Or to the cheerful tendance of the flock.
Meantime the song went round ; and dance and sport,
Wisdom and friendly talk, successive stole
Their hours away : while in the rosy vale
Love breath'd his infant sighs, from anguish free,
And full replete with bliss ; save the sweet pain
That, inly thrilling, but exalts it more.
Nor yet injurious act, nor surly deed,
Was known among these happy sons of heaven ;



Figure 53 Full-page plate, designed by Richard Redgrave, engraved by Robert Edward Branston, for “Spring,” from *The Seasons* (London: Longman et al., 1842). Reproduced from a copy in the author’s possession.

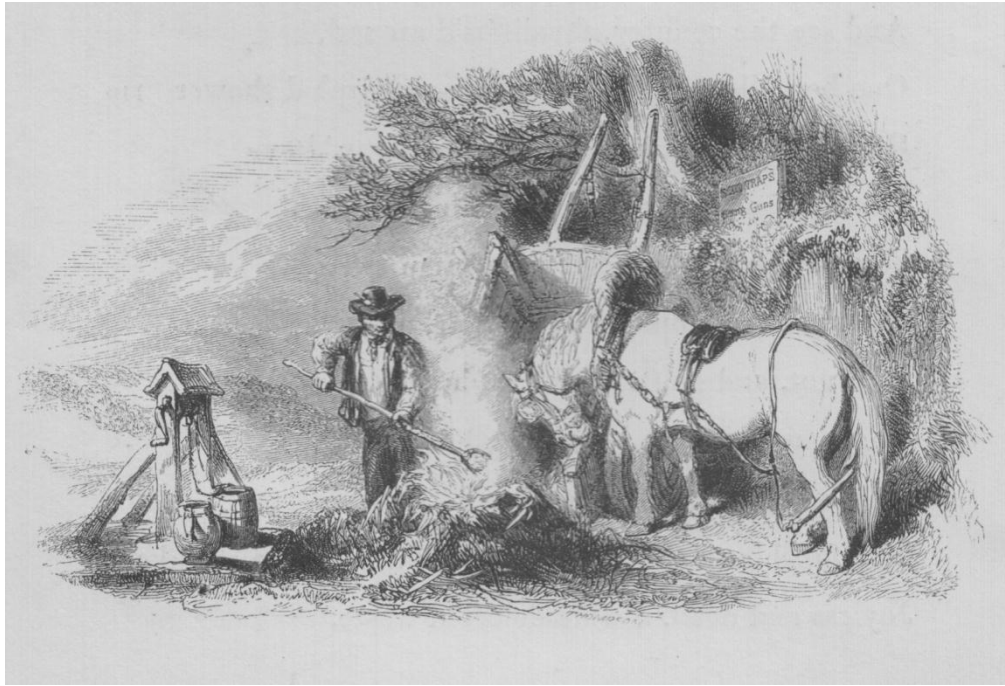


Figure 54 Vignette, designed by Frederick Tayler, engraved by John Thompson, for “Spring,” from *The Seasons* (London: Longman et al., 1842). Reproduced from a copy in the author’s possession.

left of Winter symbolise how man is a slave to the whims of the season and how he suffers under its metaphorical tyranny. In spite of an adoption of earlier illustrative modes, several of the illustrations promote a mimetic representation of nature. [Figures 56 & 57] Animals and natural landscapes feature more centrally, as the illustrators attempt to evoke certain moods, rather than advance a visual narrative of a particular passage of the text. The mimetic representation of nature without man’s presence would feature more prominently in illustrations, no longer directly related to the text, in later editions of *The Seasons*. As a result of the variety of subjects and illustrative modes, the members of the Etching Club develop a complex visual narrative, which reflects the generic heterogeneity of the literary text.

The comments on the illustrations in the reviews of the edition reveal changes in the illustration practices of *The Seasons*. Regarding the 1842 edition as the “best-illustrated edition of Thomson’s *Seasons* that we know of,”²¹ the reviewer of *The Spectator* comments extensively on the designs and singles out the representations of nature for particular praise:

²¹ *The Spectator*, 23 July 1842, 716.

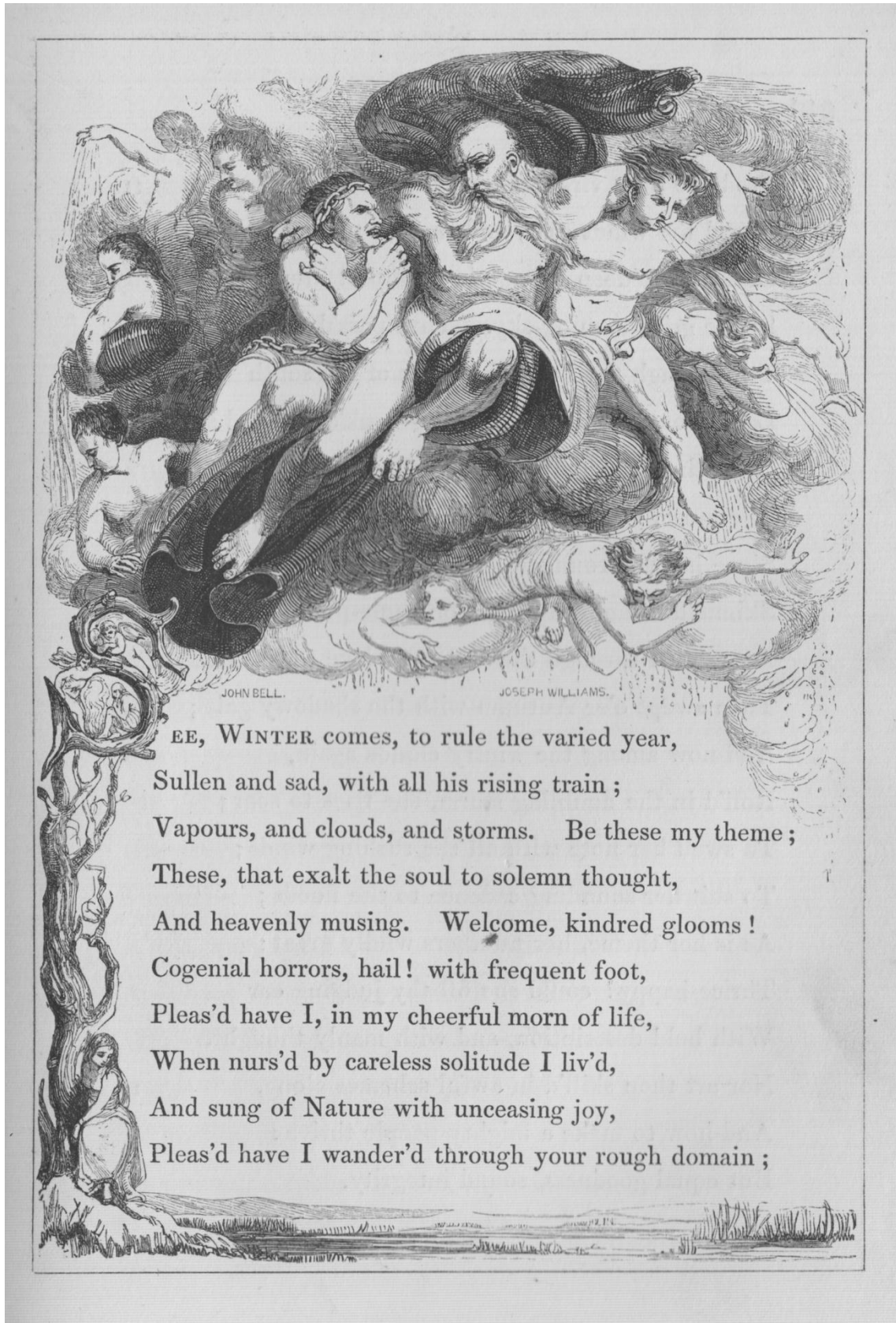


Figure 55 Full-page plate, designed by John Bell, engraved by Joseph Williams, for “Winter,” from *The Seasons* (London: Longman et al., 1842). Reproduced from a copy in the author’s possession.

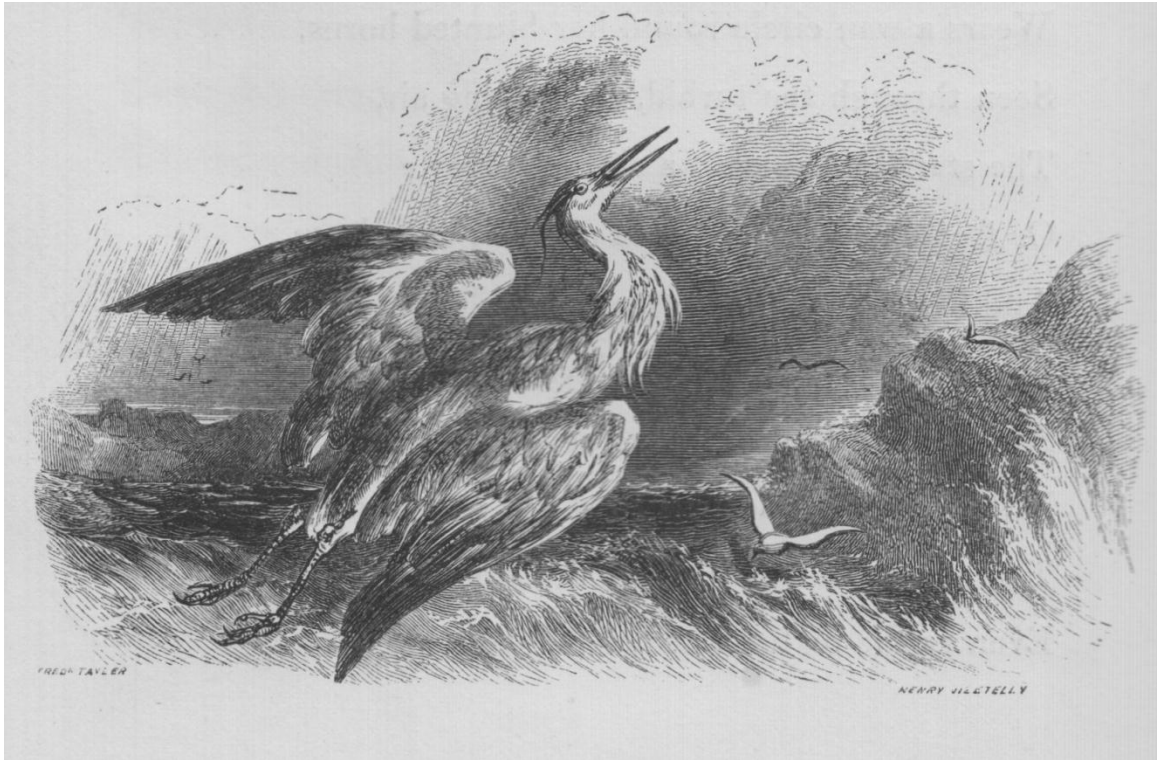


Figure 56 Vignette, designed by Frederick Tayler, engraved by Henry Vizetelly, for “Winter,” from *The Seasons* (London: Longman et al., 1842). Reproduced from a copy in the author’s possession.



Figure 57 Vignette, designed by Thomas Creswick, engraved by Thompson, for “Autumn,” from *The Seasons* (London: Longman et al., 1842). Reproduced from a copy in the author’s possession.

The illustrations . . . [are] distinguished by genuine English rustic character and a kindred poetic feeling. . . . The designs are various both in subject and in style; but scenes of homely and rural character predominate. . . . CRESWICK's landscapes breathe the repose and simplicity of village-life. . . . [F. TAYLER's] effects of light are luminous indeed; the sunbeams streaming across the waterfall, the blaze of sunrise, the flame of the wildfire, and the dazzling whiteness of snow, are imitated on the wood with the vividness of colour.²²

The reviewer's focus is on the ways in which the artists managed to capture the details of nature with the same vividness and vigour that are displayed in Thomson's lines. The appreciation of a realistic depiction of nature reveals a shift away from the preference for sentimental-anthropocentric representational mode which had predominated in the illustrations of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century editions of *The Seasons*.

Longman's 1842 edition of Thomson's poem not only represented an important turning point in terms of the paratextual make-up and material packaging of editions of *The Seasons*, but also marked a decisive moment in the poem's cultural history. The transformation of the poem's economic capital into cultural capital in the last quarter of the eighteenth century resulted in the steady promotion of *The Seasons* as a classic in the British literary tradition until well into the first half of the nineteenth century. In the "Advertisement," Corney characterised his edition as "an additional mark of homage to the merit and genius of Thomson,"²³ a view which is shared by several of the reviewers. A reviewer in *The Examiner* expresses "a peculiar pleasure to find the excellent good-natured Thomson at receipt of all this honour and glory,"²⁴ while a writer for *The Athenaeum* declares that the edition is "entitled to a place on the library shelf as well as on the drawing-room table."²⁵

This final remark shows to what extent *The Seasons* had pervaded the spheres of both private and public consumption by the middle of the nineteenth century. Issued in a wide variety of editions, ranging from expensive, large-format editions--such as Millar and Millan's 1730 quarto edition--to affordable, pocket-sized editions--such as William Lane's 1808 vigesimo-quarto edition in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries--Thomson's poem had become part of public and private libraries across Britain. It had even reached the European continent, in the form of either translations or editions of the original English text produced by non-British booksellers.

²² *The Spectator*, 23 July 1842, 716.

²³ Thomson 1842, vii.

²⁴ *The Examiner*, 16 July 1842, 452.

²⁵ The statement is included in the entry to the booksellers' catalogue.

By adopting an interdisciplinary (text-theoretical, book-historical, and print-cultural) approach towards texts, this dissertation has studied the textual, paratextual, and print-cultural mediation of *The Seasons* in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to identify some of the reasons for its success on the book market and its cultural pervasiveness. It linked Thomson's textual revisions to his developing ideas on the generic and thematic composition of his descriptive poem in an attempt to determine why it was so popular with its eighteenth-century audience. It also examined the ways in which *The Seasons* was paratextually refashioned in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century editions and visual culture within the context of a rapidly changing book market in Britain. Experimenting with the paratextual and material make-up of editions of the poem as part of their publishing strategies, booksellers catered to a growing consumer demand, in the process increasing the poem's cultural capital and solidifying its status as a classic in British literature. Finally, it has also explored the ways in which French translations of *The Seasons* transformed and reinterpreted the poem according to the tastes and fashions of a different linguistic context.

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