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Augustanism in Scotland:  
The Pastoral and the Georgic in the Work of Allan Ramsay and James  
Thomson.

Thesis presented for the Degree of Master of Philosophy  
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## Introduction.

Contemporaries Allan Ramsay (1684-1758) and James Thomson (1700-1748) are two of Scotland's most influential literary figures. Without the invention and impetus of these two writers, it is difficult to imagine how the work of Burns or Scott would have been possible. Ironically, the cultural legacy left by these two writers has, to a certain extent, been misunderstood by the critical tradition.<sup>1</sup> Conventional criticism portrays Thomson as personifying a British literary identity while, conversely, Ramsay has been appropriated by Scottish nationalist criticism; for these critics<sup>2</sup> Ramsay represents an ardent Scottish literary and cultural patriotism.

While these critical constructions are not without justification and validity, the portrayal of Ramsay and Thomson as literary opposites operating within separate cultural and national spheres is both reductive and misleading. Recent scholarship, that of Mary Jane Scott for example, has attempted to repatriate Thomson into the Scottish literary canon whilst critics such as Gerard Carruthers and Carol McGuirk have begun to explore the extent of Ramsay's Augustan and nuanced British literary identity.<sup>3</sup> In the course of this dissertation I will build upon this line of research as a more fruitful and less limiting formulation for interpreting the creative output of Scottish writers following the Union of 1707.

In discussions of eighteenth-century Scottish literature the name of Allan Ramsay is often invoked alongside the names of Robert Fergusson and Robert Burns, constructing a critical landscape reliant on an important trio of eighteenth-

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<sup>1</sup>This terminology, in relation to the Scottish critical tradition, was coined by Gerard Carruthers. For a full discussion and definition of the term, see *The Invention of Scottish Literature During the Long Eighteenth Century* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow PhD Thesis, 2001) pp. 5-47 and p.92.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, T.F Henderson *Scottish Vernacular Literature: A Succinct History* (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1910) or, more recently, Marshall Walker *Scottish Literature Since 1707* (London: Longman, 1996) p.72

<sup>3</sup> See Mary Jane Scott, *James Thomson, Anglo-Scot* (London: University of Georgia Press, 1988) Gerard Carruthers, *The Invention of Scottish Literature During the Long Eighteenth Century* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow PhD Thesis, 2001) p.63 and Carol McGuirk, 'Augustan Influences on Allan Ramsay' in *Studies in Scottish Literature 16* (South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1981) pp.97-109

century Scottish poets. While this serves to indicate the importance of Ramsay, and in particular his championing of vernacular Scots as a viable and effective literary medium, it also serves to undermine Ramsay's own diverse literary achievements. Furthermore, such a formulation is exclusive of any other spheres of influence which were undoubtedly at work on these poets as well as excluding, in its emphasis on the vernacular output of these three poets, Scottish writers such as Thomson, who chose not to employ Scots vernacular as their primary poetic medium. This formulation then, is largely based on the employment of Scots vernacular as well as, in the case of Ramsay especially, the revival of older Scottish verse forms and a preoccupation with collecting, editing and anthologising older Scottish literature which evidenced a definable historical tradition of literary creation in Scotland.

Ramsay's collecting and anthologising enterprises, encouraged by Thomas Ruddiman whose patriotic and Jacobite leanings were in tune with Ramsay's sympathies, culminated in *The Ever Green* (1724) and the four volume *Tea-Table Miscellany* (1724-37). These anthologies featured selections from sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Scottish poets alongside contributions from the Makars (all subject to Ramsay's own editing and 'improving' strategies) and could very well be interpreted as motivated purely by patriotism and a desire to showcase Scotland's rich cultural heritage. However, this interest in antiquarianism was a marked feature of the early eighteenth century and was not confined to those with an anti-Union agenda. Sir John Clerk of Penicuik was one whose interest in older Scottish culture and general patriotic ardour for his country did not preclude his support of the Union of 1707. Nor did it preclude him from offering both friendship and patronage to Allan Ramsay. Thus, even viewed as above, in the most general of terms, the cultural and literary identity of Ramsay becomes increasingly complex and nuanced, and increasingly resists definition simply in the language of cultural essentialism and purely nationalist criticism.

The dominant critical view of Ramsay as an earthy, vernacular poet of the Scottish people<sup>4</sup>, however, remained unchallenged for some time despite the flaws

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<sup>4</sup> By his I refer to the construction of Ramsay as one whose writing was rooted in a low-cultural setting and aimed at an audience composed of the lower orders of society. See, for example, Marshall Walker *Scottish Literature Since 1707* (London: Longman, 1996) p.72 'Their [Ramsay's and Fergusson's] work should not be overvalued, but their impact can hardly be overestimated. They both made the living Scots language work in literature for the people.'

inherent in a critical approach which failed to account for the neoclassical tropes and forms employed by Ramsay in almost all of his work, as well as those pieces in which standard English was Ramsay's chosen literary medium. David Craig, for example, takes considerable pains to consolidate such an interpretation, seeing such literature as indicative of the social conditions of urban Scotland:

Not a hint of 'correct' behaviour, of the cultivated manner and clever wit that belong to it, or indeed of a *conscious* code of any kind appears in the Scots work of that time. Its impulse, as has been suggested, comes directly out of the *mêlée* of common life;<sup>5</sup>

While it is true that Edinburgh society was less segregated than its London counterpart as a result of the specific physical conditions of the Old Town and that this<sup>6</sup>, as Craig argues, had a significant bearing on the literature of the time, it is difficult to justify the view that the literature of those such as Ramsay failed to demonstrate sophisticated wit or follow any kind of code. Rather, Ramsay's corpus, as will be argued, demonstrates an awareness of and engagement with literary traditions and influences far beyond the 'ordinary pubs and market places'<sup>7</sup> of eighteenth-century Edinburgh. Indeed, as Nigel Leask has recently observed: 'There has been a tendency in Scottish studies to overplay Ramsay's provincial and folklorist roots, rather than acknowledging his poetry as part of a cosmopolitan project of European extent'<sup>8</sup>. Until recently however, the critical tradition adhered to another interpretative model, one which became an abiding and dominant

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<sup>5</sup> David Craig *Scottish Literature and the Scottish People 1680-1830* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1961) p.32

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, David Diaches *Edinburgh* (London: Granada, 1980) pp.116-7 and E.F Catford *Edinburgh: The Story of A City* (London: Huteson, 1975) p.25. Catford observes, 'Yet noblemen and their families, judges of the high court, college professors, lawyers, merchants, shopkeepers and craftsmen (all with their servants), market stall-keepers, messengers, town guardsmen and many others lived their lives and brought up their families in this higgledy-piggledy community which went far beyond the dreams of present-day town planners seeking to achieve a social mix in the communities they plan.'

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p.19

<sup>8</sup> Nigel Leask *Robert Burns and Pastoral: Poetry and Improvement in Late Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) p.59

formulation and which seeks to explain perceived inconsistencies in the cultural identity of Scottish writers following the Union of 1707.

David Daiches's influential study, *The Paradox of Scottish Culture: The Eighteenth-Century Experience* (1964) accounts for the perceived inconsistencies in Ramsay's work, such as his bi-lingual facility and exploitation of neoclassical tropes and forms, as being indicative of his cultural 'confusion' in the wake of the Union:

Ramsay came [...] to Edinburgh [...] and there until his death in 1758 he engaged in a variety of literary and other activities which perfectly symbolise some of the confusions in Scottish culture and Scottish national feeling after the Union.<sup>9</sup>

This perceived cultural confusion or crisis of identity has come to be synonymous with Ramsay and with other important Scottish writers of the eighteenth century (and beyond) and is often used as a blanket interpretation for any post-Union Scottish cultural output which displays linguistic diversity, or draws on varied traditions and influences.<sup>10</sup> For Daiches, drawing on the formulation termed the 'Caledonian antiszygy' by G. Gregory Smith in his seminal work on Scottish Literature, *Scottish Literature Character and Influence* (1919), 'the dualism in Ramsay's life and character was deep-seated and corresponded to a dualism in the Scottish culture of the day'<sup>11</sup>. Rather than viewing such dualism as a versatile bi-lingual or multicultural facility however, this formulation is portrayed in negative terms which hint at an inherent sickness, or weakness in the Scottish literary tradition. The negativity of this formulation can be clearly identified in Daiches's analysis of *The Gentle Shepherd* (1725) which I shall now quote (at the risk of belabouring the point) because it is highly relevant to one of the primary foci of this dissertation:

the whole work [*The Gentle Shepherd*] is very precariously balanced, and several times falls into sentimentality, melodrama, or absurdity. Ramsay is hovering uneasily between a faded literary convention and an awareness of contemporary rustic life in the Scotland he knew, and has no one method of linking the convention with the awareness. The result is an interesting, if

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<sup>9</sup> David Daiches *The Paradox of Scottish Culture: The Eighteenth-Century Experience* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964) p.23

<sup>10</sup> For another example of this formulation, see Kenneth Simpson *The Protean Scot: The Crisis of Identity in Eighteenth-Century Scottish Literature* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1988)

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p.28

only partially successfully successful balancing feat which reflects the unstable equilibrium of Scottish literary culture in the period.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, *The Gentle Shepherd* becomes a cultural curiosity, indicative of cultural anxieties which leave the work hovering somewhere between the parochial and the ridiculous. This view however fails to account for the vast popularity of *The Gentle Shepherd* in both Scotland and England during the period, as well as the opinions of those commentators who critiqued the work in the eighteenth century. In the preface to a 1797 edition of *The Gentle Shepherd*, for example, the anonymous author observes:

Of all the poets in Scottish dialect, says a critic, the best and greatest, beyond all comparison is Allan Ramsay. He appears to have studied Dryden's style with much attention, since his verses flow with the most pleasing volubility. His provincial phrases are few, when compared with those of some of his imitators, and he has selected them with such happy dexterity, that they are almost equally familiar in every part of the kingdom.<sup>13</sup>

While this unqualified praise perhaps fails to convince as criticism, it is indicative of the reception of Ramsay's work in the eighteenth century. Another early commentator, A. F. Tytler, Lord Woodhouselee, whose remarks preface the 1800 edition of Ramsay's works, offers more a constructive and discerning critique of Ramsay's work. Lord Woodhouselee goes as far as to announce: 'Ramsay was himself (if the expression may be allowed) a true Horatian genius.'<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, Lord Woodhouselee provides a detailed comparative analysis of Ramsay and the Italian pastoralists Tasso and Guarini and finds Ramsay's work favourable in comparison, an analytical exercise which places Ramsay in a European context often overlooked by traditional criticism.

James Thomson's work (and especially *The Seasons*) has shared with Ramsay's a similarly unstable critical history, largely as a result, as Gerard Carruthers has noted, of the way in which the Scottish critical tradition has

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p.26

<sup>13</sup> Preface to *The Gentle Shepherd* (Glasgow: Stewart and Meikle, 1797) p.5

<sup>14</sup> A.F. Tytler (Lord Woodhouselee) Remarks prefixed to *Poems of Allan Ramsay 2 Vols.* (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1800) p.xcv



developed.<sup>15</sup> By suggesting an instability in the critical history of the text, I refer to the fact that the critical opinions relating to *The Seasons* have undergone major shifts in the period since its first publication. Thomson's eighteenth-century popularity was akin to Ramsay's. *The Seasons* was one of the most widely read poems of the period and enjoyed immense popularity well into the nineteenth century, running into many editions in the Romantic period especially. Despite Thomson's relocation to London in 1725 (just before the publication of the first of his *Seasons*, 'Winter' in 1726) and his use of standard English as his primary language of literary expression<sup>16</sup> his work was equally popular both north and south of the Border. Indeed, The Cape Club, to which Robert Fergusson belonged, celebrated Thomson's birthday each year, and Burns was one of several poets who penned an elegy occasioned by Thomson's death, as well as a further work entitled 'To the Shade of Mr Thomson'.<sup>17</sup> This demonstrates the extent to which Thomson was admired by both poets and by the reading public, in Scotland, England and also, in Ireland, as is evidenced by the number of Dublin editions of his work.

However, during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Thomson's career came to epitomise the route of the Anglo-Scot whose artistic trajectory diverged from the path of vernacular poets such as Ramsay and whose perceived defection to London following the union was seen as a cultural betrayal of his Scottish heritage, or worse, a self-serving exercise in financial expediency. This view has been challenged by recent critics, notably Mary Jane Scott, whose *James Thomson Anglo-Scot* (1988) endeavours to reinstate Thomson in the Scottish literary canon by way of detailing his Scottish influences and by proclaiming the physical and intellectual landscape of *The Seasons* a specifically Scottish one.

This complex critical history, as well as the opposing political allegiances of Allan Ramsay and James Thomson, has contributed to the traditional portrayal of

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<sup>15</sup> Gerard Carruthers 'Eighteenth-Century Scottish Literary Identity' in *James Thomson: Essays for the Tercentenary* ed., Richard Terry (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000) pp.165-190

<sup>16</sup> One poem of Thomson's written in Scots vernacular survives: 'An Elegy Upon James Therburn In Chatto'. See *The Complete Poetical Works of James Thomson* ed., J. Logie Robertson (London: Oxford University Press, 1908) pp. 507-8. (The editor of this edition adds a note in parenthesis at the end of the poem: '[It is Scarcely possibly that this is Thomson's]')

<sup>17</sup> See *The Complete Illustrated Poems, Songs and Ballads of Robert Burns* ed., Samuel Carr (London: Lomond Books, 1992) p.604

these contemporaries as literary opposites, despite the fact that these writers shared a cultural and national heritage which is evident in their corpora. Furthermore, both writers were, as I will argue, part of a literary movement termed Augustan by literary historians and commentators, both then and now, and made a significant, and to a certain extent, specifically Scottish, contribution to this cultural milieu. The term 'Scottish Augustan' has of course been used as a label for Scottish writers of this period in the past.<sup>18</sup> I intend, however to counter the often negative connotations of this label which render it a rather derogatory term for a group of Scottish writers who were contemporaneous with the English Augustans and who are perceived as mere imitators, and rather poor ones at that, of the literary styles and modes which were in literary currency in England during the period. By pursuing such a line of enquiry, I hope not to present an Anglocentric view of the period in which Scottish writers are judged by the English Augustan norms and standards of the day, but to offer an alternative formulation whereby the creative contribution of Scottish writers becomes a significant factor in the development of a British literature in the wake of the Union of 1707.

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<sup>18</sup> See, for example, R.D.S. Jack, *The Italian Influence on Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1972) p.179 'The Scottish Augustans were themselves too derivative and too obviously second-rate to encourage imitation.'

## Chapter One:

### Definitions.

#### Pastoral and Georgic.

There are many different strands which could be pursued in an examination of a term such as Augustan, a label which, like all literary labels, has been subject to critical pressure in recent times.<sup>19</sup> However, the scope of the present dissertation dictates that I must confine my discussion to very specific aspects and expressions of Augustanism, such as the Augustan reliance on neoclassical modes as didactic and ideological vehicles. Therefore, it is my intention to analyse the exploitation and adaptation of the pastoral and georgic modes in the work of Ramsay and in Thomson's *The Seasons*. Again, necessarily, this will lead to omissions; it is impossible to do justice to the large and varied corpora of Ramsay and Thomson within the confines of the present discussion. Consequently, I have chosen to focus on Thomson's *The Seasons* (1730) and to focus on those texts of Ramsay's which directly engage with and adapt the pastoral and georgic modes, beginning with two of Ramsay's early pastoral elegies, moving into a discussion of the pastoral and georgic elements of *The Gentle Shepherd* and finally presenting an analysis of 'The Prospect of Plenty' (1721) as a georgic text.

I have chosen to use the pastoral and georgic modes as a means of illuminating the links between Ramsay and Thomson but also in order to illustrate the trajectory of these modes in the eighteenth century. I feel that this approach offers a fruitful path in establishing the extent to which Scottish writers can be said to have contributed to an emerging British poetic in the period following the Union of 1707. Furthermore, the development and conflation of these two modes in the eighteenth century perhaps made possible the work of canonical Romantic figures such as Robert Burns, John Clare and William Wordsworth. Again, it is not possible

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<sup>19</sup> It is only in recent years that discussions of Romanticism, for example, have encompassed the notion of British Romanticism, as opposed to English Romanticism, and have acknowledged the importance of Scottish, Welsh and Irish writing of that period as having made a major contribution to the Romantic movement as a whole. See, for example, *English Romanticism and the Celtic World* eds. Gerard Carruthers and Alan Rawes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) and Murray Pittock *Scottish and Irish Romanticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). This kind of revision, or negotiation, of literary labels is particularly active in discussions of early eighteenth-century literature, as will be discussed fully in pp. 16-21 below.

to do more than suggest these connections within the confines of the present discussion, but I hope at least to go some way towards mapping the ways in which these modes became significant vehicles for the preoccupations of the writers of the early eighteenth century. In many ways this is especially relevant to those who spoke from a Scottish perspective, a perspective which offered, not merely the creative passion of a threatened culture in the wake of the union, but, as I hope to suggest, a range of linguistic, poetic and intellectual possibilities that were available to Scottish writers as a result of the complexity and diversity of the cultural conditions of Scotland in the early years of the eighteenth century.

Given the long and varied history that classical modes such as georgic and pastoral carry with them, and the many critical studies, definitions and interpretations which have been applied to the pastoral mode especially, it is necessary at this point to go some way towards delineating what I mean when referring to these terms throughout this dissertation. Pastoral as a descriptive term has many applications and connotations today; few of these modern cultural applications suggest any connection to the *Idylls* of Theocritus when he originated the pastoral eclogue in the third century BC, nor do they necessarily relate to Virgil's later *Eclogues*. For an Augustan, or neoclassical writer however, such modes were redolent with classical authority and informed by awareness of classical convention.

Similarly, much modern commentary tends to obscure the differences between the pastoral and the georgic and treat them as so closely related as to be indistinguishable as separate modes with individual preoccupations, intentions and surfaces. This does not indicate a lack of awareness on the part of modern commentators and critics, rather it is indicative of the way in which these two classical modes have been conflated through their long years as modes of literary expression, modes which must inevitably change and adapt to their historical context. The introduction to *The Penguin Book of English Pastoral Verse* (1982), for example, offers a short though thought-provoking overview of the origins, functions and forms of pastoral. In its 'Glossary of Pastoral Terms', however, grouped alongside explanations of terms such as 'Eclogue', 'Elegy' and 'Bucolic', we find the term 'Georgic', with the following definition: 'A didactic version of Pastoral, in which the intention is to idealise country life, but as a life of industry, not idleness,

and to impart practical knowledge about agriculture etc.’<sup>20</sup> Georgic is thus deemed a ‘version of pastoral’, characterised by its didacticism and by its emphasis on the rewards of labour. These are undoubtedly defining features of georgic poetry, but an Augustan writer would perhaps struggle with the notion of georgic as a ‘version of pastoral’, not having encountered the many incarnations or, as Empson<sup>21</sup> too would express it, ‘versions’ of pastoral which proliferate in the modern world of literature, art and indeed all forms of expressive media. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, writers and cultural commentators took great pains to differentiate between these modes and to assign each its correct position in the generic hierarchy which was as much a feature of those times as it was in classical times (as is evidenced by Joseph Addison’s ‘Essay on the Georgics’ (1697). Alistair Fowler explores these positions in an essay significantly entitled ‘Georgic and Pastoral: Laws of Genre in the Seventeenth Century’ in which he posits an antonymic relationship between pastoral and georgic, a relation which excludes the possibility of two such modes being in ascendancy in any one historical period. Fowler argues that in the seventeenth century, pastoral was gradually replaced by georgic, following what he describes as a period of generic blending and confusion between the two modes which for Fowler, ‘correspond to alternative but overlapping domains of assumption about a similar field of interests.’<sup>22</sup>

We can say that the ‘similar field of interests’ suggested by Fowler include a defined focus on rural life and landscapes, the opposition between urban and rural life and constructions of dialectical relations between man and nature, as well as between those who inhabit such a landscape and those who control it. That said, the dialectical relations constructed by pastoral literature are, of course, in opposition to those constructed by georgic literature as are the conventional subjects and style of representation deployed by the modes. Pastoral is enacted in an idealised landscape inhabited by shepherds whose life of leisure allows them to pass their days composing love songs. Thus, classically, the language of pastoral should be simple

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<sup>20</sup> John Barrell and John Bull (eds.) *The Penguin Book of English Pastoral Verse* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982) p.10

<sup>21</sup> William Empson *Some Versions of Pastoral* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1935)

<sup>22</sup> Alistair Fowler ‘Georgic and Pastoral: Laws of Genre in the Seventeenth Century’ in *Culture and Cultivation in Early Modern England: Writing and the Land* eds., Michael Leslie and Timothy Raylor (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1992) p.83

and direct, in keeping with the supposed utterances of the simple shepherds whom the pastoral mode pretends to represent. These emphases on love and leisure find their opposite in the georgic mode which takes labour and labour's rewards, rather than love, as its prime subject and motivation. The georgic mode is a didactic mode of civic instruction addressed, not to (or by) shepherds of the pastoral world, but to the farmer or husbandman who seeks improvement by means of the cultivation of natural resources. The georgic mode is thus characterised by a voice which, to borrow Joseph Addison's phrase, exemplifies the 'Address of the Poet'<sup>23</sup>, in that it seeks to render its didacticism more palatable by the complexity, specificity and ornate quality of its language. The georgic mode, conventionally, does not pretend to represent the voice or views of the rural workforce; this is the voice of the landowning class and of the civic leaders.

The definitions above are of course somewhat simplistic, but perhaps necessarily. As Paul Alpers points out, in the opening pages of his lengthy study, *What is Pastoral?* (1996): 'A literary definition is revealing and useful, it seems to me, not when it plants its banner everywhere, but when it is clear about what does and does not count as an example of the phenomenon in question.'<sup>24</sup> Alpers goes on to observe, a few pages later, that 'there is no principled account of it [pastoral] on which most people agree, and it sometimes seems as if there are as many versions of pastoral as there are critics and scholars who write about it.'<sup>25</sup> I agree with the notion that a definition is only useful if it incorporates some degree of specificity, though this renders definitions open to the charge of over simplification. I do not, however, entirely agree with the definition of pastoral offered by Alpers when he argues 'that the central fiction of pastoral [...] is not the Golden Age or idyllic landscapes, but herdsmen and their lives.'<sup>26</sup> That pastoral should be concerned, though not exclusively, with the representation of shepherds, I fully accept, but I would counter that the notion of a Golden Age, whether conceived of in Classical or in Christian

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<sup>23</sup> Joseph Addison 'An Essay on the Georgics' in *The Works of John Dryden*, ed. H.T. Swedenberg, Jr., Vol 5 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987) p.145

<sup>24</sup> Paul Alpers *What is Pastoral?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996) p.ix

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p.8

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p.x

terms, is a central concept in the literature of the pastoral, and one which I believe has significantly contributed to the adaptability and longevity of the mode. The notion of a pastoral Golden Age is particularly important to a discussion, such as this one, which focuses on the early eighteenth century, when British writers of pastoral took as their model the ideas of French pastoral theorists. Rapin, in his influential and widely disseminated *Dissertation de Carmines Pastoralis* (1659) assigned much importance to the concept of a Golden Age in the writing of pastoral. Furthermore, I would suggest that pastoral literature's envisioning of a Golden Age is another conceptual strand which differentiates the pastoral from the georgic.

The image of a Golden Age as a time when man lived in harmony with nature, a benign nature which willingly offered up her boons without mankind's coercion or manipulation, is one which, in its close correspondence with a Christian concept of prelapsarian Eden, allows the Classical ideals of pastoral to be easily transferred and adapted into a Christian framework.<sup>27</sup> The Golden Age in such a construction becomes a locus for nostalgia for a lost age of innocence, before the fall of man and before the decay of nature. The image of such a lost age as in opposition to the present renders the pastoral, despite its idyllic and often benign clothing, an effective tool for social and political critique, thus, 'the invocation of a Golden Age will be evidence of a present uncertainty about the stability of society.'<sup>28</sup> This capacity for the pastoral to express social anxiety within an apparently bucolic and uncultivated environment has been a feature and function of the pastoral mode throughout its long history as a literary mode. Indeed, Virgil's *Eclogues* themselves indicate such anxieties in their subtle incorporation of the themes of exile and dispossession which are so eloquently handled in Annabel Patterson's *Pastoral and Ideology: Virgil to Valery*. Despite what Patterson correctly refers to as 'the metapoetic or self-theorising aspect of the *Eclogues*'<sup>29</sup>, Virgilian pastoral, and arguably all pastoral since, has been a means of commenting, critiquing or reflecting

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<sup>27</sup> The Christian adaptation of the notion of a golden age of course has particular resonance in the context of a discussion of Thomson's *The Seasons*.

<sup>28</sup> *The Penguin Book of English Pastoral Verse* eds. John Barrell And John Bull (London: Penguin, 1982) p.5

<sup>29</sup> Annabel Patterson *Pastoral and Ideology: Virgil to Valery* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987) p.6

on the historical contexts of its production. The pastoral locus is a limited space; the danger and corruption of the external world is always present, lurking in the darker parts of the garden, threatening the simplicity and purity of the pastoral world. Furthermore, the Golden Age of the pastoral has the capacity to move in time, to be the longed-for past, the idealised present, or a future state to aspire to, rendering it an incisive political tool in times of faction, dissent and instability.

The georgic mode does not rely to the same extent on allusions to such golden times; rather, the georgic is motivated and informed by the real and tangible rewards of labour. The georgic mode assumes that man's condition is flawed, or at least, difficult, but that improvement can be achieved through application, toil, the acquisition of specialist knowledge and by controlling the baser instincts and luxurious urges. This explanation of course implies a kind of self-autonomy or an ability to shape one's own destiny through hard work and discipline. However, the georgic voice, with its characteristic elevated tone, is delivered from a position of privilege; that of the landowner, not of the labourers themselves, rendering the georgic mode liable to the same charges of social inequality and misrepresentation as have historically attached to the pastoral mode. While Anthony Low<sup>30</sup> has argued for the georgic as the voice of social dissent, of new scientific ideals and of course, of the New Husbandry, as opposed to the establishment and aristocratic voice of the pastoral, it is, given the characteristic voice of georgic poetry, difficult to view the georgic as a mode capable of representing, or even alluding to, the real rural labourer except by their notable absence, or by their occasion intrusion in the form of 'the noise of history'<sup>31</sup> as Kevis Goodman suggests.

However, despite the politics of representation, it is clear that from the mid-seventeenth century, the georgic mode first challenged, and then mixed with the pastoral mode in terms of the literary representation of rural concerns. Alistair Fowler, Annabel Patterson and Anthony Low are in agreement that this shift occurred in the mid-seventeenth century in order to reflect rapid social and agricultural change as well as providing a poetic vehicle for the expression of new

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<sup>30</sup> Anthony Low *The Georgic Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985)

<sup>31</sup> Kevis Goodman *Georgic Modernity and British Romanticism: Poetry and the Mediation of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 2004) p.64



and complex scientific ideas. Thus, when Dryden published his translation of the *Georgics* in 1697, prefaced by Joseph Addison's 'An Essay on the Georgics', the time, and the lie of the land were ripe for something of a georgic explosion. The new commercialism of the age, the stirrings of British Imperialism and of course, the newly formed British state itself demanded new forms and modes of literary expression. The georgic voice of didacticism and of civic instruction with all its attendant glorification of labour and of improvement seemed a fitting mode for the times. And yet, writers operating within such a foment of competing ideologies and rapid change seemed loathe to abandon the pastoral, especially, it will be argued, in Scotland, where the pastoral writer had a range of linguistic registers available for use and where Allan Ramsay achieved a more comprehensive representation of rural life (largely as a result of his representation of rustic characters as believable and appealing rather than self-ironising) in a pastoral drama than had been achieved in England. Arguably though, within the pastoral vision of Ramsay, the georgic mode makes its presence felt, just as, within the georgic structure and vision of Thomson's *The Seasons*, it is possible to detect a fully articulated nostalgia for a lost pastoral Golden Age.

### **Augustanism?**

I have used, and will continue to use, as a central term throughout this dissertation, the term Augustan as a period label to refer to the writers of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. As a period label, such a designation is open to debate and, as with all such labels, has its limitations. 'Augustan' and 'Augustanism' in this context, have attracted more lively debate than most literary labels; indeed these terms have, in recent years, been subject to serious critical pressure. Such is the contested nature of the usefulness of the designation 'Augustan', that there are many contemporary literary critics and historians who prefer to refer to the writing of this period as 'neoclassical' or simply as 'eighteenth-century'. I have chosen to retain the term 'Augustan' and indeed to argue for an Augustan age in Scotland, as well as in England, one which produced writing of quality rather than merely bland imitations of the style of writing popular in England in the period. Given the debate surrounding the term, it is necessary to examine the origins and connotations of the

term and to briefly rehearse the views of those critics who have made the most significant and well documented contributions to the debate.

Firstly, 'Augustan' and 'Augustanism' connote a relationship to, or parallels with, the early part of the long eighteenth century and the reign of Augustus, grand-nephew and adopted son of Julius Caesar, who became sole ruler of the Roman state following his victory over Mark Antony at the Battle of Actium in 31 BC. The reign of Augustus is generally characterised by its peace in the wake of the civil wars which preceded it and by the patronage offered to such iconic Roman poets as Horace, Virgil and Ovid among others. This extremely simplified account suggests some immediate parallels between Augustan Rome and early eighteenth-century Britain. Britain too was enjoying a period of peace following the civil war and religious unrest and intolerance of the previous century; the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) which brought an end to British involvement in the War of Spanish Succession was celebrated in the poetry of the day as was the notion that in times of peace, the arts would flourish as emblematic of a tolerant and civilised society. In addition, the poets of both periods shared, to some extent, a reliance on patronage which naturally affects the poetic of the day, producing panegyrics and flattering dedications and precluding any clear separation between poetry and politics.

This general account however, fails to convey the moral ambiguity which has attached to the historical interpretation of the reign of Augustus and which first entered the consciousness of British writers and thinkers with the discovery of the writings of Tacitus. In *The Annals of Imperial Rome*, the Roman historian Tacitus chooses to begin his account of a later Roman age with a retrospective and revisionary account of the reign of Augustus in which he emphasises the corrupt and despotic nature of the ruler. Tacitus claims that Augustus maintained his position and the peace of the state by having 'seduced the army with bonuses and his cheap food policy was successful bait for the civilians'<sup>32</sup>, noting that 'Opposition did not exist. War or judicial murder had disposed of all men of spirit.'<sup>33</sup> Finally, in summary, Tacitus announces: 'The country had been transformed, and there was

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<sup>32</sup> Tacitus *The Annals of Imperial Rome* trans. Michael Grant (London: Penguin, 1996) p.32

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p.32

nothing left of the fine old Roman character. Political equality was a thing of the past; all eyes watched for imperial commands.’<sup>34</sup>

This ambiguity in the historical constructions of the character of Augustus and Augustan Rome provides the basis for much of the critical wrangling over the propriety and usefulness of the term ‘Augustan’ in describing the literary period in question. The polarised critical responses to the usage of this term reflect the polarised historical accounts of Augustan Rome. Donald Greene, for example, entirely rejects such a designation:

That we know the age as ‘Augustan’ is probably due to Saintsbury<sup>35</sup> and to various British scholars who (like H.H. Erskine-Hill, who has written a book of many hundred pages defending the age as ‘Augustan’) having absorbed the term in their school days, cannot bear to give it up. The silliness of the epithet has been challenged by many, notably Howard Weinbrot, who points out that Pope in particular, among his contemporaries, despised the actual Augustan age and the tame poets who toadied to the tyrant Caesar Augustus.<sup>36</sup>

On the other side of the debate, are critics such as Pat Rogers who implies, in the following quotation, both the necessity of using distinct period labels and their inherent limitations and inadequacies:

I am unconvinced of the uselessness of the term ‘Augustan’ as critical coin [...] it is an imprecise word, but not all imprecision is sloppiness. There is no other suitable epithet to describe the culture of the period here under review. [...] Neoclassical begs too many questions, and ‘eighteenth century’ is not always accurate, besides sounding ponderous and pedantic after about three appearances. I prefer Augustan.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p.33

<sup>35</sup> George Saintsbury, author of *The Peace of the Augustans: A Survey of Eighteenth -Century Literature as a Place of Rest and Retirement* (London: Oxford University Press, 1916) A work which, in terms of literary scholarship, hasn’t aged very well. As Greene also points out, the suggestion that eighteenth century literature could be a place of rest and retirement could only really have been made in 1916, ‘a year when almost any earlier age might have seemed golden’.

<sup>36</sup> Donald Greene ‘An Anatomy of Pope-bashing’ in *The Enduring Legacy: Alexander Pope Tercentenary Essays* eds., P. Rogers and G.S Rousseau (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) p.245

<sup>37</sup> Pat Rogers *The Augustan Vision* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974)

The two commentators who have expended the most ink and effort on this subject are of course Howard Weinbrot whose *Augustus Caesar in 'Augustan' England: The Decline of a Classical Norm* (1978) entirely rejects the notion of a British Augustan age and H.H. Erskine-Hill whose *The Augustan Idea in English Literature* (1983) responds to the debate and defends the propriety of the epithet 'Augustan' in relation to eighteenth-century (and indeed, earlier periods of) English literature.

Weinbrot's study examines the early eighteenth-century reception of Augustus Caesar and finds the response negative, a response on which he bases his rejection of the notion of 'Augustanism'. Furthermore, he posits that what is often perceived as neoclassicism in the major writers of the day is actually a rejection of classical standards. While he constructs an extremely erudite and detailed argument for the rejection of the term 'Augustan', I would argue that the reception of Augustus Caesar, whether positive or negative, is not the primary issue. Indeed, that allusions to such a ruler were available, in all their complex ambiguity, was actually a boon for writers of a period in which a new royal dynasty was in the process of becoming established amid the protesting voices of Stuart loyalists. Thus, we have those who, drawing on the more positive elements of Augustan Rome, would conflate the figure of Augustus with Charles II, or, as in Pope's *Windsor Forest*, (1713) with the last Stuart monarch, Queen Anne. Likewise, Whig, Hanoverian writers who sought to promote a self image of a progressive establishment in which tyranny was excluded and in which the absolute power of the monarchy was limited by a modern parliamentary system, could subvert the image of a Stuart Augustus figure to suggest the corrupt and despotic qualities they associated with the old order. In this respect, the creative possibilities stimulated by the period's preoccupation with images of Augustan Rome, whether cast in a positive or negative light, were highly adaptable and abundantly fertile in an age marked by tension and anxiety over rightful authority. However, as Eva Simmons points out, 'the term Augustan' suggests not just a relationship between a monarch and the arts, but a standard and type of writing or indeed a particular cultural identity.'<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Eva Simmons 'Introduction: The Augustan Age in Perspective' in *Augustan Literature: A Guide to Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Literature* ed. Eva Simmons (London: Bloomsbury, 1994) p.4

This notion of a ‘standard and type of writing’ or of a ‘particular cultural identity’ is evident everywhere in the literature of this period and, I would argue, unites a group of writers whose politics and allegiances are often in direct opposition to one another and enables a cultural dialogue to take place in a ‘safe’ environment, that is, a literary or cultural location which facilitates the expression of difference within certain shared normative values. It is this which unites, as I will argue here, the apparently opposed literary expressions of Ramsay and Thomson in the same way that it unites those such as Addison and Pope whose religious and political views are in direct opposition and yet who operate within a shared set of cultural and literary values. Despite the suggestion by Howard Weinbrot that writers such as Pope reject the classical norms in, to borrow Weinbrot’s example, the *Epistle to Augustus* by the ironic adaptation of Horatian convention, leading Weinbrot to conclude: ‘An imitation of an author need not imply acceptance of his values’,<sup>39</sup> I would contend that adaptation, or even subversion of classical norms and conventions demonstrates a specific and deliberate reliance on classical models. This reliance informs almost all of the writing of the period stretching from around 1688 until after the mid-eighteenth century. That Horace and Virgil and other classical writers of the Augustan period figure so prominently in the collective literary consciousness of the age cannot be dismissed as a rejection of these writers, their modes, preoccupations, or their standards.<sup>40</sup> However one chooses to interpret works such as the *Epistle to Augustus* (and it appears that there are many available and conflicting interpretations), it is impossible to ignore, for example, Pope’s classically perfect *Pastorals*, or his translations of Horatian Odes. Even Ramsay, who claims to ‘understand Horace but faintly in the original’<sup>41</sup> presents Scots vernacular imitations

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<sup>39</sup> Howard Weinbrot *Augustus Caesar in ‘Augustan’ England: The Decline of a Classical Norm* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1978) p.183

<sup>40</sup> It is perhaps relevant, in the context of the present argument, to note here that I similarly reject any notion of modes such as ‘anti-pastoral’ or ‘counter-pastoral’ for the same reasons. Any work which relies heavily upon, or is primarily informed by a particular mode or convention, is thus operating within that tradition, regardless of how that tradition and its conventions are either adapted, or subverted.

<sup>41</sup> Allan Ramsay ‘Preface’ to *The Works of Allan Ramsay Vol. 1* eds., M. Burns and J. Oliver (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1951) p.xviii

of Horace and evidences an Augustan reliance on classical modes and models throughout his extensive corpus.

The reliance on and adaptation of classical modes and models need not indeed imply adherence to the values of classical writers; nor does it necessarily imply a belief in the moral and political supremacy of Augustan Rome. Rather it supplies a rich imaginative store of imagery and allusion ripe for exploitation in the service of literary presentation of ideology. In an age of competing political and ideological discourses, the ambiguity of the historiographical constructs of Augustan Rome and its ruler render this all the more appropriate for the needs of the Augustan writer. Furthermore, given that the dominant modes of classical Rome include satire, didacticism, invective and panegyric, it is little wonder that in an age of political and cultural tension such as that of early eighteenth-century Britain, writers should seize these modes as effective means of expressing their own particular beliefs and agendas. The reliance on such models further enabled writers to express competing ideologies whilst, by operating within a shared set of literary values, remaining true to the ideals of the age-tolerance, politeness, erudition and control-ideals necessary in a time of such precarious peace and fragile unity. Undoubtedly, the epithet 'Augustan' does have its limitations, but its very ambiguity is the quality which I believe renders it a valid literary label. One such limitation, or omission on the part of many of the critics mentioned in the discussion above, however, is the insistence upon the notion of 'Augustan' as a term to be applied to English Literature. The Union of 1707 and the implications of such a union surely add to parallels between Augustan Britain and Augustan Rome (in that both periods can be seen as enjoying a period of peace and unity, however fragile, following a period of turbulence and unrest), and as I hope to demonstrate, Scottish writers wholeheartedly engaged in the exploitation of classical modes, not least those of pastoral and georgic, as a means to express their response to the new age and the new state.

**Chapter two:**  
**Allan Ramsay.**

**Pastoral Elegies.**

I have suggested that Allan Ramsay is one whose poetic identity has been over simplified by critics and commentators. The construction of Ramsay as the champion of the vernacular revival and antiquarian whose collecting and anthologising enterprises served to revive and reinstate what was seen, by many contemporary Scots, as a cultural identity under threat from both the English cultural hegemony and from Scotland's own seventeenth century religious upheavals is surely relevant. However, this construction is also reductive in terms of both Ramsay's literary contribution and of Scotland's creative output and influence in the early eighteenth century. There can be no doubt that Ramsay's collecting and anthologising enterprises, as well as the language and verse forms which were incorporated into his original works, draw heavily on the long history of Scottish literature. His use of such verse forms as the 'Standard Habbie' and the 'Christ's Kirk' blazed a trail that was to make possible the poetic endeavours of such canonical figures as Robert Fergusson and Robert Burns and revived Scots as a literary language by demonstrating the possibilities afforded to the poet who was able to modulate at will, and with skill, across the full range of linguistic registers available to him. However, I contend that Ramsay's use of the vernacular was more than a political statement of cultural identity, and that the modulation between Standard English and Scots vernacular demonstrates, rather than a crisis of identity, an artist drawing on all the linguistic tools which are available to him and which he is able to manipulate with ease. Indeed, as I hope to suggest, the Scottish writer of this period, having a wide and varied linguistic continuum and a rich store of cultural material and imagery upon which to draw, made a more identifiable contribution to the fashioning of a British poetic in a way that some of the major English writers of the period perhaps did not. Robert Crawford makes a convincing argument for the importance of Scotland's contribution to British Literature, observing that 'as regards the development of a literature that was in any meaningful sense British, the English showed little or no interest. Panegyrics to 'Britain' were commonplace in early eighteenth England, but 'Britain' was usually seen as a synonym for 'England'.<sup>42</sup> Crawford goes on to suggest:

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<sup>42</sup> Robert Crawford *Devolving English Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992) p.45

Through the eighteenth century, though, in response to the cultural and political pressures [...] Scottish Literature involved a continuing examination of, and response to, the strains and possibilities of Britishness. Insightfully, awkwardly, entrepreneurially, Scottish writing entered its British phase. It is this Britishness which, more than anything else, distinguishes Scottish from English Literature in the eighteenth century.<sup>43</sup>

In order to forge such a literature, the Scottish writer must then draw deeply on the literary heritage of both Scotland and England. This practice is obvious in writers such as Thomson whose move to London and production of poetry and drama in standard English demonstrates an engagement with English literature which has often been viewed as a denial of his Scottish cultural heritage and as being complicit in the English cultural hegemony which threatened his native identity, rather than in the creation of a new British Literature. Conversely, all too often, the critical tradition has overlooked Ramsay's creative engagement with English, as well as Scottish literary traditions as a means to promote Scotland's creative wealth and contribute to an emerging British poetic. Ramsay, it will be demonstrated, in his use and adaptation of conventional modes and in his engagement with the Augustan cultural milieu, was neither insular nor purely backward-looking, as commentators such as Carol McGuirk<sup>44</sup> have argued.

The extent of Ramsay's Augustanism and forward looking, experimental usage of both mode and language is evident in his earliest, original published works. The pastoral mode was clearly one in which Ramsay felt confident in his ability to adapt and to render in a specifically Scottish Augustan mode of expression. South of the Border, the pastoral mode in the early eighteenth century was rapidly becoming a hackneyed mode, so conventional and ubiquitous as to be viewed as outdated and unfit as a vehicle for the sophisticated demands of the Augustan writer who operated within a cultural milieu defined by its complexity and variety. Indeed, the pastoral mode, classically and conventionally the lowliest of the literary forms, was being either burlesqued, in the case of John Gay or used, in the case of the precociously talented and youthful Alexander Pope, as an exercise in poetic apprenticeship. That Ramsay adopted this mode in his most popular work *The Gentle Shepherd* (1725), is then significant in terms of the development of the

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<sup>43</sup> Robert Crawford *Devolving English Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992) p.46

<sup>44</sup> Carol McGuirk 'Augustan Influences on Allan Ramsay' in *Studies in Scottish Literature 16* (South Carolina: University of South Carolina press, 1981) pp97-109



Scottish eighteenth-century literary tradition, as well as in terms of the creation of a British literary tradition in the period.

Scotland has a long tradition of pastoral literature, though much of this material can be seen as highly conventional and reliant on European models. The corpora of major sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Scottish poets such as William Drummond of Hawthornden (1569-1638) and of Sir Robert Ayton (1569-1638) reveal a wealth of pastoral material (not to mention the pastoral output of Makar Robert Henryson (c.1420-c.1490)) demonstrating a long and vital pastoral tradition in Scotland. The pastoral works of Drummond and Ayton however, express a highly conventional engagement with the pastoral mode. Moreover, many of these texts are based directly upon Italian pastorals such as Guarini's *Pastor Fido* and the pastoral romances of Tasso, a tradition which is fully explored by R.D.S. Jack in *The Italian Influence on Scottish Literature*. Discussing Ramsay's 1729 Preface to *The Gentle Shepherd*, in which Ramsay announces, 'We've with the Roman buskin Laid aside/ Now brav'ry fierce Politicks-Plots and pride/ And straight intend to shew in softer strains/ How love and virtue looks on Scotia's Plains,' Jack has this to say:

Speirs [Speirs, John *The Scottish Literary Tradition*] becomes almost apologetic when he deals with Ramsay's pastorals, seeing them as catering for 'an English taste' and wondering whether such a taste existed in Scotland. Any student of seventeenth-century Scottish poetry would answer that the cult of the pastoral had indeed dominated the work of Ayton, and had been a strong force with Drummond, Alexander and others. The major sources, moreover, were Italian, especially Tasso and Guarini. In the eighteenth century, English versions of the *Pastor Fido* and *Aminta* composed by Scotsmen were not uncommon, though infrequently of good quality. Ramsay is not urging Scottish poets to express their nationality by retreating from the international poetic scene, but by adding Scottish invention to accepted European modes.<sup>45</sup>

Ramsay then, in adopting the pastoral mode as means of expression, was engaging with a long tradition of pastoral in Scotland, one which indicates, not only an often overlooked continuity between the literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Scotland, but which situates Scotland within a broader, European literary context. However, rather than catering for an English taste, Ramsay, I would contend, suggests new directions for

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<sup>45</sup>R.D.S Jack *The Italian Influence On Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1972) p.156

the development of the pastoral mode in Scotland, and in Britain. Ramsay, in his engagement with a wide literary context indicates, as will be more fully discussed later, his awareness of and direct engagement with the Ancient versus Modern debate surrounding pastoral in the period. Ramsay is alive to the potential for experimentation and re-creation of conventional modes available to the Scottish writer who has a broad linguistic register at his fingertips and ready for use. Thus, Ramsay's use of the pastoral mode becomes, rather than an indication of late development in Scottish literature in relation to the English tradition, an act, not simply of Scottish patriotism, but a demonstration of an ambitious creative expediency, that is, a willingness to engage with and to exploit all the linguistic and generic possibilities open to him. Furthermore, as I plan to argue, Ramsay's version of pastoral subtly incorporates elements of georgic mode in a manner which can be understood as typifying the trajectory of these two modes during the course of the long eighteenth century.

Ramsay's *Poems of Allan Ramsay* (1721) contains not only 'Roger and Patie' which would provide the basis for expansion into *The Gentle Shepherd*, but also an interesting pastoral elegy: 'Richy and Sandy, A Pastoral On the Death of Joseph Addison, Esq.' In this work, Ramsay transplants Alexander Pope and Sir Richard Steele into a pastoral setting in which they lament the death of that other English Augustan heavyweight, Joseph Addison. This is no conventional pastoral elegy however, as both Pope and Steele engage in a pastoral dialogue conspicuous in the density of the Scots language voiced by both characters. In this somewhat incongruous representation, Ramsay can perhaps be seen to be flexing his creative muscles in terms of what it is possible to do with Scots as a vehicle for pastoral expression. Ramsay here lays some of the stylistic groundwork for the creation of the highly successful *Gentle Shepherd*. While there is undoubtedly a certain ironic edge in the portrayal of Pope, the long acknowledged master of wit and of the heroic couplet, lamenting his loss in less than polished couplets in dense Scots vernacular, there is also an undeniable charm and gentle humour in the rusticity of the characters as they bemoan the death of Addison. As the poem progresses in a combination of pastoral dialogue and pastoral elegy, the subject matter is elevated beyond the conventional to hint at notions of scientific progress and improvement by means of learning and cultural dissemination. This shift in subject is significant in terms of the creation of *The Gentle Shepherd* as well as in terms of Ramsay's adaptation of the pastoral mode to include elements of the georgic with all its emphasis on improvement and progress through learning and through labour.

The conventional subject of pastoral, love, is quickly dismissed as trivial, as are superstitious subjects:

RICHY

WOW Man, that's unco', - Is that ye'r Jo  
Has ta'en the Strunt? -Or has some Bogle-bo  
Glowrin frae 'mang auld waws gi'en ye a Fleg?  
Or has some dawted Wedder broke his Leg?

SANDY

NAITHING like that, sic Troubles eith were born,  
What's Bogles, - Wedders, - or what's *Mausy's* Scorn?  
Our loss is meikle mair, and past Remeed,  
*Edie*, that play'd, and sang sae sweet, is dead. (ll.7-14)<sup>46</sup>

This then, is no rustic tale of love and superstition; despite the vernacular utterances of the protagonists and the rustic setting, this is a pastoral which seeks to elevate the mode by representing real characters whose identity is made clear despite the colloquialisation of their names and which appears to engage directly with the discourses of the day. In Ramsay's dismissal of rustic superstition (the 'Bogle Bo/ Glowering frae 'mang auld waws' (l.8)) he expresses the rationality of an Augustan, enlightened mind. Knowledge, of the rational and scientific kind, is further promoted as the two pastoral protagonists catalogue the genius and talents of the dead Addison. He is remembered as one who 'kend be Moon Light how Tides ebb and fill' (l.54), suggesting a sound and scientific knowledge of nature. Not only did Addison possess such practical knowledge, but he is mourned for the loss of his artistic knowledge, his ability to decode the 'kittle Phrase' (l.57) of (the rather irreverently titled) 'Blind *John*' (l.57) which represents the extent of his learning and of his impulse towards cultural dissemination, all of which signal Addison's centrality to what can be seen as the Augustan agenda of cultural dissemination, polite discourse and rational thought. Thus, Ramsay, as the author of this piece, signals his own engagement with the Augustan agenda in the early part of the eighteenth century and, moreover, demonstrates that those whose political and cultural views diverge from the established government of the day need not be excluded from the artistic and creative milieu of the times. After all, both Ramsay and the chief mourner of Addison, Alexander Pope, shared Jacobite sympathies very much at odds with the Whig and Hanoverian loyalties of Sir Richard Steele and of Addison himself.

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<sup>46</sup> Allan Ramsay 'Richy and Sandy, A Pastoral On the Death of Joseph Addison, Esq.' In *The Works of Allan Ramsay Vol. 1* eds. B. Martin and J. Oliver (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1952) pp.106-11)

This spirit of tolerance and inclusion is further demonstrated by Ramsay in another pastoral piece first published in 1721 and appearing in his *Poems of Allan Ramsay Volume II* of 1728 alongside *The Gentle Shepherd*: ‘Robert, Richy and Sandy. A Pastoral On the Death of Matthew Prior, Esq.’<sup>47</sup> Ramsay clearly admired Matthew Prior; the epigraph for his 1721 *Poems of Allan Ramsay* is provided by Prior’s *Anacreon*, and Prior and Ramsay shared Tory and pro-Stuart loyalties, aligning them politically. It comes as no surprise then that Ramsay should produce a pastoral immortalising the memory of one such as Prior and taking the opportunity once again to demonstrate his cultural and literary engagement with contemporary English poets. What is perhaps surprising, however, is the cast of pastoral mourners assembled by Ramsay to voice the lament for Prior. Richard B. Kline, in an article entitled ‘Tory Prior and Whig Steele: A Measure of Respect’<sup>48</sup> poses this question: ‘That the Earl of Oxford and Alexander Pope should be among the mourners seems right, but why should Sir Richard Steele weep?’<sup>49</sup> In answering this question, Kline provides evidence for a relationship of mutual professional respect between Prior and Steele, exclusive of their political antipathy, and goes on to suggest a similarly amicable relationship between Ramsay and Steele:

Ramsay’s connection with Steele is not difficult to make [...].Steele, by virtue of his appointment to the Commission of Forfeitures in Scotland in 1716 was his visitor at least four times. What’s more, as a visiting celebrity, Steele was lionised in Edinburgh. His meeting with Ramsay and Ramsay’s fellow Scottish bards was apparently so cordial that on 15<sup>th</sup> November 1717, Steele wrote to his wife Prue: [...] ‘You cannot Imagine the Civilities and Honours I had done Me there [Edinburgh] and never lay better or drank better or conversed with men of better sense than there.’<sup>50</sup>

How much these honours and civilities were bestowed upon Steele by Ramsay himself is unclear<sup>51</sup>. However it appears that Ramsay extended more courtesy to Sir Richard Steele,

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<sup>47</sup> Allan Ramsay ‘Robert, Richy and Sandy, A Pastoral On the Death of Matthew Prior Esq,’ in *The Works of Allan Ramsay Vol. 2* eds. B. Martin and J. Oliver (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1953) pp.18-22

<sup>48</sup> Richard B. Kline ‘Tory Prior and Whig Steele: A Measure of Respect?’ in *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* Vol.9, No. 3 (Summer, 1969) pp.427-437 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/450022> Accessed 17/09/10

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p.427

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p.436-7

<sup>51</sup> George Aitken, claims that in 1717, ‘He [Richard Steele] doubtless visited Allan Ramsay, then a young man of 31, at his shop, from whence issued from time to time poetical pamphlets which were widely bought

arch-Whig, than he did to Bonnie Prince Charlie, the figurehead of his own professed cause, whose visits he neatly avoided in order to preserve his own political safety and, it must be owned, his own poetic patronage, much of which was provided by Whigs and pro-Unionists like Sir John Clerk of Penicuik<sup>52</sup>. This, far from being a criticism, however, is merely an indication of the times, of the dangers of political faction and the reliance of poets upon patronage. Such pragmatism on the part of Ramsay serves to further underline the complexities of his poetic and political identity and points to the extent to which this identity has been simplified or to some extent misunderstood by the critical tradition. It appears, though the example of Ramsay, that the poets of the period were far from ruled, artistically or personally, by their own cultural allegiances and were fully prepared to exploit all of the creative possibilities available in such diverse and divisive times.

Returning to Ramsay's elegy in this context, Ramsay's choices become logical, especially since Ramsay's usage of the vernacular in the mouths of those such as Steele allow a gentle irony to surface within what is, I would contend, a successful and at times, affecting pastoral elegy. 'Robert, Richy and Sandy' is another elegy in which Ramsay's skill in adapting conventional modes such as the elegy can be seen. Here though, Ramsay does something rather different with the form than in his well known comic elegies, 'Elegy on Maggy Johnston' and 'Elegy on Lucky Wood', both of which combine wit with Scots language within an elegiac format to lament the demise of two keepers of Edinburgh ale-houses. 'Robert, Richy and Sandy' does not break with convention in the same sense as in his mock-elegies but it does depart from the conventions of pastoral elegy in other ways which render it an interesting development of the form as well as a demonstration of Ramsay's versatility and engagement with Augustan preoccupations.

Ramsay's elegy on Matthew Prior does not open with the conventional invocation of the Classical muses, rather it begins with a description of the mourners assembled to grieve for Prior and the effect of such a loss on these men. By beginning in such a way, Ramsay elevates the status of these cultural and political heavyweights, suggesting that in the modern age of commerce and high culture, it is to figures such as The Earl of Oxford, Sir Richard Steele and Alexander Pope that one should look for inspiration and cultural

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by the people, and Ramsay would take Steele to some of the clubs, which at that time were very popular in Edinburgh.' *The Life of Richard Steele, 2 Vols.* (London: Wm Isbister, 1889) p.153

<sup>52</sup> See, Iain G. Brown, 'Modern Rome and Ancient Caledonia: the Union and the Politics of Scottish Culture' in *The History of Scottish Literature Volume 2* ed. Andrew Hook (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1989) pp.33-48

arbitration, a notion that seems to support Ramsay's inclusion of Steele as mourner: together, these three come to represent a cross section of the political and creative culture of the times. They do not incorporate into this representation, however, the creative and cultural contribution of Scotland to such a milieu; this is provided by Ramsay himself in his use of vernacular Scots in the mouths of these men, a use which (although gently ironising in that it confers cultural and linguistic authority on Scots vernacular as a polite and polished language of elegy and social commentary and thus challenges the supremacy of standard English as the only viable literary medium fit for such a purpose) does not seem incongruous in the context of the pastoral setting.

The three pastoral mourners speak of their grief, and in another twist on pastoral elegy, a pathetic picture is drawn of Prior's dog, 'its lane sat yowling on a brae' (l.24), a more affecting image than the conventional trope of nature mourning the deceased that is traditionally included in pastoral elegy; this also reinforces the fiction of these three famous cultural figures as being the simple shepherds of Ramsay's own particular version of Scottish Arcadia. In the next part of the dialogue, Alexander Pope tells of his prophetic dream in which his 'Tupe that bears the Bell' (l.30) fell and broke its leg. This, in its adherence to the shepherd's frame of reference, combines an authentic pastoral voice with homage to Prior as the one who 'bears the bell' and finds paths through adversity ('And paths the Snaw out' (l.31)), an idea which is expanded in Ramsay's later reference to the Peace of Utrecht (also known as 'Matt's Peace') in which Prior played a pivotal role. This topicality is common in Ramsay's versions of pastoral and can be seen as typically Augustan in its characteristic use of poetry as a political vehicle. Such topicality, with its suggestion of realism, is complemented by the use of real identities (and, in the case of *The Gentle Shepherd*, real locations) in pastoral pieces, another departure from classical convention which again aligns Ramsay with the Moderns in the Ancient versus Moderns debate. Such overt topicality serves to further align the poetic identity of Ramsay with that of Pope and indeed with many typically Augustan poets such as Dryden and, of course, Thomson. The Peace of Utrecht, moreover, provided the impetus and inspiration for other significant (in literary historical terms as well as in the context of the present argument) pro-Stuart and Tory-informed poems, including Pope's *Windsor Forest* (1713) and Gay's *Rural Sports* (1713), both of which celebrate the Tory negotiated peace which followed the War of the Spanish Succession, and which was seen as a triumph for Tories and for the last Stuart monarch, Queen Anne. Thus, Ramsay, despite his ongoing literary and cultural dialogue with figures such as Sir Richard Steele and Joseph Addison, is nevertheless alive

to the potential for promoting his own personal political allegiances through the pastoral medium. In ‘Robert, Richy and Sandy’, a shade of irony is introduced in order to further underline Ramsay’s own Tory, pro-Stuart sympathies: it is Richy himself, the Whig who stands in opposition to Tory values and to the Stuart Succession, who alludes directly to ‘Lady ANNE, a woman meek and kind’ (l.83) who dispatched Prior ‘To make the Peace’(l.86). The ideological complexities negotiated by the Augustan writer are thus demonstrated in microcosm in this lesser pastoral piece of Ramsay’s. Ramsay here manages to combine tolerance of political and cultural difference, whilst subtly remaining true to his own beliefs, and indeed to his own national and cultural identity. This carefully balanced expression is facilitated by a nuanced adaptation of the pastoral mode; by the transplantation of these figures onto an Arcadian stage, Ramsay effectively levels insurmountable cultural differences, but in his topicality he manages to incorporate political comment into a pastoral locus inhabited by real people whose identity is made evident. In doing so, Ramsay establishes his specific, and specifically Scottish, pastoral agenda while very much engaging with the Augustan preoccupations and debates of the day. Ramsay can then be seen as doing something new with classical modes such as pastoral, an approach whose success is borne out by the huge popularity, in all parts of Britain, of *The Gentle Shepherd*.<sup>53</sup>

### ***The Gentle Shepherd.***

*The Gentle Shepherd* (1725) enjoyed vast popularity with its contemporary audiences, a popularity that was to endure well into the nineteenth century. Despite the regionality of the setting and the use of vernacular language, *The Gentle Shepherd* appealed to both Scottish and English audiences, a fact which hints at the significance of the text in terms of the eighteenth-century literary tradition in that such Britain-wide popularity rejects any notion of the play being valued as a primarily Scottish text, or conversely, as catering for a purely English taste. Clearly, *The Gentle Shepherd* represented a new development of the possibilities of the pastoral mode, a development which proved hugely popular. Indeed, Ramsay’s adaptation of pastoral convention in this drama offers an insight into the

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<sup>53</sup> *The Gentle Shepherd* ran to many editions in Scotland, England and Ireland in the period. Perhaps more indicative of its wide popularity is the frequency of performances of *The Gentle Shepherd*. Burns Martin, in *Allan Ramsay: A Study of His Life and Works* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931) pp.181-184 lists some 29 Scottish performances of the play before 1800, and 98 performances in England in the same period. Martin also adds the caveat that this list should not be considered complete, thus suggesting that more performances may have taken place.

development of the pastoral mode in eighteenth-century Britain, a mode which, as the century progressed and improvement and commerce became guiding principles, became increasingly conflated with the georgic mode,

In writing *The Gentle Shepherd*, Ramsay undoubtedly created one of the early eighteenth century's finest pastoral dramas, and in his marriage of an authentic, yet fresh pastoral voice with the restoration plot of the Jacobite writer, Ramsay engages with the vogue for and the debates surrounding the English pastoral mode in the period whilst appearing to remain true to his political and national allegiances. The authenticity and success of this work certainly stem, in part, from Ramsay's linguistic choices; Ramsay's shepherds (however gentle or otherwise) speak in a Scots tongue that approximates the speech of Pentland shepherds. This could, and indeed often has, been interpreted as a political and patriotic choice by Ramsay, rendering *The Gentle Shepherd* an attempt to present Scotland as a pastoral location, one which abounds with pretty maids and swains who love, in the main, with humour, honour and with virtue as they enact their roles against a backdrop of pastoral simplicity, a landscape where the returning authority, a Stuart loyalist, displaced by the Interregnum, restores social harmony and order with minimal upheaval and no bloodshed.<sup>54</sup>

Before beginning an analysis of *The Gentle Shepherd*, it perhaps necessary to examine some of the literary precedents acknowledged by Ramsay in this pastoral work, as well as some of contemporary texts which provide a context for *The Gentle Shepherd*, in order to establish the extent to which Ramsay broke with tradition and beat a new path through the time-hallowed conventions of the pastoral mode and was thus able to reflect his own historical moment and cultural identity. It is significant that Ramsay's epigraph for the first edition<sup>55</sup> of what is his best known work is provided by Spenser:

The Gentle Shepherd sat besides a spring,  
All in the shadow of a bushy Brier,  
That Colin hight, which well cou'd pipe and sing,  
For he of Tityrus his songs did lere.

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<sup>54</sup> This restored fertility, peace and social harmony is exemplified by Sir William's promise in the final act, 'I never from these fields again will stray./ Masons and wrights shall soon my house repair,/ And busy gardeners shall new planting rear;/ My father's hearty table soon you'll see/ Restor'd, and my best friends rejoice with me.' (5.3.165-171) Allan Ramsay, *The Gentle Shepherd* in *The Works of Allan Ramsay Vol 2* eds. Burns Martin and John Oliver (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1953).

<sup>55</sup> Allan Ramsay *The Gentle Shepherd* (Edinburgh: Ruddiman, 1725)



This quotation is taken from the first stanza of *December*, the final eclogue of Spenser's *The Shepherd's Calender* (1579) and is thus acknowledged by Ramsay as the source of the title of his own pastoral. This choice of epigraph is significant in that it points to a purely pastoral mode. Spenser's *Shepherd's Calender* is a prime Elizabethan example of the mode, and *December*, in its return to the simple stanza form of *Januarye* is referred to by modern editors of Spenser as the 'concluding, purely Arcadian eclogue'<sup>56</sup> in which Colin 'hangs it [his pipe] up with respect for the job it has done'<sup>57</sup>. Paradoxically, then, Ramsay's reference to Spenserian pastoral at once establishes an expectation of a conventional pastoral voice, defined by simplicity and tradition, whilst simultaneously suggesting that the pastoral mode in its purest form is reaching the end of its useful life as a contemporary means of expression. This is a notion which, I would contend, is borne out by the pastoral drama which follows and which breaks, or rather, reshapes pastoral tradition, in several ways.

Ramsay's contemporary and one who has been suggested by critics such as Carol McQuirk and Alexander Kinghorn as having significantly influenced Ramsay, John Gay, also acknowledges his debt to 'maister' Spenser in the 'Proeme' to his *Shepherd's Week* (1714). Kinghorn comments on the influence of Gay upon Ramsay:

His reference to European pastoralists [in his dedication] as the standard at which he aimed is misleading, for the most obvious comparison is with Gay's *Shepherd's Week*, printed in 1714, which, more than any other work in the genre, links Spenser with Ramsay.<sup>58</sup>

While obvious comparisons are suggested by Ramsay and Gay's use of the pastoral, and by the reference both make to Spenser and by Gay's own ballad opera or 'Newgate pastoral' *The Beggar's Opera* (1728), there are also significant differences. Gay's 'Proeme' to the *Shepherd's Week* as well as the text itself make clear that Gay's intention, particularly with regard to the language spoken by his shepherds, is a satirical pastoral representation which was intended to contribute to the contemporary debate over pastoral, and specifically over the use of local or vernacular dialects as a pastoral vehicle which was

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<sup>56</sup> W.A. Oram et al, eds., *The Yale Edition of the Shorter Poems of Edmund Spenser* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989) p.201

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p.202

<sup>58</sup> Alexander Kinghorn *The Works of Allan Ramsay Vol.IV* eds. A Kinghorn and A. Law (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1970) p.90

being enacted in the pages of the *Guardian* in 1713.<sup>59</sup> In the course of this debate Pope famously submitted an anonymous pastoral rendered, and rendered ridiculous, in an approximation of Somerset dialect in order to defend his pastorals which adhered to classical models and to satirise Ambrose Philips's use of local dialect in pastoral settings. This was an extension of the Ancient versus Moderns debate surrounding pastoral in the late seventeenth century, a debate in which *The Gentle Shepherd* plays a significant role.

Gay's 'Proeme', laced with a sophisticated, Augustan irony, acknowledges his debt to 'maister'<sup>60</sup> Spenser as providing both the structure of his eclogues, and indeed the names of his pastoral protagonists, while chastising Spenser for having allowed his shepherds to raise 'his rustic reed to rhimes more rumbling than rural'<sup>61</sup> and for concerning his simple shepherds with 'Diverse grave points'<sup>62</sup>. Having set such a satiric tone, Gay then raises the issue of the pastoral language he employs:

touching the language of shepherd's; which is soothly to say, such as neither spoken by the country maiden or the courtly dame; nay, not only such as in present times is not uttered, but was never uttered in times past; and, if I judge aright, will never be uttered in times future. It having too much of the country to be for the court; too much of the court to be fit for the country; too much of the language of old times to be fit for the present; too much of the present to be fit for the old, and too much of both to be fit for any time to come.<sup>63</sup>

Gay, having previously made a case for vernacular as an appropriate vehicle for pastoral with reference to the classical father of pastoral, Theocritus and his use of Doric in pastoral dialogue, and of the use of British settings for British pastoral, in these lines completely deconstructs the Modern argument and eloquently dismisses the possibility of a linguistic register which would enable serious and sustained use of vernacular or regional dialects in

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<sup>59</sup> *The Guardian* ed. John Calhoun Stephens (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1982). See specifically, Number 22 pp.105-7, Number 23 pp.107-9, Number 28 pp.122-4, Number 30 pp.128-30, Number 40 pp.160-165.

<sup>60</sup> John Gay 'Proeme' to *Shepherd's Week* in *Poems on Several Occasions* (Dublin: Risk, Ewing and Smith, 1729) pp.35-38

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.,

British pastorals. His own *Shepherd's Week* in all its burlesque satire, goes on to demonstrate this point. Gay's shepherds speak in a strange pastiche of local terms, archaisms and courtly rhetoric, rendering both his pastoral protagonists, and the notion of a regional or vernacular dialect as a fit vehicle for the serious representation of rustic characters in pastoral, ludicrous.

Ramsay, then, can be seen as actively engaging with this contemporary Augustan debate surrounding the possibilities of creating a native pastoral, set in a recognisably British locale and voiced in a vernacular language appropriate to real shepherds. What's more, in Ramsay's use of Scots vernacular, he achieved something which it was not possible for an English writer to do. As the satirical pastorals of Pope and Gay demonstrate, as well as the less than successful attempts of those such as Ambrose Philips, it was extremely difficult for an English Augustan writer to render serious pastorals in anything other than standard English. Consequently, the pastoral mode in England in the early eighteenth century remained bound by the constraints of convention rendering the mode limited in its ability to portray rustic characters with any degree of realism without merely satirising the rural protagonists. Ramsay then, in writing *The Gentle Shepherd*, created a new pastoral idiom, one which incorporates elements of authenticity (this authenticity is evident in, not only the language employed by the characters, but in their sentiments and concerns, see, for example, Jenny's discussion of poverty, (1.2.128-31)) in the creation of appealing characters who converse in a wide linguistic register which is neither at odds with the pastoral setting, nor so densely vernacular as to render the characters unintelligible or farcical. *The Gentle Shepherd* can thus be seen to redefine the boundaries of the pastoral mode in the early eighteenth century, a feat achieved by Ramsay's ability to manipulate a wide linguistic register and by his engagement with the Augustan creative milieu south of the Border.

Ramsay's adaptation of conventional modes did not end with his use of the vernacular, indeed within the apparently pure pastoral vision of *The Gentle Shepherd*, it is possible to detect elements of the georgic mode. The georgic mode carries with it notions of improvement, progress and development and was a mode employed by many British poets in the early years of the Union as a means, in the words of David Fairer, 'to engage productively with the contemporary British landscape.'<sup>64</sup> Fairer goes on to observe that

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<sup>64</sup> David Fairer *English Poetry of the Eighteenth Century 1700-1789* (London: Longman, 2003) p.79

‘After the Act of Union (1707) people seemed to become interested in poetry about the organising and development of the young nation’s resources, and georgic’s linking of time-hallowed tradition to new skills and opportunities provided a subtle way of confronting wider problems of continuity and innovation.’<sup>65</sup>

The georgic certainly seems a fitting mode for this period combining, as it does, homage to Virgil in the original age of Augustus with notions of progress and improvement which, following the 1707 Act of Union seemed to be imperative to the success and cohesiveness of the newly formed British state. By appropriating and adapting the Virgilian georgic, British writers could combine political and civic comment and instruction with a neoclassical agenda that underlined perceived parallels with the reign of the Emperor Augustus in ancient Rome. This was a mode whose scope, or, ‘capaciousness’,<sup>66</sup> to borrow David Fairer’s term, allowed the writer to move beyond the original Virgilian georgic which focused on agricultural improvement and management and to engage with the new British state’s capacity for trade and for imperial expansion, an engagement which was near impossible within the limited confines of the purely pastoral mode with its emphases on love and leisure as opposed to the georgic ideals of labour and improvement. The georgic mode also facilitated an opportunity to engage in very specific terms with the British landscape and could thus be made an expression of patriotism, or perhaps even a form of national propaganda. It is a mode which, in the style of its address and the nature of its preoccupations tends to represent the view of the landowning classes; in this it seems an inappropriate vehicle for the concerns of one such as Ramsay whose adoption of the vernacular in much of his writing is at apparently at odds with the conventions of georgic. It is, however, my intention to contend that the georgic mode, by virtue of its broad scope and of its characteristic status as a mixed genre, was appropriated and adapted by Ramsay who sought to express a different agenda and who viewed Scotland itself as a land of as yet unrealised potential, one which could be greatly enriched by the georgic virtues of industry and progress.

The vogue for georgic poetry had also been stimulated by the publication of Dryden’s translation of Virgil’s *Georgics* in 1697, to which was prefaced ‘An Essay on the Georgics’, from the pen of Joseph Addison. Addison, in his ‘Essay on the Georgics’ delineated the differences between the georgic and the pastoral mode and, given the sphere

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., pp.78-9

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p.80

of Addison's influence in the cultural milieu of the period, it seems appropriate to consider what Addison deemed the distinguishing characteristics of the georgic mode in the context of Ramsay's *The Gentle Shepherd* (1725) as well as in relation to other works such as Sir John Clerk of Penicuik's 'The Country Seat' (1727), works which employ elements of the georgic in less obvious or less well documented ways and which may indicate the presence of a georgic tradition, or elements of such a tradition in Scotland.

For Addison, the essence of the georgic mode resided, not only in the subject matter but in the language and style in which georgic verse was expressed:

There has been abundance of Criticism spent on Virgil's *Pastorals* and *Aenieds*, but the *Georgics* are a subject which none of the *Criticks* have sufficiently taken into their Consideration; most of 'em passing it over silence, or casting it under the same head with *Pastoral*; a division by no means proper, unless we suppose the Stile of a husbandman ought to be imitated in a Georgic as that of a Shepherd is in *Pastoral*. But tho' the Scene of both these Poems lies in the same place; the Speakers in them are of a quite different Character, since the Precepts of Husbandry are not to be deliver'd with the simplicity of a Plow-Man, but with the Address of a Poet. No Rules therefore that relate to *Pastoral*, can any way affect the *Georgics*, which fall under that Class of Poetry which consists in giving plain and direct Instructions to the Reader;<sup>67</sup>

Thus, for Addison, one of the principal characteristics of the georgic mode lies within the nature of the poetic voice. This voice should not seek to emulate the voice of those whom it seeks to instruct but should rather seek, through ornate language, to decorate and elevate an otherwise rather 'mean' subject, so rendering such instruction more palatable and more pleasurable. The georgic style, according to Addison, should thus, 'abound with metaphors, *Grecisms*, and Circumlocutions, to give his Verse the greater Pomp, and preserve it from sinking into a *Plebeian* Stile.'<sup>68</sup> What seems to be implicit in Addison's exhortations to the writer of georgics to ornament the language in order to enhance descriptive poetry and thus more deeply engage the imaginations of his audience is the notion of authority, an authority necessary to those who would impart instruction and an authority that is achieved through convoluted and elevated poetic language and diction. The notion of authority is, I would suggest, particularly relevant to writers of the Augustan period given the nature of the Augustan political sphere and the various dissenting factions

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<sup>67</sup> Joseph Addison 'An Essay on the Georgics' in *The Works of John Dryden*, ed. H.T. Swedenberg, Jr., Vol 5 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987) p.145

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p149

whose ideals of rightful authority were far from unified and seems particularly relevant to a discussion of Ramsay whose political and cultural allegiances were in opposition to Hanoverian and Whig authority.

While Joseph Addison had no difficulty in clearly defining the georgic mode and in delineating the differences between the georgic and pastoral modes with careful reference to the classical originators of these modes, writers who engaged with these modes in the early eighteenth century rarely produced purely conventional forms of either the georgic or the pastoral mode. In the same way that Augustan writers were experimenting with the notion of a native pastoral, there were those who sought to create English georgics. One of the earliest examples of an English georgic is John Philips's 'Cyder' (1708). 'Cyder' is a conventional georgic in that it closely adheres to the Virgilian model, despite the setting and subject which are unmistakably English. In the years which followed the publication of 'Cyder', (and, of course, the Union) however, British writers adapted the classical modes and produced, by blending the georgic and the pastoral, sophisticated and generically mixed poems such as *Windsor Forest* (1713) and *The Seasons* (1730). Indeed, following the union of 1707, as the eighteenth century progressed, it became increasingly difficult to entirely separate these two modes, and it may be possible to argue that the blending of these two modes is a reflection of literary union taking place, in which Scottish writers contributed to an emerging British poetic which demanded new expressive forms and vehicles; forms which carried connotations of union whilst still incorporating difference, or variety, within the united whole.

Thomson's *The Seasons* (1730) is conspicuous in its georgic allusions and in its progressive agenda, as well as being one of the most widely read and influential texts of the period. The language of Thomson's *The Seasons* undoubtedly fulfils Addison's definition of the kind of language appropriate to the georgic mode, an aspect of *The Seasons* that has perhaps contributed to the wane in popularity of the text with modern readers. Indeed it is Thomson's use of convoluted phrasing and Latinate terms which tend to repel modern readers by his apparent deliberate obscurity. Such periphrastic and ornate language however, is very much in keeping with georgic generic conventions and is by no means unique to Thomson. Thomson's 'household feathery people' ('Winter', l.88)<sup>69</sup> and

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<sup>69</sup> James Thomson *The Seasons* (London: A. Millar and J. Millan, 1730)

‘finny race’ (‘Spring’, l.395) are reminiscent of Pope’s ‘scaly breed’ (*Windsor Forest*<sup>70</sup>, l.139) from and indeed other parallels between the two works can be discerned. Both works feature minutely observed descriptive passages which vividly paint the natural world and man’s engagement with it, reflecting Addison’s injunction to the writer of georgic to create ‘more strong and lively *Ideas* of things from his words, than we cou’d have done from the objects themselves’<sup>71</sup>. Such specificity in describing the natural world is thus a feature that characterises the georgic mode and, as one commentator observes, ‘unlike pastoral, georgic is fundamentally concerned with accurate as well as suggestive geography, in its local, national and global settings.’<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, such detailed observation and geographical specificity reflects a growing preoccupation among Augustan writers with the physical world and its poetic representation, a stylistic feature which is at odds with the idealised landscape of the pastoral world. The language and wealth of minute description which characterise both these pieces then clearly indicates the ‘Address of the Poet’<sup>73</sup> and locates both *The Seasons* and *Windsor Forest* within the tradition of British georgics. However, despite these stylistic features, both these texts, as will be argued, incorporate elements of the pastoral mode, creating a complex stylistic texture, indicative of the trajectory of these modes in the period. The essential difference between these texts lies of course within the nature of the authority which each one invokes. *The Seasons*, in its 1730 form, expresses the Whig and pro-Hanoverian principles of its author (although Thomson’s political allegiances were to shift to a ‘dissident’ or ‘patriot’ Whig identity in the future)<sup>74</sup>, while Pope’s earlier *Windsor Forest* depicts a British landscape which will flourish under the influence of what, by 1713, was the doomed Stuart monarchy, as his famous lines make clear: ‘Rich Industry sits smiling on the plains,/ And peace and plenty tell, a STUART reigns.’ (*Windsor Forest* ll.41-2)

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<sup>70</sup> Alexander Pope *Windsor Forest* in *Alexander Pope: The Major Works* ed., Pat Rogers (Oxford: The Oxford University Press, 1993) pp.48-62

<sup>71</sup> Joseph Addison ‘An Essay on the Georgics’ in *The Works of John Dryden*, ed. H.T. Swedenberg, Jr., Vol 5 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987) p.149

<sup>72</sup> Juan Christian Pellicer, ‘The Georgic’, in *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Poetry* ed., Christine Gerrard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) p.413

<sup>73</sup> Joseph Addison ‘An Essay on the Georgics’ in *The Works of John Dryden*, ed. H.T. Swedenberg, Jr., Vol.5 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987) p.149

<sup>74</sup> For a full analysis of Thomson’s shifting political allegiances as exemplified by his ongoing revisions of *The Seasons*, see Philip Connel ‘Newtonian Physico-Theology and the Varieties of Whiggism in James Thomson’s *The Seasons* in *The Huntingdon Library Quarterly* 72.1 (2003) pp.3-21.

This Stuart loyalty, or Jacobite Britishness, expressed in Pope's *Windsor Forest* finds its reflection in Scotland in the work of Ramsay and acts as a poetic interface that unites texts which appear very different in conception and expression. *The Gentle Shepherd* presents a Scottish expression of pastoralism which celebrates the Restoration of 1660 but which resonates with hopes of another Stuart restoration, an ideal which is suggested by the way which the figure of Sir William Worthy is constructed. Murray Pittock observes: 'The language used about Sir William is frequently applicable to a current Stuart exile of rather higher social station.'<sup>75</sup> However, within what ostensibly appears to be a work of pure pastoral drama in terms of the pastoral setting, its cast of shepherds and other rustic characters and in the apparently unelevated linguistic tone and register, it is possible to detect a certain overlapping, or conflation of the pastoral and the georgic modes. Indeed, from the very outset, Ramsay appears to mingle the pastoral with the georgic; the Scottish with the British and a kind of 'native' earthiness with fully realised Augustan poetic artifice, with a sophistication that is somewhat at odds with the conventional and rather predictable restoration plot. The first digression from the pastoral idyll appears before the drama even begins. The scene for the play is described as: 'A shepherd's village and fields some few miles from Edinburgh' (*The Gentle Shepherd*).<sup>76</sup> Immediately then, Ramsay can be seen to juxtapose the general and the purely pastoral: 'a shepherd's village and fields', with the specific and the urban: 'some few miles from Edinburgh' hinting that perhaps something other than a purely pastoral drama is about to be presented. Act I opens with a further elaboration upon the scene of the drama, becoming yet more specific in terms of location as the prologue refers to, 'the south-side of a craigy bield' (I.1.1), a description which is not only detailed but one in which the near oxymoronic Scots phrase 'craigy bield' is suggestive of an unrefined, or as yet untapped, potential within the Scottish landscape which, though rough, nevertheless offers shelter and other valuable resources. From the very outset then, Ramsay expresses a specificity in geographical description (one which has led many critics and biographers to seek out the features of the setting of *The Gentle Shepherd* and to suggest Newhall as the actual locale

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<sup>75</sup> Murray Pittock *Poetry and Jacobite Politics in Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) p.159

<sup>76</sup> Allan Ramsay *The Gentle Shepherd in The Works of Allan Ramsay Vol 2* eds., B. Martin and J. Oliver (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1953)



for the drama)<sup>77</sup> as well as detailed natural description which carries a degree of realism which seems more in keeping with the stylistic tenets of the georgic rather than the idealised and conventionally constructed world of the pastoral.

As the first act unfolds with the introduction of the ‘Twa youthful Shepherds’ (1.1.3), Roger and Patie, Ramsay begins to demonstrate his skill in employing Scots as an apparently authentic pastoral language. This use of Scots as a pastoral language is the feature of the play upon which much of the popularity of and critical discussions surrounding the drama have hinged. Traditional constructions of Ramsay have tended to attribute this linguistic choice to Ramsay’s ardent anti-Union patriotic beliefs. However, while it would be foolish to ignore or to deny the fact that that these cultural tendencies inform and shape Ramsay’s corpus, it must also be acknowledged that such narrow constructions are reductive and that furthermore there are generic precedents and literary theories which plead the case for the use of local dialects as a suitable vehicle for pastoral dialogue. To return once again to Joseph Addison and his definitions of georgic and of pastoral, the following statement (and it is reasonable to assume that Ramsay himself read this) seems to have particular resonance in the context of *The Gentle Shepherd*: ‘The truth of it is, the Sweetness and Rusticity of a Pastoral cannot be so well exprest in any other Tongue as in the Greek, when rightly mixt and qualified with the Doric Dialect’<sup>78</sup>. A similar point has been raised (much) more recently by Thomas Crawford in his discussion of *The Gentle Shepherd* and its relationship to the ‘great debate about pastoral in England’<sup>79</sup> in the late seventeenth century. Referring to the theories of pastoral articulated by Rapin in his *Dissertatio de Carmine Pastorali* (1659) which insisted upon an adherence to the examples of the original pastoral texts, the *Idylls* of Theocritus, as the true model for pastoral writing, Crawford draws parallels between the Doric dialect of Theocritus and the Scots vernacular of Ramsay, thus suggesting that Ramsay’s linguistic choices could be influenced, not only by a political, nationalistic agenda but also by notions of linguistic decorum. Crawford observes:

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<sup>77</sup> For a further discussion of Newhall as a possible setting for the play, see *The Works of Allan Ramsay Volume IV* eds. Alexander Kinghorn and Alexander Law, p.100.

<sup>78</sup> Joseph Addison ‘An Essay on the Georgics’ in *The Works of John Dryden*, ed. H.T.Swedenberg, Jr., Vol 5 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987) p.145

<sup>79</sup> Thomas Crawford *Society and the Lyric: A Study of the Song Culture of Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1979) p.71

Because of the way the English language and class system had developed, it was difficult, if not impossible for these ideals to be realised south of the Tweed. The Scots vernacular revival of the eighteenth-century, in contrast, enabled a poet to modulate at will from a fully colloquial dialect to what looks like standard poetic language on the printed page.<sup>80</sup>

It is the modulation between linguistic registers that is the significant point here. Ramsay's shepherds and shepherdesses, particularly Patie, appear able, like Ramsay himself, to move with ease from a Scots vernacular to 'standard' Augustan English. Perhaps this is a deliberate attempt on the part of Ramsay to signal Patie's inherent gentleness. Certainly, Patie's speech seems to become more standardised when he learns of his noble blood, although as this coincides with the return of rightful authority in the person of Sir William Worthy, perhaps instead it signals the knight's benign, fertile and ultimately improving influence. This said, even in the very early scenes of the play, Patie demonstrates a bilingual facility. When describing his 'winsome Flute' (1.1.56), that archetypal pastoral prop, Patie's linguistic versatility is demonstrated:

Of Plum-tree made, with Iv'ry Virles round  
A dainty Whistle with a pleasant Sound:  
I'll be mair canty wi't, and ne'er cry Dool,  
Than you with all your Cash, ye dowie Fool. (1.1.56)

The first couplet is expressed in near Standard English and describes a wholly conventional pastoral image. The following couplet however, incorporates Scots vernacular imbuing both the character and the sentiment contained within his discourse with a degree of realism. This ability to modulate across linguistic registers within the space of only a few lines is perhaps key to the success of Ramsay's characterisation which is undoubtedly one the most appealing aspects of the drama. Furthermore, in this easy linguistic modulation, Ramsay can be seen to follow the classical masters of the pastoral mode. Carol McGuirk comments:

Both Theocritus and Anacreon had written of country matters in dialect variants of literary Greek (Doric and Ionic, respectively) which Classical tradition had sanctioned for use in pastoral and related types of poetry; and Ramsay was aware of this from the Guardian papers on pastoral.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p.73

As previously suggested, such use may signal Patie's gentle birth, but it is not only Patie and Peggy, the gentle youths, who possess a bi-lingual skill and mastery of the couplet: Roger and Jenny's wooing scene in Act III deploys the full range of language from Scots vernacular to the 'suggar'd Words' (3.3.46) of Augustan courtship in Roger's rather surprising speech:

I've seen the Morning rise with fairest Light,  
The Day unclouded sink in calmest Night.  
I've seen the Spring rin wimpling thro' the Plain,  
Increase and join the Ocean without Stain,  
The Bridegroom may be blyth, the Bride may smile;  
Rejoice thro' Life, and all Your fears beguile. (3.3.54-59)

This speech, conspicuous in its rather elevated diction voiced by the romantically inclined Roger, contains little Scots vocabulary and seems at odds with the character of Roger himself. What this speech does do, however, is introduce an expression of conventional pastoral love and the notion of union which is so important to the pastoral love plot, but which arguably is suggestive of more political notions of union that were central to Ramsay's cultural agenda. If we view Roger's conventional speech as promoting positive notions of marriage as metaphor for union, a union in which separate elements are joined without detriment or damage - 'I've seen the Spring rin wimpling thro' the Plain/ Increase and join the Ocean without Stain' (3.3.56-7) - in response to the pragmatic Jenny's concerns, voiced in denser Scots: 'What suggar'd Words frae Wooers Lips can fa'!/ But girning marriage comes and ends them a' (3.3. 46-7) we begin to see that the conventional pastoral subject of love is perhaps being exploited as a narrative for more political concerns, adding another layer of significance to Ramsay's linguistic modulation.

Jenny's concerns regarding union are echoed in her poignant and cynically realistic discourse on marriage, which expresses nothing of the idealised love of conventional pastoral, particularly when she touches upon the effects of poverty on loving human relations. Indeed, Jenny's sentiments essentially illustrate the way in which *The Gentle Shepherd* redefines the possibilities of a native, vernacular pastoral. Jenny and Peggy's discussion of marriage represents an authentic portrayal of the reality of rural life: 'But

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<sup>81</sup>Carol McGuirk 'Augustan Influences on Allan Ramsay' in *Studies in Scottish Literature 16* (South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1981) p.99

Poortith, Peggy, is the warst of a' (1.2.128) says Jenny, adding with a poignant realism, 'But little Love, or canty Chear can come,/ Frae duddy Doublets, and a Pantry toom.' (1.2.130-1). This speech, delivered in the vernacular, achieves a realistic portrayal of rural life and language which in no way ridicules those whom it represents (suggesting parallels with the realism of the Edinburgh elegies in that the characters are neither idealised nor rendered ridiculous by Ramsay's representation). Jenny, in all her common sense and realism, as well as her ability to modulate between different linguistic registers, remains a worthy mouthpiece for rural, and even national, concerns as well as an engaging and attractive character.

Indeed, despite or perhaps because of the disconcerting linguistic shifts enacted by the characters of *The Gentle Shepherd*, they are a vital and appealing cast. Roger and Patie's discussions of the art of wooing, which are in turn mirrored by the similar discourses of Jenny and Peggy, are both human and humorous and communicate a sense of realism which is still fresh and accessible to a modern audience. The appealing qualities of such characters allow Ramsay to introduce a certain amount of didacticism into the play; the shepherdesses may be feisty and human, but they are above all virtuous, a facet of the characters which Ramsay is keen to emphasise. Despite much embracing and kissing of warm lips which is by no means stylised or artificial, the lovers of the play (with the exception of the dissembling Bauldy who is slapped down by the comic sub-plot) are faithful, virtuous and homely, wishing for a love that is sanctified by marriage and defined by virtue. Such a didactic element of moral and civic instruction again suggests a certain conflation of the pastoral and the georgic on the part of Ramsay and when combined with Ramsay's geographic specificity in terms of the location of the play hints at a georgic impulse at work within the apparently pastoral world of *The Gentle Shepherd*.

The real georgic element of the play however is embodied by Sir William Worthy whose soliloquy at the opening of Act III vocalises what could be termed, in Addison's phrase, the 'Address of the Poet'. Sir William's voice is the voice of the polite Augustan and what we are presented with, in elegant couplets, begins as a prospect poem in the georgic mode, which at times echoes Pope's *Windsor Forest* in its 'full view of every fertile Plain' (3.1.11) and which combines this georgic voice with Jacobite restoration sentiments. Sir William's detailed description of 'naked Walls of Tap'stry all bereft' (3.1.18) and his 'Stables and Pavilions, broken Walls' (3.1.19) are incongruous in the pastoral world, as is his lament for the lost fertility of his lands where once 'Peach and Nect'rine Branches found a Beild' (3.1.28). Remaining in this georgic vein, Sir William

moves on to announce his intention to repair and to improve the ruined scene. As previously suggested, Sir William's return also serves to derusticise other characters in the play. It is only after the return of Sir William that we learn of Patie's bookish habits and indeed it seems that with the return of the rightful authority, the apparently genuine, local and rustic voice of the Scottish pastoral is gradually displaced and replaced by a georgic impulse.

Such a reading of *The Gentle Shepherd* reveals Ramsay, like Thomson, Pope and other writers of georgic verse such as Dyer or Philips, as exploiting the qualities of georgic as a means by which to engage in creative speculation about the potential of the new British state. In his creation of *The Gentle Shepherd*, Ramsay successfully combines an expression of his Jacobite sympathies with a subtle didacticism and a progressive agenda for improvement through the proper management of natural resources, a theme which can be found in other works of Ramsay's, and is particularly evident in his poem on the North Sea Fishery, 'On the Prospect of Plenty'.

### **'The Prospect of Plenty.'**

'The Prospect of Plenty, A Poem on the North Sea Fishery' (1721) is the companion poem of 'Wealth, Or the Woody. A Poem on the South Sea' which warns against the greed-driven commercial speculation in foreign trade and imperial expansion, and which, for many Scots, did end in disaster. 'The Prospect of Plenty' elaborates on the theme of native resources as a means to improve and enrich the conditions of Scotland and is often interpreted as an expression of Ramsay's patriotism. I would suggest, however, that this poem has a legitimate place in a discussion of georgic poetry in Scotland in this period. The sentiments of the poem are communicated in Ramsay's particular variety of Scots combined with the language and forms of neoclassicism. This rather long poem, comprised of some twenty verse paragraphs, is expressed in elegant couplets, a rhyme scheme with which Ramsay appears to be perfectly comfortable and which does not seem at odds with the Scots-English language of expression.

The poem opens with the typically neoclassical invocation of the muse, in this instance 'Thalia'<sup>82</sup> (l.1), the muse of comedy and pastoral, and, if we are to judge by the frequency of her mention in his work, a favourite of Ramsay's and one whose presence

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<sup>82</sup> Allan Ramsay 'The Prospect of Plenty A Poem on the North Sea Fishery' in *The Works of Allan Ramsay Vol 1* eds., B. Martin and J. Oliver (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1953) pp.46-53

signals an Augustan neoclassicism at work, indeed a specifically Scottish expression of Augustan neoclassicism. Thalia's presence points to the seas of Scotland as a fertile pastoral location, a notion which is developed further, as we shall see, and which indicates a politicisation of conventional Augustan modes and tropes by Ramsay in order to suggest, through the exploitation of neoclassical referents, the value of Scottish resources. Thalia is thus called upon to oversee a poem on a serious subject, the North Sea Fishery. The subject matter is not one commonly favoured by poets and yet is in keeping with the georgic tradition. Here aquaculture rather than agriculture is being discussed but, as it is presented by Ramsay, the fishing industry is a crucial part of Britain's commercial life and thus allows Ramsay to embark upon a didactic discussion of trade, a subject for which the georgic mode was often exploited in the early years of the Union. Furthermore, the sea, as Ramsay is keen to emphasise, is one of Britain's greatest resources and one very much bound up with constructions of British national identity<sup>83</sup>. The first verse paragraph of the poem does not, however, engage with the figure and character of Britannia, but rather speaks of 'the Caledonians, lang supine,' (l.3) who 'Begin, mair wise, to open baith their een' (l.4). Ramsay goes on to describe the rich potential of the fisheries of Scotland, 'that store which Heav'n/ In sic abundance to their [the Caledonians] hands has giv'n' (l.5-6). Such abundant resources have, however, in Ramsay's eyes, been mismanaged and he draws a parallel between the management of the North Sea Fishery and that of a 'heedless heir, born to a lairdship wide,/ That yields mair plenty than he kens to guide.' (ll.7-8) This section of the poem raises questions of authority and of management and suggests that what is to follow in the poem will be an expression of Scottish patriotism which seeks to defend Scotland's resources, industries and identity from 'ilka sneaking fellow' (l.10), or from what Ramsay perhaps perceives as the English cultural hegemony of the new British state. However, as the subtle shifts in geographic and national boundaries which occur in the second verse paragraph indicate, Ramsay is aiming at something more than an expression of Scottish patriotism and anti-Union propaganda.

The second verse paragraph begins with the confident proclamation that: 'Nae nation in the world can parallel/ The plenteous product of this happy isle' (ll.15-16). This phrasing suggests that the nation being discussed is no longer Scotland, but Britain, which Ramsay now locates on the world stage as the poem begins to look outward in a move

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<sup>83</sup> 'When Britain first, at Heaven's command,/ Arose from out the azure main,/ This was the charter of the land,' Thomson, James 'Rule Britannia' *The Complete Poetical Works of James Thomson* ed., J. Logie Robertson (London: Oxford University Press, 1963)

towards a discourse of Imperialism which informs some of the imagery of the poem. The conflation of Scotland with Britain is mirrored by the conflation of the pastoral and the georgic which becomes evident in this section of the poem. Ramsay speaks of 'past'ral heights, and sweet prolific plains' (l.17); such fertile locales are however, in Ramsay's presentation, secondary in importance and potential to the abundance of the sea. Again, the pastoral is displaced by the georgic voice which applies the language of agriculture to the management of the sea: 'shaws' (l.21) is a term relating to potato growing and yet here is applied to the life of the sea bed. Furthermore, the language of this verse paragraph and that which follows clearly signals, to refer back to Addison's definition of the georgic, 'the Address of the Poet.' When describing the abundance of fish to be found in Scotland's waters, Ramsay speaks of a 'finny thrang' (l.20) and of 'scaly nations' (l.35) which seem to descend from Pope's 'scaly breed' (*Windsor Forest*, l.139) and which are precursors of Thomson's 'finny race' (*Winter*, l.87). Ramsay even speaks of the 'tyrant pike' (l.23) in a direct echo of Pope's 'pykes, the tyrants of the watry plains.' (*Windsor Forest* l.146) thus uniting these apparently contrasting poets in a kind of periphrastic brotherhood which adheres to Addison's exhortation to the writer of georgic to make his verse 'abound with metaphors, *Grecisms*, and Circumlocutions'<sup>84</sup>. Furthermore, such poetic parallels point to a collective exploitation of the georgic mode as a means to engage with the construction of British identity and to discuss and promote ideas of potential and progress.

Having catalogued the rich stores of Britain's waters and discussed practices for the management of them, Ramsay goes on, in true georgic fashion, to exalt 'Delytfou labour' (l.41) and industry and to lament the fact that the British state is not reaping the rewards of her potential resources, but rather brags of a 'toom [empty] dominion' (l.46) over the 'plenteous main' (l.46), in a typically Augustan use of antithesis. The poem then fully engages with discourses of global commerce and Imperialism, but it is clear that Ramsay believes that local resources should be exploited before those of 'foreign shores' (l.58), and that this is the means to achieve commercial success. Ramsay here enters into a poetic dialogue with his contemporaries, in which images of the sea become a symbol of British Imperialism and naval domination in the period play a crucial role. Ramsay's vision of the importance of the sea is at odds with other poetic expressions, notably, Thomson's, in that Ramsay rejects a benign vision of Imperialism facilitated by Britain's 'dominion' over the

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<sup>84</sup> Joseph Addison 'A Essay on the Georgics' in *The Works of John Dryden*, ed. H.T.Swedenberg, Jr., Vol5 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987) p.145

plenteous main' (l.46) in favour of a policy of careful management and exploitation of what he deems abundant natural and native resources.

Ramsay then introduces various sections of dialogue into 'The Prospect of Plenty' in order to enrich his argument, and it is this dialogue which renders 'The Prospect of Plenty' so fascinating in terms of Ramsay's poetic identity as a Scot, a Briton and an Augustan. Unsurprisingly, the first voice of dissent and scepticism is that of a Scot, a Scot who invokes the authority of 'Tam the Rhymer'<sup>85</sup> (l.6) in order to question the wisdom of Ramsay's plan for the management of the North Sea Fishery. What is surprising here, however, is the response offered to this criticism; a response which is very much British and very much Augustan in its character. 'Thus do the dubious ever countermines,/ With party wrangle, ilka fair design' (ll.84-5) begins the response in a typically Augustan critique of faction and intolerance, going on to refer to 'ancient nations, join'd like man and wife,' (l.91) and to urge peace and unity between these nations. The second voice of dissent talks of the Dutch and their interest in the fisheries, and the introduction of 'foreign' interests to the poem serves to strengthen the suggested bonds of the Britons against an apparently common foe, and it is here that the figure of Britannia is first imagined by Ramsay, speaking in Scots.

The poem continues in this vein, urging unity within the state which will in turn foster industry, trade and commerce and ultimately progress. In the final verse paragraph, Ramsay returns to neoclassical imagery in a description of the various sea gods and nymphs, and the strain that is sung in the celebratory final verse, 'Britons, be blyth; fair Queen of isles be fain;/ A richer people never saw the sun...' (l.240), once again underlines, rather than undermines links between Allan Ramsay and James Thomson and demonstrates both poets' direct engagement with constructions of British identity in the early years of the Union as well as the Augustan and georgic influences at work on these poets.

Despite such engagement with the notion of a unified and progressive British state, however, Ramsay's own cultural agenda is evident within such works as *The Gentle Shepherd* and 'The Prospect of Plenty'. The inclusion of georgic discussions of trade and of the management of natural resources allow Ramsay to present Scotland as a land of

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<sup>85</sup> Thomas Rimour of Ercildoune, was a Border laird who became known in Scottish folk history as the bardic figure, 'Tom the Rhymer', by reason of his prophetic and poetic leanings. For a further discussion of this figure, see *The History of Scottish Literature, Vol. 1 Origins to 1660* ed., R.D.S. Jack (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1988) p.28



plenty and thus an equal to her southern neighbour, as opposed to a rustic bride without a dowry. Furthermore, by the inclusion of a Scots-speaking figure of Britannia and a very Scottish rendering of the linguistic style deemed 'the Address of the Poet' by such an influential cultural figure as Joseph Addison, Ramsay demonstrates the extent of the cultural and creative contribution of Scotland to the new British state. The georgic mode can thus be seen to enable Scottish writers to seize the poetic means of engaging with and contributing to the construction of a new (Imperial) British identity and to challenge what was often perceived as the English cultural hegemony of the new British state. In Ramsay's, as with Pope's vision of progress however, Britain can only realise her full potential under a Stuart monarch and in this respect Ramsay's incorporation of georgic elements differs from that of Thomson, or, to suggest another possible example of Scottish georgic, the vision of Sir John Clerk of Penicuik in 'The Country Seat' (1727), a lengthy country house poem which is georgic in both the mode of its address and its instructive content. Thus, there exists between Ramsay and Thomson, despite the parallels which can be drawn by an examination of such apparently disparate poets, a certain tension, or anxiety of authority. These competing discourses are however very much a feature of Augustan literature and are far from confined to wrangles over national boundaries, as is demonstrated by the emotional and literary Jacobitism of Alexander Pope. This then exposes Ramsay as being very much an Augustan writer and one able to be more comfortably aligned with his contemporary and fellow Scot James Thomson than has been hitherto thought and furthermore, to be viewed within the context of an Augustan movement expressive of a very new, and, in creative terms, abundantly fertile, construction of British literary identity in the early years of the Union.

### Chapter Three:

#### James Thomson.

There are several problems that any discussion of Thomson's *The Seasons* must encounter and confront, and perhaps the most immediate of these problems lies within the choice of text. Ironically, even a cursory survey of the critical material reveals that the most consistent characteristic of the text is its apparently contradictory or inconsistent quality, a quality seen to be the result of the many discourses, models and ideologies woven through the text. This quality has been further complicated by the many revisions to which Thomson subjected his poem, from its first appearance as the modest 'Winter' of 1726, to the final published edition of *The Seasons* in 1746. However, the notion of a final or of a definitive version of this text should be treated with caution. James Thomson died in 1748, somewhat prematurely even by the norms of the day, and as *The Seasons* seems to have been his life's work, or certainly a poetic endeavour to which he frequently returned, there is no reason to believe that, had Thomson lived longer, he would not have published another text, or texts, of *The Seasons*, radically different from previous editions. This is, of course, speculation. However, for the purposes of the present discussion, I have chosen, for several reasons, to work primarily with the first full edition of *The Seasons* which appeared in 1730.

My first reason for such a choice is that the earliest full edition of the text (1730) brings it closer to the other main subject of this dissertation, Ramsay's *The Gentle Shepherd* (1725) and situates *The Seasons* within the period in which Ramsay's major poetical works were published. Secondly, after 1735, Thomson's political allegiances can be seen to shift, a shift which provides the motivation for some of the later revisions of *The Seasons*. The 1730 text, however, as Philip Connell contends, 'was composed and published at a time when its author's public loyalties were considerably more ambivalent than his later 'Patriot' or 'dissident Whig' identity would suggest. The 1730 *Seasons*, [...] advances a sophisticated defence of Hanoverian succession, Anglo-Scottish Union, and Whig ascendancy'.<sup>86</sup> Thus, though arguably after 1735 a certain convergence of Ramsay's and Thomson's political views can be identified, the 1730 text offers an entirely different political and cultural viewpoint than that of Ramsay's *The Gentle Shepherd*. This apparent opposition renders an examination of their shared literary heritage and exploitation of Augustan tropes and genres all the more interesting and indicative of the complexities of

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<sup>86</sup>Philip Connell 'Newtonian Physico-Theology and the Varieties of Whiggism in James Thomson's *The Seasons*' in *The Huntingdon Library Quarterly* 72.1 (2003) p.4

the political and cultural milieu in which the literary Augustans operated. Finally, there is a certain arbitrary or instinctual quality about the decision to use the first full text of *The Seasons* which can only be explained or defended by the fact that the first edition, as the text first offered to the public, seems to carry a certain amount of authorial authority and that, within the confines of the present discussion, I have neither the scope, nor the space to track and critique the text throughout its many revisions.<sup>87</sup>

I have suggested that criticism of *The Seasons* often focuses on the contradictory nature of the text, its constant negotiation between freedom and control; between the attractions of primitivism and civilisation and between the pastoral and the georgic which emphasises the digressive quality of Thomson's poetic style. However, rather than viewing this as an artistic flaw, I would contend that, instead of being an inherently contradictory text, *The Seasons* displays an astonishing variety. This variety is expressive of the neoclassical rhetoric of *concordia discors*, whereby, paradoxically, conflicting and separate elements can be united to produce a harmonious whole in which conflict becomes complement. Such rhetoric is an inherent feature of the eighteenth-century long poem; it is this concept which informs and harmonises Pope's *Windsor Forest*. Similarly, the expression of *concordia discors* can be viewed as a characteristically Augustan trope as such rhetoric enables the positive incorporation of variety and of contradiction; a desirable rhetorical function in a time of competing ideological discourses and social instability. There can be no doubt that such extensive digressions and variations present challenges to the commentator, which is perhaps why many of the studies that discuss *The Seasons* often focus on particular elements of the text. Mary Jane W. Scott,<sup>88</sup> for example, attempts to reconstruct and reinstate Thomson's national identity as a Lowland Scot and thus reads *The Seasons* as a natural expression of the linguistic and thematic concerns of a Scots poet working in the period and within the context of a specifically Scottish literary tradition. Other critical works, such as John Barrell's<sup>89</sup> excellent study of eighteenth-century poetic constructions of a politics of landscape, naturally focus on Thomson's descriptive faculty as a poet of nature and of landscape, a quality suggestive of Thomson's poetic role as a

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<sup>87</sup> I have, however, compiled an appendix, detailing the publishing history of *The Seasons* during James Thomson's lifetime.

<sup>88</sup> Mary Jane Scott *James Thomson, Anglo-Scot* (Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1988)

<sup>89</sup> John Barrell *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place 1730-1840: An Approach to the Poetry of John Clare*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972)

proto-Romantic figure. Another Thomson scholar, Patricia Meyer Spacks, states that: ‘Few of the ideas which finally emerge in *The Seasons* are coherently or consistently thought out; many are mutually incompatible [...] *The Seasons* cannot be considered a coherent intellectual whole’.<sup>90</sup> Despite these flaws, however, Spacks goes on to conclude that ‘*The Seasons* is a significant social document’,<sup>91</sup> an assertion that is undoubtedly true and that renders the re-evaluation of this text a fruitful and fascinating enterprise. Rather than focusing on specific contradictory elements of the text, however, it is my intention to trace generic conventions, those of pastoral and georgic, within the text. The interplay of two modes will illuminate the political and cultural aspects of the text in a specifically literary context, raising questions pertaining to the validity of the term ‘Augustan’ as it is applied to writers of the period, and whether such a label can be fruitfully applied to James Thomson and Allan Ramsay, given their apparent literary opposition.

Given the vast popularity of *The Seasons* to its contemporary readership and the scope of its influence on the development of eighteenth-century poetry, it appears that issues regarding coherence were not a concern for either readers, or writers, of poetry in the Augustan period. Indeed, perhaps the opposite is true; variety was a highly regarded, perhaps even necessary, quality in the eighteenth-century long poem. This notion is explored in an essay by John Barrell and Harriet Guest which examines Alexander Pope’s ‘Epistle to Bathurst’, Pope being another poet at whom the charges of inconsistency and contradiction have often been directed, and of whose *Windsor-Forest* I shall say more later:

The article of faith in much twentieth-century criticism, that the value of a poem is a function of the unity it exhibits, produced a considerable volume of writing about Pope which argues that such contradictions are only apparent. We want to suggest that these efforts may be as misconceived as they have been unsuccessful, insofar as they are predicated upon the assumption that the concern with unity and consistency was as important to Pope and Thomson as it has been to modern criticism. We are arguing that the concern for method and unity in eighteenth-century poetry was accompanied by a tacit permission for long poems of mixed genre to contradict themselves. The permission could remain tacit, partly

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<sup>90</sup> Patricia Meyer Spacks *The Varied God: A Critical Study of Thomson’s The Seasons* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959) p.6

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p.7

because the excellence of such poems was conceived as  
residing in their variety.<sup>92</sup>

The variety of *The Seasons* not only resides within the different discourses that are expressed within the text and by its digressive nature, but is provided in part by the various sources and genres used as models by Thomson. The Miltonic qualities present in Thomson's blank verse are well documented, as is the convoluted and Latinate language and syntax of *The Seasons*. Such Latinate language points towards, not only the Miltonic tradition, but is suggestive of the influence of the Scottish literary tradition. His famed, and sometimes ridiculed, use of periphrasis could also be understood in this context; his Scottish contemporary Ramsay, widely accepted by modern scholarship as part of the tradition of Scoto-Latinity, deploys such linguistic tropes, although his often appear within Scots language poems. However, as I plan to demonstrate, periphrasis, in all its specificity and complexity, is a classical literary device, which, like modes such as georgic poetry, were adopted and adapted by Augustan writers, in both Scotland and England, because they were appropriate vehicles for the expression of particularly eighteenth-century concerns. The role of periphrasis and ornate language, particularly in poems written in the georgic mode is, according to Joseph Addison's 'Essay on the Georgics' (1697), not only desirable, but perhaps essential in order for a poetic text to fulfil its didactic purpose. This didacticism is in itself a primary function and concern of Augustan writing, indicative of eighteenth-century humanism and of an artistic society which sought to distance itself from the intolerance and civil unrest of the seventeenth century. Thus, the periphrastic nature of Thomson's language becomes, when viewed in this context and within the artistic discourses of the day, a highly appropriate form of expression, particularly when we consider Thomson's reliance upon the *Georgics* as a model for *The Seasons*.

Though perhaps the most obvious source for *The Seasons*, the *Georgics* were not his only literary model: The Book of Job; *De Rerum Natura* and the influence of many other works, whether literary, scientific, religious or philosophical can be traced within the lines of *The Seasons*.<sup>93</sup> The georgic mode, however, remains the most evident model for *The Seasons* and yet, within the text there can often be detected a certain slippage into the

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<sup>92</sup> John Barrell and Harriet Guest 'The Uses of Contradiction: Pope's 'Epistle to Bathurst' in ed., John Barrell *Poetry, Language and Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988) pp.79-99

<sup>93</sup> A full discussion of Thomson's sources can be found in A.D. McKillop *The Background of Thomson's Seasons* (Connecticut: Archon Books, 1961)

realm of the pastoral, a shift, or a generic conflation which supplies the text with yet more variety and which, it will be argued, provides some of the most interesting and pleasurable passages of *The Seasons*. Furthermore, this conflation of the pastoral and the georgic modes, which I have previously discussed in relation to Ramsay's *The Gentle Shepherd*, is indicative of the trajectory of these modes in the early eighteenth century as the modes were increasingly blended. This generic mixing can be seen as a means to fulfil the expressive needs of the Augustan writer who wrote within what was, in many ways, a new British state (for good or for ill) and which demanded that a new poetic be forged in order to describe a new cultural, political and economic age. This generic mixing, in its ability to express different and often opposing voices and ideals within the confines of a single text, allowed for different cultural and political agendas and influences to be incorporated with facility into literary productions. This age was itself defined by variety and by difference, conditions that have contributed to the recent critical pressure exerted on the term Augustan as a period label. Despite these complex cultural, national and political debates and opposing discourses however, I believe that within the literary culture of the eighteenth century there existed definable, consensual and shared values and preoccupations through which Augustan writers were able to express their own political, cultural and national allegiances and to use these expressions to contribute to an emerging British poetic in which these competing discourses could coexist within a shared literary context.

The utilisation of the four seasons as a structural device not only echoes the four book structure of Virgil's *Georgics*, but allows for further variations in the fabric of the text; contrast thus becomes an emphatic and inherent feature of *The Seasons*. There were, of course, contemporary literary precedents for such a choice of structure and subject, such as the young Alexander Pope's classically perfect *Pastorals* (1704?). In Pope's *Pastorals*, the four seasons become an organisational principle for the four eclogues which deal with the loves of shepherds in a purely conventional pastoral mode and in which the seasons themselves become little more than metaphors for the differing aspects and conditions of love and desire, enacted in the idyllic world of the Golden Age. Pope himself, in his 'Discourse on Pastoral Poetry' (1704?), announces: 'The complete character of this poem

consists in simplicity, brevity and delicacy;<sup>94</sup> the two first of which render an eclogue natural, and the last delightful.’<sup>95</sup> These pastorals were penned by an adolescent Pope, and can perhaps be viewed as apprentice pieces, albeit technically perfect apprentice pieces, in which simplicity, pleasure and classical perfection were the main aims. By the publication of Pope’s *Windsor Forest* (1713) Pope had eschewed the purely pastoral mode in all its simplicity and brevity for a georgic form, a form which was more appropriate to the expression of the complexities of political and cultural feeling and allegiance. Within the georgic mode of expression of *Windsor Forest*, however, there can be detected elements of the pastoral mode, or certainly, a definable nostalgia for the lost pastoral Golden Age. In this, despite the pro-Stuart message of *Windsor Forest*, we can draw parallels, in terms of the incorporation of the pastoral into the georgic mode, with Thomson’s *The Seasons*. By 1730, the pastoral mode in its pure form seemed unable to satisfy the expressive demands of the Augustan writer. The inadequacies of the pastoral as means of modern expression were being made evident as the publication of John Gay’s *Shepherd’s Week* (1714) demonstrates; in his burlesquing of the pastoral, Gay transforms the simplicity and ‘delight’ of the pastoral into a satirical mode. That said, such an explanation does not account for the huge popularity of, for example, William Shenstone whose pastoral verse was much admired later in the century by both poets and the reading public. I would suggest, however, that Shenstone’s pastoral verse represents a form of the mode which was conspicuous in its self-conscious exploitation of generic conventions which arguably incorporate a satirical edge. Consider, for example, Shenstone’s poem, ‘On Certain Pastorals’ (1764), which does not perhaps satirise the pastoral mode as much as practitioners of a genre so conventional by this period as to appear hackneyed and belaboured: ‘So rude and tuneless are thy lays/ The weary audience vow-/ ‘Tis not the Arcadian swain that sings,/ But ‘tis his herds that low.’<sup>96</sup> Shenstone’s pastoral verse is very much delivered in the voice of the poet rather than the shepherd, and thus perhaps

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<sup>94</sup> Pope here echoes Rene Rapin in his strict adherence to Classical pastoral models, aligning himself with the Ancients in the great pastoral debate. Rapin comments: ‘It (pastoral language) must have a simple native beauty, but not too mean; it must have all sorts of delicacies, and surprising fancies, yet not be flowing, and luxuriant.’ Thomas Creech’s translation of Rapin’s *Dissertatio de Carmine Pastoralis* (1659), reproduced in *The Pastoral Mode: A Casebook* ed., Bryan Loughrey (London: Macmillan, 1984) pp.39-45

<sup>95</sup> Alexander Pope ‘Discourse on Pastoral Poetry’, reproduced in *The Pastoral Mode: A Casebook* Loughrey, Bryan (ed.) (London: Macmillan, 1984) pp.50-53

<sup>96</sup> William Shenstone ‘On Certain Pastorals’ *The Penguin Book Of English Pastoral Verse* eds., J. Barrell and J. Bull (London: Penguin Books, 1982) p.348

signifies a transitional period between conventional pastoral and the lyrical pastoral of Wordsworth, a viewpoint which is perhaps supported by his position (not unlike Thomson's) as a poet of great fame among his contemporaries but who is seldom read or admired by modern readers.

Despite the literary precedents which utilise the seasons of the year as a structural principle, it is clear that Thomson's achievement was unique and novel in many ways. I have said that one of the motivations for choosing the seasons of the year as structure and as subject was the potential which such a theme offers in terms of variety and in terms of enabling stark contrasts, yet there are other reasons why this seems like a logical choice for a Whig, pro-Unionist writer like Thomson. The seasons offer a vision of nature which is naturally progressive. Spring, in all its 'ethereal mildness' (*Spring* l.1), and in all its stirring fertility, looks forward to Autumn. Even at the very onset of Spring: the poet's 'raptur'd eye/ Travels from joy to joy, and hid beneath/ The fair profusion, yellow AUTUMN spies.' (*Spring* ll.109-111). Thus, Thomson, through the device of seasonal change can be seen to offer a positive, progressive and ultimately Whig construction of history. This linear, progressive timescale is apparently very much at odds with the vision of Ramsay's *The Gentle Shepherd* in which the restoration plot offers a vision of a fertile and harmonious future which can only be achieved by a return to the past in the form of the restoration of Stuart authority. Similarly, Pope's *Windsor Forest*, in all its georgic complexity, ends with a return (again, only possible because 'a STUART reigns' (*Windsor Forest* l.42<sup>97</sup>)) to a harmonious pastoral Golden Age, signalled by Pope's use of the first line of his first pastoral, 'First in these fields I sung the Sylvan strains' (*Windsor Forest* l.434) as the final line of a poem which has enacted a monarchical and pro-Stuart, pacific and Tory construction of British history.

These differing constructs of the past, the present and the future seem perfectly natural in the context of the differing cultural, religious and political views held by these writers. However, *The Seasons* is by no means consistently linear and progressive in its perspective. Thomson's spring may look forward to the reward of the abundant autumnal harvest, but it retains the chills of winter, as both a reminder of what has been, and more importantly, what will inevitably return in the future: 'As yet the trembling year is unconfirm'd,/ And WINTER oft at eve resumes the breeze,/ Chills the pale morn, and bids

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<sup>97</sup> Alexander Pope *Windsor Forest* in *Alexander Pope: The Major Works* ed., Pat Rogers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) pp.49-62



his driving sleets/ Deform the day delightless' (*Spring* ll.18-21). There is an unsettling insecurity in Thomson's language in these lines, suggested by the uncertainty of the adjectives used to describe the spring, 'trembling' and 'unconfirm'd', and this insecurity is emphasised by the contrasting strength and authority conferred upon winter. Winter is itself made more solid, and so more threatening, by personification and is firmly authoritative as he 'bids'(l.20) and 'deforms' (l.21). This reminder of the transience of the seasons and the fragility of the present serves to destabilise the confident, progressive perspective of the text and points to the repetitive and circular timescale of nature, creating a tension within the text between progress and return, or perhaps between progress and retreat. Finally, the seasons represent an ordering system, and *The Seasons* can be understood to express the attempt to impose order on nature by the civilising hand of man. Civilisation in terms of both society and nature is a central concept in the Augustan ethos which links both to notions of polite sociability and to the new thrust towards commerce and the exploitation and control of natural resources. In *The Seasons*, several systems of ordering, or discourses of control can be detected. Man is often depicted as separate from the natural world and engaged in a struggle to control a resistant nature, whether through agricultural or aesthetic means, or through the language and discourse of science, which, by enabling a fuller understanding of creation, allows man to further control and harness the forces of nature. These competing discourses of control further heighten the sense of tension so often encountered within the text.

### **'Spring': 'Such were these Prime of Days'**

This tension is most evident in Thomson's 'Spring', as is the tension between the georgic and pastoral modes. Spring is the eternal and harmonious season of the pastoral Golden Age, a literary concept which, even within the georgic framework of the poem, Thomson seeks to emphasise. The opening passages of 'Spring' describe a season of modest, hidden promise. There is nothing harsh or jarring about the language of the opening invocation, nor does the syntax stumble or challenge the reader as elsewhere in *The Seasons*, the only clause which is inserted into this short (by Thomson's standards) sentence is 'While music wakes around' and by connecting the season with music Thomson effectively reinforces the notion of harmony. There is an implied freedom in the 'expansive atmosphere' (l.28) of this season that contrasts with the confined and 'cramp'd' (l.32) nature of winter. In these opening sections of 'Spring', Thomson's language creates

a sense of freedom and movement. The air is ‘unconfin’d’ (l.32) and ‘unbinding’ (l.33), the ‘moving softness strays’ (l.33) in gently sibilant alliteration.

Within this construction of spring as a harmonious and non-threatening pastoral idyll, however, man is not depicted as being in harmony with nature, and man’s relationship with nature is first introduced with an ambiguity indicative of the dialectic of this relationship. While the season flows around him, fluid and unhurried, the husbandman is ‘impatient’ (l.34) as he ‘perceives/ Relenting nature’ (ll.34-5). Such language suggests that nature is reluctantly yielding, not only to the inevitable change in the seasons, but is unwillingly submitting to the control of man in the form of the husbandman. In this moment the pastoral idyll is exploded and man is set apart from nature: this is not the simple shepherd of the pastoral world; rather this is the cultivating husbandman of the georgic mode. The Virgilian echoes are reinforced with the introduction of the plough in the following line, a symbol of the Virgilian georgic, but also an appropriate symbol of the newly formed British state, as agriculture was still the main source of British wealth. The tension between man and nature intensifies in the following lines as man, ‘The master’ (l.42) removes the ‘obstructing clay’ (l.42) of a resistant earth. The image of the plough, representative of Iron Age rather than Golden Age ideals, continues to be an important one throughout the text as a symbol of civilisation, aligning the new British state with Augustan Rome. It becomes, in very Virgilian terms, ‘The sacred plow’ (l.57), a source of redemptive and civilising power, by whose means the ‘fathers of mankind’ (l.57) were able to heal the scars of civil war and thus, ‘greatly independent liv’d’ (l.64). This gives way to an exhortation to ‘Ye generous Britons’ (l.65) to ‘cultivate the plow!’ (l.65), with the promise of the future autumn harvest as a reward. This in turn gives way to a panegyric on benign Imperialism as the poem moves outward from the British ports and Britain’s civilising influence spreads across the oceans to clothe ‘naked nations’ (l.75) (an image which is fully developed later in the century by John Dyer in his georgic *The Fleece*, 1757) and, through the harnessing of natural resources, Britain becomes ‘th’ exhaustless granary of a world’ (l.75). This discourse of benign Imperialism and of trade is firmly rooted in a Whig vision of the future of Britain which is well served by the georgic mode in which it is delivered. However, this optimistic, progressive vision is not always sustained within the text and the following section of ‘Spring’ treats of nature in a radically different way.

John Barrell comments: ‘*The Seasons* seems to me to express a dialectical relationship between nature and civilisation, in which the effort of civilisation to control nature is resisted by nature, which in turn threatens the progress of civilisation and

threatens to control it.’<sup>98</sup> Barrell’s formulation eloquently describes the relationship between man and nature and accounts for certain tensions within the text, tensions which are symptomatic of the nature of this relationship. The opening of ‘Spring’ thus evidences man’s effort to control and harness natural resources, exhibiting a civic awareness which expresses the Whig, mercantile ideology espoused by Thomson at this stage of his poetic career. The landscape of *The Seasons* may be a political as well as a natural landscape and as such is exploited and shaped by Thomson to express political and cultural ideology, but it is also a moral and aesthetically moving landscape which ultimately is a manifestation of the creative power of God. To a poet who trained as a minister and sprang from a Scottish, Presbyterian and rural background, the importance of nature as an expression of the divine cannot be overlooked. Thus, in the landscape of *The Seasons*, nature not only at times resists control, but can be seen to, for want of a better phrase, fight back. Furthermore, at such times, when nature threatens to seduce and overwhelm the poet, and all the discourses which are employed to order and control nature, there is a sense that the poet yearns to surrender to this fecund and overwhelming power.

One such passage, where the poet appears seduced by the abundant charms of nature, follows immediately from the previously discussed panegyric on trade and Imperialism; a juxtaposition of opposing ideals which heightens tensions within the text. This poetic ordering is by no means accidental and is indicative of the complex and ambiguous relation of man to nature which is expressed in *The Seasons* and provides the contrast and contradiction which render the poem far more than merely descriptive nature poetry coloured by British patriotism.

Returning to the scene before him, Thomson moves into the realm of celebration for the rebirth of nature which is everywhere observed in the landscape of ‘Spring’. However, more than just a celebration of nature’s fertile potential, the language employed by Thomson in this passage creates an eroticised vision of nature: ‘the penetrative sun,/ His force deep-darting to the dark retreat’ (ll.77-8) renders nature, in the form of the sun, a virile, masculine and irresistible force, one entirely different from the ‘ethereal mildness’ (l.1) which opens ‘Spring’, and which infects the poetic voice with the same irrepressible virility and energy. The declamatory tone of the preceding lines is replaced with an exclamatory tone which threatens the controlling voice of characteristic restraint as the

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<sup>98</sup> John Barrell *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place 1730-1840: An Approach to the Poetry of John Clare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972)

lines, punctuated with frequent exclamations of ‘ever-new delight’(l.84), reach a climactic point, after which nature bursts forth in all its fecundity and verdure. This shift in the portrayal of nature is mirrored by a shift in the poetic persona. The poet is no longer one who stands apart from nature, an external observer who operates within the discourse of civic-minded patriotism, but rather becomes the lyrical ‘I’ (l.104) for the first time, and thus, a man in the landscape, one no longer separate from nature, but part of it and experiencing, first hand, the ‘secret-working hand’ (l.95) of nature. There can be no doubt too, that this ‘I’ within the landscape is experiencing a deeply sensual engagement with nature, one which assaults all the senses, not only sight which is overwhelmed with colour, but taste and smell too, a sensory experience which confuses the ordering descriptive principles, suggested by the strange phrase: ‘Or taste the smell of dairy’ (l.105). At this, Thomson seems to seek to assert man’s control once again by distancing himself from the overwhelming fertility of the scene and returns to the position of an observer, one who catalogues and describes, not only from a distance, but from the height of ‘some eminence’ (l.106). Even this distancing technique, which elevates man above the landscape and reinstates his sense of mastery, however, does not liberate the poet from nature’s sensual embrace; his ‘raptur’d eye’ (l.109) remains under her thrall. Instead, in order to regain control, Thomson enacts a return to the purely georgic mode, in all its didactic authority, and begins a scientific and practical discussion of the animal life of spring.

I have previously mentioned Thomson’s interest in and use of scientific, particularly Newtonian, discourse as another system of ordering or of control, and Thomson’s application of Newtonian physics to the poetry of natural description is an aesthetically striking and thematically significant feature of *The Seasons*. Through the medium of Newtonian ideas, Thomson’s linguistic register is extended, and while some of this language may strike the modern reader as belaboured or inappropriate, other examples of this scientific discourse are among the finest parts of the text and serve to further adapt the Virgilian georgic mode for use in the formation of a poetic mode of expression appropriate to the newly formed British state. The incorporation of Newtonian ideas into the text informs much of Thomson’s detailed natural description, and accounts, in part, for Thomson’s reliance on periphrasis as a descriptive mode. Indeed, John Arthos’s study of the language of eighteenth-century poetry theorises that periphrases was a logical linguistic mode of natural description for the Augustan poet: ‘Periphrases, for example, of the two word sort much used by classic and neoclassic poets, belonged also to the conventional

language of naturalists’<sup>99</sup> Thus, for Arthos, and to a certain extent, I would agree: ‘It [periphrases] is the principle of definition, and various terms of natural description, controlled by this principle, are used to form phrases of definition. Such phrases make definitions by referring an object to its place in a philosophic or mythological scheme.’<sup>100</sup> What is interesting about this idea, is the notion that the use of such definitions locate the objects within another system of ordering which again is indicative of man’s need to control and to organise nature within a recognisable framework. Such a framework, in keeping with Thomson’s poetic rendering of Newtonian physico-theology, points to an ultimate governing principle of design—in this case, of course, the ultimate authority is God.

The influence and incorporation of Newtonian scientific referents is also discernible in the changing perspective of *The Seasons*. Thomson, in keeping with the Newtonian ideas incorporated into the text, employs at times a microscoping technique which complements his shifting perspective that, as previously noted, alternates between distance from, and immersion in, the natural world. This microscoping technique is clearly illustrated in ‘Spring’, (ll.136-168) where the role of the teeming, invisible world of tiny insects and bacteria – the ‘nameless nations’ (l.147) – in the great chain of being is registered in the context of what is a surprisingly modern, ecological view of the natural world. However, even this scientific discourse and its ability to name, explain, categorise and thus, to a certain extent, own nature does not always create or reveal an ordered scheme through which man is able observe nature. Indeed, the eye of the microscope that exposes ‘The worlds within worlds enclosed’ (l.163) and enables man to enter these hidden realms of bacterial life threatens to overwhelm and unsettle man, to make him abhor ‘the freshest viands and the brightest wines’ (l.166), and ‘in dead of night,/ When silence sleeps o’er all, be stun’d with noise’ (ll.167-8). That Thomson declares these nations ‘nameless’ has further significance. Thomson’s inability to name or to categorise these nations suggests that they are resistant to scientific, or poetic, systems of taxonomy; they refuse to become part of the conversable universe of the Augustans. Furthermore, as Kevis Goodman argues,<sup>101</sup> the power of the microscopic eye to enlarge and to clarify, is equally

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<sup>99</sup> John Arthos *Language of Natural Description in Eighteenth-Century Poetry* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1949) p.32

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p.17

<sup>101</sup> Kevis Goodman *Georgic Modernity and British Romanticism: Poetry and the Mediation of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) pp.38-67

liable to distort reality<sup>102</sup> and to deform man's perception of proportion. Again, nature appears resistant to man's control, and to his scientific knowledge-seeking endeavour which can be understood as a means of gaining power over the natural world, or an assertion of ownership through control. This notion of ownership and control through the pursuit of specific and specialised knowledge is yet another expression of the eighteenth-century preoccupation with improvement and progress through rational enquiry. Furthermore, this preoccupation with specific and detailed knowledge as a means of progress implies notions of ownership which are well served by the British georgic mode which, unlike the pastoral mode, can be seen as expressing the overview of the educated, landowning classes.

Such a perspective, however, does not, in the case of *The Seasons*, preclude a strong and fully articulated nostalgic yearning for the simplicity and harmony of the pastoral world, a world that is depicted in direct opposition to the modern, commercial British state in 'Spring' (ll.259-355). In Thomson's construction of man and nature in the Golden Age, we are again alerted to a certain ambiguity in Thomson's attitude to the modern world despite his frequent panegyrics on Britain and on trade, industry and commerce. This element of uncertainty and ambiguity is entirely absent from the world of Ramsay's *The Gentle Shepherd* and from Pope's *Windsor Forest* in which the pastoral idyll is both tangible and attainable, provided a Stuart sits upon the throne. In *The Gentle Shepherd*, for example, Sir William Worthy's lament for lost fertility of the Stuart reign (a fertility that Worthy intends to regain) incorporates an incongruous image of his Pentland abode as a place where once 'Peach and Nect'rine Branches found a Beild' (*The Gentle Shepherd* (3.1.28))<sup>103</sup> an image that is puzzling in the context of a drama enacted and specifically rooted in the rural Scottish landscape of 'A shepherd's village and fields some few miles from Edinburgh' (*The Gentle Shepherd*). However, this depiction of a promised return to what seems an unlikely, if not impossible, fulfilment of the land's fertile potential ceases to puzzle if we take Ramsay's hint and consider that the evocation of such exotic fruits, more commonly associated with the Mediterranean than with Eastern Scotland, is a deliberate attempt to connect the restoration of rightful authority with a return to the

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<sup>102</sup> This concept of distortion of scale and proportion is of course illustrated at its most extreme in Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726)

<sup>103</sup> Allan Ramsay *The Gentle Shepherd* in *The Works of Allan Ramsay Vol 2* eds., B. Martin and J. Oliver (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1953)

pastoral Golden Age. For Ramsay, the Jacobite sympathiser, the Golden Age is an attainable goal for the modern world; the harmony of such a modern Golden Age stemming from the reinstatement of the social and cultural hierarchy brought about by the restoration of rightful authority in the form of the Stuart succession. Thus, for Ramsay, the notion of a Golden Age becomes a specifically cultural and political construct, and as such imbues his drama with a note of optimism born of cultural conviction. A similar conviction is discernible in Pope's *Windsor Forest* in which the specific geographical location, whilst under the control of rightful (again, Stuart) authority is itself conflated with the Christianised Golden Age of pre-lapsarian Eden:

The Groves of Eden, vanished now so long,  
Live in description, and look green in song:  
These, were my breast inspired with equal flame,  
Like them in beauty, should be like in fame. (*Windsor Forest*, ll.7-10)<sup>104</sup>

Here, Pope's youthful haunt of Windsor Forest, another real and specific location, is invested with Edenic potential, though again, the fulfilment of such promise is only possible while a Stuart reigns. This potential is retained throughout the poem and confirmed by the return to the pastoral voice in the final lines which effects a contrast with the georgic voice of the central sections of *Windsor Forest*.

Thomson's Golden Age is constructed through stock images of harmony, innocence and peace, the harmony of the scene effectively underlined by the musical soundscape of these lines:

For musick held the whole in perfect peace:  
Soft sighed the flute; the tender voice was heard,  
Warbling the joyous heart; the woodlands round  
Apply'd their quire; and the winds and waters flow'd  
In consonance. Such were these prime of days. ('Spring' ll.290-5)

What becomes clear in Thomson's depiction of the pastoral Golden Age, however, is that it belongs in an ancient, lost time and that it cannot be regained. Thomson's Golden Age refers to both the classical Golden Age and the prelapsarian golden age before the fall of man and thus also operates within the Christian framework that is central to *The Seasons*. Another essential difference between Thomson's poetic construction of the pastoral Golden Age and that of Pope or Ramsay is that, despite the minute detail and apparent specificity of Thomson's descriptions of nature and of the landscape, Thomson's Golden

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<sup>104</sup> Alexander Pope *Windsor Forest* in *Alexander Pope: The Major Works* ed., Pat Rogers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)

Age is a philosophical and moral construction: a state, or condition of the human mind. That man has irretrievably lost the ability to dwell in such a place is made abundantly clear in these lines:

BUT now whate'er those gaudy fables meant,  
And the white minutes which they shadow'd out,  
Are found no more amid those iron times,  
Those dregs of life! In which the human mind  
Has lost that harmony ineffable,  
Which forms the soul of happiness; ('Spring' ll.324-329)

Man is no longer 'A stranger to the savage arts of life,' (l.264), nor is he a stranger to the violent arts of war and has lost his prelapsarian innocence. This is a conventional enough literary trope and one influenced by the writers of the seventeenth century, especially the post-Renaissance master of pastoral poetry, John Milton. Furthermore, this attitude against the 'savage arts' (l.264) is very much in keeping with the typically Augustan ideals of tolerance and politeness, ideals which the Augustan writers (and here I emphatically include Ramsay in his poetic antipathy to 'faction'<sup>105</sup>) exploited in order to make a strong distinction between their own age and that of the religious and civil turmoil which characterised much of the previous century, in all the disparate areas of what had recently become Britain. The ambiguous reference to 'savage arts' (l.264) is also perhaps suggestive of the art versus nature debate so topical in the period, embodied by the passion for both landscape gardening and for topographical poetry and reflected by the different attitudes evidenced by pastoral and georgic modes. What does seem at odds with the Whig and mercantile ideology espoused by Thomson, however, is Thomson's declaration that in these golden days, 'The sailor-pine had not the nations yet/ In commerce mix'd; for every country teemed/ With every thing.' (ll.298-300). Thus, in those harmonious days, trade and Britain's role as the 'granary of the world' (l.75) were redundant, so too was the need for man to control nature; in these harmonious times nature bloomed unchecked and 'Spontaneous harvests wav'd' (l.300), entirely without human intervention. While this nostalgic yearning for a pre-commercial world seems at odds with Thomson's georgic panegyrics on the value of trade and industry elsewhere in *The Seasons*, such oppositions are indicative of the Augustan preoccupations with balance and restraint and as such naturally foreshadow the final section of 'Spring' which treats of the nature of human relationships and of love and desire.

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<sup>105</sup> For example, in 'The Vision', Ramsay laments the fact that the country is 'forfairn wi' faction'



The final section of 'Spring' takes as its subject the nature of human love, desire and familial relationships. In this treatment, Thomson warns of all-consuming, unrequited and ultimately unfruitful passions as opposed to virtuous, mutual relations which are enacted within the framework of marriage and which form the stable basis for human progress and expansion through religiously sanctioned procreation. This is a conventional literary treatment of love and desire, but Thomson, as I shall demonstrate, manages to locate his song of love within a discourse of patriotism for a unified Britain, which in turn raises some of the central concerns of 'Summer'. Having ascended through the great chain of being, describing the loves of the beasts, Thomson offers a vision of a shepherd and his flock as a starting point for his discussion of human love. That Thomson should begin here, with a rustic, indeed pastoral figure, is perhaps indicative of Thomson's world view: for Thomson, such rustic characters are closely involved with nature, a part of the natural landscape in a way that Thomson, as has been made abundantly clear from his elevated position and diction in regard to nature in preceding sections of the poem, is not. Once again, *The Seasons* demonstrates the limitations of the pastoral mode in its ability to express the progressive, educated and elevated perspective of the writer of georgic poetry in this period. Thomson however does not waste the opportunity afforded him by the presentation of the rural shepherd and his flock to suggest that the newly created unity of Britain is beneficial to all, from the civilised statesman or poet, to the lowliest agricultural labourer. Indeed, lines 775-795 can be seen to demonstrate, in microcosm, the shift from a pastoral vision of simplicity and ease to a georgic panegyric on commerce, wealth, labour and unity. That the shepherd is able to sit 'on the grassy turf,/ Inhaling, healthful, the descending sun' (ll.780-1) is as a direct result of the unity of Britain, a unity which has put an end to 'iron war' (l.789):

...his sportive lambs,  
 This way, and that, convuls'd in friskful glee,  
 Their little frolicks play. And now the race  
 Invites them forth; when swift, the signal given,  
 They start away, and sweep the massy mound  
 That runs around the hill; the rampart once  
 Of iron war, in antient barbarous times,  
 When disunited BRITAIN ever bled,  
 Lost in eternal broil; ere yet she grew  
 To this deep-laid, indissoluble state  
 Where WEALTH and COMMERCE lift their golden head,  
 And o'er our Labours, LIBERTY and LAW  
 Illustrious watch, the wonder of a world! ('Spring' ll.783-795)

Thomson thus engages in an act of national mythmaking. These lines suggest, not only the positive value and effects of British national unity for all sections of society, even for the agricultural livestock who can now roam in safety where once the forts of war held sway, but to a certain extent, rewrite British history to express a Whig, mercantile ideology of progressive improvement. The hillock around which these idealised lambs gambol is not a natural feature, rather it is all that remains of an ancient fort, and here it may be reasonable to assume that Thomson had in mind a particular image of such a landscape; his native Borders area is dotted with such monuments to a time of constant conflict and so this image seems a logical one for Thomson's particular brand of pro-Union sentiment. However, Thomson seems at pains to consign the violence of such days into the distant past, to 'antient barbarous times' (l.789), and this construction simply fails to ring true: the Union of Scotland and England and the bitterness between certain sections of the two nations was far from a distant memory by 1730. Moreover, the intervening period had witnessed a Jacobite rebellion that threatened to destabilise and indeed destroy the unity of Britain. Such real and recent challenges to the Union, however, have no place in Thomson's harmonious vision, and the language of this passage works to counteract any notion of dissent or disruption brought about by the Union of 1707. The phrase: 'ere yet she grew/ to this deep-laid, indissoluble state' (l.791) suggests an incremental, yet irresistible and inevitable progress towards unity, a gradual process which had taken place over an extended historical period, which, though very much in keeping with a Whig construction of history is one which many, in 1730 and today, would strongly contest. Thomson himself was perhaps aware of the poetic licence he exploited in these lines and thus, in the final line of this passage, shifts to a wider prospect, a prospect which allows a view of Britain within the world, indeed, 'the wonder of a world' (l.795); from such a distant perspective, Thomson is able to obscure the differences within Britain and present a more unified whole.

Thomson can be seen then to offer a construction of Britishness and of Britain which stems from its difference to the rest of the world, a world less unified and thus less civilised than early eighteenth-century Britain, and this discourse of unity stemming from difference from other nations<sup>106</sup> is one which can be detected in Thomson's discussion of 'love' in the final passages of 'Spring' and which is explored further in 'Summer'.

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<sup>106</sup> This definition of Britishness as, not a shared and unified identity, but as stemming from the Briton's difference to others, especially, in this period, the French (and Roman Catholics), is posited by Linda Colley in *Britons: Forging the Nation: 1707-1837* (London: Yale University Press, 1992) pp.5, 12-54

For Thomson, love too is a force of nature, connected with the spring. It is the air of spring which inspires 'a fresher bloom' (l.878) on the 'virgin's cheek' (l.878) and rouses the human passions. As a force of untamed nature, however, Thomson warns against the wilder passions inspired by human love and desire; this too is something which must be controlled. Thomson warns against loss of virtue caused by such unruly impulses, but more than a conventional warning against desire and sin, Thomson describes the mental turmoil which such strong feelings foster in man, 'when on his heart the torrent softness pours' (l.897). For Thomson, if such passions are allowed to grow unchecked, they will force humans to abandon the civilised arts and pursuits; the very qualities which differentiate man from the beasts whose untamed passions he has already described. Thomson catalogues the results of such love in a way that erodes, one by one, the values of the Augustan ideal. One in the throes of this violent passion is denied the civilising and consoling properties of art, learning and of social interaction:

Books are but formal dullness, tedious Friends,  
And sad amid the social scene he sits,  
Lonely, and inattentive. From the tongue  
Th' unfinish'd period falls: ('Spring' ll.930-2)

The civilised art of conversation becomes impossible; time and sleep are disrupted. Rather than being a source of poetic inspiration, as many poets have presented such love in the past, for Thomson such unchecked desire serves not to inspire but to foster jealousy which 'taints' (l.1001) the vision and poisons the imagination. Once again, nature, in the form of intense desire serves, if allowed to run unchecked and uncontrolled, to consume and destroy the civilised man. Yet, within these lines there is an ambiguity created by the descriptive enthusiasm of the poetic voice. This enthusiasm suggests that the speaker is reliving the 'charming agonies of love' (l.991), with a kind of sensual abandonment that parallels the earlier longing for and poetic flirtation with the wilder and overwhelmingly seductive aspects of the natural world, aspects which, as the poet is aware, defy all the discourses of control which modern, civilised man attempts to impose on the world around him. This parallel between the seductive charms of nature and of human desire is clearly drawn at the end of Thomson's passage on the dangers of base desire as Thomson conflates uncultivated nature with uncontrolled passion: 'Thus the warm youth,/ Whom love deludes into his thorny wilds,/ Thro' flowery-tempting paths' (ll.1024-6).

Having apparently been seduced, once again, by the charms of the uncultivated and uncivilised world of nature, Thomson again appears to step back and to distance himself

from the wilder passions by a description of love as part of the framework of society, institutionalised by marriage and made productive, rather than destructive, by the rearing of children. This kind of sanctioned love is depicted in opposition to the destructive force of obsessive desire, it is instead ruled by 'gentler stars' (l.1031) and is approved by heaven. In a characteristic outward movement, Thomson consigns the wilder passions to 'barbarous nations' (l.1047) and 'eastern tyrants' (l.1049) 'whose inhuman love/ Is wild desire, fierce as the suns they feel' (ll.1046-7), thus distancing both the poet, and Britain, from such forces and locating his discussion of human love within a wider discourse of patriotism and national identity, which foreshadows the descriptions of the scorching heat of foreign climes as opposed to the temperate British climate which informs parts of 'Summer'.

'Spring' can be understood as a poetic negotiation between freedom and control. This negotiation is evident not only in the shifting attitudes of the poem, but in Thomson's choice of Latinate blank verse as a poetic form. Blank verse, especially in Thomson's hands, offers the appearance of freedom in the absence of rhyme and in the rejection of such enclosed forms as, for example, the heroic couplet favoured by Pope. This appearance of freedom is further hinted at in the varied punctuation of Thomson's blank verse. This illusion of freedom, however, is counteracted by the often convoluted nature of Thomson's poetic diction as the language is forced into what is, in reality, a rigid and tightly controlled metrical pattern.

The flirtation between sensual freedom and civic-minded patriotism evidenced by Thomson's passages of undisguised nostalgia for a time in which man was in harmony with, and thus a part of, the natural world is enabled in part by Thomson's exploitation of the pastoral and the georgic modes. Thomson is undoubtedly 'the new British Virgil as he hails from a far northern part of the commonwealth'<sup>107</sup> as he sings the praises of unity, commerce and progress in the elevated diction of the georgic mode. However, as I have argued, this does not preclude a yearning for the pastoral idyll a yearning which at times threatens to overwhelm the poetic persona and destabilise the discourses of control which inform 'Spring'.

### **'Summer' : 'The Verdant Lap of Industry'**

The mild pastoral world of 'Spring' holds warnings against extremes and the baser instincts of man, and, as the gentle season gives way to 'Summer', nature herself becomes

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<sup>107</sup> Gerard Carruthers 'Eighteenth-Century Scottish Literary Identity' in *James Thomson: Essays for the Tercentenary* ed., Richard Terry (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000)pp.165-191

extreme, even tyrannical. 'Summer' also utilises a more specific structural principle than Thomson's other seasons in that 'Summer' is described within the progressive framework of a single day. Once again, Thomson's motivation for this poetic choice lies in the quest for variety: 'As the face of nature in this season is almost uniform, the progress of the poem is a description of a summer's day', announces the argument which precedes the poem. This public declaration of poetic intent echoes Thomson's words in a private letter to David Mallet, his friend, brother poet and fellow countryman in exile: 'I resolved to contract the Season into a Day. The uniform Appearances of Nature in Summer easily allow of it.'<sup>108</sup> Summer, like winter, is not the conventional abode of pastoral which is enacted in an eternal spring and, again akin to its opposite season, 'Summer', 'Child of the Sun!' (l.2), is lent a rather fearful force by personification. Summer, far from the mild sensuality and fertile potential embodied by the feminised 'Spring', is a virile, masculine and regal force, whose 'ardent look' (l.6), is enough to chase the mild season of pastoral harmony. Mankind too feels the need to seek 'the mid-wood shade' (l.9) in order to shield himself from the penetrating force of the sun.

The overt use of personification in the opening passages of 'Summer' and 'Winter' lend strength to the seasonal descriptions and can also read be as expressive, in the anthropocentric, humanising thrust of personification, of what Paul Fussell defines as a specifically Augustan Humanism. A discussion of Augustan Humanism, as minutely defined by Fussell<sup>109</sup>, at this stage in my analysis of *The Seasons*, is relevant because firstly, it demonstrates the extent to which the writers of the period were in dialogue with each other, despite (as is the case with Thomson and Pope, or Gay and, of course, Ramsay), radically differing political and cultural views. Thus, such an avenue of inquiry will serve to illuminate further links between Ramsay and Thomson. Finally, one of the main characteristics of eighteenth-century Humanism, according to Fussell, is an adherence to Classical literary genres and the belief that such genres and modes reflect the permanence of human nature, which seems relevant to an investigation into the pastoral and georgic modes in the period. However, I should here state that Fussell himself is sceptical of Thomson's Humanist credentials, largely because of Thomson's authorship of

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<sup>108</sup> James Thomson *James Thomson (1700-1748) : Letters and Documents* ed. A. McKillop (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1958) p.45

<sup>109</sup> Paul Fussell *The Rhetorical World of Augustan Humanism: Ethics and Imagery from Swift to Burke* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965)

‘Hymn on Solitude’, solitude being contrary to the deeply sociable nature of the Augustan Humanist. I would respond to this by pointing out the Pope, a poet whose humanist values have never been doubted, himself penned a poem of a similar title. Furthermore, to judge by Fussell’s exacting criteria, Thomson very much displays the traits of and employs the literary rhetoric and imagery associated with Augustan Humanism. Thomson’s urge towards ‘solitude’, I intend to argue, is a yearning for a specifically Augustan solitude; that is, no solitude at all.

To return to the notion of the permanence and value of Classical literary modes, ‘Summer’, despite succeeding ‘Spring’, the conventional season of pastoral, enacts the same interplay of the pastoral and the georgic that can be detected throughout *The Seasons*. The early passages of ‘Summer’ resonate with Virgilian, georgic echoes as Thomson describes the planetary motions, and the ‘delightful round/ Of SEASONS, faithful; not eccentric once’ (ll.39-40) as dawn spreads of the landscape of ‘Summer’. No sooner has the dawn broken, however, than Thomson slips easily back into the unspoilt world of pastoral; the freshness and clarity of the dawn mirroring the innocence of the pre-lapsarian world of the pastoral Golden Age. As ‘Young Day pours in apace’ (l.51), the speaker remains passive: ‘The dripping rock, the mountain’s misty top/ Swell on the eye’ (ll.53-4). This is not the cultivating, active georgic voice, but rather the indolent voice of pastoral which seeks not to alter nature, but rather to harmonise with it, a construct complemented by the image of the shepherd who leaves ‘His mossy cottage where with PEACE he dwells.’ (l.63) The following passage however, shatters this pastoral idyll as the ‘FALSELY luxurious’ (l.66) modern man is contrasted with the simplicity of the shepherd. It is no accident that this contrast should be drawn at the poetic moment when ‘the powerful king of day’ (l.80) appears, in all his dazzling beauty and scorching excess, making it possible to read the progress of the summer’s day as analogous with the progress of man. Man’s morning began in the harmonious Golden Age, but, due to his, and here I return to Fussell and the notion of Augustan Humanism, ‘irredeemably flawed’<sup>110</sup> nature, he could not remain in such a harmonious state. For Thomson, though, the consolations for such a removal from the pastoral world are the georgic (and Augustan) ideals of labour and the careful manipulation of nature. The noonday sun may burn, but, coupled with

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<sup>110</sup>Paul Fussell *The Rhetoric of Augustan Humanism: Ethics and Imagery from Swift to Burke* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965) p.8 Fussell further comments: ‘If the eighteenth-century humanist is orientated towards the Christian tradition, he will often conceive of this flaw by means of the myth of the Fall of Man’ p.8

industrious labour, it brings its own rewards: 'Fully mature'd, into the verdant lap/ Of INDUSTRY, the mellow plenty falls.' (ll.128) That personified industry should have a 'verdant lap' is a startling, near oxymoronic image; the effect is to blend the georgic ideals of cultivation and industry into a benign whole which suppresses notions of hard labour and constructs an image of industry as fertile and possessed of progressive potential.

The sun may bring blessings to the industrious cultivator, but the excessive heat of summer brings less welcome aspects of nature, such as the teeming insect life already alluded to in 'Spring'. Insect life is of course a subject discussed in Virgil's *Georgics*, but in eighteenth-century literature this motif has particular resonance as an image frequently drawn to symbolise moral corruption and decay. The notion of bacterial or insect life as repellent is touched upon by Thomson in 'Spring'; in 'Summer' the symbolic potential of the image is extended and explored. Thomson's discussion of the 'noisy summer-race' (l.236) begins with a characteristically sympathetic attitude to the insects who draw their 'high descent' (l.239) directly from the sun and whose short life is fraught with danger (not least from the 'villain spider' (l.267) who recalls Swift's rather loathsome portrayal of the same beast) and whose numerousness seems to celebrate the plenitude of nature. However, as the sun's heat in all its potency becomes a negative force, excessive and tyrannical, so too does Thomson's use of the insect as image. As Fussell announces in an entire chapter devoted to Augustan insect imagery, 'There is no doubt that the Augustan conservative imagination delights to image the contemptible by recourse to insects.'<sup>111</sup> For the Augustan poet, the 'contemptible' was that which led to moral decay, in the form of excess, luxury or the surrender of man to his baser instincts; warnings against these moral transgressions inform every line of Thomson's *Seasons*.

Thomson's insects whose 'ceaseless hum' (l.280) soothes the 'drowsy shepherd' (l.282) and whose place in the pastoral world is assured and benign undergo a radical transformation when used metaphorically. The 'critic fly' (l.193) becomes a blot on the noble face of art and creative endeavour, one whose microscopic vision is flawed, whose 'feeble ray/ extends an inch around, yet blindly bold/ He dares dislike the structure of the whole' (ll.193-195). In these lines the georgic emphasis on wholeness and unity is adapted metaphorically to the Augustan vision as once again the interplay between the georgic and pastoral modes is exploited as a means to impart the cultural ideology of one committed to the Augustan ideals of restraint, tolerance and unity. The shifting poetic attitude to insect

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., p.234

life expresses the benignity of the insect as animal, in harmony with nature and with man in a pastoral setting but as an index of moral decay and a warning against vice, luxury and vanity in the georgic setting of the modern world of commerce. The ‘critic fly’ (l.193) too finds its opposite in the moral value of poetry, which, informed by philosophy and learning is ‘the treasure of mankind,/ Their highest honour, and their truest joy!’ (ll.1160-1) and is the very thing that separates civilised man from the ‘savage roaming thro’ the woods and wilds’(l.1163), whose brutal existence is one devoid of all the Augustan ideals with which, for Thomson, mighty Britannia abounds. These ideals, ideals denied the ‘savage’, are catalogued again in the closing strains of ‘Summer’. In the repeated negations of these lines Thomson clarifies his absolute rejection of an uncivilised life and reinstates his final position as one both outside and above nature; flawed and fallen certainly, but seeking seeking redemption through the civilising arts, through industry, social union and the quest for progress and improvement:

WITHOUT thee what were unassisted man?  
 A savage roaming thro’ the woods and wilds,  
 In quest of prey; and with th’ unfashion’d furr  
 Rough-clad; devoid of every honest art,  
 And elegance of life. Nor home, nor joy  
 Domestick, mix’d of tenderness and care,  
 Nor moral excellence, nor social bliss,  
 Nor law were his; nor property; nor swain,  
 To turn the furrow; nor mechanic hand,  
 Harden’d to toil; nor sailor bold; nor trade,  
 Mother severe of infinite delights! (ll.1162-1172)

If ‘Spring’ was characterised by tension, sustained by competing discourses of control enacted by the interplay between the apparent freedom and simplicity of the pastoral and complexity and manipulative impulse of the georgic; the tension of ‘Summer’ arises from the poetic and ideological quest for balance. In ‘Summer’ Thomson seeks to achieve this balance by the poetic endeavour to present and reconcile opposites and again, much of this is underpinned by a skilful manipulation and overlapping of the pastoral and the georgic. Thomson seems to present two opposing states, or conditions of humanity. On the one hand is the world of pastoral simplicity, the shepherd enjoying his life of harmonious ease, untroubled by the hum of the insects as he drowns in the noon-day heat. Later, the same pastoral figure and his flock are set upon by angry hornets, suggesting that something sinister is lurking at the heart of the pastoral idyll. This something is, of course, human nature which in turn is negatively portrayed by insect imagery of a more repellent and ugly



nature. The shifting attitude to the insects further symbolises the difficulty of achieving the balance between plenty, and between excess and luxury, an ideological tightrope well trodden by many of Thomson's contemporaries, not least by Allan Ramsay. What becomes clear in the text of 'Summer' is that man is no longer fit, nor able to dwell in the pastoral idyll so nostalgically evoked at times by Thomson. Thomson does, however, offer an alternative to man, the georgic ideals of labour, cultivation, knowledge and the quest for constant moral improvement which, for Thomson and his contemporaries was the primary function of poetry. Man cannot live in harmony with nature in these 'iron times'; should he attempt such a purely rustic existence, then the pastoral shepherd becomes a mere savage. Rather man must labour to harness and to manipulate nature, keeping as tight a control on the natural tendencies of his external environment as he keeps upon his internal impulses, and by such means progress, improve and avoid tyrannical extremes.

### **'Autumn': 'And thus united Britain Britain make Intire'**

As 'Spring' is the season of the eternal Golden Age of the pastoral world, so 'Autumn' in all its abundant harvests-the fruit of rural labour-is the season of the georgic; certainly, it is so for Thomson. 'Autumn' depicts industry's reward, peace, plenty and unity. 'Autumn' too is arguably the most political of the *Seasons* and that which confronts the idea of a united Britain most overtly. Indeed, in the first verse paragraph, 'Autumn' is depicted as the fruitful product of all the seasons, united and 'perfect' (l.8). Despite this, in the opening lines, Thomson tunes 'his doric reed once more' (l.3). For all that Thomson embraces the georgic ideals of industry and progress in 'Autumn', it appears he is loathe to abandon the realm of pastoral harmony; or perhaps, the abundance of the season holds the promise of a new age of gold, the product of trade, commerce and unity.

As Robert Inglesfield observes: 'The 1730 text of *Autumn* concludes with three long verse paragraphs based on extended allusions to the second book of the *Georgics*.'<sup>112</sup> However, even those passages which do not allude directly to Virgil's *Georgics* construct patriotic ideals through the medium of the georgic mode. In 'Autumn' we are again presented with the subject of the planetary motions and their relevance to man, a passage which gives way to a panegyric on industry. Thomson here acknowledges the hardships of labour which attends industry, but in a highly Augustan construct, cites these hardships, the

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<sup>112</sup> Robert Inglesfield 'Thomson and Shaftsbury' in *James Thomson: Essays for the Tercentenary* ed., Richard Terry (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000) pp.67-93

‘Sweat and Pain;’ (l.44) as the ‘kind source of every gentle art,/ And soft civility of life’ (ll.45-6). Naturally, it will not be Thomson, nor indeed the landed classes whose view he represents who sweat and toil; from this perspective – distanced from the actual business of rural labour – the georgic overview is in very much in evidence. The ‘soft civility of life’ (l.46) is then contrasted with its opposite state, the life of the primitive savage, a mere ‘shivering wretch’ (l.59). Moreover, Thomson abandons any ambiguity regarding the art versus nature debate evinced in certain passages of ‘Spring’ as personified industry wakes man from this barbaric state and points out, ‘Where lavish NATURE the directing hand/ Of ART demanded’ (l.80). There is no nostalgia for a simple life of pastoral harmony between man and nature here; rather control and manipulation are the tools with which modern man must work to exploit nature’s abundant resources.

These purely georgic constructions of man’s relation with the natural world are then given a specifically British cast. Following a passage describing the formation of an ordered and united society, Thomson introduces the figure of commerce and the conventional rural setting of the georgic mode is transferred to the city, populated by the ‘busy Merchant’ (l.130) and where the plough of the farmer is substituted by the ‘strong crane’ (l.131). With yet another echo of Pope’s *Windsor Forest*, the Thames, that ‘majestic, king of floods’ is evoked in a passage which glorifies, not only industry, but the plenteous boons, the ‘foreign plenty’ (l.132) of Imperialism, and, likened to a ‘wintry forest, groves of masts’ (l.136), the scene of urban commerce becomes a country in the city, a specifically modern, British adaptation of georgic conventions. This georgic and British panegyric on commerce and industry culminates in a return to rural harvest scenes of joyous labour, and in this passage Thomson effects another significant transformation: here, for the first time, the swains, shepherds and reapers of the pastoral world become ‘husband-men’ (l.179). These are the georgic equivalents of shepherds and the connotations of these terms are highly significant: a shepherd, conventionally, cares for and protects his charges; the husband-man, in contrast, is one who takes an active role in the shaping and manipulation of the natural world.

In the wake of such a fervent panegyric on the georgic, progressive and undeniably Whiggish values of industry, commerce and cultivation, Thomson enacts a sudden retreat into the purely pastoral world of Lavinia and Palemon, another embedded tale within the text. The choice to include such an overtly ‘Arcadian’ tale in the georgic landscape of ‘Autumn’ is significant in its incongruity and serves to present, in microcosm, some of thematic strands I have been pursuing. The plot of this episode is essentially simple as

befits an Arcadian love story. Palemon is a rich landowner of gentle birth and generous nature who becomes captivated by a rustic beauty, Lavinia, who labours in his fields. Naturally, given the social (and economic status) of Lavinia, such a union would be considered highly inappropriate for one such as Palemon and he suppresses his feelings accordingly. Happily, it transpires that Lavinia is actually the beloved daughter of Palemon's rich, now deceased, patron. The barrier to their union thus removed, Palemon raises Lavinia (and her elderly mother) from poverty's abode and they live a happy, gentle life together.

It is immediately apparent that the story of these ancient lovers bears more than a passing resemblance to the plot of Ramsay's *Gentle Shepherd*, in the figure of nobility disguised in poverty but whose noble blood ultimately shines through (and here we are also reminded of the story of Alexander Ross's later Scottish pastoral, *Helenore, or The Fortunate Shepherdess* who may as well have been named the 'gentle shepherdess'). This plot is as much odds with the text of 'Autumn', as it seems at odds with the cultural beliefs of Thomson. In the tale of Lavinia and Palemon there is a clear suggestion of the recognition and the restoration of noble blood which is suggestive of both Tory and Jacobite impulses. The incongruous quality of this tale is then deliberate: in 'Autumn', Thomson appears to reject the simple, primitive values of pastoral as having no place in modern, commercial Britain, yet, as ever, he is loathe to abandon such idylls and evinces a nostalgia for the lost Golden Age of pastoral. By inserting the tale of Lavinia and Palemon, Thomson is able to serve the need for variety and indulge the alluring poetic possibilities of the pastoral mode whilst simultaneously, in the embedded and isolated position of this tale, suggest that the only value of pastoral tales is in their diverting qualities. That the pastoral idyll is an unfit model for the representation of modern society is made clear; what Thomson also makes clear however, is that the pastoral has positive, desirable qualities. The pastoral is embodied here by the figure of Lavinia who is connected with an uncorrupted, yet also uncultivated nature. Her primitive dwelling and rustic life are 'safe from the cruel, blasting arts of man' (l.196); she is 'Almost on NATURE'S common bounty fed' (l.197). Again, Thomson underlines the opposition between art and nature; again, Thomson's position in this debate can be seen to shift, creating an ambiguity which, it must be admitted, creates, not only a sense of variety, but of uncertainty and contradiction. Thomson expends poetic energy and enthusiasm in painting the wholesome beauty of Lavinia, and in his depiction of her as one possessed of a 'native grace' (l.209) he hints at notions of nationhood, or of an inherent national identity. Within the framework

of this apparently simple love plot, such notions become heavy with implication. Thomson develops his positive construction of 'native grace' and purity in the following lines:

Veil'd in a simple robe; for loveliness  
Needs not the foreign aid of ornament,  
But is when unadorn'd adorn'd the most. (ll.211-13)

The choice of the word 'foreign' again resonates with discourses of national identity and of 'native grace' (l.209). Furthermore, Thomson's language in describing Lavinia's simple robe as unadorned with 'foreign ornament' (l.212) echoes Ramsay's vocabulary and sentiments in 'Tartana, Or the Plaid' (1721) (and also foreshadows or influences Robert Fergusson's 'Elegy On the Death of Scots Music').<sup>113</sup> In 'Tartana, Or the Plaid' (a poem which Thomson admired) Ramsay defends traditional native garb in similar language:

We'll find our Godlike Fathers nobly scorn'd  
To be with any other Dress adorn'd;  
Before base Fashions interwove, 'Tartana, Or the Plaid'<sup>114</sup> (ll.42-44)

Lavinia can then be seen as symbolic of all that is appealing in rustic simplicity, a pastoral embodiment whose 'native grace' (l.209) dressed in poverty's garb, combined with the language of description which resonates with the Scottish literary tradition, connect her with the faded nobility of Scotland itself.

Palemon, in contrast, is an unmistakeably georgic figure. In constructing the figure of Palemon, Thomson enacts a linguistic shift to a higher register; Palemon is characterised by 'pride' (l.219), by riches, (l.220) and by 'elegance' (l.222) which all connote sophistication, civilisation, art and luxury. If we read this love tale as referring to another kind of union, and accept Lavinia as symbolising a beautiful, if uncultivated Scotland, then Palemon, in his power, wealth and sophistication must represent England. Such a reading apparently explains Thomson's inclusion of the tale as an embedded and symbolic justification and defence of the Union between Scotland and England. Palemon employs georgic metaphors in his wooing of Lavinia, he promises to 'into a richer soil,/Transplant thee safe!' (ll.280-1). He is in a position to elevate and improve Lavinia's condition by means of their union, to restore her to her once glorious status and to shelter her from

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<sup>113</sup> 'Now foreign sonnets bear the gree,/ And crabbed queer variety/ Of sounds fresh sprung frae Italy,/ A bastard breed! Unlike that soft-tongu'd melody/ Which now lies dead.' Robert Fergusson 'Elegy On the Death of Scots Music' *The Works of Robert Fergusson* (London: Oddy & co, 1807) p.252

<sup>114</sup> Allan Ramsay *The Works Of Allan Ramsay Vol.1* eds., B. Martin and J. Oliver (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1951) pp.27-37

‘poverty’s cold wind’ (l.278) in a seemingly uncomplicated, symbolic defence of union which chimes with Thomson’s professed politics.

There are, however, moments of tension and of resistance within this apparently positive representation of union. There is, for example, an unmistakeable and unappealing sense of ownership and of control in Palemon’s promise to make Lavinia ‘of my garden be the pride, and joy’ (l.283). Moreover, this slightly sinister sentiment is mirrored by the syntax of this speech. The surface of freedom and simplicity which characterises the description of Lavinia is lost; Thomson’s syntax in representing Palemon becomes convoluted and grammatically complex. It is reliant on awkward poetic inversion whilst the prolific punctuation renders this passage challenging to the reader. Ironically, the syntactical disruption and difficulty of what is speech concerning protection and unity points to constraint and perhaps a resistance to unity. Thus, while the tale in its symbolism and in its literary allusions casts Scotland as a pastoral setting, at once possessed of raw resources and positive qualities but in need of the georgic direction and cultivation supplied by an amicable union within a progressive British state, there is a characteristic note of tension here. There is a real fear hinted at by this tale of union, a fear that while cultivation brings improvement, there is a danger that during the process, the positive qualities of the pastoral and the primitive will be irretrievably lost. It is this fear which perhaps informs Thomson’s sustained poetic nostalgia for the pastoral Golden Age and which perhaps accounts for some of the inherent and inescapable contradictions of the text. Thomson thus welcomes union, but is wary of a union which will ultimately subsume the positive qualities of the poorer member. This underlying ambiguity or resistance continues to surface in the following passages of ‘Autumn’.

The story of Palemon and Lavinia carries literary allusions to the tradition of Scottish pastoral in the period and in the following sections of ‘Autumn’, direct references to the tradition of English georgic poetry are made. Such references to the English tradition are not always entirely positive, however, and in these passages of ‘Autumn’ Thomson the Scot can be detected, promoting the cause of his native country as a worthy partner in a united Britain, in much the same way as Ramsay presents Scottish resources in ‘The Prospect of Plenty’. Thomson’s first allusion to the English georgic tradition is in his temptation to ‘sing the RURAL GAME’ (l.364). This surely alludes to John Gay’s *Rural Sports, a Georgic* (1713), and if there were any doubt of this, it is dispelled by Thomson’s description of the spaniel, ‘Struck,/ Stiff, by the tainted gale, with open nose’ (ll.365-6) who echoes Gay’s spaniel, ‘The subtle dog scowrs with sagacious nose/ Along the field,

and snuffs each breeze that blows' (*Rural Sports* ll.309-10)<sup>115</sup> and by other resonant passages. Thomson characteristically rejects the barbarism of hunting, though not before he has exploited some of the poetic and allusive potential afforded by such scenes: 'These are not subjects for a peaceful muse' (l.381). This can be seen as a move to deflate the Tory informed posture of peace evinced by poets such as Gay and Pope: Thomson renders Gay's relish of bloodsports barbaric and hypocritical in one who would wish a speedy end to war. However, there is another poetic motive in evidence in this section. Thomson goes on to directly reference Philips's georgic *Cyder* (1708) in tones of glowing approbation:

The piercing cyder for the thirsty tongue:  
Thy native theme, and boon inspirer too,  
PHILLIPS, facetious bard, the second thou  
Who nobly durst, in rhyme unfetter'd verse,  
With BRITISH freedom sing the BRITISH song; (ll.637-41)

Significantly, though, between Thomson's reference to rural sports and the barbarity of hunting, and his praise of the patriot-poet Philips's georgic treatment of cider making, comes a description of drunken revelry following a day's hunting. This scene is no description of innocent conviviality, rather it is a scene of rough excess; what's more is that it is a specifically named English scene. As the 'tankards foam; and the strong tables groan' (l.504), the talk is 'Of ENGLAND'S glory, ne'er to be defac'd,' (l.508). England's glory, however, is very much defaced and disgraced by the scenes which follow as an orgy of excess takes place and every sensual, primitive pleasure is gratified beyond polite bounds. Amid the gorging of food and alcohol the revellers smoke, game and indulge in shows of lewd sexuality as 'romp-loving miss/ Is hauled about, in gallantry robust' (ll.529-30). There is clearly nothing gallant or wholesome about such behaviour as the 'puking wretch' (l.535) is forced to drink yet more and all are rendered senseless and 'feeble' (l.553) in a 'broken scene' (l.559) of 'drunken slaughter' (l.560). Thomson's purpose goes beyond a didactic warning against excess. These scenes of English indulgence provide a stark contrast with Thomson's later depiction of inhabitants of the Hebrides. Thomson's muse surveys 'CALEDONIA, in romantic view' (l.824) and describes its rugged beauty in the language of the sublime. This is a wild, uncultivated landscape, but one rich in natural resources 'of watry wealth/ Full; winding deep, and green, her fertile vales' (ll.830-1). Here too, the Tweed is described as 'pure parent stream' (l.833), language which is reminiscent of Pope's description of the Thames as 'Father Thames' (*Windsor Forest*

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<sup>115</sup> John Gay *Poems on Several Occasions* (Dublin: Risk, Ewing and Smith, 1729) p.10

l.197) and ‘great father’ (*Windsor Forest* l.219) suggesting, as in Ramsay’s ‘Prospect of Plenty’, the wealth of resources which Scotland brings to the union. More than material advantages are represented here: the people of these harsh lands are ‘in misfortune’s school/ Trained up to hardy deeds; soon visited by LEARNING’ (ll.836-8). These are ‘a generous race,/ Of unsubmitting spirit, wise and brave’ (ll.839-40), and in all their struggles and hardships represent the very opposite of the beer-sodden, meat-glutted gathering of English hunters. Thus Scotland is possessed of fine and abundant, albeit rather primitive, qualities. The waters of Scotland abound with wealth whilst her hardy inhabitants, accustomed to toil and hardship offer (and here we see the influence of Thomson’s native Calvinism, in the Calvinistic rejection of luxury, decadence and idleness) an antidote to the luxurious excess indulged by some south of the Border. The primitive qualities of the hardy Scot then can be seen as the perfect, complementary partner to the industrious, if a little excessive English labourer. The Scot in turn must trust to a native ‘patriot’ (l.850) (a term which in the case of Thomson of course carries significant implications in terms of his later ‘dissident’ or ‘patriot’ Whig political identity) in the form of an ardent promoter of the Union, in this case, the Duke of Argyle, to lift Scotland from its primitive state through unity with England in order to realise the untapped potential of both her land and her people: ‘And thus united BRITAN BRITAIN make/ Intire, th’ Imperial MISTRESS of the deep’ (ll.867-8). While this hyperbolic panegyric on unity is supported by the repetition of the word ‘Britain’, it also suggests division, or doubleness. Thomson thus acknowledges the differences between Scotland and England, in terms of both landscape and national character, but instead of presenting this as an obstacle to unity, Thomson presents this difference as the basis of a complementary partnership, where the wants of one nation are supplied by the other in a symbiotic relation of interdependence.

‘Autumn’ then eschews the purely pastoral in favour of a progressive and industrious georgic overview. Characteristically, though, Thomson still acknowledges the allure of pastoral simplicity through a nostalgia for the uncorrupted life of the Golden Age. The positive aspects of pastoralism are embodied in ‘Autumn’ by the positive portrayal of the primitive qualities of Scotland, while the overall message conveyed by Thomson is that primitivism and pastoralism have no real place in a progressive Britain. The georgic ideals of industry and cultivation are what Scotland requires in order to improve and fulfil her potential; for Thomson, these are the rewards of an amicable British union. However, Thomson does hint at the dangers of a union in which Scotland, and all the positive

qualities of Scotland, are subsumed by England; Thomson thus evidences not, as has been previously thought, an unqualified acceptance of union, but rather seeks to promote and preserve the qualities and character of Scotland as an equal partner in union. Thus, as ‘Spring’ embodied the discourse of control and ‘Summer’ sought balance, ‘Autumn’ embodies the discourse of unity, a peculiarly Augustan form of unity, a unity which acknowledges, tolerates and welcomes difference, and of course, variety, as positive qualities of a united whole.

**‘Winter’: ‘Welcome, kindred glooms! Congenial horrors, hail!’**

‘Winter’ occupies a prominent position in the history and evolution of *The Seasons*. ‘Winter’ was of course the first of the seasons to be written and published and thus the first to be subject to the authorial process of revision, transposition and addition. Indeed, critics and editors of Thomson, from John Logie Roberston in 1908 to Ralph Cohen in 1970 have used the text of ‘Winter’ to illustrate and exemplify Thomson’s processes of textual revision. For Mary Jane Scott, ‘Winter’, with its snow-ravaged mountainous landscapes is the ultimate expression of Thomson’s inescapable Scottishness and his nostalgia for the Borders landscape of his youth. First published in 1726, only a year after Thomson moved south to London, there does seem to be some justification for this interpretation. To a certain extent, I would agree that ‘Winter’ is perhaps the most Scottish of Thomson’s seasons, though I would suggest alternative justification for such a conclusion. Furthermore, I would contend that ‘Winter’, perhaps more overtly than is apparent in the other seasons, demonstrates a significant contribution to an emerging British poetic, a poetic which adapts and incorporates the Scottish literary tradition in an Augustan context.

Previously, my discussion of *The Seasons* has focused primarily on the interplay of the georgic and pastoral modes as exploited by Thomson. Such a focus, however, becomes difficult in the case of ‘Winter.’ Pastoral is typically enacted in the eternal spring of the Golden Age. Summer and autumn in all their abundance and rural industry lend themselves to the instructive voice of the georgic mode; ‘Winter’, however, and particularly the harsh northern winter described by Thomson, is not the conventional seasonal setting for either of these modes. The pastoral idyll withers in the face of such cruel blasts and while Thomson still speaks in the voice of moral didacticism, his instructions and exhortations to the husbandman of winter achieve a very different effect than those of ‘Spring’ and ‘Summer’. What can be read in the text of ‘Winter’, however, is a blending of Thomson’s Scottish literary and cultural heritage with the Augustan ideals of



his contemporaries in England. 'Winter' is thus imbued with a literary significance in terms of the creation of a British poetic which draws on the cultural wealth of all the disparate parts of the new British superstate, and which resists an English cultural hegemony whilst demonstrating certain shared literary ideals suggestive of the existence of an Augustan movement in Scotland as well as England.

I have discussed, with reference to Thomson's other seasons, the competing discourses of control which can be identified. 'Winter', with all its seasonal violence and resistance to the control of man constructs a very different dialectic between man and the natural world and employs alternative discourses in its description. 'Winter', I intend to argue, offers poetic constructions of Augustan humanism combined with the discourse of sentiment and sensibility, moral and social theories which were to become of paramount importance to Scottish Enlightenment philosophy. Such theories are exemplified by the work of Adam Smith and David Hume and paralleled by sentimental literature, the clearest expression of which can be read in the Henry Mackenzie's *Man of Feeling* (1771). While *The Seasons* of 1730 predates both Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) and the vogue for sentimental literature in the latter decades of the eighteenth century, the seeds of Enlightenment moral theories can be found in the work of Smith's teacher, the Irishman Francis Hutcheson, whose position as Professor of Moral Philosophy at the University of Glasgow was crucial in terms of the development of Enlightenment philosophy.<sup>116</sup> Hutcheson's *Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* was first published in 1725 and incorporates a defence of the religiously controversial philosophical ideals of Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury as well as a development of Shaftesbury's assertion of humanity's inherent, as opposed to learned, moral virtue. The influence of Shaftesbury's ideas upon the text of *The Seasons* and upon the religious and intellectual beliefs of Thomson himself has been well documented<sup>117</sup> and needs no reiteration here. However, given Hutcheson's connections with the Scottish intellectual milieu<sup>118</sup> and the fact that Hutcheson's *Inquiry* first appeared the year before the first

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<sup>116</sup> See Susan M. Purviance's discussion of the importance of Hutcheson's contribution to Enlightenment thought in 'Intersubjectivity and Sociable Relations in the Philosophy of Francis Hutcheson' in *Sociability and Society in Eighteenth-Century Scotland* eds., John Dwyer and Richard B. Sher (Edinburgh: The Mercat Press, 1993) pp.23-38

<sup>117</sup> See Robert Inglesfield 'Thomson and Shaftesbury' in *James Thomson: Essays for the Tercentenary* ed., Richard Terry (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000) pp.67-93

<sup>118</sup> At the time of publication of the *Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, Hutcheson, having graduated from The University Of Glasgow and not yet having been appointed Professor of Moral

edition of 'Winter' was published, I would suggest that Thomson was aware of Hutcheson's development of Shaftesbury's themes and that *The Seasons* represents an early literary expression of the notion of moral sense and sociability as inherent in mankind, a suggestion which points to Thomson's Scottish intellectual identity as well as indicating the importance of the text as incorporating ideology from all parts of Britain, thus rendering *The Seasons* an example of a truly British poem. It is surely no coincidence that the memorable passage of 'Winter', in which the cottager, attempting to care for his flock, is overcome by the winter snows and perishes in a great flurry of sentiment, directly engages with the theory of moral sense and the pleasures of virtue posited by Hutcheson in this treatise. While Hutcheson's *Inquiry* employs the vocabulary of compassion, benevolence and virtue as opposed to Smith's terms of sympathy and sentiment, this seminal discourse of sentiment can be read in Thomson's text. Susan M. Purviance eloquently summarises Hutcheson's theory:

His view, which has come to be known as sentimentalism, proposes that feeling rather than reason is the root of moral judgement. Proper behaviour must be grounded in the natural affections, suitably reinforced by social custom. Hutcheson's empiricist moral epistemology identifies perception of virtue and vice as the product of a moral sense: a disposition to respond to the motivations of others by way of feeling. This feeling is pleasure in the presence of virtue, pain in the presence of vice. The affective responses of the moral sense are sentiments that tie us to one another, moral dispositions are social dispositions.<sup>119</sup>

The notions of firstly, 'affective responses' and secondly, of the emphatic connection between morality and sociability are particularly relevant and interesting in the context of 'Winter'. The extreme sentimentality of the episode in which the shepherd perishes in an effort to save his flock appears, to a modern readership, to be imbued with a hyperbolic sentimentalism which hovers on the narrow boundary between pathos and bathos; its affective power upon the reader has been eroded by the intervening centuries. In 1730, however, a contemporary reader would have been alert to the philosophic discourse

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Philosophy at that institution, was living in Dublin and according to Hutcheson's entry in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography by James Moore, was moving in intellectual circles which maintained connections and correspondence with Scottish University Professors and Irish students in Scotland.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., p.23

expressed in such poetic passages and would have suspected no irony on the part of Thomson.

The section of 'Winter' that describes this pathetic scene is characteristically preceded by a passage in which the reader's sympathy is aroused by the plight of animals in this harsh wintry landscape. I say characteristically because Thomson, after Virgil, employs the technique of ascending through the hierarchy of the chain of being to arrive at man, a device which both aligns the plight of humanity with the animal world as well as emphasising the differences between man and other earthly creatures. Thomson tells of the robin upon whom, as the friend of man, affection and importance is conferred by personification. The 'Red-breast' ('Winter' l. 326) is the only bird or animal in this section whose name is capitalised, and this is perhaps because, in his wisdom, the robin cultivates a relationship with 'trusted man' (l.329) by paying his 'annual visit' (l.330). This constructs a different dialectic between man and nature than we have seen elsewhere in the text, a relationship suggestive of a certain dependence of the natural world upon the benevolence of men: the robin offers nothing to the shepherd, the husbandman or even the poet, except his fragile beauty and a splash of vivid colour against the snowy backdrop of winter. This notion of benevolence and of sympathy is developed in the following lines as the 'hare,/ Tho' timorous of heart' (ll.331-2) and the 'bleating kind' (l.335) become images of a helpless nature, in need of human compassion. This then, is the poetry of affect, and Thomson manipulates the responses of his audience with skill in order to heighten the affective power of the following section. Thomson, however, is aiming at more than simply eliciting an emotional or affective response from his reader; he is also laying the groundwork for an exposition of current philosophical ideals, ideals expressed in the pathetic climax of this section of 'Winter'.

Having surveyed the coming storm and its effects upon the landscape's wild inhabitants from a geographical and poetic distance, Thomson descends into the foreground of his own landscape and directly addresses the shepherd of the pastoral world in an exhortation to be kind to his 'helpless charge' (l.339), again suggestive of man's role as a benevolent guardian of the natural world. Man's status and power as such a figure is elevated by the phrase which follows. The shepherd is urged to 'Baffle the raging year, and fill their pens/With food at will' (ll.340-1) and Thomson's choice of verbs here is, as always, highly significant. The shepherd is no longer a pastoral figure, a benevolent, passive figure in harmony with the rhythms and caprices of a nature as benevolent as himself. Rather, this figure is imbued with a near godlike power, the power to 'baffle'

(l.340) the fury of the winter tempests, a verb which connotes both the power to confuse and to subdue. This construction of man as a figure of power is consolidated by the phrase 'at will' (l. 341), which again speaks of more than a simple act of care or duty. The simple figure of the pastoral shepherd is thus both elevated and transformed by Thomson into one imbued with an unsettling power. This image of man as possessed of elemental control however, is no sooner constructed than Thomson tears it down with the savage sublimity of the season itself.

In the lines which follow, it is not nature who is 'baffled', confused or subdued, but rather man, as Thomson deconstructs the image of man he has just created. As the snowstorm rages, the landscape is distorted and inverted by the deep, windblown snow. In such conditions, 'The valley to shining mountain swells' (l.348) a reversal which baffles the senses of the hapless shepherd who, far from providing his charges with safety and sustenance, is unable even to trust the evidence of his vision. The notion that man is able to somehow own or control nature is further eroded: the swain, 'Disaster'd stands' (l.353) in his 'own loose-revolving fields' (l.353), his visual referents are hidden or distorted, he can neither name nor recognise the terrain before him, rendering him as helpless and as incapable of ownership or guardianship as the dumb beasts he is endeavouring to save. The passive helplessness of the shepherd is heightened by the syntax of the passage; here, nature is the active force; man is passive in the face of nature's sublime power. The snows 'arise' (l.350) and are assigned importance by the adjectives that are heaped upon them, 'and foul, and fierce,' (l.350), whilst 'All Winter drives' (l.351) in a resistless force of activity. In contrast, the swain merely 'stands' (l.353), motionless as inanimate objects, the fields and the hills, are animated with a living force, the fields are 'loose-revolving' (l.353) and the hills themselves 'ascend' (l.353), newly created by the formidable storm. Faced with such active and resistless power, the shepherd is lost and succumbs to the terrors of his own imagination, unable to trust, not only his senses, but his own mental powers. This construction demonstrates Thomson's emphatic engagement with the ideals of the Enlightenment in its rejection of superstition in favour of rational thought and systematic scientific enquiry.

In this passage, Thomson reiterates the importance of society and human relationships; here again it is isolation from humanity which causes the greatest distress to the unfortunate swain. The realisation that he has not found his home amid the storm and is in fact 'Far from the tract, and blest abode of man' (l.367) brings despair and horror. This concept of sociability as man's defining and paramount faculty expresses both the proto-

Enlightenment ideals of Hutcheson, as previously suggested, as well as being a primary concern of eighteenth-century Humanism. Moreover, in these lines, Thomson hints at the dangers of superstition and the lack of imaginative control:

And every tempest, howling o'er his head,  
Renders the savage wilderness more wild.  
Then throng the busy shapes into his mind,  
Of cover'd pits, unfathomably deep,  
A dire descent! Beyond the power of frost,  
Of faithless bogs; of precipices huge,  
Smooth'd up with snow; and, what is land unknown,  
What water, of the still unfrozen eye,  
In the loose marsh, or solitary lake,  
Where the fresh fountain from the bottom boils. (ll.368-378)

While these lines continue to express the severity of the storm, Thomson also suggests that it is not solely the adversity of nature which defeats the shepherd, but rather he is defeated by his own superstitious fears, encouraged by the panic and despair which erode his faculty of reason and mental control. It is the 'busy shapes' (l.371) that overwhelm his mind and conjure the hellish imagery of descent, recalling a Miltonic landscape of hell in the unfathomable 'cover'd pits' (l.372), the 'dire descent' (l.373), the 'faithless bogs' (l.374) and, perhaps the most hellishly Miltonic of all, the 'solitary lake,/ Where the fresh fountain from the bottom boils.' (ll.378-9). This passage enacts a shift between the external landscape of winter and the internal landscape of an overwrought and superstition-fuelled mind and as such, this passage holds a warning against the loss of control which leads to susceptibility to delusion and superstition, neither of which have any place in the Augustan world of civilised sociability and order.

Thomson thus warns against the pitfalls of imagination and superstitious fears and yet remains at pains to demonstrate human benevolence in the sentimental depiction of the cottager's death and his bereaved and bewildered family in the following lines. The reader is encouraged to feel sympathy for this afflicted man and his family and is thus led into a position of elevated moral virtue. The reader experiences both the distanced, progressive viewpoint of realising the folly of the swain, while simultaneously deriving a sense of moral virtue from the sympathetic human response elicited by the climax of this episode when Thomson depicts the warmth of the unreachable cottage, complete with 'official wife' (l.385), 'fire fair-blazing' (l.386) and the 'little children, peeping out/ Into the mingling rack' (ll.387-8) who in vain seek the return of their father and who recall the offspring of virtuous love in 'Spring'. Their father, meantime, is seized by an awful, or

awesomely animated winter, who steals over the unfortunate cottager and robs him of 'friends' (l.391), of sense, of motion and ultimately of humanity and life.<sup>120</sup>

The affective power of this passage derives from the image of the cottager's family in their warm abode, contrasting with the cold and isolated death of the cottager; this notion of isolation as being the worst fate to befall man runs through the entire text of *The Seasons*. In 'Winter' this concept is articulated through the pathetic tale of the cottager which, as I have suggested, expresses ideas that were to become central in the development of Scottish Enlightenment philosophy and can thus be seen as an expression of Thomson's engagement with his own cultural and intellectual background. However, the notion of man as, above all, a social creature, is also central to Augustan Humanism of the kind expressed by Pope and others. The text thus evidences the blending of ideas which Thomson no doubt imbibed in the intellectual climate of pre-Enlightenment Edinburgh, with a peculiarly Augustan form of Humanism.

'Winter', though not the conventional seasonal setting for georgic nor pastoral, does employ the georgic topos of rural retirement, a topos which is evident throughout *The Seasons* and which is frequently twinned with the theme of sociability and the importance of human relationships. In 'Winter', we see the poet sheltering from the sublime power of the season with the ancient philosophers, poets and, of course, friends: 'Thus in some deep retirement would I pass/ The winter-glooms, with friends of various turn,' (ll.568-9). In the discussion of the civilised arts of philosophy and history, dwells a 'portion of divinity' (l.591), the redemptive power 'which lights the glorious flame/ Of patriots and heroes' (ll.592-3), or, failing in such intellectual grandeur, the company of choice few will at least offer the consolation of laughter, 'deep-shaking every nerve' (l.614). The georgic ideal of rural retirement thus becomes a vehicle for the expressive of both proto-Enlightenment philosophy and Augustan Humanism; central to both is the notion of sociability and this ideal informs every one of Thomson's *Seasons*:

Oh knew he but his happiness, of men  
The happiest he! Who far from public rage,  
Deep in the vale, with a choice few retir'd,  
Drinks the pure pleasures of a RURAL LIFE. ('Autumn' ll.1135-39)

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<sup>120</sup> The characters of the cottagers are also significant in terms of the development of the eighteenth-century Scottish literary tradition: these cottagers are surely the precursors of the cottars in Fergusson's 'Farmer's Ingle' and of Burns's 'Cottar's Saturday Night'

This then, is Augustan retirement and solitude, which is no solitude at all, rather it is the company of ‘choice few’ whose wit and wisdom acts as a moral guide and a human consolation in the face of the sublime. This also alludes to the idealisation of the notion of political retirement which becomes very important to Thomson and is evidenced by his inclusion of the ‘Hagley Park’ passage in the 1744 edition of *The Seasons*.

‘Winter’ thus blends early Scottish Enlightenment theories (theories which value rationality and sympathy for fellow beings) with Augustan ideals against a landscape inspired by Thomson’s youth in the Scottish Borders. In this, Thomson can be seen as drawing on all of the cultural material available to him in the newly created British state. Despite Thomson’s support for and promotion of British unity, he, the Scot in London, is well aware of the complexities involved in imaginative constructions of a unified British identity. His awareness of these complexities and differences is demonstrated by the apparent contradictions and tensions within the text, a text which rejects the tyranny of genre by conflating the georgic with nostalgic pastoralism and which incorporates the many discourses of control current in the period whilst demonstrating their fragility in the face of the natural sublime. The constant negotiation between extremes and opposites and Thomson’s unceasing quest for variety allows Thomson to acknowledge differences, whether national, political or philosophical and to demonstrate that such oppositions can co-exist within a united whole, each complementing the other and enriching the whole by their very variety. Much of this poetic negotiation, which ultimately seeks to unite opposites and negate extremes, is expressed through the conflation of classical modes further serves to align Thomson with his contemporaries, contemporaries such as Ramsay, Pope and Gay. These poetic contemporaries, despite their overt allegiance to cultural political and religious ideals in direct opposition to those espoused by Thomson, demonstrate a similar conflation of the pastoral with the georgic, thus demonstrating, not only the development of these literary modes in the period but a collective poetic engagement with the British state which demanded a varied and complex poetic in order to express the competing discourses and conflicting ideologies of the early eighteenth-century.

#### **Chapter Four: Comparison and Conclusions.**

In the previous chapters I have approached the work of Ramsay and Thomson individually. I have adopted this approach in order to enable detailed analysis of the work of each and not with the intention of emphasising any notions of difference or opposition between the work of Ramsay and Thomson. Rather, I have sought, through detailed textual analysis, to illuminate particular thematic and stylistic trends that can be traced through the texts discussed. Focusing on the manipulation of pastoral and georgic conventions in the work of both Ramsay and Thomson has implicitly included both writers in an Augustan literary context which invoked classical authority by its reliance on the adaptation of classical modes and genres. Such neoclassicism is an inherent feature of the corpora of both writers.

The examination of Augustanism in Ramsay and Thomson has illuminated shared thematic strands which can be identified as being specific concerns or preoccupations of the early eighteenth-century writer, particularly, but not exclusively, the Scottish writer in the early eighteenth century. Political comment and panegyric is one such area of concern for both Ramsay and Thomson, as is the didactic voice which seeks to promote virtue, tolerance and control. The move towards progress and improvement through the process of rational enquiry and cultural dissemination is another defining characteristic of the period which is an important thematic strand in the literature of the period. Unity, and the notion of union is another fascinating strand and one which is expressed by both writers in the complex interplay of the pastoral and the georgic which I have argued is embodied by texts as apparently different as *The Gentle Shepherd* and *The Seasons*. Having identified these preoccupations in the work of each writer, I shall now compare the treatment of these shared thematic concerns as well as the way in which each has manipulated neoclassical modes as vehicles for complex poetic expression. Finally, this comparative and concluding chapter will broaden the scope of my argument to include other significant contemporary texts and thus go some way to relocate Ramsay and Thomson within a broader and more complex context whilst redefining the term 'Scottish Augustan' to suggest a vital engagement with a broad literary context in which Scottish writers had much that was original and worthy to contribute to the creation of a new British, rather than a Scottish or an English, literature.

#### **The Politics of Form.**

While it has been my intention to illuminate points of convergence between Thomson and Ramsay, there are of course obvious differences between *The Seasons* and *The Gentle Shepherd*. The most obvious major differences are those of form and language. Clearly, the



blank verse of *The Seasons* is very different from the favoured couplet of Ramsay, though both schemes were widely used in the period. Furthermore, as a survey of poetic form in the period reveals, the deployment of such different forms has both political and generic implications. An investigation of how and to what effect these forms were deployed is revealing of the existence of a politics of form emerging in a period so marked by faction and polemic.

It is difficult today to consider blank verse without considering Milton and for a writer in the early part of the eighteenth century it was impossible. Furthermore, Milton, as master of the form and author of the only true English epic, had quite deliberately politicised his choice of blank verse. In the second edition of *Paradise Lost* (1674) Milton prefaced his masterpiece with a justification of his use of blank verse which relates not only form to meaning, but form to politics. Given the revered position occupied by Milton and his alleged influence on Thomson's use of highly ornate, Latinate blank verse, it is worth examining Milton's preface in some detail:

The measure is in English heroic verse without rime, as that of Homer in Greek, and of Virgil in Latin-rime being no necessary adjunct or true ornament of poem or good verse, [...] but the invention of a barbarous age, to set off wretched matter and lame metre; graced indeed by the use of some famous modern poets, carried away by custom, but much to their own vexation, hindrance and constraint. [...] This neglect then of rime so little is to be taken for defect, though it may seem so perhaps to vulgar readers, that it is rather to be esteemed an example set the first in English of ancient liberty recovered to heroic poem from the troublesome and modern bondage of riming.<sup>121</sup>

This preface does much more than merely artistically justify Milton's choice of blank verse as a form appropriate to his epic poem; in these lines, Milton renders his choice of blank verse pregnant with political implications of radical republicanism and liberty from established notions of what is appropriate in terms of poetic form. Implicit in his defence of the use of blank verse which breaks with contemporary poetic convention, perpetuated by those 'famous modern poets, carried away by custom' and enslaved by the 'invention of a barbarous age', is his defence of a radical political regime, the Interregnum government who, in defence of liberty and in defiance of 'constraint' and 'bondage', executed the reigning Stuart monarch, Charles I. So weighty are Milton's motives that, for a poet in the

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<sup>121</sup> John Milton 'Preface' to *Paradise Lost* in *The English Poems of John Milton* (London: Humphrey Milford, 1940) p. 112

early eighteenth century, the use of blank verse in a long poem, a long poem which treats of the state of the nation, as Thomson's *Seasons* does, must be aware of the political sceptre that is implicitly wielded by such a poetic. Certainly, in Thomson's support for the Hanoverian succession (whether the current monarch, or later, when Thomson's allegiances shifted in support of Frederick, Prince of Wales and figurehead of the 'patriot' or 'dissident' Whigs) and rejection of Jacobite sympathies for the displaced Stuarts, we can identify political leanings which, in their rejection of established heredity, can be aligned with the far more radical agenda of Milton. That said, Milton was (and is) such a canonical poetic figure, that many poets refer to his genius (even Ramsay, who refers to 'Blind John's' 'kittle phrase'<sup>122</sup>) and attempt to emulate him, with or without an accompanying espousal of radical or republican beliefs. However, it is reasonable to suggest a Miltonic influence on Thomson; certainly, critics and commentators have referred to Thomson's Miltonic blank verse, despite as I will argue, obvious differences between the two styles. Furthermore, I would suggest that the language of Milton's 'Preface' aligns the two poets. The emphasis on liberty and on the freedom from 'constraint' which for Milton was expressed and embodied by blank verse can be traced through all of Thomson's poetry, not only *The Seasons* with all its impulse towards a controlled liberty.

However, it is significant that in Paul Fussell's invaluable study, *Poetic Meter and Poetic Form*, he chooses to exemplify the different styles of blank verse by the examples of Milton and of Thomson, specifically through the examples of *Paradise Lost* and of 'Winter'. Identifying that the decisions faced by the writer of blank verse are concerned with the choice between the enjambment favoured by Milton, or by the near end-stopped lines of Thomson, Fussell comments:

The technique of the Thomson passage ['Winter', ll.17-26] is very close to that of the end-stopped heroic couplet: we are moved forward by line units and almost by syntactical units of predictable length and weight, and the effect is one of closure, of taking up a thing only when the thing preceding it is entirely finished. The view is analytic: the materials are being accumulated, like mosaic, piece by piece. But in the Milton passage the enjambment helps transmit a very different effect, an effect of strenuousness, of an energy that

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<sup>122</sup> Allan Ramsay 'Richy and Sandy, A Pastoral On the Death of Joseph Addison, Esq.' In *The Works of Allan Ramsay Vol. 1* eds., B. Martin and J. Oliver (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1952) pp.106-11

disdains containment, bursting through the line endings as if they constituted impious bars to liberty.<sup>123</sup>

It is natural that Thomson should employ a more constrained, tightly organised form of blank verse in 'Winter'. 'Winter' is defined by Thomson as being a season of constraint; its 'expansive atmosphere is cramp'd with cold' ('Spring' l.28) in a characteristically Thomsonian negotiation between freedom, suggested by the adjective 'expansive' and control, or constraint, suggested by the adjective 'cramp'd'. Indeed, the opening lines of 'Winter', and much of what follows, are all end-stopped by punctuation of some form or other. Furthermore, this apparent reluctance on the part of Thomson to surrender entirely to the freedom and fluidity offered by Miltonic blank verse characterises all of *The Seasons* and thus cannot be merely expressive of the 'cramp'd' nature of 'Winter'. The effect created by Thomson's tightly organised blank verse, which much more than Milton's, often eschews enjambment in favour of end-stopped lines is more than simply, as previously suggested, an impression of controlled freedom. Thomson's blank verse further creates, to borrow Fussell's terminology, an analytic or accumulative effect which seems to resist total poetic freedom and unity, becoming rather, a kind of poetic barrier to absolute liberty and unity.

It is significant that this interpretation of Thomson's blank verse suggests parallels with the heroic couplet, Ramsay's chosen form, and a rhyme scheme which presents a poetic surface of enclosed units. Despite certain parallels, however, it must be admitted that the poetic surface and structure of *The Seasons* remain very distinct from that of *The Gentle Shepherd*. There are several ways of accounting for the choices made by Ramsay and Thomson in conceiving the structure for these two texts, and it must be remembered that elsewhere in their corpora, both poets employed other forms. Firstly, I have suggested parallels between the political (and perhaps religious) leanings of Thomson and Milton which could account for Thomson's choice of blank verse. This could also account for Ramsay's decision to avoid a verse form so redolent with republican, anti-Stuart and Protestant connotations. The rhyming couplet in the period, on the other hand, is associated with Dryden, Pope and Gay, all poets who expressed Stuart and Tory loyalty, thus aligning them politically with Ramsay. This explanation, however, fails to convince in its simplicity and in its failure to account for other forms employed by these poets. Thomson's early poetry, for example, yields many examples of rhyming couplets. Perhaps more useful,

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<sup>123</sup> Paul Fussell *Poetic Meter and Poetic Form* (New York: McGraw-Hill Inc., 1979) p.112-3

particularly in the context of the present discussion, is to examine these formal choices in terms of modal or generic decorum.

A brief survey of georgic poetry in the eighteenth century reveals a tradition reliant on blank verse as its primary form of expression. One of the first eighteenth-century examples of a native georgic, John Philips's *Cyder* (1708), is expressed in blank verse, as are other well known poems in the georgic mode. John Dyer's *The Fleece* (1757) employs blank verse, and Christopher Smart's *The Hop Garden* (1752) draws attention to the verse form in the opening verse paragraph: 'Under what sign to pluck the crop, and how/ To cure, and in capacious sacks infold,/ I teach in verse Miltonian' (*The Hop Garden* ll.5-7).<sup>124</sup> This not only signals an engagement with a Miltonic tradition, but appears to link the use of blank verse with a voice of authority and thus with didacticism, a primary function of the georgic mode. Furthermore, a brief survey of eighteenth-century georgic poetry indicates, as I have previously suggested, that the georgic mode was a British mode. Its didacticism and ability to incorporate variety made it ideal for exploitation as a means to creatively engage with the notion of Britain, as well as promote the interests and resources of the different parts of the island. John Dyer was Welsh and several well known georgics were penned by Scotsmen. John Armstrong's *The Art of Preserving Health* (1744), James Grainger's *The Sugar-Cane* (1764) as well as the topographical poem, 'The Country Seat' (1727) by Sir John Clerk of Penecuik in which the didactic tone and impulse towards improvement arguably situate it within a tradition of Scottish georgics, suggest that the georgic was a truly British mode and that blank verse was the form deemed most appropriate for georgics. One notable exception to this tradition is provided by Stephen Duck's *The Thresher's Labour* (1736). This work has been termed an anti-georgic in its depiction of what John Barrell would perhaps term 'the dark side of the landscape', or perhaps, the dark side of labour. *The Thresher's Labour* subverts the georgic mode's conventional glorification of labour by presenting the perspective of rural labour as seen by those who actually toil and reap little reward for their labour. Significantly, Duck's poem is written in couplets, more usually the preserve of the pastoral, perhaps because this poem seeks to represent the real voice of the rural workforce. The couplet hints at connections with song and with the ballad tradition which perhaps aligns this piece with a more realistic portrayal of rural life and folk culture.

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<sup>124</sup>Christopher Smart, *The Hop Garden* in *The Penguin Book of Pastoral Verse* eds., J. Barrell and J. Bull (London: Penguin, 1982) p.334

Indeed, Pope's *Pastorals*, Gay's *Shepherd's Week*, Ramsay's pastoral pieces and, to mention another excellent example eighteenth-century Scots pastoral expressed in the vernacular, Alexander Ross's *Helenore*, all employ the couplet, suggesting that this is the form most appropriate to the concerns of the pastoral. This then renders Ramsay's and Thomson's choice of forms in keeping with generic decorum. Furthermore, such notions of decorum can be seen as partially accounting for the linguistic registers employed by Ramsay in *The Gentle Shepherd* and by Thomson in *The Seasons*. The georgic poem is characterised by its mode of address; it is the voice of didacticism, of civic instruction. This precludes any serious attempt to render the georgic in a vernacular language; the georgic does not represent the voice of the people, rather it seeks to instruct the people, or, perhaps more accurately, it seeks to instruct the landowners and landlords. Conversely, the pastoral, in that it pretends to represent the voice of the rural shepherd, can quite appropriately be rendered in the vernacular, providing, of course, that this, as is the case with *The Gentle Shepherd*, is handled with sensitivity and elements of realistic representation.

However, it cannot be denied that Ramsay's use of the vernacular, however decorous, is also an act of cultural and linguistic patriotism. That said, there can be no doubt that Ramsay engaged with imaginative constructions of Britain and of Britishness following the Union of 1707. Such constructions, as evidenced in poems such as 'The Prospect of Plenty' were largely motivated by a desire to present Scotland as an equal partner in union, one which would bring specific native qualities and resources to such a partnership. Ramsay may have opposed the Union of 1707, but, seeing it as irrevocably entrenched, he seized the opportunity afforded by his poetic platform to champion the virtues of his native land. However, it is possible to argue that Thomson, in the particular quality of his blank verse and in some of his thematic preoccupations enacts a similar resistance to union, or certainly, resistance to a union which would subsume the 'native grace' ('Autumn' l.209) of Scotland.

### **Resisting Unity.**

Susan Manning's fascinating study *Fragments of Union: Making Connections in Scottish and American Writing* examines the way in which the syntax and semantics of eighteenth-century Scottish writing, which she connects, in its preoccupation with political union with writing from the American Civil War period, reflects anxieties about or resistance to union. Manning's study is by no means restricted to those writers who were openly hostile to political union, but rather argues for a shared, at times subconscious, 'grammar of the

imagination'<sup>125</sup> which stylistically informs much of the writing of the period. Manning relates the two available models for political union- union by federation and union by incorporation- to their literary equivalents represented by, respectively, paratactic structures of writing and hypotactic structures of writing:

Structurally, federation is an association of equals, in a sequential chain, as it were, while incorporation is hierarchical and absorptive, a smaller partner swallowed by the larger. Principles of association govern the first, those of subordination the second. In syntactic terms, federation corresponds to parataxis, incorporation to hypotaxis. *If*, as this book argues, grammar is in very specific senses a political issue in Scottish and American writing, so (it was recognised from the very first) debates about political identity cannot be separated from questions of syntax and semantics in the telling of a national story.<sup>126</sup>

If we then broaden the terms of Manning's argument to include poetic forms, and situate this idea in the context of my previous discussion of poetic form, it becomes apparent that Ramsay's rhyming couplets, which act as accumulative building blocks in the creation of an overall structure whilst retaining their original, enclosed integrity and identity logically and formally express a resistance to union in keeping with Ramsay's anti-Union stance. However, the terms of this argument are equally interesting when applied to the work of James Thomson. Indeed, Manning actually employs Thomson's *Liberty* to exemplify her argument:

The moral allegory [of *Liberty*] is clear, the incorporative message is unequivocal. But the poem itself is structurally and dynamically conflicted in ways that imply that its 'British' resolution may be incompletely formed, and achieved at some cost.<sup>127</sup>

This analysis is also appropriate to *The Seasons*. I have previously suggested that Thomson's blank verse is in itself apparently resistant to total unity, or to incorporation into the overall structure of the text. Syntactically, Thomson's language is complex and convoluted, presenting challenges, not only to the reader, but to a reading of the text as symbolic of unity; it is this, as I have suggested which differentiates Thomson's blank verse from that of Milton's. Moreover, the digressive quality of the text (which prompted

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<sup>125</sup> Susan Manning *Fragments of Union: Making Connections in Scottish and American Writing* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002) p.32

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.9-10

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p.77

Samuel Johnson to criticise its lack of structure) and Thomson's frequent insertion of embedded tales all resist surrender to a wholly unified surface. Furthermore, the variety of *The Seasons* does at times become undeniably contradictory. This tension is often created, as my analysis of 'Spring' suggests, by the juxtaposition of, or negotiation between pastoral and georgic material. This negotiation enables Thomson to incorporate and embrace the notion of difference within the text, just as it allows Thomson to articulate nostalgia for a lost age, or perhaps, for a lost nation. The idea of union is most conspicuously broached by Thomson in 'Autumn'. Despite the discourse of union which informs this season, Thomson can be seen, akin to Ramsay in, for example, 'The Prospect of Plenty' or 'Tartana, Or the Plaid', to be at pains to promote the positive virtues of the Scottish nation. These ideas are exemplified in the embedded pastoral tale of Lavinia and Palemon. The marriage plot aptly symbolises political union and the georgically informed discourse of ownership expressed by Palemon encapsulates Thomson's fears for the interests and future of Scotland, a Scotland who is then embodied by the impoverished nobility and 'native grace' ('Autumn' l.209) of Lavinia. Furthermore, the overall structure of *The Seasons*, while it embodies both the progressive impulse of Thomson's politics as well the ultimate authority of God, is an example of what Susan Manning would term union by federation. The four seasons were united in one single text in 1730, but each season resolutely retains its own character and identity within the whole. Thomson then accepts union as a means to improve the condition of Scotland, but refuses to submit entirely to a union of incorporation; he embraces the notion of unity if it is a symbiotic partnership of equals, but has anxieties over a union which would erode the specific cultural identity of one of the partners.

Thomson's pastoral tale of love clearly shows the influence of Ramsay's *The Gentle Shepherd*, as does Alexander Ross's pastoral narrative, *Helenore, Or The Fortunate Shepherdess* (1768), an important Scots pastoral which has been somewhat neglected by the critical tradition. As suggested above, pastoral literature's primary concern with love is particularly appropriate to the concerns of the Scottish writer following the Union of 1707 given its symbolic potential for representing the idea of union. This perhaps accounts for Thomson's inclusion of pastoral material within what is ostensibly a georgic text; this in turn creates some of the tension, or contradiction that can be detected in *The Seasons*.

Thomson's Lavinia, Ramsay's Peggy and Ross's Nory are pastoral heroines distinguished by their virtue, loyalty and a certain stoicism in the face of adversity. It is these qualities which, in all three plots, captivate a man of apparently higher rank than they (although of course Patie is unaware of this when he first courts Peggy). Significantly, in

terms of a reading which accepts the marriage plot as symbolic of another kind of union, it transpires, in all three cases, that the rustic heroine is actually of gentle or noble blood, displaced by fate, or by political upheaval and is, through marriage, restored to her elevated position. Ramsay's drama is of course informed by the Jacobite impulse towards restoration, but arguably, Patie, the Gentle Shepherd himself, could fulfil this symbolic function, without the need for a similar transformation of Peggy's fortunes. Such an interpretation of the pastoral love plot renders it difficult to read this as anything other than patriotic discourse indicative of anxieties over union and a desire to remind the audience of Scotland's noble history. The similarity of the symbolism of these three pastoral love plots aligns these poets and points to a collective exploitation of the conventions of pastoral as a means to propagate patriotic discourse.

### **Enlightenment and Improvement.**

The pastoral love plot, however, can be interpreted on another level, one which again seems particularly appropriate to the preoccupations of the Scottish writer in the early-Enlightenment period.

John Dwyer notes,

The significance of the love bond in enlightened Scottish thought has not received the attention it deserves. It was no accident that that one of the most important works of the early Scottish Enlightenment, Allan Ramsay's *The Gentle Shepherd* (1725), was written in the form of a pastoral, the genre that, as Fontanelle suggested, speaks the language of love more than any other. Ramsay defined love as an affectionate rather than a romantic relationship, and he suggested that love was as much a mental as a sexual bond. The relationship between Patie and Peggy provides a microcosm of the harmonious society.<sup>128</sup>

The idea of a virtuous and harmonious love bond as representing in microcosm a model for a harmonious and benevolent society as well as providing the very basis of such a society is a central concept in early-Enlightenment thought. Francis Hutcheson employed this discourse in his *Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*; and this kind of love bond is exemplified by the relationship between Patie and Peggy in *The Gentle Shepherd*, that is, a love bond tempered by prudence, or as it is expressed by Hutcheson: 'we see something amiable in every Action which flows from kind Affections or Passions

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<sup>128</sup> John Dwyer 'Introduction-A 'Peculiar Blessing': Social Converse in Scotland from Hutcheson to Burns' in *Sociability and Society in Eighteenth-Century Scotland* eds., John Dwyer and Richard B. Sher (Edinburgh: The Mercat Press, 1993) p.18



towards others; if they may be conducted by Prudence.’<sup>129</sup> The idea of the virtuous love bond, tempered by ‘prudence’, as Dwyer rightly observes, informs the discourse of love in *The Gentle Shepherd*. However, it is equally important to Thomson’s depiction of human relationships in *The Seasons*. I have previously discussed Thomson’s engagement with enlightened ideas of benevolence and compassion with regard to ‘Winter’, but early-Enlightenment discourse also informs the discussion of love in ‘Spring’. Indeed, the argument prefaced to ‘Spring’ underlines these connections. Thomson announces that ‘Spring’ will conclude with ‘a Dissuasive from the wild and irregular passions of love, opposed to that of a purer and more reasonable kind’ (‘Spring’, *The Argument*). Thomson’s discussion of love which concludes ‘Spring’ develops this idea in a discourse of control which speaks not only of Augustan ideals, but which expresses early-Enlightenment social ideology in its treatment of virtuous love as the basis for an ideal society. In Thomson’s depiction of love based on unruly and irrational passion as opposed to settled and virtuous love, love becomes a destructive force, damaging not only to the individual, but to the very fabric of society. The incorporation of these ideals is thus another point of convergence between Ramsay and Thomson, demonstrating the extent to which both writers sought, through a creative medium, to express ideas which were in intellectual currency in early-Enlightenment Scotland.

Moreover, the impulse towards improvement and progress which informs much of *The Seasons* and all its attendant emphasis on rational thought can be read as indicative not only of Thomson’s political allegiances, but of early-Enlightenment philosophic ideals. Thomson can be seen to clearly reject superstition and irrationality as delusive and dangerous throughout *The Seasons*, and the Newtonian discourse that Thomson employs acts as a foil to such irrational and backward looking superstition. As Philip Connell contends, ‘the poem identifies popular sedition and Jacobite rebellion with the delusions of vulgar superstition which Thomson consistently opposes to the enlightened ‘philosophic eye’ of Newtonian science’<sup>130</sup> This identification of superstition with Jacobitism (and also with Roman Catholicism) referred to by Connell, is entirely deflated by *The Gentle Shepherd*, ‘The Prospect of Plenty’ and indeed much of Ramsay’s corpus. Largely due to

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<sup>129</sup> Francis Hutcheson *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (London: Innys, Osborn and Chandler, 1725) p.176

<sup>130</sup> Philip Connell ‘Newtonian Physico-Theology and the Varieties of Whiggism in Thomson’s *The Seasons*’ in *The Huntingdon Library Quarterly* 72.1 (2003) p.4

the incorporation of georgic material, for example as it is embodied by the figure of Sir William Worthy in *The Gentle Shepherd*, Ramsay demonstrates an agenda very much concerned with ideas of improvement, whether through agricultural improvement, or by the acquisition of knowledge, represented by Patie's self-improving reading habits. Furthermore, Ramsay is clearly more concerned with realism than with superstition; the character of Bauldy represents ignorant superstition, superstition which is reduced to the realm of the ridiculous by Ramsay's comic sub-plot. Moreover, Ramsay can, in his pursuit of realism, be said to be less seduced by the creative possibilities offered by portrayal of superstitious notions than Thomson. At several points in *The Seasons*, Thomson exploits the dramatic and poetic potential of superstition, for example, in his depiction of the response of the villagers to the appearance of the comet in 'Summer' and in 'Autumn's' corresponding meteor storms. While these scenes are ostensibly painted in order to deflate the superstitious beliefs of the villagers, Thomson's apparent relish and enthusiasm in indulging the poetic potential of these scenes hints at a certain enjoyment in the diverting qualities of these moments which goes somewhat beyond his didactic purpose. Ramsay however, resists the comic and dramatic potential offered by the literal slapping down of Bauldy by the educated Mause; this incident takes place off-stage and is only reported to the audience. This is surely indicative of Ramsay's rejection of superstition and irrationality; by his refusal to enact this scene on-stage, Ramsay suggests that those who hold such beliefs are few and are isolated from the community.

The exploitation of Newtonian discourse which is so characteristic of *The Seasons* does not admittedly find its reflection in *The Gentle Shepherd*. There is, however, a definably rational, realistic and arguably empirical thrust to the drama. In Ramsay's very specific and georgic descriptions of the locale of the play, as well as the reliance on a scientific taxonomy in his cataloguing of fish types in 'The Prospect of Plenty', there can be detected a certain incorporation of scientific discourse which is again facilitated by the incorporation of georgic material. Moreover, Ramsay, like Thomson, recognised the genius and importance of Newton's groundbreaking contribution to the realm of scientific knowledge; both penned elegies to Newton exalting his achievements. Indeed, celebrations of progress in the realm of experimental science, facilitated largely by the work of The Royal Society can be viewed as a subject appropriate to a Jacobite writer such as Ramsay; the inception of the Royal Society coincided with and was patronised by Charles II

following the Restoration in 1660.<sup>131</sup> Therefore, despite Newton's association with the established Whig government, the realm of scientific discourse was not solely the preserve of Whig supporters of the Hanoverian succession. Thus Ramsay's work punctures any association between superstition and Jacobitism just as Ramsay demonstrates that literary Jacobitism, despite the obvious nostalgia for a lost Stuart Golden Age, does not necessarily indicate an opposition to improvement.

### **Conclusions.**

It has been my intention to draw attention to certain points of contact between Allan Ramsay and James Thomson and to challenge the portrayal of these two contemporaries as literary opposites. *The Gentle Shepherd* and *The Seasons* are very different texts, but perhaps not as radically different or opposed as has been previously thought. These texts are expressed through different forms and poetic and linguistic mediums and they undoubtedly act as vehicles for the political agendas of their authors. However, the interplay of the pastoral and georgic modes within *The Seasons* and *The Gentle Shepherd* enables more complex and at times conflicting ideologies to surface within the texts. For Thomson, the inclusion of pastoral material within the ostensibly georgic mode of *The Seasons* allows him to express a certain native patriotism within the framework of a text which ultimately defends the Union of 1707 and the Hanoverian succession. Akin to Sir John Clerk of Penecuik, Thomson's pro-Union agenda does not preclude a patriotic love of Scotland nor a desire to promote Scottish interests within the framework of a unified British state. Furthermore, as I have suggested, the conflation of the pastoral with the georgic enables Thomson to symbolically articulate his anxiety about, to borrow Susan Manning's terms, a union of incorporation as opposed to a desirable union of federation.

Similarly, Ramsay's subtle incorporation of georgic material into the Scots pastoral world of *The Gentle Shepherd* introduces a didactic element which is both georgic and Augustan and which sets a premium value on enlightened notions of improvement, and indeed, self-improvement. In doing so, Ramsay simultaneously punctures the perceived opposition between Jacobitism and progressive improvement. Both writers seize the opportunity offered by the conflation of the pastoral and the georgic as a means to engage in creative constructions of Britain, and of Britishness; constructions which, for both

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<sup>131</sup> See Margery Purver *The Royal Society: Concept and Creation* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967)

Ramsay and Thomson, emphatically include the contribution of Scotland in the formation of a new British state. Similarly, both Ramsay and Thomson, through their manipulation of the pastoral and georgic modes, seek to promote a vision of Scotland as a land of plenty and of the Scots as a hardy and resourceful nation whose specific and positive contribution to Britain is considerable.

Finally, both can be seen as operating within an Augustan context but as expressing the Augustan ideals from a uniquely Scottish perspective. This unique perspective and the attendant creative possibilities of such a perspective, (evidenced by the way in which Ramsay redefines the boundaries of possibility in regard to the creation of a native pastoral) has wide ranging implications in terms of influencing the pastoralism of Burns, and even Wordsworth. Ramsay and Thomson are thus united in their expression of a specifically Scottish Augustanism. As such, these Scottish Augustans must be viewed not as imitators, but as innovators whose contribution to an emerging British poetic<sup>132</sup> in the period cannot be overestimated.

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<sup>132</sup> That is, a British poetic which incorporates regional and national discourses, preoccupations and literary legacies from all parts of the British state. The creation of such a poetic was instrumental in the forging of a British Romanticism which can be seen to utilise literary regionalism and has definable links with the literature of sensibility which itself was informed by the moral theories of Hutcheson, Hume and Smith. See also, Howard Weinbrot *Britannia's Issue: The Rise of British Literature from Dryden to Ossian*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) p.1. In the introductory comments to this magisterial work, Weinbrot observes, 'How does a great nation determine its identities? In Britain's case, slowly and by accident more than design; by processes that encourage both change and stability, both reluctant reaching out to alien strains and insistence on apparently native power and virtues. The new blend is an often discordant *concordia discors* that can stimulate literary greatness. Such, I shall argue, is one among many approximate shapes of historical, intellectual, and literary events from the mid-1660s to the mid-1760s in Britain.'

## Appendix 1

### Editions of *The Seasons* from 1726 -1748

The following appendix is intended to demonstrate, not only the popularity and wide circulation of *The Seasons* in all parts of Britain, but also to indicate the frequency and scope of Thomson's revisions.

The following information has been compiled from a number of sources, including appendix 1 of Ralph Cohen's *The Art of Discrimination*<sup>133</sup> and the database *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* (ECCO). For the purposes of the present discussion, I have only included full citations of the editions which appeared in Thomson's lifetime and so were subject to revisions and additions made by Thomson.

#### 1726

- Winter, A Poem* (London: J. Millan, 1726)  
*Winter, A Poem* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition) (London: J. Blandford for J. Millan, 1726)  
*Winter, A Poem* (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition) (London: J. Blandford for J. Millan, 1726)  
*Winter, A Poem* (4<sup>th</sup> Edition) (London: J. Blandford for J. Millan, 1726)  
*Winter, A Poem* (Dublin: T. Hume for W. Smith, 1726)

#### 1727

- Summer, A Poem* (London: J. Millan, 1727)  
*Summer, A Poem* (Dublin: R. Norris, 1727)

#### 1728

- Spring, A Poem* (London: A. Millar, 1728)  
*Winter, A Poem* (5<sup>th</sup> Edition) (London: J. Millan, 1728)  
*Summer, A Poem* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition) (London: J. Millan, 1728)  
*Spring, A Poem* (Dublin: S. Powell for G. Risk, G. Ewing and W. Smith, 1728)

#### 1729

- Spring, A Poem* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition) (London: A. Millar, 1729)

#### 1730

- Autumn, A Poem* (Dublin: S. Powell for G. Risk, G. Ewing and W. Smith, 1730)  
*Autumn, A Poem* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition) (London: N. Blandford for J. Millan, 1730)  
*Poems, viz. Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter. A Hymn on the Seasons. To the Memory of Sir Isaac Newton. And Britannia.* (Dublin: S. Powell for G. Risk, G. Ewing and W. Smith, 1730)  
*Winter, a Poem, A Hymn to the Seasons, A Poem to the Memory of Sir Isaac Newton, and Britannia, a Poem.* (London: J. Millan, 1730)

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<sup>133</sup> Ralph Cohen *The Art of Discrimination: Thomson's The Seasons and the Language of Criticism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964) pp.472-507

*Winter, a Poem, A Hymn to the Seasons, A Poem to the Memory of Sir Isaac Newton, and Britannia, a poem.* (London: J. Millan, 1730) (with an illustration of Winter)  
*Winter, A Poem. With large addition and amendments. By James Thomson. To which is added His three following poems, viz. A Hymn on the Seasons. To the Memory of Sir Isaac Newton. And Britannia.* (Dublin: S. Powell for G. Risk, G. Ewing and W. Smith, 1730)  
*Summer, A Poem* (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition with additions) (London: J. Millan, 1730)  
*Summer, A Poem. With large Additions* (Dublin: S. Powell for G. Risk, G. Ewing and W. Smith, 1730)  
*The Seasons, A Hymn, A Poem to the Memory of Sir Isaac Newton. And Britannia.* (illustrated by B. Picart and J. Clark ) (London: J. Millan and A. Millar, 1730)  
*The Seasons, A Poem.* (London: J. Millan and A. Millar, 1730)  
*The Seasons* (illustrated by William Kent, N. Tardieu) (London: J. Millan and A. Millar, 1730)<sup>134</sup>

### 1731

*Spring, A Poem* (second edition) (London: A. Millar, 1731)

### 1734

*Spring, A Poem* (second edition<sup>135</sup>) (London: A. Millar, 1734)  
*Winter, A Poem, A hymn on the Seasons. A Poem to the memory of Sir Isaac Newton, and Britannia.* (London: J. Millan, 1734)

### 1735

*The Four Seasons, and other poems.* (London: J. Millan and A. Millar, 1735)  
*Summer, A Poem* (fourth edition) (London: J. Millan, 1735)

### 1736

*The Works of Mr. James Thomson* 2 vols. (London: A. Millar, 1736)

### 1738

*The Works of Mr. James Thomson in two volumes.* (London: A. Millar, 1738)

### 1740

*Spring, A Poem* (second edition) (Dublin: S. Powell for G. Risk, G. Ewing and W. Smith, 1740)  
*Summer, A Poem* (fourth edition) (Dublin: S. Powell for G. Risk, G. Ewing and W. Smith, 1740)

### 1744

*The Seasons* (London: A. Millar, 1744)  
*The Seasons* (London: A. Millar, 1744)  
*The Works of Mr James Thomson* (London: A. Millar, 1744)

### 1745

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<sup>134</sup> This is the edition used for the purposes of this dissertation. Some copies of this edition include the second edition of 'Britannia'; others include miscellaneous poems inserted at the end.

<sup>135</sup> This was a reprint of the 1731 edition with no revisions or additions.

*The Seasons* (London: A. Millar, 1745)<sup>136</sup>

1746

*The Seasons* (London: A. Millar, 1746)<sup>137</sup>

### Thomson's revisions

As is evident from the above list, *The Seasons* ran to many editions in Thomson's lifetime, and many more subsequently, being regularly reissued until the early twentieth century. The years 1800-1830 perhaps saw the most prolific interest in the publication of *The Seasons*, a fact which is significant in terms of Thomson's Romantic period popularity and his influence on Romantic poetry.

I have chosen, for the reasons cited earlier, to work with the first full text of *The Seasons* as it appeared in 1730, but it is worth perhaps saying a few words about Thomson's revisions of the poem.<sup>138</sup> Thomson's revisions of *The Seasons* are problematic for the scholar, being both frequent and extensive. They do, however, reveal not only Thomson's shifting political allegiances,<sup>139</sup> but arguably, the final text is more georgic in its specificity of landscape description and in the political implications of this kind of description.

The 1730 text of *The Seasons*, exclusive of the major additions to 'Winter', remained largely unchanged until 1738. After 1738, when, arguably, Thomson's political identity became aligned with the 'patriotic' or 'dissident' Whigs whose rallying point was provided by Frederick, Prince of Wales, the text of *The Seasons* was subject to radical authorial revision. The text of 1744 reveals a text much longer, and much altered. To this edition is added, for example, the 'Hagley Park' passage, now well known from John Barrell's excellent analysis.<sup>140</sup> This passage, issues of politics and patronage aside, reveals a specific engagement with the landscape which, in its topographical approach and

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<sup>136</sup> This was a reprint of the 1744 edition with no revisions or additions.

<sup>137</sup> Some copies of this edition include three pages of advertisements.

<sup>138</sup> A full account of Thomson's revisions and additions of *The Seasons* can be found in *The Complete Poetical Works of James Thomson* ed. J. Logie Robertson (London: Oxford University Press, 1908)

<sup>139</sup> Thomson's shifting political identity as evidenced by *The Seasons* is fully explored in Philip Connell 'Newtonian Physico-Theology and the varieties of Whiggism in James Thomson's *The Seasons*' in *The Huntingdon Library Quarterly* 72.1 (2003)

<sup>140</sup> John Barrell *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place 1730-1840: An Approach to the Poetry of John Clare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972)

allusions to the art of landscape gardening and to the cultivation and manipulation of landscape, is purely georgic in conception.

Another alteration which seems to me to be significant is the transference of the 'nameless nations' passage from its position in 'Spring', ll. 147-168 (1730) to 'Summer' (1744) ll.302-317. The context of the new position suggests a shift from the scientifically informed discourse of its original position to the political and imperial connotations of its final position and form as Kevis Goodman<sup>141</sup> argues in her complex reading of *The Seasons*.

Such revisions are indicative of Thomson's 'dissident' Whig identity to which he shifted after 1735. If such allegiances were not made evident in the text, Thomson leaves little doubt as to where his loyalties lie by the dedication of the 1744 edition which reads, 'To His Royal Highness Frederic Prince of Wales, This Poem Corrected and made less unworthy of his Protection, is with the utmost Gratitude and veneration, inscribed, by His Royal Highness's Most Obedient and Most Devoted Servant, James Thomson.' Moreover, and more relevant in terms of a discussion of the interplay between pastoral and georgic in *The Seasons*, the 1744 text, in its increased variety of subject matter and in its more specific and politicised passages of landscape description, evidences a shift from the pastoral to the purely georgic as a vehicle for Thomson's political and poetic concerns as the century progressed and social and economic change gathered pace and impetus, as did the united Britain's concern with imperial expansion.

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<sup>141</sup> 'this passage was modified in 1744 and moved to 'Summer', so that it could come into contact with the passage detailing the Imperial imagination [...] In this final location it is difficult not to hear, with Jill Campbell, this passage's 'nameless nations', 'unseen people' and 'winding citadel' as a peculiar re-entry of that evacuated imperial history' Kevis Goodman *Georgic Modernity and British Romanticism: Poetry and the Mediation of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) p.59



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