

## The Seasons by James Thomson and the Baltic German Poetry about the Seasons in the Era of Baltic Enlightenment<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract.** Since 2016 one of my research topics has been the Baltic German reception of English poetry through the lens of cultural historical book collections in Estonia. One of my findings has been that James Thomson's *The Seasons* belonged among the most often received works of English poetry by Baltic Germans in Estonia, after James Macpherson's *Poems of Ossian* and John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and followed by Edward Young's *Night-Thoughts*. (Kaur 2018: 375) Except for Milton's, these works are almost unknown to modern Estonian readers. Therefore a few words to introduce Thomson and his famous work should be said.

James Thomson (1700–1748) was an 18th century Scottish poet and playwright. Son of a Presbyterian minister, he studied at the College of Edinburgh to become a minister (1715–1719). However, very soon he found that preaching was not his calling and moved in 1725 to London to commit himself to literary work. There he created his poetic tetralogy in blank verse *Winter* (first published in 1726), *Summer* (1727), *Spring* (1728) and *Autumn*, which appeared together under the title *The Seasons* in 1730 (revised version in 1744). Enthusiastic, patriotic and full of love for flora, fauna, people, landscapes and everchanging weather conditions of his surroundings, but also of the wider world, it was received with great admiration by his British compatriots. But not only them: a new fresh interest in nature and especially in the phenomenon of the seasons as well the wish to describe and express them through poetry and other artistic means can be traced in Europe. Some years before Thomson the famous Italian composer Antonio Vivaldi had created his violin concerto *The Four Seasons* (1718) and a German poet and senator from the city of Hamburg, Barthold Hinrich Brockes, had started to publish his series *Irdisches Vergnügen in Gott* (Earthly Delight in God) (1721–1748) in which he meticulously described many objects from and views of nature as God's creations, inspired by English and Dutch physical theology.

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The conception of nature from the aspect of physical theology or natural theology rested on teachings as early as those of antiquity, but was also explained with passages from the Bible, such as Paul's epistle to the Romans or the 19th psalm (The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork), which can be summed up with the formula God's Glory from Nature. This approach united religious feeling, aesthetic experience, the ideal of utility and the empirical observation of nature: nature is perceived as beautiful and well arranged, it is seen as the expression of God's glory and might and evidence of His existence. The approach of physical theology from the early Enlightenment first gained momentum in England and in the Netherlands. In England, it was popularised by the pastors and observers of nature John Ray (1627–1705; *The Wisdom of God Manifested in the Works of Creation*, 1691) and William Derham (1657–1735; *The Artificial Clockmaker*, 1696, *Physico-Theology*, 1713 and *Astro-Theology*, 1714). In the Netherlands, at the turn of the 18th centuries, Leiden University was the spiritual centre where attempts were made to unite observation of nature and religion. Brockes had also studied at Leiden University, as well as Jan Swammerdam (1637–1680), a researcher of the anatomies of insects and of human beings and one of the first to use the microscope for dissections. Jan Swammerdam's field guide to insects *Biblia Naturae* (The Bible of Nature) was published in 1737 by Herman Boerhaave (1668–1738). The latter had first studied theology and philosophy and later turned to the subject of medicine, becoming a lecturer in medicine at Leiden University in 1701 and a professor in 1709. He was one of the most distinguished scientists of medicine of his time and an exceptionally popular lecturer who attracted listeners from the whole of Europe.

Compared with Brockes, the emphasis on the glory of God has a less prominent place in Thomson, though it is not missing. Rather, the focus is on the description of nature and human activities in different seasons. The ideals of the early Enlightenment also brought an emphasis on patriotism into Thomson's works, which has produced dedications for each season to various outstanding Britons. The glorification of Great Britain has a less prominent place in *The Seasons* than in Thomson's other better-known work *Rule, Britannia*, from the masque *Alfred*.

The Baltic German reception of Thomson seems to have started through Brockes. The Anglophile Brockes found an elective affinity in Thomson through his *Seasons* and recognised the greater poetic mastery of the English author (Gjerset 1898: 8–9). To experience it and to share it with his countrymen, he translated the work into German and had it published in 1745 in Hamburg by Christian Herold under the title *Herrn B[arthold] H[inrich] Brockes ... aus dem Englischen übersetzte Jahres-Zeiten des Herrn Thomson*.

This is the earliest translation of Thomson's *The Seasons* into German that can be found in collections in Estonia (TLÜ AR, XII-152, XII-498, owned by a member of the well-known Baltic German Hasselblatt minister family). Brockes translation into irregular madrigal verse did not please the reader; even the fierce admirer of Brockes, Christoph Martin Wieland, criticised it as too far from the original (Gjerset 1898: 4). So, the way to new translations was open.

In our collections the translation by Brockes is followed by a prose translation by Johannes Tobler (1696–1765) in several editions (*Thomsons Gedichte*. Zürich: Orell, Gessner u. Comp., 1764–1765, 5 vol. (TLÜ AR XII-287; TÜR 4 XIVA-33120); *Thomsons vier Jahreszeiten*. Zürich: bey Orell, Gessner, Füesslin und Compagnie, 1774 (RaRa RLB-774/Thomson)). Tobler was a politician in Appenzell (Switzerland) who emigrated to America, founded New Windsor in 1737 in South Carolina and published local almanacs. For his former countrymen he used his acquired English to share the sublimities of Thomson's *The Seasons*. The exemplar of *Thomsons Gedichte* in the Baltica department of the Tallinn University Academic Library has had prominent owners: Otto Wilhelm von Krusenstiern (1740–1820), brigadier in service of Russia and squire of Leal (Lohu) and Jerlep (Järlepa), uncle of the famous admiral Adam Johann von Krusenstern and father of the 3rd wife (Wilhelmine) of August von Kotzebue, one of the most popular German dramatists at the turn to 19th Century and one of the founding fathers of theatre in Estonia; then a member of the family Koch, probably Peter Koch (1757–1816), minister in Jewe (Jõhvi) and earlier private teacher of Christiane Gertude von Krusenstern (1769–1803, a niece of von Krusenstern and later second wife of August von Kotzebue) and her sister in Püssi (Pühs) in Wierland (Virumaa), a region in northern Estonia; a *mademoiselle* E. Petit, probably a governess; and last but not least and especially interesting for this article, Friedrich Gustav Arvelius (1753–1806), a private teacher in Pöddes (Kalvi) and Kiekel (Kiikla) in Virumaa and later professor of theology and rector at the Gymnasium in Reval (Tallinn), himself a poet and playwright. Koch and Arvelius probably became friends as Arvelius dedicated an epithalamion with the title *Skofliot* to the wedding of Peter Koch in 1782. How the book circulated between these owners is not quite clear.

Another translation printed in Switzerland is preserved as well: *Die Jahreszeiten des Jacob Thomson. Deutsch und Englisch*, translated by Johann Jakob Dusch (1725–1787) and published in Basel by Johannes Schweighauser in 1768 (TLÜ AR XII-1477). Dusch studied English literature at the University of Göttingen, the most important centre of English studies in Germany in the 18th century, and was professor at the Christianeum Gymnasium in Altona (near Hamburg). More than for his Thomson translation, which appeared

anonymously, he is known for his rendition of Pope. His own best-known work, *Moralische Briefe zur Bildung des Herzens* (Moral Letters to Educate the Heart, 1759), was translated into French in 1765 by Elisabeth Charlotte Benigna von Hahn, who later married a Curonian nobleman, an uncle of Elisa von der Recke.

The next German translation in our collections is *Jakob Thomson's Jahreszeiten*, translated by Ludwig Schubart and published in Berlin by Christian Friedrich Himburg. This translation is preserved in three editions (TÜR Mrg 4506 1st ed., 1789 and TÜR XIV-2402a 3rd ed., 1805; TLÜ AR XII-1351 2nd ed., 1796). Ludwig Albrecht Schubart (1765–1811) was a writer and translator, son of the more famous German poet Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart. He found Tobler's translation to be the most faithful to the original (mark that another translation into prose created by Johann Franz von Palthen (1758) also existed, but is not preserved in our collections), but also *unpoetisch, rau und ermüdend* (unpoetic, rough and tiring; 1789: XXXVII). At the same time he held the original blank verse unsuitable for longer narrations because it easily turns into monotony and decided to substitute it with a metric prose enriched with dactyls and molossi (1789: XXXIV–XXXV). The exemplar of the 1789 edition belonged to Karl Morgenstern. Johann Karl Simon Morgenstern (1770–1852) from Magdeburg/Germany was the first professor of rhetoric, classical philology, aesthetics, as well as of literary and art history at the re-established University of Tartu. He was also the first director of the university library and founder of the university art museum. As professor of literary history he coined the term *Bildungsroman*, and as a member of the university's greening committee he also helped to shape the ensemble of university buildings.

Morgenstern also owned another translation of the *Seasons: Thomsons Jahreszeiten in deutschen Jamben*, translated by Heinrich Harries and published in Altona by I. F. Hammerich in 1796 (TÜR Mrg 4507; TLÜ AR XII-1729). Harries (1762–1802) was a protestant pastor in Brügge near Kiel in Schleswig, then Denmark. He was disturbed by the fact that the Germans still did not have a translation of *The Seasons* that tried to convey the original blank verse and took the work into his own hand. It would be interesting to know whether Morgenstern used these translations in his lectures on literary history or aesthetics or even in exercises in style, which he also taught.

The translation into iambs was followed by a translation into hexametres: *Thomsons Jahreszeiten in deutschen Hexametern*, translated by Carl Friedrich von Rosenzweig (1767–1845) and first published in St Petersburg by Nicolai Gretsck in 1819 (TLÜ AR XII-2721; TÜR XIV-2404a Hamburg 1825). Rosenzweig was a diplomat of Saxony in St Petersburg (1796–1830) (more about him: [https://www.stadtwikidd.de/wiki/Karl\\_Friedrich\\_Rosenzweig](https://www.stadtwikidd.de/wiki/Karl_Friedrich_Rosenzweig)).

Unfortunately, Rosenzweig has not explained why he has decided to translate into this metre. The 1819 edition lacks any paratexts, while the dedication of the 1825 edition, addressed to the Russian empress Elisabeth Alexiewna (1779–1826, née Luise Marie Auguste Princess of Baden) only says that the translation owes its existence to happy leisure under the mighty protection of Russia (*Der glücklichen Muße unter Rußlands mächtigem Schutze verdankt diese Uebersetzung ihr Daseyn* (1825: unpaginated)). Rosenzweig probably wanted to emphasise the epic character of *The Seasons*, but perhaps he also looked for a metre which would be suitable to be dedicated to the empress of a vast country, and therefore chose the most epic metre in European literary history, the metre of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

Although some German full translations listed by Knut Gjerset in his survey *Der Einfluss von James Thomson's „Jahreszeiten“ auf die deutsche Literatur des 18. Jahrhunderts* (The Influence of The Seasons by James Thomson on the German Literature in the 18th Century, 1898: 74–75) cannot be found in our collections, for example those by J. C. W. Neuendorf (Berlin 1815), Friedrich Schmitthenner (Zwickau 1822) and Dietrich Wilhelm Soltau (Braunschweig 1823; note that Soltau like Rosenzweig spent a long period of his life in Russia), it can be said that our collections are well equipped and reflect the metric diversity of German translations well.

An adaption in French, inspired by Thomson's tetralogy *Les Saisons* (started in 1733, 1 ed. in print in 1769) by Jean François de Saint-Lambert published in Amsterdam in 1775, is also preserved (RaRa, RLC-775/Lambert).

The reception of *The Seasons* by Baltic German readers in the original English seems to have started somewhat later than in German translation, although it has lasted longer. The oldest English language edition preserved in our collections is *The Seasons*, published in London and printed by A. Millar, in the Strand, in 1758 (TLÜ AR XII-2874). It belonged to the library of the Tallinn Cathedral School, which indicates that at that time this work might already have been part of the Baltic German school literary canon of English language literature.

Several editions from the 1760s and 1770s follow (*The Seasons* by James Thomson. London and Leipzig: Printed for J. Dodsley and C. Moser, 1766. (TLÜAR XII-409 Provenance: a member of the noble family Stackelberg; *The Works*. London 1766. 4 vol. [vol. 1 *The Seasons*] (TÜR XIV-2238); *The Works Of James Thomson: In Four Volumes; With His Last Corrections And Improvements*. Edinburgh: Printed by A. Donaldson; and sold at his Shops in London and Edinburgh, 1768 [vol. 1 *The Seasons*] (TLÜ AR XII-519); *The Poetical Works*. 2 vol. Edinburgh, 1773 (TÜR)).

In addition to the German translations Karl Morgenstern also owned *The Seasons* in original, in a new ed. To which is prefixed an essay on the plan and character of the poem by J. Aiken, which was published in Leipzig in 1781 (TÜR Mrg 4505). The person referred to is probably John Aikin (1747–1822), an English medical doctor (MD in Leiden [sic] 1780) and surgeon who soon devoted himself to biographical work.

An exemplar of the last preserved edition from the 18th century, *The Poems of James Thomson*, published in London in 1790 in the series *The Works of English Poets* (vol 54–55) (TÜR Kling 548; XIV-2085), belonged to another famous German in Tartu, Friedrich Maximilian Klinger (1752–1831), the first curator of the re-established university, better known as one of the leading dramatists of the German *Sturm-und-Drang* era, which was named after one of his plays.

The next and last two editions in English from the time before *Umsiedlung* (the resettlement of Baltic Germans from Estonia and Latvia, 1939) were published in the middle of the 19th and turn of the 20th centuries and are both preserved in the University of Tartu Library and were probably ordered for the use of study and science. *Poetical Works*, published by Tauchnitz in Leipzig in 1853, appeared in the Collection of British authors (vol. 279; TÜR XIV-1300a). This series offered good quality paperback editions of classics, which, however, can often be seen as a sign that the work published has dropped out of active and creative reception and rather possesses interest from the point of view of literary history. On the one hand, this marked the zenith of the status of the work as classics, but at the same time anticipated its eclipse and vanishing from the literary canon in Germany. However, it is also interesting that in the Baltic German diaspora some works have preserved their importance much longer than in Germany. This can be said, for example, about Young's *Night-Thoughts* (Kaur 2018b: 41–44) as well as Macpherson's *Poems of Ossian*. The last preserved edition of Thomson's *The Seasons*, included in *The Poetical Works of James Thomson*, was ordered from Scotland (it was published by Nimmo in Edinburgh around 1900 (TÜR 4 XIV A-36114) and not by a German publisher).

In general, such is the reception history in the Baltic German cultural area of one of the most significant epic nature poems of the British Enlightenment, James Thomson's *The Seasons* according to our cultural historical collections. We could see that this poem was read by noble men and ministers, private teachers and local poets, at school and university. It was read in a wide range of translations (printed between 1745 and 1825), but also in the original (until the 20th century). But how did Thomson's *The Seasons* influence the poetry the Baltic Germans wrote themselves?

## Baltic German nature poetry and Thomson

Researching the occasional poetry (written and signed) by Baltic German women from the time before 1800 for my dissertation, I noticed that nature and location were almost absent before the 1790s. Depictions of nature were allegorical and rather abstract, a style could be described as anacreontic rococo. (Kaur 2013: 176–177) So the question was, what was there before?. When did nature find its way into Baltic German poetry? And, importantly for this context, was it influenced by Thomson's *The Seasons*?

A first look indicates that nature was rarely mentioned before the mid-18th century in Baltic German poems. Natural sites could be depicted in pastoral poems of the 17th century, but they were created after models of antiquity and rather reproduced old *topoi*. Reflexions of locality can be found almost only in the names of groups of poets, for example the Muses of Embach or the Shepherds of Laksberg. We can find a *verschneiter Garten* (snow-covered garden) in Paul Fleming's poem *Liefländische Schneegräfin* (Livonian Snow Duchess, 1636), which is set in Tallinn, and later some depictions of nature in the patriotic poem *Mitau* (1688) by Christian Bornmann, librarian at the court of duke Friedrich Kasimir, dedicated to the capital of the duchy of Courland, where he reports on how the landscape looked before the foundation of the town in the 13th century and how the surroundings of the town looked in his time. He also gives some glimpses of urban nature, describing *Fürstengarten* or the duke's garden.

The first poem on a manor was *Dondangen* (Dundaga), written by Jakob Friedrich Bankau (?–1725), pastor in Courland, in 1721. It focuses on buildings and people rather than nature, but the manor garden, fields and hunting landscapes are described. However, the poem existed for a long time only as a manuscript (today preserved in the University of Tartu Library TÜR R Est.A-4675(III)) and was published only in 1855, so we can question how well it was known by its contemporaries and whether it had any influence on the literary processes of its time.

The first major poem in which nature and life in the countryside form the main focus and the phenomenon of the seasons is thematised was *Hinter-Bergens Winter- und Sommer-Lust* (General and Special Winter and Summer Joy at Behind the Hill) by Johann Bernhard von Fischer in 1745. The somehow baroque-sounding full title could be translated as General and Special Winter and Summer Joy at Behind the Hill, intermixed with Physical and Moral Observations, written in Verses, by Montan, who lives there in Calm and Peace; to which are appended his Thoughts about the Names of Riga, Courland und Livonia in the Native and German Language, and could be summarised as follows: Montan has resigned to countryside, his friends from the town, Urban

and Urbanowitz, do not understand why he has chosen a rather uncomfortable place to live. Urbanowitz asks Montan and is invited to visit him in winter. Urbanowitz comes in February and is presented with a long poem in praise of winter; after that the guest enjoys coffee, a pipe and a conversation; finally the visitor is invited to come back with Urban in summer. They come in June, around midsummer. Montan presents his manor, the friends also visit an artillery exercise ground, take a look at a fish pond, enjoy the smell of roses, taste the products of the manor and admire the sunrise. When the friends leave, Montan does not feel alone, the Lord keeps him company. (For a longer summary in Estonian, Kaur 2018c: 52–58; for the digitised copy of Fischer's poem see the Bibliography.)

Johann Bernhard von Fischer (1685–1772) was born in Lübeck. His family moved to Riga, when he was 10. His father, an apothecary, died there in 1695. After home schooling and lyceum in Riga Fischer went to Germany, where from 1704 he studied medicine in Halle and Jena, and then in the Netherlands, in Leiden, Amsterdam and Utrecht (MD Leiden in 1708). To consummate his studies he went on a grand tour to England and France. A new period of life began when, in 1710, he came back to Riga, where until 1734 he kept a medical practice. In 1733 he became second physician (*Physicus*) of the city of Riga. In 1725 he made first acquaintance with Anna of Courland, the later Russian empress Anna Ivanovna. When Anna ascended to throne, Fischer followed her and between 1734 and 1740 was her personal physician. In 1740–1741 he was the personal physician of the dauphin Ivan VI. He was also *Archiater* or director of the medical service of Russia. In this position he founded hospital schools for medical assistances and apothecary gardens and compiled and translated medical textbooks. His life took a new turn in 1742 after Jelizaveta Petrovna's ascension to throne, when he resigned and settled in his manor near Riga, dedicating himself to husbandry and literary work. As early as 1736 he had become a noble man and in the same year was elected a member of Academia Leopoldina in Germany. In 1744 the membership of the Royal Society in London followed and from 1767 he was also a member of the Free Economic Society in St Petersburg. In addition to his long poem he is also known for his *Livländisches Landwirthschaftsbuch* (Book of Livonian Husbandry, 1753).

This is a verse narrative in alexandrine-like madrigal verses, inspired by the seventh part of Barthold Hinrich Brockes' *Irdisches Vergnügen in Gott, Landleben in Ritzebüttel* (Country Life in Ritzebüttel, 1743), a poetry book in which Brockes described and praised the circle of the year in a manor in the city of Hamburg, which he governed for some years in his duties as senator. The influence is obvious as Fischer takes the motto of his poem from Brockes, talks about physical and moral observations as Brockes did, calls him for inspiration



instead of the Muses and lets Montan praise him as the best describer of roses. But was Fischer also influenced by Brockes' translation of Thomson's *The Seasons*?

I would rather say no or at least not by the full translation. These suspicions are aroused by the dates of the prefaces: Fischer's preface is signed in June 1744, but the preface by B. J. Zink to the first edition of Brockes' translation in September 1744 (Gjerset 1898: 3). So Brockes seems to have finished his translation later than Fischer his poem, and therefore it could hardly have been a model for Fischer. This does not mean that Fischer could not have known some parts of Thomson's tetralogy in Brockes' rendition: the translations of part of *Spring* and *A Hymn on the Seasons* appeared in earlier parts of *Earthly Delight in God* (1740 resp. 1741) (Gjerset 1898: 3). On the other hand, it is not impossible that Fischer might have read *The Seasons* in the original because he was probably able to read English at least to some degree. His interest in England is signalled by his grand tour, his membership of the Royal Society and an anonymous article in the learned appendices of *Rigische Anzeigen*, Riga's local newspaper, which he probably wrote: *Ob die Angelsachsen oder andere teutsche Völker, nach Taciti und anderer Geschichtsschreiber Meinung, in Lief- und Kurland, in alten Zeiten gewohnt haben* (Did the Anglo Saxons or other Germanic peoples, according to the opinion of Tacitus and other historians, live in Livonia and Curonia in old times) (in *Gelehrte Beiträge zu den Rigischen Anzeigen*, Johann Gottfried Arndt (ed). Riga 1762, St. 4, S. 25–31; St. 6, S. 49–56, more about this article Kaur 2021a: 335–337). However, the name of Thomson is not mentioned in Fischer's poem, although he has explicitly named some English scientists, for example Isaac Newton, William Whiston, Jean Théophile (John Theophilus) Desaguliers. Certainly, there are some similarities in the motifs used. For example, both authors speak about wolves: Thomson in his *Winter* about the wolves in the Alps and Apennines (Sambrook (ed.) 1972: 139, v. 389–413), Fischer in his *Winter-Lust* about wolves in northern Russia (p. 33) and Livonia (pp. 34–35), but the depictions are not similar. So there is no proof that Fischer had read *The Seasons*.

*Hinter-Bergens Winter- und Sommer-Lust* was not the last work by Fischer about the seasons. In 1750 he published a short poem in Riga titled *Empfindungen des Frühlings* (Sentiments of Spring). It was followed by the poetry collection *Physicalische und Moralische Gedichte* (Physical and Moral Poems, Riga 1751); the title indicates that he still stood under Brockes' influence. Fischer's style changed in the 1750s when he began to write idyllic shepherd songs in the manner of German anacreontics, for example *Hirtenlieder und Gedichte* (Shepherd Songs and Poems, Halle 1753) and *Daphnis und Silen* (Daphnis and Silen, Riga 1754). With these poetry books he introduced a

manner of writing which seems to have been influential until the 1780s. It is not quite clear how much this way of writing could have been influenced by Thomson, though it can be said that Thomson's *The Seasons* certainly include elements that are similar to the idyllic writings of antiquity, and he used then and again names which seem to be taken from old Greek literature, a method shared by German anacreontic authors of the mid-18th century as well as being loved by French authors of the time.

An interesting text which suggests the eve of the anacreontic writing in the region in the 1780s and the emergence of a more contemporary, less idealised look at nature inspired by empirical science is *Die Tauben* (The Doves) by Regina von Graf (1742–1806), a granddaughter of Johann Bernhard von Fischer, whose poems were published under the title *Vermischte Gedichte und Lieder einer Liefländerin von Stande* (Miscellaneous Poems and Songs by a Livonian Lady) by the well-known Baltic enlightener August Wilhelm Hupel (Jürjo 2004 or 2006) in his periodical *Nordische Miscellaneen* in 1781. Doves were oft-depicted birds in anacreontic and idyllic poetry, used as symbols of lovers and of fidelity. With this knowledge Regina von Graf begins her poem. The first-person narrator describes how her attention is caught by the view of a couple of doves. First she is charmed by the view, recalling sayings about the indestructible fidelity of doves. Then something unexpected happens. After having made love the male dove flies to another female and the play is repeated. The sentimental observer whose expectations of an idyll are betrayed blurts out, full of indignation, her verdict: not a single representative of the male sex is faithful. (Graf 1781: 193). From a scientific point of view a single observation cannot give justification to such a generalised conclusion, but a myth is certainly destroyed. A physical theology conclusion is unthinkable in this case and is not made.

The time of physical theology was not over, however. Friedrich Gustav Arvelius' poem *Unsere Winternacht* (Our Winter Night), published in 1787 in the journal *Für Geist und Herz*, edited by August von Kotzebue, ends in praise of the immortal soul. Though the poem begins with a depiction of a winter landscape, the season is used to introduce an allegory. Arvelius speaks of the death of an enfeebled nature, which is wrapped into a silver coated winter, shrouded and buried. The next strophe gives a more precise idea of what kind of winter landscape the poet is imagining: it is a (snow) covered seashore, high above which a moon with an innumerable host of stars shines forth in exuberant resplendence. At this vision, in a silent night dedicated to contemplation, a thought about the future shivers through his soul: you, cover of the sublime, will die as well when she (*die Seele*/the soul) flees and shining more brightly will look on you from above and be pleased by the Awakening. The figure

of the innumerable host of stars shows that in addition to the Bible, Arvelius was probably influenced by Christian Fürchtegott Gellert's poem *Die Ehre Gottes aus der Natur* (God's Glory from Nature, 1757), one of the best known physical theological poems by a German author in the second half of the 18th century. The mentioning of a silent night dedicated to contemplation indicates that Arvelius was probably acquainted with Edward Young's *Night-Thoughts*, but could this poem be inspired by Thomson's *The Seasons* as well? As shown earlier in this article Arvelius owned an exemplar of *The Seasons* in Tobler's translation. However, if *Our Winter Night* was influenced by Thomson's work, it is hard to trace its exact impact due to the brevity of Arvelius' poem. If the influence existed, it must have been of a rather general nature, inspiring him to write about a season specific to Nordic countries. There, too, the depiction of the native environment and patriotic feelings seem to be connected. The picture of a seashore in moonlight in winter could also have been inspired by Macpherson's *Poems of Ossian*, which Arvelius probably knew in the translation by Michael Denis. Both Thomson and Macpherson helped to increase the awareness of local Nordic nature, taught readers to see it through an artistic lens and thereby gave it a more appreciated status. It was Arvelius who brought the northern Estonian coastal cliffs of his region into Baltic German poetry and drama (more about Arvelius' *Ossian*-reception in Kaur 2021b: 991–995). Next to such models as Klopstock and Friedrich Leopold zu Stolberg, Thomson probably also aroused enthusiasm and an endeavour toward the sublime in Arvelius. However, in using the seasons allegorically to denote different stages of life, Arvelius was not very original. This kind of allegory of seasons was also widely employed in the Baltic German occasional poetry of the time.

Another poet who used the seasons in allegorical ways was Elisa von der Recke (1754–1833). In her poem *Novemberelegie* (November Elegy), published in the poetry collection *Elisens und Sophiens Gedichte* (Berlin 1790: 171–176) she compares the ages of human life and the seasons, for example to make the point that all physical beauty is waning, but someone who has aspired to gain moral splendour can be beautiful in old age too. *November Elegy* is not as allegorical at the core as *Our Winter Night*. The comparisons are interwoven as reflective and didactic parts into a six-page poem devoted to the description of an autumn month and the cycle of the year. Beginning in an elegiac sombre mood (Recke, Schwarz 1790: 171)

Er ist vorübergeflogen mit seinen Feuden der / Frühling / Der fruchtergie-  
bige Sommer ihm nach! / Schon braust im herbstlichen Laub und schwärzt  
/ des Himmels Gewölbe / Mit finstren hangenden Wolken der Nord / Stürzt  
Regenschauer herab, verödet Wälder und / Auen / Und raubt der Erde den

festlichen Schmuck. / So furchtbar bläset der Tod der Jugend rosige / Wangen  
/ So drängt das Alter die Schönheit hinweg. [etc.]

It most resembles the beginning of Thomson's winter depiction (v. 1–3, Sambrook (ed.) 1972: 129):

SEE, Winter comes to rule the varied year, / Sullen and sad, with all his rising  
train – / Vapours, and clouds, and storms. Be these my theme;

Recke might have read the above-mentioned translation of *The Seasons* by Jakob Johann Dusch and/or another work by Dusch inspired by Thomson's poem, *Schilderungen aus dem Reiche der Natur und Sittenlehre, durch alle Monate des Jahres* (Descriptions from the Realm of Nature and Deontology, throughout all Months of the Year; 4 vol., 1757–1760). In the latter, Dusch also leaned, according to Gjerset (1989: 51), on another English writer, James Hervey; more exactly on his work *Meditations and Contemplations* (1716), intertwining in his *Descriptions* depictions of nature with observations guided by Christian morals. Another German model also comes into consideration, *Die Tageszeiten* (The Daytimes, 1756) by Justus Friedrich Wilhelm Zachariae, a further development of the *Seasons*, where the descriptions of the daytimes are interwoven with moralisations.

Casimir Ulrich Boehlendorff (ca. 1775/76–1825) probably borrowed a motif from *The Seasons*, but transformed it to make it better suit the local context. In the *Spring* part of *The Seasons* Thomson describes a nightingale lamenting its offspring lost to naughty boys and the cage. (Spring, v. 714–728 in Sambrook (ed.) 1972: 22–23). In his poem *Der moderne Ossian am Kurischen See* (The Modern Ossian at a Curonian lake, 1824), an imaginary dialogue between a modern Curonian Ossian and the voice of Malvina, blown from the coasts of Scotland to the Curonian shores by stormy winds, Boehlendorff introduces the modern Ossian as a lone walker on a misty lake beach (the lake is meant to be Angernsee (Engure) near the Curonian coast) who has lost his love. He probably identifies with a northern lapwing (*Kiebitz*) that has lost its offspring to the hunter and laments in vain (Schellhase (ed.). 2000, I: 93):

Der kiebitz flattert über dem verlassenen ufer / Und meldet sein leid: / Der  
jäger hat mein junges entwendet / Und meine stimme klagt umsonst. / Die  
laute der klage / Finden ihren theuren Gegenstand nicht.

But Malvina's voice on the ground of the lake is awakened, because she has empathy for all those who lament.

The enthusiastic and patriotic tone of another poem, or more exactly a fragment, by Boehlendorff, *Herbstlied an den Stabburags* (Autumn Song on Stabburags, between 1820 and 1824), also reminds us of Thomson.

Wunderwürdiges Horn! Es treibt mich der Geist, dich zu suchen  
 Noch einmal im herbstlichen Mond. Im Frühmond versagtest  
 Du mir Huldigung, kurischer Horn! Nun will ich's erringen  
 Dir zu flechten im dienstbaren Lied patriotischen Blumenkranz.  
 Lang umirrend auf täuschender Spur, wohl stürzt ich hinab mich  
 Durch die knitternden Aeste des gelbenden Hains an das tiefe  
 Dünagestad. Und unter dem Fuß, ha! rauschet der Tod mir  
 Zornig schäumend, bedrohet den Geist; es wirft mich im Schwindel  
 An dem Moose der Felswand nieder. Es leitet der Fußpfad  
 Zwischen der fallenden Eiche, dem flammenden Ahorn, hinunter,  
 Weder wohin du sinkst, noch den Pfad gewahst du im Sturze. –  
 etc. (Schellhase (ed.) 2000; II: 200, whole poem pp. 200–201).

But Boehlendorff is already leaving the era of the Enlightenment. Not only is he enchanted to describe the sublime landscape, an impressive limestone cliff at the shore of the river Dūna (Daugava) (today flooded by a power plant reservoir), but the sight also leads him into a phantasy world, to the myths and legends of Latvians. The fragment closes with the exclamation:

Schau es, o Wandr'er, Felsungeheuer mit klaffenden Rachen,  
 Und sie stützen herab zum Kampf in die siedenden Fluthen.  
 (Schellhase (ed.) 2000; II: 201)

The fighters who fall into the boiling flood or into the yawning throat of the cliff monster are, although not named, the Latvian hero Lāčplēsis and the Black Knight, fighting over the fate of Latvians. And this fall indicates that Baltic German nature poetry has already arrived at the era of Romanticism.

## Conclusion

James Thomson's *The Seasons* was widely received by Baltic German readers in the era of the Baltic Enlightenment, with the peak period being between 1745 and 1825, as well as later. It was read in a variety of German translations, in several prints of the English original and also in French adaptation. Baltic German writers used the poem as inspiration for their own nature poetry, rearranging motifs from it or trying to give their own rendition of its sublime style. The influence of *The Seasons* was in their work often intermingled with

the influence of other authors, for example Brockes, German anacreontic poets (between the 1750s and 1780s), Macpherson's *Ossian*, and Dusch's and Zachariae's further developments of *The Seasons* in German. Throughout the era, the philosophy of physicotheology was present. While in the 1780s, the ideas of empirical observation can be traced, by the 1820s, the influence of Romanticism appears.

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