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**The Mutual Gaze: the Location(s) of Allan Ramsay and James Thomson within an
Emerging Eighteenth-Century British Literature.**

Melanie Clare Buntin

**Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy.**

**Scottish Literature
School of Critical Studies
University of Glasgow**

**Dedicated to the memory of
Carolyn Halcrow
1969-2011**

Abstract

The primary aim of this thesis is to bring Allan Ramsay (1684-1748) and James Thomson (1700-1748) into close critical contact for the first time and, in so doing, deconstruct the paradigm of opposition which has previously attached to these two contemporaries. The thesis posits that the separation of Ramsay and Thomson has been effected, retrospectively, by the twentieth-century Scottish critical tradition. The narrow, cultural essentialism exhibited by this body of scholarship has been effectively challenged in recent decades by the work of Gerard Carruthers, and revisionary 'Four Nations' approaches to late eighteenth-century British literature have done much to reinstate the importance of what were previously viewed as marginal or peripheral literary locations. Ramsay and Thomson, however, have never been fully united in literary and cultural terms. This thesis demonstrates that Ramsay and Thomson shared, not only a chronological context, but also a creative context informed by a reciprocal engagement with the work of the other and posits that the relationship between these two lowland Scottish writers can be conceived of in terms of a sustained mutual gaze.

James Thomson remains entrenched within an English literary canon, despite the efforts of Mary Jane Scott to reclaim him for his native country. Conversely, Allan Ramsay remains firmly rooted in his native Scottish soil as the father of the vernacular revival and the epitome of literary and cultural resistance to a supposed English cultural hegemony in the wake of the 1707 Act of Union between Scotland and England. It is true that Ramsay's and Thomson's creative trajectories exemplify the literary choices and cultural paths available to a Scottish writer in the years immediately following the Union of Parliaments, but to set them in creative opposition as a result of these choices is a critical commonplace which this thesis challenges.

Thomson spent the greater part of his literary career in and around London, whilst Ramsay remained in Edinburgh until his death; clearly the corpora of these two writers were conditioned by the locations of their production. Hence, the thematic structure of this thesis relies on the notion of location, both physical and literary. The first two chapters of this thesis, 'Edinburgh' and 'London', illustrate the urban contexts of both writers; in so doing they suggest that a mutual gaze was sustained, not only between Ramsay and Thomson, but that a similarly reciprocal relationship and network of influence existed between the literary and cultural centres of Edinburgh and London. The third chapter of this thesis, 'Nation', traces the fluid and nuanced literary responses to the concept of nation in a period when national and literary boundaries were in a state of flux. The fourth and

final chapter of this thesis, 'Land', explores the shifting aesthetic landscape of the period and, with an emphasis on mode and genre, demonstrates Ramsay's and Thomson's original contribution to an emerging British poetic, elucidated by an extended analysis of their poetry of place.

Contents:

➤ Abstract	p.iii
➤ Acknowledgements	p.vii
➤ Introduction	p.8
The Critical Locations of Allan Ramsay and James Thomson.....	p.8
Relocating Ramsay and Thomson.....	p.20
Definitions and Scope.....	p.23
A Note on Texts.....	p.27
➤ Chapter 1 – Edinburgh.....	p.28
The Easy Club.....	p.34
Grotesques, Athenians and <i>The Edinburgh Miscellany</i>	p.42
No ‘Merry Freedom’: Poets and Patrons.....	p.53
➤ Chapter 2 – London.....	p.66
Miscellaneous Identities.....	p.68
The Mutual Gaze and ‘The Morning Interview’.....	p.76
Cultural Capitals: Scots and London.....	p.86
‘Winter’, Sympathy and the Scottish Sublime.....	p.99
➤ Chapter 3 – Nation.....	p.104
Performing the Nation.....	p.116
The Oak, the Plough and the ‘Waters Wild’.....	p.126
➤ Chapter 4 – Land.....	p.140
The Aesthetic Landscape.....	p.141
The Moral and Modal Landscape of <i>The Castle of Indolence</i>	p.145

Satirical and Elegiac Locations.....	p.155
➤ Conclusion.....	p.166
➤ Index of Individual Works.....	p.170
➤ Bibliography.....	p.172

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Introduction

THE CRITICAL LOCATIONS OF ALLAN RAMSAY (1684-1758) AND JAMES THOMSON (1700-1748)

In a recent (and rare) anthology of eighteenth-century Scottish poetry, Christopher MacLachlan begins his introductory comments with the following justification: ‘It is necessary to begin by explaining why this anthology of eighteenth-century Scottish verse contains nothing by the greatest Scottish poet of the period, if not of all time, Robert Burns.’¹ The reason for the deliberate omission is that, in MacLachlan’s metaphorically dazzling yet undeniably accurate rhetoric,

Just as in a total eclipse of the sun the sky darkens so the lesser bodies whose light is usually lost in the solar glare become visible, so by a temporary and artificial occlusion of the star of Robert Burns may the lesser constellations of eighteenth-century Scottish poetry swim into our ken.²

There can be no doubt that Burns’s international poetic and cultural stature casts a long shadow over the earlier Scottish poets of the eighteenth century. Consequently, MacLachlan’s temporary eclipse of Robert Burns is both justifiable, and wholly welcome, to those whose interest in eighteenth-century Scottish poetry extends before and beyond the stellar career of Burns. However, the exclusion of Burns from this anthology is surely foregrounded by the title, *Before Burns*. Thus, on first reading the contents page of this anthology, the question should not be ‘Where’s Burns?’, but rather, ‘Where’s James Thomson?’ Had the subtitle been *Eighteenth-Century Scots Poetry*, rather than *Eighteenth-Century Scottish Poetry*, then the omission of Thomson would be reasonable, but, as MacLachlan so rightly insists in his introduction, the Scottish poets of the period were not entirely self-conscious about their linguistic choices and wrote in both Scots and English, ranging freely across a wide linguistic continuum. The breadth of this linguistic continuum is amply represented in the anthology. It contains, for example, ‘standard’ English works by writers such as Alexander Robertson of Struan’s ‘Liberty Preserved, Or Love Destroyed’ alongside works such as William Hamilton of Gilbertfield’s ‘Last Dying Words of Bonnie Heck’, which ranges along the length of the linguistic continuum of Scots and Scots English, simultaneously establishing a potent sub-genre of Scottish poetry in its use

¹ Christopher MacLachlan, Introduction to *Before Burns: Eighteenth-Century Scottish Poetry* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2002) p.ix

²Ibid., p.ix

of the ‘dying words’ trope (a poetic trope exploited to great satirical effect by Ramsay in ‘Lucky Spence’s last Advice’, discussed in chapter four of this thesis). Poems and songs by female Scottish writers are also included within MacLachlan’s anthology. These include Grizel Baillie’s Scots language piece ‘Werena my Heart Light I Wad Die’, Alison Rutherford Cockburn’s version of the song ‘The Flowers of the Forest’ expressed largely in ‘standard’ English laced with a little Scots vocabulary and pronunciation, as well as Jean Elliot’s reworking of the same song in her Scots language ‘The Flowers of the Forest’.³ Linguistic range then, does not provide the criteria for inclusion in this anthology. Nor does the anthology seek to exclude those poets who are often termed Anglo-Scots, such as David Mallet, whose ‘Birks of Invermay’ is included. Perhaps then, the Scottish poetry included in this anthology is deemed to engage creatively with Scottish themes, settings or preoccupations in some way. If this is the case then surely a selection from, for example, Thomson’s ‘Autumn’(1730) would have satisfied this criterion.

I ask the question, not to undermine the validity and usefulness of MacLachlan’s anthology - on the contrary, this anthology is an invaluable and timely presentation of the breadth and vitality of early-eighteenth century poetry - but rather to illustrate Thomson’s long and apparently unaccountable absence from the Scottish literary canon. Such a line of inquiry inevitably raises complex questions regarding what constitutes a Scottish poet or Scottish poetry, and related to this, what constitutes a national literature. Subsequently, any attempt to answer these questions and begin to theorise these distinctions leads to wider questions of canonicity and periodicity. These questions, in turn, highlight the complexities involved in applying such systems of classification to the shifting cultural and political climate of eighteenth-century Scotland, and Britain.

Thomson has, until recently, occupied an uneasy position in relation to Scottish literary history despite his widespread popularity and the fact that he was exactly contemporaneous with Allan Ramsay (who, along with Robert Fergusson contributes the most to MacLachlan’s anthology). Whilst his work enjoys a prominent position in

³ The full list of writers in this useful anthology is as follows: Grisell Baillie (1665-1746); Alexander Robertson of Struan (1668-1749); William Hamilton of Gilbertfield (1670-1751); Allan Ramsay (1685-1758); Robert Crawford (1695-1733); Alexander Ross (1699-1784); William Hamilton of Bangour (1704-54); David Mallet (1705-65); Alison Rutherford Cockburn (1712-94); Henry Erskine (1720-65); John Skinner (1721-1807); Tobias Smollet (1721-71); William Wilkie (1721-72); Jean Elliot (1727- 1805); James Beattie (1735-1803); Isobel Pagan (1741-1821); Alexander, Duke of Gordon (1743-1827); Hector Macneill (1746- 1818); Michael Bruce (1746-67); Robert Fergusson (1750-74); Anne Lindsay (1750-1825); John Tait (c.1750-1817); Elizabeth Hamilton (1758- 1851) and Joanna Baillie (1762-1851). It is worth noting that Ramsay himself, in his role as editor and anthologist of Scottish poetry and song, included works by several of these writers. MacLachlan observes: ‘Ramsay’s collections of Scottish verse *The Tea-Table Miscellany* (1723) and *The Ever Green* [...] include much of the most significant Scottish poetry of the previous two centuries, plus much contemporary work, including poems by Grizel Baillie, Robert Crawford, William Hamilton of Bangour and of course Ramsay himself, establish a sense a sense of a Scottish tradition of verse.’ Ibid., p.x

anthologies of eighteenth-century English literature, it has largely been omitted from narratives of eighteenth-century Scottish literature.⁴ There have, however, been rare challenges to this critical and canonical positioning of Thomson. Mary Jane Scott's monograph *James Thomson, Anglo- Scot* (1988), for example, seeks to relocate Thomson within a Scottish context and argues for discernible Scottish influences and preoccupations in his work. Scott observes:

Accidental, isolated, or superficial factors such as birthplace, setting, or subject matter have too frequently justified a Scottish label. Still, the concept of Scottishness, its ability to define the 'honesty of genius' of a Scottish-bred writer such as James Thomson, does have considerable critical value. It carries the broader significance of all the influences a poet's distinctive national culture has had on his art – literary, linguistic, geographical and topographical, educational, religious, social, political, racial; in short, of all the unique traditions and institutions which distinguish the Scottish national identity. Such influences on Thomson are prodigious.⁵

More recently, Gerard Carruthers has posited that Thomson's neglect by Scottish literary criticism and omission from narratives of eighteenth-century Scottish literary development was precipitated by the way in which the canon of Scottish literature in this period has been formulated. Carruthers constructs a convincing argument to support the notion that Scottish literature has suffered from critical judgements based on a rigid cultural essentialism which seeks to impose a holistic, idealised version of literary history on what is a heterogeneous literary heritage:

While Scottish criticism is accurate to some extent in its diagnosis of a literary heritage which is heterogeneous, it has tended, paradoxically, to decry and to base a too rigid canonicity upon the observation of multifaceted Scottishness, and this has extended not only to the excision from the canon almost completely of James Thomson and other "Anglo-Scots" but also to exercising such canonicity in constrictive fashion on their accepted canonical writers such as Ramsay, Robert Fergusson and Robert Burns.⁶

In this formulation, the 'dominant, over discriminating, essentialist Scottish literary canon-mould during the latter decades of the nineteenth century and through the twentieth

⁴ See, for example, Richard Ferrar Patterson, *Six Centuries of English Verse: Passages Selected from the Chief Writers and Short Biographies. Volume IX Prior to Rogers* (Glasgow: Blackie & Son, 1933) pp.106-112; *The Broadview Anthology of British Literature: The Restoration and the Eighteenth-Century* Six vols. eds., Joseph Black et al. (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2010) pp.550-558; *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* Two vols. ed. M.H.Abrams et al (London: W.W Norton & Company, 1993) pp.2450-2453; *British Literature 1640-1789: An Anthology* ed., Robert Demaria (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996) pp.811-822 (this anthology of British, as opposed to English literature, also includes two poems by Allan Ramsay, *ibid.*, pp.696-698) and *Eighteenth-century Poetry: An Annotated Anthology* eds., David Fairer and Christine Gerrard (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004) pp.211-238

⁵ Mary Jane Scott *James Thomson, Anglo-Scot* (London: The University of Georgia Press, 1988) p.2

⁶ Gerard Carruthers, *The Invention of Scottish Literature During the Long Eighteenth Century* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow PhD Thesis, 2002) p.1

century’⁷ has led to constructions of Scottish literary history founded upon notions of cultural fracture and opposition. This, in turn, is often viewed as an inherent sickness in the creative output of Scotland, rather than healthy and varied creative imaginings and expressions of a heterogeneous national culture. Such a rigid and essentialist approach has, as is indicated by the above quotation, not only excluded those such as Thomson, but has done a great disservice to those who, like Ramsay, are able to be read in terms of an exclusive ‘Scottishness’ in literature by restricting the interpretative possibilities that may be suggested by a reading, or a re-reading of their work.

The development of the Scottish critical tradition, in Carruthers’s judgement, has thus been detrimental to Scottish literature, especially the literature of the eighteenth century, in its constrictive narratives. Furthermore, it has precluded certain critical endeavours which could prove illuminating in this context by encouraging a negative, oppositional model of literary production. This model, in prizing and retaining the Scots productions of Allan Ramsay whilst sending James Thomson south - and effectively writing him out of the narrative of Scottish literary history - branded with only the epithet of ‘Anglo- Scot’ to remind him (and the reader) of his origins, has meant that only too rarely are these two contemporaries brought into close critical contact. This close critical contact is central to this thesis. Of course, the forms and surfaces, as well as ideological differences between these writers and their works make this a challenging enterprise, with or without the legacy of the Scottish critical tradition as presented by Carruthers. One way of uniting these two writers so as to facilitate a comparative analysis of their work is by reinstating them in their original cultural context, that is, a neoclassical, or Augustan context. This is an obvious context in the case of Thomson, but not perhaps in the case of Ramsay. However, I am in full agreement with Carruthers’s opinion that,

We have seen Ramsay’s patriotic project emanating and operating in a number of locations. We have seen this, most especially, in his utilisation of the influence of the pro-Jacobite Scoto-Latinists and in his combination of the Scot language and Scottish situation with wider British Augustan predilections of the early eighteenth-century. These sites, I would claim, are much more pertinent to Ramsay’s re-formation of Scots poetry at the beginning of the eighteenth century than his often identified ‘antiquarianism’. His mock-elegies, for instance, [...] look back to seventeenth-century Scottish poetry (and not, as is sometimes wrongly assumed, much earlier poetry in Scots), but in technique and outlook they are modern early eighteenth-century British productions (albeit at a time when the definition of Britishness remains contentious and not so anglocentric nor quite so securely Hanoverian, at least in cultural terms, as is sometimes assumed).⁸

⁷ Ibid., p.5

⁸ Ibid., p.82

What emerges ultimately from this wide-ranging study is an eighteenth-century Scottish context and literary identity which is deeply complex, rather than confused, an epithet which has attached to this period and which is both limiting and constrictive. Furthermore, the most influential of these early twentieth-century critical constructions of Scottish literary history in the wake of the Act of Union point, not only to a cultural confusion, but to an inherent psychological sickness. I refer of course to the phenomenon that G. Gregory Smith, in 1919, named the ‘Caledonian antiszygy’,⁹ a phenomenon that has been variously described since as cultural confusion by David Daiches writing in 1964 and, more recently, by Kenneth Simpson as a ‘crisis of identity in eighteenth-century Scottish literature’ (it is worth noting that in Simpson’s assessment, this condition is, creatively speaking, a positive attribute).¹⁰ In these formulations, the fractured identity of the Scottish writer arises from a turbulent political and cultural history characterised by ideological, linguistic and cultural oppositions. The Augustan period, in narratives of English literature, shares this complexity and diverse cultural identity, but this is rarely interpreted as weakness or confusion. Rather it is seen a source of positive creative energy.

Margaret Anne Doody’s excellent re-evaluation of Augustan poetry, *The Daring Muse: Augustan Poetry Reconsidered* (1985), has this to say of the couplet, a poetic form which she judges to be deeply expressive of the Augustan poetic project (and one, as will be demonstrated in the course of this thesis, favoured by Ramsay in much of his work):

In the couplet the deep figure of Augustan thought, its oxymoron, finds perfect form, and it can proceed through debate, through paradox, antithesis and parallel. Through the operation of the couplet various languages can play, and the double-voices statement finds a natural pattern. One might say that the Augustans had binary minds, that they thought in twos. Presumably a series of historical events involving, first, a Civil War (between two chief sides) and then a series of political disputes (involving the same two sides as two national parties historically modified) all leading, however reluctantly, to the evolution of what we now know as the two party system had something to do with this cast of thought.¹¹

This notion of division, or doubleness, arising from historical events and political context finding an appropriate form of expression in the couplet is particularly significant when considered in the context of a Scottish writer of the period. The vocabulary of Doody’s rationale, her use of the terms ‘binary’, ‘paradox’ and ‘double-voices’ in relating form to function and ideological context, recall the terms of argument on which several of the

⁹ G. Gregory Smith *Scottish Literature: Character & Influence* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1919) p.2

¹⁰ See, for example, David Daiches, *The Paradox of Scottish Culture: The Eighteenth-Century Experience* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964) p.23 and Kenneth Simpson, *The Protean Scot: The Crisis of Identity in Eighteenth-Century Scottish Literature* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1988), especially pp.3-11

¹¹ Margaret Anne Doody *The Daring Muse: Augustan Poetry Reconsidered* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) pp.232-233

previously mentioned significant critical accounts of Scottish literature and culture in the period have been based. Significantly, Doody's study of the Augustan poetic is largely rooted in an English literary tradition. Evidently, the Augustan aesthetic, arising from the poetic expression of cultural and political opposition, was a British phenomenon, significant in terms of the development of a British poetic, in the same way that this poetic internalising of opposition and cultural division has previously been considered a mark of a Scottish cultural crisis finding literary expression. The Scottish context, however, perhaps enabled more complex utterances of division as a result of the uniquely varied linguistic choices available to a Scottish writer; a linguistic situation very much exploited by Ramsay. Crucially, Doody's analysis is offered by way of explanation, rather than excuse. The Augustan poetic reliance on forms such as the couplet, that is, forms capable of expressing opposition and antithesis in a carefully balanced and ultimately aesthetically and rhetorically satisfying manner, is presented by Doody as wholly positive in terms of its creative effect and ability to express ideological and cultural concerns. The notion of opposition, or rather, of cultural plurality, as evidenced by the corpora of Ramsay and Thomson, informs my approach to the material; a plurality which I emphatically read in positive terms.

In an earlier and, in terms of establishing Ramsay's Augustan credentials, highly significant, essay entitled 'Augustan Influences on Allan Ramsay' (1981), Carol McGuirk reads Ramsay's poetic agenda in the light of the English Augustans (primarily John Gay). While this essay firmly locates Ramsay's use of the vernacular and his engagement with the neoclassical generic hierarchy in an Augustan context and insightfully defines the Classical modes and models (Horatian, mainly) to which Ramsay most adhered, McGuirk's essay perhaps errs on the side of anglocentricity. As the title indicates, this article allows for a flow of influence in only one direction; that is, south to north. Furthermore, McGuirk's reading of Gay's *The Shepherd's Week* (1714) as being the primary catalyst for Ramsay's *The Gentle Shepherd* (1725) is one I would, in certain respects, challenge. Certainly, both of these texts were likely to have been written in response to the contemporary neoclassical debate over pastoral and both works feature an approximation of local, rustic dialect.¹² However, the overall effects are, I would contend, different, indeed

¹² A lively debate over the possibilities of a 'native' pastoral was conducted in the pages of *The Guardian* in 1713. In essence, the debate hinged upon notions of pastoral realism as opposed to pastoral idealism and the use of vernacular, or regional dialects in the portrayal of pastoral characters. This was an extension of the seventeenth-century Ancients and Moderns debate over theories of pastoral. Significant articulations of the seventeenth-century debates include those of Rene Rapin in his *Dissertatio de Carmine Pastorali* (1659) which insisted on the propriety of the originals of Theocritus as pastoral models and Fontanelle, whose 'Discours sur la Nature d'Eglogue' (1688) argued that pastorals should strive for realism in their representation of pastoral shepherds; just as Theocritus had written in his native Doric, so too should

even oppositional in their reflection of their authors' responses to the debate over the possibility of a native pastoral. McGuirk acknowledges that 'to say that Gay suggested techniques to Ramsay is not to say that their creative procedures were identical. For one thing, the burlesque undercurrent or undertow in *The Shepherd's Week* was not emulated by Ramsay; and Gay's poem is nimbler than *The Gentle Shepherd*.'¹³ I would counter that there is more than a 'burlesque undercurrent' in Gay's poem and that the whole piece, coupled with the heavy irony of Gay's 'Proeme', represents a rejection of the possibility of a native pastoral and ridicules those (like the much maligned Ambrose Philips) who would attempt to render a native pastoral in rustic or vernacular language. This is not true of *The Gentle Shepherd* in which Ramsay's characterisation is the key to the success of the otherwise pedestrian plot of the drama. Ramsay's characters are neither oafish figures of ridicule, nor 'naive' as McGuirk would have them; the pastoral dialogues incorporate contemporary debates and preoccupations over improvement, self-improvement, economy and social cohesion. *The Gentle Shepherd* is set, after all, only a 'few miles from Edinburgh',¹⁴ and the urban centre of the Scottish Enlightenment most certainly sheds its light upon the drama.

Much of Ramsay's critical attention has focused on his pastoral creations, especially his most popular work, *The Gentle Shepherd*, and it is this pastoral identity which allows Ramsay to be most comfortably situated in an Augustan context. Ramsay's early editor and commentator, A.F. Tytler, Lord Woodhouselee, favourably compares Ramsay's pastoral drama with the sixteenth-century Italian pastorals of Tasso and Gaurini.¹⁵ More recently, Thomas Crawford's groundbreaking study *Society and Lyric: A Study of the Song Culture of Eighteenth-Century Scotland* considers Ramsay's use of Scots vernacular in the light of generic decorum, situating Ramsay within the debate over pastoral taking place in the *Guardian* and re-emphasising the parallels between Ramsay's use of Scots and Theocritus's use of rustic Doric, suggesting that the Scots writer had a range of linguistic

contemporary writers of pastoral strive for native realism and the use of local, or vernacular dialect. Alexander Pope rejected such pastoral theories and, in response to Ambrose Philips's attempt to create a realistic, local pastoral, Pope anonymously published a scathingly satirical pastoral in a Somerset dialect which effectively rendered Philips's attempt, and the entire concept of a native, realistic or vernacular pastoral, ridiculous. See, *The Guardian* ed. John Calhoun Stephens (Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1982), especially, Number 22 pp.105-107; Number 23 pp.107-109; Number 28 pp.122-124, Number 30 pp.128-130 and Number 40 pp.160-165.

¹³ Carol McGuirk 'Augustan Influences on Allan Ramsay' in *Studies in Scottish Literature* 16 (South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1981) p.99

¹⁴ Allan Ramsay, *The Gentle Shepherd* in *The Works of Allan Ramsay Vol 2* eds., Burns Martin and John Oliver (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1953) p. 212

¹⁵ A.F. Tytler, Remarks prefixed to *Poems of Allan Ramsay 2Vols* (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1800) p.xcv

choices that were perhaps unavailable to an English writer of the period, rendering the creation of a native pastoral possible. Crawford observes:

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 page.¹⁶

The significance of Ramsay's pastoral project in terms of the development of eighteenth-century Scottish poetry is further delineated in Nigel Leask's recent study *Robert Burns and Pastoral: Poetry and Improvement in Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (2010). Rather than merely observing that Ramsay made Scots a visible and viable poetic language for his successors Robert Fergusson and Robert Burns, Leask reinvigorates Ramsay's legacy and suggests a complex sophistication in Ramsay's pastoral project. Leask notes that 'Jacobite politics underpinned the pastorals of Ramsay [...] often mining the Virgilian themes of exile and dispossession',¹⁷ going on to observe that 'Ramsay's Jacobite sympathies didn't interfere with his attempt to construct a more representative "British" poetic in the wake of the 1707 Union, promoting the interests of Scottish language, literature and culture.'¹⁸ Furthermore, Leask identifies 'a georgic resolution'¹⁹ in *The Gentle Shepherd*. Such complex manipulation of generic material which points to a complex Scoto-British and Augustan identity whilst still allowing for the expression of ideological allegiances begins to forge links with the poetic project of James Thomson and suggests that the time has come for a more comprehensive and close comparison of the two than has been previously attempted.

Thomson's Augustan identity is critically established, though this designation does not hinge upon a pastoral poetic identity as is the case with Ramsay. While, as some of the above comments indicate, much critical commentary on Ramsay focuses on his pastoral works, especially his immensely popular *The Gentle Shepherd*, much of the critical commentary on Thomson focuses on his equally popular *The Seasons* (1730). The georgic model for *The Seasons* coupled with the 'standard' English language of expression would seem to place this text in direct opposition to Ramsay's pastoral drama. However, as Nigel Leask has suggested, Ramsay's drama incorporates elements of the georgic mode, and as I have previously argued, *The Seasons* incorporates many pastoral references, evidencing

¹⁶ Thomas Crawford, *Society and the Lyric: A Study of the Song Culture of Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1979) p.73

¹⁷ Nigel Leask, *Robert Burns and Pastoral: Poetry and Improvement in Late Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) p.57

¹⁸ Ibid., p.58

¹⁹ Ibid., p.62

throughout a conflation of the pastoral and georgic modes. This modal conflation is, in turn, characteristic of the development of a new British poetic in the period which foregrounds later poetic developments in the field of Romanticism.²⁰ This is just one way of reading *The Seasons*; there are many more, and these alternative analytical possibilities are reflected in the diversity of critical material devoted to this important eighteenth-century long poem.

Indeed, it could be argued that Christine Gerrard is correct in her observation that '*The Seasons* is arguably the most important long poem of the eighteenth century.'²¹ Gerrard's justification for this claim relates to the generic status of *The Seasons*: 'Expansive in scale, ambitious in scope, it is the one poem written in the century following *Paradise Lost* which can lay genuine claim to epic status.'²² While I am not entirely convinced of *The Seasons*'s epic status, these comments are illustrative of the multitude of ways of reading *The Seasons* and of the text's resistance to the taxonomy of genre. Similarly, critical constructions of Thomson's creative identity, independent of *The Seasons*, are diverse and resistant to conventional generic or period classifications. Despite Mary Jane Scott's study of the Scottish influences central to Thomson's creativity, he is most often presented as 'the first truly British poet in modern history'.²³ Significantly, Valentina Bold makes a similar claim for Ramsay: 'In "Wealth, or the Woody: A Poem on the South Sea. Wrote June 20 1720" Ramsay poses as an acute Scottish merchant and, perhaps, as the first truly great British poet.'²⁴ These critical assessments demonstrate the plurality of cultural influences at work on Ramsay as well as Thomson, and both are valid judgements. This thesis suggests that both poets are instrumental in formulating poetic constructions of British identity in the period and that their work illuminates a complex and fascinating strand in the formulation of a new British poetic in the first half of the eighteenth century. Chapter three provides detailed textual analysis of the ways in which these contemporaries engage creatively with the newly formed political entity of Britain and with constructions of Britishness in the period, arguing that poetic responses to shifting geographical and political boundaries in the period were necessarily fluid as they sought to renegotiate cultural and national identities in the wake of the Union of 1707.

²⁰ See, Melanie Buntin 'Augustanism in Scotland: The Pastoral and the Georgic in the Work of Allan Ramsay and James Thomson' Unpublished University of Glasgow MPhil thesis (Glasgow, 2011)

²¹ Christine Gerrard, 'James Thomson, *The Seasons*' in *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Poetry* ed., Christine Gerrard (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009) p.197

²² Ibid., p.197

²³ Gerard Carruthers, 'Eighteenth-Century Scottish Literary Identity' in *James Thomson: Essays for the Tercentenary* ed., Richard Terry (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000)p.187

²⁴ Valentina Bold "'Nature's Making": James Hogg and the Autodidactic Tradition in Scottish Poetry. Unpublished University of Glasgow PhD thesis (Glasgow, 1997) p.21

Blandford Parker, who devotes a chapter to Thomson in his study *The Triumph of Augustan Poetics* (1998), presents Thomson, not as the first (or last)²⁵ British poet, or as a writer of British epic, but as one of the last true Augustan poets, claiming that ‘in the poetry of Thomson we have the finest example of the last phase of Augustan poetry.’²⁶ For Parker, Thomson’s poetry exemplifies what he refers to as the ‘literalising tendency’²⁷ of Augustan poetry, a poetic which he reads as being characterised by a breadth of subject matter which very much included, if not prized, the trivial as subject for descriptive poetry. Utilising an analysis of ‘Summer’ to exemplify his argument, Parker posits that Thomson’s poetic, in its purely descriptive function, is characteristic of this ‘literalising tendency’, the ‘realisation of the physical and detached nature of things’²⁸, presenting ‘Summer’ as Thomson’s greatest triumph and Thomson himself as ‘one of the great innovators of English poetry.’²⁹

While Thomson was without doubt a great innovator, particularly in terms of landscape poetry, Parker’s assessment of *The Seasons* as being purely the poetry of description is one which I would contest. Parker’s analysis of ‘Summer’ effectively demoralises and de-politicises Thomson’s poetic agenda, an analysis which, as he readily acknowledges, runs counter to the conclusions of earlier Thomson scholars such as Ralph Cohen and Patricia Meyer Spacks.³⁰ Cohen and Spacks adopt different approaches to Thomson’s work, but both carefully delineate the political, moral, physico-theological and philosophical undercurrents of Thomson’s work. Indeed, Spacks reads *The Seasons* as ‘a significant social document’³¹, albeit a social document that ‘cannot be considered a coherent intellectual whole.’³² I would agree with Cohen and Spacks that Thomson’s poetic is far more than purely literal description although certainly, Thomson’s progressive incorporation of scientific referents often renders his language of natural description startlingly effective and innovative in its novelty. Furthermore, in terms of Thomson’s landscape poetry, John Barrell’s excellent analysis of ‘Spring’ in his groundbreaking and influential study *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place 1730-1840: An Approach to the Poetry of John Clare* (1972), points to the sophisticated descriptive and syntactical

²⁵ In a recent paper at the AECSS conference in Aberdeen, Pierre Carboni suggested that Thomson was not only the first British poet, but also the last.

²⁶ Blandford Parker *The Triumph of Augustan Poetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) p.144

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.136

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.137

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.145

³⁰ See, Ralph Cohen *The Art of Discrimination: Thomson’s Seasons and the Language of Criticism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964), Ralph Cohen *The Unfolding of The Seasons* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970) and Patricia Meyer Spacks *The Varied God: A Critical Study of Thomson’s The Seasons* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959)

³¹ Patricia Meyer Spacks *The Varied God: A Critical Study of Thomson’s The Seasons* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959) p.7

³² *Ibid.*, p.6

features of Thomson's landscape poetry which do not merely describe, but effectively '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.'³³ This dialectical relationship between civilisation and nature is, as Barrell observes, indicative of the Whiggish, mercantile ideology which operates throughout Thomson's corpus. My positioning and reading of Thomson's work owes a debt to Barrell's approach, as will become evident in chapters three and four of this thesis.

Despite challenging Parker's overall assessment of *The Seasons* as a poem of literal description (a conclusion which could only be reached by an analysis of 'Summer' in isolation from Thomson's other seasons), his approach to Augustan poetry is significant to my own research in other ways. Firstly, Parker is right to observe (following Margaret Doody to a certain extent) that one of the distinguishing characteristics of the Augustan poetic project was its fixation with and ability to poeticise the trivial and the everyday, claiming that 'not only was no object too common or too small for wit's new empire, but smallness seemed to be the measure of a good deal of the most popular (if not lasting) poetry of the age.'³⁴ To illustrate this point, Parker goes on, 'the objects of the home, the tavern, and the garden were soon to enter English poetry, and the city, already the possession of comedy, was in the time of Gay and Garth to become a familiar place in lyric and didactic verse.'³⁵ This approach to Augustan poetry, and indeed a chapter on Augustan poetry which has Thomson as its primary focus, chimes with the re-evaluation of the period offered in this thesis, not only in relation to the work of Thomson, but also to that of Ramsay. Indeed, elaborating on this theme, Parker continues, 'the number of poems on precious and hitherto unpoetical topics was astounding. Even lyric poetry of the period, like that of Ramsay, is larded with incidental description.'³⁶ Parker then goes on to quote Ramsay's dedication, prefixed to *The Tea-Table Miscellany* (1724-37). Not only does Parker's reading of the Augustan poetic unite Ramsay and Thomson, but it does so in such a way as to look beyond Ramsay's use of the pastoral, the satirical or the mock-elegiac for a more nuanced expression of the Augustan poetic, one which, I suggest, is instrumental in the emergence of a new British poetic. This stylistic (as well as generic) analysis of Ramsay and Thomson is investigated in chapters three and four of this thesis.

³³ 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) p.24

³⁴ Blandford Parker, *The Triumph of Augustan Poetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) p.136

³⁵ Ibid., p.136

³⁶ Ibid., p.140

Thomson then, has been variously presented as the first British poet, a poet of natural description, the last Augustan poet and occasionally, as a Scottish poet. He has also been presented as highly influential to the formation of Romanticism or even as an early Romantic figure. R.R. Argawal's *The Tradition and Experimentalism of James Thomson (1700-1748)* for example, explores Thomsonian influences on Romanticism and Ralph Cohen and John Strachan demonstrate the extent of Thomson's popularity and posthumous presence in the minds of the reading public as well as the poets and critics of the Romantic period.³⁷ This identification of a Romantic strain present in the corpus of Thomson is key to another critical construction that unites Thomson with Ramsay. In recent years a growing interest in a 'Four Nations' approach to Romantic studies has culminated in a number of studies that question traditional critical assumptions relating to the character, location and periodicity of Romanticism.³⁸ In these accounts, Scotland is assigned a significant role in the Romantic movement, not just as an imaginative storehouse of the sublime, or the gothic, but as a key locus of British Romanticism.

I have already mentioned some of the critical material that presents Thomson as an influential precursor to Romanticism; increasingly Ramsay is being understood as a significant figure in the presentation of a particularly Scottish contribution to Romanticism. These formulations are not merely reliant upon his influence on Burns who is widely accepted as a key, early Romantic writer. In a recent study, *Scottish and Irish Romanticism*, Murray Pittock (whose illuminating, historicist approach to Ramsay has previously focused on his Jacobite identity)³⁹ devotes an early chapter to Ramsay whom he designates an 'avatar' of Romanticism. Of course, as Pittock is quick to acknowledge, critical evaluations of Ramsay as a Romantic avatar are not new, they have merely been swept aside, or neglected in the recent past. For Pittock, and I agree, this has occurred as a result of a reinterpretation of the nature of Romanticism itself as assumptions regarding canonicity, impetus and periodicity are now themselves being challenged. Pittock introduces his chapter on Ramsay by tracing some of these evolutions (or, perhaps more accurately, revolutions) of literary history and assumptions regarding periodicity and canonicity:

³⁷ See Ralph Cohen, *The Art of Discrimination: Thomson's Seasons and the Language of Criticism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964) and John Strachan "'That is True Fame': A Few Words about Thomson's Romantic Period Popularity" in *James Thomson: Essays for the Tercentenary* ed., Richard Terry (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000) pp.247-270

³⁸ See, for example, Gerard Carruthers and Alan Rawes *English Romanticism and the Celtic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), Leith Davis, Ian Duncan and Janet Sorensen *Scotland and the Borders of Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), Murray Pittock, *Scottish and Irish Romanticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)

³⁹ See, Murray Pittock, *Poetry and Jacobite Politics in Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) pp.149-162

A century ago, W.J Courthope, in his magisterially vast *History of English Poetry* (1895-1910) suggested that Allan Ramsay's work, particularly in his song-collecting, 'gave' a 'powerful impulse to the Romantic revival': that he was, in fact, an avatar of Romanticism in the British Isles. In 1924, an article by J.W Mackail confirmed the point that Ramsay gave 'the first clearly assignable impulse to the romantic movement'; as late as 1952, J. E. Congleton in his account of pastoral poetry, developed this position at some length. Such views were not untypical of the first half of the twentieth century, when there were still as many articles published on Burns as the other major Romantics, when the use of the Scottish vernacular in poetry was not an automatic indicator of its 'peasant' status (Courthope, for instance, gives an example of Ramsay's sophistication in his graft of Scots on to the Addisonian model), and before a growing interest in the Coleridgean imagination and the verbal icon of the autarkic Romantic text moved the critical history of Romanticism into another mould.⁴⁰

Pittock's revisionary reading of Ramsay as an avatar of Romanticism is thus possessed of historical precedent, though his theorising of Ramsay's Romantic credentials is both innovative and complex. He bases his identification of Ramsay as an early practitioner of a specifically Scottish Romanticism on the following criteria: 'his promotion of a Scottish public sphere, [...] his altermentality and inflection of genre, [...] and his development of a taxonomy of glory to justify a continuity of kinds and forms in a distinctively Scottish literature.'⁴¹ Pittock's nuanced argument is a fascinating addition to critical constructions of Ramsay, particularly in its formation of a new taxonomy of national literature. However, to assign an identity to Ramsay which renders him a lone, early Romantic figure (Pittock suggests that the Romantic period in Scotland may benefit from a different periodicity than in England, tentatively suggesting 1750 as a starting point) seems somewhat problematic. Although characteristics which would later be labelled Romantic certainly appear in Ramsay (and Thomson's) work, as well as in Ramsay's editorial practices, this designation perhaps verges on the anachronistic. Rather, this early eighteenth-century Romantic strain may be indicative of a narrative of continuity between the Augustan and Romantic periods, periods which have conventionally been portrayed as in opposition.

RELOCATING RAMSAY AND THOMSON

My own approach to Ramsay is informed by his Augustan identity and his awareness of, and interactions with, the new British literary marketplace. This approach reinstates him in his own immediate historical and literary context, a context which he shares with James Thomson. The diversity of epithets which have attached to Thomson, and which are

⁴⁰ Murray Pittock, *Scottish and Irish Romanticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) p.33

⁴¹ Ibid., p.33

outlined above, suggests that he, like Ramsay, is too often read in isolation from his own immediate literary and cultural context, or placed within constrictive and reductive formulations that do not allow or fully realise the complex synthesis of cultural, national and literary influences and generic and linguistic inflections that characterise the work of both Thomson and Ramsay. My thesis aims to, primarily, relocate and reunite Thomson and Ramsay in their immediate cultural and literary context and evaluates their contribution to an emerging British poetic in the period. This evaluation of the significance of the contribution of two Scottish poets in the formation of a British literature in the first half of the eighteenth century seeks to bridge the gap between the ‘archipelagic’ approach of John Kerrigan to the literature of the seventeenth century and recent ‘Four Nations’ approaches to British Romanticism. To date, a ‘four nations’ approach to the Augustan period has only been adopted by Murray Pittock in *Poetry and Jacobite Politics in Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland* (1994). Pittock’s emphasis, as is indicated by the title of this work, is on the impact of Jacobite ideology on British literature following the Revolution of 1688 and on the ensuing struggle for literary authority enacted between Jacobite and Hanoverian writers. My own contribution to this field differs from Pittock’s firstly, in that it focuses on two specific authors, and secondly, in its emphasis on a literature of negotiation, rather than opposition. In so doing, it illuminates a neglected strand in the developmental narrative of British literature.

The thesis is structured around four thematically linked chapters, each one reliant in some way on the notion of location. The first two chapters are historicist in their approach and define the various contextual locations of Ramsay and Thomson. Chapter one, ‘Edinburgh’, analyses the impact and influences of the early, formative years of both poets in Edinburgh, illuminating shared cultural and social spheres and contexts. The club coteries of both writers are examined as is the impact of these coteries on the early poetic productions of the two aspiring writers. This investigation points to audience as a crucial element in shaping the individual poetics of Ramsay and Thomson. Ultimately, the first chapter illuminates meaningful links between these poets in the complex cultural milieu of Scotland’s capital in years immediately following the Union of 1707, a time when discourses of national identity, of progress, and of Enlightenment combined to offer a range of creative paths for the innovative writer. Chapter two, ‘London’ mirrors the approach of the first chapter in its historical and cultural contextualisation by examining Thomson’s involvement with the London literary milieu and defining links between Ramsay and this milieu. Chapters one and two thus present contextual, as well as textual, evidence to support the proposition that whilst Ramsay and Thomson ultimately chose different

creative paths, this does not render them the twin embodiment of a fractured Scottish cultural identity As Pittock observes in framing his revisionary comments on Romanticism, ‘periodicity is thus defined as what is available for writers to choose, not by what they did choose.’⁴² Chapter one and two thus offer a reading of the literary identities of Ramsay and Thomson which relies upon an examination of their choices, and the motivations for such choices, regarding the creative paths available to them. This approach erodes notions of opposition between these contemporaries, replacing them instead within a discourse of complex and emphatically healthy cultural plurality. Furthermore, reinstating Ramsay and Thomson in their immediate historical context enables an analysis of, not only the cultural forces at work on Scottish poets in the period, but also the commercial forces exerted upon writers. Patronage, in all its various guises, was a primary concern for a writer in the early eighteenth century and this system of financial support exerted a discernible influence on the poetic projects and career trajectories of these two writers. Patronage and networks of influence and support that existed in, and between, Edinburgh and London are, it is suggested, more significant elements in contextualising these writers than has previously been acknowledged. A detailed investigation of these networks is provided in the first two chapters of this thesis, illuminating an important hitherto neglected strand in critical responses to the location(s) and significance of Ramsay and Thomson within an emerging British literary identity in the first half of the eighteenth century. Furthermore, in examining the links between Edinburgh and London literary milieux, this thesis suggests that a mutual gaze was sustained, not just between Ramsay and Thomson, but between Scottish and English writers more generally. Ultimately, this thesis argues, it is this sustained and reciprocal relationship that shaped an emerging eighteenth-century British poetic.

Chapters three and four, entitled respectively, Nation and Land, continue the thematic reliance on the notion of location and place, but, having established the physical contexts of Ramsay and Thomson in the first two chapters, offer an analysis of the ways in which nation and place are constructed and presented in the writings of Ramsay and Thomson. Chapter three demonstrates the fluidity of textual responses to the concept of nation evinced by both writers, defining the symbolic landscape of nation, whilst chapter four explores their deployment and manipulation of modal and generic conventions in their presentation of place in poetry. These chapters are elucidated by close readings of key texts and enable a comparative textual analysis to take place between the work of Ramsay and

⁴² Ibid., p.4

that of Thomson. This comparative approach exposes meaningful points of contact between these two, apparently very different, Scottish writers.

DEFINITIONS AND SCOPE.

There are several conceptual terms used throughout this thesis which, given the ambiguity of such epithets and their centrality to the argument presented, require elucidation. Firstly, I shall offer a definition of what is meant by the related terms 'British literature' and 'British poetic' within the confines of this thesis. 'British literature' is, firstly, and most obviously, a geographical designation pertaining to the body of literature produced in Britain. Within the context of this thesis which focuses on the first half of the eighteenth century, however, 'British literature' signifies literature produced in Britain following the Act of Union of 1707. I suggest, therefore, that the Union of Crowns (1603) did not exert the same kinds of cultural pressure, nor precipitate the same kinds of cultural and political divisions as were felt by writers working in the period following, firstly, the Glorious, or Bloodless, Revolution (1688) which secured the Hanoverian succession and, secondly, the Union of Parliaments which centred political power on London. Additionally, given Britain's rapid imperial expansion in the long eighteenth century, and mindful of a significant body of travel literature that was produced by those writers wealthy enough, or fortunate enough, to participate in the highly fashionable 'Grand Tour', 'British literature' includes literature written by Britons in the period, regardless of their locations. Defining, in concrete terms, a 'British poetic' which emerged during the eighteenth century is a more challenging proposition.

There are two critical articulations which are useful in defining what is meant by the term 'British poetic' in the context of this thesis. The first of these definitions is supplied by Howard Weinbrot in his magisterial work *The Rise of British Literature from Dryden to Ossian* (1993). Weinbrot's assessment of the formation and subsequent aesthetic shapes and surfaces of a specifically British poetic is as follows:

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 reluctantly 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.⁴³

⁴³ Howard Weinbrot, *Britannia's Issue: The Rise of British Literature from Dryden to Ossian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) p.1

The significant elements of Weinbrot's formulation are the paradoxical insistence on change and stability and the notion of blending. This notion of blending different strains of literary utterances is central to understanding the impact and influence of Ramsay's and Thomson's contribution to an emergent British poetic in the eighteenth century. The second crucial critical formulation which foregrounds the centrality of Scottish writers in creating a new aesthetics of poetry is offered by Robert Crawford in his seminal work *Devolving English Literature* (1992):

Through the eighteenth century, though, in response to cultural and political pressures [...], and sometimes in direct response to the teachings of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, 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. The Scots' concern with identity, discrimination, and the possibilities of 'improvement' or advancement makes prejudice one of the main themes of Scottish books in the period. If we wish to see how a society may attempt to articulate a non-English cultural identity while using a (sometimes modified) form of English, it is to eighteenth-century Scotland that we must turn to for the first full-scale example.⁴⁴

Crawford, significantly, also utilises the notion of a British literature or poetic arising from different 'strains' coming together to produce a literature that can be defined in terms of its hybridity. Crawford suggests that eighteenth-century Scottish writers provided these new strains and thus, British literature was in effect, created by Scottish writers. Thus, in Crawford's formulation, English writers were not subject to the same cultural pressures as Scottish writers. Subsequently, they felt less urge to participate in constructions of Britishness, or British literature as, for them, little had changed in the early years of the eighteenth-century.

While I agree with Crawford's suggestion that Scottish writers were instrumental in creating a British poetic, I suggest that the creative agenda of Scots in the period did in fact help to precipitate a cultural and literary re-examination of Britain and Britishness on the part of English writers. Rather, I would argue that the relationship between Scottish and English writers in the period was a more reciprocal one than Crawford suggests. I would also challenge the presentation of Scottish writers as being thematically reliant on the notion of prejudice. This formulation is, I suggest, indicative of a kind of cultural paranoia regarding creative and literary persecution which has been overstated and remains unhelpful in reconstructing the historical context of literature produced by Scots such as Ramsay and Thomson in the period. Indeed, there is some evidence (cf. chapter two) that

⁴⁴ Robert Crawford, *Devolving English Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992) p.46

English writers were very much aware of – and perhaps even slightly anxious about – the literary innovations of Scottish writers who had a different literary heritage on which to draw and a wider linguistic toolkit at their disposal.

The work of Ramsay and Thomson can thus be seen to have provoked an active participation in literary constructions of Britishness and in the formation of a British poetic on the part of English writers. The resulting poetic was inevitably characterised by its hybridity, by its challenging of accepted laws of genre and linguistic decorum and by its shifting and nuanced interpretation and deployment of modes and forms of literature. The British poetic which emerged in the eighteenth century was one which incorporated competing political and cultural discourses and which drew on disparate voices from all parts of the British state. The regional and the local were increasingly important in this poetic which reached its apotheosis in Romantic poetry of the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century and points to a narrative of continuity in the development of eighteenth -century British literature. This reliance on the poetry of place and challenges to modal and generic convention are characteristic of the work of Ramsay and Thomson and evidence the significance of their contribution to the new British poetic.

I have used, and will continue to use throughout this thesis, the terms Augustan, and Augustanism. I also use the epithet ‘neoclassical’ to refer to the same literary period. The term Augustan has, to some extent, fallen from critical fashion in recent years. Indeed, the usefulness and relevance of the term has been the subject of some lively critical debate. Notably, Howard Weinbrot, in *Augustus Caesar in ‘Augustan’ England: The Decline of a Classical Norm* (1978) rejects the usefulness of the epithet, arguing that eighteenth-century constructions of and responses to Augustus Caesar were negative, and that perceived literary neoclassicism in the period was, in effect, a rejection of classical norms. Howard Erskine-Hill’s contribution to this debate, *The Augustan Idea in English Literature* (1983), on the other hand, rigorously defends the use of this designation and all that it implies as an appropriate label for the literature of the early part of the long eighteenth century. The ambiguity of the term is, I would argue (and have previously done so, in greater detail, elsewhere),⁴⁵ what renders it so useful an epithet, one capable of encompassing opposing discourses of political, monarchical and cultural authority. This seems entirely appropriate and useful in discussing a period of literature in which writers engaged directly with notions of political and cultural authority: Ramsay’s literary Jacobitism and Thomson’s oppositional Whig identity are prime examples of this. Augustanism is thus, in my view, a

⁴⁵ See Melanie Buntin ‘Augustanism in Scotland: The Pastoral and the Georgic in the Work of Allan Ramsay and James Thomson’ Unpublished University of Glasgow MPhil thesis (Glasgow, 2011) pp.16-21

heavily politicised term which signals the prominent and, at times, strained relationship between the arts and the state. It is of further relevance, contextually, to the continuing artistic reliance on patronage in the period and to the pressures that such systems of financial support exert upon the literary productions of individual writers. Neoclassicism, I would suggest, is a more politically neutral term and as such it is used in this thesis to refer, not to the period generally, but to describe a set of guiding aesthetic principles which were ubiquitous in the period. A reliance on classical modes and genres is widely evidenced in the literature of the time and the way in which writers such as Ramsay manipulate, subvert and democratise certain classical modes is indicative of a collective literary response to the demands of developing a new British literature in the early eighteenth century.

Throughout this work I refer to Britain, and to British literature, and suggest that this thesis fills a critical gap between John Kerrigan's 'Archipelagic' approach to seventeenth-century literature and 'Four Nations' approaches to the literature of the later eighteenth-century. It will be observed, however, that this thesis focuses, primarily, on the literary milieux of Edinburgh and London and thus illuminates Anglo-Scottish literary relations and interactions in the period. Given the significance of the contributions of Welsh and Irish writers in the period, this is a regretful omission.⁴⁶ However, the primary foci of the present work are the corpora and contexts of Ramsay and Thomson and, given the space and time constraints inherent in such a project, this omission is a necessary one. A more comprehensive study of the contribution of writers from other parts of the British archipelago is, however, a promising topic for further research in the field of early eighteenth-century literature and it is hoped that the present work will in some small way help to facilitate this wider discussion.

The other notable omission in the present work relates to Allan Ramsay himself. Ramsay's role as collector and editor of both older, and contemporary, Scottish poetry and song is not fully discussed here. The primary justification for this is that Ramsay's editing

⁴⁶ Although Ireland was not officially a part of the political entity of Great Britain until the Acts of Union of 1800 and 1801, it was increasingly ruled from London as the English, then British, Parliament ruthlessly promoted the Protestant Ascendancy. Frank O'Gorman observes: 'Long before then [the late seventeenth century], English politicians and pamphleteers had begun to treat Ireland as a conquered country and had come almost to rejoice at her status as a colony. The establishment of the Protestant Ascendancy and the passage of the penal laws were widely welcomed in England. Many English landowners were happy to see Ireland reduced to client status. In 1720 this status was brutally defined in the Declaratory Act, which stated that Acts of the Irish Parliament could be vetoed by the Westminster Parliament but that the legislation of the latter was automatically accepted by the former. Indeed, English treatment of Ireland compared unfavourably with the treatment that Scotland received after the Union.' Frank O'Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century: British Political and Social History 1688-1832* (London: Arnold, 2009) p.60 For a useful account of the contribution of Welsh writers, writing in English, in the period, see, Sarah Prescott, *Eighteenth-Century Writing from Wales: Bards and Britons*. (Aberystwyth: University of Wales Press, 2008)

projects and recovery of Scottish songs and ballads has been expertly treated elsewhere.⁴⁷ Moreover, the present work approaches Ramsay and Thomson as imaginative poets and playwrights and evaluates their original contributions to an emergent British poetic in the period. Consequently, Ramsay's anthologising and editing endeavours are referred to when relevant, but are not accorded a detailed analytical treatment within this work.

A NOTE ON TEXTS

The texts referred to in this work are, in Ramsay's case, primarily the Scottish Text Society's six volume edition of *The Works of Allan Ramsay* (1951-74) as this remains the definitive modern edition of Ramsay's work and, in the presentation of published work, these volumes are faithful to the original published editions. Where it is necessary to refer to other editions, they are clearly indicated in the text. In the case of Thomson, this work relies largely on James Sambrook's editions: *The Seasons and The Castle of Indolence* (1972) and in *Liberty, The Castle of Indolence and Other Poems* (1986). Sambrook's edition of *The Seasons* is based on the revised edition of 1746. Again, given the complex publishing history of *The Seasons*⁴⁸ and the extensive revisions that the work was subject to during Thomson's lifetime, references are occasionally made, where chronologically and contextually relevant, to other editions. In these instances, the edition is clearly indicated in the text and footnotes. In quoting original material, this work retains the original spelling and punctuation throughout.

⁴⁷ See, for example, Rachel Cowgill and Peter Holman *Music in the British Provinces, 1690 -1914* (Basingstoke: Ashgate, 2007) pp. 65-67; David Johnson *Music and Society in Lowland Scotland in the Eighteenth Century* (Edinburgh: Mercat Press, 2003) pp.133-143; Maurice Lindsay *History of Scottish Literature* (London: Hale, 1977) p.179 and Steve Newman *Ballad Collection, Lyric and the Canon: The Call of the Popular from the Restoration to the New Criticism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007) pp.44-60

⁴⁸ For an overview of the publication history and revisions of *The Seasons* during Thomson's lifetime, see, Melanie Buntin, 'Augustanism in Scotland: the Pastoral and the Georgic in Allan Ramsay and James Thomson'. Unpublished University of Glasgow MPhil thesis (Glasgow, 2011) pp.99-101

Chapter One:

Edinburgh

‘The Gentlemen who Compose this Society [...] Have Resolved at sometimes to Retire from all other Business and Company and Meet in a Society By Themselves in order that by a Mutual improvement in Conversation they may become more adapted for fellowship with the politer part of mankind [...] on ye Second day of their Meeting [...] it was Unanimously determined their Society should go under the Name of the Easy Club designing thereby that their denomination should be a Check to all unruly and disturbing behaviour among their Members.’

The Journal of The Easy Club (1712)¹

‘Young Gentlemen, most, if not all of them, Students in the University of *Edinburgh*, who from a Sympathy of Affections, founded on a Similitude of *Parts*, and *Genius*, have united themselves into a Body, under the Title of THE GROTESQUE CLUB; the Reason of which Name, I shall explain in a future Paper.’² Their Business, to express it in the Words of one of their own Members, is, ‘*A Friendship that knows no Strife, but that of a generous Emulation, to excel, in virtue, Learning, and Politeness.*’

Aaron Hill *The Plain Dealer* (1724)³

The cultural significance of the many clubs, societies and associations that formed the social nucleus for many in the eighteenth century has never been in question. Robert Allen begins his account of *The Clubs of Augustan London* (1967) (a study which emphasises the literary significance of these clubs) with the following quotation, taken from Joseph Addison in the first number of *The Spectator*,⁴ ‘For, as I have before intimated, a plan of it is laid and concerted (as all other matters of importance are) in a club.’⁵ The matter of importance to which Addison refers in the above quotation is the inception of *The Spectator*, but his assertion that ‘all other matters of importance’ arise from the same milieu of clubs and associations is one which few scholars of early eighteenth-century Britain would challenge. Furthermore, the proliferation and social significance of clubs in the Augustan period was by no means a phenomenon peculiar to London.

¹ *The Journal of the Easy Club*, in *The Works of Allan Ramsay Vol. V* eds., Kinghorn and Law (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1972) p.5

² Unfortunately, given the dearth of extant information relating to The Grotesque Club, a search of all numbers of *The Plain Dealer* reveals no such explanation. Indeed, only one other reference to The Grotesque Club appears in *The Plain Dealer*. This further reference appears in a letter from one ‘Fergus Bruce’, Hill’s (possibly fictitious) Edinburgh correspondent, in which Bruce thanks Hill for his interest in, and praise of, the literary life of Edinburgh. See *The Plain Dealer: being select essays on several curious subjects, relating to friendship, poetry, and other branches of polite literature. Publish’d originally in the year 1724 and now collected into two volumes.* (London: printed for J. Richardson and A. Wilde, 1730) pp.461-468.

³ Aaron Hill, *The Plain Dealer: being select essays on several curios subjects, relating to friendship, poetry, and other branches of polite literature. Publish’d originally in the year 1724 and now collected into two volumes.* (London: printed for J. Richardson and A. Wilde, 1730) No.46, Friday, August 28, 1724, pp.393-4

⁴ This first appeared on Thursday, March 1, 1711

⁵ Robert Allen, *The Clubs of Augustan London* (Connecticut: Archon Books, 1967) p.3

Edinburgh witnessed a rapid increase in the number of clubs, societies and associations in the eighteenth century as has been meticulously documented by, among others, Davis D. McElroy.⁶ These clubs and societies were primary loci of literary production of all kinds. For both Allan Ramsay and James Thomson, membership of a club likely represented their earliest available opportunity to gain access to both audience and encouragement for their creative endeavours. The above quotations have been deliberately selected to suggest similitude between Ramsay's Easy Club coterie and purpose and that of the Grotesque Club, the club to which James Thomson belonged as a young student at the University of Edinburgh. There were of course essential differences in, not only the clubs to which each belonged, but in their cultural, religious and educational backgrounds. These differences clearly impacted on their specific poetics, a fact which has allowed Ramsay and Thomson to come to epitomise a two-strand approach to the Scottish culture and literary production in the early eighteenth century. However, there is evidence for a sustained dialogue between these contemporaries on cultural, literary and intellectual levels. While much critical attention on Ramsay has centred on his membership of The Easy Club, less has been said, indeed much less is known, about Thomson's membership of The Grotesque Club. Thomson spent a full decade of his formative years in the intellectual milieu of Edinburgh, a fact often neglected in critical approaches to Thomson; it could indeed be said that Thomson, akin to Ramsay, served his poetic apprenticeship in the Scottish capital. This chapter re-examines the early years of Ramsay's and Thomson's poetic careers against the backdrop of Edinburgh, its club culture and its intellectual life, and aims to delineate points of contact between Ramsay and Thomson in this context.

Edinburgh, in the early years of the eighteenth century, was a place of political unrest and radical intellectualism. Political factions and resistance to the 1707 Union of Parliaments were a marked feature of the times and would, in 1715, erupt into open rebellion, demonstrating the depth of the schisms, not only within Scottish society, but within the new British state itself. There has been a tendency to view such divisions as restricted to Scotland but in reality, the ideological divisions of the time were evident in all areas of Britain. Moreover, the cultural divisions in Edinburgh have conventionally been clearly delineated between the 'high culture' of the literati of day who were predominantly pro- Union (some might even say 'anglophilic'), Calvinist and Whig in their political and religious orientation. It is from this Enlightenment milieu that figures such as David Hume and George Turnbull emerged in later decades of the eighteenth century. Conversely, the

⁶ Davis McElroy *The Literary Clubs and Societies of Eighteenth-Century Scotland and their Influence on Literary Productions of the period from 1700-1800* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh PhD Thesis, 1952)

‘low culture’ has been portrayed as rooted in the folk tradition and characterised by ardent anti- Union patriotism, pro- Stuart loyalty and a Tory political orientation. Traditionally, these are the roots of the vernacular revival embodied by figures such as Allan Ramsay; this cultural grouping has conventionally been portrayed as backward looking and opposed to progress and modernity. Recent scholarship in the field of Enlightenment historiography however, that of Alexander Broadie and David Allen for example, has challenged this two strand approach and has been at pains to emphasise the complexity and cross currents of culture within early Enlightenment Scotland:

There is a common view that, during the eighteenth century, two Scottish cultures are distinguishable. One [...] was a high or polite culture to which the geniuses belonged. It was literary, was based on the universities, the Kirk, the legal institutions and the country’s many literary and scientific societies, and was international [...]. The other culture was popular or vernacular; it was primarily oral, had a wide base, and was more nationalistically Scottish [...]. The distinction seems clear; but there is room for doubt about its usefulness as an analytical tool [...], since the reality is much more complex than the abstract categories would suggest. For example, in the field of poetry it is not easy to categorise Allan Ramsay senior, Robert Burns and Robert Fergusson in terms of the distinction⁷

The ‘common view’ of a divided Scottish culture to which Broadie alludes has been a pervasive one in Scottish cultural and literary history. The complexity of the cultural conditions created by a series of momentous political, economic and cultural events – the Glorious Revolution of 1688 which sealed the fate of the Stuart monarchy; the failure of Scotland’s attempt to achieve an empire which ‘perished in 1699 in the swamps of Darien’⁸ and of course, the (still surviving) Union of Parliaments of 1707 – has often been interpreted by means of a paradigm of paradox. This paradigm is particularly prevalent in the field of literary criticism. David Daiches’s influential *The Paradox of Scottish Culture: The Eighteenth-century Experience* (1964), David Craig’s *Scottish Literature and the Scottish People 1680-1830* (1961), and, more recently, Kenneth Simpson’s *The Protean Scot: The Crisis of Identity in Eighteenth-century Scottish Literature* (1988) rely on this notion of cultural confusion, paradox and ultimately a bifurcation of identity peculiar to Scottish culture as a result of Scotland’s political incorporation into Britain, a state whose dominant cultural force was seen by many as being provided by England or, more specifically, London. Conventionally, Allan Ramsay has come to epitomise this

⁷ Alexander Broadie *The Scottish Enlightenment: The Historical Age of the Historical Nation* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2007) pp.13-14

⁸ Christopher Harvie, *Scotland and Nationalism: Scottish Society and Politics, 1707-1977* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1977) p.64 (Harvie also notes the that in the 1690s, ‘four bad harvests brought the last and probably the worst famine in the country’s history.’ Ibid., p.64)

eighteenth-century Scottish literary schizophrenia. An example of this dominant formulation is provided by the following quotation from David Craig:

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.⁹

Among Ramsay's 'literary and other activities' was his membership of The Easy Club, established, according to the club's journal, in May, 1712.¹⁰ Returning to Joseph Addison's observation that 'all other matters of importance' are planned and debated in a club, and, given the cultural conditions and history of this club, it is no surprise that The Easy Club has been the subject of considerable critical commentary and debate. The well documented and much cited change of pseudonyms adopted by the club members in November 1713 has, like Ramsay himself, been interpreted as indicative of 'cultural schizophrenia'.¹¹

Two of the most comprehensive critical treatments of the Easy Club (and other clubs of the period that were significant in terms of literary production) are Davis D. McElroy's thesis, *The Literary Clubs and Societies of Eighteenth-Century Scotland, and their Influence on the Literary Productions of the Period from 1700-1800* (1952) and Corey Andrews's *Literary Nationalism in Eighteenth-Century Scottish Club Poetry* (2004). Some of the material from McElroy's meticulously researched thesis was later published as a book entitled *Scotland's Age of Improvement: A Survey of Eighteenth-Century Literary Clubs and Societies*, a title that is indicative of his interpretation of the main cultural imperatives at work in Scotland at the time. McElroy contextualises his subject with the following assertions regarding the state of Scotland at the beginning the eighteenth century:

As a nation, however, Scotland was not unaware that the general increase of material prosperity and the intellectual achievement of her neighbours were in sharp contrast to her own abject poverty in both these spheres. She was, in fact, acutely aware of her 'backward' state and, prompted by pride and a desire to share in the good things in life, she resolved to 'improve' herself, and to bring herself abreast of the times by imitating and emulating her traditional enemy, the English.¹²

This interpretation, with its emphasis very firmly on improvement by imitation, is in direct opposition to Andrews's view. Andrews says of McElroy's improvement model, 'Clearly, in this theory of Scottish culture, the teleology of improvement does not allow for any

⁹ David Craig, *Scottish Literature and the Scottish People 1680-1830* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961) p.32

¹⁰ *Journal of The Easy Club* in *The Works of Allan Ramsay Vol V* eds., A. Kinghorn and A. Law (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1972) p.5

¹¹ The phrase 'cultural schizophrenia' appears in David Daiches, *The Paradox of Scottish Culture: The Eighteenth-Century Experience* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964) p.66

¹² Davis D. McElroy, *The Literary Clubs and Societies of Eighteenth-Century Scotland, and their Influence on the Literary Productions of the Period from 1700-1800* (PhD Thesis: University of Edinburgh, 1952) pp.13-14

deviation from the imitation of English models: thus the stress on the Easy Club's return to the 'blithe and easy task of improving themselves in polite conversation' after their dalliance in politics during the 'fifteen.'¹³ Andrews argues throughout that some of the literary productions of the Easy Club (and others) can be read as forms of cultural resistance against the assimilation of Scottish culture into the cultural ideal that was represented by England. He does however, add the necessary caveat that 'as in other areas of eighteenth-century Scottish cultural life, the world of Scottish clubs is resolutely contradictory, offering an assimilationist counterpoint for every pocket of nationalist resistance.'¹⁴

Of course, there are problems, or inconsistencies, within both these interpretive models but these are indicative of the complexity of the period, rather than any failings on the part of the commentators. McElroy, as Andrews is quick to point out, downplays the significance of literary works and cultural impulses that are surely indicative of cultural resistance to both the Union of 1707 and to English models as cultural ideals and Andrews, although acknowledging the marginality of literary nationalism in the clubs of the period, chooses the clubs and writers who form the main subjects of his book with care. What this material does make clear is that club life in Scotland in the early years of the eighteenth century, like so many other sites of cultural expression, is subject to the same models of opposition and paradox. What appears to be missing from such commentary then is an interpretative model which is capable of expressing the dense complexity of this culture and the seemingly paradoxical nature of the society from which these clubs and, more importantly in terms of the present discussion, literature, emerged. This is a question to which I shall return at the end of the chapter.

Ramsay and Thomson were both members of Edinburgh clubs in the early years of the eighteenth century, as well as aspiring poets. Much has of course been written of the Easy Club, largely due to Andrew Gibson's¹⁵ fortuitous discovery of the *Journal* of the Easy Club in an Edinburgh bookshop in 1907¹⁶ and Alexander Kinghorn's and Alexander Law's subsequent publication of the full text of the *Journal* in Volume V of The Scottish Text Society's *The Works of Allan Ramsay*.¹⁷ The *Journal* is a fascinating social document and provides insight into the character of the Easy Club. Much less is known about the

¹³ Corey Andrews, *Literary Nationalism in Eighteenth-Century Scottish Club Poetry* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2004) pp.34-35

¹⁴ Corey Andrews, *Literary Nationalism in Eighteenth-Century Scottish Club Poetry* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2004) p.3

¹⁵ See, Andrew Gibson *New Light on Allan Ramsay* (Edinburgh: William Brown, 1927)

¹⁶ Alexander Kinghorn and Alexander Law, 'Introductory Note' to *The Works of Allan Ramsay Vol. V*. (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1972)

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.5-58

Grotesque Club, the club to which Thomson belonged. The occasional reference to it appears in a few sources, such as the reference to it in Aaron Hill's *The Plain Dealer*, but unfortunately no journal, nor full membership list, is available today. So little extant documentation of the Grotesque Club remains in fact, that it renders a comprehensive analysis of this club coterie with that of the Easy Club challenging.

What is known about the Grotesque Club is firstly, and most obviously, its name. Sadly, the reason for this name, though alluded to teasingly by Aaron Hill in the quotation cited above, has been lost in the intervening years. However, it is perhaps significant that the Grotesque Club was known as a 'club', akin to the Easy Club. Certainly, McElroy, whose work remains the most comprehensive treatment of eighteenth-century Scottish clubs, accords some importance to the denomination of such groups:

It is necessary to examine the three terms, 'association', 'club', and 'society', in the light of their eighteenth-century usage. The first thing to be observed about these three words is that in the eighteenth century, as today, there was very little distinction made between them in common usage. There was, or I believe, a general feeling that an association was usually a more businesslike affair than either a club or a society; and there was probably a further inclination to regard a society as being a slightly more sedate and purposeful organisation than those which one familiarly referred to as a 'club'. Such distinctions were, in fact, a reflection of the true state affairs, for the clubs, literary or otherwise, generally met in taverns, and they were characterised by a convivial disregard for formality which has been caught for all time in the scene in which counsellor Pleydell appeared at 'High-Jinks' in Scott's novel *Guy Mannering*.¹⁸

Conviviality then, and friendship, are central to the ethos of club life in this account. This notion of friendship is borne out by the Easy Club's justification for their name: 'it was unanimously determined their Society should go under the Name of the easy Club designing thereby that their denomination should be a Check to all unruly and disturbing behaviour among their Members',¹⁹ as well as by the member of the Grotesque Club who describes their 'Business'²⁰ as 'A Friendship that knows no Strife, but that of a generous Emulation, to excel, in Virtue, Learning and Politeness.'²¹ However, in addition to an emphasis on friendship and conviviality, an improving agenda is also present in these club manifestos, as is a desire to achieve 'politeness', a word of great cultural significance in the period. What is of further interest in the Easy Club's manifesto, is their designated goal of

¹⁸ Davis D. McElroy, *The Literary Clubs and Societies of Eighteenth-Century Scotland, and their Influence on the Literary Productions of the Period from 1700-1800* (PhD Thesis: University of Edinburgh, 1952) pp.8-9

¹⁹ *The Journal of the Easy Club*, in *The Works of Allan Ramsay Vol.V* eds., Kinghorn and Law (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1972) p.5

²⁰ Aaron Hill, *The Plain Dealer: being select essays on several curios subjects, relating to friendship, poetry, and other branches of polite literature. Publish'd originally in the year 1724 and now collected into two volumes.* (London: printed for J. Richardson and A. Wilde, 1730) No.46, Friday, August 28, 1724, pp.393-4

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.393

improving themselves in conversation ‘that they may become more adapted for fellowship with the politer part of mankind’²². This naturally begs the question, who were the ‘politer part of mankind?’ and, related to this, who were the Easy Club? The rhetoric of improvement combined with the suggestion that the gentlemen who composed the Easy Club did not number themselves among the ‘politer part of mankind’ would seem to support McElroy’s thesis that the Easy Club, and indeed most of the Edinburgh clubs at this time, sought improvement through imitation, or, to put it bluntly, improvement through Anglicisation.

THE EASY CLUB

The Easy Club first convened in Edinburgh, in May 1712, agreeing that each member should adopt the name of an ‘eminent person’ in order to have these patrons ‘as an example which as the wise say is more prevalent in Reformation than precept.’²³ The *Journal* entry for the 12th May 1712 records: ‘Those who founded ye Club call’d one another by ye Names of Rochester, Isaac Bickerstaff and Tom Brown- they were in a few days Join’d by three who assum’d ye Names of Sr Roger L’Estrange, Sr Isaac Newton and — Heywood.’²⁴ Thus, Isaac Bickerstaff, the young Ramsay, was a founding member of the club. By May 1712 the aspiring poet was, as yet, unpublished.²⁵ It was his fellows in the club who would form his first real critical audience, indeed perhaps his motivation for the founding of such a club was to provide himself with a convivial poetic platform. Certainly, with the exception of Sir Isaac Newton, the pseudonyms of these initial members, and those joined later in this first phase of the club²⁶, Sir Richard Blackmore and George Buchannan, demonstrate a decidedly literary bias which is indicative of the character of the club and perhaps of the direction which aspiring poet Ramsay hoped the club would take.

The choice of English patron names at the founding of the Easy Club, along with a letter, composed by Isaac Bickerstaff and addressed to ‘Mr Spectator’, very much supports the notion that the club was inspired by and moulded in imitation of the fictitious ‘Spectator Club’. It should be remembered that in this reliance on *The Spectator* as the ideal model of polite sociability, the Easy were not alone. Jon Mee, in his study

²² *The Journal* of the Easy Club, in *The Works of Allan Ramsay Vol.V* eds., Kinghorn and Law (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1972) p.5

²³ *Ibid.*, p.5

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.5

²⁵ He was, however, writing; a manuscript copy of ‘Elegy on Maggy Johnston’ is in existence, and as the date of the legendary Maggy’s death is given as 1711, it seems likely that this was when the poem was written.

²⁶ Following the example of Corey Andrews, I refer to the first phase of the Easy Club as being the period prior to their hiatus in 1713 and subsequent regrouping and adoption of Scottish pseudonyms.

Conversable Worlds (2011), notes: ‘Throughout the eighteenth century and beyond, writers and readers of all kinds looked back to Joseph Addison and Sir Richard Steele’s *Spectator* as the key text of the paradigm of conversability.’²⁷ However, the content of this letter points to more than a wish to gain, by flattery, the advice of Mr Spectator himself on the means to render the club more like the literary clubs of Augustan London and thus, more comprehensively improve its members along English cultural ideals. The letter describes the different roles of the members of the Easy Club:

Tho our humours be Sympathetically United yet there are severall pleasant varieties in our Qualifications or Rather what we discover our Selves to be admirers of in others every Member at Meeting is call’d by the Name of whatever Author he hath ye granted Esteem for Our wit goes by the Name of Rochester our Mathematician Sr Isaac Newton Our Moralist Sr Roger L’estrangle ye grave poet Sr Richard Blackmore Our Historian Geo: Buchannan the Mертt Rott Colinson ye Humorist Tom Brown and the Censor of ye Club Isaac Bickerstaff.²⁸

This echoes Addison’s description of each of the members of his fictitious ‘Spectator Club’ in the second number of *The Spectator*, published on March 2nd, 1711.²⁹ In both cases, these character sketches serve to delineate the differences between club members and to emphasise the inclusive and fraternal nature of the club environment, an environment which embraces difference by viewing differences in opinion and character as charming eccentricities or endearing foibles. How much this was actually the case with regard to the Easy Club is open to debate.³⁰ What we can learn from these character sketches is that regardless of personal, or political, differences, the club environment was one that was considered safe, in that a certain loyalty existed between the members that allowed the members freedom of expression within the confines of the club coterie. This is an important point in terms of Ramsay’s poetic apprenticeship, and one that is alluded to in another part of his letter to Mr Spectator, one which explains the relevance of the club’s name as well as indicating how Ramsay viewed this audience for his poetry:

We compose a Civil Society which goes under ye Name of ye Easy Club. The Main Reason of our Assuming this Name is because none of ane empty conceited quarrelling temper can have ye privelage of being a member for we Allow all ye title merry freedoms among our Selves rallying one another at our Meeting without ye

²⁷ Jon Mee *Conversable Worlds: Literature, Contention, and Community 1762 to 1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) p.9

²⁸ *The Journal of The Easy Club in The Works of Allan Ramsay Vol. V* eds., A. Kinghorn and A. Law (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1972) p.8

²⁹ See, *The Papers of Joseph Addison, Esq. In the Tatler, Spectator, Guardian and Freeholder. Together with his treatise on the Christian religion. To which are prefixed Tickell’s life of the author, and extracts from Dr. Johnston’s remarks on his prose writings. With original notes never before published. In Four Volumes. Vol.I*, (Edinburgh: Printed for William Creech, 1790) pp.285-291

³⁰ Corey Andrews suggests that a decidedly uneasy poetic rivalry took place within the easy Club. See, *Literary Nationalism in Eighteenth-Century Scottish Club Poetry* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2004) pp.70-75

least appearance of Spleen upon Account of what ever we discover to be amiss or weak in any Circumstances of our Conversation which produces Rather love than Dislike being with persuaded of ye Esteem each of hath for his fellow and his design to See No blemish in his Character.³¹

This notion of ‘merry freedoms’ among the members speaks of confidence in the loyalty of fellow members and likely encouraged in the aspiring poet a freedom to experiment and to express any poetic sentiment regardless of its potentially contentious content. Furthermore, this ‘merry freedom’ no doubt extended to the club who formed the audience for Ramsay’s earliest productions, rendering them honest, yet supportive critics.

But, just who were these critics? I have previously quoted the club manifesto which communicated the club’s desire to improve in order to converse with the ‘politer part of mankind’, and suggested that this indicates a certain reluctance among the members to number themselves among the ‘politer part of mankind’. I would not however, interpret this simply as a desire to become Anglicised and converse in a manner that could have come directly from the pages of *The Spectator*. Rather these men sought mutual improvement through contact with their fellows in the club, and through the opportunities that this environment offered in terms of the study and discussion of the issues of day, and of literature past and present. Ramsay himself had, by this time, completed his apprenticeship in wigmaking and opened his own business, having been admitted a burgess of Edinburgh in 1710.³² This was a profession which would have afforded Ramsay many opportunities of meeting and conversing with men of a more eminent social position than himself. Perhaps this was the means by which he made the acquaintance with some of his future fellows in the Easy Club, some of whom were of a higher social standing than himself.

Of the members of the Easy Club whose real identities are known, less is known about their professions and positions. George Buchannan has been identified as one John Fergus,³³ Kinghorn and Law suppose that this is the same John Fergus who appears in the list of subscribers to both Ramsay’s *Poems of 1721* and *Poems of 1728* as an Edinburgh merchant.³⁴ The other members whose real identity has been established are Lord Rochester, later Lord Napier, whose real name was James Stewart, and Sir Roger L’Estrange, later Michael Scot, whose real name was Mr Edgar. The *Journal* entry for

³¹ The *Journal* of The Easy Club in *The Works of Allan Ramsay Vol. V* eds., A. Kinghorn and A. Law (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1972) p.7

³² See, Murray Pittock’s entry for Allan Ramsay in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/23077> (accessed 10/03/2011)

³³ According to Andrew Gibson, *New Light on Allan Ramsay* (Edinburgh: William Brown, 1927) p.53, George Buchannan’s ‘real name was John Fergus, as is provided by a stitched manuscript of twenty leaves, in the handwriting of ‘Buchannan’, that is now in our possession.

³⁴ Alexander Kinghorn and Alexander Law, ‘Introductory Note’ to the *Journal* of The Easy Club in *The Works of Allan Ramsay Vol. V* eds., A. Kinghorn and A. Law (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1972) p.2

April 1713 records that, ‘Upon ye 29 and 30th April 1713 Sr Roger L’Estrange took Journey for London in order to go to Leyden to prosecute his study of ye Law and was Conveyed half a days journey by Mr George Buchannan.’³⁵ It seems likely then that Sr Roger L’Estrange, or, Mr Edgar, successfully completed his legal studies and returned to Edinburgh in time to appear in the list of subscribers to Ramsay’s first volume of poems as ‘Mr John Edgar, Advocate.’³⁶ There also appears, in the lists of subscribers to Ramsay’s first two major published volumes, one ‘James Stewart *Attorney of the Court of Exchequer*’³⁷ but whether this is Ramsay’s fellow (and fellow poet) in the Easy Club is, of course, mere conjecture.

However, what these few clues do tell us is that Easy Club membership was not restricted along class or professional lines and in this sense seems to have been genuinely ‘easy’ and inclusive. Rather, the uniting forces in the club seem to have been an ardent Scottish patriotism and an interest in literary culture. Corey Andrews has documented the vigorous flyting that seems to have taken place between Ramsay and James Stewart, as well as providing commentary on the poetic contributions of other members of the club.³⁸ The Easy Club then must have been an ideal testing ground for the patriotic and aspiring young poet. Furthermore, Ramsay’s early club poetry offers an insight into the complex cultural forces and influences that Ramsay, with increasing confidence, was able wield and to weave into his poetic project.

Conventionally, as has been previously noted, Ramsay’s ability to manipulate a diverse range of language, form, ideology and influence and harness these into the service of his poetic project has been viewed as symptomatic of his cultural confusion and a peculiarly Scottish bifurcation of identity following the Union of 1707. The Easy Club’s decision to reject their English patron names in 1713 has come to symbolise this crisis. Given the extent of the critical attention which has focused on this event in the club’s history, it is perhaps necessary to quote the (lengthy) journal entry for the meeting at which the change of pseudonyms for the club members was proposed and adopted:

Thursday the 5th of November 1713. [...] Mr George Buchannan Representing what Scotland has Suffered what we now in a More inglorious manner (do) are like to Suffer by the Perfidy, pride, and hatred of England and how great an affront was put upon ye Scots Nation by Condemning our own Country and Choosing English men for our Patrons he said if they Continued in this he had Reason to fear their easiness would dwindle into Stupidity and Concluded (by) declaring that he thought it would

³⁵ Ibid., p.27

³⁶ Allan Ramsay, *The Works of Allan Ramsay Vol.I* eds. Burns Martin and John Oliver (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1951) p.xxxii

³⁷ Ibid., p.xxxvi

³⁸ See, Corey Andrews, , *Literary Nationalism in Eighteenth-Century Scottish Club Poetry* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press,2004) pp.31-114

be an honourable article in the Constitution of a Club of Scots men (who have Resolv'd to be called by other Names than their own) To pay a dutifull Respect to the heroes and Authors of their own Nation by Choosing them for their patrons And proposed it might be an Article in ye fundamentall Constitution of this Society as a Mean to Maintain in us Love to our Native Country which we See day by [day] decaying and Animate us to projects for her interest

Scots Blood was fire and flaming fir'd itself

Mother Breasts which kindly took ye Blaze

All took ye hint and it was Unanimously Resolv'd in warm expressions by each that none of this Club shall have english but Scots Patrons So immediately Renouncing their former deliberate upon ye Choice of new patrons and that Member formerly nam'd Isaac Bickerstaff did chose Gavin Douglas sometime bishop of Dunkeld and a famous old Scots poet for which he is chosen by that member Tom Brown is now Samuell Colvill a Scots poet and humourist Sr Richard Blackmore choosed Blind Harry ane old Scots poet author of ye Epique poem on Wallace Mr George Buchannan continues the same.³⁹

This entry and Ramsay's authorship, in the same year, of 'A Poem to the Memory of the Famous Archibald Pitcairn, M.D.', demonstrate an unequivocal anti-union and patriotic sentiment and, in the light of these productions, it is difficult to refute Murray Pittock's conclusion that the Easy Club were indeed Jacobites, at least in sentiment.⁴⁰ Indeed, if further evidence is required of the Easy Club's Jacobite sympathies, the life of Dr. Archibald Pitcairne (1652-1713),⁴¹ subject of Ramsay's poem and whose death was the potential catalyst for the club's adoption of Scottish pseudonyms lends weight to this conclusion.⁴² However, this ardent Scottish patriotism need not be at odds with an Augustan poetic agenda, particularly if, as is the case with Ramsay, Augustan forms and tropes are manipulated in a specifically Scottish context. I have previously suggested that the club environment offered a place of safety and poetic as well as political freedom. The most convincing evidence for this is Ramsay's poem, written shortly after Archibald Pitcairne's death in 1713. This poem was not officially published in Ramsay's lifetime and indeed remained lost until the twentieth century. That this poem was never included in Ramsay's published works is hardly surprising given the politically sensitive, or even

³⁹ The *Journal of The Easy Club* in *The Works of Allan Ramsay Vol. V* eds., A. Kinghorn and A. Law (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1972) pp.27-28

⁴⁰ While most critics would now agree with this point (myself included), it has given rise to some debate over the years. See, especially, Alexander Kinghorn, 'Allan Ramsay and the Easy Club' in *Scottish Literary Journal* 16:2 (Glasgow: ASLS, 1989) pp.18-40 and Murray Pittock, 'Were the Easy Club Jacobites?' in *Scottish Literary Journal* 17:2 (Glasgow: ASLS, 1990) pp.91-94

⁴¹ Archibald Pitcairne's remarkable life and achievements included a distinguished medical career, publications of works on medicine and poetry in both Latin and English as well as accusations of Jacobitism, atheism and alcoholism. His only son was imprisoned in the Tower for his part in the 1715 Jacobite rebellion and died soon after his release. See Anita Guerrini's entry for Archibald Pitcairne in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* at www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22320 (accessed 09/10/2013)

⁴² I am inclined to agree, in light of the close proximity of these events, with Murray Pittock's speculative comment on The Easy Club's adoption of Scottish pseudonyms: 'Perhaps this decision was in honour of the death of Dr Archibald Pitcairne on 20 October.' *Poetry and Jacobite Politics in Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) p.154

sedition, content and the fact that it was written only two years before political unrest would erupt into open rebellion in the form of the Jacobite uprising of 1715. The poem was presented to the Easy Club who were presumably pleased with it as the club *Journal* entry for Wednesday, November 18th, 1713 reads as follows:

The Club being Met Gavin Douglas was chosen Praeses who after he had taken the Chair Presented a Poem Composed by himself to ye Memory of Dr Archibald Pitcairn which he dedicated to ye Club in a handsome Dedicatory poem– the Poem and dedication being Read it was Unanimously Approven and ye Authors Complement Received for which he had ye thanks of ye Club– after which it was Resolved that the said poem should be printed at ye charge of ye Members ye author included (at his own desire) Upon which each member Consign'd 18/s Scots in the treasurer's hands amounting to £7.4/s.⁴³

The poem itself is Ramsay's most fiercely patriotic piece, and yet it is also one of his most typically Augustan poems which demonstrates Ramsay's range and command of diverse material even at this early stage in his career. Despite the bold ideological statement contained within 'Poem to Pitcairne,' Ramsay's Augustan literary identity is clearly indicated in the form of the poem, an identity which is characteristically incorporated into a framework of reference and allusiveness to a specifically Scottish literary heritage. The poem is, with minor exceptions, expressed in heroic couplets which are indelible hallmarks of Augustan poetic practice. The sustained use of the couplet in the period however, is more than merely a stylistic choice based on aesthetic taste, it was, to return to Doody's judgement, in the couplet that one can identify 'the deep figure of Augustan thought, its oxymoron, finds perfect form, and it can proceed through debate, through paradox, antithesis and parallel. Through the operation of the couplet various languages can play, and the double-voices statement finds a natural pattern.'⁴⁴ Thus, Ramsay's choice of the couplet in 'Poem to Pitcairne' is not only an entirely appropriate vehicle for a poem which openly expresses cultural discontent and division, but which signifies Ramsay's location within a British literary context even whilst producing a poetic polemic which is specifically Scottish in its concerns. Furthermore, the heroic couplet is, in this case, suited to the narrative framework of 'Poem to Pitcairne' which uses Pitcairne's journey through the classical underworld as a vehicle for ideological expression.

This classical, or rather neoclassical framework further exposes Ramsay's engagement with Augustan preoccupations and expressive vehicles. It does so, however, in a specifically Scottish way, pointing thus not only to eighteenth-century neoclassicism, but

⁴³ The *Journal* of The Easy Club in *The Works of Allan Ramsay Vol. V* eds., A. Kinghorn and A. Law (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1972) p.33

⁴⁴ Doody, Margaret Anne *The Daring Muse: Augustan Poetry Reconsidered* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) pp.232-3

to Ramsay's Scottish literary heritage. Specifically, Pitcairne's journey through the underworld alludes, not to Virgil's *Aeneid* so much as it does to Gavin Douglas's Scots adaptation of the work, *The Aneados*, which is of course wholly appropriate given Ramsay's adoption of Gavin Douglas as his Scottish patron. Furthermore, as Murray Pittock⁴⁵ has suggested, Douglas's work had become a significant source of Jacobite textual code and allusion. Notably however, despite these apparently significant allusions to Douglas's work and thus the Scots literary tradition which Ramsay is ultimately credited as championing, the language of 'Poem to Pitcairne' eschews the use of Scots vernacular. As there is evidence for Ramsay's use of Scots vernacular prior to this date, this cannot merely be suggestive of Ramsay's early attempts to write in Standard English, before finding his Scots voice as it were; rather, this is a deliberate artistic choice. Perhaps then, in appropriating the language of those he criticises in the poem, the educated Scottish nobility and politicians, Ramsay renders his work all the more subversive, perhaps also signalling his awareness of and ability to assimilate the language of the English Augustan tradition. Ultimately, the effect is one which displays the wide sources of Ramsay's poetic apprenticeship, and harnesses them together in an incisive Scottish Augustan polemic.

'Poem to Pitcairne' opens with typically Augustan personification, as 'loud mouth'd Fame' (l.1) spreads the news of Pitcairne's death, hinting in this phrase at the showiness and vulgarity of contemporary society, a theme which informs Ramsay's social satires. Here however, the action of the poem is removed from contemporary society and located instead in the classical underworld. The narrative of Pitcairne's journey is related to the speaker by means of a 'kindly Genij' (l.18) who goes on to relate the words and actions of those encountered by in the underworld. This utilisation of multiple speakers is characteristic of Ramsay and is effective in several ways. Firstly, this device allows a certain degree of authorial distance, especially important in politically sensitive poems such as this. This distance between speaker and action allows Ramsay to maintain a polite poetic persona, one who stands wryly observing the competing discourses and factions of society whilst simultaneously exploiting these competing discourses as means of imparting ideology and opinion. In 'Poem to Pitcairne', the political factions that divide Scotland are her greatest enemy, a notion which is returned to again and again. Thus, while 'Poem to Pitcairne' exploits all the opportunities afforded by converse with the dead in enabling

⁴⁵'Its [Douglas's *Aeneados*] popularity in the age of Ruddiman and Ramsay seems due to its identification as a meeting point for vernacular and Latinist patriotism in the central story of Jacobite classicism.' Murray Pittock, *Poetry and Jacobite Politics in Eighteenth Century Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) p.152

Ramsay to recall Scotland's heroic and independent past by constructing a Scottish myth-histoire through the heroic and noble words of Bruce and Wallace, the true villain of the piece is the divided nature of Scottish society. Those, 'who their Country Sold' (l.34) and who now float on a 'Pool of Boyling Gold' (l.33) are condemned to what Ramsay evidently considers a worse fate than rivers of boiling gold or transformation into the devil's creatures ('Vipers, Asps, or Toads' (l.36)), that is, they are condemned to strive in 'Eternal Faction' (l.50). This topos is continued when Pitcairne encounters 'the Royal shade/ Of Valiant BRUCE' (ll.68-9) to whose questions concerning the present state of Scotland Pitcairne replies,

We're plagu'd with Whig and Tory,
 Who mind their Interest more than great *Jove's* Glory,
 About mere Trifles they make such a Pother,
 Still Damning and Devouring one another.
 So when E're ought's propos'd for SCOTLAND'S good,
 It's by a *Cursed Party* still withstood:
 Thus all our best Designs are Ruin'd quite,
 Allenary by *Whig* and *Tory* Spite. (ll.76-83)

There is, of course, a certain sophisticated irony in all of this; Ramsay is himself as guilty as any polemicist in the period, and of course, this poetic persona which apparently transcends the grubby world of 'interest' and 'party' is in itself a ideologically informed construct, very much in the Jacobite and Tory mould.

This then is the work of a Scottish Augustan, and by this I do not mean to suggest that it is a weak and derivative attempt to emulate the work of English masters of sophisticated irony and heroic couplets such as Dryden or Pope. Rather, Ramsay creates a poetic manifesto which speaks deeply and unequivocally of his own espousal of Tory, Jacobite and anti-Union sentiments which he then carefully overlays with the stylistic features, forms and tropes of the polite Augustan. He thus neatly distances himself from the ideological intensity of the content and context of his poem by the use of persona and a multi-voiced, fragmentary dialogue. Despite such poetic posturing however, we are left in no doubt as to the allegiances of Ramsay. The gravity of the classical referents and characters is greatly undermined by comparison with Scotland's own glorious, semi-mythical past. Charon, rather than a dark figure of dread, becomes in Ramsay's familiar, reductive and dismissive treatment, the grumbling 'Old Charon'. The guardians of the underworld it seems, lose their weight and bite in comparison with Scotland's heroes, the 'Grave Majestick Stalk, the Royal shade/ Of Valiant BRUCE' (ll.68-9) and Wallace 'with *Aspect Stern*, yet kind;' (l.84), indicating Ramsay's commitment to a now lost Scottish culture characterised by honour, and of course, kindly virtue, where all were united under

one strong monarch. Ramsay's Scottish Augustanism here speaks of one who utilises classical referents and yet who perhaps prizes his own national history and mythology above that of Rome or Greece. At the close of the poem, Pitcairne is included in the company of Scotland's heroic worthies, where he takes his place and is 'left Penning Harmonious Odes,/ In praise of Vertue' (l.99).

This then represents an early example of Ramsay's poetry, a poetic that, at this time, was very much informed by the Easy Club environment. Ramsay was still an active member of the Easy Club in 1715 when James Thomson matriculated at the University of Edinburgh and found his place within a different club coterie which likewise provided the apprentice poet with a poetic platform and audience for his early productions. Thomson's audience of the Grotesque Club would have been largely composed of his fellow students from the university and thus was probably less diverse in its membership than the Easy Club. However, both clubs shared a distinct literary bias which no doubt shaped the future poetics of Ramsay and Thomson. As so little is known about the Grotesque Club, except that its membership was largely comprised of students including Thomson and David Malloch (later, Mallet), it is to Edinburgh University itself that we must look for clues as to the character of student clubs at this time.

GROTESQUES, ATHENIANS AND *THE EDINBURGH MISCELLANY*

When James Thomson first matriculated at the University of Edinburgh in October 1715, he entered an institution which was already promulgating ideas and scientific and philosophical systems that were to become central to the Scottish Enlightenment. Only seven years before, in 1708, the University of Edinburgh had adopted the professorial system as opposed to the old regenting system which had been in place since the foundation of the university.⁴⁶ This progressive step meant that instead of each matriculating class being assigned a Regent, that is, one Professor who would oversee their entire degree programme, each Professor, according to his own specialisms and skills, would teach a particular subject, as is the case in universities today. Not only did this progressive step make sound educational sense, but it also points to the move towards specialisation of knowledge which was characteristic of later Enlightenment thought. Indeed, with regard to improving education, the University of Edinburgh at this time boasted some of the leading intellectual and scientific lights of times. Among the *Senatus*

⁴⁶ See, Andrew Dalzel, *History of the University of Edinburgh From its Foundation*, 2 vols., (Edinburgh: Edmonston & Douglas, 1862) vol.2 p.299 and Herbert Drennon, 'James Thomson's contact with Newtonianism and his Interest in Natural Philosophy' in *PMLA*. Vol. 49, No. 1 1934, pp.71-80 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/458239> Accessed: 11/06/2012

Academicus of 1715 listed by Andrew Dalzel in his annalistic history of the university are such eminent figures as: Mr William Hamilton, Professor of Divinity; Mr Colin Drummond, Professor of Logic; Mr Robert Stewart, Professor of Natural Philosophy and James Gregory (brother of eminent Newtonian, David Gregory), Professor of Mathematics.⁴⁷

1715 was undoubtedly an exciting time to matriculate in the capital's university and some of the ideas that Thomson would imbibe in this stimulating intellectual environment would thematically inform his future poetic path.⁴⁸ Aside from such a stirring intellectual environment, Edinburgh was, in 1715, politically unsettled by the Jacobite rebellion which was at its height in October 1715 and would end with the Battle of Sheriffmuir and the subsequent surrender of the Jacobites at Preston in November 1715. So significant was the disruption arising from these events that Dalzel's *History* digresses from the annalistic listing of facts relating to the University of Edinburgh to comment upon the events of 1715:

The rebellion prevailed in Scotland at this time, particularly in Lothian in the month of October, which, no doubt, was unfavourable to the assembling of the College. November 13, the rebels surrendered at Preston. On the same day, the battle of Dunblane [Sheriffmuir] was fought. Not long after, the Pretender landed in Scotland, but was soon obliged to re-embark and make his escape, and the rebellion was soon quelled.⁴⁹

Despite Dalzel's succinct treatment of the events of 1715, such a political climate of opposition, unrest and violence must have impacted on the young James Thomson, fresh from his rural home in the Borders. Yet, his early poems betray little political comment, a fact that seems incredible when placed in this context. Certainly, Thomson's own background, and that of his patrons (of which more will be said below) point to the Whig identity which Thomson would develop both poetically and politically in the future, as well as according with the predominantly Whig culture of the capital and of the university itself. However, Thomson seems to have deliberately avoided overt or polemic political commentary at this early stage in his poetic career. This was perhaps an act of prudence on Thomson's part, or perhaps he was aware that the situation in Edinburgh, and in his new environment as a student in the university, was rather more volatile than Dalzel would suggest.

⁴⁷ Andrew Dalzel, *History of the University of Edinburgh From its Foundation*, 2 vols., (Edinburgh: Edmonston & Douglas, 1862) vol.2 p.316

⁴⁸ Herbert Drennon, 'James Thomson's contact with Newtonianism and his Interest in Natural Philosophy' in *PMLA*. Vol. 49, No. 1 1934, pp.71-80 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/458239> Accessed: 11/06/2012

⁴⁹ Andrew Dalzel, *History of the University of Edinburgh From its Foundation*, 2 vols., (Edinburgh: Edmonston & Douglas, 1862) vol. 2 pp.314-314

Thomson's well documented and abiding friendship with David Malloch stems from their time at the University of Edinburgh, as does Thomson's acquaintance (an acquaintance that did not develop into friendship, but into open animosity in later years) with Joseph Mitchell, another member of the so-called Anglo-Scottish poets of the period. Malloch, later Mallet,⁵⁰ has of course been subject to contempt in the annals of literary history, largely due to Samuel Johnson's derogatory account of him in his *Lives of the Poets* (1779-81). As Sandro Jung, in his recent work on Malloch, comments: 'Consequently, almost all accounts dealing with Mallet are tinged with Johnsonian prejudices that can be identified in a number of 'lives' such as William Shenstone's or Thomas Gray's.'⁵¹ Jung's work seeks to redress the balance of literary history in Malloch's favour, offering a comprehensive reassessment of Malloch's broad corpus and significance in the narrative of early eighteenth-century poetry. Of more relevance to the present discussion, however, is Jung's detailed research on Malloch's background which reveals a complex character whose political, and some might say, national identity is necessarily ambiguous and, to a certain extent, an act of self-fashioning (Jung entitles one of the chapters of his monograph on Malloch, 'Self-Fashioning as a Poet, 1732-43').

Engaging in a more thorough investigation of Malloch's roots than has hitherto been undertaken, Jung's work on Mallet confirms the Jacobite and Catholic background of Mallet, defining a concrete relation between Malloch and a family of Mallochs from Perthshire. Citing primary evidence, Jung describes a family who had been involved in the Jacobite risings of both 1715 and 1745 and whose 'prominent allegiance to the Jacobite cause and a Catholic succession is confirmed by the confiscation of [their] Perth estate.'⁵² Jung further comments, 'Ironically, Mallet's aristocratic patron, the Duke of Montrose, fought the very cause for which they [the Malloch family] had suffered.'⁵³ Malloch, after a period of study at the High School of Edinburgh and a period of employment as Janitor at the same institution, took classes at the University of Edinburgh.⁵⁴ According to Jung, he 'attended the university probably 1719-20, but only formally matriculated in 1721 and 1722, using his Scottish name, Malloch.'⁵⁵

⁵⁰ I shall continue to refer to Malloch as 'Malloch', rather than 'Mallet', at this stage in his life as, whilst in Scotland, this was the surname by which he was known. The change to the Anglicised 'Mallet', occurred after his removal to London.

⁵¹ Sandro Jung *David Mallet, Anglo-Scot: Poetry, Patronage and Politics in the Age of Union* (Newark: Delaware University Press, 2008) p.13

⁵² Ibid., p.20

⁵³ Ibid., p.20

⁵⁴ James Sambrook, 'Mallet, David (1701/2?-1765)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004) <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/17888> Accessed 11/06/2012

⁵⁵ Sandro Jung *David Mallet, Anglo-Scot: Poetry, Patronage and Politics in the Age of Union* (Newark: Delaware University Press, 2008) p.21

Given the predominantly Whig culture of both the city, and the University of Edinburgh, Malloch no doubt felt that success and survival in such an environment demanded the construction of a new cultural identity, one that would be completed in London with his change of surname. This name change has caused some animosity to have been directed at Mallet over the years, but when viewed in the context of the sensitive political climate, a climate in which Malloch was very much part of the (already once defeated) minority, as well in view of poets' continued reliance on patronage in this period, it is perhaps unwise and unfair to judge such acts of self-reinvention too harshly. Furthermore, within the context of a discussion, such as this one, which touches upon Allan Ramsay and the Easy Club's change of pseudonyms from English to Scottish figures, as well as the dynamics of patronage, Malloch's Anglicisation of his name provides some provocative parallels. It also serves as a further demonstration of the difficulties and necessary ambiguities negotiated by poets, especially, though not exclusively, by Scottish poets, at this time.

Malloch's acquaintances and friendships at the University of Edinburgh reflect the cultural cross currents negotiated by Mallet. As Jung informs us:

Through his studies at Edinburgh he not only became acquainted with Jacobites such as the poet William Hamilton of Gilbertfield, he was also admitted to the circle of James Thomson, a staunch Whig, who enabled him to frequent societies such as the Grotesque Club that otherwise would not have been accessible to him.⁵⁶

In this account, Thomson appears to have been instrumental in furthering Malloch's poetic career by facilitating his entrance to and acceptance by the Grotesque Club (and, as discussed below, the Athenian society) and offers a different perspective on the relationship between Malloch and Thomson. In some accounts, Malloch is portrayed as the slightly patronising friend of Thomson who helps him to become established in London whilst adopting a vaguely sneering attitude to his poetic endeavours. Either Malloch, as has been suggested (again, by his unsympathetic biographer, Samuel Johnson), shrouded his family background in secrecy, or Thomson, the apparently 'staunch Whig' was not inclined to reject a friendship on grounds of cultural difference. This suggestion gains credence in the light of my previous observation that Thomson's early pieces are free of political comment despite the fraught political events of Thomson's Edinburgh years.

Records, written histories and anecdotal accounts of student life at the University of Edinburgh in the period between 1715 and 1725 (the period from when James Thomson first matriculated at the University of Edinburgh to his removal to London in 1725) do not

⁵⁶ Ibid., p.22

allude to the Grotesque Club, the student literary club to which Thomson and Malloch belonged. Indeed, the references quoted earlier in this chapter represent almost all of the extant written records that such a club ever existed. There is also very little concrete documentation referring to the Athenian Society, the Society responsible for publishing *The Edinburgh Miscellany* (1720), the anthology in which Thomson's and Malloch's early poetry first appeared in print. What is evident from those references to both the Grotesque Club and the Athenian Society, however, is that their membership would appear to have been very similar. This prompts the speculative proposition that the Grotesque Club and the Athenian Society were actually one and the same. There is no way of proving this of course (unless some previously unknown primary source material is uncovered), but the circumstantial evidence outlined below is reasonably compelling.

The Athenian Society is referred to in McElroy's definitive thesis *'The Literary Clubs and Societies of Eighteenth-Century Scotland and their Influence on the Literary Productions of the Period from 1700-1800'*. However, McElroy's reference to this society is necessarily vague; he too struggled to find any records of its existence other than a reference made to it by John Ramsay of Ochtertyre (1736-1814) in his work on Scottish political and social history, *Scotland and Scotsmen of the Eighteenth Century* (1888). After quoting extensively from Ramsay of Ochtertyre, McElroy concludes:

The Societies of 'would be wits' to which Ramsay of Ochtertyre referred are not known, with the exception of the Athenian Society of Edinburgh which he mentioned in the passage quoted above. However, very little is known of this society, but it seems like it was modelled on the Athenian Society of London.⁵⁷

Ramsay of Ochtertyre's account of the members of the Athenian club that includes Thomson and Mallet and that places Joseph Mitchell in a prominent position in the society very much echoes what is known of the membership of the Grotesque Club, suggesting a membership comprised of students of the University of Edinburgh and a literary bias. It is notable too that McElroy should suggest that the Athenian Society of Edinburgh was modelled on the London society of the same name. McElroy's thesis of course tends to emphasise the imitative qualities of Scottish clubs and societies of the time, believing that the main cultural imperative of such organisations was improvement through emulation of their English counterparts. In this case however, such an observation, given the prominence of the Athenian Society of London, may point to a desire for recognition in London circles on the part of the Edinburgh Athenian Society. Publication was central to

⁵⁷ Davis McElroy *The Literary Clubs and Societies of Eighteenth-Century Scotland and their Influence on Literary Productions of the period from 1700-1800* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh PhD Thesis, 1952) p.70

the agenda of both groups and it is possible that the students who formed the Grotesque Club chose to call themselves by the more formal designation of ‘society’ and by the already well known title of Athenian in order to add gravitas to their publications and to draw the notice of their Southern counterparts who may have been more inclined to show interest in an Edinburgh equivalent of the Athenian Society than in an obscure student club.

This is of course, given the dearth of extant primary sources, merely speculation. Fortunately, the Athenian Society did leave a concrete and available legacy in the form of its publications, publications which point to Joseph Mitchell as being the society’s leading member. In 1719, the Athenian Society sponsored the publication of *Lugubres Cantus*, a collection of elegiac verse in memory of John Mitchell, the younger brother of Joseph Mitchell. This collection was authored by Joseph Mitchell and his friend, John Callender. *Lugubres Cantus*, unlike *The Edinburgh Miscellany*, was published in both Edinburgh and London; no doubt dedicatory verses by Ambrose Philips (1674-1749) and Edward Young (1683- 1675) benefitted its reception in London, and indeed paved the way for Mitchell himself when he moved South to London shortly after this date. It is interesting that Philips (who would later become the butt of Alexander Pope’s [1688-1744] ridicule for his attempts at a native pastoral) and Young (the future author of the meditative and popular *Night Thoughts* [1742-45]) would show such interest in a young writer such as Mitchell who had achieved a little recognition in Scotland at this time but who would have remained relatively obscure in London circles. Sandro Jung, citing Mary Jane Scott⁵⁸ as his source, posits that Philips and Young were members of a London Athenian Society and thus had connections with the Edinburgh Athenian Society. However, the original Athenian Society of London had ceased to exist in 1697⁵⁹ (if it ever did exist outside of the pages its publications, Robert Allen numbers this among the fictitious clubs of Augustan London),⁶⁰ but the success of the periodical, *The Athenian Mercury*, ensured that the name of the Athenian Society would not be quickly forgotten. My own research into the possibility of another London Athenian Society, active in the early decades of the eighteenth century and with a membership of literary figures including Philips and Young, would indicate that no such society existed at this time. Philips and Young were however associated with the literary coterie of Alexander Pope and others who frequented Button’s

⁵⁸ See Mary Jane Scott, ‘James Thomson and the Anglo-Scots.’ In *The History of Scottish Literature* vol.2 ed. Andrew Hook (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1989) p.97

⁵⁹ For a detailed account of the significance of the periodical published by the Athenian Society, see Helen Berry, *Gender, Society and Print Culture in Late-Stuart England. The Cultural World of the Athenian Mercury* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2003)

⁶⁰ See, Robert Allen, *The Clubs of Augustan London* (Connecticut: Archon Books, 1967) pp.188-192.

coffee house in London at this time,⁶¹ pointing to a developing literary network between London and Edinburgh that would become firmly established when the Scots, Mitchell, Malloch and Thomson migrated south to London.

Young's poem to Mitchell, 'To Mr Mitchell' is brief and flattering. It refers to the rising poetic talents of young Scotsmen writing, and writing well, in English, a sentiment that is echoed in the later 'Preface' to *The Edinburgh Miscellany*. Young proclaims,

Our hope and fond endeavours now succeed,
Edina's Bards begin to raise their Head
Avouch what'er they please to write, and claim
What we must yield, –an equal right to fame. ('To Mr Mitchell', ll.1-4)⁶²

It is worth noting that Young, in rhyming 'succeed' with 'head', emulates Scots pronunciation. Philips's address to Mitchell, 'To the Author of the First Part of *Lugubres Cantus*' is longer and, whilst flattering to Mitchell, paints a negative image of Scotland as a barren, uncivilised land whose people are:

Lazy as Owls that shun the Face of Day,
Like Tapers burning in a Sepulchre
Many Alas! Too many Scotsmen are,
Useless to all mankind they live, and die,
Without one Pile to save their Memory;
Proud of their modest Indolence and Shame,
They seem to scorn what their own Merits claim.
('To the Author of the First Part of *Lugubres Cantus*', ll.28-34)⁶³

Mitchell though, and others like him who chose to write English poetry, are the exceptions to this rule and, according to Philips's will, by emulation of English modes and models, save, improve and civilise their native land and claim the 'English Muse'(ll.54) as their own.

The Athenian Society's next publication, *The Edinburgh Miscellany*, boasts a 'Preface' that seems to have been informed by, or perhaps written in response to, such sentiments. This often overlooked anthology was designed to showcase the talents of Scots who wrote in English and followed the aesthetic precepts of the Earl of Shaftesbury in their

⁶¹ Robert Allen comments of this group, or 'society of wits': 'Although the membership was not fixed, the regular group included Addison, Steele, Budgell, Philips, Carey, Tickell, Hughes, Davenant, Young, and Colonel Brett. Garth sometimes dropped in, and in the early days of the group Pope was a daily visitor. *The Clubs of Augustan London* Connecticut: Archon Books, 1997) p.241

⁶² Edward Young, 'To Mr Mitchell' in *Lugubres Cantus: Poems on Several Grave and Important Subjects, Chiefly occasion'd by the Death of late Ingenious Youth John Mitchell. In two parts. With a General Preface by Appointment of an Athenian Society in Edinburgh* (London: Printed for T. Cox and Edinburgh: J. McEuen, 1719) Preface not paginated.

⁶³ Ambrose Philips 'To the Author of the First Part of *Lugubres Cantus*' in *Lugubres Cantus: Poems on Several Grave and Important Subjects, Chiefly occasion'd by the Death of late Ingenious Youth John Mitchell. In two parts. With a General Preface by Appointment of an Athenian Society in Edinburgh* (London: Printed for T. Cox and Edinburgh: J. McEuen, 1719) Preface not paginated.

compositions. The 'Preface' defends the contributors from criticism, citing their youth as justification for any poetic shortcomings, admitting that,

And we own it, we have ventur'd to publish several juvenile Poems, where the Drawings of a Genius appear'd, merely to encourage the Authors, and raise a generous Emulation amongst their Companions. Perhaps our fondness to cherish the sprightly Youth, has occasion'd some Blunders here and there in this Volume, which we would not have indulge'd in the Performances of more grown People.⁶⁴

The quality of the poetry in the anthology is variable, consisting largely of pastorals, translations, religious pieces and epistolary addresses. The contributors include Thomson, Malloch, Robert Blair, Mr T. Boyd, Mr John Callender and other Edinburgh students. The anthology also includes poems by members of the Fair Intellectual Club of Edinburgh, thus showcasing the talents of Scots women, as well as men, and includes translations of Horatian odes by the Irish James Arbuckle, a student of Glasgow University and friend of Allan Ramsay (he would write a flattering address in the preface to Ramsay's first volume of poetry the following year). Aside from these original, often juvenile pieces, the anthology contains a poem by Royalist George Mackenzie of Rosehaugh (c.1636-1691) and other older Scottish poems (which may well have been sourced from Jacobite printer and publisher James Watson's *Choice Collection* [1711]) as well as two overtly Jacobite poems by Alexander Robertson of Struan (1668-1749). 'The Holy Ode' and 'Struan's Farewell to the Hermitage, Sitting on top of Mount Alexander' both lament the fate of the Stuarts in unambiguous terms. In 'Struan's Farewell to the Hermitage', in Murray Pittock's view, 'the pastoral retreat collapses into an anti-world like that of Pope's Dulness, but under the attack of Hanoverian soldiers rather than Hanoverian scribblers.'⁶⁵

The inclusion of such sensitive overtly political and unambiguously anti-Hanoverian material alongside the work of the predominantly Whig cast of the Edinburgh student population points to a real desire to showcase Scottish poetic talent. The inclusion of these pieces leads Mary Jane Scott to conclude: 'Politically, the *Miscellany* poems are heterogeneous; among them are militantly Scottish nationalistic and even Jacobite poems. Yet the unifying purpose of the volume itself is its insistent and optimistic Anglo-Scottish patriotism.'⁶⁶ Undoubtedly, *The Edinburgh Miscellany* represents a patriotic poetic project, but one very different from the poetic and political agenda of Allan Ramsay, or indeed that of earlier anthologies such as Watson's *Choice Collection*. For the publishers of *The*

⁶⁴ 'Preface' to *The Edinburgh Miscellany: Consisting of Original Poems, Translations, &c* (Edinburgh: J. McEuen, 1720) p.ii

⁶⁵ Murray Pittock, *The Invention of Scotland: The Stuart Myth and Scottish National Identity, 1638 to the Present*. (London: Routledge, 1991) p.49

⁶⁶ Mary Jane Scott, 'James Thomson and the Anglo-Scots.' In *The History of Scottish Literature* vol.2 ed. Andrew Hook (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1989) p.85

Edinburgh Miscellany, the path to poetic success and national improvement meant allying oneself to the English muse.

Furthermore, a second edition of *The Edinburgh Miscellany* appeared in 1720. This second edition was very similar to the first; the only notable change was the sudden removal of Alexander Robertson's ideologically sensitive Jacobite poems. This removal of sensitive material is hardly surprising; the dedicatee of *The Edinburgh Miscellany*, Charles Maitland, Sixth Earl of Lauderdale had, in Walter Scott's account,⁶⁷ fought against the Jacobites at the Battle of Sheriffmuir, only five years before. Charles Maitland and other Whig members of Scottish nobility represented potential patrons for aspiring poets; as such, it would have been wise to avoid offending these influential men. More surprising is that such poems were included in the first instance, a decision that belies any attempt to impose an unambiguous, two strand narrative upon the culture, and cultural productions, of the time. The significance of *The Edinburgh Miscellany* thus lies in its ability to demonstrate the constant re-negotiations of poetic, cultural and national identity that were enacted by Augustan writers, especially, by Scottish Augustan writers.

Thomson's contributions to *The Edinburgh Miscellany* were unlikely to offend potential patrons, or even friends who may (like Malloch) have come from a very different cultural and religious background. Of the three poems contributed by Thomson, the most notable is 'Of a Country Life'. This short georgic piece represents *The Seasons* in microcosm, although it is clear that Thomson was not yet in full possession of his poetic talent at this young age. Here, the topos of rural retreat is simply that; there is no political allusion here. Rather, Thomson appears to be exercising his muse in natural description, and demonstrating his reading of the English Augustans; the poem is particularly reminiscent of John Gay's *Rural Sports* (1713). While 'Of a Country Life' does not nearly approach the quality of *The Seasons*, it does hint at Thomson's talent for natural description, a talent that comes from the close observation of nature. For example, the first section of the poem catalogues merely the sounds of the countryside, 'the gentle Murmurs of a purling Rill,/ Or the unweary'd chirping of the drill.' ('Of A Country Life' [ll.7-8]),⁶⁸ displaying Thomson's ability to incorporate all the senses in his portrayal of nature, a skill that Thomson was display to great effect in *The Seasons*. 'Of a Country Life' is written

⁶⁷ 'The numbers slain in the Battle of Sheriffmuir were considerable. Seven or eight hundred were killed on the side of the rebels, and the royalist must have lost five or six hundred. Much noble and gentle blood was mixed with that of the vulgar. A troop of volunteers, about sixty in number, comprehending the Dukes of Douglas and Roxburgh, the Earls of Haddington, Lauderdale, Loudon, Belhaven and Rothes, fought bravely.' Walter Scott, *Tales of a Grandfather, Being Stories from the History of Scotland*.3 Vols. (Edinburgh: Caddell & Co., 1830) vol. 2 p.40

⁶⁸ James Thomson 'Of a Country Life' in *The Edinburgh Miscellany: Consisting of Original Poems, Translations, &c* (Edinburgh: J. McEuen, 1720) p.124

entirely in rhyming couplets, again displaying his reading of Pope and Gay and signalling the lack of confidence of the apprentice poet who is as yet unsure where his poetic path lies.

‘Upon Happiness’, the second of Thomson’s contributions to *The Edinburgh Miscellany*, is a long, moralising, religious poem. While the poem itself has little to commend it, it does display Thomson’s awareness of Newtonian physico-theology, a theme that informs *The Seasons* and signals Thomson’s exposure to Newtonian systems and precepts as a student in Edinburgh. The third of Thomson’s *Miscellany* poems, ‘Verses On Receiving a Flower from his Mistress’ is a conventional love poem, somewhat awkward in its syntax and slightly cloying in its sentiment.

While Thomson’s contribution to the *Miscellany* didn’t secure him a poetic reputation, his fellow contributors and the literary networks which they represented were to be instrumental in his success in London. His discreet approach to politically sensitive material would help him secure patronage and support from influential public figures like John Clerk of Penicuik and Sir William Bennet, both of whom offered support and encouragement to Allan Ramsay too, despite the apparent differences in the two writers’ poetic projects.

Clubs provided an early and important audience for Ramsay and Thomson at this stage in their poetic apprenticeships. I have suggested that the convivial club coterie offered aspiring poets freedom of expression and of experimentation, freedoms vital to an apprentice poet. These freedoms are evidenced by the politically charged content of Ramsay’s ‘Poem to Pitcairne’ among others. In Ramsay’s case, poems written in the club environment were designed largely for circulation within the confines of that environment, an environment that was, however heterogeneous in its membership, a safe site for poetic expression regardless of how polemic the poetic might have been. By safe, I mean to suggest that the club environment allowed a poet to express contentious or politically sensitive ideas, protected by the knowledge that such poetic expressions would remain confined to the semi-private sphere of the club.

The notion of public and private spheres have become key concepts in the interpretation of the social and cultural conditions of the long eighteenth century (particularly in revisionist approaches to the Romantic period)⁶⁹ and mindful of this, I acknowledge that the use of a term such as ‘semi-private’ is problematic and requires some

⁶⁹ See, for example, Alex Benchimol *Intellectual Politics and Cultural Conflict in the Romantic Period: Scottish Whigs, English Radicals and the Making of the British Public Sphere* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010) and Murray Pittock *Scottish and Irish Romanticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) especially Chapter two ‘Allan Ramsay and the Decolonization of Genre’ where Pittock argues that ‘Ramsay is an avatar of subsequent literary development in several areas: in his promotion of a Scottish public sphere...’ pp.32-58

elucidation in this context. However, the complexity of the social and cultural milieux of Edinburgh in this period is such that a simple interpretative model is unable to represent the cultural-cross currents of the times, cross-currents that are expressed by the literary negotiations enacted by Ramsay and represented by the agenda and activities of the Easy Club. While the Easy Club, and indeed most clubs and societies of the Augustan period, met in a public place, for example a room in a tavern or similar space, such clubs were not open to all. Each club, society or association had its own rules, some more formal and exacting than others, regarding membership, attendance and the responsibilities of individual members. Thus, although the Habermasian model assigns clubs of this period a pivotal role in catalysing the emergence of a public sphere in the early eighteenth-century, citing 'clubs and press' as the 'public sphere in the world of letters'⁷⁰ and referring explicitly to the social milieux and literary enterprises of Joseph Addison and Sir Richard Steele as exemplifying the emergent literary public sphere, it is clear that the situation in the Scottish capital was more complex than in London, a fact which is not surprising given the political, religious and social divisions of the time. Of course, Habermas's definition of a public sphere in the eighteenth century refers specifically to a particular form of a public sphere, that is, a bourgeois public sphere, terminology which is perhaps not entirely appropriate to the context of the Edinburgh milieu of Ramsay and Thomson at this time.

Alex Benchimol, in his recent book, *Intellectual Politics and Cultural Conflict in the Romantic Period* (2010) acknowledges that one of the limitations of Habermas's thesis lies in 'the failure to properly represent the existence of multiple publics'.⁷¹ This notion of 'multiple publics' seems to acquire a particular resonance in a discussion of the heterogeneous membership of the Easy Club, and even more so in a discussion of Ramsay, a figure who, as previously noted, inhabits an area which resists definition as either part of a high cultural sphere, or that of a low, or popular cultural sphere. Thus, the Easy Club represents an environment which negotiates between the public and the private spheres and Ramsay's work can be seen to demonstrate an awareness of the separation between these spheres, that is, an awareness of the importance of intended audience. Such awareness informs the diversity of Ramsay's poetic and of the multiple personae and positions adopted by him.

Indeed, this concept of 'multiple publics' can be understood as a more comprehensive interpretative model for Ramsay's literary agenda than that which reads

⁷⁰ Jurgen Habermas *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge: Polity, 1992) p.30

⁷¹ Alex Benchimol, *Intellectual Politics and Cultural Conflict in the Romantic Period: Scottish Whigs, English Radicals and the Making of the British Public Sphere* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010) p.6

diversity as a form of cultural schizophrenia. In the case of Thomson, the Grotesque Club may have been rather more homogeneous in its membership than the Easy Club, but the fraternal camaraderie of a group of young students no doubt invited the same kinds of poetic license and liberty. Furthermore, it is possible to view the Grotesque Club as another environment in which the boundaries between the public and the private become, as with the Easy Club, somewhat hazy. Some of the anecdotal evidence⁷² suggests an informal association of friends between whom freedom of expression, and an equal freedom to criticise, were encouraged.

NO 'MERRY FREEDOM': POETS AND PATRONS

In order to become a successful poet, a professional writer as it were (a role which was clearly aspired to by both Ramsay and Thomson), a poet in the early years of the eighteenth century must consider the commercial value of their work and the means by which it could be made to support the mundane business of life, especially since neither Ramsay nor Thomson were members of the leisured classes. In order to achieve recognition and success, a poet must engage with the wider public. Furthermore, the need for financial support meant some degree of reliance on patronage, a system still very much the main support of the world of letters. This kind of audience differed greatly from the freedom and conviviality of the club audience and placed restrictions on the poet. Even if, as is the case with Ramsay, an aspiring poet had alternative means of supporting himself (and his family, Ramsay married Christian Ross in 1712), an influential patron was still someone to be courted. Despite Ramsay's own business enterprises, his volumes of poetry display lists of subscribers, evidencing his reliance on one of the main forms of literary patronage.⁷³ Furthermore, both Ramsay and Thomson enjoyed relationships with several influential Scottish figures who acted the role of encouraging patrons of the arts. Sir John Clerk of Penicuik (1676- 1755) was associated with both poets, indeed Ramsay enjoyed a close and abiding friendship with Clerk (cf. chapter two), but rather less well known in this context was another important figure in Scottish political and cultural life at the time.

⁷² David Mallet, former member of the Grotesque Club and friend of Thomson's, wrote to John Ker in 1726, 'It ['Winter'] is a very different poem, of considerable length and agreeing with mine in nothing but the name. It has met with a great deal of deserved applause and was written by that dull fellow, whom Malcolm calls the jest of our club The injustice I did him then, in joining with my companions to ridicule the first the first, imperfect essays of an excellent genius...' David Mallet, *James Thomson (1700-1748) Letters and Documents* ed., Alan Dugald MacKillop (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1958) p.34

⁷³For a full discussion and comprehensive description of the different types of patronage see Paul Korshin 'Types of Eighteenth-Century Literary Patronage' in *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 7:4 1974 pp.453-472 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3031599> (accessed 08/02/2012)

Sir William Bennet was an early patron of both Thomson and Ramsay and provides an early point of contact and comparison between the two poets prior to Thomson's departure for London in 1725. Both poets penned flattering poems to Bennet and some of Ramsay's letters to him are extant (though these are, as we shall see, very much shaped by the flattery of one seeking patronage and preferment and are of more value as historical documents than as literary productions). Mary Jane Scott has suggested that 'Thomson probably met Ramsay first at Sir William Bennet's Marlefield House; he almost certainly knew him in Edinburgh.'⁷⁴ This is a fascinating speculative proposition but one that must remain firmly in the realm of possibility. What can be said with certainty is that both Ramsay and Thomson visited Bennet's Marlefield House frequently enough to become familiar with the house, its grounds and its inhabitants as is evidenced by what I shall refer to as 'the Marlefield poems' of both poets.

Sir William Bennet of Grubbet, Baronet (c.1655-1729) was an active figure in Scottish public life, and indeed, as we can infer from his patronage of Ramsay and Thomson, an active figure in Scottish cultural life. He was a Member of the Scottish Parliament prior to its dissolution in 1707 and a Member of Parliament for Scotland in the post-Union British government (a union, and a parliament⁷⁵ which he actively supported, as he did the Hanoverian Succession.)⁷⁶ His active support and defence of the post-Union government and monarchy apparently continued. James Sambrook, in *James Thomson 1700-1748: A Life* (1991) describes Bennet as 'one of the leading Whigs in Roxburghshire',⁷⁷ and recounts how, in October 1715, Bennet, 'charged with the defence of Kelso, prudently withdrew his militia when a superior force of Jacobites arrived'.⁷⁸

Thomson's own political allegiances would no doubt have been viewed favourably by Bennet, as would Thomson's childhood proximity to Bennet's seat Marlefield House. Marlefield, situated near the Roxburghshire village of Morebattle was, as Sambrook

⁷⁴ Mary Jane Scott, *James Thomson Anglo-Scot* (Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1988) p.51

⁷⁵ Bennet (as well as John Ker, Duke of Roxburgh, discussed below), appear as 'Approvers' in the list of members names who voted on the Treaty of Union of Scotland and England on the 16th January 1707. For the full list of members' votes see, Scotland. Parliament. *In the Parliament the 16 of January 1707, a vote was put, approve of the act ratifying and approving the treaty of union of the two kingdoms of Scotland and England, Yea or Not, and it carried Approve: and the list of the members names as they voted, Approve or Not, (ordered to be Printed) is as follows.* (Edinburgh, 1707) at <http://find.galegroup.com/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=glasuni&tabID=T001&docId=CW108401511&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE> (accessed 07/02/2012)

⁷⁶ Following the so-called Glorious Revolution of 1688, the 'Proclamation for calling together the militia on this side of the Tay and the fencible men in some shires' which was issued on 14/03/1689 in response to unrest in Ireland, lists William Bennet, younger, of Grubbet as a 'captain of eastern troop' for the shire of Roxburgh and Selkirk. See, *The Records of the Parliament of Scotland to 1707* at <http://www.rps.ac.uk/trans/1689/3/82>. (accessed 12/12/2011)

⁷⁷ James Sambrook *James Thomson 1700-1748: A Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991) p.7

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.8

observes, ‘close to Thomson’s mother’s property at Wideopen, so perhaps the budding poet was brought to Sir William’s attention through Mrs Thomson’s well connected family.’⁷⁹ Thus, Thomson could claim status as a neighbour in courting the attentions and patronage of Bennet, as well as sharing in the local Baronet’s support for the Union of Parliaments and the Hanoverian Succession.

Patrick Murdoch, Thomson’s friend and early biographer, refers to this relationship in his account of Thomson’s life and works, prefixed to the 1762 edition of Thomson’s poems. Murdoch recalls that Bennet, ‘well known for his gay humour and ready political wit, was highly delighted with our young poet, and used to invite him to pass the summer vacation at his country seat; a scene of life which Mr Thomson always remembered with particular pleasure.’⁸⁰ Indeed, it comes as no surprise that Thomson should remember these visits with pleasure, for a young man brought up surrounded by a large family in a small Borders manse and then occupying what were presumably modest lodgings as a student in Edinburgh, Marlefield House would have been impressive in its grandeur. The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland’s site record for Marlefield House reports that ‘at some date before 1677 the estate of Marlefield, formerly called Mowmaynis (Prof Cooper 1903), came into the possession of the Bennets of Grubbet (J.Hardy 1882). The mansion, however, does not seem to be older than the reign of Queen Anne.’⁸¹ When Thomson (and Ramsay) visited Marlefield then, the mansion would have been relatively recent in its construction. Other comments and observations provided by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland suggest that Marlefield House’s construction and decoration exhibited fine examples of contemporary taste.⁸² It is little wonder that the young Thomson should be impressed by such an environment and seek patronage and encouragement from the owner of such an estate and a man whose history suggests that he wielded some influence, not only in Scotland, but in the newly formed British parliament.

This was undoubtedly Thomson’s aim in penning the early ‘Poetical Epistle to Sir William Bennet’⁸³ and his first attempt at a local poem, ‘Upon Marlefield.’ These poems are placed among Thomson’s ‘Juvenilia’, most of which are to be found in the ‘Newberry

⁷⁹ Ibid., p.7

⁸⁰ Patrick Murdoch’s ‘Account of the life and writings of Mr James Thomson’, prefixed to *The Works of James Thomson with His Last Corrections and Improvements*. 2 Vols. (London: A. Millar, 1762) p.iii

⁸¹ See, The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland’s website entry for Marlefield House at <http://canmore.rcahms.gov/en/site/58235/details/marlefield+house> (accessed 10/12/2011)

⁸² For example, ‘The simple but elegant stair, which local tradition states to have been designed by Sir Christopher Wren...’ Ibid.

Manuscript', a manuscript that once resided in the Newberry Library in Chicago but which has been lost for some years. Fortunately, as this remains one of the few largely autograph Thomson manuscripts, a facsimile of the manuscript was made prior to its disappearance and this has enabled James Sambrook to produce meticulously researched, reliable editions of, not only Thomson's major works, but his early poetic productions. Despite the varying quality of these juvenile pieces, they provide valuable insights into the development of Thomson's poetic in the years before he left Edinburgh for London.

'A Poetical Epistle to Sir William Bennet' is one of those pieces among Thomson's juvenilia which has been largely dismissed by commentators and critics as being of very little artistic merit. Sambrook comments in reference to Thomson's 'Marlefield poems, 'One would like to think that it was for poems other than these, poems now lost, that Sir William valued Thomson's genius.'⁸⁴ Certainly, this short poem has little to commend it and offers no hint of the rising poetic talent of the future poet of *The Seasons*. The poem does, however, offer insights into the relationship of dependence between a poet and a possible patron as well as displaying Thomson's Augustan credentials at this very early stage. The poem is comprised of five rhyming couplets of iambic pentameter and opens with the following couplet: 'My trembling muse your honour does address/ That it's a bold attempt most humbly I confess' (ll1-2).⁸⁵ This is a conventional if slightly clumsy opening to a poem addressed to a potential patron; the poet adopts an air of humility and the insecurity of the poet's position is well expressed by the word 'trembling' (a word later employed by Thomson in the opening lines of 'Spring' to denote the unsettled and uncertain quality of the early part of that season, 'As yet the trembling year is unconfirmed' 'Spring' [l.18])⁸⁶. This notion of insecurity and of dependence is emphasised by several later lines beginning with 'If...'. Despite Thomson's ostensibly humble caveat in the line 'If little things with great may be compared' (l.5), the poet is only too happy to cast Bennet in the role of Augustus and himself in the role of Virgil. Again, this is conventional enough and very much in keeping with the mode of Augustan flattery. What is significant here though, is that Thomson casts Augustus in a merely supporting role, not only in terms of patronage, but Augustus is apparently secondary to, or less important than the poet Virgil. It is for Virgil that Thomson reserves his flattering adjectives, and it is Virgil who appears first in the poem: 'In Rome it so with the divine Virgil fared;/ The tuneful bard Augustus did inspire/ Made his great genius flash poetic fire' (ll.6-8). These lines deflate the posture

⁸⁴ James Sambrook, *James Thomson 1700-1748: A Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991) p.8

⁸⁵ James Thomson, 'A Poetical Epistle to Sir William Bennet of Grubbat Baronet' in *Liberty, The Castle of Indolence and Other Poems* ed., James Sambrook (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986) p.240

⁸⁶ James Thomson, 'Spring' in *The Seasons and The Castle of Indolence* ed. James Sambrook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972) p.3

of humility and deployment, enacting the classic modesty topos, whilst simultaneously placing art above power.

Another of Thomson's juvenile poems written around this time and addressed to Sir William Bennet's daughter, 'Upon Mrs. Elizabeth Bennet'⁸⁷ lends weight to the suggestion that Thomson was confident in the reception his poetry would meet with at Marlefield. This poem, an adolescent catalogue of the young lady's charms, at times borders on the audacious and overly familiar as Thomson imagines 'balmy kisses' (l.37) and devotes a stanza to the 'cruel charms' (l.41) of Miss Bennet's breasts before going on to dispense advice regarding Miss Bennet's choice of husband. That said, this poem, despite the audacity and sometimes ill-judged conceits which perhaps reflect Thomson's reading of Petrarch, ('All that's attractive in you found/.../With fatal certainty you dart/ Like porcupines from every part' [ll.61-64]) has moments of disarming simplicity which hint at Thomson's growing talent. Perhaps unsurprisingly, these are the stanzas in which Thomson paints images from nature as a background on which to display the lady's attractions. Thomson then seems to have been confident enough in this audience to have allowed himself some liberties in composing poems to the Bennet family. He was, after all, a promising young local man who shared the political, cultural and religious prejudices of his eminent patron. That Bennet also patronised Ramsay is, however, a more complicated proposition and one more revealing of the importance and effect of awareness of audience in terms of poetic development.

As I have previously observed, Sir William Bennet was highly active in the political life of Scotland and Britain. His credentials as an ardent Whig and supporter of the Union are well established; he was prepared, on more than one occasion, to lead those men he could muster against any Jacobite threat, as he did (albeit unsuccessfully) in Kelso in October 1715. The politics of such a man would seem to sit rather uneasily with those of an aspiring poet such as Ramsay who only two years previously had written (albeit for a select audience) the 'Poem to Pitcairne' in which, as I have previously argued, the Jacobite sentiment cannot be ignored. Surely Bennet, a reasonably wealthy Scottish landowner and Baronet who, whilst sitting in Scottish parliament had voted for the Union of Parliaments of 1707, was exactly the sort of man who was the target of Ramsay's lines:

On which did float, those who their Country Sold
They Howl'd and Yell'd and often Curs'd the Gods,
Who had not made them Vipers, Asps, or Toads.
Here he the Faces of some Traitours knew
Who at the U— did their hands embrew

⁸⁷ Ibid., pp.252

By 1721 however, Ramsay seems to have been on excellent terms with Sir William Bennet, enjoying all the benefits of his friendship, encouragement and patronage. In return, Bennet was receiving flattering epistles from Ramsay and the poem written by Ramsay extolling the virtues of Marlefield and its master was published in Ramsay's first published volume of poetry. The poem to Bennet thus entered the public realm in a way that 'Poem to Pitcairne' never did in Ramsay's lifetime.

In a letter to Bennet dated September 20th 1721, Ramsay refers to an enclosed poem, presumably an early draft of 'To Sir William Bennet of Grubbet, Bart.', as he tells Bennet that 'reflecting on the finished Beautys of your Seat awakened my muse'⁸⁸. This letter continues in this flattering vein though Ramsay appears keen to resist any suggestion that his compliments to Bennet are merely the self-serving words of one seeking preferment:

Honrd Sir
far from being a parasite a Character I heartly hate I speak my Real Sentiments
when I admire your Happyness and fine taste of Life, your family, your paradise,
your personall qualitys, in short every thing Belonging and Relating to you is most
Beautyfull and perfect in its kind—Be ever hearty and carefull of your Health to be
enjoyd to latest age by them who Love you.⁸⁹

The hyperbole of Ramsay's enthusiastic praise here perhaps undermines the sincerity he professes. However, as I shall argue, Ramsay's poem to Bennet does seem to evince genuine feelings of respect and admiration for the addressee, a respect and admiration which presumably transcends political differences in the manner of the true Augustan for whom politeness is a guiding principle. Indeed, later in the letter referred to above, Ramsay makes reference to the troubled political climate of Edinburgh and his own position regarding it:

Hoping to see you soon I shall not trouble you with a long Epistle about the litle whimsical politicks of our Toun, about which I am only a merrey onlooker moving with all Caution Imaginable according to advice of his Grace of Roxburgh not to be seen of any party...⁹⁰

From this we may infer that 'his Grace of Roxburgh' has offered a friendly word of warning to Ramsay with regard to his political allegiances; we may also assume that this was because of Ramsay's Jacobite leanings, otherwise surely there would be little need for

⁸⁸ Allan Ramsay, *The Works of Allan Ramsay Vol. IV* eds., Kinghorn and Law (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1970) p171

⁸⁹ Ibid., pp.171-2

⁹⁰ Ibid., p.172

caution in the Whiggish climate of the Scottish capital. We may also infer then, that Ramsay and his friend and patron had agreed to differ politically and to lay politics aside and find instead common ground in the realm of art, as was the case with Ramsay's other eminent patron, Sir John Clerk of Penicuik. Indeed, Bennet, like Sir John Clerk, had a passion for the arts and a desire to write poetry himself. Bennet's obituary in the *Echo* or *Edinburgh Weekly Journal* reads:

On Monday was Se'nnight died, at his fine seat at Marlefield the Hon. Sir William Bennet of Grubet, Bart. late one of the Commissioners of Excise and some time Muster Master: he was a Gentleman of great Vivacity, Learning and Judgement, a brave Captain, a true Patriot and an eminent Poet; and was perhaps exceeded by none in his great Skill of Gardnery and Improving of Ground.⁹¹

This obituary, combined with Bennet's apparent desire to promote the arts through poetic patronage, paints an image of Bennet as a man with an Augustan agenda of politeness and improvement. Naturally, it is this Augustan mode which Ramsay adopts in his poetic address to Sir William Bennet, as does Thomson in his 'Upon Marlefield'. Thomson's 'Upon Marlefield' is of course the work of an apprentice, while Ramsay's poem to Bennet is the work of a more mature, published poet. It is worth noting however, that the focus of Thomson's poem remains firmly rooted in the beauties of the grounds of Marlefield; even at this early stage Thomson's muse was most stimulated by scenes of nature, or, in this case, of carefully manipulated nature. It is possible to detect the painterly effects employed by Thomson in *The Seasons* in microcosm in this piece in, for example, the chiaroscuro effect of the lines, 'Wher spreading trees a chequer'd scene display/ Partly admitting and excluding day' (ll.9-10).⁹² Indeed the young poet appears to shy away from the house itself in this poem, 'To it adjoin'd a rising fabric stands/ Which with its state our silent aw commands/ Its endless beauties mock the Poet's pen/ So to the garden I'll return again.' (ll.15-18). Clearly, Thomson is far more comfortable in the paths and groves of the grounds than within the walls of the house. Even at this early stage in his poetic career Thomson's poetic talent lies in his ability to render nature. These early pieces should perhaps be credited with more significance in the development of Thomson's mature poetry.

Ramsay too writes of the grounds of Marlefield, but, employing the common Augustan trope of the retirement topos, he utilises these scenes to create a contrast with the busy turmoil of the political world referred in the opening lines:

While now in Dischord giddy Changes reel,

⁹¹ *Echo* or *Edinburgh Weekly Journal* Wednesday, December 31st, 1729 Issue LII.

⁹² James Thomson, 'Upon Marlefield' in *Liberty, The Castle of Indolence and Other Poems* ed., James Sambrook (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986) p.238-9

And some are rack'd about on Fortune's Wheel,
You with undaunted Stalk and brow serene,
May trace your Groves, and press the dewy Green;
No guilty Twangs your manly Joys to wound,
Or horrid Dreams to make you Sleep unsound. (ll.1-6)⁹³

In so doing, Ramsay is able to avoid sensitive political issues and present Bennet as a figure graced with such polite virtues as allow him to transcend the grubby world of party faction. Ramsay, however, is perhaps not entirely apolitical in this poem. He does not lose the opportunity to suggest that Scotland, represented in microcosm by Marlefield, is a land blessed with 'soil prolific' (l.16) and 'as much choice as in *Britain* found' (l.14), revealing his Scottish Augustan agenda.

The poem catalogues the Augustan virtues of artistic taste, true friendship, learning and politeness. Ramsay even makes reference to the New Science in his mention of the 'Microscope' (l.31) and to the telescope, the 'lengthen'd Tube' (l.33), creating a poetic persona who is progressive, polite and aware of new developments in the scientific world. Ramsay makes clear however, that all of these tools and even nature itself is rather worthless unless the observer is blessed with a highly developed imaginative faculty. It is this imaginative faculty that beguiles the 'heedful Gazer' (l.17) who 'wanders through an artificial Wild,/ While native flowry Green, and christal Strands,/ Appear the Labours of ingenious Hands.' (ll.18-20). Thus, for Ramsay, the power of imagination, that power presumably possessed by the poet, has the power to confound nature with art, and art with nature, creating a complex and fascinating dialectic between art and nature and the observing man.

This dialectical relation is one which Thomson explores and exploits to great effect in *The Seasons* and to see such a complex manipulation of these themes in an early and rather neglected poem by Ramsay is highly suggestive of his influence on the younger poet. Given that Ramsay's poem to Bennet appeared in his first published volume of poetry, it is safe to assume that the aspiring young poet Thomson would have carefully read Ramsay's *Poems* of 1721, and read with particular interest the poem addressed to Bennet, a man whom Thomson both knew and had addressed flattering verses to. Indeed, it could be said that Thomson's reading of Ramsay at this stage was pivotal in his poetic development. The juvenile poems of Thomson display a rising talent for natural description and a particular sensitivity to the fleeting and the transient qualities of nature, skills which would be fully realised in *The Seasons*. What is lacking in these early poems is the sophisticated

⁹³ Allan Ramsay, 'To Sir William Bennet of Grubbet, Bart.' in *The Works of Allan Ramsay Vol.1* eds. Burns Martin and John Oliver (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1951) p.253

manipulation of the shifting dialectal relation between man and nature and, of course, art that elevates *The Seasons* from mere descriptive poetry. This dialectical tension however, is very much present in Ramsay's 'To Sir William Bennet of Grubbet, Bart.' and as such, perhaps in part catalysed the apparently sudden blossoming of Thomson from a young apprentice into a fully fledged poet capable of synthesising a vast number of philosophical, scientific and political themes in an ambitious, innovative and highly successful poem such as *The Seasons*.

The prizing of the imagination over all that science and nature can offer, and the suggestion that these things can only achieve their full potential when mediated by a well developed imaginative faculty, that faculty possessed by the poet, lends weight to the suggestion that Ramsay was, to borrow Pittock's term, an 'avatar' of later poetic developments. Ramsay's identity as a poet of imagination whose work demonstrates a new poetic aesthetic, especially in the realm of landscape/nature poetry, is an aspect of Ramsay's oeuvre which has not previously been subject to much critical attention and which I shall analyse in detail in chapter four. For now, I merely wish to suggest that these impulses were important to the poetic development of Thomson and point to a new direction in the development of a British poetic. It is also worth noting that this preoccupation with the poetic imagination and its power to transform the natural and scientific world, a preoccupation that, by extension, places the poet figure in a prominent position within society, arises from Ramsay's awareness of his intended audience. In deference to the political differences between himself and his patron and an awareness of his public audience, Ramsay lays aside the political, polemical poetic impulses that inform 'Poem to Pitcairne' and the results display another, very different aspect of Ramsay's poetic oeuvre.

As previously observed, Ramsay received a hint, referred to in the above letter to Bennet, from the Duke of Roxburgh, that it would be well to be an 'onlooker', rather than an active participant in the political upheavals of the day. This is a hint that Ramsay seems to have followed. Indeed, it was in the poet's interests, financially as well as in terms of political discretion, to adhere to the advice of the Duke of Roxburgh. As the manuscript poem 'To His Grace John Duke of Roxburgh, The Address of Allan Ramsay, S. P.' (1722) makes explicit, the Duke of Roxburgh made at least one gift of money to Ramsay and in return had a poem addressed to him. This poem, unusually for a dedicatory address or a poem expressing gratitude to an influential figure was not published in Ramsay's lifetime. This further complicates the division between public and private audiences in the context of

patronage. The system of patronage was deemed to be a reciprocal relationship. Dustin Griffin writes:

Other evidence that patronage involved a kind of exchange is found in the very language of eighteenth-century dedications. These dedications must of course be read very cautiously: the client presumably says only what he knows the patron wants to hear, or credits the patron with virtues and motives currently fashionable. Paradoxically, however, although written dedications may not account for motives in individual cases, their generic nature provides some insight into the *system* of patronage and the function it is expected to perform. One significant element is reciprocity. [...] *Tatler* 177 (1710) describes ancient patronage - and ideal patronage - as 'memorable Honour to both Parties, and a very agreeable Record of their Commerce with each other.'⁹⁴

Thus, for both Griffin, and the *Tatler* quotation he cites, the key element of the system of patronage is reciprocity, inferred in the *Tatler* by the phrase, 'Honour to both Parties', and by the word 'commerce' which suggests an economic exchange of money for goods or services. The reciprocal element is clear in 'To Sir William Bennet of Grubbet, Bart'. Ramsay, in return for support, subscriptions and hospitality, decorates the name of the patron with flattering words lauding the public and private virtues and generosity of the patron and publishes the poem in *Poems* (1721). 'To His Grace John, Duke of Roxburgh' however, was not published and so there was no 'agreeable Record' of this commerce available in the public realm. Thus Ramsay, whether by his own, or by his patron's design, does not, as it were, maintain his end of the bargain. 'To His Grace John, Duke of Roxburgh, the Address of Allan Ramsay' remained, in both poet's and patron's lifetime, a private document. In this there is an element of irony, for, as discussed below, the very subject of this poem is that of patronage, the necessity of artistic support and the obligation placed on wealthy and influential public figures to provide such material support.

The extant manuscript of the poem itself refutes any suggestion that the poem was never intended to be presented to its addressee and was merely a private poetic exercise, or an early draft of a work in progress that was never realised. British Library Add. MS 12115 undoubtedly represents a fair copy of a finished poem. Unlike Ramsay's extant private poetic notebook⁹⁵ in which poems, parts of poems, marginalia, letters, sketches and even a family tree appear haphazardly jotted down, 'To His Grace John Duke of Roxburgh, the Address of Allan Ramsay' is carefully and neatly transcribed. The manuscript is regularly laid out, two stanzas to a page, boasts an elaborately written title page and the poem is specifically dated by the poet (20th April 1722). Evidently, this was intended for

⁹⁴ Dustin Griffin *Literary Patronage in England, 1630-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) pp.19-20

⁹⁵ Allan Ramsay (British Library, Egerton MS 2023)

presentation to its addressee, even if it was not intended for publication. This begs questions pertaining to the nature of the poet/patron relationship as well as to Ramsay's motives for withholding this poem from publication. Unless, of course, the patron himself desired the poem to remain in the private realm for reasons of his own. In order to address these questions, it is to the poem itself that we must look for answers.

The poem differs significantly from 'To Sir William Bennet of Grubet, Bart.' in form, language and content. It is arranged, not in Ramsay's customary couplets, nor in the Habbie stanzas commonly associated with his early productions, but in complicated Christis Kirk on the Grene stanzas. The poem ranges across the full linguistic continuum from Scots-English to what is, at times, very dense Scots. The subject matter consists not, as in both Ramsay's and Thomson's poetic addresses to Sir William Bennet, of a catalogue of the virtues of the addressee and the beauties of his family and property, but rather this poem focuses on the nature of patronage itself, in a specifically Scottish context.

The poem opens with the following lines: 'In South Brittania there is Bays/ Placed on a Poets pow,/ and stipend w'it, his strains to raise,/ and gar his Genius Glow,' (ll. 1-4). Immediately then, Ramsay introduces a note of complaint, and of comparison between the situation faced by poets in Scotland to that of their English counterparts. Furthermore, in the epithet 'South Brittania', Ramsay includes an implicit note of political and national commentary. It had, following the Union of 1707, become customary to refer to Scotland as North Britain; to refer to England as South Britain or 'South Britannia', as Ramsay does here, was not quite so commonplace. In this context, Ramsay's choice of epithet for England, fulfils several functions. Firstly, the Latinate rendering of Britain as 'Brittania' is in keeping with an Augustan neoclassical poetic decorum, which, combined with, and somewhat satirically undermined by the vernacular Scots of the ensuing phrases injects an ironic quality into the opening of the poem. Furthermore, by naming England as South Brittania, thus depicting England as merely the southern counterpart of North Britain, he, in a characteristic rhetorical manoeuvre, places Scotland and England on an equal footing as partners in a union in which both protagonists have surrendered their original identity, an identity symbolised, in this case, by the name of each nation. Having established this notion of equality between North and South Britain, Ramsay goes on to suggest that what is not equal to its Southern partner is the support that Scotland, and by extension, the wealthy and influential Scottish nobility, provides for the aspiring literati of that nation. 'South Britannia' recognises the importance and achievements of its poets and makes concrete this support and admiration with stipends, thus ensuring the English poet's genius is unfettered by the bonds of poverty and 'frae want secure' (l.9). In contrast, the Scottish poet must feed

his muse on 'tippony' (l.44) rather than 'Claret wine' (l.42) and 'dree' (l.41) 'Dowie dumps' (l.41) for his trouble.

The poet's complaint continues for five stanzas, stanzas in which we see the same desire as in the poem to Bennet to present the poet as one possessed of special gifts. In a rather audacious move, Ramsay can be seen to equate the innate gifts of the poet with the hereditary rights of the nobility. The name of 'Bard' (l.20), is deemed a 'vogey Title' (l.21) but, despite such a title, the poet is 'Heir to no ae inch of Eard' (l.22) and his 'Income's something kittle.' (l.23) The poet then asks outright for preferment as a reward for his talents, 'lest poortith do my Witt ill,/ And spill my Breeding.' (ll.26-26) Again, the suggestion, contained in the word 'breeding', is that the poet is one set apart from the common herd of humanity, one born with a special calling and a claim to some kind of title. It is, Ramsay suggests, the obligation of those who possess both title and wealth to provide financial support for the poor, but none-the-less distinguished, bard.

The importance of the poet and the preserver of the Scots tongue is, in stanza four, presented as a national service: 'For nought am I to save our Tongue/ with numbers, Gloss and Notes,' (ll.29-30). In support of his petition, Ramsay does not waste an opportunity to complain of the clergy who receive a comfortable living: 'Frae public funds Thousands are fed/ with some of whom we're vext,/ wha make Divinity a Trade,/ riving in deugs the Text,' (ll.47-50) in contrast with poets who are 'better Bred' (l.51) and whose precepts are 'less perplex' (l.52). It is here, more than halfway through the poem, that Ramsay moves to thank the Duke of Roxburgh for an unsolicited gift of 'Guineas gay' (l.60). These guineas may represent a subscription for Ramsay's 'Quarto book' (l.58) as both the Duke and the Duchess of Roxburgh appear in the list of subscribers to Ramsay's *Poems* of 1721, or it may have been simply a present. Regardless, this gift was enough for Ramsay to shower the Duke and his family with poetic blessings in the closing stanza of the poem.

This poem serves to further illustrate the effect of audience upon poetic productions and further complicate the separation of public and private spheres in the world of letters. Ramsay's 'To Sir William Bennet of Grubbet, Bart.' displays a conventional approach to a public poem addressed to an eminent potential patron in which the virtues of the addressee are recounted. Though the trope of flattery is conventional in this piece, Ramsay, in separating himself from the political realm that forms the subject of some of his club poetry and activities, expresses a shifting aesthetic and conception of poetry and the poet which can be seen as an early precursor to Romantic preoccupations and constructions of poetry and poets. Furthermore, it is in this context of a specific audience, an audience shared by Thomson, that we begin to see the influence of Ramsay at work on the developing talent of

Thomson. Through these early literary activities we can begin to map a literary network of which both these poets were a part (and of which I shall say more in the next chapter) and which represents material links between the two; the literary links are demonstrated by the poems themselves. The poems discussed above also demonstrate a shared preoccupation of both Ramsay and Thomson with promoting the importance of the role of the poet, and of poetry, within society as whole. Furthermore, Ramsay's 'To His Grace John Duke of Roxburgh' in its reference to the system of literary patronage in England contains the suggestion that, while Scottish poets may be equal to their southern counterparts, there is no equivalent or adequate system of support in operation in Scotland. Thus, Ramsay implies that patronage of the arts and recognition of the social function performed by poets is necessary in order to promote the interests of and to improve the cultural conditions in Scotland. Finally, I want to suggest that a poet's awareness of the intended audience of a particular poem, or collection of poems, impacts on the poetic and persona adopted by a poet in ways that should not be underestimated. Incorporating an awareness of different audiences into our understanding of the literary landscape offers a more comprehensive, and perhaps a more healthy, means of interpreting the work of Scottish poets in the early years of the eighteenth century than that model which attributes the adoption of multiple positions and voices to an inherent confusion, or weakness in the Scottish literary milieu of that period.

Chapter Two:

London

**My youthful Bosom burns with Thirst of Fame,
From the great Theme to build a glorious Name,
To tread in Paths to ancient Bards unknown,
And bind my Temples with a Civic Crown;
But more, my Country's Love demands the Lays,
My Country's be the Profit, mine the Praise.**

John Gay, *Trivia, Or, the Art of Walking the Streets of London* (1716) ¹

The previous chapter focused on the themes of patronage, audience and publication. These themes were examined within the context of early eighteenth-century Edinburgh and South-East Scotland. The chapter sought, not to obscure the cultural, political and poetic differences between Ramsay and Thomson, but to demonstrate that a poet in Edinburgh, operating within a complex cultural environment, must display an awareness of audience as well as a pragmatic approach to gaining patronage. By means of a discussion of patronage and publication, the previous chapter defined a literary network of both poets and patrons. By illuminating these hitherto undefined connections and networks, the chapter sought to erode some notions of the perceived opposition between Ramsay and Thomson. Additionally, the chapter argued that the idea of opposing or competing literary discourses were not peculiar to Scotland in the period following the Union of 1707, but rather were characteristic of an emerging British literature in the period. This chapter, utilising a similar historicist approach, extends this discussion both textually and geographically. Thomson's involvement with the London literati, specifically the group of writers surrounding Aaron Hill in the 1720s and known as the 'Hillarian circle' is well documented. This chapter, rather than merely re-examining Thomson's membership of this circle, demonstrates the extent of Ramsay's creative and cultural engagement with the same circle. Ultimately, the chapter argues that the relationship between the cultural centres of Edinburgh and London was, in the early eighteenth century, a reciprocal one, characterised by a mutual exchange of ideas and ideals as writers both north and south of the border seized on the opportunities offered by the expanding British literary market place.

Brean Hammond, in the introduction to *Professional Imaginative Writing 1670-1740*, comments: 'There is an eighteenth-century line of succession alternative to Dryden, Pope, Swift and the conservative satirists [...], which comprises writers like Dennis,

¹ John Gay *Trivia Or, the Art of Walking the Streets of London* in *John Gay: Selected Poems* ed. Marcus Walsh (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2003) p.40

Blackmore, Addison and Steele, Aaron Hill, Mallet, and Thomson.² This observation not only raises notions of opposition within the literary culture of early eighteenth-century Britain, but by including Mallet and Thomson, points also to the significance of the Scottish contribution to the creation of 'alternative' strains of literary composition in the period. That, of course, is not to suggest that all Scottish writers in the period can be numbered among this alternative 'line of succession'. Indeed, Ramsay, as shall be discussed below, perhaps sits more comfortably within the grouping which comprises Dryden, Pope and Swift and whose hallmarks include a biting form of Tory political satire and mock- heroic poetry among other modes.

Conversely, Thomson became part of the literary circle surrounding poet, playwright and critic, Aaron Hill (1685-1750) and his contact with this group undoubtedly influenced his creative trajectory. However, as I shall argue in the course of the chapter which follows, while Hammond's formulation is useful and illustrative of the competing literary discourse of the moment, it does tend to over- simplify the literary landscape by failing to allow for moments of overlap between the agenda and productions of members of these two lines of 'succession'. Indeed, the use of the somewhat loaded term 'succession' in relation to modes of literary production is, in its dynastic and divisive overtones, mildly disconcerting in that it serves to underline the heavily politicised nature of literature and creative culture in the period. However, this notion of alternative, or opposing strains of cultural production in the period is a pervasive one.

Other influential scholars of the period have observed the same kind of cultural and creative divisions. Howard Erskine-Hill makes a similar point in the introduction to *The Poetry of Opposition and Revolution: Dryden to Wordsworth* (1999):

Mention of Addison and Young [...] prompts the point that a different eighteenth century than the one shown here could have been presented. To Addison and Young might have been added Thomson, a considerable poet with a different political vision from and a different notion of liberty from Pope and Johnson. But Thomson does not begin to have the political imagination they have.³

Christine Gerrard recalls, in the 'Preface' to *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole: Politics, Poetry and National Myth 1725- 1742* (1994), being asked how 'one could reconcile such very different eighteenth centuries?'⁴ and suggests that her detailed study of the period is an attempt to answer this question. Arguably, it is those who borrow from both of these

²Brean Hammond *Professional Imaginative Writing in England 1670-1740 'Hackney for Bread'* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997) p.12

³ Howard Erskine-Hill *The Poetry of Opposition and Revolution: Dryden to Wordsworth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) p.4

⁴ Christine Gerrard *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole: Politics, Poetry and National Myth 1725-1742* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994) p.viii

apparently distinct traditions, and who, by a creative and cultural awareness of all the possibilities available in a period characterised by competing discourses, allow a new British poetic voice to surface. Viewed in this way, Ramsay and Thomson, two contemporary Scottish writers, demonstrate all of these creative possibilities. They not only demonstrate the creative paths open to a Scot writing in the early decades of the eighteenth-century, but indicate the directions which British literature could take. Both Ramsay and Thomson bring elements from the Scottish literary tradition to the reshaping of the literary landscape in this period, and it is these elements which unite them in offering a distinctively Scottish contribution to the emerging British poetic in the period. Ramsay, most obviously, demonstrates the range and potential of Scots vernacular language as well as borrowing older verse forms. He incorporates these particularly Scottish strains into a poetic which can be considered as very much part of an Augustan creative agenda. Moreover, the work of both Ramsay and Thomson incorporates contemporary philosophical and social discourses arising from their connections with the intellectual elite of Edinburgh. In so doing, they render the literature they produce a locus for national debate and for the expression and creation of new national identities.

This chapter will reinforce the suggestion that opposition and diversity are driving creative forces in the period and that literature expressive of conflict or competing discourses is not a peculiarly Scottish phenomenon (a manifestation of what David Daiches would term ‘confusions in Scottish culture and Scottish national feeling after the Union’)⁵ but is characteristic of a wider literary movement. The chapter begins by examining the concept and construction of the poetic miscellany as a site where diverse writing is brought together, becoming a locus for the re-negotiation of cultural and national identities. The chapter emphasises the reciprocity of the relationship between Scottish writers, primarily Ramsay and Thomson, and their English counterparts and the centrality of this mutual exchange in forging a new British literary identity. Ultimately, this chapter argues that even those such as Ramsay, who remained in Edinburgh, were not only able to capitalise on the new British literary marketplace, but were instrumental in the negotiation of an emerging British poetic.

MISCELLANEOUS IDENTITIES

Thomson left Edinburgh in 1725; in 1726 ‘Winter’ was published, securing him a literary reputation both north and south of the border. As discussed in the previous chapter, prior to

⁵ David Daiches *The Paradox of Scottish Culture: The Eighteenth-Century Experience* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964) p.23

the publication of 'Winter', Thomson's published works were represented by his contributions to the *Edinburgh Miscellany* of 1720, and his poem 'The Works and Wonders of the Almighty Power', a work which drew upon the Newtonian physico-theology that would inform *The Seasons*. This poem was published by Aaron Hill in his periodical, *The Plain Dealer*, on 28th August 1724. James Sambrook posits that this poem 'may have been communicated by Thomson's college friend David Mallet, who, in that same number of *The Plain Dealer*, acknowledged his authorship of the much-praised balled *William and Margaret* printed in Hill's periodical five weeks earlier.'⁶ This suggests the extent to which the Edinburgh literary network to which Thomson, and Ramsay, belonged, remained active and extended to London. This is a suggestion which will be interrogated below. However, it was in the context of a poetic miscellany that Thomson first presented his poetry to the public. The miscellany, and the changing conceptions of it, both in Scotland and England (and indeed in the wider, European context) in the period, is revealing of the diverse and shifting poetic agendas espoused by contemporary writers.

The term miscellany in this period was a fluid epithet, one that resists definition and thus, I would suggest, mirrors the shifting literary and geographical landscape of the day. *The Edinburgh Miscellany*, as argued above, offered, in its preface and in its content, a representation of a specific poetic project. This project was patriotic⁷ in that it sought to display Scottish poetic talent from both new poets to 'give a promising Idea of our rising Generation'⁸ as well as from older sources but, as can be assumed from the slight, yet politically significant, changes made to the second edition, *The Edinburgh Miscellany* sought to distance itself and its contributors from any perceived Jacobite, or anti-Union sentiment.⁹ The editors of *The Edinburgh Miscellany* were clear in their vision for the future of Scottish poetry: theirs was a vision of success and progress through emulation of English modes, forms and, of course, language. The preface begins with a laudatory and elegiac reference to Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713), author

⁶ James Sambrook, *James Thomson: Liberty, The Castle of Indolence and Other Poems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986) p.406

⁷ The term 'patriot' becomes, in this period, and especially in terms of Thomson's 'patriot' or 'dissident' Whig political identity, problematic. This is something which is fully interrogated in chapter three of the thesis. For now, I use the term in its conventional meaning, defined by Samuel Johnson as 'One whose ruling passion is the love of his country'. Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language in which words are deduced from their originals, and illustrated in their different significations by examples from the best writer. To which are prefixed, a history of the language, and an English grammar.* (London: Knapton, Longman, Hitch, Hawes, Millar and Dodsley, 1755-6) p.307

⁸ 'Preface' to *The Edinburgh Miscellany* (Edinburgh: J McEuen and Co., 1720) p.ii

⁹ For example, the removal of Alexander Robertson's ideologically sensitive Jacobite poems. (See chapter one for a full discussion of the particular patriotic project represented by *The Edinburgh Miscellany*.)

of the influential *Characteristicks* (1711)¹⁰: ‘Peace be with the Soul of that charitable and courteous Author, who, for the common Benefit of his Fellow- Creatures, introduc’d the ingenious Way of *Miscellaneous* writing!’¹¹ The poetic miscellany and miscellaneous writing, of course, had their origins long before the Earl of Shaftesbury wrote of them. What the editors of *The Edinburgh Miscellany* mean then, by invoking the Earl of Shaftesbury, is to align themselves with a very specific poetic agenda and aesthetic approach. It also aligns the contributors to the miscellany with their influential English counterparts, as well as bolstering their claim to the title of ‘The Athenian Society’. If then, we read the ‘Preface’ to *The Edinburgh Miscellany* with the precepts of the Earl of Shaftesbury’s *Characteristicks* in mind, the ‘Preface’ directs the reader to a particular school of patriotism, one which eschews the local and the regional in favour of united whole, that is, a British, rather than a Scottish, patriotism (a fact borne out by the ‘standard’ English language of expression which characterises *The Edinburgh Miscellany*). Indeed, the rhetoric of the ‘Preface’ creates the impression that the editors of the *Miscellany* believe that Scottish poetic talent is worthy of standing alongside English talent, on a large, but not a separate, stage. The influence of the *Characteristicks* was widely felt in the period and was a direct influence on Aaron Hill who was himself to influence James Thomson on his arrival in London.

Christine Gerrard, in *Aaron Hill The Muses’ Projector, 1685-1750* (2003), touches upon the relationship between Shaftesbury and Hill and the notion of patriotism:

Hill came to maturity at the very time that patriotism as a concept was undergoing recognition and definition. Shaftesbury, in his influential *Characteristicks* of 1711, dismissed ‘local’ patriotism as inferior to the enlightened sense of common humanity which transcends place and region. The emotion we feel for ‘that particular district or tract of earth’ in which we were born, he writes, is an attachment of ‘clay and dust’. ‘We may call ourselves indeed the sons of earth at large, but not of any particular soil or district.’ [...] Hill shared Shaftesbury’s moral and social concept of ‘equal brotherhood’. As he wrote in an early poem,

Base are these *local* limits to men’s hearts,
That canton out *humanity*, in *parts*.
Truth has no *districts*, to divide her *toil*;
And *virtue* is at *home*, in every *soil*
Since, on one *common* globe, we *neigh’bring*, dwell,
What *narrow* line shou’d *man*, from *man expel*.
Each, born *alike*, and sons of *nature*, all,

¹⁰Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinion, Times* ed. Lawrence E. Klein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999)

¹¹ ‘Preface’ to *The Edinburgh Miscellany: Consisting of Original Poems, Translations, &c* (Edinburgh: J. McEuen, 1720) p.i

These lines are entirely unambiguous. For Hill, truth and virtue belong to those who see beyond the 'narrow lines' of national boundaries, indeed they indicate a certain level of cosmopolitanism which reaches far beyond the boundaries of Britain. This sentiment seems particularly significant when we consider that it appears in a poem 'Addressed to the Genius of Scotland.' If related to the act of writing then, Hill's sentiment directly echoes those expressed by Ambrose Philips (1674- 1749) and Edward Young (1683- 1765) in the verses prefixed to Joseph Mitchell's *Lugubres Cantus* (1719). These verses (cf. chapter one) argue for the right of Scottish poets to claim 'the English muse' but make it evident that this is an honour to be bestowed only upon those who, in poetic voice and political conviction, reject any expression deemed to be the product solely of their 'Sullen country'¹³ or 'rugged land'¹⁴ and thus lacking the civilising influence of English poetry and language.

In Philip's view, Mitchell, and others like him who chose to write English poetry, are the exceptions to this rule. Moreover, suggests Philips, Scottish poets such as Mitchell will, by emulation of English modes and models, improve and civilise their native land by claiming the 'English Muse'(ll.54) as their own (cf.chapter one). The significant point to note here is the level of interest that is sustained by these English writers in the early productions of minor Scottish writers. This is very much indicative of a reflective gaze between writers in Edinburgh and those in London.

However, it is not surprising that Hill, Philips and Young should share similar views on patriotism and poetry, given that, according to Robert Allen, they were members of the same literary coterie.¹⁵ Furthermore, the group of writers surrounding Hill were at times casually referred to as the 'new Athenians'. This title was not an official club or society name but was prompted by Hill's production of the periodical *The British Apollo*

¹² Christine Gerrard, *Aaron Hill: The Muses' Projector, 1685-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) p.13. Gerrard quotes from Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinion, Times* ed. Lawrence E. Klein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) pp.399-402 and from Aaron Hill, 'To the Editor of Albania, a Poem. Addressed to Genius of Scotland, and dedicated to General Wade' *The Works of the Late Aaron Hill, Esq. In Four Volumes. Consisting of Letters on Various Subjects, and of Original Poems, Moral and Facetious* (London,1753) iv. Pp.98-103. It is fascinating that these lines from Hill should appear in a poem provocatively addressed to 'the Genius of Scotland'. Clearly Hill had a keen interest in Scottish cultural life and sought to influence the development of Scottish literary culture.

¹³ Ambrose Philips 'To the Author of the First Part of *Lugubres Cantus*' in *Lugubres Cantus: Poems on Several Grave and Important Subjects, Chiefly occasion'd by the Death of late Ingenious Youth John Mitchell. In two parts. With a General Preface by Appointment of an Athenian Society in Edinburgh* (London: Printed for T. Cox and Edinburgh: J. McEuen, 1719) Preface not paginated.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.44

¹⁵ See Robert Allen, *The Clubs of Augustan London* (Connecticut: Archon Books, 1967) p.241

(1708-1711). This periodical was loosely modelled on John Dunton's *The Athenian Mercury* but was distinguished from the earlier periodical by a literary bias. Indeed, Hill's periodical was perceived to be so similar to *The Athenian Mercury* that John Dunton 'complained bitterly'¹⁶ that Hill had stolen the question and answer format which had formed the basis for *The Athenian Mercury*. It is clear that the Edinburgh Athenian Society was influenced by the endeavours of Hill and his coterie in London, suggesting an established literary network between the Hillarian circle in London and those who, calling themselves the Athenian Society of Edinburgh, contributed to *The Edinburgh Miscellany*.

The influence of Hill's London literary coterie is evident in the poetic project agenda of *The Edinburgh Miscellany*, and the fact that Joseph Mitchell, David Malloch and, of course, James Thomson all migrated south to London in the years immediately following the publication of *The Edinburgh Miscellany* has been interpreted as a desire to emulate London literary contemporaries. It is of further significance that in the same year *The Edinburgh Miscellany* appeared (1720), Anthony Hammond, in London, published *The New Miscellany*. Like *The Edinburgh Miscellany*, Hammond's *New Miscellany* featured work by established writers such as Matthew Prior and Alexander Pope, as well as the late Earl of Rochester (a grouping suggestive of a Tory, Stuart loyal bias), alongside work by lesser known contemporary writers such as Martha Fowke Samsom, (1690-1736) an established member of the Hillarian circle. *The New Miscellany*, then, was truly miscellaneous in character, offering something to suit everyone's poetic and political tastes. Again, it would appear the Athenian Society of Edinburgh was keen to attract the notice of its London counterparts by emulating the kind of creative projects currently underway in the British capital.

Moreover, these efforts to gain the attention of English contemporaries seem to have paid off. Certainly Hill was at pains to promote and encourage the talents of Scottish writers. He not only published the work of Malloch and Thomson in *The Plain Dealer*, and welcomed them into his coterie upon their arrival in London, but even gave his play *The Fatal Extravagance* to Joseph Mitchell to pass off as his own as a means of financially assisting the struggling writer.¹⁷ This relationship between London and Edinburgh writers appears then to hinge upon the willingness of Scottish writers to accept and adopt English

¹⁶ See, Christine Gerrard, *Aaron Hill: The Muses' Projector, 1685-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) pp.16-17

¹⁷ Gerrard comments on the success of this play: 'Hill's *Fatal Extravagance* of 1721 was a far greater critical success. In its original version it was a tense, one-act domestic tragedy, with elements anticipating Lillo's *George Barnwell*, which ran for at least nine performances between April 1721 and May 1722. By allowing the play to be performed and published under Mitchell's name, Hill was unable personally to capitalise on its success, but it may have inspired him to return to stage management.' *Ibid.*, p.59

modes and models and to write in 'standard' English, thus uniting in an attempt to create a homogenous character for a new British literature. However, as I shall argue, this was not entirely the case, as is more than proven by the success enjoyed in London by, for example, Ramsay's *The Gentle Shepherd* (1725). Ramsay's drama plunged directly in contemporary debates about the possibility of a native pastoral, at once proving that such a thing was possible, and that such a native pastoral could be rendered so successfully in Scots. Furthermore, the interest of figures such as Hill, Philips and Young in relatively obscure Scottish poets such as Mitchell, Malloch and Thomson suggests an awareness, or even perhaps anxiety, on the part of the London literary milieu, that Scottish writers were able to offer something different in terms of creating a new British literature.

In more concrete terms, it is worth noting that prominent English cultural and literary figures actually travelled to Scotland during these early years of the eighteenth century. Long before Scotland become an adventurous, yet safe, destination for the southern British traveller (as it did following the final, crushing defeat of the Jacobite forces at Culloden in February 1746) and before such accounts of Scottish travel, both real, such as those of Samuel Johnson and James Boswell (published in 1775 and 1785 respectively) and imagined, such as Tobias Smollett's enduring epistolary novel, *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771), Richard Steele, John Gay and Aaron Hill all made the journey to Scotland and evidenced an interest in the Scottish cultural and literary milieu that did not appear to be entirely disparaging.

In Ramsay's preface to his volume of poetry which appeared in 1721, a year after *The Edinburgh Miscellany* and *The New Miscellany* were published in Edinburgh and London, respectively, he refers to his volume as 'the following Miscellany'.¹⁸ This is unusual; we are accustomed to think of a miscellany, in a literary context (like those examples discussed above), as being comprised of works from different, or miscellaneous, authors. While this volume opens with commendatory verses by James Arbuckle and others, it is otherwise the work of Ramsay himself. Thus, by adopting the term miscellany to refer to his own work, Ramsay points to diversity of his own range, represented by the poems in this first collection. The volume does contain, however, Ramsay's re-presentation of 'Christ's Kirk on the Green', a medieval Scottish poem in the Scottish tradition of carnival and conviviality. The inclusion of this piece, combined with Ramsay's adoption of the term 'miscellany' seems to firstly, speak directly to the contributors to recent poetic miscellanies, and secondly, to refer the reader back to the volume in which 'Christ's Kirk

¹⁸ Allan Ramsay, *The Works of Allan Ramsay Vol.1* eds. Burns Martin and John Oliver (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1951) p.xvii

on the Green' was first made available, in book form, to the wider public: James Watson's *Choice Collection of Comic and Serious Scots Poems*, the first part of which appeared in 1706 (two further volumes were published in 1709 and 1711). This may also indicate a desire on the part of Ramsay, who was a bookseller and businessman as well as a writer and collector, to appeal to the tastes of an existing audience and to benefit materially from this new market for literature.

Watson's collection has historically been considered to be a seminal work in the so-called 'vernacular revival'. It was published as the Union of Parliaments was being debated and is seen by many literary historians to represent an act of cultural resistance to the union that was, by 1706, inevitable. It was the first collection to feature a range of poetry in Scots and thus the first attempt to 'anthologise' Scottish literary culture for the reading public. Historically, this collection is interpreted as embodying Watson's own cultural politics, that of a Stuart loyal, Scottish patriot who used his role as printer to oppose to the union and what he considered would be the consequences of such a union for Scotland: the disintegration of a distinctive Scottish culture.¹⁹ Maurice Lindsay, for example, claims that the collection was published in order to 'counter the increasing Edinburgh tendency to accept Anglicisation'.²⁰ It has also been viewed, even by recent editor Harriet Harvey Wood, as having been assembled in a 'haphazard'²¹ fashion. However, in a recent article, Leith Davis offers a fresh perspective on the collection:

This assessment of Watson's text as both seminal and flawed derives, I suggest, from a failure to consider the *Collection* in the wider context of British, and European print culture. Criticism of the *Collection* has come out of a tradition of Scottish studies that has often been, for justifiable but now perhaps outmoded reasons, so concerned with authorising a Scottish national literature that it has failed to relate Scottish literary activity to what was taking place beyond Scotland's borders. In particular, critics have failed to notice the *Collection*'s affiliation with the contemporary genre of the *miscellany* popular in England and France at the time, despite the fact that Watson himself draws attention to that affiliation. [...] Recognizing the competing interests at stake in the Scottish political landscape of 1706, Watson uses the imaginative space of the miscellany to bring readers of different tastes and interests together to promote the cause of Scotland at a time during which the nation's very existence was under threat.²²

¹⁹ This was a culture which, for James Watson, had its roots in what Hugh Ouston terms 'the Jacobite Episcopalian tradition in Scotland'. See, Hugh Ouston 'Cultural life from the Restoration to the Union' in *The History of Scottish Literature Vol.2* ed. Andrew Hook (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987) pp.11-33

²⁰ Maurice Lindsay, *History of Scottish Literature* (London: Hale, 1977) p.170

²¹ Harriet Harvey Wood, introduction to *Watson's Choice Collection of Comic and Serious Scots Poems* ed. Harriet Harvey Wood, 2 vols (Aberdeen: Scottish Text Society, 1977 and 1991) vol. 2, p. xxii

²² Leith Davis 'Imagining the Miscellaneous Nation: James Watson's Choice Collection of Comic and Serious Scots Poems' in *Eighteenth-century Life* 35:3 (2011) p.61

While some critics of Scottish literature may, in the past, have been slow to recognise the wider contexts of Watson's *Collection*, Ramsay was not. His knowledge of the literary marketplace was such that he was well aware of the popularity of the literary miscellany at the time. He would comprehensively exploit this popularity by publishing *The Evergreen* (1724) and *The Tea-Table Miscellany* (1724-37). *The Evergreen* was a re-presentation of older Scottish poetry sourced largely from the Bannatyne manuscript. This was not a particularly profitable enterprise; Ramsay was criticised for his cavalier approach to editing and the volume failed to achieve popularity. It did, however, include Ramsay's own medieval forgery, 'The Vision', the authorship of which was teasingly ascribed to A.R Scot. The four volumes of *The Tea-Table Miscellany*, however, were immensely popular and profitable, running to some twelve editions. In compiling *The Tea-Table Miscellany*, Ramsay displayed his awareness of a new literary market place. *The Tea-Table Miscellany* tapped into the contemporary vogue, in both Edinburgh and London, for Scottish songs. As the title suggests, the market for such collections was largely comprised of gentlewomen who performed selections of songs as entertainment at civilised gatherings around the tea tables of society women. He further exploited this niche in the market by publishing *Musick for Allan Ramsay's Collection of Scots Songs* (c1726). Each section of this publication was dedicated to a different genteel lady. Once again, Ramsay can be seen to demonstrate his understanding of his audience and his business acumen.²³

Nor did he fail in his attempt to appeal to a diverse readership in compiling his first collected volume of poetry. His patriotic agenda is made clear in his preface where he defends the use of Scots language: 'That I have expressed my Thought in my native Dialect, was not only Inclination, but the Desire of my best and wisest Friends; and most reasonable, since good Imagery, just Similies, and all Manner of ingenious Thoughts, in a well laid Design, disposed into Numbers, is Poetry. Then good Poetry may be any Language'²⁴. Yet, despite this patriotic defence of his native language, Ramsay was well aware of his potential audience beyond Scotland's border. Among the subscribers to this first volume is Alexander Pope, and the opening poem, 'The Morning Interview' is not only composed in near 'standard' English, but is modelled on Pope's 'The Rape of Lock'.

²³ The dedicatees of this work included Lady Murray of Stanhope the daughter of Grisell Baillie whose poetry had been published in *The Tea-Table Miscellany*. Lady Murray was a popular figure in both Edinburgh and London society. Famed for her singing voice, she was the 'sweet-tongued Murray' described in John Gay's poem. 'Mr Pope's Welcome from Greece.' (1720) Once again, Ramsay can be seen to be in direct, and often lucrative, engagement with the London literati.

²⁴ Allan Ramsay, *The Works of Allan Ramsay Vol.1* eds. Burns Martin and John Oliver (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1951) p.xviii-xix This patriotic defence of the use of Scots, at the wish of his 'best and wisest friends' also underlines his involvement in the Edinburgh publishing milieu comprising Watson and the Ruddimans.

THE MUTUAL GAZE AND 'THE MORNING INTERVIEW'

Before going on to provide a detailed comparative analysis of these two poems, it is necessary to consider the wider issues and debates that have arisen from firstly, Ramsay's (and other 'Scots vernacular' poets, notably his successors, Robert Fergusson's and Robert Burns's) linguistic choices, particularly when those choices result in standard English poetry, and secondly, the notion of imitation as poetic practice. The Scottish critical tradition, according to Gerard Carruthers, has been guilty of a narrow, culturally essentialist view of Scottish literature, a view which is particularly evident in interpretations of eighteenth-century literary practice.²⁵ In this essentialist view, Scots language poetry is an 'authentic' cultural expression, as well as an act of cultural resistance. Conversely, Scottish writers who choose 'standard' English as their language of poetic expression are seen as, at best, unnatural, and at worst, second-rate emulators of English poetic practice, opportunists seeking preferment and acceptance in the new political entity of Britain. The limitations inherent in this view are evident when we consider that a significant part of Ramsay's corpus is written in 'standard', or near 'standard' English. A similarly significant amount of critical writing on this part of Ramsay's corpus, however, is conspicuous by its absence.

In a rare article touching upon Ramsay's work in 'standard' English, Corey Andrews offers reasons for the critical neglect of poems by Scots (specifically the Scots triad of Ramsay, Fergusson and Burns) which adopt 'standard' English as their language of expression. Andrews suggests: 'One possible reason for the lack of interest in English poetry by Scots may have to do with its imitative nature',²⁶ going on to defend such mimetic practice by pointing out that 'to fault English verse by Scottish poets for such reasons would be a historical and categorical mistake; the practice of poetic imitation served a vital though changing role through the course of the century for all British poets.'²⁷ However, as Andrews explains, while imitation was a standard and valued poetic practice in the eighteenth century, such imitative verse takes on a politically unpleasant hue in the case of Scottish poets, particularly if such works are being judged by critics with a rigid nationalist agenda. If 'vernacular' poetry is considered an act of cultural resistance, then, by the same token, poetry by Scots in English must be, to borrow Andrews's

²⁵ Gerard Carruthers *The Invention of Scottish Literature During the Long Eighteenth Century* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow PhD Thesis, 2002) pp. 5-47

²⁶ Corey Andrews, '“Almost the same, but not Quite”: English Poetry by Eighteenth-Century Scots' in *The Eighteenth Century* vol.47 no.1 (Texas: Texas Tech University Press, 2006) p.60

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.60

terminology, indicative of ‘assimilationist’ practice on the part of Scots. Thus, concludes Andrews: ‘To avoid this unpleasant deduction, many critics of eighteenth-century Scottish poetry have concentrated only on the Scots poems, entirely dismissing those in English.’²⁸ In order to avoid this ‘unpleasant deduction’, Andrews himself employs Homi Bhabha’s theory of mimicry which foregrounds difference in order to interrogate some of the English language poems of Ramsay, Fergusson and Burns.²⁹ By this means, he offers a refreshing theoretical framework in which to view these poems, a framework which does not challenge the critical view of Ramsay, Fergusson and Burns as champions of nationalist literature. Thus, in Andrews’s brief discussion of the relationship between Ramsay’s ‘The Morning Interview’ and Pope’s ‘The Rape of the Lock’, he points to moments of pure mimicry that are nonetheless laced with Scottish national referents. For example, Andrews reads the setting of the poem (Edinburgh, near the building that once housed the Scottish Parliament) as functioning to identify ‘the principles as Scottish. As camouflaged versions of Belinda and the Baron, the Scottish difference of Celia and Damon is revealed beneath their mimicked resemblance.’³⁰ I would assert, however, that in writing ‘The Morning Interview’, Ramsay’s intentions, and his symbolic use of both character and setting, were more ambitious and complex.

The first thing to note in a discussion of ‘The Morning Interview’ is its prominent position in Ramsay’s first collected volume of poetry, *Poems of 1721*. It is the first poem in the volume, preceding his (already well known in Edinburgh) Scots language mock-elegies. Given the apparent difference between the opening poem and some of the other pieces in this volume, we can perhaps begin to see why Ramsay himself referred to this volume as a ‘miscellany’. Secondly, ‘The Morning Interview’ does not simply emulate the ‘English’ style, form and language of the day, but is closely modelled on a contemporary, well-known and indeed somewhat controversial poem by a prominent poet, a poet who, as previously mentioned, was among the subscribers to this volume. Clearly Ramsay felt sufficient confidence in his allusive poem and was keen that it should not be overlooked by the author of its model.

It is perhaps easy to see why Ramsay would have chosen a poem by Pope as his model for the opening poem in this volume. If we return to Hammond’s formulation, then politically and artistically, Ramsay and Pope can be grouped together with relative ease. Both demonstrated, at times, a literary Jacobitism and both employed satire for political

²⁸ Ibid., p.61

²⁹ See, Homi K. Bhabha, ‘Chapter Four: Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse’ in *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994) pp.85-92

³⁰ Corey Andrews, ‘“Almost the same, but not Quite”: English Poetry by Eighteenth-Century Scots’ in *The Eighteenth-Century* vol.47 no.1 (Texas: Texas Tech University Press, 2006) p.69

ends.³¹ In terms of form, the rhyming couplet was a form in which Pope famously excelled, and a favourite of Ramsay's. Furthermore, as Gerrard has commented: 'Placed in the context of other Jacobite writings of this period, *The Rape of the Lock* and *Windsor- Forest* seem to resonate with the Jacobite imagery of rape and illegal seizure as a metaphor for William III's usurpation of the English crown.'³² Such critical commentary underlines elements of Pope's literary agenda and style that would have appealed to Ramsay. Furthermore, it is possible to read, within Ramsay's poem, a political and national narrative. I would suggest therefore, that Ramsay's poem does not merely 'mimic' Pope's; rather, this is a sophisticated use of intertextual allusion. Ramsay alludes to Pope's poem in order to demonstrate shared (Jacobite) context, but Ramsay's poem extends this context in order to present dissatisfaction, not solely in terms of the displaced Stuarts, but in terms of Scotland's loss of independence.

Both poems open with an epigraph that begins to construct the layers of allusion which operate within each text. As befits the mock-heroic mode, *The Rape of the Lock* is prefaced with two lines, in the Latin, from Martial. This serves to introduce Belinda, the female protagonist, and to establish, through allusion, the martial register which is used throughout the narrative to describe the entanglements and petty wars arising from 'am'rous causes' (*The Rape of the Lock* 1.1).³³ Such extended martial metaphor of course enables Pope to call upon his vast knowledge of Homeric epic and to transpose familiar passages from *The Iliad* into a domestic, intimate and apparently trivial context, rendering the hyperbolic responses of the protagonists all the more ridiculous and thus amusing by comparison. Ramsay's epigraph is not supplied by a Classical source; he prefaces his poem with some lines from Edmund Waller (1606-1687), a past master of the couplet form. These lines serve to introduce the battle metaphor that extends throughout Ramsay's poem but also make reference to the role of the poet as one who records and comments upon these amorous engagements:

Such killing Looks, so thick the Arrows fly,
That 'tis unsafe to be a stander by:
Poets approaching to describe the Fight,

³¹ Recent criticism has made much of Pope's literary Jacobitism. Howard Erskine-Hill comments: 'The career and writings of Pope can be plotted against this prediction of a return to the old masters and the ancient constitution. The interest in doing so today connects with the academic rediscovery of Jacobitism as the most notable development peculiar to eighteenth-century studies in recent years.' *The Poetry of Opposition and Revolution: Dryden to Wordsworth* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) p.58. In the same study, he offers a detailed and convincing analysis of *The Rape of the Lock* as codified Jacobitism, see, *ibid.*, pp.77-98.

³² Christine Gerrard *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole: Politics, Poetry, and National Myth, 1725-1742* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994) p.85

³³ Alexander Pope, *The Rape of the Lock* in *Alexander Pope: The Major Works* ed. Pat Rogers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) p.79

Are by their Wounds instructed how to write.
(Epigraph to 'The Morning Interview')³⁴

This not only draws attention to the figure of the poet as one who records and interprets events, but hints at Ramsay's growing poetic confidence; he is no longer an apprentice, rather his experience has tutored him in the art of poetry. Furthermore, he demonstrates, by his choice of epigraph, that he is familiar with the English poetic tradition and capable of incorporating elements of this tradition into his work.

Ramsay's poem opens, not with allusions to epic, as Pope's does, but with a depiction of a harmonious pastoral scene, a locus amoenus appropriate for a simple tale of pastoral love where 'Musick gladdens ev'ry Grove,/ While Bleating lambkins from their Parents rove' (ll.3-4). Ramsay even refers to 'Tuscan oil' (l.2), alluding to the Mediterranean origins of the pastoral mode (as well as signalling the availability of such luxury 'foreign' commodities in contemporary Edinburgh, drawing attention to the increasing cosmopolitanism of the city.). This bucolic idyll though, is not as innocent as it first appears; a note of discord is introduced as the anxious 'Mothers stray,/ Calling their tender care with hoarser Bae' (l.5-6). As the sun rises on this scene, it exposes 'Debauch' (l.11) and drunkenness, as 'the Sons of Bacchus' (l.12) stagger home. Despite these pastoral referents however, these 'sons of Bacchus' are no country shepherds; with their 'tatted Wigs' (l.13) and cravats 'all bedaub'd with snuff' (l.14), they display all the tawdry trappings of the urban fop. The pastoral idyll is thus subverted as the male protagonist of Ramsay's poem, Damon, is introduced against a backdrop of unseemly and chaotic excess. Pope does not rely in the same way as Ramsay upon pastoral convention at the opening of *The Rape of Lock*. The rising sun is seen only through a domestic lens, 'Sol through white curtains shot a timorous ray' (l.13), as the reader is invited into the room of Belinda, the 'heroine' of the piece. Both poems operate through contrast; Pope's language juxtaposes the mighty with the trivial in order to achieve comic effect, whereas Ramsay contrasts the rural with the urban and the innocent with the urbane. Pope and Ramsay can be seen to exploit the generic conventions of mock-epic in different and nuanced ways. Ramsay chooses to satirically undercut the martial concerns of epic by overt and sustained reference to the concerns and characters of pastoral. This demonstrates a confident and sophisticated manipulation of genre which is also highly appropriate to the love plot which forms the (symbolic) narrative surface of Ramsay's poem.

³⁴ Allan Ramsay, 'The Morning Interview' in *The Works of Allan Ramsay Vol.1* eds. Burns Martin and John Oliver (Edinburgh: The Scottish Text Society, 1956) p.1

Another key difference between the poems which is evident at this early stage is Ramsay's focus upon the male protagonist; this focus becomes increasingly significant. It is worth noting also, that Pope's poem was based, however loosely, on real people.³⁵ Thus, although Pope clearly took some liberties with the characters of his protagonists, he perhaps had less freedom in painting his characters than Ramsay had in constructing his. Pope's poem alludes to reality whereas Ramsay's poem alludes to Pope's poem, allowing Ramsay greater freedom to use his characters to fulfil symbolic functions rather than to directly satirise modern society. *The Rape of the Lock*, in this respect, can be described as approaching formal, direct satire in that it borrows its protagonists from real life, whereas Ramsay's is very much indirect satire in the Horatian mould. Arguably, Ramsay is able to adopt this indirect satirical approach, not simply to distinguish 'The Morning Interview' from *The Rape of the Lock*, but rather because Pope's poem already exists and was, by 1721, well known to readers of contemporary poetry. Ramsay is thus able to borrow meaning from Pope's poem and then extend this meaning in order to incorporate specifically Scottish concerns. A complex relationship can be understood to exist between these two works, a relationship which illustrates, in microcosm, some of the elements which characterise Anglo-Scottish literary relations in the period.

Ramsay continues to focus primarily on Damon for a significant part of the poem. Celia is introduced through Damon as he thinks of the patch that he has stolen from her and plots his revenge for the wounds that his love for her has inflicted upon him. As Pope digresses into a long explanation of the roles and hierarchies of his epic machinery, in the form of the sylphs, Ramsay's focuses on the overworked valet of Damon. In another ironic reversal, it is Damon's toilette which is described in great detail. This description may lack some of the voyeuristic frisson supplied by Pope's description of Belinda, her chamber, and all her feminine trappings, but it certainly delivers comic effect. Damon is rendered effeminate and foppish as Ramsay (the wigmaker) describes the mock- epic labours of Roger, the valet, in combing Damon's hair and powdering his wig:

The yielding Comb he leads with Care,
Through crooked Meanders of the flaxen Hair:
E're this is perform'd he's almost chok'd to Death,
The Air is thicken'd, and he pants for Breath. (ll.43-46)

³⁵ Pat Rogers has this to say of the identities of the people on whom Pope based his protagonists: 'A brief identification suffices for the 'real' hero and heroine, since they were little more than the occasion for the poem. Belinda is based on Arabella Fermor (c.1689-1738), daughter of a well-established Catholic family settled in Oxfordshire. The Baron derives from Robert, seventh Baron Petre (1690-1713), member of one of the main English families of the Catholic faith, with a seat at Ingateston, Essex.' *Alexander Pope: The Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) p.599

If these lines are read against the corresponding passage in *The Rape of the Lock*, the comic effect is intensified through contrast:

The busy Sylphs surround their darling care,
These set the head, and those divide the hair,
Some fold the sleeve, whilst others plait the gown. (ll.145-147)

Ramsay then not only uses Pope's poem as a model to demonstrate his awareness of and ability to emulate English poetry, but uses Pope's poem as a foil to intensify the effects of his own piece. This is a sophisticated use of allusion and reinforces the image of a mutual gaze being maintained between Ramsay in the Scottish capital and his counterparts in London. In a mirroring effect, Ramsay reflects Pope's poem back to him, but with essential differences and reversals. As Corey Andrews observes, 'the occasion for the poem revolves not around a clipped lock of hair, but rather Damon's anguish for having been 'wounded' by Celia's 'patch', a beauty spot that masks her true appearance. From its inception, 'The Morning Interview' mirrors its own imitative qualities within the action of the poem.'³⁶ A careful reading of Ramsay's poem, and especially of the elements of this piece which diverge from *The Rape of the Lock*, however, points to a deeper symbolic meaning.

The most significant difference in terms of the narrative of each poem lies in their resolutions. The resolution of *The Rape of the Lock* focuses, not on the fate of the protagonists, but rather on the fate of the lock of hair. 'The Morning Interview' ends with the union of the two lovers, the wounding patch forgotten as merely a superficial detail (the marriage plot is of course, a significant one in Scottish literature of this period and had, by this time, been used as a symbolic device in a number of Union satires, for example, *The Comical History of the Marriage betwixt Fergusia and Heptarchus* [1706]). Furthermore, in *The Rape of the Lock*, both hero and heroine are the targets of Pope's satirical wit. At certain moments Pope depicts Belinda sympathetically, but ultimately, both Belinda and the Baron are satirised for their superficial lives and engagement with the trivial preoccupations of the beau-monde. 'The Morning Interview' appears, initially, to satirise Damon much more than Celia. Indeed, the reader is made uncomfortable by the methods employed by Damon in order to gain Celia's hand. In calling upon Cupid to disguise himself as Shock the lap-dog (a character borrowed directly from *The Rape of the Lock*), the deception practised upon Celia appears rather sinister: 'thou must, my boy, assume the shape of Shock,/ And leap to Celia's Lap; whence thou may slip/ Thy Paw up to her Breast and reach her lip.' (ll.164-167). Furthermore, Damon's appearance, unannounced in the intimate environment of Celia's bedroom appears inappropriate and somewhat predatory.

³⁶Corey Andrews, ' "Almost the same, but not Quite": English Poetry by Eighteenth-Century Scots' in *The Eighteenth Century* vol.47 no.1 (Texas: Texas Tech University Press, 2006) p.69

Damon is, however humorously, depicted as an interloper, violating the privacy of feminine space. Indeed, this image recalls the terms of Christine Gerrard's argument in describing *Windsor-Forest* and *The Rape of the Lock* as resonating 'with the Jacobite imagery of rape and illegal seizure'. We should then be alert to the possibility that Ramsay uses the pastorally named figures of Celia and Damon to enact more than merely a comic love plot.

Celia is first introduced to the reader through the location of her home. In this passage, Ramsay adopts a higher linguistic register than has previously been employed in the poem. There is certainly an element of hyperbole in the grandeur of Ramsay's description of the square where Celia lives, but perhaps with good reason. Here, dominating the scene, stands 'Charles's statue in lasting Brass' (l.76), amid 'spacious fabricks of stupendous Height' (l.78) and 'sublime roofs'(l.81). This is at once an allusion to Ramsay's own belief in the Stuart's enduring claim to the throne and to the Jacobitism which laces Pope's poem. No more than this reference to the Stuart monarchy is needed here; Ramsay's intertextual allusion to Pope's poem supplies the Jacobite undercurrent more than adequately. More significantly, this is the place where 'once the Three Estates/ Of Scotland's Parliament held free Debates' (ll.81-82). Here, we are told, 'Celia dwelt, and here Damon did move' (l.83). Again, the suggestion is that Damon does not belong in this setting, he is very much the interloper. From this point in 'The Morning Interview' then, it is possible to impose a narrative of nation upon the poem.

In support of such a reading, it is significant that Damon gains entry into Celia's chamber because Celia is expecting a less threatening visitor, Frankalia, her cousin, 'come to take her morning tea' (l.90). The allusions to Scotland's historic relationship with France (where many Jacobite exiles from the 1715 rebellion now lived, along with the exiled Stuarts) are inescapable. Damon's arrival thus supplants the place of France, by means of deception. Furthermore, Celia is, by Damon's unexpected arrival in her chamber, placed at a disadvantage in the coming battle. Unlike Damon, she has not yet had time to prepare herself for the fray, or to plunder the feminine armoury for puffs, patches or powders. Rather she is partially dressed: 'Who can describe the Charms of loose Attire?' (l.99). Yet, this alluring costume works to disarm her amorous adversary: 'Ah, barbarous Maid! he cries, sure native Charms/ Are too much: Why then such a store of Arms?' (ll.101-102). Celia displays none of the preened and polished beauty of a spoilt socialite such as Belinda, rather, the vocabulary used here alludes to the wild beauty and raw potential that characterises poetic accounts of Scotland (not least those of James Thomson at moments in *The Seasons*).

Celia's chamber now becomes love's battle ground and the domestic warfare is clothed in the language of mock-epic as Ramsay likens the advance and retreat of Celia and Damon to 'Hannibal' (l.114) and 'Fabius'. Significantly, these skirmishes are also likened to the strategies of 'warlike Bruce and Wallace' (l.115), who Ramsay characterises as adopting the so-called 'Fabian strategy' by pretending 'to seem defeat, yet certain Conquest gain'd' (ll.115-116). This is very much a war of attrition, of strategy and dissemblance rather than of open conflict. These referents are appropriate, not only to the context of amorous warfare, but to a reading of the poem as symbolic of the union between Scotland and England. Particularly as, in the next verse paragraph, Ramsay alludes to 'Royal Ned' (l.132) and explains in a footnote: 'Edward III. King of England who established the most honourable Order of the Garter.' Again, this reference sits comfortably within the narrative of the lover's battle (Damon is dazzled by the sight of the lady's garters) but also introduces an English monarch/ hero as a counterpoint to his reference to Bruce and Wallace. The battle lines are firmly drawn.

It is at this point that Ramsay introduces epic machinery into the narrative, in order to break the stalemate. He does not adopt the sylphs of *The Rape of the Lock*, rather he has Damon call upon Venus, 'the Queen of Love' (l.157), and her son Cupid for assistance. Cupid then assumes 'the shape of Shock' (l.164) and, in this disguise, gains both the lap and the trust of Celia. Damon then, by rather vicarious means, now has the advantage and Ramsay seizes this opportunity to display his knowledge of Classical mythology within his mock epic poem.

The final denouement of the battle is thus brought about by the intervention of the Classical gods. However, in a bold subversion of Classical convention, Cupid's 'two barbed Darts in Celia's eyes' (l.182), do not blind her with love for Damon, rather, they dazzle her with gold. We are told that 'Many [arrows] were broke before he cou'd succeed;/ But that of Gold flew whizzing through her head.' (ll.183-184). Following this manoeuvre, the narrative voice wryly comments: 'When all others fail,/ Then the refulgent metal must prevail' (ll.185-186). This could be read as a satirical comment on feminine superficiality and materialism as Celia's commodity fantasy produced by the sight of gold is described: 'Pleasure produced by Money now appears/ Coaches and Six run rattling in Ears./ O Liv'ry Men! Attendants! Household-plate!' (ll.187-188), but the last things visualised by Celia in her rapture are 'Court-posts and Visits! Pompous Air and State!' (l.190). This, coupled as it is with the references to gold, perhaps points to those Scots who embraced the union of 1707 as a means for personal advancement, enrichment and opportunity. Such language, albeit transposed into a mock-epic, satirical poem, recalls the

language that Ramsay, in his earlier, unpublished and unmistakably anti-union ‘Poem to Pitcairne’ (cf. chapter one), employs in his reference to the men ‘who their Country Sold’ (‘Poem to Pitcairne’ l.34) and whose fate is to float, in the Classical underworld, on a ‘Pool of Boyling Gold’ (‘Poem to Pitcairne’ l.33). Celia thus comes to embody, not so much Scotland, the nation as a whole, but those of the Scottish nobility who welcomed the union and whom Ramsay views as betrayers of the nation. She unites herself with the foppish and apparently dishonest Damon and each partner of this union is so blinded by greed that each believes they have won the war. This notion is dramatised by a series of antithetical clauses, characterising each partner as active, and then passive in the relationship, thus linguistically enacting the divisions and competing discourses in Scottish society brought about by the Union of 1707:

Thus Celia fell; or rather thus did rise:
 Thus Damon made, or else was made a Prize;
 For both were Conquerers, and both did yield,
 First she, now he, is Master of the Field. (ll.200-203)

The remainder of the poem describes, firstly, the happiness of Damon in securing the hand of Celia and, finally, the ‘sumptuous Entertainment’ (l.236) with which the protagonists celebrate their union. The happiness of Damon is portrayed in a series of negatives and in language which speaks of corruption and, to a certain extent, exploitation (as well as a liberal dash of sexual innuendo): ‘Not gaming Heir when his rich Parent dies, /Not Zealot reading *Hackney’s* Party-Lies, /[...] Not Miss when *Limberham*³⁷ his Purse extends, / E’er knew such Raptures as this joyful Swain, / When yielding, dying Celia calm’d his pain’ (ll.206-215).

This imagery of commerce, and sexual commerce, is extended and becomes more pointed in its allusions to prostitution as the poem continues: ‘Then to complete the Peace and seal the Bliss, / He for a Diamond Ring receiv’d a Kiss’ (ll.230-231). By this stage of the poem, it is clear that the speaker’s sympathies lie with neither protagonist. Both are shown to be weak and driven by greed for gold and physical appetite, a notion which is compounded by the commodity fetishism which dominates the final section of the poem. This lavish array of luxury foreign commodities upon which the lovers feast points at once to the availability of such goods in the cosmopolitan Scottish capital, as well as to the moral vacuity of such emblems of power, modernity and imperial wealth.

³⁷ This is another intertextual allusion on the part of Ramsay, this time to the work of John Dryden (1631-1700). *The Kind-Keeper, or Mr Limberham* (1678) was a controversial play satirising sexual manners. It also featured, in one of its songs, a pastoral protagonist called Damon who nearly died for love of his mistress.

Incongruous on this ‘Table which boasts its being from Japan’ (l.238), groaning with Amazonian sweets, the ‘product of her Luscious cane’ (l.245) is Scotland’s contribution to the feast: ‘Scotia does no costly Tribute bring,/ Only some Kettles full of Todian Spring’ (ll.246-247). This modest item, described by Ramsay in a footnote as: ‘Tod’s-Well, which supplies the city with water’, speaks of a homely simplicity and purity in contrast to the extravagant and exotic imported goods which otherwise populate the tea-table. The purpose of this local resource is, of course, to become tea: ‘Chief of the Treat, a Plant the boast of Fame’ (ll.250-251). The final lines of the poem extol the virtues and properties of this mighty plant, ‘happiest of Herbs!’ (l.252) and ask, ‘Who would not be/ Pythagoriz’d into the Form of thee’ (ll.252-253), referring to Pythagoras’s belief in the transmigration of souls and thus the ability to be transformed into another thing. The transformation that is suggested however, is not a happy one. The final image of the poem is of the kettle of pure water being infused, or polluted, with foreign luxury in the form of tea. This then can be seen to mirror the corruption of Celia by the lure of wealth and power. Thus, ‘The Morning Interview’ ends with a union, and a celebration, but these are seen as fuelled by commercial greed and corruption.

The Rape of the Lock ends with no such union, but it does end with the transformation of the lock of hair into a heavenly body- a positive transformation. The lock blazes in the sky, a hopeful image on which to end. There is no such hope at the close of Ramsay’s poem, because Ramsay’s poem is not, like Pope’s, only to be read as laced with Jacobite allusion (and, at this time there was still Jacobite hope for a Stuart restoration), but is able to be read as a narrative of union, dramatising the marriage of Scotland and England. By 1721, hope that the Union of 1707 might be quickly dissolved was a fading hope. Ramsay thus appropriates the Jacobite code that, for many readers, underpins *The Rape of the Lock*, but extends the symbolism of ‘The Morning Interview’ into a narrative of union seen from a specifically Scottish viewpoint. These two poems can be understood as a poetic, and political, dialogue between Ramsay in Edinburgh, and Pope in London. Indeed, ‘The Morning Interview’ in spite of its smooth, conventional, Augustan surfaces, (Ramsay himself describes it, in the ‘Epilogue’, as ‘smoothly wrought in good firm British Rhime’ [l.262]) is arguably as politically charged as anything in Ramsay’s corpus.

Ramsay then, despite remaining firmly rooted in the Scottish capital, sustained a significant poetic dialogue with Pope and other English Augustans. Thomson, of course, chose to not only to engage with the contemporary London literati through poetic dialogue, but to become himself a member of this coterie. This, as I have argued, did not involve Thomson turning his back on the Edinburgh cultural milieu; rather, it was the literary

connections and networks already established between these two cultural capitals that facilitated Thomson's welcome, and subsequent success among literary circles in London.

CULTURAL CAPITALS: SCOTS AND LONDON

Thomson was not alone in realising the advantages that were available to an aspiring writer in London in the early years of the eighteenth century; he was neither the first nor the last Scottish writer to be seduced by the miscellaneous charms and opportunities on offer in the British capital. Nor is he alone in his subsequent neglect by Scottish critical history as a result of his move to London and creation of an Anglo-Scottish identity. Recent scholarship in this field, notably that of Sandro Jung, has succeeded in revising critical and cultural (and indeed, at times, personal) judgements of, and focussing critical attention on, hitherto neglected, marginal figures in the Anglo-Scottish milieu such as Joseph Mitchell and David Mallet.³⁸ Both Mitchell and Mallet were already established in London life by the time of Thomson's arrival in the capital in 1725 (Mitchell arrived in 1720, Mallet in 1723) and it is likely that their removal to England was a significant factor in Thomson's own decision to seek literary success and preferment in the south. As discussed in chapter one of this thesis, Mitchell and Mallet were well known to Thomson during his years as a student in Edinburgh. Mallet (then Malloch) and Thomson were friends and fellow members of the Grotesque Club, as well as of the Athenian Society of Edinburgh. Mitchell was also deeply involved with these groups and played a pivotal role in the publication of *The Edinburgh Miscellany*. Thomson and Mallet corresponded regularly in the two years preceding Thomson's own move to London and, as previously remarked, these Edinburgh acquaintances were crucial in terms of Thomson's admittance into prominent London literary networks.

It was not only aspiring poets who migrated south in the years immediately following the Union of Parliaments. Stana Nenadic notes, in the introduction to *Scots in London in the Eighteenth Century* (2010),

The Act of Union in 1707 sent another elite group to the English metropolis: the forty-five Scottish members of Parliament. This relocation of much of the high-

³⁸ See, Sandro Jung 'Joseph Mitchell (c1684-1738): Anglo-Scottish Poet' in *Scottish Studies Review* 9.2 (2008) pp.43-69; *David Mallet, Anglo- Scot: Poetry, Patronage, and Politics in the Age of Union* (Newark: Delaware Press, 2008) and Sandro Jung "'Staging" an Anglo-Scottish Identity: The Early Career of David Mallet, Poet and Playwright in London' in *Scots in London in the Eighteenth Century* ed., Stana Nenadic (Lewisburgh: Bucknell University Press, 2010) pp.73-90

level political and patronage business of Scotland ensured that many other Scots from across the social the spectrum were obliged to engage in London life.³⁹

This quotation reveals a very practical motivation for relocation to London on the part of Scottish writers and aspiring artists. The Scottish elite, including figures such as John Campbell, second Duke of Argyll (1680-1743), were often patrons of the arts as well as powerful politicians. Following the union, many of these important public, political and cultural figures took up residence in London for significant periods of time. In order to gain the notice of such influential and eminent prospective patrons then, it was prudent to move closer to the seat of political, as well as financial, power. Furthermore, the collective community feeling of Scots in London perhaps precipitated a greater level of interest by the expatriate Scottish elite in the plight of the struggling Scottish poet adrift in a large and alien city. Again, the issue of patronage can be seen as a crucial one in the making of a literary career in the first half of the eighteenth century and as being a shaping force in the chosen career trajectories, as well as on the poetic voice of writers in the period. In the previous chapter, poetic addresses to patrons such as William Bennet were explored, and Ramsay's poetic address to John Ker, Duke of Roxburgh enacted a direct and comparative comment on systems of patronage in Scotland and England signals the importance and contentiousness of issue in the period.

The system of patronage in early eighteenth century was still the main means of financial support available to a writer. Ramsay, as we have seen, was a man of business as well as a man of letters, involved in both the commercial supply and in the production of literature, the one enterprise, in part, facilitating and financing the other. But Ramsay, in his multiple roles, was the exception, rather than the rule. Moreover, as previously noted, this did not preclude him from courting the favour and support of influential friends and patrons. However, for a writer of modest means like Thomson, patronage and preferment were often the sole means of securing financial support. He, like Ramsay, clearly felt that there more opportunities for preferment in London than in Edinburgh.

It is necessary at this stage to say a few words about the system and nature of patronage in the eighteenth century given the paramount role patronage played in promoting the arts in the period. In a seminal article, Paul Korshin explains:

The types of literary patronage operative during the eighteenth century are numerous and confusing. Patronage is generally assumed to refer to the financial support of learning and literature by the wealthy and titled... The term has more than one meaning. Other writers describe it in such a way that we can be reasonably

³⁹ Stana Nenadic, *Scots in London in the Eighteenth Century* (Lewisburgh: Bucknell University Press, 2010) p.14

certain they use it to indicate the support of a publisher, the interest of a subscription-buying public, or the approbation of an audience. Just as drama's patrons are the theatre-going public, so an author's patrons are the people who subscribe to or purchase his books.⁴⁰

Despite the increasing commercialisation of the book trade in the long eighteenth century, Dustin Griffin's work *Literary Patronage in England 1650-1800* (1996) demonstrates that rather than representing 'an old and dying cultural form that never provided adequate support to authors and fortunately gave way to a superior system in which authors were at last properly recognised as independent owners and professionals',⁴¹ patronage persisted well into the century and was a marked feature of the literary marketplace.

Ramsay, as we have seen, benefitted from several forms of patronage and demonstrated the reciprocal nature of the relationship between patron and artist by penning flattering poetic addresses and panegyrics on the virtue of his wealthy patrons, William Bennet and John Ker, the Duke of Roxburgh. His close and lasting friendship with Sir John Clerk of Penicuik and his association with Archibald Campbell, Lord Islay, brother and successor to John Campbell, the second Duke of Argyll also served him well, as will be discussed in more detail below. Another form of literary patronage which Ramsay benefitted directly from is the system of subscription. An examination of the list of subscribers which prefaces many of Ramsay's published works is revealing of the network of influential patrons he cultivated. Subscription was, by its nature, a fully reciprocal form of patronage. In addition to receiving copies of the published work, a subscriber's name would appear in a list in the opening pages of the work thus identifying the subscriber as a generous and culturally engaged individual. Korshin has this to say of the subscription system:

This may not be patronage in the traditional sense in which it was practiced in Augustan Rome or Renaissance Italy. Yet it is interesting to observe how the subscription method democratized literary patronage, and made it possible for a community of wealthy people to contribute to the support of many authors. The sense of obligation which pervades and often exacerbates the traditional patron-client relationship is usually diminished or wholly absent in the author-subscriber relationship.⁴²

Ramsay's first volume of poetry, published in 1721, and his second volume of 1728 were published by subscription. The subscription lists printed in the opening pages of these

⁴⁰ Paul Korshin, 'Types of Eighteenth-Century Literary Patronage' in *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 7:4 (1974) p.454.

⁴¹ Dustin Griffin *Literary Patronage in England 1650-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) p.3

⁴² Paul Korshin, 'Types of Eighteenth-Century Literary Patronage' in *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 7:4 (1974) p.464.

volumes make for fascinating reading. Among the subscribers of both volumes are, as one would expect, Ramsay's notable patrons and friends. These include: Sir William Bennet and his daughter Elizabeth; Sir John Clerk of Penicuik and other members of his family; John Campbell, second Duke of Argyll (1680-1743) and his brother, Archibald Campbell, Earl of Islay (1682-1761), and the Duke and Countess of Roxburgh. Subscribers also include numerous other members of the Scottish landed and titled elite, including such eminent Edinburgh public figures as Sir Gilbert Elliot, second baronet, Lord Minto (1693-1766).⁴³ The professional classes are well represented in this list: legal men, medical men, architects and commissioned army officers feature prominently. Ramsay seems also to have elicited the notice and support of his fellow Edinburgh merchants, jewellers and booksellers, including his own publisher, Thomas Ruddiman. His Easy Club acquaintances are also visible in the list of subscribers as are the academic elite of Edinburgh: Mr Robert Stewart, Professor of Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh and Mr George Campbell, Professor of Mathematics at the same institution subscribed to Ramsay's volumes of poetry. Men of the arts were also known to Ramsay, and subscribed to his work: William Aikman, the accomplished and successful portrait painter (1682-1731), cousin to John Clerk of Penicuik; Richard Cooper (1701-1764), the notable engraver who would work with Ramsay on the production of *Musick for Allan Ramsay's Collection of Scots Songs* (c.1725-1726), Joseph Mitchell (for two copies) and the painter John Smibert are listed. It can be inferred then, that Ramsay's social activities, as well as his professional and creative roles and projects, brought him into contact with potential subscribers and supporters from all sections of Edinburgh, and Scottish society. Indeed, his early trade as a wigmaker would also have afforded him access to the elite of the day as, of course, all men of rank, importance and fashion required a wig. As Ramsay had the ear and admiration of men like John Clerk of Penicuik, William Bennet, Baronet and John Kerr, the Duke of Roxburgh, he no doubt prevailed upon these influential friends to canvas support and subscriptions from their social acquaintances on his behalf.

Indeed, Ramsay's relationship with Sir John Clerk of Penecuik was much more than merely a client-patron relationship. Ramsay's relationship with Clerk, who was a valuable customer of Ramsay's bookshop, deepened into a lifelong friendship. There is a

⁴³ Sir Gilbert Elliot was MP for Roxburgh from 1722 until 1726 when he was appointed to the bench of the Court of Session. In Scotland, he was active figure in the intellectual and cultural life of Edinburgh as well as a committed campaigner for the improvement and beautification of Edinburgh. His entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* records him thus: 'Classical scholar, antiquary, and bibliophile, Minto belonged to Scotland's circle of legal literati.' See, Jane Blackie's entry for Sir Gilbert Elliot of Minto, second baronet, Lord Minto in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* online at www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8659?docPos=2 (accessed 12/10/2013)

good deal of extant correspondence recording the relationship between Ramsay and Clerk. Much of this is in the form of invoices and other business communications and provides a fascinating insight into Clerk's, and Ramsay's, literary and historical interests. However, there are also letters which are indicative of the mutual respect and affection that existed between these two men. Ramsay spent a great time of time at Clerk's country seat. Iain Gordon Brown describes the relationship between Clerk and Ramsay thus:

Theirs was not only a business relationship between a gentleman and wigmaker turned bookseller, and that between a subscriber and an author, and for that matter between a virtuoso and a poet with artistic leanings, but also a personal friendship built on admiration, familiarity and mutual affection.⁴⁴

It was at Clerk's country seat that Ramsay made the acquaintance of Clerk's cousin, William Aikman, eminent portrait painter and subscriber to Ramsay's poetic volume. Ramsay wrote several poems to Aikman and no doubt viewed the career of Aikman as a suitable model for his talented son, Allan Ramsay junior (1713-1784), to follow.⁴⁵ Aikman, in turn, was an occasional member of the Hillarian circle in London and was known to Thomson and Mallet. Thus, when Clerk attempted to write his own georgic, a country house poem praising the virtues of his own house, 'The Country Seat' (1727), he used Aikman to petition Thomson and Mallet in London to read and critique his poetic production. It would appear from the correspondence which alludes to this episode, however, that Thomson and Mallet were too much engaged with their own poetic careers to offer much in the way of advice to Clerk. One letter from Aikman to Clerk reads:

Since Receipt of yours [...] it has not been in my power to get anything done with Thomson or Malloch till within these few days, for Thomson is so throng about his Subscription that he minds nothing else and Mr Malloch has been printing his Excursion which has employed all his leisure time.⁴⁶

Thomson did eventually find the time to write to Clerk on the subject of his poem, exclaiming, in glowing tones, that:

I think your Subject noble, pleasing, and affecting. Whose Taste will it not suit?
And where is the Man, who after all the Bustle and ambitious Toil of Life is not
fond of the fine Amusements and, and Philosophical Calm of the Country Seat? Yet

⁴⁴ Iain Gordon Brown *Poet and Painter: Allan Ramsay Father and Son 1684-1784* (Edinburgh: National Library of Scotland, 1984) p.14

⁴⁵ For a more detailed account of Ramsay's relationship with Sir John Clerk and William Aikman and the impact that Ramsay's circle of powerful friends and patrons had on establishing his son's distinguished career as a portrait painter, see, Melanie Buntin and Rhona Brown, 'Family Resemblance: A Dialogue between Father and Son' in *Allan Ramsay: Portraits of the Enlightenment* ed. Mungo Campbell (London: Prestel, 2013) pp.51-65

⁴⁶ William Aikman to Sir John Clerk in *James Thomson (1700-1748): Letters and Documents* ed. Alan Dugald McKillop (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1958) p.61

if such there was one executed according to your Plan must charm him into Retirement.⁴⁷

Clerk's poem was never published but this exchange is significant for two reasons. Firstly, the correspondence between Aikman, Clerk and Thomson illuminates another point of contact between Thomson and Ramsay, demonstrating the existence of another mutual circle of patronage and acquaintance. Secondly, the correspondence serves to signal Thomson's continued involvement with the Scottish literati and cultural elite after his removal to London. Clerk evidently enjoyed an ongoing relationship with Thomson as well as Ramsay.

Given Ramsay's many roles and wide social circles, it is not surprising that he garnered so much support from Scottish patrons. What is perhaps surprising, and significant in terms of a discussion of his links with James Thomson and the contemporary London literati are the names of subscribers from the English capital. These include, perhaps inevitably, given Ramsay's own part in the book trade, London booksellers, Mr Tho. Longman and Mr John Osborne. More significantly, is that among the subscribers of Ramsay's 1721 volume, appear the names of, Aaron Hill Esq. (for two copies), Mr Richard Savage, Sir Richard Steele (for two books) and, as noted above, Mr. Alexander Pope. Pope and Steele subscribed to the 1728 volume also, indicating that they were not displeased with Ramsay's poetic productions. Of course, both Pope and Steele were subjects of poems by Ramsay, so perhaps they felt a certain personal interest in Ramsay's poetry and a certain obligation to support, in some small way, his poetic career. Ramsay not only opened his first volume with an imitation of Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*, but wrote an epigrammatic poem 'To Mr Pope' which appeared in the 1728 volume. This poem is a brief panegyric on the virtues of Pope's translation of *The Iliad*, most notable for its use of Scots in this context and the knowledge that Pope would certainly read the piece:

Three times I've read your *Iliad* o'er:
The first time pleas'd me *well*;
New Beauties unobserv'd before,
Next pleas'd me *better* still
Again I try'd to find a Flaw,
Examined ilka Line,
The third time pleas'd me best of a',
The Labour seem'd divine.
Henceforward I'll not tempt my Fate,
On dazzling Rays to stare,
Lest I should tine dear Self-Conceit,
And read and write nae mair.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ James Thomson to Sir John Clerk, *ibid.*, p.58

⁴⁸ Allan Ramsay *Poems by Allan Ramsay Volume II* (Edinburgh: Ruddiman, 1728) p.34

Thus, whilst he never met Alexander Pope in person, he certainly took great pains to gain his notice. This brief panegyric appears in the volume immediately after Ramsay's pastoral elegy on the death of poet Matthew Prior (1664- 1721), 'Robert, Richy and Sandy, A Pastoral on the Death of Matthew Prior Esq'.⁴⁹ This positioning is highly appropriate as the pastoral shepherds who mourn the poet's passing are Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford (1661- 1724), Sir Richard Steele and Alexander Pope. These three English cultural heavy-weights are invoked at the opening of the piece, in place of the conventional pastoral evocation of the Classical muses. Ironically, however, the three mourners express their grief in Scots vernacular. Again, Ramsay seems to pass comment on the possibility, and indeed propriety, of vernacular language in a pastoral context and, by his choice of pastoral mourners, can be seen to speak directly to the London literati who were themselves embroiled in the debate over the propriety of native, or realistic, pastoral representations.⁵⁰ Moreover, there is concrete evidence that Ramsay entertained Sir Richard Steele in Edinburgh 1717. Richard B. Kline, in an article which questions the political groupings of the mourners assembled in Ramsay's poem, posits that a relationship of mutual respect existed between the Tory Prior and the Whig Steele. Kline goes on to elucidate the connection between Ramsay and Steele, as this again appears to be a politically anomalous grouping. Kline records:

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 15th 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 sense than there.'⁵¹

George Aiken, biographer of Richard Steele, also mentions Steele's 1717 meetings with Ramsay, 'He [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 by the people, and Ramsay would take Steele to some of the clubs, which at that time were

⁴⁹ This poem was first published in 1721, presumably too late for inclusion in Ramsay's first collected volume of poetry of the same year, hence, it was included in the Ramsay's collected volume of 1728. This explains why the poem appears in the 1728 volume despite the fact that Matthew Prior's death occurred in 172. It also accounts for the fact that one of the chief mourners, Robert Harley, first Earl of Oxford, was dead by the time this poem appeared in the collected 1728 volume.

⁵⁰ For a more detailed discussion of this poem, its manipulation of pastoral convention and its contribution to the contemporary debate surrounding pastoral in the period, see, Melanie Buntin 'Augustanism in Scotland: The Pastoral and the Georgic in the Work of Allan Ramsay and James Thomson' Unpublished University of Glasgow MPhil thesis (Glasgow, 2011)

⁵¹ Richard B. Kline, 'Tory Prior and Whig Steele: A Measure of Respect?' in *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 9:3 (1969) pp.427-437 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/450022> (accessed 17/09/11)

very popular in Edinburgh.⁵² Ramsay then, from an early period, was well known to the leading lights of the London literati, despite never making the journey to London himself.

That Ramsay socialised with arch-Whig Sir Richard Steele and created pastoral identities for the London literati signals the extent to which Ramsay's poetic project has been overly politicised by the critical tendency to read his work in the light of his Jacobite identity. Furthermore, this kind of literary and social activity points to Ramsay's desire to identify himself with a burgeoning British literary identity, as well as, once again, underlining the continued reliance on patronage by poets in the period. Politics, apparently, become less important when measured against the desire to secure a literary reputation and the necessity of financial support in the form of patronage. To demonstrate the veracity of this claim, it is worth remembering that Ramsay, the literary Jacobite, left Edinburgh in order to avoid meeting Bonnie Prince Charlie in an act of canny pragmatism and political self-preservation. He suffered no qualms, however, in feting Sir Richard Steele in the Scottish capital.

The names Aaron Hill and Richard Savage (c.1697-1743), the other notable London subscribers to Ramsay's work are more commonly associated with James Thomson. As noted above, Hill's early encouragement of James Thomson, David Mallet and Joseph Mitchell seem to indicate a lively interest in Scottish writers, primarily those who adopted a 'standard' English language of expression and a poetic which was emulative of English modes and models. The fact that Hill, and his friend and fellow poet, Richard Savage, subscribed to Ramsay's 1721 volume of collected poetry, however, belies any cultural narrowness in Hill's interest in Scottish writers and Scottish poetry. Ramsay had, by 1721, published a number of individual poems, including his well-known Scots language comic-elegies. Hill and Savage were clearly interested in Scots poetry, as well as Scottish poetry. Furthermore, this was not merely an act of creative and cultural curiosity: by subscribing to Ramsay's volume they were, if only in a small way, effectively helping to support Ramsay's poetic agenda.

To link Ramsay with the Hillarian circle – and thus with Thomson's London coterie – on the strength of some names on a subscription seems, initially, somewhat tenuous. However, Ramsay's involvement with this milieu did not end with a few copies of his first collected volume of original poetry being sent to London. Ramsay was in fact acquainted with several Scottish figures who would become prominent members of the Hillarian circle alongside Thomson. This lends weight to the suggestion that Ramsay was personally acquainted with Thomson but, unfortunately, there is no concrete, extant proof

⁵² George Aitken *The Life of Richard Steele*, 2 vols (London: Wm Isbister, 1889) p.153

of this, however likely it seems. What can be said with certainty is that some of Thomson's close friends and associates were known to Ramsay and that Ramsay's reputation and repertoire would have been discussed at the gatherings of the Hillarian circle in the literary salons of London.

Ramsay's *Poems* of 1721 provide poetic evidence of Ramsay's acquaintance with Joseph Mitchell, as well as his continuing interest in Mitchell's career in London. 'To Mr Joseph Mitchell on the Successful Representation of a Tragedy wrote by Him',⁵³ is at once a flattering and familiar poem to Mitchell, a proudly patriotic comment on Scottish literary talent and a defence of the theatre. The tragedy of the title almost certainly refers to *The Fatal Extravagance* which was first presented at Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1721. The play was in fact authored by Aaron Hill who had given the play to Mitchell as a means of relieving his financial difficulties. It was, fortunately for Mitchell, well received by contemporary audiences. Ramsay's poem to Mitchell is presented in heroic couplets and is expressed, in part, in Scots and, in part, 'standard' English. The whole piece is laced with classical referents and allusions to the leading lights of the London theatre and intellectual elite including Addison, Steele and, naturally, Aaron Hill. Poetic addresses and verse epistles do not, of course, guarantee the existence of a personal relationship between author and addressee, but the affectionate and undisputable familiarity of tone of the opening couplets of this poem very much signals a personal acquaintance:

But Jealousie, dear Jos, which aft gives Pain
To Scrimpit Sauls, I own my sell right vain
To see a native trusty friend of mine,
Sae brawly 'mang our bleezing Billies shine.
(‘To Mr. Joseph Mitchell on the Successful Representation of a Tragedy wrote by Him’ [ll.1-4])⁵⁴

The difference in tone between this and Ramsay's admiring and respectful address to 'Mr Pope' is abundantly clear, even without Ramsay's designation of Mitchell as a 'native, trusty Friend of mine' (l.3). The poem then expands upon the theme of the 'native'. That is, Scottish literary talent (retrospectively, this is somewhat ironic, given that Hill, an Englishman, was the true author of the piece). Ramsay evokes the wild and rugged landscape of 'the frozen north' (l.5) as the birthplace of and inspiration for Mitchell's literary genius. The song that rings from 'black heath'ry headed Mountains' (l.8) is proclaimed as every bit as 'saft as he that haughs Hesperian trades,/ Or leans beneath the

⁵³ See, Juliet Swindells and David Francis Taylor, *The Oxford Handbook of the Georgian Theatre 1737-1832* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) p.627

⁵⁴ Allan Ramsay 'To Mr Joseph Mitchell on the Successful Representation of a Tragedy wrote by Him' in *The Works of Allan Ramsay Vol 1* eds. Burns Martin and John Oliver (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1952) pp.269-270

Aromatic shades.’ (ll.9-10). These lines announce, not only an equality of merit between the productions from the ‘Frozen north’ and those of warmer, southern climes but also effect a contrast which points to the resilience and fortitude of northern bards as opposed to the implied indolence and sweetness of southern productions. Ramsay also seems to hint at certain masculinity which is attached to the north, as opposed to feminised and sibilant breezes of the ‘Hesperian trades’. This is a significant construction when one considers how often the union between Scotland and England has been portrayed symbolically as a marriage or as an unequal partnership. Often in such narratives, Scotland is depicted as the bride, or the female in the union, weaker and more vulnerable to a sublimation of identity. It is worth noting, at this point, that this trope of Scottish resilience is one also exploited by Thomson. We see it at work in, for example, ‘Autumn’ (1730) where the inhabitants of ‘Caledonia’ are depicted as ‘in misfortune’s school/ Trained up to hardy deeds; soon visited by LEARNING’ (‘Autumn’ ll.836-838).⁵⁵ In the case of Thomson we could attribute his positive emphasis on the virtues of suffering and consequent resilience to his native Calvinism, but I would argue that it is also indicative of his reading of and literary debt to Ramsay.

Ramsay’s address to Mitchell continues in its depiction of a specifically Scottish literary character and heritage:

Bred to Love of literature and Arms
 Still something great a Scottish bosom warms:
 Tho nurs’d on ice, and educate in Snaw,
 Honour and Liberty eags him to draw
 A Hero’s Sword, or an heroic Quill,
 The monst’rous Faes of Right and Wit to kill. (ll.11-16)

In these lines, Ramsay cleverly juxtaposes martial skill and literary learning. He presents these as specifically Scottish qualities, drawing on a Scottish literary heritage which stretches back to Barbour’s *Brus* and Scottish myths-histoire which foreground the bravery and heroic spirit of the martial Scot. Simultaneously, Ramsay taps into the prestige and prominence of Scotland’s academic institutions and intellectual history.

The poem then shifts from the theme of ‘native’ Scottish talent into a defence of the theatre. The theatre was, of course, a subject which would consume much of Ramsay’s capital and energies during the 1730s when the theatre he opened in Carruber’s Close Edinburgh in 1736 was thwarted by the Licensing Act of June, 1737. The Act prohibited commercial theatrical performances anywhere outside of London. This was essentially an act of state and church censorship, and one which Ramsay fought vigorously but to no

⁵⁵ James Thomson *The Seasons* (London: J. Millan and A. Millar, 1730). These lines are subject to Thomson’s revisions of the text of *The Seasons*; they are not included in the revised 1746 edition.

avail. Extant correspondence illustrates Ramsay's frustration and his attempts to gain the support of his influential patrons for his theatre project.⁵⁶ The opposition of the Church of Scotland to what was perceived as the inherent licentiousness and godlessness associated with playhouses and other such entertainments is referenced by the pointed use of the word Brethren in these lines. Moreover, the relevance of Ramsay's defence of the theatre to a Scottish context is signalled by the increased density of Scots words and pronunciation in this section of the poem:

Well may ye further in your leal Design,
To thwart the Gowks, and gar the Brethren tine
The wrang Opinion which they have had,
That a' which mounts the stage- is surely bad. (ll.17-20)

Ramsay's commitment to the theatre suggests another parallel with Hill, the enthusiastic theatre manager. Indeed, perhaps this is a parallel that Ramsay himself wished to emphasise as he goes on to mention Hill twice the next stanza of his address to Mitchell:

If in themselfs sic fair designs were ill,
We ne'er had priev'd the sweet drammatick Skill
Of Congrave, Adison, Steel, Rowe and Hill;
Hill, wha the highest Road to Fame doth chuse,
And has some upper Seraph for his Muse;
It maun be sae, else how could he display
With so just Strength the great tremendous Day. (ll.27-33)

It is significant that of all the prominent names mentioned by Ramsay, Hill is singled out for the greatest praise, and it is Hill's career which Ramsay advises Mitchell to use as his model, 'Sic PATTERNS, Joseph, always keep in view' (l.34). This evidences Ramsay's singular admiration for Hill and a desire to gain Hill's notice and approbation. It is also possible that Ramsay's critical faculties combined with his familiarity with Mitchell and his work had led Ramsay to conclude, correctly, that the successful tragedy was not the work of his friend, but that of Hill. If this was case, then Ramsay would have been well aware of the ironic effects of this poetic address. Regardless of Ramsay's intentions, the poem further cements his link with the circle of writers surrounding Hill in the 1720s.

Another Scottish member of the Hillarian circle who was the subject of a poetic address by Ramsay was David Mallet. 'To Mr. David Malloch, On his Departure from Scotland' appeared in Ramsay's 1728 volume of poetry, though it must have been written some years earlier as Mallet left Scotland in 1723. This poem is thematically similar to Ramsay's address to Mitchell in its defence of Scottish literary talent:

⁵⁶ See, Alexander Kinghorn and Alexander Law *The Works of Allan Ramsay Vol IV* (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1970) pp.33-34.

Frae Grampian Heights, some may object,
Can you such Knowledge bring?
But those laigh Thinkers ne'er reflect,
Some Sauls ken ilka thing. (ll.21-24).⁵⁷

Again, in Ramsay's rather obscure reference to 'knowing souls' is the suggestion of an innate and specifically Scottish genius arising, in part from the Scottish landscape. Ramsay goes on to laud Mallet's ballad 'William and Margaret' (1723) and urges Mallet to 'Gae, Lad, and Win a Nation's Love' (l.37). Ramsay, however, does not specify whether the nation to which he refers is Scotland, or Britain but it is clear, as in the address to Mitchell, that Ramsay's intention is to present Scotland as location which is rich in literary talent and is, in this, very much the equal of Scotland's southern neighbour. Again, the network of literary exchange between Ramsay in Edinburgh and Hill in London is evident as Hill published Mallet's 'William and Margaret' in *The Plain Dealer* in 1724, a year after it was first published in Edinburgh alongside one of Ramsay's own poems, 'Jenny and Peggy.'⁵⁸

A further point of contact between Ramsay and Hill is their interest in the Fair Intellectual Club of Edinburgh, a literary society of women dedicated to self-improvement along the lines of the many gentlemen's clubs of Edinburgh. Works by these 'fair intellectuals' (the identities of these women was a closely guarded secret) were included in *The Edinburgh Miscellany* and gratitude to this society of literary women was expressed in the *Preface* to the collection.⁵⁹ In 1723, Ramsay published a substantial poem addressed to 'The Fair Assembly, A Poem, in the Royal Stanza'. It is reasonable to assume that the 'Fair Assembly' and the 'Fair Intellectual Club' were one and the same; it is highly unlikely that two such societies existed at the same time in Edinburgh. Ramsay's poem is comprised of thirty-two eight line stanzas⁶⁰ praising the activities of this assembly. In the dedicatory address 'To the MANAGERS, Right Honourable LADIES', Ramsay announces: 'How

⁵⁷ Allan Ramsay, 'To Mr David Malloch, On his Departure from Scotland' in *The Works of Allan Ramsay vol 2* (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1953) pp.169-170

⁵⁸ Sandro Jung notes, 'The poem had first been published in Edinburgh in 1723, with a London in the same year. There is also another version of the poem, entitled "William and Mary: An Old Ballad" which Alexander Chalmers identified as Mallet's original version; it was published in Edinburgh in 1723, alongside Ramsay's "Jenny and Peggy". *David Mallet, Anglo-Scot: Poetry, Patronage, and Politics in the Age of Union* (Newark: Delaware University Press, 2008) p.32

⁵⁹ The 'fair intellectuals' are addressed thus: 'We particularly thank the Fair Intellectual Club for the poems they have been pleas'd to favour us with for Publick Use.' 'Preface' to *The Edinburgh Miscellany* (Edinburgh: J. Mc Euen and Company, 1720) pp.ii-iii

⁶⁰ Ramsay erroneously refers to this as the 'Royal stanza' invented by James I of Scotland in *The Kingis Quair*. The rhyme royale stanza utilised in *The Kingis Quair* is comprised of seven lines, with a rhyme scheme of ABABACC; Ramsay, in the 'The Fair Assembly', employs an eight line stanza with a rhyme scheme of ABABABAB.

much is our whole Nation indebted to your Ladyships for Your reasonable and laudable Undertaking to introduce Politeness amongst us.’⁶¹

In 1724, Hill’s *The Plain Dealer*, published a complimentary description of the same Edinburgh society in which, he claims, ‘*Ladies find they may speak to Gentlemen, without Violence to their Modesty, and Gentlemen may entertain Ladies, without Designs upon their Virtue.*’⁶² Christine Gerrard comments, ‘The polite ideal of rational discourse between the sexes is epitomised by the *Plain Dealer*’s account of the Edinburgh literary circle known as the ‘Fair Assembly’, “one of the best Nurseries of Politeness in SCOTLAND”’.⁶³ Women writers, Martha Fowke Sansom and Eliza Haywood were prominent members of the Hillarian circle and Hill encouraged and supported their literary careers. However, as Gerrard notes, ‘Hill’s circle never came close to transforming itself into a “fair assembly”’, largely, suggests Gerrard, due to the close and sexually fraught relationships between the members of the coterie. That Hill would hold up the Fair Assembly of Edinburgh as a model of rational and polite discourse worthy of emulation is highly significant for several reasons. Firstly, it is a critical commonplace (cf. chapter one) to assume that the clubs and societies of early eighteenth-century Scotland were emulative of English, primarily London, models. Whilst this is certainly true to a certain extent, Hill’s approbation of this particular Edinburgh society is a rare and significant example of a London literary coterie publicly expressing admiration for, and a wish to emulate, a Scottish society. Secondly, Hill refers to the society as the Fair Assembly, rather than the Fair Intellectual Club. This indicates that Hill was following Ramsay’s articulation and description of the society from the previous year, rather than that of *The Edinburgh Miscellany*’s. This is further evidence of Ramsay’s substantial and sustained, if remote, dialogue with London literary circles and of a mutual gaze which was sustained between the cultural capitals of Edinburgh and London. This highlights a culture of exchange between writers in London and those in Edinburgh which challenges constructions of the period which emphasise the influence of London intellectual and literary milieux on Edinburgh, but which fail to acknowledge a flow of influence in the opposite direction.

⁶¹ Allan Ramsay, *The Fair Assembly, A Poem* (Edinburgh: Printed and sold at the *Mercury*, 1723) p.3

⁶² Aaron Hill *The Plain Dealer* 65 November, 1724

⁶³ Christine Gerrard *Aaron Hill: The Muses Projector 1685-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) p.77

‘WINTER’, SYMPATHY AND THE SCOTTISH SUBLIME

The circle of writers into which Thomson was welcomed on his arrival in London in 1725 thus not only included other ex-patriot Scots but was also very much engaged in a reciprocal creative dialogue with the literati of Edinburgh. Moreover, the Hillarian circle demonstrated both an awareness of, and an admiration for, the cultural projects underway in the rapidly changing Scottish capital. On the publication of ‘Winter’ in London 1726, Thomson’s literary reputation was secured as was his place among the London literati. This poem in blank verse was the work of a mature poet. It was groundbreaking in its portrayal of the sublime forces of god and nature, or rather, god in nature, and anticipated the direction that the British poetic would follow in the latter part of the eighteenth century.

Thomson proclaimed his arrival in the literary world in the ‘Preface’ to the 1726 edition. This spirited defence of poetry signalled Thomson’s wider poetic project and marked him as a serious writer, one confident enough to enter into contemporary critical debates about the present state, subjects, and functions of poetry. According to Thomson’s ‘Preface’, poetry is in state of decline, it has been debased and removed from its previously elevated position. His stated poetic manifesto is to restore poetry to

her ancient Truth and Purity; let her be inspired from Heaven, and, in return, Her incense ascend thither; let her exchange Her low, venal, trifling Subjects for such as fair, useful, and magnificent; and, let Her execute these so as, at once, to please, instruct, surprise, and astonish.⁶⁴

He speaks here of a restoration, and, later in the piece, of a revival of poetry:

Nothing can have a better Influence towards the revival of POETRY than the chusing of great, and serious, Subjects; such as, at once, amuse the Fancy, enlighten the Head, and Warm the Heart.⁶⁵

The poetic revival with which Thomson identifies himself involves the creation of a poetic which moves the imagination, serves a didactic purpose and stirs the sentiment; again, his position as an avatar of Romanticism is foregrounded in his critical approach. For Thomson, this poetic revival should aspire to the conditions of ‘NATIVE poetry’.⁶⁶ This ideal is defined as stemming from a ‘genius fired with the Charms of Truth, and Nature, is tuned to a sublime pitch.’⁶⁷ Significantly, and perhaps unsurprisingly, the quotation which Thomson includes as an exemplar of this mode of ‘native’ poetry, and which Thomson

⁶⁴ James Thomson, ‘Preface’ to *Winter A Poem* (London: J. Millan, 1726) p.12

⁶⁵ Ibid., p.13

⁶⁶ Ibid., p.14

⁶⁷ Ibid., p.14

‘emphatically recommends’⁶⁸ is provided by an extract from Hill’s *The Judgement Day* (1721):

For Me, suffice it to have taught my Muse,
The tuneful Triflings of her tribe to shun;
And rais’d her Warmth such Heavenly themes to chuse,
As, in past ages, her best Garlands won.⁶⁹

For Thomson, the eschewal of ‘trifling’ subjects ultimately means choosing nature, in all her changing aspects, as a more worthy poetic subject. Nature, for Thomson, is a subject which is ‘more elevating; more amusing; more ready to awake the poetical Enthusiasm, the philosophical Reflection and the moral sentiment.’⁷⁰ Thus, he simultaneously flatters his patron Hill and justifies his choice of subject.

The language which Thomson adopts in his defence of poetry has other intriguing resonances. Evidently, as is borne out by the Miltonic blank verse of the poem, the older, more elevated poetry to which he refers achieved its apotheosis in the works of John Milton (1608-1674). However, the notion of ‘revival’ which involves the restoring and renovating of forms and subjects ‘from past ages’, mirrors the terms conventionally employed to describe Ramsay’s patriotic poetic agenda of vernacular revival. This involved the renovation of older forms and the presentation of these older forms in vernacular Scots. As this thesis argues, to cast Ramsay solely in this mould is to do him, and Scottish literature of the eighteenth century more generally, a great disservice. Nevertheless, this is a potent aspect of Ramsay’s literary identity which must be acknowledged. Thomson’s poetic agenda, as it is presented in the ‘Preface’ and in the text of ‘Winter’, is vastly different from Ramsay’s. However, it is surely significant that both writers, who formed part of the Edinburgh literati of the 1720s, should cast themselves in the role of poetic revivalists whose projects emphasise the centrality of what both express as a ‘native’ faculty of ‘genius’. In so doing, both writers foreground the centrality of the poet as one who renegotiates national literary identities in the period.

Of all Thomson’s *Seasons*, Mary Jane Scott reads ‘Winter’ as being the most expressive of Thomson’s Scottish youth and of his debt to a specifically Scottish literary heritage. For Scott, the season of winter is specifically identified with the ‘very real and immediate presence of the inclement northern climate itself’.⁷¹ She also identifies a Scottish literary tradition of poetry inspired by the Scottish winter stretching back to David

⁶⁸ Ibid., p.14

⁶⁹ Aaron Hill, from *The Judgement Day* *ibid.*, p.14

⁷⁰ James Thomson, *ibid.*, p.15

⁷¹ Mary Jane Scott *James Thomson, Anglo-Scot* (London: University of Georgia Press, 1988) p.99

Lindsay, William Dunbar, Robert Henryson and William Dunbar.⁷² This evidence alone does not entirely justify the claim that this is Thomson's most Scottish poem; there was, throughout the eighteenth-century, in both Scotland and England, a certain vogue for winter poetry, a vogue which predates Thomson's poem. In 1709, for example, Ambrose Philips published 'A Winter-Piece' in *The Tatler*. Philips's poem was set in Copenhagen; a northern location where the winters are harsher than in Scotland. Moreover, even if we accept that the landscape of 'Winter' is a recognisable portrait of the borders landscape of Thomson's youth, this does not necessarily prove that the poem is somehow inherently Scottish. Many different locations are described in *The Seasons*. In one short passage of 'Summer', for example, Thomson describes the 'roaring Andes'(1.839), 'the swelling Nile'(1.805) and Gojam's sunny realm.'(1.806).⁷³ Moreover, in 'Autumn', the Hebrides are referred to, representing a very specific Scottish landscape, but no claim has been made for the particular Scottishness of 'Autumn'.

There are, however, identifiably Scottish enlightenment discourses running through Thomson's piece. In the pathetic scene of a shepherd perishing in snow, while nearby his loving family wait in comfort by the hearth, 'in vain his little children, peeping out/ Into the mingling storm' (ll.313-315),⁷⁴ enlightenment discourses of moral sympathy can be detected. Furthermore, this section seems to anticipate the literature of sensibility that arose, in part, from the theories of moral sympathy and social discourse espoused by Scottish enlightenment philosophers such as Adam Smith and David Hume and reached its apotheosis in Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* (1771). Thomson's text, of course, predates these developments; Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* was not published until 1759. However, Smith's teacher and mentor, the Irishman Francis Hutcheson, Professor of Moral Philosophy at the University of Glasgow, published his seminal work, *Inquiry into the Originals of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* in 1725. This treatise contained the seeds of Smith's moral philosophy.⁷⁵

Hutcheson's *Inquiry* would have enjoyed considerable intellectual currency in Thomson's University of Edinburgh circles. The *Inquiry* not only provided the first articulation of the enlightenment preoccupation with the science of man, but included a

⁷² Ibid., p.99

⁷³ James Thomson, 'Summer' in *The Seasons and The Castle Of Indolence* ed. James Sambrook (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972) pp.59-60

⁷⁴ James Thomson, 'Winter' in *The Seasons and The Castle of Indolence* ibid., pp.127-157

⁷⁵ For a useful collection of essays exploring the interactions of moral philosophy with both Scottish society and Scottish literary culture see, John Dwyer and Richard Sher (eds.) *Sociability and Society in Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (Edinburgh: The Mercat Press, 1993). For a comprehensive critical overview of sentimental poetry see, Harold Bloom (ed.) *Poets of Sensibility and the Sublime* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986)

defence of the controversial philosophical and religious ideals of Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury. This would certainly have piqued the interest of Thomson. Homage to Shaftesbury had, as previously mentioned, formed the preface to *The Edinburgh Miscellany* and Shaftesbury's critical ideals would continue to influence Thomson's poetic development.

The notion of moral sense and virtue is evident in the famous passage of 'Winter' in which the lowly shepherd, in an attempt to save his flock, is himself overcome by the storm; this episode engages directly with Hutcheson's theories of moral sense and virtue which relied upon notions of compassion and benevolence as contributing to human moral virtue. Susan M. Purviance summarises Hutcheson's theories thus:

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 as social dispositions.⁷⁶

Hutcheson's theory clearly informs this section of 'Winter'. The passage is designed to elicit a compassionate response, or, to borrow Purviance's terminology, an 'affective response', from its reader. A contemporary reader of this passage would have recognised the philosophical import of the pathos in these lines:

These check his fearful steps; and down he sinks
Beneath the shelter of the shapeless drift,
Thinking o'er all the bitterness of death,
Mixed with the tender anguish nature shoots
Through the wrung bosom of the dying man—
His wife, his children, and his friends unseen.
In vain for him the officious wife prepares
The fire fair-blazing and the vestment warm;
In vain his little children, peeping out
Into the mingling storm, demand their sire
With tears of artless innocence. Alas!
Nor wife nor children more shall he behold,
Nor friends, nor sacred home.⁷⁷

The dreadful scene of the shepherd in the snow is rendered all the more tragic by the contrasting, fire-warmed, familial scenes. These images speak of virtuous social discourse,

⁷⁶ Susan M. Purviance, 'Intersubjectivity and Sociable Relations in the Philosophy of Francis Hutcheson' in *Sociability and Society in Eighteenth-Century Scotland* ed. John Dwyer and Richard B. Sher (Edinburgh: The Mercat Press, 1993) p.23

⁷⁷ James Thomson, 'Winter' in *The Seasons and The Castle of Indolence* ed. James Sambrook (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972) p.137

social discourse now denied the shepherd by the sublime ferocity of the storm. Thus, in 'Winter' we can identify early- Enlightenment theories which point to Thomson's Edinburgh education. In this sense 'Winter' can be considered as expressive of Thomson's Scottish background. Certainly, none of the other seasons painted by Thomson contain equivalent scenes of pathos.

Nevertheless, 'Britannia sons' (1.681) still find a place in 'Winter' as Thomson, the pro-union Scot in London negotiates his own, and others' national identity in the new British state. The popularity of the poem, and those which followed, stand as a testament to his successful engagement with this new identity. 'Winter' may refer back to Scotland, but it was the poem which guaranteed Thomson a place in the Hillarian circle and with the London literati more generally.

However, as demonstrated above, Ramsay can be viewed as very much involved in a cultural and creative dialogue with the Hillarian circle before James Thomson was welcomed into this coterie upon his arrival in London. Thus, the literary and cultural exchanges examined above illuminate another, previously obscured cultural network which was very much shared by Ramsay and Thomson. Ramsay remained in Edinburgh, pursuing his own poetic project, but this did not preclude him from making a significant literary and contribution to the collective negotiation of a British poetic in the period. Thomson chose instead move to London, where he became a member of the Hillarian circle and subsequently became associated with the poetic opposition to Robert Walpole. These factors were significant forces in the shaping of Thomson's poetic project. However, as will be examined in the course of the next chapter, and as is suggested above, Thomson's post-1725 literary identity did not involve a rejection of his Scottish identity, indeed, Thomson's literary agenda actively promoted the cultural contribution of his native Scotland to a united Britain.

Chapter Three: Nation

**Here hills and vales, the woodland and the plain,
Here earth and water seem to strive again,
Not chaos- like together crushed and bruised,
But as the world, harmoniously confused:
Where order in variety we see,
And where, though all things differ, all agree.**
Alexander Pope, *Windsor Forest* (1713)¹

The previous two chapters have contextually located Ramsay and Thomson within the literary and cultural spheres of Edinburgh and London and have demonstrated that a mutual gaze was sustained between the literati in Edinburgh and those in London. The notion of mutuality is key in a contextual re-reading of the period. As noted in the introduction to this work, previous critical constructions have been divided in attempts to theorise the position of Scottish writers in relation to their English counterparts. Thus we have the view (of, for example, Davis McElroy)² that argues the case for the literature of ‘improvement’, that is a literature which emulates English literary and cultural practice as a means to propel Scotland forward and into a culturally homogenous (and economically prosperous) Britain.

Traditionally, where Thomson’s relation to Scotland has been acknowledged at all, his work has been situated within this paradigm. Then, there is the case for literature of ‘resistance’ (notably that of the recent scholarship of Corey Andrews, and to some extent, David Daiches, among others)³ which argues that Scottish culture was revised, revived or revisited as a response to the threat of English cultural dominance in the wake of the union of 1707. Murray Pittock too, building upon Frantz Fanon’s model of a ‘literature of combat’ as a national literature, defines a specifically Scottish Romanticism which remains independent of English cultural dominance. Such a national literature, asserts Pittock, depends upon three key elements: ‘a separate public sphere, [...] the inflection of genre, and the taxonomy of glory.’⁴

¹ Alexander Pope, *Windsor Forest* in *Alexander Pope: the Major Works including The Rape of the Lock and the Dunciad* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) p.49

² See, Davis D. McElroy, *The Literary Clubs and Societies of Eighteenth-Century Scotland, and their Influence on the Literary Productions of the Period from 1700-1800* (PhD Thesis: University of Edinburgh, 1952)

³ See, Corey Andrews, *Literary Nationalism in Eighteenth-Century Scottish Club Poetry* (New York: The Edwin Mellon Press, 2004) and David Daiches, *The Paradox of Scottish Culture: The Eighteenth-Century Experience* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964)

⁴ Murray Pittock *Scottish and Irish Romanticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) p.27

Allan Ramsay has traditionally been comfortably situated within this construction of a literature of resistance, or a 'literature of combat'. However, as we shall see in the readings which follow, Pittock's emphasis on the performance of self as enmeshed with the expression of a national literature as well as generic inflection is relevant to Thomson as well as Ramsay. Finally, there is the (until recently, dominant) view of the fractured Scot, whose literary utterances express the internal psychological, linguistic and cultural divisions caused by Scotland's precarious claim to nationhood in this, and in earlier periods of Scottish history (again, this view is presented by David Daiches, as well as G. Gregory Smith and, more recently, Kenneth Simpson)⁵. What these three formulations share is an assumption of cultural anxiety on the part of the Scottish writer, a persistent need to watch the 'other', in this case primarily the English, and seek to either emulate or differentiate themselves from the cultural practices and literary utterances of those south of the border.

This notion of anxiety has been, as this thesis argues, overstated and certainly unhelpful in the interpretation of early eighteenth-century poetry by Scots, or at least, by Allan Ramsay and James Thomson. Others such as Joseph Mitchell and David Malloch (later, Mallet) could perhaps fit within such a paradigm in their apparently 'British' cultural identity, but again, this cultural identity is, as is the case with Thomson, and as has been demonstrated by the first two chapters, more complex than this paradigm of polar opposition allows. Interest, or engagement, are arguably more useful terms with which to understand the relationship between Scottish and English writers, as well as between Scottish writers and the British state, in the first half of the eighteenth century as is the notion of cultural negotiation. This notion has been fruitfully applied to the discursive interaction between Scottish and English writers in the eighteenth century in the work of Leith Davis; the term negotiation is significant in that it implies reciprocity.⁶ The reciprocal nature of this creative relationship is paramount in creating a fresh perspective with which to re-evaluate the work of Ramsay and Thomson, both of whom navigated through the changing political and cultural landscape of early eighteenth-century Britain by engaging with cultural forces beyond their native Scotland as well as by asserting the validity of an existing cultural history. Thus, the mutual gaze was at times, reflective, and at times, transformative.

⁵ See, David Daiches, *The Paradox of Scottish Culture: The Eighteenth-Century Experience* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964) G. Gregory Smith *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence* and Kenneth Simpson, *The Protean Scot: The Crisis of Identity in Eighteenth-Century Scottish Literature* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1988).

⁶ Leith Davis *Acts of Union: Scotland and the Literary Negotiation of the British Nation 1707-1830* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998)

It is this engagement, this literary exchange as others, notably Robert Crawford, have previously argued,⁷ (cf. introduction) which shaped a British literature following the union of 1707. Indeed, literature itself is the site and the means of imagining nation. Literature is the creative location whereby nations are first imagined and constructed, imbued with characteristics and boundaries, informed by myths of history and myths of kinship, or blood, that do not actually exist in political, practical or physical reality. In Scottish literary history, for example, an abiding national myth *histoire* created by John Barbour in *The Brus* (c1375). Barbour's epic recounting of the past glory of days in which Scots 'Wan gret price off chevalry' (*The Brus* Book I, l.25),⁸ has indeed remained 'ay furth in memory' (*The Brus* Book I, l.14) of the Scottish nation, catalysing the creation of a national identity informed by the figure of the noble warrior. The figure of the warrior, or military hero is an image capitalised on by both Ramsay and Thomson, as shall be demonstrated in the close readings which follow. The centrality of literature in the creation of national myth and identity is a notion which will inform the following chapter. The primary question which will be addressed in this chapter is: how do Ramsay and Thomson imagine and transcribe nation in literature? Having illustrated some of the diverse literary responses to nation, the chapter will then identify points of confluence, and divergence within the narratives of nation offered by these two writers as each explores the creative options open to a Scottish writer in post-union Britain. Finally, this chapter will raise some questions pertaining to the relationship (real or imagined) between the poet and the nation as it is presented in range of works by Ramsay and Thomson. Ultimately, while acknowledging the depth of the creative, political and cultural differences between these contemporaries, this chapter will illuminate some points of creative contact and engagement, even, or perhaps especially, on the contested ground of nation and national narrative.

Before attempting to answer these questions, there are a number of terms which require elucidation. The term 'nation' is of course a problematic, much debated and debateable term, particularly in the context of eighteenth-century Britain. In 1707, Scotland joined the political entity of Britain, following the monarchical union of 1603 when the Scottish monarch, James VI, by necessity, became James I of Britain on the death of Elizabeth I, the last Tudor monarch. Thus the Stuart dynasty was established as the rulers of Britain. This dynasty was to be ended by the so-called Glorious Revolution of 1688, though the last Stuart monarch, Queen Anne, reigned until her death in 1714. A Britain

⁷ Robert Crawford *Devolving English Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992) see p.46 particularly.

⁸ John Barbour, *The Brus* in *The Mercat Anthology of Early Scottish Literature 1375-1707* eds., R.D.S Jack and P.A.T. Rosendaal (Edinburgh: Mercat Press, 1997) p.2

which, nominally, included Scotland, was not new then, but the political union of 1707 precipitated momentous changes for Scotland, and Scotland's identity as a nation. The repercussions of the union of 1707, and the future of the union, are the subjects of intense debate today. When eighteenth-century Scottish writers speak of nation, and of their country, we must ask whether they refer to Scotland or to Britain, or to both. We must then also ask, what is meant by the term nation? Anthony D. Smith, nation theorist and historiographer, defines nation, at its most simple level, in the following terms: 'By the term nation, I understand a named human population occupying a historic territory of homeland and sharing common myths and; a mass public culture; a single economy and rights and duties for all members.'⁹ While this is useful working definition of what constitutes a nation, its simplicity and ultimate lack of ambiguity – those attributes which render it a good and useful definition – make its application to eighteenth-century Britain limited. Leaving aside Ireland and Wales,¹⁰ perhaps the only criterion of Smith's which can be applied to Britain in the period, would be a shared economy. This is, perhaps, also debateable, however, a shared currency did exist in Britain. The other criteria for Britain's claim to the title of nation are not applicable. Scotland and England could not be said to have shared a mass public culture; Scotland's church, educational institutions and legal system remained separate and largely autonomous. There was, and remains, a defined, if oft contested, border between the two neighbouring territories, precluding the suggestion of a shared 'historic homeland'. Moreover, many in Scotland would be quick to suggest, then as now, that they, and their interests, were under-represented in the centralised parliament and were thus denied the same democratic rights as those in other areas of Britain. However, to apply these criteria specifically to Scotland in the early eighteenth-century is equally problematic. Scots may have shared common myths, and myths *histoire*, a single historic territory of homeland and a single economy, but cannot be said to have a shared mass public culture or even language. Those beyond the Highland line spoke Gaelic and lived in a semi-feudal society vastly different from the increasingly cosmopolitan and enlightened Edinburgh inhabited by Ramsay and Thomson in the first decades of the century. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, this linguistic barrier between the Highlands and the Lowlands of Scotland was a significant one, Charles Jones and Wilson McLeod note:

⁹ Anthony D Smith *The Nation in History: Historiographical Debates about Ethnicity and Nationalism*. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Limited, 2000) p.3

¹⁰ Which I must do in this discussion; space constraints inevitably mean omissions. The present discussion focuses on two Scottish writers and their relationship to England and to Britain and so I shall confine my discussion to Anglo-Scottish literary relations. For a more comprehensive justification of this point, refer to the introduction, pp.26-27

In 1700 Gaelic was the sole language spoken by the great majority of the Gaidhealtachd population; of the total Scottish population of around 900,000, about 25 to 30 per cent spoke Gaelic. English- Gaelic diglossia has not yet developed: for most Gaels English was an unknown tongue.¹¹

As well as a distinct and entirely separate language, the Highlanders had a distinct and ancient culture of their own. This culture would be harshly oppressed after the Jacobite rebellion of 1745, rendering a vast swathe of Scottish territory inhabited by disenfranchised people with very few rights, but in the early decades of the century, this specific Highland linguistic and cultural identity was still strong, visible and separate from Lowland culture. That Highland culture was so vastly different from that of the Lowlands and the cities did not prevent both Ramsay and Thomson from representing the Highlanders and the Hebridean islanders in print, as shall be demonstrated below. However, the very existence of such diverse cultural groupings within Scotland, and thus within Britain, challenges any simple and unambiguous definition of nation such as that provided by Anthony Smith.

Another influential formulation which seeks to define nation and nationhood is that of Benedict Anderson. Anderson's model is perhaps more appropriate than Smith's in that it relies upon the concept of 'imagined political communities'.¹² This in turn implies an element of choice which, in the context of eighteenth-century Britain, is significant. One could choose, therefore, to be Scottish, or equally to be British, to express one of these identities in certain contexts, at certain times, or for certain purposes and to express the other at other times. Thus, nation, and national identity become fluid concepts, subject to change and to some extent, a matter of choice. This fluidity in the literary representation of nation and the expression of national identity is characteristic of the work of both Ramsay and Thomson. Furthermore, as Leith Davis observes, with reference to Anderson's remarks on the rise of print capitalism in the period, 'Anderson's work is important in pointing out how the public sphere of the literary world served as an important site for imagining the nation.'¹³ The centrality of this public sphere of the literary world and Ramsay's and Thomson's engagement with this sphere has been demonstrated in chapters

¹¹ Charles Jones and Wilson McLeod, 'Standards and Differences: Languages in Scotland, 1707-1918' in *The Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature Volume 2: Enlightenment, Britain and Empire (1707- 1918)* eds. Ian Brown, Thomas Clancy; Susan Manning and Murray Pittock (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007) p.21

¹² Benedict Anderson *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991) p.6

¹³ 'Nothing perhaps more precipitated this search [for a new way linking fraternity, power and time meaningfully together] nor made it more fruitful, than print-capitalism, which made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways.' *Ibid.*, p.36

one and two. Indeed, Ramsay's professional as well as creative paths serve as an illustration of the rise of print capitalism as well as the importance of the public sphere of the literary world.

Postcolonial theory has also, in recent years, provided some critics with a revisionary approach to reading narratives of nation in Scottish literature generally, and in this period specifically. As has already been discussed in chapter two, Corey Andrews's article "'Almost the same, but not Quite': English Poetry by Eighteenth-Century Scots" (2006) reads the 'standard' English poetry of Ramsay, Fergusson and Burns within the postcolonial framework informed by the work of Homi Bhabha. Thus, for postcolonial theorists, such as Andrews, moments of mimicry within eighteenth-century Scottish works are interpreted as foregrounding difference rather than implying assimilationist practice on the part of Scottish writers who were keen to exploit the creative and commercial opportunities available to them in the new British literary market place.

However, as the present discussion seeks to widen the scope of interpretation of the work of Ramsay and Thomson and to define an interpretive or descriptive model which is complex enough to incorporate the broad corpora of these two writers, such a theoretical approach would be neither adequate, nor appropriate. It is, I would suggest, a deeply flawed theoretical approach primarily because of the precarious and contentious position that Scotland inhabits within the discourse of postcolonial studies as at once occupied and occupier. The difficulties inherent in such an approach to Scottish cultural production are defined by Leith Davis, Ian Duncan and Janet Sorensen who, in the introduction of *Scotland the Borders of Romanticism* (2004), acknowledge that while postcolonial studies have proved a 'likely instrument' for reappraising eighteenth-century Scottish literature, it is as problematic as it is fruitful:

As critical studies within Scottish studies itself have made clear, though, Scotland occupies an anomalous position in the topology of postcolonialism- shifting between the coordinates of colonised and coloniser, the producer as much as the recipient of 'global English'.¹⁴

A more useful and more appropriately nuanced approach that has gained significant critical currency over the course of the last decade is the 'four nations' or 'archipelagic' approach to British literature. John Kerrigan's *Archipelagic English* (2008) reads seventeenth-century British literature within this framework, asserting that:

¹⁴ Leith Davis, Ian Duncan and Janet Sorensen *Scotland and the Borders of Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) p.3

Historians increasingly recognise that early modern England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales were in different degrees and for a variety of reasons, but sometimes to crucial effects, interactive entities.¹⁵

The phrase 'interactive entities' is key to Kerrigan's reading of British literature in the period between the Union of Crowns (1603) and the Union of Parliaments (1707); it is also a central concept in readings of eighteenth-century literature which chimes with this thesis's central consideration of a mutual gaze which was sustained between writers from the disparate parts of Britain in the eighteenth century. Indeed, the literary negotiation of nation and of national identity becomes, in some respects, a more urgent concern in the eighteenth century. It is no surprise, given the backdrop of political union, two Jacobite rebellions and the subsequent political neutering of the Jacobite threat, that literary relations and, to borrow Kerrigan's term, literary interactions, between Scotland and England, should play such a significant role in critical discussions of the period.

The four nations approach to or 'decentring' of eighteenth-century literature has gained, to quote Dafydd Moore, 'a substantial providence', and informs many recent studies of Romanticism especially.¹⁶ Murray Pittock's *Scottish and Irish Romanticism* (2008), *Scotland and the Borders of Romanticism* (2004) and Carruthers and Rawes (eds.) *English Romanticism and the Celtic World* (2003) all aim to either decentre Romanticism, rejecting the anglocentricism that has previously dominated accounts of British Romanticism, or, in the case of *English Romanticism and the Celtic World* particularly, to map the influence that the Celtic fringes of Britain had on the Romantic imagination. These accounts vary in their content and focus but naturally, given the accepted periodicity assigned to Romanticism, they all offer narratives of late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century British literature. Thus, these accounts offer views of a literature created post-1745, a period when the Jacobite threat had been eradicated, as had any significant threats to the Union of Parliaments. Post-1745, Scotland, and particularly the Scottish Highlands, became a locus for Romanticism, a geographical space that was at once wild, yet non-threatening and, crucially, accessible. Romantic writers from both sides of the border (William Wordsworth, John Keats, James Hogg and James Boswell are prominent examples) journeyed to the Highlands on newly built roads and wrote travelogues or poetry inspired directly by the landscapes and people they encountered there. Scotland, particularly the previously unmapped, unknown lands north of the Highland line, became, post-1745, to borrow a much quoted phrase, 'a Romantic object or

¹⁵ John Kerrigan *Archipelagic English* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) p.vii

¹⁶ Dafydd Moore 'Devolving Romanticism: Nation, Region and the Case of Devon and Cornwall' in *Literature Compass* 5/5 2008 pp.949-963

commodity'.¹⁷ Paradoxically, perhaps this very objectification stems, in part, from early productions of Scottish Romanticism, specifically James Macpherson's glorious Ossian forgeries (1761-5).¹⁸ Indeed, Pittock's *Scottish and Irish Romanticism* makes a convincing argument for a different, earlier, periodicity for Romanticism in Scotland in comparison with the periodicity usually assigned to English Romanticism. Questions of periodicity aside, these archipelagic approaches agree on the polycentrism of British Romanticism and, in the case of Kerrigan, the literature of the seventeenth century, though they do not always agree on how these polycentric and multi-cultural influences impacted on literary accounts of nation and national identity. Nor do they offer an account of the literature in the first half of the eighteenth century. The discussion which follows seeks to address this gap and to do so by drawing on this polycentric approach which has proved so useful in opening up new fields of literary inquiry in the later part of the eighteenth century.

One further relevant articulation of nationhood in eighteenth-century Britain must be mentioned here. The difficulties inherent in expressing a coherent and cohesive national identity in a land mass which is characterised by, if anything, its lack of a unified cultural, linguistic or political identity has been addressed by Linda Colley. Colley's historical account of the formation of a British national identity in the long eighteenth century, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (1992) has become a central text in articulations of national identity in the period. Colley's thesis defines Britishness as arising, not from a shared and unified cultural or political identity, but as stemming from the Briton's awareness of cultural differences from other nations, specifically, the French. In this formulation, the French represent the malignant other whose own identity is informed by Roman Catholicism.

In Colley's view, Britishness thus involved the collective rejection of a common enemy, France, and of the religious and cultural imperatives which formed the foundations of French national identity in the period.¹⁹ As Britain and France were engaged in prolonged conflict for much of the long eighteenth-century, it is not surprising that British national identity was, in part, defined by its difference to what was perceived as an antagonistic neighbour. Moreover, this was a conflict which threatened the very fabric of the protestant, Hanoverian succession. Colley notes:

¹⁷Leith Davis, Ian Duncan and Janet Sorensen *Scotland and the Borders of Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) p.1

¹⁸ It is worth noting that these 'glorious forgeries' were made possible by the very existence of a separate Highland culture and language. James Macpherson's knowledge of this culture and language, as well as his knowledge of the English language and the British marketplace, placed him in a unique position of intellectual and linguistic authority which allowed him to exploit these specific cultural conditions.

¹⁹ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707 -1837* (London: Yale University Press, 1992) See pp.4, 5, 11-55.

At one level, these were religious wars, and perceived as such by both sides. One of France's primary objectives in the Nine Years War (1689-97), in the War of Spanish Succession (1702-13) and in the War of Austrian Succession (1739-48) was an invasion of Britain in support of the Stuart claimants to the throne.²⁰

Colley goes on to assert, however, that by the mid-eighteenth century, the Jacobite (and thus the Catholic) threat was 'plainly dust and ashes'.²¹ While this is certainly true in terms of the concrete threat of further rebellion, Colley fails to acknowledge the persistence of literary, or sentimental, Jacobitism which continued to have potent cultural and, particularly, literary currency well beyond the mid-century. Indeed, Colley's tendency to understate the level of support for Jacobitism, in both Scotland and England in the first half of the eighteenth century tends, at times, to undermine the validity of her argument.²² Nevertheless, Colley's formulation does ring true in certain eighteenth-century literary responses to nation. Unsurprisingly, the concept of national identity as enacting discourses of difference can be detected in the work of pro-union, Presbyterian Thomson. Indeed, an extract from Thomson's 'Rule, Britannia' provides the epigraph for Colley's first chapter, 'Protestants'. For Colley, 'Rule, Britannia' supports the view of nation and national identity as being defined by difference to other nations. Colley interprets Thomson's hymn to British supremacy thus:

[Rule Britannia] whose chorus is so rousing that it scarcely seems to matter that that it is Britain's supremacy offshore that is being celebrated, not its internal unity. Or that the British are defined less by what they have in common than negatively-whatever these people are, we are told, they are not slaves. Yet Thomson's emphases, like his silences, are suggestive. It is almost as if God is being invoked and bombast is being deployed to deter more searching questions. For just who were the British? Did they even exist? ²³

This reading of 'Rule, Britannia' is compelling. Moreover, the questions raised by Colley are intriguing and pertinent to the present discussion in that these questions point to the necessary ambiguity of literary responses to the complex issues of nationhood and national identity in the period.

Nation in this period must be viewed as a fluid concept, a series of overlapping discourses which ultimately resist definition. Thus, we have Thomson, author of the

²⁰ Ibid., pp.3-4

²¹ Ibid., p.4

²² Murray Pittock's *Poetry and Jacobite Politics in Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland* (1994) offers an alternative formulation to that of Colley. Pittock posits that it was the literary struggle for cultural supremacy enacted between Jacobite and Hanoverian writers which shaped British literary and cultural identity in the period. My own position in regard to this debate would borrow from both Pittock's and Colley's theses, providing a more balanced view of the period. This involves acknowledging the validity of Colley's paradigm of negatively constructed articulations of national identity whilst being in full agreement with Pittock's assertion of the centrality and persistence of Jacobite ideology and imagery throughout the long eighteenth century.

²³ Linda Colley *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (London: Yale University Press, 1992) p.11

abidingly anthemic ‘Rule, Britannia’, writing to David Mallet in 1726, ‘They [the poems] contain a panegyric on Britain, which may perhaps contribute to make my Poem popular. The English People are not a little vain of Themselves, and their Country. Britannia too includes our native Country, Scotland.’²⁴ Clearly Thomson was not above exploiting the patriotic and emotive qualities of literary constructions of Britain. Yet the apparently committed unionist expresses, in these lines to a fellow Scotsman (one who also saw London as offering more opportunities for an aspiring and ambitious poet than the Scottish capital), a view which differentiates between, not only the countries of Scotland and England, but implies that different national identities and characteristics are expressed by the natives of each country. Similarly, Ramsay, long identified with Scottish literary nationalism, an identity borne out by a significant section of his corpus, at times introduces positive images of Britain into his work. In, for example, ‘The Prospect of Plenty: A Poem on the North-Sea Fishery, Inscribed to Royal Burrows of Scotland’ (1721), ‘Britons’ are exhorted to ‘be blyth, fair Queen of Isles be fain;/ A richer people never saw the Sun’ (‘Prospect of Plenty’, ll.240-241)²⁵. In the same poem, the union is portrayed as a marriage between ‘ancient nations’ (‘Prospect of Plenty’ l.91), a marriage which need not be an unhappy one, provided ‘baith alike consult the Common Weal’ (‘Prospect of Plenty’ [l.96]). For both Ramsay and Thomson, then, the concept of nation is a fluid one; both poets also share a concern that there should be equality in the partnership between what they clearly deem to be two separate countries in possession of distinct national identities.

As mentioned above, Ramsay has long been identified with a form of what we would today call Scottish literary nationalism, a view which is not unjustified: as Christopher MacLachlan observes, ‘Ramsay set out to create a national tradition in poetry and largely succeeded in bringing about the consciousness of one, if not the thing itself’.²⁶ Similarly, despite the fact that, for Thomson, ‘being a good Scot finally meant [...] supporting the Union’,²⁷ Thomson’s corpus is often imbued with the discourse and imagery of patriotism. Again, epithets such as ‘nationalism’ and ‘patriotism’ are problematic in the context of early eighteenth-century literature and culture.

²⁴ James Thomson to David Mallet, August 1726 in *James Thomson(1700-1748): Letters and Documents* ed. Alan Dugald McKillop (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1958) p.48

²⁵ Allan Ramsay, ‘The Prospect of Plenty: A Poem on the North-Sea Fishery’ in *The Works of Allan Ramsay Vol.1* eds. Burns Martin and John Oliver (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1953) pp.46-53

²⁶ Christopher MacLachlan, introduction to *Before Burns: Eighteenth-Century Poetry* ed. Christopher MacLachlan (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2002) p.x. It is worth noting that this anthology, which includes David Mallet’s ‘The Birks of Invermay’ as well as poems in ‘standard’ English, notably omits any pieces by James Thomson. This would seem to be indicative of the prevailing attitude of neglect of Thomson by critics of eighteenth-century Scottish literature.

²⁷ Mary Jane Scott ‘James Thomson and the Anglo-Scots’ in *The History of Scottish Literature Vol.II* ed. Andrew Hook (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987) p.83

In the first instance, nationalism, as a term relating to the belief in the need for one's homeland's cultural, political and administrative autonomy did not exist and so, in the context of the early eighteenth century, the idea of nationalism as a political ideology or cultural force is anachronistic. When Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755-56) was published, a definition was provided for the word 'nation' as 'A people distinguished from another people; generally by their language, original, or government',²⁸ but the word 'nationalism' was not included. One of Johnson's definitions of the word 'national', however, perhaps alludes to notions of nationalism as it is understood today, albeit in rather negative terms: Johnson defines one meaning of national as, 'Bigoted to one's country'.²⁹ In this period, zeal for one's native country would more properly be called patriotism. However, patriotism in the first half of the eighteenth century had other potent political associations.

The Patriot, or Dissident Whigs were the group of Whigs who opposed Robert Walpole in the years following 1725 and who took instead, as their political figurehead, Frederick, Prince of Wales. Thomson was of course one of the leading 'patriot poets' of period. This aspect of both his political and literary identity (because, as Christine Gerrard observes, 'politics and poetry were more closely intertwined in this period than they were (arguably) ever to be again.'³⁰ has been the subject of recent scholarship, notably that of Christine Gerrard's *The Patriotic Opposition to Walpole: Politics, Poetry and National Myth 1725-1742* (1994). Dustin Griffin's book *Patriotism and Poetry in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (2002) reappraises the wider meanings of patriotism as expressed in eighteenth-century literature, opening his first chapter with this observation: 'It is remarkable and a little surprising to rediscover that not only minor eighteenth-century poets but many of the poets whom we regard as major figures quite explicitly put themselves forward in their poems as patriots.'³¹ Unsurprisingly, Thomson is discussed at length in both of these works. Also unsurprising then, given this political context, is that the word patriot appears in the 1730 edition of *The Seasons* no less than ten times (most of these references appear in the highly politicised 'Autumn'). As for Ramsay, throughout the entirety of both his *Poems* of 1721 and his second volume of 1728, the word patriot is

²⁸ Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language in which words are deduced from their originals, and illustrated in their different significations by examples from the best writer. To which are prefixed, a history of the language, and an English grammar.* (London: Knapton, Longman, Hitch, Hawes, Millar and Dodsley, 1755-6) p.191

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.191

³⁰ Christine Gerrard, *The Patriotic Opposition to Walpole: Politics, Poetry and National Myth 1725-1742* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994) p.vii

³¹ Dustin Griffin *Patriotism and Poetry in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) p.7

mentioned only once, and this in a poem ('The Address of the Muse, to the Right Honourable George Drummond Esq. Lord Provost of Edinburgh; and Council of Edinburgh') which appropriates what is an apparently Thomsonian discourse of patriotism into a specifically Scottish context.

Having defined some of the problems inherent in discussing literary representations of nation and of national feeling or identity, as well as suggesting a theoretical approach to these complex issues, I shall now offer close readings from the corpora of Ramsay and Thomson which demonstrate the fluidity of their responses to questions of nation and national identity. It is perhaps worth noting here that selecting texts for these case studies was a difficult task. Almost all of the works of Ramsay and of Thomson would lend themselves easily and intriguingly to such a discussion. I have endeavoured then to choose those which seem to be most illuminating and most diverse in their representations of nation.

Nation can be textually represented or alluded to in a variety of ways by writers seeking to present a distinctive national identity. For example, within the corpora of Ramsay and Thomson a national, often mythical, past is created, or recreated, within both poetry and drama. Specific topographical elements, such as Britain's status as an island state, also become potent symbols of national identity as shall be demonstrated by the readings which follow. Particular characters are often imbued with what are presented as specific national characteristics as is the case with, for example, Patie, the autodidactic and eponymous hero of Ramsay's *The Gentle Shepherd*. Allegorical representations of nation are also crucially important.

A good deal of scholarship has been produced on allegorical representations of nations, particularly those which rely on the personification of nation.³² The figure of Britannia is a potent symbol of British identity, of naval might and of imperialism which has often been exploited by artists and writers in search of a symbolic language with which to characterise a nation, or a group of nations, which resists definition. The figure of Britannia is visible in the work of Thomson and, to a lesser extent, Ramsay, perhaps because Scotland lacks such an instantly recognisable symbol. Kirsten Stirling notes that,

The Scottish version of the woman-as-nation figure does not really emerge until the twentieth century, and even then in a much more muted form than some of her better-known counterparts, such as Britannia, Marianne (in France) or Helvetia (in Switzerland).³³

³² See, for example, Sebastian Mitchell *Visions of Britain, 1730-1830: Anglo Scottish Writing and Representation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013) and, for a discussion of the Scottish context, specifically, see Kirsten Stirling *Bella Caledonia Woman, Nation, Text* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008)

³³ Kirsten Stirling *Bella Caledonia Woman, Nation, Text* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008) p.11

Stirling ascribes the absence of such a personification of nation in Scotland to Scotland's problematic status as a nation, observing that 'particularly before the devolved parliament of 1999, any Scottish figurehead would not represent an independent political state but a less rigidly defined entity, autonomous in some respects but subordinate to the British government.'³⁴ This does not explain why no such potent or abiding literary or visual symbol emerged in Scotland prior to the Union of Crowns (1603) or the Union of Parliaments (1707) but, as Stirling traces the origins of the Britannia figure back to the cult of 'Virgin Queen', Elizabeth I, perhaps the answer lies in Scotland's troubled relationship with its own female monarch, the ill-fated Mary Queen of Scots, a figurehead who did not lend herself quite so easily to deification by her subjects. In the absence of a female personification of Scotland, then, both Ramsay and Thomson drew on images of Britannia in their quest to find new ways of expressing national concerns. The portrayal of Britannia, however, was subject to subtle alterations in depiction and character, reflective of the shifting responses to the question of nation itself.

PERFORMING THE NATION

Thomson certainly exploited the potency of the image of Britannia. Indeed, it would not be an overstatement to say that he championed the figure of Britannia to such a degree that his literary construction, and the connotations with which he imbued this image, have arguably informed every textual utterance or visual representation since. Thomson's Britannia was so central to constructions of British identity in the period that Suvir Kaul asserts: 'the aggressive nationalism of James Thomson's ode 'Rule Britannia!' (1740) is the condition to which much English poetry on public themes written in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries aspires'.³⁵ This jingoistic hymn to British might and liberty echoes through the centuries as a patriotic, unofficial British anthem.

The figure of Britannia then, occupies a prominent, perhaps dominant, position in Thomson's corpus; Ramsay, unsurprisingly, did not exploit the potential of this image to the same extent. That said, a broader view of Ramsay's corpus indicates that he did not employ personification or allegorical representations to the same degree as Thomson, so this may be a stylistic, rather than a political, difference. However, as shall be

³⁴ Ibid., p.11

³⁵ Suvir Kaul, *Poems of Nation, Anthems of Empire: English Verse in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 2000) p.1

demonstrated during the course of this chapter, neither did he exclude this powerful emblem from his oeuvre. Both, however, rendered their art a locus for the construction and presentation of national myths-histoire and both adopted a catholic approach to historical and mythical source material, offering diverse, and at times, conflicting, performances of nation. The notion of national performance takes on a particular and abiding significance in the context of Ramsay and Thomson. Both writers can be said to be most renowned today as the authors of popular dramatic productions. The popularity of Ramsay's native pastoral, *The Gentle Shepherd* (1725) has continued to the present³⁶ whilst Thomson's dwindling, post-Romantic popularity has resulted, unfairly, in his being primarily remembered by posterity for authoring 'Rule, Britannia', the closing song from *Alfred, A Masque* (1740) which he co-wrote with fellow Scot David Mallet.

Alfred, A Masque was first performed at Clivedon House, on the banks of the Thames, residence of the Frederick, Prince of Wales on the first of August 1740. Despite the ubiquity and abidingly anthemic status of 'Rule, Britannia', the masque itself has been, for the most part, critically overlooked or dismissed entirely. However, it is not without significance in contextual or literary terms. As a performance of nation it reflects the complex and highly politicised patriotism espoused by Thomson (and Mallet) and perhaps it indicates a certain literary debt to Ramsay's earlier *The Gentle Shepherd*, despite the conflicting political ideologies and national discourses at work in each of these performances.

Both *The Gentle Shepherd* and *Alfred* are located in the past and refer to historical events which are distant enough to be considered 'safe' politically and yet still invite parallels with the contemporary political and cultural conditions of their production. Both works are rooted in a pastoral world inhabited by rustic shepherds who demonstrate loyalty to legitimate authority; in both productions this rightful authority is temporarily displaced and disguised, a plot device which enables interaction between the figure of social authority and the rural poor. Furthermore, in both works we can detect a shift from pastoral simplicity to georgic productivity and the exaltation of labour as, in the course of the narrative, the figure of authority, Alfred, or in the case of *The Gentle Shepherd*, Sir William Worthy, is restored. This is, of course, a gross simplification of the plots and generic models at work in these performances. The point to note, however, is that once again, even in pieces so apparently disparate in conception and execution, Ramsay and

³⁶ *The Gentle Shepherd* is the most often anthologised work of Ramsay's, likewise, it has been the subject of most critical attention.

Thomson need not always be cast entirely in opposition to one another in literary terms, even if the political allegiances revealed by these works are very much at odds.

Whilst, as noted above, very little critical attention has focused on *Alfred, A Masque*, two notable exceptions, Gerard Carruthers and Christine Gerrard, have both persuasively argued for the underlying political and indeed national significance of *Alfred*. Both Carruthers and Gerrard are concerned with foregrounding Thomson's dissident Whig identity. Gerrard's evocative and contextually informative account of the first performance of *Alfred, A Masque* at Clivedon House is worth quoting in full:

When Alfred's venerable British Bard, ancient and blind, first stepped across an open-air stage to Arne's swelling tune and spoke those memorable lines one warm night in August 1740, Britain was basking in Admiral Vernon's recent victory at Porto Bello. National pride was at its height, and 'Rule Britannia', which began life as a potent piece of opposition propaganda, soon became the unofficial national anthem.³⁷

The circumstances, settings and audience for the first performance of *Alfred* could not be more different from those of the first performance of Ramsay's *The Gentle Shepherd*. Burns Martin records the first performance of *The Gentle Shepherd* as taking place at Taylor's Hall, Edinburgh on 22nd of January, 1729.³⁸ Ian Brown elaborates upon this, adding that the play was performed by the students of Haddington Grammar School; the master of Haddington Grammar School was John Leslie, a friend of Ramsay's and a man who did much to promote dramatic productions in the hostile climate of Edinburgh in the period.³⁹ Taylor's Hall, originally Tailors' Hall, was situated in the Cowgate area of Edinburgh and The Royal Historical Commission for the Ancient monuments of Scotland lists this hall as having been built on land acquired by the Incorporation of Tailors in 1620. Over the years various buildings were added to this site, but its prime historical significance lies in the fact that the draft of the National Covenant was approved in the hall on the 27th of February 1638.⁴⁰ By 1729 Tailor's Hall was used primarily as a community hall and performance space for amateur dramatic productions. The modest circumstances

³⁷ Christine Gerrard, *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole: Politics, Poetry and National Myth 1725-1742* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994) p.3

³⁸ Burns Martin, *Allan Ramsay: A Study of his Life and Works* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931) p.181

³⁹ Ian Brown *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Drama* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011) p.24

⁴⁰ The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland's website entry for Edinburgh, 137 Cowgate, Tailor's Hall at <http://canmore.rcahms.gov.uk/en/site/522268/details/Edinburgh+137+cowgate+taylor+s+hall> (accessed 19/10/2013)

of this first performance, however, are in no way reflective of the popularity gained and the influence cast by Ramsay's pastoral drama. Rather, the drama's first airing as a school play is indicative of the hostility directed at theatrical productions in Edinburgh, a hostility which Ramsay was to challenge, to no avail, in his attempts to open a theatre in the 1730s. As Brown notes:

For much of our period [1650-1800], Stuart/Jacobite and Williamite/Hanoverian conflicts continued and systems of state control meant that some drama was not written for performance but for publication, or even, like anti-Soviet samizdat, manuscript circulation.⁴¹ Playwrights like Allan Ramsay and Archibald Pitcairne wrote from a dissident Episcopalian, broadly Jacobite stance, designed to infuriate the Presbyterian establishment. Scottish drama between 1650 and 1800 engaged in intimately in debate about Scottish society. It had, therefore, opponents, while support for the theatre was political as well as aesthetic.⁴²

School productions, however, were allowed, if closely regulated by the Church, and the humble origins of *The Gentle Shepherd* did not prevent the pastoral drama from becoming a hugely popular play. *The Gentle Shepherd* was regularly performed in Edinburgh and Glasgow as well as London, Bath, Bristol, Newcastle and other English locations throughout the course of the century. Martin also records American performances of the play which took place in New York, Philadelphia and Charleston in the last two decades of the eighteenth century.⁴³ *The Gentle Shepherd* was an example of, not only a native pastoral, but a Scots pastoral which engaged directly with, as Brown suggests, debates about Scottish society. These debates, moreover, were framed within a restoration plot that resonated with contemporary Jacobite ideology. Given these circumstances, the popularity of this play, not only in its native Scotland, but in the wider world, is a testament to Ramsay's originality and linguistic ingenuity. This was no parochial pastoral, but a watershed moment in the development of a British literature which embraced regionality and diversity.

Alfred, A Masque, despite its rather more ostentatious performance history, lacks the originality of Ramsay's pastoral and was, essentially, a crowd pleaser. However, *Alfred*, presented as it was to 'their Royal Highnesses the PRINCE and PRINCESS of WALES',⁴⁴ speaks, as Carruthers and Gerrard point out, of Thomson's own dissident

⁴²Ian Brown *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Drama* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011) p.23 Moreover, Brown's comment can be extended to the realm of poetry; both Ramsay's 'Poem to Pitcairne' and Archibald Pitcairne's satirical poetic presentation of the Assembly of the Church of Scotland, *Babell*, were circulated either privately, or in manuscript form, due to the sensitive, dissident nature of their religious and political content.

⁴³Burns Martin *Allan Ramsay: A Study of His Life and Works* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931) pp.181-184

political identity as an oppositional Whig. Viewed in this way, *Alfred* too can be seen as engaging in contemporary social and political debates. It also offers a construction of an idealised national past as a means of commenting on the present state of the nation and on the nature of political and monarchical authority. As Carruthers comments:

Thomson plays a role in popularising King Alfred as an icon for the reform movement. Alfred, unlike George I or George II, so far as Thomson is concerned, was a hands-on king, of strong military bent, and also fostered learning including the promotion of a vernacular literary language – Anglo-Saxon.⁴⁵

Carruthers's comments suggest further parallels between *Alfred* and *The Gentle Shepherd*. The figure of legitimate authority in Ramsay's play is Sir William Worthy. Worthy is a Royalist, forced into exile during Cromwell's Protectorate and who is now, at the Restoration, returning to his land and people. Worthy is very much depicted as, to borrow Carruthers's term, a 'hands-on' laird. He has been exiled for fighting alongside Montrose, 'Because ye ken fou well he bravely chose/ To stand his Leige's Friend with Great MONTROSE' (2.1.27-28)⁴⁶ and, on his return, his character is conspicuous for the level of familiarity, affection and compassion that he displays towards his tenants. Two of the tenants, Symon and Glaud, reminisce over the many virtues of their returning laird, commenting that Worthy never prevented his tenants from prospering by hounding them 'with a racket rent' (2.1.43). Nor was the laird vain of his position, 'Nor wad he lang, with senseless saucy Air/ Allow our lyart Noddles to be bare.' (2.1.46-47). Indeed, the generous Worthy was not above indulging in scenes of pleasant and homely conviviality with his tenants:

Glaud. Then wad he gar his *Butler* bring bedeen
The nappy Bottle ben, and Glasses clean,
Whilk in our Breast rais'd sic a blithesome Flame,
As gart me mony a time gae dancing hame. (2.1.52-55)

Worthy too recognises the importance of education which 'makes the Genius bright' (3.4.128). However, the true champion of learning in the play is the gentle shepherd himself, Patie. As the title of the drama suggests, Patie is both gentle and a shepherd. He has been brought up in simple circumstances by the faithful Symon. He tends the flocks, plays upon his oaten reed and courts the lovely Peggy, a vivacious rustic girl. His time in this archetypal pastoral world, however, is soon to end as he is actually the son of Sir William Worthy. Patie is thus gentle by birth, but long before he learns of this

⁴⁵ Gerard Carruthers, 'Scotland in Thomson's *The Seasons*' in *Crossing the Highland Line: Cross-Currents in Eighteenth-Century Scottish Writing* ed. Christopher MacLachlan (Glasgow: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 2009) p.27

⁴⁶ Allan Ramsay *The Gentle Shepherd* in *The Works of Allan Ramsay Vol 2* eds. Burns Martin and John Oliver (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1953) pp.205-277

circumstance is he set apart from his more rustic friends and fellows. Patie is the very embodiment of the Scottish autodidact. The influence of nearby Edinburgh, on the cusp of enlightenment, is discernible in Patie's character, in his actions and in his ideals. Patie 'reads, and speaks/ With Fowk that ken them, Latin Words and Greeks' (3.4.65-66) and the source of his learning is the Scottish capital:

Sym. When'er he drives our Sheep to *Edinburgh* Port,
 He buys some Books of History, Sangs or Sport:
 Nor does he want of them a Rowth at will,
 And carries ay a Poutchfu' to the Hill.
 About ane *Shakspear*, and a famous *Ben*,
 He aften speaks, and ca's them best of Men.
 How sweetly *Hawthrenden* and *Stirling* sing,
 And ane ca'd *Cowley*, loyal to his King,
 He kens fu' well, and gars their Verses ring.
 I sometimes thought he made o'er great a Frase,
 About fine Poems, Histories and Plays.
 When I reprov'd him anes, –a Book he brings,
 With this, quoth he, on Braes I crack with Kings. (3.4.69-81)

Symon's speech reveals more than merely Patie's reading habits. Here, William Shakespeare and Ben Jonson are set alongside William Drummond of Hawthornden; Scotland's literary talent and heritage are clear equals to English genius in Patie's (and Ramsay's) opinion. Moreover, the juxtaposition of the elevated, or the learned, with the pastoral in the final lines of this speech, 'With this, quoth he, on Braes I crack with Kings', enacts a modal shift away from the purely pastoral whilst simultaneously hinting at the intellectual potential and capacity for learning that dwells in the hills and glens of Lowland Scotland. This notion of potential and of abundant natural resources is a key element in Ramsay's depiction of Scotland. In Ramsay's construction, both the people of Scotland, regardless of class or position, and the landscape of Scotland are rich in potential. The key to realising this potential, of course, is careful management by legitimate authority. In *The Gentle Shepherd*, the returning Royalist, Worthy, restores Patie (and, later, Peggy) to their rightful positions within the social hierarchy of the play. He promises too, to return the land to its former productivity and fertility. This promise is delivered in a soliloquy which can best be described as a prospect poem in microcosm, and, once again, demonstrates Ramsay's Augustan identity and ability to manipulate conventional modes and genres in a specifically Scottish context:

Whilst I my once fair Seat in Ruins view.
 Yonder, ah me! It desolately stands,
 Without a Roof; the gates faln from their Bands;
 The naked Walls of Tap'stry all bereft:
 My Gardens, once adorn'd the most compleat,

With all that Nature, all that Art makes sweet;
 Where, round the figur'd Green, and Pebble Walks;
 The dewy Flowers hung nodding on their Stalks:
 But overgrown with Nettles, Docks and Brier,
 No Jaccacincths or Eglintines appear.
 How do those ample Walls to Ruin yield,
 Where Peach and Nect'rine Branches found a Beild,
 [...]
 These soon shall be repair'd. (3.1.14-33)

The return of rightful authority allows all to flourish once again. Of course, the lament to ruined walls and missing tapestries combined with the triumphant return of the heroic exile resonate with Jacobite imagery and the whole plot of the drama yearns for another Stuart restoration. Indeed, Ramsay conflates the events of the Civil War with the final displacement of the Stuarts. As Pittock comments, 'the language used about Sir William [Worthy] is frequently applicable to a current Stuart exile of a rather higher station'.⁴⁷ There can be no doubt that *The Gentle Shepherd* is a testament to Ramsay's sentimental, or literary Jacobitism, as well as to his Tory political leanings. Harmony, fertility, social cohesion and the social hierarchy are restored to the world of *The Gentle Shepherd* with the return of legitimate, that is, Stuart loyal, authority. The Jacobite resonances of *The Gentle Shepherd* have been expertly explored elsewhere, most notably by Pittock in *Poetry and Jacobite Politics in Eighteenth-Century Britain Ireland* and thus need no full rehearsal here. I want rather, to return to Ramsay's portrayal of the potential inherent in Scotland's people and land as it is presented in the play and to the specific characteristics that the cast and setting are imbued with.

Patie, as we have seen, represents the autodidact of Scottish culture. He is linked with the city of Edinburgh as it enters the Enlightenment. Patie, of course, as is revealed by the plot, is no common shepherd, but he has been brought up in pastoral simplicity. Patie's sweetheart, Peggy, like Patie, is revealed as being gentle by birth. Again, like Patie, she is unaware of this until the return of Worthy. Their friends, Roger and Jenny, are genuine pastoral characters; they lack a little of the charm of Patie and Peggy which serves to foreground their more simple origins. Nevertheless, they remain appealing and virtuous characters. The warm and affectionate interaction between these four characters is one of the drama's main attractions. Roger is Patie's slightly more prosperous friend. His prosperity, however, does not win Jenny's affections quite as easily as Patie ensnares Peggy. Thus, the characters can be seen to act without avarice; the loves of the shepherds and shepherdess are wholesome and untarnished by ulterior motives. Nevertheless,

⁴⁷ Murray Pittock *Poetry and Jacobite Politics in Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) p.159

Ramsay injects a certain realism into the pastoral dialogue; the adversity and the precariousness of the existence faced by the rural poor is acknowledged by the pragmatic Jenny. As she and Peggy discuss love and marriage she comments:

But Poortith, *Peggy*, is the warst of a',
Gif o'er your Heads ill Chance shou'd Beggary draw:
But little Love, or canty Chear can come,
Frae duddy Doublets, and a Pantry toom.
Your Nowt may die—the Spate may bear away
Frae aff the the Howms your dainty Rucks of Hay.—
The thick blawn Wreaths of Snaw, or blashy Thows,
May smoor your Wathers, and may rot your Ews. (1.2.127-135)

Jenny's pragmatism is answered by Peggy in a response which owes more to the georgic than the pastoral. She answers Jenny's fears with a lesson in rural farm and household management:

What e'er he wins, I'll guide with canny Care,
And win the Vogue, at Market, Tron, or Fair,
For halesome, clean, cheap and sufficient ware. (1.2.154-156)

Indeed, Peggy's adjectives in this speech – wholesome, clean and sufficient – could be applied to the whole world of *The Gentle Shepherd*. The manner in which the lives and land of the pastoral characters are portrayed by Ramsay speaks of a virtuous existence, an existence that, while it lacks luxury, with careful management provides ample resources. It is an existence without greed or corruption. There is no trace of avarice here, no yearning for exotic, imported goods. Indeed, the only object which is described in terms approaching the luxurious is the tartan plaid that Roger offers Patie as a token of their abiding friendship and in gratitude for Patie's sound advice in matters of the heart. The plaid has been spun by Roger's late mother of 'good Hawslock Woo,/ With Sprains like Gowd and Sillar, cross'd with black;' (1.1.149-151). The plaid is woven with threads that look like silver and gold, but its real value is the quality of the wool and the skill of the rural labourer whose hands created it. In exchange for the tartan plaid, a specifically Scottish emblem of the fruits of rural labour, Patie offers Roger his 'winsome Flute,/ Of Plum-tree made' (1.1.56-57). The surrender of the flute, the symbol of the pastoral world, is a foreshadowing of Patie's change in fortunes.

The only negative portrayal of a rustic figure is that of Bauldy, who is central to the comic sub-plot. Bauldy represents rural superstition and Ramsay's treatment of this gullible character, whose farcical punishment coincides with the return of Worthy, is a move to supplant superstition and replace it with reason and rationality. Again, the influence of enlightened Edinburgh is felt in the rural world of the drama. Ramsay thus

scotches any notions of rural Lowland Scotland as being inhabited by superstitious and backward looking characters. Rather, the shepherds of Scotland are characterised by virtue, industry and sense. Again, the conventional pastoral world is imbued with georgic ideals: industry, progress and reason supplant leisure and superstition.

The landscape of *The Gentle Shepherd* is one of light and clarity, its most striking attributes are cleanliness and purity. The land, like its inhabitants, is wholesome, ripe with potential and suffused with the light of reason emanating from nearby Edinburgh. The opening scene is enacted 'Beneath the South side of a Craigy Beild,/ Where Crystal Springs the halesome Waters yield.' (1.1.1-2). Thus, it is at once rugged and sheltered, but above all, it is pure and uncorrupted. Indeed, the entire world of the play rings with crystal streams and sparkling water. The air too is 'halesome' and 'cauler' (1.1.11), moved gently by a 'healthy Breeze' (2.4.16). This is a fertile landscape of 'verdant Braes' (1.2.1) and 'scented Meadows' (2.4.16); it is a land rich in potential. This landscape can be interpreted as a synecdoche of Lowland Scotland. Both the city of Edinburgh and the land surrounding the capital are present in the play. Moreover, the city and the country are presented as engaged in a symbiotic relationship as each location imbues the other with its positive attributes. The city offers learning and reason, in return, the countryside offers abundant resources and casts a wholesome influence which negates the smoky airs and excesses of the city.

Ramsay thus offers a vision of Scotland which does much to challenge negative portrayals of the land and its people such as those offered by, for example, Philips and Young (cf. chapter one). The rural inhabitants of Scotland are industrious, vital and appealing. The land on which they labour is rugged and 'craigy' but nonetheless it is pure, fertile and productive. The cast are guided by reason rather than superstition; they too are ripe with potential. Thus, in a Scots pastoral drama which resonates with Jacobite ideology, Ramsay is able to create an image of Scotland which is wholesome, productive and progressive. For Ramsay, these are the valuable qualities which Scotland brings to the Union. However, as the character of Worthy signifies, in order to realise the potential inherent in Scotland, the nation must be guided by strong and legitimate leaders, by authority which recognises the value of Scotland's wealth.

It is the nature of national authority which is explored by Thomson in *Alfred*. King Alfred, like Worthy, is an admirable leader who wins the love of his people by military action and Christian virtue. As Gerard comments, '[Alfred's] reign married pristine Saxon

liberty with the wise, benevolent, and spiritual virtues of an educated Christian King.’⁴⁸ The inhabitants of the rural landscape are also portrayed by Thomson as uncorrupted and loyal to legitimate authority. Despite Alfred’s disguise, Corin and Emma, the pastoral protagonists of the play, recognise the inherent nobility, virtue and, ultimately, the authority of King Alfred. Colin asserts, ‘He steals, I know not how, into the heart/ And makes me pant to serve him. Trust me Emma,/ He is no common man’ (1.1.9-11).⁴⁹ The reign of King Alfred is offered as a model of national authority and as a foil to what Thomson, the dissident Whig, considers to be the corruption of Walpole’s government. The portrayal of nation in Thomson’s play is, however, rather more ambiguous, or confused, than the specific image of Lowland Scotland that Ramsay offers in *The Gentle Shepherd*.

Throughout *Alfred*, the designations of Britain and England are used almost interchangeably. At times Thomson refers to ‘the Genius of England!’ (2.3.66), at other times, he refers to ‘the British spirit’ (2.3.138). The conflation of Britain and England characterises the play. Thus, despite Thomson’s protestations that Britain includes his native country, there is no hint of Scotland as a national presence in the play. The historical context of the play, in that it is set in a time when Scotland and England were entirely independent of each other, and the fact the play ranges across British history, raising the ghost of past monarchs and heroes perhaps justifies Thomson’s emphasis on England. For ultimately, despite occasional references to Britain – references imbued with characteristic dissident Whig discourses of patriotism and liberty – this is a play which is firmly rooted in the English state. The prominence of the specifically English state is such that Percy Adams, editor of the sole recent edition of Thomson’s plays, concludes his introduction to the plays with the following comments:

The contemporaneous politics that the avid searcher now finds in these pieces are far less prominent than the joint themes of public duty and kingship in the larger, nobler sense that pervade the entire corpus of Thomson’s plays. They are the same themes –the praise of England, of English liberty and all liberty, of loyalty to and love of ‘This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England’ –found just as prominently in *The Seasons*, ‘Britannia’, *Liberty*, and the stirring ‘Rule, Britannia’, in fact, in all of the patriotic Thomson’s work.⁵⁰

While I disagree with Adams’s tendency to understate the importance of Thomson’s engagement with contemporary politics and the extent to which his oppositional Whig identity informs his literary identity, as well as the assumption that Britain exclusively

⁴⁸ Christine Gerrard, *The Patriotic Opposition to Walpole: Politics, Poetry and National Myth 1725-1742* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994) p.117

⁴⁹ James Thomson, *Alfred, A Masque* in *The Plays of James Thomson* ed. Percy G. Adams (London: Garland, 1979) pp.189-229

⁵⁰ Percy G. Adams, Introduction to *The Plays of James Thomson*, *ibid.*, p.xxv

refers to England, the nation presented in *Alfred* is predominantly an English one. However, I would suggest that this is far from typical of Thomson's poetic constructions of nation. I would also suggest that the reasons behind the anglocentricity which can be detected in Thomson's plays are indicative of the audience to which they were presented, that is, an almost exclusively English audience. In Thomson's poetic constructions of nation and national identity, more subtle impulses inform his presentation of Britain, and of Britannia. Poetry is a very different medium than drama, composed of imagery, rather than dialogue, and Thomson's masterly command of painterly poetic techniques allow him to present complex symbolic responses to the vexed issue of nationhood in eighteenth-century Britain.

THE OAK, THE PLOUGH, AND THE 'WATERS WILD'.

Alfred, and more particularly, 'Rule, Britannia', chimed perfectly with the mood of the nation in 1740. 'Rule, Britannia' opens with Britain arising, by divine decree, from the ocean:

When Britain first, at heaven's command,
Arose from out the azure-main;
This was the charter of the land,
And the guardian-angels sung this strain;
'Rule, Britannia, rule the waves;
'Britons never will be slaves.' (Rule, Britannia' [ll.1-6])⁵¹

The origin myth being myth that is created here is significant in a number ways. Suvrir Kaul comments:

Britain's heavenly origins are enunciated via an odd (but representative) yoking of divine and legal-commercial sanctions: in the beginning was the 'charter' (l.3). In the myth of national origins being composed here, British geography and history begin in divine command, which (in a fine instance of the overlapping of religious and commercial discourse in the eighteenth century) takes the form of a contract.⁵²

Kaul's identification of the overlapping discourses at work in the ode point to the significance of Thomson's contribution to the shaping of a British national identity. He is at pains to present a myth of national origins which is relevant to contemporary concerns and does so without reference to any specific region of Britain. In so doing, Thomson looks to the encircling ocean as a central and defining image of British national identity,

⁵¹ James Thomson, 'Rule, Britannia' in *The Plays of James Thomson* ed. Percy G. Adams (London: Garland, 1979) pp.227-229

⁵² Suvrir Kaul, *Poems of Nation, Anthems of Empire: English Verse in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 2000) pp.1-2

one that is evocative too of Britain's naval might. This is a triumphant, confident portrayal of Britannia, and of Britain. However, Thomson's portrayal of Britannia was not always such a powerful symbol of strength and victory.

In his earlier work, *Britannia, A Poem* (1729), Thomson exploited the female-as-nation image of Britannia in order to elicit a different response and to reflect a different historical moment. The figure with which the reader is presented in the opening lines of *Britannia, A Poem* is an image of ravished, abandoned femininity, brooding on 'the sea-beat shore' (l.1).⁵³ Here, the 'Queen/ Of nations' (ll.13-14) (and, we should notice the plural 'nations') is exposed, beset and undefended. Her vulnerable femininity is foregrounded by sexualised language which speaks of degradation and abuse: her 'throbbing bosom' (l.4) bare as 'loose flow'd her tresses; rent her azure robe'. (l.6). Such a depiction is far removed from the triumphant vision of 'Rule, Britannia' and was designed to elicit sympathy and righteous civic anger. This is a direct, controversial and unequivocal call to arms. What both 'Rule Britannia' and *Britannia, A Poem* share, however, is a reliance on naval and sea imagery.

Britannia, A Poem, first published in 1729 was occasioned, not by glorious victory, but rather but by Walpole's foreign policy which was deemed by many to be too pacific in its response to, specifically, Spain. James Sambrook explains the circumstances which prompted the poem:

[It] was occasioned by general public clamour for energetic retaliation against Spain's interference with British trade in the Spanish American colonies. Because of very severe limitations placed upon concessions secured by British merchants under the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, a thriving illicit traffic grew up, which Spanish coastguards sought to check by the seizure of British ships; consequently, Britain and Spain had drifted into war by 1727, though neither country was prepared to prosecute hostilities with any vigour.⁵⁴

In composing the poem, Thomson was thus able to capitalise on public feeling and simultaneously critique Walpole's foreign policy. The poem, however, and the circumstances of its composition did little to destabilise the popularity of Walpole's rule. In fact, as Sambrook goes to note, 'Walpole easily rode the parliamentary storm, and strengthened his power and that of the court party by concluding in, November 1729, the Treaty of Seville, which was highly advantageous to Britain.'⁵⁵ *Britannia, A Poem* may

⁵³ James Thomson, *Britannia, A Poem* in James Thomson, *Liberty, The Castle of Indolence and Other Poems* ed. James Sambrook (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986) p.21

⁵⁴ James Sambrook, *James Thomson, Liberty, The Castle of Indolence and Other Poems* ed. James Sambrook (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986) p.18

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.19

then have lacked the intended political bite, but it is a fascinating poem in terms of its representation of Britain.

Given that the poem directly engages with contemporary naval and commercial activities, it is no surprise that the sea is the central image in this poem. However, as demonstrated by 'Rule, Britannia', and indeed a significant section of Thomson's work, Britain's relationship to the sea and geographical status as an island state is a defining image of national identity. The encircling sea serves to unite the disparate people of the island and isolates them from those beyond. In short, the surrounding ocean is what unites Britain. Moreover, in *Britannia*, the sea is presented as the sole preserve of the Briton. Britannia's speech in the second verse paragraph of the poem makes explicit Britain's ownership of the ocean:

While, unchastis'd, the insulting Spaniard dares
Infest the trading flood, full of vain War
Despise my Navies and my Merchant's seize;
As, trusting to false peace, they fearless roam
The world of waters wild, made, by the toil,
And liberal blood of glorious ages, mine. (ll.23-28)

Britain, in these lines, is intimately connected to the 'waters wild' (l.27). The audacity of the Spanish presence on the waves is thus viewed as a violation of a sacred British realm. The Spaniards are depicted as a corrupting force whose presence defiles, insults and 'infests' (l.24). The emphatic language of disgust and rejection that Thomson employs here, combined with the suggestion that British blood has created the watery realm is bordering on the xenophobic as Thomson strives to portray a Britain which stands united against a common and corrupt enemy. In this construction, Thomson can be seen to define Britishness as different from, and superior to, foreign forces. This reading chimes with Colley's reading of national identity in the period, although here it is the Spanish, rather than the French, who stand for the threatening (and Catholic) other. Moreover, Thomson is not only defending the moral rights of Britain, he is defending British commercial privileges, as, once again, the discourse of divine right is harnessed to a very eighteenth-century discourse of commerce. The sea is at once a source of strength, a source of wealth and an emblem of British identity.

Another emblem of British identity and British naval might that is exploited by Thomson in *Britannia*, is that of the oak. The 'heart of oak' is the defining image of the British navy, but its usefulness in eighteenth-century literary representations of nation is due, in part, to its symbolic ambiguity. Tim Fulford traces the evolution of the symbolic qualities of the oak in an essay entitled 'Britannia's Heart of Oak: Thomson, Garrick and

the language of Eighteenth-Century Patriotism.’ He notes that the potency of the oak as a symbol of Britain stems, firstly, from its native status. The British oak is believed to be stronger than oaks from other areas due to the slow growing conditions of the British oak, a fact which explains its popularity as a material in shipbuilding. However, the real power of the oak as a national image in this period derives from the fact that it was first employed as an emblem by Stuart monarchs, rendering it redolent with Jacobite associations. It was then appropriated by the Hanoverian succession, who exploited it as a symbol of British naval and imperial expansion. Fulford explains:

It was a life that cannot be separated from what Gillian Russell has called ‘the struggle for the meaning of patriotism in the eighteenth century’. In that struggle the oak came to be used as a political icon by Patriot politicians, by the Whig gentry, and by reformers and radicals. The oak was a contested symbol: when reformers used it to define the people as a whole it had already been associated with Stuart monarchs and then with gentlemanly government. Nurtured by Jacobites, it later grew under the hands of Hanoverian Whigs into a symbol of the Britain that was thought to have resulted from the constitutional settlement of 1688— a Britain of rooted traditions which changed slowly and organically, a Britain strong and independent, capable of resisting sudden shocks.⁵⁶

This quotation is illustrative of the power and usefulness of the oak as a symbol of Britishness. In *Britannia*, the oak is incorporated into Thomson’s symbolic idiom of Britishness:

A state, alone, where *Liberty* should live,
In these late times, this evening of mankind,
When *Athens*, *Rome*, and *Carthage* are no more,
The world almost in slavish sloth dissolv’d
For this, these rocks around your coast were thrown;
For this, your oaks, peculiar harden’d, shoot
Strong into sturdy growth. (ll.195-201)

Here, Thomson references the strength of the ‘peculiar harden’d’ native oak and presents the oak, and the landscape of the rugged coastline, as being inherently bound to British destiny. The particular landscape and topography of Britain is portrayed as having been specifically created in order to fulfil the destiny of the nation. Britain’s destiny, of course, is one which, unlike the ruined civilisations of ‘Athens, Rome and Carthage’ (l.198), will not be destroyed by the enemies of liberty: corruption, indolence and decadence. Indeed, the seed of Thomson’s more ambitious poem, *Liberty*, is contained within these lines.

The oak also provides shelter from the encroaching storms, offering stout protection to the land. Indeed, in *Britannia*, the land and the sea are presented as existing in

⁵⁶ Tim Fulford, ‘Britannia’s Heart of Oak: Thomson, Garrick and the Language of Eighteenth-Century British Patriotism’ in *James Thomson: Essays for the Tercentenary* ed. Richard Terry (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000) p.193

a symbiotic relationship. Naturally, commerce is at the heart of the relationship between the sea and the pastoral world of ‘the shepherd, in the peaceful dale’ (l.136) and the ‘husbandman’ (l.38) who toils at the plough. Without the protection of the encircling sea and the British fleet, this pastoral world would be destroyed and corrupted by foreign forces. In turn, the rural labourer and the oak forests supply the victuals and materials for the creation and maintenance of the British fleet.

Britannia is unambiguous and unsubtle in its purpose. War is presented as being necessary for the continued prosperity and liberty of the Britons. However, within this call to arms, Thomson creates a symbolic language with which to express British national identity. The sea encloses, unites and protects the state. The pastoral world of rural Britain could not exist without the protection of this watery boundary. Moreover, for Thomson, the specific geography, topography and flora of Britain are the shaping forces of national destiny.

Within this call to arms, however, Thomson makes it explicit that this is a Britain which very much includes Scotland. Indeed, the only specific, local reference in the entire poem is reserved for the ‘fractur’d Caledonian isles’ (l.89). It is significant that, what are most likely the Hebridean islands, are singled out in such a specific manner in *Britannia*, particularly when we consider the diminutive size and population of these islands. Despite this, these islands occupy a significant area of Thomson’s vision of Britain. These islands and their inhabitants are also referenced in *The Seasons*, as discussed below. This is indicative of Thomson’s poetic agenda in his representation of nation. He is at pains to demonstrate the importance of Scotland’s location within Britain. Indeed, in his insistence on referring to the Scottish isles, Thomson seems to suggest that the inhabitants of such hostile island environments are somehow archetypically British. The islands and their resilient inhabitants dwell in symbiotic proximity to sea and, by necessity, are entirely reliant on the sea’s resources for their survival. Indeed, these islands can almost be understood as representing, within Thomson’s creative vision of Britain, an image of the state in microcosm.

The Hebrides feature in both *The Castle of Indolence* and in the 1730 text of ‘Autumn’, the last written and most heavily politicised of Thomson’s *Seasons*. Ultimately, ‘Autumn’ is concerned with presenting a triumphant narrative of national unity. Significantly, within this narrative of unity, Scottish locations and icons occupy a prominent position. In the following passage, Thomson not only paints a positive image of the Scottish landscape, but also casts William Wallace in the role of patriot-hero:

With many a cool translucent brimming flood

Washed lovely, from the Tweed (pure parent-stream,
 Whose pastoral banks first heard my Doric reed,
 With, sylvan Jed, thy tributary brook)
 To where the north-inflated tempest foams
 O'er Orcas or Betubuim's highest peak-
 Nurse of a people, in misfortune's school
 Trained up by hardy deeds, soon visited
 By Learning, when before the Gothic rage
 She took her western flight; a manly race, and brave,
 Who still through bleeding ages struggled hard
 (As well unhappy Wallace can attest.
 Great patriot-hero! Ill requited chief!)
 To hold a generous undiminished state,
 Too much in vain! (ll.888-903)⁵⁷

The centrality of rivers and of the sea to Thomson's poetic has prompted Gerrard Carruthers to suggest the presence of what he terms 'water pastoralism'⁵⁸ in *The Seasons*. Arguably, this term could also be accurately applied to the work of Ramsay.

Water and the sea are writ large in Ramsay's creative vision. *The Gentle Shepherd*, as previously mentioned, is set in a landscape characterised by crystal streams and clear pools, symbolic of pastoral purity. The sea, however, provides the imagery and subject for Ramsay's poem 'Prospect of Plenty, A Poem on the North Sea Fishery, Inscribed to the Right Honourable the Royal Burrows of *Scotland*' (1721). Ramsay's depiction of the centrality of the sea's resources to the British economy imparts a very different message to that which is expressed in Thomson's *Britannia*. Significantly, though, in this poem Ramsay also presents an image of Britannia, located in a specifically Scottish context.

'The Prospect of Plenty' and its companion poem, 'Wealth, or the Woody. A Poem on the South- Sea. Wrote June 1720' (1721), are expressive of another strand of Ramsay's diverse poetic and cultural identity. In these two poems, Ramsay adopts the persona of what Valentina Bold terms 'an acute Scottish merchant'.⁵⁹ Moreover, for Bold, these poems are indicative of Ramsay's role as 'the first truly great British poet.'⁶⁰ Both poems are presented in long verse paragraphs comprised of rhyming couplets, a form with which, as we have seen, Ramsay was entirely confident. The language of expression is Scots-English. That is, these poems are presented in a language which, at times, approximates near 'standard' English and, at times, the language is inflected with Scots idiom.

⁵⁷ James Thomson, 'Autumn' in *The Seasons* (London: J. Millar and A. Millar, 1730)

⁵⁸ Gerard Carruthers "'Poured out extensive, and of watery wealth": Scotland In Thomson's *The Seasons*' in *Crossing the Highland Line: Cross- Currents in Eighteenth-Century Scottish Writing* (ed.) Christopher MacLachlan (Glasgow: ASLS, 2009) p.26

⁵⁹ Valentina Bold "'Nature's Making": James Hogg and the Autodidactic Tradition in Scottish Poetry. Unpublished University of Glasgow PhD thesis (Glasgow, 1997) p.21

⁶⁰ Ibid., p.21

Both poems engage directly with immediately contemporary commercial subjects. Moreover, as Bold's comments indicate, both poems speak of, and to, a British context and address the subject of British commercial schemes and interests. However, they do so from a specifically Scottish viewpoint. 'Wealth, or the Woody' is a poetic response to what Ramsay deems to be the unwise, greed-driven commercial speculation that led to the bursting of the South Sea Bubble and the ensuing, disastrous economic collapse of 1720. As the title indicates, in its opposition of wealth to the woody, a vernacular term for the gallows, Ramsay's poem warns of the dangers of the near criminal greed involved in such speculative business enterprises. Frank O'Gorman provides a succinct summary of the South Sea Company's origins, aims and ultimate failure:

The [South Sea] Company had been founded by [Robert] Harley in 1711 to counterbalance the influence both of the Whig Bank of England and of the East India Company. His original intention had been to use anticipated commercial revenues to liquidate £9 million of the National Debt (which then stood at £50 million). The favourable terms of the Treaty of Utrecht enabled the Company to prosper, and, between 1717 and 1720 it successfully negotiated with the Stanhope-Sunderland ministry to assume no less than £31 million of the National debt which was in the hands of private investors. In Harley's scheme, these investors would receive 5 per cent per annum until 1727 and 4 per cent thereafter if they transferred their annuities into South Sea stock. The enthusiasm with which the Company tried to persuade investors to convert their holdings created a financial crisis of the first order. The South Sea directors themselves helped to bid up the stock value, generating fictitious stock. They lent over £10 million on the security of their own stock and they issued new stock recklessly. The market for South Sea stock soared from 100 at the start of 1720 to 300 by early April, then to over 700 by the beginning of June. By the end of the month it stood at 1000. At this point some of the larger investors began to take their profits. By the middle of September the stock had crashed to 400. By the end of the month payments were suspended and the stock stood at 190.⁶¹

The epigraph for this poem is provided by a quotation from Horace in the original Latin. This is followed by Ramsay's own Scots rendering of the piece:

Daring and unco' stout he was,
With heart hool'd in three Sloughs of Brass,
Wha venture'd first upon the Sea
With Hempen Branks, and horse of Tree.⁶²

This is a typically audacious move on the part of Ramsay. His Scots translation of the Horatian original is taken from his own poem, 'Horace to Virgil, on his taking a Voyage to Athens'. This is one of a series of Horatian odes rendered in Scots which appear in

⁶¹ Frank O'Gorman *The Long Eighteenth Century: British Political History 1688-1832* (London: Arnold, 1997) p.70

⁶² 'Wealth, or the Woody. A Poem on the South Sea, Wrote June 1720' in *The Works of Allan Ramsay Vol 1* eds. Burns Martin and John Oliver (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1951) p.151

Ramsay's *Poems* of 1721. Ramsay thus displays his own mastery of neoclassical forms whilst simultaneously conferring Horatian authority on his own response to the commercial manoeuvres of the South Sea Company. Ramsay continues in this neoclassical mode by opening his poem with a conventional, Augustan invocation of the muse. The muse invoked is Thalia, the muse of comedy and pastoral. Ramsay offers an explanation of Thalia's role in a footnote. It is worth noting, at this point, that Ramsay is prolific in paratextual utterances such as footnotes and glosses. His footnotes are often significant, in that they add further layers of meaning to the main body of the poem and, at times, allow another voice or persona to surface. In this instance, Ramsay's footnote informs the reader that Thalia is 'the cheerful Muse that delights to imitate the Actions of Mankind, and produces the laughing comedy...The kind of poetry ever acceptable to *Britons*.' ⁶³ Ramsay thus establishes the British context of the poem in the very beginning of the piece. That this is very much a British poem is signalled throughout by references to 'Britain' (l.12) and 'Britannia's Credit' (l.108). The second verse paragraph begins:

Long had the Grumblers us'd this murm'ring Sound,
Poor Britain in her Publick debt is drown'd!
 At fifty millions late we started a'
 And wow we wonder'd how the Debt wad fa'! (ll.11-14)

Ramsay's deliberate linguistic shifts in these lines are telling: the 'Grumblers' speak in 'standard' English whilst the economic commentary is delivered in Scots. Ramsay seems to suggest that, whilst the mismanagement of the national debt by the London politicians and businessmen will have dire consequences for all of Britain, the voice of Scotland is a voice of sound economic sense, one less easily seduced by lure of a quick and easy profit. Moreover, in Ramsay's reference to 'the Debt' (l.14), Ramsay inverts the common perception of Scotland as being the poorer partner in the Union, as well as the partner who stands to gain the most. In Ramsay's presentation, Scotland, in uniting with England, has become jointly responsible for the vast national debt incurred by the War of Spanish Succession. To compound this injustice, Scotland must now suffer the consequences of the mismanagement of this debt by the London government. It is typical of Ramsay's patriotic poetic agenda that he should locate Scotland within Britain, but do so in such a way as to suggest that Scotland is not only culturally poorer for the Union, but is, in a very real sense, economically endangered. Ramsay substantiates this implicit suggestion, one which is, of course, not strictly true, by embedding it within a poetic response to a very real, serious and immediate economic situation.

⁶³ Ibid., footnote, p.151

What is truly startling about this poem is that, if Ramsay's claim to have written this poem in June 1720 is to be believed, then he, at the very height of the South Sea frenzy, foresaw the disastrous consequences that would inevitably ensue. This foresight is explicitly referenced by Ramsay in the poem. At the beginning of the sixth verse paragraph of the poem, Ramsay proclaims: 'This I forsee, (and Time shall prove I'm right;/ For he's nae poet that wants the second Sight)' (ll.93-94). Ramsay's dark prophecy goes on to draw a dire picture of a future time when all that shall hang from the trees of Britain is 'Men,/ Wha shall like paughty Romans greatly swing.' (ll.100-101). Ramsay's eerie prediction not only emphasises his economic acuity, but also points to role of the poet as a source of national wisdom, or, perhaps, as the oracle of the nation. The 'second Sight' (l.94) is, according to Ramsay, a prerequisite quality in a poet.

Throughout 'Wealth, or the Woody', as is appropriate to the subject matter, the vagaries and sudden tidal shifts of the sea provide a metaphor for the 'ebbs and flows' (l.3) of the nation's fortune. The bravery of those who, like Virgil in the epigraph of the poem, would venture out onto the wild ocean with only 'Hempen Branks, and Horse of Tree' (epigraph) are exposed, not as heroic, but as 'Sand- blind' (l.4) fools guided, and blinded, by the lure of an easy fortune. Ramsay also implies parallels between the South Sea enterprise and the Darien scheme, another example of a spectacular imperial failure, the consequences of which precipitated Scotland's entry into the Union.

In 'The Prospect of Plenty', the sea is not a metaphorical presence but rather the sea, and its resources, are the subjects of the poem itself. 'The Prospect of Plenty', as the title suggests, treats the theme of native resources, those provided by the North Sea Fishery, as both a means to improve the conditions of Scotland and as a means of portraying Scotland as a land rich in resources. Like its companion poem, 'A Prospect of Plenty' is expressed in couplets of Scots-English combined with the language and forms of neoclassicism and is comprised of some twenty verse paragraphs.

Again, the poem opens with the invocation of 'Thalia' (l.1), ⁶⁴ the muse of comedy and of pastoral. Thalia's presence here points to the seas of Scotland as a fertile pastoral location. Thalia is called upon, as in 'Wealth, or the Woody', to oversee a poem on a serious subject, the North Sea Fishery. The subject matter again signals Ramsay's business acuity; fisheries are not a common poetic theme, but for Ramsay, the fishing industry is a crucial part of Britain's commercial life, and one which is central to the Scottish economy. Furthermore, the sea, as Ramsay is keen to emphasise, is one of Britain's greatest

⁶⁴ 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

resources and one, as we have seen in the work of Thomson, that is central to poetic constructions of British national identity. The figure of Britannia is also called upon during the course of the poem. This is, for Ramsay, a rare exploitation of the emblematic power of Britannia as a figure of national representation.

Britannia, however, is absent from the first verse paragraph of the poem. Here, Ramsay appears to be speaking specifically of Scotland in his description of 'the Caledonians, lang supine,' (l.3) who 'Begin, mair wise, to open baith their een' (l.4). Ramsay goes on to describe the abundant potential of Scotland's fisheries, 'that store which Heav'n/ In sic abundance to their [the Caledonians] hands has giv'n' (l.5-6). In Ramsay's view, this resource has been mismanaged; he compares the mismanagement of such a valuable resource to a 'heedless heir, born to a lairdship wide,/ That yields mair plenty than he kens to guide.' (ll.7-8). These questions of authority, and of mismanagement, parallel questions raised in 'Wealth or, the Woody', but they also find their reflection in the preoccupations with the nature of authority that characterises much of the work of Thomson. Here, such questions are raised in order to protect Scottish resources from 'ilka sneaking fellow' (l.158). However, this apparently unambiguous plea for the better management of Scottish resources becomes, in terms of national representation, more complicated as the poem progresses. Subtle shifts in geographic and national boundaries occur in the second verse paragraph and reveal Ramsay as working very much within a British context, despite grounding his discussion in specifically Scottish issues. The opening of the second verse paragraph proclaims: 'Nae nation in the world can parallel/ The plenteous product of this happy isle' (ll.15-16). The use of the term 'isle' indicates a shift in focus. Ramsay is no longer referring solely to the nation of Scotland, but to Britain.

Akin to Thomson's national vision, Ramsay presents the sea as intrinsically linked to the land. Ramsay presents the fertile landscape of Scotland, and Britain, as possessed of 'past'ral heights (l.17) and sweet prolific plains' (l.17). Ramsay asserts, however, that although such pastoral scenes 'command the saftest Strains' (l.18), his poetic subject is 'Amphitrite' (l.19), the Greek goddess of the sea and wife of Poseidon. Amphitrite oversees the waters of Scotland and, in typically Augustan periphrases, 'drives her finny Thrang/ O'er Shaws of Coral, and the Pearly Sands,/ To Scotia's smoothest Lochs and Chrystal Strands.' (ll.20-21). Once again, Ramsay presents Scotland in neoclassical terms, signalling his own Augustan identity. Ramsay then catalogues the rich stores of Scottish waters. The symbiotic relationship between land and sea, or between ocean and nation, is maintained; Ramsay appropriates pastoral or, more accurately, georgic, concerns and

applies them to the landscape of the sea. He speaks of, 'Shaws of Coral' (l.21), a term used more commonly to refer to potato plants. Thus, the language of agriculture becomes the language of aquaculture. For Ramsay, the sea should be subject to the same careful management as the land. Implicit in this presentation is the notion of ownership. Ramsay, like Thomson, asserts that these waters belong specifically to Britain.

Having catalogued the abundant resources of Scottish waters, Ramsay goes on to exalt 'Delytfou' Labour' (l.41). He goes on to lament the fact that, rather than reaping the plentiful rewards of the North Sea Fisheries, the nation is instead preoccupied with war, with imperial expansion, and with boasting, in an antithetical phrase, 'toom dominion on the plenteous Main (l.46). Here, Ramsay can be seen to engage with imperial discourse and with wider, national concerns. However, he unequivocally rejects the benign imperialism espoused by Thomson. He adopts, instead, a typically pacifistic Tory stance on the issues of war and of naval domination. For Ramsay, the effort involved in pursuing a global agenda would be more profitably employed in the careful management of plentiful native resources.

The remainder of the poem is structured around sections of dialogue; this enables Ramsay to enact a rhetorical defence of his proposals for the management of the North Sea Fisheries. Moreover, the competing voices presented here can be understood as representing the different voices and factions within the state. This dialogic presentation of nation is crucial in terms of understanding Ramsay's nuanced identity as a Scot and as a Briton. Indeed, this poem effectively challenges any attempt to read Ramsay solely in terms of a Scottish nationalist agenda.

The first dissenting voice raised in the ensuing debate belongs to a Scottish 'Grumbletonian' (l.72). This voice is sceptical of Ramsay's commercial ethos and of Ramsay's qualifications in making such pronouncements:

"Wow! That's braw News, quoth he, to make Fools fain,
"But gin ye be nae Warlock, How d'ye ken?
"Does tam the Rhimer spae oughtlins of this?
"Or do ye prophesy just as ye wish?
"Will Projects thrive in this abandon'd Place?
"Unsonsy we had ne'er sae meikle Grace
"I fear, I fear, your tousing Aim fa' short,
"The Southernns will with Pith your Project bauk,
"They'll never thole this great Design to tak. (ll.74-85)

Here, not only is the notion of poetic second sight raised again, but the voice of scepticism suggests that it will be the English who oppose the proposed plan for the management of the fisheries. The response to this is indicative of Ramsay's pacifistic Tory-informed

political identity, incorporating as it does, a critique of faction: ‘Thus do the Dubious ever countermines,/ With Party wrangle, ilka fair Design.’ (ll.84-85) Surprisingly, however, this critique of political division shifts into a narrative of British unity:

Will Britain’s King or Parliament gainstand
The universal Profit of the Land?
Now when nae sep’rate Interest eags to Strife,
The antient Nations join’d like Man and Wife.
Maun study close for peace and Thriving’s sake,
Aff a’ the wissen’d Leaves of Spite to shake:
Let’s weave and fish to ane anither’s Hands,
But baith alike consult the Common Weal,
Happy that Moment Friendship makes us leal
To truth and Right, – Then springs a shining Day,
Shall Clouds of sma’ Mistakes drive fast away.
Mistakes and private Int’rest hence be gane,
Mind what ye did on dire Pharsalia’s Plain,
Where doughty Romans were by Romans slain. (ll.88-102)

Here, the patriot Ramsay defends unity and portrays the Union as a marriage between ‘antient Nations’ (l.90). Moreover, suggests Ramsay, this marriage has the potential to be a peaceful one, providing both parties ‘consult the Common Weal’ (l.96). This is, given previous critical constructions of Ramsay’s poetic and national identity, an unexpected rhetorical manoeuvre. Here, Ramsay urges unity as a means to foster national peace, prosperity and, ultimately, progress.

This narrative of British unity is maintained throughout the remainder of the poem. Ramsay, like Thomson, invokes a common foe, the Dutch, and asks, ‘Maun bauld Britannia bear Batavia’s yoke?’ (l.112). The poem ends with a positive image informed by British national pride. The ‘Sea-born Prophet’ (l.239) sings:

“Britons be blyth, fair Queen of Isles be fain;
“A richer People never saw the Sun:
“Gang tightly throw what fairly you’ve begun;
“Spread a’ your Sails and Streamers in the Wind,
“Great Neptune’s unexhausted Bank has Store
“Of endless Wealth, will gar yours a’ run o’er.”
He sang sae loud, round Rocks the Echoes flew,
“Tis true, he said; they are return’d, ‘tis true. (ll.240-248)

Thus, ‘The Prospect of Plenty’ and its companion piece, ‘Wealth, or the Woody’, serve to complicate Ramsay’s national identity and representations of nationhood. These poems effectively challenge notions of Ramsay as only inhabiting a Scottish context and as espousing a Scottish nationalist ethos. In these poems, Ramsay demonstrates a fluid response to nation and to national identity. Here, Caledonia becomes Britannia within a poem which treats of specifically Scottish interests; these Scottish interests then become

British interests. Thus, for Ramsay, both nations must ‘consult the Common Weal’ (l.96) and protect Scottish commercial interests for the benefit of all within a united Britain.

Within this narrative of national unity, Ramsay, as ever, is keen to portray Scotland as land of plenty and a land rich in potential. While Ramsay rejects the benign imperialism espoused by Thomson, aligning himself instead with a Tory informed foreign policy, both poets urge unity within the British state. Both writers, moreover, are at pains to emphasise the importance of Scotland’s contribution to the British state and to challenge the perception of Scotland as a poor and barren land.

In creating a symbolic language with which to represent nation and national identity, both poets seize upon the image of Britain as island state. Thus, the encircling sea becomes, for both writers, a defining image of nationhood, as well as the source of much of Britain’s wealth and resources. This reliance on sea and water symbolism can be interpreted as an expression of what Gerard Carruthers has termed ‘water pastoralism’.⁶⁵ This mode is very much exploited by both writers in their quest to find a suitable idiom and imagery with which to express nuanced representations of nation.

In Ramsay’s and Thomson’s dramatic productions, much of the wealth of the nation is portrayed as residing in the rural labourers and ordinary citizens of both Scotland and England. This is evidenced by the portrayal of the cast of *The Gentle Shepherd* and in the depiction of Corin and Emma in *Alfred, A Masque*. By this means, both writers question, and often challenge, notions of legitimate authority. In seeking to establish an ideal vision of national authority, both writers draw on a wide range of historic and contemporary source material. Both, for example, invoke the figure of William Wallace; both cast Wallace in the role of patriot hero.

The centrality of the poet’s role in creating national identity is evidenced by the work of both Ramsay and Thomson. Both render literature a locus for the negotiation of nation and of national identities. Moreover, both cast themselves in the role of preservers of culture. This is evidenced by Ramsay’s revival of older verse forms and re-presentation of older Scottish poetry. Additionally, in his ‘Address to John, Duke of Roxburgh’ (cf. chapter one) he explicitly asserts that the role of preserving Scottish language and culture belongs to the poet. This concept of the poet as one who restores and renovates poetry is articulated by Thomson in his ‘Preface’ to ‘Winter’ (cf. chapter two).

While the political identities revealed in the works discussed above are in opposition to one another, both writers can be seen to engage in a collective project to

⁶⁵ Gerard Carruthers “‘Poured out extensive, and of watery wealth’: Scotland In Thomson’s *The Seasons*” in *Crossing the Highland Line: Cross- Currents in Eighteenth-Century Scottish Writing* (ed.) Christopher MacLachlan (Glasgow: ASLS, 2009) p.26

create a new literary idiom in which to render to the British state. This creative rendering, in turn, exposes points of creative contact between the two writers which can again be characterised by the notion of a sustained mutual gaze.

Chapter Four:

Land

‘To consider the place of poetry, it is therefore necessary to understand the poetry of place. This does not mean that the only worthwhile poetry deals with landscape or adopts a pastoral mode, but rather that true poetry is conditioned by its original location, wherever that may be.’ Fiona Stafford *Local Attachments: The Province of Poetry*.¹

The opening sentences of Fiona Stafford’s *Local Attachments: The Province of Poetry* (2010) emphasise the centrality of place and location to poetic production. These comments are presented in the context of the work and critical orientation of Seamus Heaney. For Heaney, poetry is simultaneously a powerful political tool and a ‘celebration of local truth’.² Heaney’s poetic involves rendering an experience which derives its power and truth from the specific, immediate and very local conditions of its inspiration or production into a universal idiom. The poetic reliance on the local as manipulated in the work of Burns, or Heaney, and rendered so as to be universally meaningful, however, is not something that is present in the same way in the work of Ramsay and Thomson. Although, as we shall see, the local and the urban, are, at times, central to Ramsay’s poetic project. Nevertheless, regardless of whether the writer in question is Heaney, Wordsworth, Ramsay or Thomson, Stafford’s assertion that all poetry is conditioned by its original location is absolutely crucial in understanding the impulses behind, and truths within, all poetry.

The theme of location has been interpreted in several ways during the course of this work. The first two chapters of this thesis examined the Edinburgh and London milieux of Ramsay and Thomson. These chapters explored the direct impact that two specific urban centres had on the poetic development of these two Scottish writers. This involved mapping hitherto obscured literary networks of support and influence. It also illuminated the commercial conditions of literary production in the period. Location, in these chapters referred, not only to specific locations, but to the wider contemporary contexts and conditions of cultural production experienced by Ramsay and Thomson.

The previous chapter explored the means by which Ramsay and Thomson sought to express the, often fraught and always fluid, concept of nation in the years following the

¹ Fiona Stafford *Local Attachments: The Province of Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) p.1

² Fiona Stafford *Local Attachments: The Province of Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) p.2

Union of Parliaments. Thus, location referred both to nation and national identity. These textual expressions of nation and national identity borrowed symbolism and imagery from sources as diverse as Jacobitism and the rapidly expanding British Navy. The chapter posited that topography, particularly Britain's status as an island state and as a primarily agricultural nation, was central to these poets' attempts to conceptualise and to shape the new British state within their creative vision. Thus, land and landscape were key elements in formulating poetic responses to the shifting national boundaries in the period and in the formulation of an emerging British poetic. Political boundaries had been redrawn with the Union of 1707 and political ideologies fought to express these changes and to vilify the enemies within and without the state. The project of agricultural improvement in Scotland which, although it did not begin in earnest until the 1760s and 1770s, was gathering pace and support in the early half of the century.³ In England, the Enclosures Act would have similarly huge repercussions in terms of the rural landscape and in terms of poetic responses to land and to nature.⁴ In response to these seismic shifts in socio-political orientation, as well as the changing face of the rural landscape, the aesthetics of landscape poetry were also in a state of flux.

This chapter will examine the shifting modal and generic landscape of the period as it is expressed by specific works of Ramsay and Thomson, offering an analysis of the ways in which poetic locations are shaped, and altered, by the blending of different modes and models. The chapter will examine how specific locations, in turn, inform and alter specific forms.

THE AESTHETIC LANDSCAPE

The notion of property and, specifically, land is central in contextualising eighteenth-century British poetry. Britain in this period, although in the midst of imperial and commercial expansion, was still economically an agrarian society, dependant on wool as the source of much its wealth. Thus, those in possession of land were in possession of political and cultural authority. Those who were not, laboured on the land. The harsh punishment of the Jacobites post-1745 involved the stripping of land (and authority) and

³ As Nigel Leask points out, 'Agricultural improvement wasn't entirely the product of the 1707 Act of Union with England, as the pre-Union Scottish Parliament had already got the ball rolling by passing an 'Act anent Lands lying Runrig' in 1695, authorising the abolition of the old system.' Nigel Leask *Robert Burns and Pastoral: Poetry and Improvement in Late Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010)p.24

⁴ See, John Barrell *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place: An Approach to the Poetry of John Clare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972)

the reallocation of land and authority. Tim Fulford, in *Landscape, Liberty and Authority: Poetry, Criticism and Politics from Thomson to Wordsworth* (1996) states:

Nature's political significance emerged clearly at the start of the eighteenth century in relation to the consolidation of the landed interest. The constitutional settlement of 1688 and the development of a system of patronage in the hands of the King's ministers, most notably Sir Robert Walpole, created what J.H.Plumb has called 'a paradise for gentlemen, for the aristocracy of birth'. Power remained predominantly in the hands of the landed nobility and gentry, many of whom increased their wealth and influence by investment in commercial activities in the City and on their estates (iron, stone, coal, timber). But it was the possession of an independent income from heritable property, giving both freedom from labour and a continued stake in the country, that was seen as conferring upon the landed interest their legitimacy as legislators. [...] For such gentlemen the proper source of power and stability in the nation was the possession of land, and the organisation of the prospect view was an expression of their authority over the national landscape which they owned.⁵

Fulford's account illuminates some of the reasons for the poetic reliance on the themes of landscape and land in the period. Thus, major debates revolve around the modes and genres which enabled these themes to be creatively explored. I have previously mentioned the debate surrounding pastoral poetry in the period (cf. introduction), a debate with which Ramsay's *The Gentle Shepherd* directly engaged. Until the publication of Ramsay's drama, the possibility of a native pastoral had inspired zeal and ridicule in almost equal measure. However, the purely pastoral mode would soon be threatened by the rising popularity of the georgic mode.

Following the publication of Addison's 'Essay on the Georgics', which prefaced Dryden's translation of Virgil's *Georgics* (1697), the georgic began to compete with the ubiquity of the pastoral. The instructive and elevated voice of the georgic appealed to writers seeking a more sophisticated and comprehensive mode in which to express ideological elements within landscape poetry. Contemporary ideals of improvement, progress and development were easily expressed in georgic poetry, rendering this an appealing mode with which, to quote David Fairer, 'to engage productively with the contemporary British landscape.'⁶ Fairer goes on to observe that:

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.⁷

⁵ Tim Fulford *Landscape, Liberty and Authority: Poetry, Criticism and Politics from Thomson to Wordsworth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) pp.2-3

⁶ Fairer, David *English Poetry of the Eighteenth Century 1700-1789* (London: Longman, 2003) p.79

⁷ Fairer, *ibid.*, pp.78-9

The georgic was thus a highly appropriate mode for this period. It was a mode whose 'capaciousness',⁸ allowed the writer to broaden the scope and subject matter of conventional Virgilian georgic, with its focus on agricultural improvement and management, and to engage with the new British state's capacity for imperial and commercial expansion. The discourse of commerce could be appropriately incorporated into georgic poetry in a way that was largely impossible within the limited confines of conventional pastoral. The georgic mode further enabled poets to engage, very specifically and in very concrete terms, with the British landscape and could thus be rendered an expression of patriotism, or even a form of political or national propaganda.

Joseph Addison, in his 'Essay on the Georgics', defined the differences between the georgic and the pastoral mode. For Addison, the essence of the georgic mode resided, not merely 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.⁹

Addison's emphatic belief that the georgic mode was to be delivered in the 'Address of a Poet' precluded any debate about vernacular language or the authenticity of portrayals of rustic life. Georgic poetry represented the voice and view of the country landowner, not of the rural labourer. Civic, as well as practical, instruction could be delivered in georgic poetry. Indeed, the georgic was a versatile mode. Antony Low posits that the georgic could also function as a voice of dissent, or as the voice of the progressive new science,¹⁰ while Kevis Goodman takes the opposite view, dismissing the georgic mode as incapable of representing the rural poor. In Goodman's view (and I am inclined to agree) the real rural labourers are, in georgic poetry, notable only by their absence.¹¹ Given this versatility, and

⁸ Fairer, *ibid.*, p.80

⁹ 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

¹⁰ Antony Low *The Georgic Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985) p.8

¹¹ Kevis Goodman *Georgic Modernity and British Romanticism: Poetry and the Mediation of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) p.64

the explicit instructions which Addison delivered to aspiring georgic poets, it is not surprising that the early eighteenth century gave rise to a number of georgics on a variety of subjects.¹² Not least among them was Thomson's *The Seasons*.

As suggested in the introduction to this work, *The Seasons* remains resistant to the taxonomy of mode and genre. However, it cannot be denied that the poem owes a substantial debt to Virgil's *Georgics*. As I have previously argued, *The Seasons* can be seen to enact a modal conflation between the pastoral and the georgic modes. This, in turn, is illustrative of a wider poetic shift which took place over the course of the eighteenth century.¹³ The seasonal structure enabled Thomson to shift from the fresh spring world of the pastoral golden age and on into the productive season of harvest. This modal, or generic, appropriation and manipulation is, I would suggest, indicative of the emerging British poetic in the period. Certainly, this generic blending anticipates some of the concerns of British Romanticism as is evidenced by, for example, Wordsworth's and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), whose very title signals the blending of different strains and modes of literary utterance. In this, as in other respects, such as Thomson's presentation of the sublime in, for example, 'Winter', and in his mastery of the poetry of natural description, Thomson's groundbreaking contribution to the development of a new British poetic is discernible. While a wealth of critical material interrogates the generic precedents and models for *The Seasons*, much less has been said about the modal and generic ambiguities of Thomson's final poem, *The Castle of Indolence*.

In this chapter I will, therefore, offer an analysis of the modes and models at work in *The Castle of Indolence*. In Thomson's Spenserian imitation it is possible to detect the interplay of the pastoral and georgic modes, as well as the incorporation of other contemporary modes and topoi. As indicated in my discussion of *The Gentle Shepherd*, Ramsay too seizes on the progressive impulses of the georgic mode.¹⁴ The georgic element of Ramsay's play is embodied by Sir William Worthy whose return signals progress and improvement. Ramsay's innovative manipulation of mode and genre, however, is at its most conspicuous in his series of comic-elegies. As will be discussed below, specific locations are crucial in Ramsay's comic-elegies and work to create poetry which is both satirical and democratising. Ramsay's experimental conflation of pastoral elegy with

¹² See, for example, John Philips *Cyder* (1708) and James Grainger, *The Sugar-Cane* (1765)

¹³ See, Melanie Buntin 'Augustanism in Scotland: the Pastoral and the Georgic in the Works of Allan Ramsay and James Thomson.' Unpublished University of Glasgow MPhil thesis (Glasgow, 2011)

¹⁴ Again, for a full account of the modal interactions of *The Gentle Shepherd*, see Melanie Buntin 'Augustanism in Scotland: the Pastoral and the Georgic in the Works of Allan Ramsay and James Thomson.' *Ibid.*

bawdy satire can be seen as emanating from both his awareness of Augustan modes and his own, specifically Scottish, literary heritage.

THE MORAL AND MODAL LANDSCAPE OF *THE CASTLE OF INDOLENCE*

The Castle of Indolence, published in 1748, four weeks after the death of James Thomson does not occupy the same exalted position in the canon of eighteenth-century poetry as *The Seasons*. Rather than representing a watershed moment in the development of poetry of natural description, *The Castle of Indolence* makes no apologies for its lineage as a direct, imitative descendent of Edmund Spenser's epic allegorical poem *The Faerie Queene* (1590-96).¹⁵ Thomson proudly proclaims this poetic heritage in the 'Advertisement' which prefaces the poem, going so far as to acknowledge that: 'the obsolete Words, and a Simplicity of Diction in some of the Lines, which borders on the Ludicrous, were necessary to make the Imitation more perfect.'¹⁶ From this somewhat defensive explanation, it can be inferred that, for Thomson, the use of archaic language and older verse forms is worth the risk of ridicule if they contribute to the authenticity of the imitation. Imitation, of course, was standard practice in this period, as discussed above in relation to Allan Ramsay's 'The Morning Interview' (cf. chapter Two). Nick Groom's *The Forger's Shadow* (2002) treats extensively of this mimetic or, imitative literary, practice. He has this to say of the Augustan age:

Imitation is a – or rather *the* classical and neoclassical mode of literary composition, and had a huge influence from the Renaissance to the Augustans. Imitation is a liberating writing philosophy because it means that literature is dependent on what has gone before, which in turn encourages the development of canons (and hence scholarship), and ultimately provides aesthetic criteria. The historical value of a particular literary tradition is implied by imitability- and the value of a work consists not in what is entirely new in it, but in how it reworks its sources. Or to phrase it slightly differently, the originality of an imitation depends on its degree of inspiration.¹⁷

This imitative mode allows certain meanings to be embedded, or inherent in the allusive quality of the poem's structure, providing a framework which can be subtly, or

¹⁵ Although, *The Castle of Indolence* was not without influence, as Burns's *Cotter's Saturday Night* attests.

¹⁶ James Thomson, 'Advertisement' prefacing *The Castle of Indolence. An Allegorical Poem. Written in Imitation of Spenser* in *James Thomson: Liberty, The Castle of Indolence and Other Poems* ed., James Sambrook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986) p.173

¹⁷ Nick Groom *The Forger's Shadow: How Forgery Changed the Course of Literature* (London: Picador, 2002) pp.38-39

dramatically, altered. Spenser's epic protestant allegory had, as its moral centre, the figure of Elizabeth I, a figure free from duplicity or moral ambiguity, and the allegory is prefaced by a dedication to his monarch. Thomson does not follow Spenser's lead in this matter, instead he justifies his use of the Spenserian model by what is, given the tense relations between Britain and France for most of the long eighteenth century, a surprising reference to the French court of Louis XIV. Thomson proclaims:

And the stile of that admirable Poet, as well as the Measure in which he wrote, are as it were appropriated by Custom to all Allegorical Poems writ in our Language; just as in French the Stile o Marot who lived under Francis I has been used in Tales, and familiar Epistles, by the politest Writers of the age of Louis XIV. ¹⁸

The justification he offers then is apparently a literary, rather than a political, one.

Moreover, Thomson's rhetoric in these lines aligns him with 'the politest Writers of the age.'¹⁹

Thomson's Spenserian imitation, despite its relative brevity, is considered to have been successful in its mimetic quality. *The Faerie Queene*, as one of the most influential poems in the English language, has given rise to many imitations. The first half of the eighteenth century was particularly rich in imitations of *The Faerie Queene*. Richard Frushell, in his comprehensive study of this phenomenon, *Edmund Spenser in the Early Eighteenth Century: Education, Imitation and the Making of a Literary Model* (1999), cites no less than 62 Spenserian imitations in the years between 1746 and 1758.²⁰ Frushell also deems Thomson's *The Castle of Indolence* 'one of the best imitations'²¹ and numbers Thomson among one of only a handful of Spenserian imitators who 'succeed[ed] in approximating Spenser's diction.'²²

There is a relative dearth of criticism relating to Thomson's final poem, indeed it is most usually cited in the context of its status as yet another eighteenth-century imitation of *The Faerie Queene*, as the case with Frushell, quoted above. Two recent and notable critical readings of the poem are those of Christine Gerrard and Sebastian Mitchell, both of whom have written extensively on Thomson. Gerrard, characteristically, reads the poem as an allegorical presentation of the corruption of Walpole's government. For Gerrard:

A close study of Thomson's political outlook during the years in which *The Castle of Indolence* was in the making would suggest that, for Thomson, as for the

¹⁸ James Thomson, *ibid.* p.173

¹⁹ James Thomson, *ibid.* P.173

²⁰ Richard C. Frushell, *Edmund Spenser in the Early Eighteenth Century: Education, Imitation and the Making of a Literary Model* (Pittsburgh, Pa: Duquesne University Press, 1999) p.51

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.51

²² *Ibid.*, p.63

Opposition writers in the 1730s, politics were inextricably linked to larger considerations of man's moral welfare.²³

The evidence that Gerrard cites in support of her interpretation of the allegorical framework of the poem, is compelling. She offers a reading which refers to Maynard Mack's²⁴ mapping of 'the sophisticated network of allusion and innuendo'²⁵ through which Opposition writers responded to contemporary politics. Ultimately, and inevitably, Gerrard casts Walpole in the role of the wicked wizard of Indolence. For Gerrard, and I would agree, there is no doubt that that Thomson's dissident Whig identity was central to his poetic agenda. Thus, I disagree with Mitchell's suggestion that Gerrard's reading of *The Castle of Indolence* overstates the political elements of the piece and as such, reduces the scope of the poem. Gerrard is, I believe, quite right in suggesting that political allegiance formed the backbone of Thomson's creative project, especially in the later years of his career.

Mitchell reads the poem as what he identifies as one of Thomson's 'three phases'²⁶ of national representation, 'each associated with one of his major poems'²⁷. He thus reads *The Castle of Indolence* as repeating much of the national representation and central concerns presented by Thomson in *Liberty*. He concludes by asserting that the apparent cohesiveness and persuasiveness of the national narrative in this poem, however, was [...] undermined by Thomson's introduction for the first and last time of a prominent confessional component.'²⁸ I follow Mitchell in agreeing that *The Castle of Indolence* expresses a national narrative, a narrative very similar to that which informs *Liberty*, but I would assert, like Gerrard, that this is a national narrative which is informed by Thomson's dissident Whig identity. Both readings are thus valid because, for Thomson, national concerns are intrinsically linked to political concerns.

In the following analysis of the poem, I aim therefore, not to challenge these interpretations. Rather, I examine the ways in which Thomson's portrayal of the landscapes and locations of the poem manipulates generic conventions and exploits the modal nuances available to a poet who utilises the poetry of place and the landscape of natural description to express political and national concerns. Ultimately, I aim to suggest

²³ Christine Gerrard, 'The Castle of Indolence and the Patriotic Opposition to Walpole' in *The Review of English Studies* 14:161, 1990 pp.47

²⁴ See, Maynard Mack *The Garden and the City: Retirement and Politics in the Later Poetry of Pope* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969) pp.116-162

²⁵ Ibid. p.50

²⁶ Sebastian Mitchell *Visions of Britain, 1730-1830 Anglo- Scottish Writing and Representation* (London: Palgrave, 2013) p.13

²⁷ Sebastian Mitchell, *ibid.* p.13

²⁸ Sebastian Mitchell, *ibid.*, p.13

that this manipulation of modes is crucial in supporting the allegorical presentation of political and national concerns.

The Castle of Indolence, like *The Seasons*, is resistant to the taxonomy of genre. Thomson clearly states that the poem is allegorical in mode and is a direct imitation of *The Faerie Queene*. Spenser's original is an epic poem, in every sense. It is extensive, national in scope and heavily moral in tone. The relatively modest two cantos of Thomson's poem combined with the personal, self-referential, elements which imbue parts of the poem with an intimacy of tone creates a piece which cannot be called epic. Nor, given the form and subject of the piece, does it belong amongst the large and varied grouping of eighteenth-century long poems which are characterised by, if anything, their descriptive and digressive tendencies. The sustained deployment of such a rigid and complex stanza form as well as the narrative thrust of the poem render *The Castle of Indolence* a very different kind of poetic project. So, it is Spenserian, but not epic. It is allegorical, but also confessional.

Borrowing cultural and moral authority from *The Faerie Queene*, *The Castle of Indolence* opens with a stark warning addressed, in a commanding tone, to 'Mortal Man' (l.1).²⁹ The opening address warns of the degenerative effects of a life of leisure, a path that leads to the loss of virtue, to 'Loose Life, unruly Passions and Diseases pale.' (l.9). Having imparted this warning, which is the very essence of georgic in its emphasis on labour as civic virtue, the poem moves into five stanzas which describe the 'Landscape' (l.54) of *The Castle of Indolence* and the physical environs of the castle itself. However, as we shall see, these five stanzas of natural description serve, not to set the scene, but rather to, if I may coin a term, unlandscape it. That is to say, the opening descriptive stanzas of the poem contain little of the real, or of the local; the abundance and specificity of the language of natural description which so characterises *The Seasons* is absent from these stanzas. Rather, the landscape of Canto I of *The Castle of Indolence* is a moral landscape of the mind, the dark fantasy of the poet's imagination; in this respect, Thomson remains faithful to the Spenserian original. This may be explained simply in terms of the allegorical framework of both poems: allegorical landscapes are internal, rather than rooted in the real and the external. However, as *The Castle of Indolence*'s didactic function is to exalt labour and virtue over leisure and moral degeneracy, I intend to argue that the landscape of the poem shifts from a pastoral setting, to a georgic one, as Thomson first presents, and then

²⁹ All line numbers relate to *James Thomson: Liberty, The Castle of Indolence and Other Poems* ed., James Sambrook (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986) pp.173-223

unpicks the pastoral idyll as an appropriate mode in which to express the political and moral concerns of the period.

Stanza two introduces both the scene and the season of the poem; it also introduces the confusion of contrast and antithesis which characterises the early, descriptive stanzas of the piece. The reader is drawn into a landscape which is, initially, vaguely drawn, generic and bland. The environs of the castle have no distinguishing features, no specific qualities. The castle is situated in a 'lowly Dale' (l.10) near to an unspecified river of whose size and character no indication is given. The lowly dale is, in turn, surrounded with 'woody Hill o'er Hill' (l.11). There is nothing in this description to aid the reader in forming an opinion of the location, all is carefully neutral and drawn from stock imagery. The reader is told, however, that in the narrator's view, it is 'a lovely Spot of Ground.' (l.14). The veracity of this statement is of course doubtful: the previous lines have already informed the reader that this is the abode of an enchanting Wizard' (l.12) 'than whom a fiend more fell is nowhere found.' (l.13). These sudden, antithetical shifts between the benign and the diabolical and between the bland and the sinister breed confusion and mistrust, both of the apparently neutral landscape and of the narrator. Indeed, even at this early stage, the narrator himself can be viewed as a sorcerer figure. He beguiles the reader with gentle description and pastoral imagery but subverts the benignity of the scene at every turn with sinister undercurrents which threaten to invade and pollute the peaceful, edenic setting. This then is an environment of ambiguity, paradox and confusion. These transitory, liminal qualities of the descriptive voice are exemplified in the time setting of the poem.

The action (or, more accurately perhaps, the inaction) of Canto I of *The Castle of Indolence* takes place in a 'Season atween June and May,/ Half pranked with Spring, with Summer half imbrown'd' (ll.15-16). Thus, not only is the poem enacted in a transitional time between spring, the season of pastoral love, and summer, whose heat has 'imbrown'd' (l.16), that is to say, polluted, the fresh green growth of spring, but the poem takes place in a liminal space between June and May. Moreover, the order of these months has been inverted, partly perhaps to satisfy the rigorous demands of the Spenserian rhyme scheme, but also to suggest an inversion of the natural order of the landscape. That this environment, however unsettling, is a pastoral setting is made clear in the final lines of stanza two. The 'listless Climate' (l.17) is not one conducive to labour: there, 'No living Wight could work, ne cared even for Play' (l.18). This vaguely sketched landscape then, is a setting for leisure and indolence, not for labour and industry. Furthermore, lest we mistakenly read this scene as a poet's internal paradise or a creative locus amoenus, the overwhelming indolence conveyed in the opening stanzas is such that the impetus towards

‘Play’ (l.18) and, by extension, creativity, is as stifled as the impetus towards action and industry. The vague, unspecific location is the allegorical equivalent of the undisciplined, unfocused and indolent mind, rendered incapable of action or creativity. It is an empty space, a mental void, an unlandscaped landscape.

Nevertheless, the grounds and environs of the castle are a seductive and beguiling place, akin to Spenser’s ‘Bower of Bliss’. The reader, along with the narrator, is enthralled, or more accurately, drugged by the location: ‘flowery Beds that slumberous influence kest,/ From Poppies breath’d; and Beds of pleasant Green’ (ll.21-22). Only, the ‘unnumber’d glittering Streamlets’ (l.24) are immune to the opiate laden airs of the grounds of the enchanter’s castle. These streams are described by active verb phrases, in contrast to the passive, sleep soothing voice that has hitherto described the land of *The Castle of Indolence*. The streams ‘play’d,/ And hurled every-where their Waters sheen;/ That, as they bicker’d through the sunny Glade.’ (ll.24-26). Paradoxically, however, the sound of these rushing waters is a soothing, ‘lulling Murmer’ (l.27). Water, whether streams or oceans, as we have seen (cf. chapter three), are powerfully emblematic of the positive attributes of national identity. Thus, they are here portrayed in contrast to the wickedly degenerate influences of the Castle of Indolence.

The murmuring streams are not the only sounds to be heard in this scene. Stanza four describes the ‘lowing Herds’ (l.29), the ‘Flocks loud-bleating’ (l.30) and ‘vacant Shepherds piping in the dale’ (l.31) (the use of the word ‘vacant’ here is telling, and is very much in keeping with the theme of mental annihilation arising from physical and moral indolence). This then is the epitome of the pastoral idyll: we are presented with the flocks, the shepherds idly piping and the whole is accompanied by the nightingale (‘Sweet Philomel’ (l.32)) and the ‘Stock- Doves’ (l.33) of the woods. On the surface then, this is the very essence of the pastoral world, but here, as ever, the pastoral contains the threat of destruction, or, of corruption.

The threat is of course the castle itself and the ‘Fiend’ who inhabits it. The threat is signalled by the alteration in the portrayal of the landscape in stanza five. Here, the reader is offered a broader view of the landscape and the location of the enchanter’s castle. This prospect view casts a shadow over the pastoral idyll created in the preceding stanzas. Looming large above the castle is a ‘sable, silent, solemn Forest’ (l.38); the sibilant alliteration adds a sinister quality to the location and reinforces the notion of a drug induced hallucination in its repetition of these sounds. In this forest, the ‘blackening Pines’ (l.42) send ‘forth a sleepy Horror through the Blood’ (l.43). This is suggestive of internal infection and corruption caused by the landscape itself.

In another of the stark contrasts enacted in the poem, and through which much of the allegorical meaning is conveyed, the next stanza returns to the seduction of the senses begun in the opening lines of the poem. The landscape is returned to a pleasant and benign location:

A Pleasing Land of Drowsyshed it was:
Of Dreams that wave before the half-shut Eye;
And of gay Castles in the Clouds that pass,
For ever flushing round a Summer-Sky (ll.46-49).

These sudden and deeply unsettling shifts from the threatening to the benign and from dark to light are marked features of the presentation of the location and landscape of the poem. These shifts are symbolic of the internal moral struggles of man and are indicative of the shifting and competing modal nuances which surface throughout the poem as the pastoral world is corrupted by moral decay. The whole landscape of the first canto of the poem exists within a moral battleground of 'checker'd Day and Night' (l.59). It is a landscape which both seduces and repels.

Stanzas eight to nineteenth record the 'Syren Melody' (l.70) sung by the 'Enchanter false' (l.69) in order to lure the unwary into the castle and under his thrall. As he frames his subtle justification for a life of ease and indolence, the spell cast by the wizard is a rhetorical one. In the wizard's siren song, labour, and by extension, civic virtue, is aligned with 'Guile, Violence, and Murder (l.98) and motivated by the 'savage Thirst of Gain' (l.95). Conversely, a life of inaction and indolence is emphatically aligned with elevated moral virtue:

"What, what, is Virtue, but Repose of Mind?
"A pure ethereal Calm! that knows no Storm;
"Above the reach of wild Ambition's Wind,
"Above those Passions that this World deform,
"And torture Man, a proud malignant Worm! (ll.136-140).

The topos of rural retirement is also incorporated into the wizard's rhetorical justification for idleness: "'The best of Men have ever lov'd Repose:/ They hate to mingle in the filthy Fray;' (ll.145-146). The 'best of men' are exemplified by reference to Scipio, "'The most renown'd of worthy Wights of Yore' (l.150), as the wizard invokes classical authority in his panegyric on the life of rural retirement. The repose offered within the castle, however, has little in common with the ideal of rural retirement and civic virtue.

Throughout the wizard's song, Thomson can be seen to adapt the Spenserian model in order to present, and to subvert, contemporary themes, topoi and preoccupations. In stanza nine, for example, the 'bright robes' (l.75) and 'easy Pleasure' (l.78) of the butterfly are invoked as a foil to 'the hard Estate' (l.2) of man. However, for all of the butterfly's

bright beauty, it is still an insect, a gaudy and showy one at that. The insect is, in poetry of the period, a ubiquitous symbol of moral corruption. Paul Fussell notes: ‘There is no doubt that the Augustan conservative imagination delights to image the contemptible by recourse to insects.’³⁰ The emulation of such an insect thus signals man’s descent or regression to the lowest ranks of the great chain of being. Throughout this section of the poem contemporary topoi are incorporated into the wizard’s justification for a life of leisure. In this way, Thomson modifies the Spenserian model within the framing discourse of moral debates.

The language of this section also appropriates contemporary poetic elements. The reference to fishing, which recalls passages from Pope’s *Windsor Forest* (1713) and John Gay’s *Rural Sports* (1713) as well as Thomson’s own work, *The Seasons*, adopts, in its reference to ‘watery gear’ (l.158), the periphrastic language of expression so conspicuous in all of these works. This contemporary mode of description supplants the Spenserian diction, signalling the poem’s engagement with contemporary political and scientific discourse. This periphrastic mode of description, in its indirect and allusive quality, is moreover, highly appropriate in this context. The song of the ‘smooth Demon’ (l.181) is designed to deceive and to bewilder and the indirect and allusive language of description supports this notion of deceit and doublespeak.

The interior of the castle is a decadent and degenerate world. It is also, significantly, as the poem enters the castle that Thomson utilises, for the first time, personal pronouns:

Forgive me, if my trembling pen displays
What never yet was sung in mortal Lays.
But how shall I attempt such arduous String?
I who have spent my Nights, and nightly Days,
In this Soul-deadening Place, loose-loitering?
Ah, how shall I for This uprear my moulted Wing? (ll.274-279)

The poet is thus identified as an erstwhile inmate of the castle and therefore one qualified to speak of its evil enchantments. The confessional elements of this section of the poem, as well as the inclusion of comic sketches of the poet and the poet’s friends, add another layer to generic landscape of the poem and signal another departure from the Spenserian original. This personal and creative playfulness is rare in Thomson’s work and perhaps demonstrates the confidence of the mature poet. In this, his final poem, he displays a willingness to experiment and to depart from the seriousness of the rest of his work. These

³⁰ Paul Fussell *The Rhetoric of Augustan Humanism: Ethics and Imagery from Swift to Burke* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965) p.8

character sketches provide much needed relief from the stifling environment of the castle whilst also serving to warn that any man may fall under the spell of vice and indolence.

The interior of the castle is a fantasy of corruption and decadence informed by commodity fetishism. The furnishings of the castle are described in stanza thirty-three and the repetition in the line, 'Soft Quilts on Quilts, on Carpets Carpets spread' (l.294), speaks of the easy abundance of the scene. Lavish descriptions of foods and wine follow, the whole pointing to gluttony and decadent indulgence. This world of vice and idleness is explicitly identified with the pastoral world in stanza twenty-six:

The Rooms with costly Tapestry were hung,
Where was inwoven many a gentle Tale;
Such as of old the Rural poets sung,
Or of Arcadian or Sicilian Vale:
Reclining Lovers in the lonely Dale,
Pour'd forth at large the sweetly-tortur'd Heart;
Or, looking tender Passion, swell'd the Gale,
And taught charm'd Echo to resound their Smart;
While Flocks, Woods, Streams, around, Repose and Peace impart. (ll.316-324)

The pastoral, in its identification with the wicked wizard's abode, is thus exposed by Thomson as being a mode incapable of rendering contemporary concerns. Pastoral poetry's emphases on love and leisure have, for Thomson, no power to describe his vision for a progressive and united Britain. These lines expressly reject the pastoral project begun in the opening stanzas of the poem and equate the pastoral ideal with corruption and decay. This anticipates the arrival of the georgically inclined Knight of Industry in Canto II of the poem. His arrival is also obliquely foreshadowed in the closing stanzas of Canto I.

The final four stanzas of the first canto of *The Castle of Indolence* were provided by Thomson's friend, John Armstrong (1709-1779), the Scottish poet and physician. Armstrong's medical knowledge informs the specificity of the personified diseases that stalk the unhealthy dungeons, the last refuge of the dissipated and degenerate inmates of the castle. Armstrong's georgic, *The Art of Preserving Health* (1744), had been published a few years before *The Castle of Indolence*; clearly the instructive voice of the georgic had impressed Thomson. The stanzas written by Armstrong thus act as bridge between the pastoral landscape of Canto I of the poem and the georgic landscape of industry and labour which is represented by Canto II.

Canto II, which never gained the popularity of Canto I of the poem, perhaps due to the heavily moral tone and the reduction in scenes of lavish description, describes the origin and development of the Knight of Industry, the saviour of *The Castle of Indolence*. His father, we are told, was a 'rough unpolish'd Man, robust and bold' (l.39). The language

of this description hints at an, as yet unrealised, potential. This ‘unpolish’d’ (l.39) knight lives a pastoral existence, he ‘neither sow’d nor reap’d’ (l.37-45) and thus his potential remains unrealised. His son, however, the product of a union between the knight and Dame Poverty, fulfils the potential hinted and becomes the very embodiment of the georgic ideal.

The tale of the Knight of Industry’s development is an allegory of progress and improvement. The Knight, born ‘among the green-wood Shade’ (l.55) learns, with the help of wise Minerva, to counter the poverty of his existence by dint of labour. He learns to ‘tame the Soil and rule the Crook’ (l.71), to catch in ‘Hand the Spade or Plough’ (l.104), he becomes, essentially, the very essence of Virgilian georgic. Moreover, his mastery of husbandry leads to an existence which allows the knight time to master the civilising arts of poetry, music, sculpture and painting. Now a civilised and accomplished man, the knight pursues his quest to civilise ‘a barbarous world’ (l.125).

In seeking a land to civilise, the knight journeys through ‘Egypt, Greece and Rome’ (l.142) but rejects these fallen nations which lie in ‘Ruins grey’ (l.142), having been victim to the corrupting force of ‘Sloth and Tyranny’ (l.144). Thus the knight sets sail for Britain, a Britain which is still in the pastoral golden age, where, ‘A Sylvan Life till then the Natives led’ (l.147). Liking this land’s ‘soil’ (l.154) and ‘Clement skies’ (l.154), the knight brings all his civilising power to Britain. He brings industry, the ‘mechanic Arts’ to the towns, he establishes a ‘matchless Form of glorious Government’ (l.209) and teaches the arts of farming, of polishing ‘Nature with a finer Hand’ (l.245). He then, on learning of the ‘soul-enfeebling Wizard INDOLENCE’ (l.254), sets out to conquer the malign influence of indolence and free the miserable wretches who are under the wicked wizard’s thrall. He effects this by his own kind of enchantment, or rather, disenchantment:

Then strait a Wand
He wav’d, an anti-magic Power that hath,
Truth from illusive Falsehood to command.
Sudden the Landskip sinks on every Hand;
The pure quick Streams are marshy Puddles found;
On baleful Heaths the Groves all blacken’d stand;
And, o’er the weedy foul abhorred Ground,
Snakes, Adders, Toads, each loathly Creature crawl around. (ll.596-601)

Here, the landscape of the first canto of the poem is re-landscaped and revealed to be a dismal scene of bogs and ‘baleful Heaths’ (l.601). All illusion is destroyed and clarity and virtue are restored. The inhabitants of the grisly scene are rescued and comforted by the compassionate virtues of the heroic knight.

The ‘anti-magic’ (l.597) power wielded by the knight is that of the georgic. Its power exalts labour, liberty, good government and civic virtue. These qualities counter the

idleness of the pastoral world and bring contemporary Britain into being. Thus, the poem is at once a georgic fantasy of progress and a presentation of stadial history. The narrative enacts the progress of man from the pastoral world and into the industrial age and does so by means of nuanced modal and generic blending. Thomson's sophisticated adaptation of the Spenserian model renders this Thomson's most cohesive expression of national narrative, one very much informed by his own Oppositional politics. The self-referential passages serve, I would argue, not to undermine the effectiveness of this narrative, but rather offer a vision of the poet's role in shaping and supporting the national and political ambitions of the state. The poet, for Thomson, should not be a solitary figure in a lonely garret, but one directly involved in creating and promoting a narrative of civic virtue and in warning against apathy, vice and folly.

ELEGIAC AND SATIRICAL LOCATIONS

Ramsay's and Thomson's poetic projects contain radical points of departure as well as sharing common themes. Thomson's allegorical Spenserian imitation has no comparative equivalent in Ramsay's oeuvre. Having acknowledged that there are certain aspects of the work of each that cannot be comfortably read in alignment, I shall now discuss some of Ramsay's sharpest literary tools, which Thomson eschews, those of satire and comedy.

Satire, as a corrective, or didactic literary tool is central to the Augustan agenda, indeed, some of the most well known literary productions of the period, such as Pope's *The Dunciad* (1728-42) and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) fall into this category. Ramsay can be comfortably situated, as previously mentioned, within this category of biting Tory satirists. Therefore, this discussion will situate Ramsay's satirical productions within the wider context of Augustan satire by interrogating the ways in which Ramsay's satire departs from, or coincides with either, a specifically Scottish satirical tradition, or with the English Augustan satire of the day. I will analyse the importance and implications of satirical locations and I shall investigate the relationship between the satirical narrator and the satirical subject.

Implicit in my approach to certain works by Ramsay, such as the comic-elegies discussed below, is a rejection of any reading which interprets these pieces as purely parodic, or as operating solely within a Scottish tradition of vernacular literature which celebrates communality and conviviality. Rather, I would situate these poems within the wider context of Augustan satire and argue that they represent a highly sophisticated manipulation of language and subject. The elegies offer a distinctly Scottish contribution to

the genre of Augustan satire in their combination of Scottish settings and vernacular language with a distinct strain of neoclassical satirical production. Moreover, these elegies demonstrate a modal blending of satire and pastoral elegy which serves to mock the corrupt and hypocritical sections of society whilst, simultaneously, democratising the elegiac mode.

In 1692 John Dryden (1631-1700) wrote 'A Discourse concerning the Original and Progress of Satire'. This work not only contributed to the seventeenth-century debate surrounding the relative merits of the three great Latin satirists, Persius, Juvenal and Horace, but offered advice to contemporary satirists. It also included an apology for his own satirical productions. Prior to this publication, in Howard Weinbrot's assessment, 'later seventeenth-century English satire lacked a self-conscious, synthetic, and both authoritative and comprehensible history and assessment of the modern satirist's art.'³¹ Thus, for Weinbrot, 'Later seventeenth-century satire was an incoherent setting of diamonds and coal. Poets of genius, or less, often lacked full awareness of the limits of their art, and modulation of tone.'³² Scotland, however, had a long and satisfying history of Scots vituperative social satire, including the work of William Dunbar among others, whose scathing satirical tongue delighted in exposing hypocrisy and vice. Thus, Scottish Augustans, such as Ramsay, had a separate and distinct tradition upon which to draw. Indeed, as I shall argue, Ramsay's social satire, despite, or perhaps because, of its crude surfaces, was highly sophisticated, multi-layered satire which exploited tonal modulations and in this it was supported by the linguistic modulations available to a Scot such as Ramsay.

Dryden's 1692 *Discourse* employs the terms 'profit'³³ and 'pleasure'³⁴ in formulating judgements on the relative merits of the ancient satirists. The function of satire then is to profit the reader by exposing vice and offering moral correction, but satire does so in a pleasurable, witty manner. Dryden elaborates,

They who will not grant me that pleasure is one of the ends of poetry, but that it is only a means of compassing the only end, which is instruction, must yet allow that, without the means of pleasure, the instruction is but a bare and dry philosophy: a crude preparation of morals, which we may have from Aristotle and Epictetus, with more profit than from any poet.³⁵

³¹ Howard Weinbrot *Eighteenth-Century Satire: Essays on Text and Context from Dryden to Peter Pindar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) pp1-2.

³² *Ibid.*, p.1

³³ John Dryden 'A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire' in *Dryden: A Selection* ed. John Conaghan (London: Methuen & Co.,1978) p.568

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.568

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.605

Dryden's 'Discourse on Satire' offers an Augustan manifesto which was applied, not just to satire, but to poetry in general in its articulation of the centrality of the didactic purpose of literature. However, in establishing the concepts of profit and pleasure as the twin ends of literature, the one, profit, reliant on the other, pleasure, for its efficacy, Dryden does more than merely articulate an Augustan literary statement of intention. These terms, in fact, resonate throughout Augustan literature in all its forms and are transformed at will by the satirist from moral ideals into physical, carnal and commercial realities, reflecting the vices and follies of the contemporary commercial society which the satirists aimed to expose.

Returning to the Scottish context, 1692 was also the year in which Archibald Pitcairne MD wrote a scathing satire with the intention of exposing the trivial minds and motives and the hypocrisy of those who composed the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. *Babell; A Satirical Poem, On the Proceedings of the General Assembly of in the Year MDCXCII* (1692), was a poetic precursor to his play, *The Assembly*. *Babell* was not officially published until 1830, however, it was in circulation³⁶ and would certainly have been known to the Ramsay/ Ruddiman circle. It is unlikely that Pitcairne would have encountered Dryden's 'Discourse' prior to producing *Babell*; Dryden's 'Discourse', although written in 1692, was not published until the following year. Yet *Babell* is in keeping with Dryden's exhortation to the writer of satire to give his 'reader some one precept of moral virtue, and to caution him against some one particular vice or folly. Other virtues, subordinate to the first, may be recommended under that chief head.'³⁷ Pitcairne uses satire to punish religious hypocrisy, whilst also exposing the folly of religious intolerance and fanaticism, a subject which has long been the subject of Scottish satire. George Kinloch, the editor of the 1830 edition of *Babell* observes,

When Fanaticism and Folly will not listen to the dictates of Reason, SATIRE, though a bitter, is often found a powerful corrective. Pinkerton asserts that Sir David Lindsay, in satirising the vices of the Catholic clergy, and the abuses of religion, 'was more the reformer of Scotland than John Knox; for he prepared the ground, and Knox only sowed the seed.' With equal plausibility it may be maintained, that the satirical writers of the seventeenth century, by ridiculing the austerity and correcting the follies of the Presbyterian divines, paved, in a great measure, the way for that liberality of opinion, and propriety of conduct, which now so highly distinguishes the clergy of Scotland.³⁸

³⁶ I was lucky enough to view a MS copy of *Babell*, dated 1692, which was in Walter Scott's library at Abbotsford House. Thanks are due to Lindsay Levy of the Advocate's Library and the National Library of Scotland.

³⁷ Ibid., p.599

³⁸ George R. Kinloch 'Prefatory Notice' to Pitcairne, Archibald, *Babell; A Satirical Poem, On the Proceedings of the General Assembly in the Year MDCXCII* (Edinburgh: The Maitland Club, 1830) p.i

Babell is, as these editorial remarks suggest, a fierce satirical poem which renders the clergy of Scotland, not only ridiculous, but also physically and morally repulsive by the use of visceral humour which focuses on the human body as the site of moral expression. Furthermore, as the title demonstrates, this is satire which is firmly rooted in a particular location and thus lacks any ambiguity of purpose or focus. The use of *Babell* in the title is a further satirical irony on the part of Pitcairne; he appropriates and subverts the more common derogatory use of the image of ‘the whore of Babylon’ to refer to the Roman Catholic church. Indeed, members of the Assembly in the poem later refer to the Catholic Church and its doctrines as ‘Babel’s builders’ (l.117) and to the Church of England as the ‘whore of Babell’s brat’ (l.1180). Here, it is the petty, self-interest and disunity of the Assembly itself which creates the chaos of Babel. Furthermore, as F. W. Freeman notes, ‘Babylon was a telling image for the abuse of language, the unintelligible gabble of crowds’³⁹, going on to elaborate, ‘Eloquence and clarity of expression were, moreover, hallmarks of civilised society [...]. Where reason and speech are deficient men are animals.’⁴⁰ Thus, Babylon is, not only an image of spiritual and religious chaos or corruption, but in more secular terms, becomes symbolic of the loss of reason and moral corruption, a central concept of Augustan literature and one which informs the texts discussed below.

Indeed, the Assembly is marked as much by faction and an inability to communicate effectively as it is by hypocrisy and moral degeneracy. Pitcairne employs bawdy, physical imagery in describing the members of the clergy, eliciting a reader response which hovers between mirth and disgust. This particular satirical device is highly effective in signalling moral degeneracy through physical manifestations, connoting a slippage from the spiritual to the physical. This descent from the spiritual to the physical is further emphasised by the fact that the members of the Assembly are more effectively described by their physical postures and unintelligible utterances than they are represented by their language and rhetoric. They are thus, not only stripped of their Christian spirituality, but are reduced to a non-rational and bestial level. Sexual parody and allusion as well as scatological humour are abundant, signifying the bestial and brutal aspects of human nature at its most degenerate. Moreover, Pitcairne uses these satirical devices to demonstrate the extent to which the hypocrisy and intolerance of the clergy cheapens, and makes mockery of, religion. Pitcairne describes the assembly at prayer with particular relish:

³⁹ F.W. Freeman, *Robert Fergusson and the Scots Humanist Compromise* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1984) p. 95

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.96

Some stood, some sat, some laid their heads
 Upon their neighbour's shoulder blades;
 Some bow'd their bodies down, but some
 Did lean them on their neighbour's bum.
 Noe painter could draw the grimaces
 That appeared on their faces;
 Some gasp't, some star'd, some visage wrung,
 Some look't as they had smelled dung;
 Some winkt, some others I did see
 That girn'd and turn'd up white of ee,
 Like those who have convulsion fits,
 Or are deprived of their wits.
 Yet all these postures did agree
 Exactly in deformitie. (ll.1-96)

Thus, prayer, the ultimate expression of spiritual reverence becomes a purely physical act of extreme vulgarity and ultimately, corruption, as signalled by the word 'deformitie'.

Pitcairne, however, does represent the voice of moderation within the Assembly, a voice which is rejected by the majority who view moderation as, 'a most Malignant devil/ That to the Whiggs does mickle evill' (ll.115-6). The speech of those who preach tolerance and moderation is represented by Pitcairne in couplets of iambic pentameter, creating an effective contrast between the speech of the moderate party and the clipped hexameter of the other speakers of the Assembly. Pitcairne exploits these tonal modulations in his satirical depiction in order to suggest that those who are able to use language effectively are endowed with reason beyond that of their peers. The piece closes with a final satirical flourish as the Assembly is disbanded due to their disunity. At this the gruesome gathering joins together in singing Psalm 113:

Behold how good a thing it is,
 And how becoming well,
 Together as such Brethren be,
 In unities to dwell. (ll.1352-1380)

Ramsay, like Pitcairne, locates his satire in a very specific time and place. However, he does this not, as in the case of *Babell*, in order to satirise a particular group, or section of society, but rather, he chooses to locate his satire in such a way as to satirise and expose the vices of a broader section of society. Moreover, Ramsay's satire lacks the vitriol of Pitcairne's; Ramsay, in Horatian mode, gently mocks, rather than attacks, his satirical subjects.

His early comic-elegy, 'Elegy on Maggy Johnston, who died Anno 1711' is firmly located in both time and place; Ramsay's footnote informs the reader that the location of

Maggy Johnston's farm is 'about a mile Southward of *Edinburgh*'.⁴¹ It is also significant, in terms of Ramsay's exploitation of tonal and linguistic modulations, that his footnotes, glosses, and other paratextual utterances are always delivered in an urbane and polite voice. The voice of the urbane and knowledgeable paratextual commentary contrasts with the tone and vernacular language of the poems themselves. Indeed, Ramsay manipulates the opportunities for incorporating a different authorial persona in a highly sophisticated manner, adding another layer to the social commentary offered by his vernacular poems.

In 'Elegy on Maggy Johnston', for example, the first footnote explains the attractions of Maggy's ale, going on to elaborate, 'People who lov'd to have a good Pennyworth for their Money be her frequent Customers. And many others of every Station, sometimes for Diversion, thought it no affront to be seen in her Barn or Yard.' The notion that all sections of Edinburgh society met in such locations is highly important in terms of the development of Ramsay's satirical voice and is reiterated in the second stanza of the poem: 'For Lairds and Souters a' did gang/ To drink bedeen,' (ll.9-10). Indeed, as David Craig notes, this communality was a marked and specific characteristic of Edinburgh society:

In fact the habitués of Maggy Johnston's howff included a judge (Lord Cullen) and a 'well-employed advocate'. In contrast, the English clubs of the period were the preserve of the upper-classes, whether literary or political, and the aristocracy were beginning to split off into their own exclusive societies with their own premises.⁴²

However, I would argue that the significance of such locations does not indicate a poetic celebration of conviviality, or of the levelling and democratising qualities of alcohol, even such a 'clear and intoxicating' brew as that made by the legendary Maggy Johnston. Rather, Ramsay locates his satire in such places in order to expose the moral degeneracy which is endemic in all echelons of society and to comment on wider society in general. The graphic, and apparently humorous, depictions of over indulgence which follow in the nostalgic lament for Maggy Johnston recall the language of Pitcairne's *Babell*. Moreover, these descriptions produce a similar response as the speaker boasts of extreme drunkenness and physical vulgarity, 'Fou closs we us'd to drink and rant,/ Until we did baith glower and gaunt,/ And pish and spew and yesk and maunt.' (ll.31-3). We assume that the poetic persona's use of 'we' includes both 'Lairds and Souters' (l.9). Again, it is difficult to accept that this portrayal of loss of control and reason is a positive reflection on society,

⁴¹ Allan Ramsay, *The Works of Allan Ramsay Vol. 1* eds. Burns Martin and John Oliver (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1956) p.10

⁴² David Craig, *Scottish Literature and the Scottish People 1680-1830* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1961) p.32

particularly since this action takes place in what is essentially a farmyard, thus imbuing the whole with a deliberate and unflattering, bestial quality. Furthermore, although the speaker of the poem includes himself in this depiction, the urbane and overly correct, polite voice of Ramsay's footnotes and explanatory glosses add authorial distance and hint at a judgement, rather than a celebration of such scenes.

Ramsay's editors, Kinghorn and Law note that Ramsay's 'informative footnotes explaining the 'background's' of Maggy Johnston, Lucky Wood, Lucky Spence and John Cowper would not have been needed by his companions in the Easy Club, and were added when he prepared his collection for a wider audience'.⁴³ I would argue, however, that Ramsay's prolific footnotes actually work to add layers of irony to these poems.⁴⁴ The tonal modulation between poem and footnote often adds to the humorous effect, thus enhancing the reader's pleasure, but the overall suggestion is that Ramsay is exploiting low-life, or low-culture, in order to expose the failings of all sections of society. He deflates the authority and credibility of those who consider themselves part of the high-cultural milieu and suggests that there is in fact little difference between low- and high-culture. Certainly, Ramsay suggests that all are subject to the same desires and weaknesses. Thus Ramsay, in a mock-elegiac format, expressed in that most Scottish of stanza forms, the 'standard Habbie', and in dense Scots vernacular is actually at his most Augustan in his condemnation and exposure of the vices and degeneracy of society. This then, is a specifically Scottish Augustanism expressed through sophisticated social satire.

'Lucky Spence's Last Advice'⁴⁵ offers another example of social satire located in a low cultural location: a brothel. If we accept the didactic purpose of satire then we must also appreciate the double irony of a poem whose title offers advice; the irony being, of course, that the advice is imparted by a dying jade to her 'loving Lassies' (l.7) in order that they, in her absence, continue to dishonestly extract as much profit from their customers as is possible. Here, as is typical of Augustan satire, the terms 'pleasure' and 'profit', create nuanced satirical resonances beyond the meaning assigned to them in Dryden's 'Discourse'. The moral meaning of 'pleasure' and 'profit' are subverted here and rendered in physical and commercial terms; the prostitute is one who profits financially by supplying purely physical pleasure, and this subversion is, as shall be demonstrated below, a common

⁴³ Alexander Kinghorn and Alexander Law (eds.) *Poems by Allan Ramsay and Robert Fergusson* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1974) p.xiii

⁴⁴ These footnotes were added when Ramsay produced his first volume of collected poetry in 1721 and appeared in the Edinburgh edition. This indicates that Ramsay was not merely catering for the needs of a wider, perhaps English, audience, but was in fact offering something more significant, and deliberate, in these paratextual utterances.

⁴⁵ Allan Ramsay, *The Works of Allan Ramsay Vol. 1* eds. Burns Martin and John Oliver (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1956) pp.22-6

trope in Augustan satire. Again, this low-cultural setting is exploited by Ramsay for the opportunities it affords in exposing different sections of society; all of whom, if Ramsay is to be believed, frequent establishments like that of Lucky Spence's. As in 'Elegy on Maggy Johnston', Ramsay's depictions are imbued with realism and authority by the specificity of the physical location.

This location is described elaborately in Ramsay's first footnote: 'Lucky Spence, a famous Bawd who flourished for several Years about the beginning of the Eighteenth Century; she had her lodgings near *Holyrood-House*.' The speaker of the poem then systematically dispenses advice regarding the treatment of various groups of customers including drunkards, misers, soldiers and religious hypocrites (these last are very much in the mould of Pitcairne's hypocritical Presbyterian protagonists in *Babell*). Again, Ramsay implicates much of society in vice. Moreover, the vernacular language of sexual innuendo introduces an undeniably voyeuristic frisson which, despite the crudity of the poem's content and surfaces, adds another layer of sophisticated satirical implication. Not only are those who frequent the brothel implicated in immorality and vice, but the reader too, is caught in the act of looking and found to be very much enjoying the spectacle.

This voyeuristic element which works to implicate the reader is, I would assert, one of the functions of Ramsay's footnotes. These footnotes, or paratextual utterances, themselves work to create meaning in the poem. They do so by means of a correct and polite tone of delivery which is satirically undermined by the speaker's undeniably intimate knowledge concerning the appearance, habits and practices of the inhabitants of the brothel. Just, however, as the reader begins to realise the extent of this knowledge and subsequently feels her/himself to be morally superior to both poet and protagonists, he/she is exposed by the content of Ramsay's footnote. The lines, 'And gin he likes to light his Match/ At your spunk box' (ll.24-6) surely require little explanation. Thus, the reader who seeks to have this sentiment made more explicit is tricked by Ramsay's footnote which reads: 'Light his match. I could give a large Annotation on this sentence, but do not incline to explain every thing less I disoblige future Criticks by leaving nothing for them to do.' Ramsay thus implicates both reader and critic in vice (and hypocrisy) by emphasising the extent of their interest in, and enjoyment of, the depiction of a sordid location which harnesses lewd sexuality and commerce together in a scathing satirical exposé. Indeed, the self-ironising heroines of Defoe, Moll Flanders and Roxanna, perhaps learned some of their art from Lucky Spence and their creator too perhaps learned to exploit the voyeuristic tendencies of his readers from Ramsay. However, it is unlikely that Defoe would ever admit to such a debt.

Location then, is a highly significant element, not just of satire, but of didactic literature in general. Ramsay locates much of his satire in low cultural locations and uses these to effectively comment on society as whole. This further indicates the limitations of the high/ low cultural divide in its application to Scottish culture and literary production in the period. Moreover, it points to the nuanced literary identity of Ramsay. Indeed, Ramsay's satirical voice is highly sophisticated in its careful modulations in tone facilitated, in part, by the shifts in linguistic register which characterise his most successful pieces. Ramsay's comic-elegies can be understood, on one level, as social satire in which specific, low-cultural locations are burlesqued in order to create enjoyable and humorous spectacles whilst simultaneously acting as microcosms of society. Ramsay creates a satirical voice which is lent authority and credibility by the real locations and characters depicted and by the intimate knowledge displayed by the author about such locations. However, authorial distance is maintained by the ironic gap between the language of the poem and that of the persona created and language employed in the paratextual utterances. This paratext reaches beyond the immediate locale of the poem and ridicules the vices and follies of society more generally.

I have suggested that the bawdy vulgarity of Ramsay's imagery and his reliance on the physical body as a site of moral expression is a trope adapted from a Scottish satirical tradition exemplified, in the present discussion, by the satire of Pitcairne. That is not to say that this remained a satirical device peculiar to Scottish writers. Indeed, the burlesquing of bodily functions and sexual desire as contrary to reason and decency finds its darkest expression in the Augustan period in the writings of Jonathan Swift whose disgust with the bestial, the non-rational and the corrupt elements of human nature reaches its apotheosis in the depiction of the Yahoos of *Gulliver's Travels*. These allegorical characters display a mindless greed and revel in their own filth and express many of the themes already discussed in relation to Ramsay and Pitcairne. However, Swift's satirical locations are far removed from the real and immediate settings of Ramsay's social satire. There are notable exceptions, for example, the well known 'A Description of a City Shower' (1710), and the poem, 'A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed' (1731), which creates a foul image of a London harlot as she strips away all the paint, props and artifice which render her acceptable to her clientele. This poem incorporates reference to real city locations such as 'Fleet-Ditch's oozy Brinks' (l.48)⁴⁶, but Swift's most successful satire relies on allegorical characters (however recognisable) and allegorical or fantastic locations.

⁴⁶ Jonathan Swift, 'A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed' in *The Writings of Jonathan Swift* Robert Greenberg and William Piper (eds.) (London: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1973) pp.538-40

Ramsay's comic-elegies thus satirise the vices of Edinburgh society. Those who frequent the taverns and brothels of eighteenth-century Edinburgh are exposed as base and bestial. However, in their innovative modal and formal blending and in their mixing of different literary strains, they also enact a further function. In Ramsay's appropriation of the forms and features of pastoral elegy, he can be seen as enabling a democratisation of genre. Ramsay's elegies incorporate the formal features of pastoral elegy, but do so in a specifically Scottish manner. His 'Elegy on Lucky WOOD in the Canongate', for example, opens with the conventional invocation of the muse that is a feature of classical pastoral elegy. The muse invoked by Ramsay in this piece is, however, the Canongate itself: 'Oh Cannigate! Poor elritch Hole, (l.1). This invocation is followed by the conventional pastoral representation of nature's mourning as the speaker calls out to the 'Hills and every Glen' (l.7) in his grief. In appropriating the features of conventional pastoral elegy and framing them in a satirical manner, Ramsay can be seen to democratise the genre of pastoral elegy. His satire has brought low the high-cultural characters, but his appropriation of conventional elegiac conventions serves to elevate the characters who are mourned. This democratising impulse can be understood as anticipating Wordsworth's and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) in which lowly rural characters are considered appropriate subjects for poetry. In replacing the conventional muse of classical pastoral elegy, moreover, Ramsay elevates the status of Edinburgh locales such as the Canongate.

Ramsay's comic-elegies are thus startlingly original in both their manipulation of genre and in their utilisation of real and recognisable locations. In these elegies, Ramsay again signals his mastery of appropriating conventional neoclassical modes and genres and manipulating them in a specifically Scottish context. These elegies are rooted in the streets of Edinburgh, and it is the use of specific locations which render the comic-elegies such successful poetry. Moreover, Ramsay can be seen to draw on elements from his Scottish literary context and heritage – his debt to Pitcairne's *Babell* is clear – and combine these elements with typically Augustan tropes, modes and forms.

Indeed, Weinbrot's assessment that the formation of a new British poetic involved the 'reaching out to alien strains and [the] insistence on apparently native power and virtues'⁴⁷ is enacted by Ramsay in the comic-elegies. He creates a new literary form by the blending of satire with pastoral elegy and by his ability to combine elements from a specific Scottish literary heritage with contemporary English modes and models. His innovation is striking in its originality. This innovation, in its generic blending and in its democratisation

⁴⁷ Howard Weinbrot, *Britannia's Issue: The Rise of British Literature from Dryden to Ossian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) p.1

of hitherto high-cultural modes and forms, is indicative of his significance in the formulation of a new British poetic in the period. Similarly, the same generic and modal blending is enacted in the work of Thomson. His appropriation and adaptation of Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* effectively renovated the Spenserian stanza form and demonstrated the viability of such a form in expressing contemporary debates and preoccupations. Ironically, considering Thomson's neglect within the Scottish canon, *The Castle of Indolence* had a discernible influence on Scottish poetry of the later part of the eighteenth century. Robert Fergusson would use the poem as a model for 'The Farmer's Ingle', and Burns would express 'The Cottar's Saturday Night' in these same stanzas. These cross currents of influence and heritage chime with this thesis's central consideration of a mutual gaze. This gaze was held, not only between Ramsay and Thomson, but between writers from all regions of Britain throughout the eighteenth century as they participated, collectively, in the formation of a new British literature.

Conclusion

Chapter one of this thesis, 'Edinburgh', recovered the early historical and cultural contexts of Ramsay and Thomson. An examination of their membership of, respectively, The Easy Club and the Grotesque Club demonstrated that, while these clubs were different in terms of membership and political agenda, they shared a defined literary bias. Moreover, these clubs represented Ramsay's and Thomson's early audiences and critics. Their membership of these clubs did much to encourage their earliest literary endeavours and support their first publications.

Ramsay's early club poetry, particularly the polemical 'Poem to Pitcairne', was boldly expressive of Ramsay's literary Jacobitism and opposition to the Union of Parliaments of 1707. The chapter suggested that the semi-private sphere of clubs such as the Easy Club enabled a freedom of expression that was not possible in the public sphere of a politically fraught Edinburgh in 1713. A close reading of this poem, however, is revealing of Ramsay's strong Augustan literary identity and ability to manipulate neoclassical modes and forms into a specifically Scottish content. This aspect of Ramsay's literary positioning within an emergent eighteenth-century British literature is a strand which has been pursued throughout this thesis.

Thomson's network of fellow students at the University of Edinburgh and Grotesque Club coterie resulted in his being published in *The Edinburgh Miscellany*. This important, yet critically neglected anthology, explored in both chapters one and two of this thesis, was representative of a different kind of patriotic project from that of Ramsay's Easy Club coterie. *The Edinburgh Miscellany* showcased the talents of young, aspiring Scottish poets but its emphasis was on the emulation of English modes and models. For Thomson, the real significance of publication in this miscellany lay in the literary networks he established by participating in the project. This network and his association with the Grotesque Club and the so-called Athenian Society of Edinburgh were crucial in his entry to London literary circles.

The chapter sought to challenge narrow and overly politicised views of Scottish literary production in the period. By emphasising the continued reliance on patronage in the period and demonstrating the effects of this system on poetic productions, the chapter argued that political allegiance in the period becomes a secondary consideration when measured against the need for financial support and influential friends and patrons. The chapter highlighted figures such as Sir William Bennet who patronised both Ramsay and Thomson. The recovery of these hitherto neglected contexts provides meaningful points of contact between the two writers and defines networks of poets and patrons in the period.

Ultimately, the first chapter established an alternative approach to Scottish writing in the early eighteenth century, challenging the previously critically entrenched Diachesian paradigm of cultural confusion and replacing it with a narrative of healthy creative plurality.

Chapter two extended the thematic concerns of the previous chapter, both textually and geographically. The chapter engaged with critical formulations of early eighteenth-century British literary identity such as ‘the alternative line of succession’ posited by Brean Hammond,¹ and argued that such formulations fail to allow for moments of overlap between these competing and diverse strains of literature. Arguably, it is within these moments of overlap that a new British literary identity was negotiated. Such moments of overlap can be identified in anthologies of the period and the chapter examined the literary miscellany as a site where literary identities are presented and negotiated.

A comparative analysis of Ramsay’s imitative ‘The Morning Interview’ with Pope’s *The Rape of the Lock* established the notion of a mutual gaze which was sustained between writers in London and those in Edinburgh. Ramsay’s poem was interpreted as another example of his ability to appropriate the forms and surfaces of English Augustan poetry and to present them in a specifically Scottish context.

The chapter built upon the arguments presented in the previous chapter and emphasised the centrality of patronage and of networks of literary exchange in the period. The research presented in this discussion demonstrated that a reciprocal creative exchange was enacted by writers in London and those in Edinburgh. The notion of a mutual gaze which was sustained by those north and south of the border was reinforced by the illumination of hitherto unexplored exchanges enacted, albeit remotely, between Aaron Hill and Ramsay. Ramsay’s interaction with this milieu provides another point of contact between Ramsay and Thomson and challenges the generally accepted view that the stream of influence in British literature flowed only one way, from south to north.

Chapters three and four of this thesis relied upon textual analysis of the corpora of Ramsay and Thomson. Chapter three was thematically informed by the concept of nation and explored the expression and creation of national identities in the work of both poets. The chapter defined theoretical approaches to the contested concept of nation in the period and concluded that literary responses to nation and to national identity in the early part of the eighteenth century were necessarily fluid. The fluidity of responses to questions of national and literary identity were explored in a range of texts by Ramsay and Thomson.

¹ Brean Hammond *Professional Imaginative Writing in England 1670-1740 ‘Hackney for Bread’* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997) p.12

While the chapter acknowledged that the political identities of Ramsay and Thomson were in opposition, and suggested the ways in which this opposition was expressed within their writing, the chapter also identified points of contact in the representation of nation evidenced by their corpora. Both poets were found to share a reliance on imagery provided by sea. Both poets were also identified as, at times, defining Britain, and the Briton, in terms of difference to other nations. Thomson's poetic project was deeply informed by his ardent pro-unionist tendencies.

However, within this narrative of unity, Thomson presents images of Scotland in order to indicate the role of Scotland within Britain and in order to present a positive image of Scotland. Ramsay inevitably presents Scotland in a positive way. His poetic and dramatic portrayals of Scotland present the nation as rich in natural resources and inhabited by virtuous and educated people. In this way, Ramsay sought to deflate contemporary myths which cast Scotland as a poor relation or as a barren land inhabited by barbarous and uneducated peasants. However, Ramsay too was found, at times, to offer a narrative of national unity. Ramsay's poem, 'The Prospect of Plenty', illustrates the complex identities of Ramsay as at once a Scot, a Briton, and, in terms of literary identity, an Augustan.

Chapter four explored the generic and modal landscape of the period. The chapter suggested that conflation of mode and genre was a feature of early eighteenth-century literature. This modal conflation, in turn, was instrumental in forging a new British poetic. To support this assertion, the chapter examined the use of location within the work of Ramsay and Thomson. Both poets were found, in their presentation of real, and allegorical, locations, to enact a modal and generic blending which was characteristic of later developments in eighteenth-century literature.

The central consideration of this thesis, that of a mutual gaze which was sustained between Ramsay and Thomson, as well as between writers in Edinburgh and in London, was evidenced by this analytical approach to the corpora of Ramsay and Thomson. The mutual gaze was also demonstrated as operating within the wider historical and literary contexts of early eighteenth-century Britain. I would suggest that this approach to the literature of the period is a fruitful one, deflating as it does, notions of cultural confusion, anxiety and opposition. Rather, literary expression involves the transcription and negotiation of competing modes, models and discourses. Therefore, the notion of literature as a site of cultural opposition, is not peculiar to Scottish literature of the eighteenth century and beyond, nor is it indicative of confusion or paradox. Rather, it is indicative of the centrality of literature to the negotiation of multiple literary, political, cultural and national identities.

During the course of my research for this thesis, several fields suggested themselves as being ripe for further research. The literary networks of exchange illuminated in the first two chapters of this thesis suggest that this is a fruitful area for further research. The examination of these literary networks presented in this thesis focused exclusively on Ramsay's and Thomson's cultural and literary interactions with Alexander Pope and the Hillarian circle. I am convinced that further research would certainly reveal a much wider network of influence and literary interaction between writers in Edinburgh and those in London. Linked to this, another fascinating strand pursued during the course of this thesis was the issue of patronage. Dustin Griffin's scholarship has illuminated the system of patronage in England, but there remains a dearth of scholarship relating to patronage in Scotland in the period. Major figures such as Sir John Clerk of Penecuik and Archibald Campbell, Lord Islay have received some critical attention for their roles as patrons of the arts, but an investigation of more minor figures, such as Sir William Bennet, would no doubt provide some fascinating insights into the conditions of literary production in early eighteenth-century Scotland.

The periodicity conventionally assigned to eighteenth-century literature is a further fascinating area. Augustanism, or neoclassicism, and Romanticism have conventionally been portrayed in opposition. The contribution of early eighteenth-century writers such as Ramsay and Thomson in the formation of a new British poetic challenges this view. Their contribution, evidenced by a willingness to embrace the local and the regional in their work, and by their adaptation of older forms, modes and genres suggests the conventional narrative of opposition between Augustan and Romantic writers is a ripe field for research and revision.

INDEX OF INDIVIDUAL WORKS

Works by Allan Ramsay:

- ‘A Poem to the Memory of the Famous Archibald Pitcairn, M.D.’ pp. 38-42, 52, 58-59, 62, 85
- ‘Elegy on Lucky Wood’ p.164
- ‘Elegy on Maggy Johnston’ pp.159-161
- ‘Jenny and Peggy’ p. 97
- ‘Lucky Spence’s Last Advice’ pp.161-162
- ‘Robert, Richy and Sandy, A Pastoral on the Death of Matthew Prior Esq’ p. 92
- ‘The Address of the Muse, to the Right Honourable George Drummond Esq. Lord Provost of Edinburgh; and Council of Edinburgh’ p. 110
- ‘The Fair Assembly, A Poem, in the Royal Stanza’ p. 97
- The Gentle Shepherd*, pp. 74, 111, 113-121
- ‘The Morning Interview’ pp.77-86
- ‘The Prospect of Plenty: A Poem on the North-Sea Fishery, Inscribed to Royal Burrows of Scotland’ pp. 109, 134-138
- ‘To His Grace John Duke of Roxburgh, The Address of Allan Ramsay, S. P.’ pp. 62, 63-66
- ‘To Mr. David Malloch, On his Departure from Scotland’ pp.96-97
- ‘To Mr Joseph Mitchell on the Successful Representation of a Tragedy wrote by Him’ pp. 94-96
- ‘To Mr Pope’ pp. 91-92
- To Sir William Bennet of Grubbet, Bart.’ pp.59, 60, 61, 63, 64, 65
- ‘Wealth, or the Woody’ pp.131-134

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- Alfred, A Masque* pp. 115-116, 120-122
- ‘Autumn’ pp. 95, 131-132
- Britannia, A Poem* pp.126-131
- ‘Of a Country Life’ pp. 51

'Poetical Epistle to Sir William Bennet' pp.56-57
 'Rule, Britannia' pp. 108, 112, 113
 'Spring' p. 57
The Castle of Indolence pp. 145-155
The Seasons pp. 57, 60, 61, 84, 110
 'The Works and Wonders of the Almighty Power' p.70
 'Upon Happiness' p.51
 'Upon Marlefield.' pp.56-57, 60, 61
 'Upon Mrs. Elizabeth Bennet' pp.57-58
 'Verses On Receiving a Flower from his Mistress' pp.51-52
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 Pitcairne, Archibald *Babell* pp. 157-159
 Pope, Alexander 'The Rape of Lock' pp. 77, 79-86, 91
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