

**The Philosophical Traveller as Social Critic in
Oliver Goldsmith's *The Traveller*, *The Deserted Village* and
*The Citizen of the World***

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Abstract

This thesis examines the figure of the philosophical traveller in Oliver Goldsmith's poems *The Traveller* (1764) and *The Deserted Village* (1770), and his pseudo-oriental letter collection, *The Citizen of the World* (1762). Building upon recent reassessments of Goldsmith as a political writer, this study takes a thematic approach to the question of why the solitary traveller or foreign observer becomes so important to Goldsmith's socio-economic criticism. I argue that his preoccupation with mobile narrators emerges from his sense of dissonance with the prevailing rhetoric and values of mid-century culture, yet this uncertainty of outlook embeds his works more thoroughly in their problematic historical period.

My first chapter argues that Goldsmith's cultural commentary originated in his early career as reviewer and periodical writer. By situating his major poems and *The Citizen of the World* in the context of his journalism, I show how they reveal his concern with the changing status and public responsibilities of the professional author in an increasingly commercialised milieu. In *The Citizen of the World*, for example, Goldsmith adapts the oriental-observer genre to an ironic critique of popular culture, including the trade in *chinoiserie* goods and exotic fictions. The second chapter shows how he extends the comparative function of his traveller figures to advance a broad-based analysis of national cultures that reflects upon Britain's conduct at home and overseas. The fiction of a Chinese visitor gave an Anglo-Irish author greater freedom to question Britain's mercantile and colonial expansion. In *The Traveller*, Goldsmith adapts the "prospect view" to a Europe-wide survey that explicitly connects foreign commerce to domestic decline, particularly in the arts. I argue that Goldsmith's choice to expand his political arguments more fully in verse demonstrates the limitations of popular journalism for aspiring authors and demonstrates his awareness of the literary authority poetry still carried at this time. In my final chapter, I show how Goldsmith's search for this literary and ethical authority was at odds with the retreat of mid-century poetry from politics and history. Therefore, *The Deserted Village* in particular expresses its socio-economic arguments through ideals of feeling, sensibility and benevolence.

Goldsmith uses his solitary poetic personae to raise the possibility of a literary community to replace those lost through rural depopulation and the decline of

traditional social bonds, including those between authors and readers. The outsider figure is distinctive but embraces the functions of estranging and drawing together, just as epistles from abroad simultaneously work to expose differences and overcome distance. Through examining the ways in which Goldsmith adapts the traveller figure to address public themes, this thesis proposes new insights into his social commentary as it relates to central concerns of mid-eighteenth century literature.

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Introduction

Perspectives on Goldsmith and the Outsider's View

At the close of his Preface to Oliver Goldsmith's *The Citizen of the World*, the editor of these "letters from a Chinese Philosopher" turns to the matter of his own indeterminate station in life. "I belong," he declares,

to no particular class. I resemble one of those solitary animals, that has been forced from its forest to gratify human curiosity. My earliest wish was to escape unheeded through life; but I have been set up for half-pence, to fret and scamper at the end of my chain. Tho' none are injured by my rage, I am naturally too savage to court any friends by fawning. Too obstinate to be taught new tricks; and too improvident to mind what may happen, I am appeased, though not contented. Too indolent for intrigue, and too timid to push for favour. I am—But what signifies what am I. (2.15)¹

The editor has abandoned the mock scholarly tone in which he set out to introduce the philosopher's correspondence. His complaint here seems so personal that it is ultimately futile, as the final exclamation suggests with its play of meanings around "what signifies." What am I? he is asking; what constitutes a human self? More particularly, how is he to classify himself, socially and professionally? Oscillating between extremes—too this or too that—his parallel constructions express not balance but an inability to rest contented between the two. He can neither live with nor without the society of others. Solitary and savage by nature, he fails at the kind of scheming and self-promotion necessary to advance himself in London. Like a dancing bear, he is forced to waste his talents entertaining the public for a few coins, and can see no way of escaping or rising above his situation. "What signifies" what or who he is to an unappreciative audience?

¹ References to Goldsmith's prose are from Arthur Friedman's five-volume *Collected Works of Oliver Goldsmith* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), which is the standard edition. It should be noted, however, that both Richard C. Taylor and Peter Dixon question Friedman's selection of anonymous pieces, and Taylor adds "with caution" twenty-nine further essays to Goldsmith's journalistic canon (11; Dixon viii). To the extent to which this study draws upon their conclusions, I also accept their attributions.

The lone outsider, frequently a traveller or foreign observer, is a persona common to several of Goldsmith's works. Besides the Chinese philosopher Lien Chi Altangi and his English editor, there is the eponymous speaker of *The Traveller, or A Prospect of Society* (1764) who "remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow," makes his way across Europe.² In *The Deserted Village* (1770) a nostalgic city-dweller returns to the country setting of his childhood to find it fallen into ruin. Although the speaker's "solitary rounds" of his old haunts are more localised, he too has spent years in "wanderings round this world of care" (83). Many commentators have noted the problematic relationship between these figures and their author. Discussions of the poems have focussed upon how they shift between "the earlier rational, witty, didactic mode," in which the poetic persona is more detached, and a "new subjectivity" in which the voice becomes more personal (Lonsdale, *Poems* 673). With the increasingly global focus of scholarship and a growing interest in cultural perceptions of the foreign "other," Goldsmith's oriental traveller Altangi has been receiving increased attention. Critics also continue to reassess Goldsmith as a political writer, against a contemporary background that J. G. A. Pocock succinctly outlines. "The debate," he says, "between virtue and passion, land and commerce, republic and empire, value and history – underlay a great part of the social thinking of the eighteenth century" (462). Goldsmith's writings continue to rehearse this debate, as many have noted, employing this same characteristic pattern of opposing pairs. However, less has been done to relate this socio-economic argument to the figure who personifies comparison and contrast: the travelling observer. Moreover, critics have historically cited Goldsmith's village childhood and his travels as biographical precedents for these figures, leaving the influence of his early writing career underexplored. Richard C. Taylor, whose *Goldsmith as Journalist* is the only study devoted solely to this aspect of his work, devotes significant space to Goldsmith's construction of an "authorial self" with which to address his readership (104). Taylor concludes that the use of the "'traveler' or 'correspondent' persona to generalize about foreign cultures and to evaluate his own" is so prevalent an approach that it forms the "single most dominant feature of [Goldsmith's] journalistic career" (110).

² Line 1. This and further references to the poems, quoted by line number, are from Roger Lonsdale, ed. *The Poems of Thomas Gray, William Collins & Oliver Goldsmith*. 2nd ed. London: Longman, 1976.

In this thesis I investigate the figure of the outsider or traveller, and the critical leverage his viewpoint allows, by examining *The Citizen of the World* and the two long poems that contain some of Goldsmith's clearest and most developed social commentary. Rather than examining each text or genre separately, my chapters will be organised around certain themes and contexts. In summary, the first chapter will relate Goldsmith's cultural commentary to his literary criticism and his status as a professional author; the second will examine his political arguments on a national and global scale, and the third will discuss the moral, ethical and emotional dimensions of the three texts. Although Goldsmith wrote prolifically, his socio-economic and political arguments remain consistent enough to justify this thematic approach. Placing different genres side by side should help illuminate the important changes in the relationships between poetry and prose during this period, and also seems appropriate in light of Goldsmith's varied output. In particular, it is important to consider *The Citizen of the World* in its earlier incarnation as a newspaper column in the *Public Ledger, or, Daily Register of Commerce and Intelligence* alongside the expanded and revised two-volume work. The three chapters will adhere to a rough chronology, devoting more discussion to *The Citizen of the World* earlier on before moving to the poems, but returning frequently to all three works. This way of proceeding will help to draw out the thematic and stylistic echoes between these texts and yet also highlight the difficulties inherent in imposing a sense of order or development on to Goldsmith's career. For instance, many of the works that established his reputation have parallels in his journalism of the late 1750s and early 1760s, and many of their central ideas date much earlier than their dates of publication. Nevertheless, how he addresses these ideas naturally changes. The market-driven milieu of 1750s periodical publishing may have shaped Goldsmith's historical and socio-economic criticism, but his decision to develop these public themes further in verse suggests the limitations of popular journalism for aspiring authors and demonstrates the literary authority poetry still carried at this time.

The public sphere and the periodical press are the primary contexts of my opening chapter. Through their narrators, these three texts explore the question of the public role of the writer or "foreign correspondent:" his place in society, his professional and moral obligations, his relationship with readers, and how all of these were perceived to be changing. They also reveal a related anxiety about national and cultural decline, and the future of literature especially, which is specifically related to

broader unease about the status of Britain as a global power. The Seven Years' War with France (1756–63) dramatically expanded Britain's territorial and trading reach, and it is in the verse, travel writing and journalism of this period that much of the fiercest debate took place over the domestic consequences of this expansion. In my second chapter, I look at how these texts employ contrasts of geographical and cultural space and, through a critique of the political values of liberty and luxury, respond to the discourses of nationalism and imperialism during the period. In the final chapter, I address the problematic role of communal feeling in the texts: appeals to benevolence, sympathy and ideals of cosmopolitanism. Returning to where the first chapter left off, I reassess the theme of pessimism and decline, examining whether these texts express a desire to retreat from the pressures of historical and social change, or whether they employ the language of feeling to serve their moral and political positions in their attempt to resolve the tension between economic and ethical good.

The tensions in Goldsmith's work are not always obvious. His prose appears too agreeable, and its inconsistencies too careless, to sustain serious political and social analysis. In his verse he achieved a similar ease and lyricism with the couplet. The themes of alienation and discontent that recur throughout his works seem too neatly explained as the complaints of a second-rate author, politically conservative and socially marginalised as an Irishman who in company refused to recognise his own limitations. Perhaps because of Goldsmith's reputation as an unproblematic writer, there is a lack of serious literary criticism of his works. G. S. Rousseau found pre-1900 material scarce when compiling *Goldsmith: The Critical Heritage*, and despite a spate of publications in the early twentieth century and again in the 1960s, little had changed by 1993 when Taylor described Goldsmith scholarship as "virtually moribund" (1; 167). I have mentioned above Taylor's own contribution, which offers a brief but thorough cultural historical contextualisation of Goldsmith's journalism but which stops short, for one reviewer at least, of sufficient literary analysis (Scanlan 677). In my view, a more successful recent approach is that of the postcolonial critic Suvir Kaul in his *Poems of Nation, Anthems of Empire* (2000). Kaul argues for close attention to the formal strategies, imagery and vocabulary of eighteenth-century poems, not at the expense of a cultural or historical materialist analysis, but as an essential constituent of this process. He examines the relationship between social changes and their "competing forms and ideologies" on a broad scale, and the

“specifiable contradictions” of poetic practice, in particular poems, as one of complex mediation (272–73).

This combined literary and cultural approach shifts attention away from the questions of aesthetic value, canonical merit and qualitative inconsistency that have proved problematic for Goldsmith scholarship in the past. Kaul’s model is sensitive to the “fissures and the ruptures” in texts and the revealing ways in which they often fail to resolve contradictions of form or ideas (43). Although my broader argument requires tracing certain thematic elements between the texts, I want to avoid imposing a false unity or disregarding their inconsistencies. At the same time, tying them closely to their socially-constituted literary context allows us to appreciate the breadth and engagement of Goldsmith’s critique. A great deal of valuable criticism recovering the political significance of *The Deserted Village* in particular has emerged from Marxist literary historians. Alfred Lutz’s materialist readings of the history of Goldsmith criticism argue that the “paucity of important critical responses” to Goldsmith’s writings is symptomatic of a “narrowing of the critical purview” that obscures the most politically radical implications of his verse and prose (174). Among other factors, Lutz suggests, this resulted from the reactionary climate in Britain following the French Revolution and the ideological separation of ethics and literature from economic discourse. Above all, the persistence of autobiographical readings has helped to gradually silence the “voice of opposition” of Goldsmith’s poet-persona (183). Building upon these approaches, this study aims to re-examine this voice as one that often speaks from the margins, or from a distance, conscious that this is both a position of power and of vulnerability.

In investigating how Goldsmith engaged with contemporary history and culture through the figure of the outsider, I also want to highlight his importance as a transitional figure for understanding the literature of the mid-eighteenth century. Goldsmith scholarship has historically been dominated by debates over where his works fit into the problematic decades following Pope’s death. Labels for this period are continually adopted, adapted, then shed. Margaret Doody reanimates “Augustan,” John Sitter chooses “post-Augustan” over “preromantic,” and Marshall Brown, while conceding that the term “has a bad name,” entitles his survey *Preromanticism* (Doody 2, Sitter 79, Brown 1). More playfully, Ricardo Quintana suggests that “the Age of Johnson is quite as much the Age of Goldsmith” (*Oliver Goldsmith* 16). It is an overstatement to credit Goldsmith with a stable, lasting influence on his “age,”

however. T. S. Eliot acknowledges that Goldsmith was no innovator but successfully adapted Pope's idiom for this very reason. His originality, he says, "consists of his having the old and the new in such just proportion that there is no conflict; he is Augustan and also sentimental and rural without discordance" (303). Recent criticism has concerned itself with identifying the many places where conflicts or disjunctions do occur in Goldsmith's works, and another common argument adduces these hesitations as evidence of unfulfilled promise. Thus, Goldsmith's biographer Ralph Wardle declares that "if he had had full confidence in his convictions and had had the leisure to develop them, he might well have been a leader in the Romantic Revival in English literature" (Wardle 296). According to this view, his creative development reached full but brief expression in *The Deserted Village*, and was otherwise stifled and misdirected by the demands of his professional writing career.

While I do not entirely agree with this account, I find the traditional rebuttal—that Goldsmith was in fact wholly "Augustan"—equally unhelpful.³ His works often waver or rest in between. For Brown, the "looking ahead" implied in "preromanticism" expresses precisely the sense of dissatisfaction and impulse for change shared by many authors at the time (3). Seamus Deane claims that we detect little of this "sense of crisis" in Goldsmith's "wonderfully versatile and serene prose," but the apparent ease of composition does not disguise the very real difficulties these works display with achieving a coherent voice and outlook (36). Brown insists that "if the central problems of sensibility were self-definition, self-regulation, and closure, then Goldsmith deserves to figure more prominently ... as an index to the literary anxieties of his period" (113). Whether defined negatively as a period of confusion and stagnation, or positively as a time when old models cracked and released new energy into, for example, the 'primitive' sublime, most commentators agree that the mid-eighteenth century was a time of experimentation and transition. Moving beyond debates over whether Goldsmith was satirical or sincere, Augustan or Romantic, can open up more productive enquiries into how his works grapple with the anxieties and strategies of a professional writer in the mid-eighteenth century.

³ Hopkins, for example, insists upon Goldsmith's "Augustanism" (vii, 22–23) and Quintana argues that despite the "romantic" overtones of some passages, "Goldsmith never ceased to be essentially neoclassical in spirit" (23).

I

Once readers know that Goldsmith wrote the lament that prefaces *Citizen of the World*, they find it difficult to separate the aggrieved editor from the author himself. By 1762, when *The Citizen of the World* appeared, Goldsmith was in his early thirties and had been away from his native Ireland for ten years. The first part of that decade had been spent in Edinburgh, Leiden, and Paris in desultory medical studies and in pedestrian travel through western Europe. In his own words to his brother-in-law, he had arrived in London “without Friends, recommendations, money, or impudence; and that in a Co[untry] where my being born an Irishman was sufficient to keep me [unem]ploy’d” (*Letters* 27). Since 1757, he had been earning a precarious living as an anonymous translator, reviewer and writer of miscellaneous journalism. As Roger Lonsdale observes, Goldsmith’s letters from the period reveal “a strikingly self-conscious and self-absorbed figure,” constantly “preoccupied with his loneliness, poverty, social inferiority, and unprepossessing appearance and manner” (“Garden” 7). For Lonsdale, the conclusion to *The Citizen of the World*’s preface expresses openly Goldsmith’s feelings of frustrated ambition and isolation (“Garden” 7). Although his publications to date were far from obscure, the literary success he hoped for had not arrived and he felt excluded from the same circles of polite culture he often referred to with humorous contempt. In the “savage” narrator who opposes a corrupt world rife with flattery, intrigue, and self-advancement, we also see the hallmarks of satire, the realm of the mask. Goldsmith often adopts neutral or outsider perspectives that makes his writing appear deliberately *impersonal*. Quintana is perhaps the most persistent advocate of an unsentimental view of Goldsmith as a skilled manipulator of irony and “comic distance.” All his writing, he argues, “has the strength and firmness of impersonal statement” and is characterised by rhetorical argument rather than emotional self-revelation (*Oliver Goldsmith* 16).

One of the reasons why Goldsmith has been so consistently identified with his literary personae is that he, too, is an indeterminate figure. Thomas Davies, a bookseller who knew him well, called him an “inexplicable existence in creation,” made up of so many opposing vices and virtues that “he might be said to consist of two distinct souls” (qtd. in Rousseau 191). Relatively few of Goldsmith’s letters and personal papers survive, and details of his early years are sketchy. Anecdotes abound, however, usually from those marvelling as Mrs. Thrale did at “a man made up of Contradictions” (qtd. in Dixon vii). As Goldsmith’s contemporaries had done before

them, nineteenth-century readers puzzled over how a socially inept blunderer could produce verse and prose that were elegant, sensitive, and universally appealing. When they could not find sufficient detail in his biography, they turned to his prose, and his two long poems in particular, as sincere, direct expressions of the author's heartfelt experience, containing his "true" sentiments (Lonsdale, "Garden" 5). "Your love for him is half pity," Thackeray exclaimed in 1853, underlining the extent to which by this stage Goldsmith had become indistinguishable from a sentimentalised version of his traveller persona. Thackeray praised "the sufferings, the genius, the gentle nature" of this "kind vagrant harper" doomed to wander and dream of home (qtd. in Rousseau 339). While young and poor, this traveller had come into contact with all classes of society, and his varied experience had given him a benevolent eye for the destitute and the disadvantaged (Rousseau 348). The nineteenth century admired Goldsmith for his warm-hearted nostalgia and the moral sentiments expressed most eloquently in *The Vicar of Wakefield* and *The Deserted Village*. His reputation among readers peaked during this period of close association between the man and his works, and the critical fortunes of both seem to have declined in tandem since—there is no recent biography of Goldsmith, for example (Lonsdale, "Garden" 5).

While earlier commentators tended to read Goldsmith's life through his works, recent critics have been re-reading his texts in the light of specific aspects of his social and professional background. In my first chapter, I follow Taylor and others in recovering the importance of his early journalism and London career for his later writing. From 1757 until the end of his life, Goldsmith made a living as an author, but the "particular class" of this profession was changing.⁴ Broadly speaking, a shift was underway from a culture of aristocratic and political patronage to a commercial culture where authors sold through booksellers to an expanding reading public drawn increasingly from the middle and labouring classes. This generalised progressive account requires much qualification; nevertheless, Goldsmith and his contemporaries were acutely aware of changes in what John Sitter calls the "literary contract" between writers and readers (217).⁵ The periodical press was a central site of this

⁴ Taylor notes that the term "profession" was not strictly applied to authorship at the time and the term "journalist," although gaining in respect, still implied a lesser class of writer (17–18).

⁵ In the case of patronage, for example, Dustin Griffin argues that, far from declining markedly after 1755, systems of patronage persisted in viable competition with support from booksellers into the late eighteenth century. He notes that much of the evidence for a narrative of decline derives from figures

uncertainty. Its large volumes of topical and ephemeral output were geared to a market which gave aspiring authors more outlets and larger audiences, but less control over their material, less perceived moral or political influence, and no “clear index of literary fame” by which to judge their progress (Donoghue 2). *The Citizen of the World*’s editor displays this anxiety when he wishes that instead of adapting Altangi’s writings, he had employed his time “in contriving new political systems, or new plots for farces.” In either case, with the mechanisms of power or of popularity on his side, he would have been better off: “I might then have taken my station in the world, either as a poet or a philosopher; and made one in those little societies where men club to raise each others [*sic*] reputation” (2.15). Appropriately enough, just two years later Goldsmith launched himself with his first poem and became an original member of The Club, alongside Samuel Johnson, who reviewed *The Traveller* very favourably for the press. Johnson considered Goldsmith a competent author, versatile and clear, but neither he nor Boswell credited him with much depth of thought or political acumen. Therefore it is interesting that in 1792, when copies of the *Life of Johnson* were circulating widely, the *European Magazine* observed that “[i]n his manner and conversation Dr. Goldsmith exhibited very little of that knowledge of the world and of life which his Essays universally displayed.”⁶ We might read this as yet another comment on the disjunction between Goldsmith’s social presence and literary style. However, I am more interested in the way that the magazine credits Goldsmith as essayist with “universal” knowledge, implicitly recognising his skill in creating and adopting an authoritative authorial voice.

An effective persona was necessary for an anonymous periodical writer, and has a practical advantage as a critical focus: it unifies a discussion of many disparate texts. Like Goldsmith’s other periodical pieces, the letters which make up *The Citizen of the World* present a mélange of topics, speakers, sub-narratives and digressions. The whole work is therefore far more difficult to characterise. Wayne C. Booth acknowledges the problems the essay series presents for critics in search of organic

like Johnson and Goldsmith who had an interest in promoting the cause of the independent author (246–52).

⁶ According to the anonymous author, Goldsmith in *The Citizen of the World* had even “predicted the present revolution in France” (qtd. in Rousseau 211). The passage is from Letter LVI where Fum Hoam remarks of France “that the Genius of freedom has entered that kingdom in disguise. If they have but three weak monarchs more successively on the throne, the mask will be laid aside, and the country will certainly once more be free” (2: 235).

unity, and argues that periodical literature requires and deserves a different approach. Noting the work's variety, and Goldsmith's "blatant plagiarizing" of other such collections such as Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* (1721), Deane concludes that the only unifying factor is "the attitude toward writing and the function of the writer," which also defines and regulates the presentation of the persona (33, 37). In a recent essay, "Goldsmith on Authorship in *The Vicar of Wakefield*," Maureen Harkin shows that the same concern with the writer's role pervades the novel, and I hope to show that this central theme of *The Citizen of the World* also recurs in his two longer poems.

Goldsmith's commitment to public themes and the author's duty as reformer has been identified as one of the more Augustan aspects of his work. If we approach these texts first and foremost as public arguments with a persuasive function, we may assign their expressions of sentiment or nostalgia a solely rhetorical purpose. In this view the narrator, Richard Eversole suggests, becomes an orator (99). A complex interrelation between "the 'public voice' of poetic decorum" and the personal voice of the subject results in a distancing irony that undermines any impression of emotional sincerity if it does not deny it entirely (Love 43). This distance facilitates Goldsmith's cultural commentary. From the publication of *An Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe* in 1759, a strong strain of critique appears which bears comparison to those Augustan satires whose aim is to "exert moral pressure on an eighteenth-century public" in the hope of effecting artistic or social reform (Dowling 12). *The Citizen of the World* belongs to the well-established genre in which a foreign visitor comments upon and satirises a local culture, while being by no means immune to ridicule himself. Donna Isaacs Dalnekoff in "A Familiar Stranger: the Outsider of Eighteenth-Century Satire" gives a lucid overview of the functions of this figure, particularly his common manifestation as a naïve innocent. Such texts operate within the public sphere and enact collective insecurities and desires. *The Citizen of the World* is a satire on Chinese and especially English mores, including the craze for oriental commodities and fictions. This attack on *chinoiserie* then becomes part of Goldsmith's overarching critique of imperial expansion, a critique I examine in my second chapter.

Commentary on the political and moral ills affecting Britain appears throughout Goldsmith's periodical writings but is expressed most strongly in *The Traveller* and *The Deserted Village*. From the outset, reviewers recognised the poems'

economic and social arguments but found them less convincing than their descriptive “painting.” This tendency to admire these poems predominantly for their scenery and character sketches persisted into the mid twentieth century, when Howard Bell and Earl Miner returned to a discussion of the original political concerns of *The Deserted Village*. Bell’s essay “*The Deserted Village* and Goldsmith’s Social Doctrines” set the foundations for much criticism to come by identifying three primary targets of these “doctrines”: “luxury, the aristocracy of wealth, and commerce,” in particular the rise of a “new commercial class” who had often earned their fortune overseas (753; 760). By returning to establish landed estates in England, the poem argues, these newly-rich merchants hasten the enclosure of rural lands and worsen the depopulation caused by emigration. The over-expansion of a mercantile colonial empire, fuelled by the pursuit of profits and luxuries, therefore weakens domestic strength and leads to national decline. Similar arguments motivate *The Traveller*, which employs a comparative survey of the geographical and cultural advantages of various European nations to direct attention to the detrimental avarice and aggression of British trade and foreign policy.

The perspective of the outsider or traveller structures and heightens this commentary. The narrator’s peregrinations between city and village and between England and other nations set up patterns of contrasts through which Goldsmith explores broader social and geopolitical implications. Kaul argues that “the history of English poetry in the long eighteenth century is best written as a history of poets’ attempts to endow the nation with literary, cultural and iconic capital adequate to its burgeoning status as a global power” (18). By refusing to participate in the patriotic celebrations of poems such as Thomson’s *Liberty* or “Rule, Britannia!,” Goldsmith diverged from the sentiments of many of his contemporaries and adopted what may appear to be a radically anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist stance. As early as 1978, A. Lytton Sells described the argument against enclosure and industrialism in *The Deserted Village* in terms that today would be called ecological (307–08).⁷ It is characteristic of Goldsmith’s conservative political philosophy that he chose to frame these radical sentiments through tried and proven poetics. Early reviews of *The Traveller* make it clear that critics appreciated the “return to the Augustan tradition”

⁷ Although Sells clearly has 1970s conditions in mind when he claims that Goldsmith “condemns without reserve all the ideals of the modern world,” particularly the pursuit of industrial development that is “creating hideous towns and polluted rivers” (307–08).

after the “experiments and excesses” of other English poets since Pope’s death, and in the dedications to both poems Goldsmith rejects such innovations (Lonsdale, *Poems* 627). Augustan verse, as Doody shows, embraces ambitious themes, and the rhyming couplet is a suitably mobile and flexible mode for carrying this poetry across large expanses of space and time (8; 263). In Doody’s account, one of the ways in which Augustan verse controls this generic variety is by pushing “the poet-self ‘I’” into prominence as the focus and unifying perspective, and therefore foregrounding the importance of the speaker in directing a text’s social commentary (73).

It may seem natural that an Irish author should criticise British imperialism and surprising only that he chose to adapt Pope’s poetics to do so. However, Robert W. Seitz presents convincing evidence that Goldsmith’s conservative politics were actually founded in his attempts to integrate his admiration for the English middle class with his fundamentally Irish Protestant outlook (408). In this important sense, Goldsmith *was* an outsider in England. Patrick Ward in *Exile, Emigration and Irish Writing* describes him as a “prototypical cultural hybrid,” and his Anglo-Irish background has only recently begun to receive more attention (63). Quintana claims that Goldsmith was unashamed of his ancestry and “never concealed or misrepresented his origin,” leaving unanswered the question of why explicit references to Ireland are so rare in his writings and why, when producing essays on themes of cultural difference and national character, he critiqued British society as if from the inside, even employing a Chinese narrator to do so (*Oliver Goldsmith* 5). This question deserves further exploration. As the letter quoted earlier reveals, Goldsmith complained of suffering anti-Irish prejudice when he first arrived in London. Stereotypes of the foolish provincial, or clown, colour Thomas Walsh’s 1928 portrait of this “brilliant, irresponsible Irishman” and many later accounts (355). Wolfgang Zach’s essay “Oliver Goldsmith on Ireland and the Irish: Personal Views, Shifting Attitudes, Literary Stereotypes” attempts to locate and define Goldsmith’s own views on his land of origin. Zach collates enough passages to suggest that Goldsmith was more “pro-Irish” than is commonly assumed, but his summaries are tellingly inconclusive. Nevertheless, because Goldsmith examines national character at such length, his own nationality remains relevant to any discussion of political themes in his work. *The Citizen of the World* deals most obviously with these topically political issues of national identity and imperialism that offer another important point of contact between the texts. Goldsmith’s Chinese characters (Lien

Chi Altangi, his friend Fum Hoam and his son Hingpo) open intriguing questions of the relationship between China, Ireland and Britain. On the one hand, Goldsmith's "rhetoric of humanistic cosmopolitanism" attempts to transcend these national boundaries. On the other hand, possibly as a result of Goldsmith's Anglo-Irish origins, Tao Zhijian observes that his perspective remains firmly Anglocentric and his greatest concern is with advocating benevolence for the benefit of Britain (20).

Nineteenth-century readers appreciated Goldsmith's works for their pathos and their moral virtues alike, and in my third chapter I discuss how this moral dimension is integral to their political arguments. Dixon describes *The Traveller* and *The Deserted Village* as "didactically passionate and socially committed," agreeing with Thomas Percy that both may be called "ethic poems" (117). One of Goldsmith's concerns was to align his conceptions of civic virtue and benevolence with the period's growing emphasis on sensibility and individual emotion. His ambivalence about this balance emerges in the "man of feeling" character whose excessive sensitivity and soft-heartedness act against him. Sir William Thornhill in his youth, Mr. Honeywood in *The Good Natured Man*, and the Man in Black in *The Citizen of the World* all display such "'romantic' (that is, impulsive and imprudent) generosity" (Dixon 95). Private despair is often accompanied in these texts by a contrary impulse towards communal compassion. Therefore, the traveller's homelessness and solitude urge him to seek happiness, but his sympathy for greater humankind means that he cannot find contentment amidst the unhappiness of others. Ingrid Horrocks places *The Traveller* within a genealogy of prospect poetry to show how Goldsmith's "houseless stranger" criticises the privileged position of earlier poets even as he mourns its loss, and translates the only meaningful community into one of shared suffering (675, 682). Similarly, in *The Deserted Village*, the narrator's nostalgia for his childhood manifests itself in a longing to return to an idealised rural community, and leads him to deplore the wider historical conditions that have caused its decline. For critics inclined to view Goldsmith as a comic satirist or orator these expressions of feeling are hooks to engage readers with his arguments. Therefore, for Hopkins the opening lines of *The Traveller* are "designed to win the reader's pity," and the traveller's "increasing emotional involvement with his meditation" becomes "perhaps the central device of persuasion" that draws the reader in (71, 75). It is therefore ironic that, as I have noted, the emotional appeal of Goldsmith's traveller's laments have tended to outlast their rhetoric.

Once again, we can see here some of the complications attending mid-century literature. While for Kaul the poetry of this period is publicly- and nationally-orientated, for Sitter it retreats from these broad political and historical concerns to engage in a search for imaginative intensity communicated by “solitary writers for solitary readers.” His term for the uncertainty surrounding the relation of these figures to public life is “literary loneliness,” a term that seems to encapsulate perfectly the sense of isolation expressed again and again by Goldsmith’s narrators (9). However, while we may pity Altangi’s editor, that discontented “solitary animal,” his references to “political systems” remind us that his peripheral position is socially created and socially defined. In a recent essay on *The Traveller* and *The Deserted Village*, Roman Kazmin concludes that these works grapple with the erosion of “traditional moral relationships based on the idea of virtue” by economic relationships of exchange; that what Goldsmith is advocating is a “moral economy” deeply intertwined with representations of English landscape and national identity (667). The hint of oxymoron about the phrase “moral economy” is fitting for an author presided over, in Peter Brigg’s words, by a “muse of disjunction” and whose works often reveal an inability to rest between contrary impulses or to resolve them (252). The contradictory position of the anonymous hack or outsider who attempts to assume the authority of social critic therefore seems a good place to begin.

Chapter One

Goldsmith and Mid-Century Literary Culture

Essayist and “True Critic”

Oliver Goldsmith adopted the position of cultural critic from the outset of his literary career, when he worked as a professional journalist within the London periodicals market. This popular publishing milieu with its commercial constraints shaped his conception of his role, his literary critical principles, and his approach to the business of writing, including his use of personae. It is important therefore to begin by situating a discussion of his later works in this early period. To speak of Goldsmith’s “career” does imply a narrative of progress, or at least a coherent development across time that in his case is conspicuously lacking. As Donoghue observes, “[i]t is ironic that the eighteenth-century author who perhaps best understood the relationships that lead to the formation of a literary career never really had one himself, in the sense that the disparate nature of his publications makes it impossible to analyse the trajectory of his writing” (88). Nevertheless, considerable portions of the works I examine here originate in Goldsmith’s journalism. *The Citizen of the World* began as a newspaper column, *The Traveller* has antecedents in essays from 1760 and 1762, and *The Deserted Village* expands upon “A Revolution in Low Life” published eight years earlier. Among the key concerns these works explore, the question of the author’s position in the literary and commercial relationships of mid-century London remains central to Goldsmith’s critique of contemporary British culture.

From 1757 to 1762, Goldsmith supplemented his income from translations and popular biographies by working as a reviewer and essayist for at least nine different periodicals, including his own short-lived production, the *Bee*. “[P]eriodicals as a collective were a central cultural presence” in the mid-century literary market, well adapted to its demands for large volumes of cheap, novel and varied printed matter (Donoghue 2). However, their frequency of publication, wide readership and miscellaneous subject matter placed particular demands upon authors. Periodical publications potentially offered authors a large audience. Successful essays could

achieve a longer life and greater status as bound volumes, and *The Citizen of the World* and *Essays by Mr. Goldsmith* (1765) both made this transition from coffee-house ephemera to private libraries. There were disadvantages also. The writer who exchanged the patron for the bookseller, Goldsmith complained in 1759, was obliged to produce “tedious compilations, and periodical magazines” by volume rather than quality, leaving little time or inclination for fine composition (1: 316). One result was a lack of originality; authors became skilled at adapting, compiling and plagiarising. This has proved a historic problem for critics of the three texts I examine here. Many of the hundred-plus letters of *The Citizen of the World*, for example, show evidence that Goldsmith often met newspaper deadlines by translating and adapting from other sources he had to hand. His tendency to recycle extended to his poetry: Johnson found *The Deserted Village*, arguably the most original of the three works, “sometimes too much the echo of his ‘Traveller’” (Boswell 236). This repetition arose in part because Goldsmith returned to thematic concerns that remained unresolved, and because certain strategies helped address these. The outsider persona, I suggest, formed one of these strategies as well as being a practical measure.

Until his name first appeared on the title page of *The Traveller* in 1764, Goldsmith wrote anonymously. Personae, either developed into characters like “Mr. Spectator” or in the simplest form of labels like “A Cosmopolite,” were a staple feature of the Addisonian essay, review notice or letter to the editor common in newspapers and journals. Goldsmith adopted such public voices because they were expedient, but also because they gave him the freedom to explore the writer’s function as cultural commentator through the different positions from which he addressed readers. The speakers he employed needed both to attract the attention of a popular readership and “to establish his credibility as a reliable social observer, scholar, or critic” (Taylor 28). While Goldsmith worked within the London press, these personae were to varying degrees literary figures themselves, knowledgeable judges and satirists of the city’s print culture. However, as he removed himself from the milieu, he increasingly sought genres and narrators symbolic of retreat and disillusionment. The Chinese Lien Chi Altangi, who moves among booksellers and fashionable society, gives way to the solitary speakers of *The Traveller* and *The Deserted Village*. Even in his early depictions of the literary world, Goldsmith’s personae are placed at a distance. As Taylor observes, he favoured the device of a foreign correspondent well-travelled enough to observe his own society at a slight remove. Not only was

Goldsmith aware of being an Irish “cultural outsider,” he also recognised that such a persona could provide a nonpartisan, objective mask—not least as a defense against attacks in the press (110).

In his social criticism, Goldsmith attempted to adopt an impartial but authoritative stance that emerged in part from his work as a reviewer. Review journals altered the landscape of mid-century publishing by establishing a new market for popular literary criticism. Their sudden appearance in 1749 with Ralph Griffiths’ *Monthly Review* brought about lasting changes in the practices of authors and booksellers and their relationship with the reading public. Goldsmith reviewed for Griffiths from April to September 1757 and for Tobias Smollett’s competing *Critical Review* for three months at the beginning of 1759.¹ Frank Donoghue’s *The Fame Machine: Book Reviewing and Eighteenth-Century Literary Careers* is the only study to devote sustained attention to the importance of Goldsmith’s periodical criticism for shaping his subsequent cultural commentary.² As a reviewer Goldsmith partook of the reviews’ authority, but as an author he shared the concerns of other “hack” writers about their diminishing status and control over their work. Donoghue argues that with the decline of patronage “authorship became increasingly defined in popular criticism” and therefore reviewing “described, and indeed made possible” literary careers (3). He makes the convincing claim that even Goldsmith’s early work displays a “sophisticated understanding” of how literary culture had become a three-cornered contest, with writers and reviewers vying for the attention of readers, whose opinions (and purchasing choices) ultimately determined a publication’s reputation and sales (86).³ Goldsmith’s understanding, however, did not translate to easy success.

Goldsmith fitted the “profile,” as Taylor puts it, of the professional reviewer: “diversity of interest, facility with foreign languages, knowledge of European culture, and financial desperation” (31). He was also concerned with the social role of

¹ Griffiths kept a file recording the authors of each notice for the *Monthly*, allowing us to attribute Goldsmith’s contributions with some certainty, but no such records exist for the *Critical* (*Coll. Works* 1:3, 146).

² The *Bee* essay “A Resverie” [*sic*], from which Donoghue borrows his title, is a satire on an increasingly commercialised republic of letters and suggests that by 1759 Goldsmith was very conscious of the disparity between popularity and literary merit.

³ While Donoghue convincingly demonstrates the impact of the reviews upon Goldsmith’s critical outlook, his later argument focuses upon the plays and so shows Goldsmith as far more in control of his public reception than he appears in his poetry.

criticism. Following the *Critical*'s lead, there was growing consensus between the two dominant reviews that they should not only impose order on the ever-increasing number of works flooding off the presses, but fulfill a corresponding demand for "uniform standards, norms, [and] guidelines" by which to evaluate them (Donoghue 17). Conservative commentators like Goldsmith and Smollett were worried that printed material was increasing in quantity at the expense of quality, and that readers were losing the ability to discern what they should be reading. Review journals proposed to inform them. In a typical passage, the *Monthly* declared that "Criticism is the result of Judgement, and the perfection of Taste. It ... teaches when to applaud, and when to censure, with reason" (14 1756: 528). Goldsmith clearly agreed, stating in an early dramatic review: "To direct our taste, and conduct the Poet up to perfection, has ever been the true Critic's province" (1: 10). While in his essays he might denounce dull pedantry and urge others to "write what you think, regardless of the critics," his repeated complaints about critics' power (echoed in many letters, pamphlets, poems and prefaces at the time) suggest that he believed that the reviews boosted both reputations and sales (1: 317).⁴

The authority of the review journals therefore offered a potential solution to the problem of defining and addressing a readership. If it was indeed possible for the critic to "direct" readers' tastes, reviewers could help strengthen authors' precarious positions until they resembled those they had occupied in the days of aristocratic patronage and coterie audiences. One of their "key rhetorical strategies" for reforming taste, however, was to separate authors and readers into mutually exclusive groups, and then to claim that their views aligned with and represented those of "elite readers" (Donoghue 34). Constantly reiterating their obligations to their fellow readers and addressing them using the inclusive "we," the anonymous reviewers sought to establish solidarity with the book-buying public (Forster, "Review Journals" 182–85). For aspiring authors like Goldsmith this tendency of the reviews to side with their customers represented a potential threat. If instead of encouraging genius, critics showed themselves to be pedants and false connoisseurs, writers were better "to appeal from the tribunal of criticism to that of the people"—the same people, however, whose literary taste was in doubt (1: 318).

⁴ From 1750 onwards, material from reviews often appeared in book advertisements, suggesting that booksellers believed that critical notices could influence profits. Disputatious letters and notices naturally improved sales of the Reviews themselves (Forster, "Introduction" 9).

In his first essay periodical, Goldsmith attempted to create an authorial persona who as a book-trade “insider” also appealed to readers. The weekly paper the *Bee* was not a success, surviving for just eight numbers from 6 October to 24 November 1759. The essay form “presupposes an independent observer, a specific object, and a sympathetic reader,” and the *Tatler* had established that the observer in such a series should be a “fictional author-editor” (Good 4, 56). Goldsmith greatly admired Addison’s *Spectator* and Johnson’s *Rambler*, with their memorable narrators and moral commentary conveyed with stylistic elegance and wit. Another model was the *Connoisseur*’s “Mr. Town, Critic and Censor-General,” whom Goldsmith described in a review as the ideal “*Friend of Society*,” a “cheerful companion” who is at once “perfectly satirical, yet perfectly good-natured” (1: 14). The “sympathetic reader” was harder to define. The *Bee*’s fictional author is notable mainly for being accommodating to his audience to the point of apology while displaying increasing indignation at their indifference. He is well versed in the periodical trade, satirising its advertising promises of “extraordinary pages of *letter press*, or three beautiful prints,” but discovers that no-one wants the “wit and learning” he offers in their stead (1: 356).

This lack of demand probably resulted from the fact that his offerings were neither fresh nor original. Taylor estimates that around half of the forty-two pieces in the *Bee*’s eight numbers are compiled and translated from other publications, including Goldsmith’s own works and reviews (81). The mixture had a lukewarm reception; William Kenrick in the *Monthly* observed that its subject matter was “already sufficiently worn out” (22 1760: 39). Moreover, the *Bee* adhered too closely to the outmoded tradition of the mildly reforming single-author periodical and omitted the military and political news that were the real fodder for the press of the day. In an article on the persona of the *Connoisseur*, Robert D. Spector comments that “at mid-century with the outbreak of the Seven Years’ War, it proved fatal to have personae suggestive of frivolity or levity,” such as the bee who flits from flower to flower (qtd. in Taylor 84). Goldsmith soon abandoned this approach in favour of a more politically-engaged persona. Nonetheless, Donoghue suggests that he never lost sight of the institutional power of the reviews and attempted in his own work to adopt a similar generalised and wide-ranging perspective on British society (86–87). His personae, too, began to range further afield. This change marked his shift away from

merely advocating polite taste towards addressing the social and political causes that he saw underpinning its decline, including the turbulent international situation.

The Seven Years' War from 1756 to 1763, which involved all the major European powers but particularly England and France, coincided almost exactly with Goldsmith's journalistic career. During these war years the staple diet of City periodicals was fresh foreign news, which travelled through the established social and economic networks between coffee houses, commercial customers, and the press (Taylor 106–07). This demand for overseas intelligence inspired a more general desire for real or fictional literature concerning other lands. Taylor notes that “interest and exchange in foreign books peaked between the years 1759 and 1762,” perhaps also as a result of intensified curiosity about Britain's new overseas possessions, and the urge to assess British progress relative to other nations (109). In such a climate, news and critique emanating from a fictional traveller was more likely to appeal. Essays such as Goldsmith's series “A Comparative View of Races and Nations” for the *Royal Magazine*, in which an Englishman returns home after fifteen years' absence, could combine balanced analysis with nationalist self-congratulation. In his *grave and learned Chinese Philosopher* he created another such voyager who catered to the fascination with the foreign and exotic in an essentially English setting.

The Chinese Letters and the *Public Ledger*

The “Chinese Letters” that became *The Citizen of the World* combined the proven essay format with that common eighteenth-century figure, the fictional oriental traveller, to produce Goldsmith's first periodical success. The letters' popularity was partly due to the newspaper in which they appeared and its skill in exploiting the periodicals market for monetary gain.⁵ John Newbery launched *The Public Ledger, or, Daily Register of Commerce and Intelligence* on 12 January 1760 and the first letter from the Chinese traveller Lien Chi Altangi appeared shortly afterwards on 24 January. As its title suggests, the *Ledger* was primarily a commercial paper that relied upon advertising revenue. During the war, it devoted increasing space to reporting maritime and military movements, but included lighter pieces to

⁵ One of the *Ledger*'s innovations was to be the first of the four London dailies to respond to rises in taxes on newspapers and advertisements by printing sixteen columns instead of the standard twelve (Bertelsen 152). The usual format consisted of letters, short essays and theatre news on page one, and foreign and shipping news on page two, followed by two pages of advertisements. The Chinese Letters occupied one or two columns on the front page.

broaden its appeal. Prior relates that Newbery contracted Goldsmith “to furnish papers of an amusing character twice a week” for 100 pounds per annum (1: 356). Although there is evidence from his letters that Goldsmith had been considering the device of an oriental narrator earlier, the *Public Ledger*’s emphasis upon foreign news may have influenced Altangi’s origins, just as Newbery may have requested the letters’ comedic elements. One of the ironies of the series is that Goldsmith’s satirical assaults upon rapacious booksellers and colonising traders occur within the pages of a publication serving City financiers.

From the *Monthly Review*’s comment that the Chinese letters were “supposed to have contributed not a little towards the success of that Paper,” it appears that they fulfilled Newbery’s expectations and that their satire did not repel readers (26 1762: 477). There is little other information about the reception of the letters, apart from internal evidence implying that they were considered insufficiently Chinese. As I will discuss further below, Goldsmith was ambivalent towards the craze for Asian tales and intended his traveller’s observations to reflect most clearly upon English culture. It is worth noting, then, that neighbouring columns from the *Public Ledger* in early 1760 indicate that readers approached the letters as standard offerings in the oriental mode. On 4 March, “T. W.” claims that his humorous pseudo-Asian piece “belongs to your Chinese correspondent, for a gentleman dressed in the Eastern manner, had just past by me at the time it was found.” After less than three months, Altangi was apparently recognisable enough to be appropriated by other satirists. Two days later, “Letitia Traffick” writes that she is a convert to her father’s *Ledger*: instead of “creditor, debtor, per contra, and a heap of stuff I know nothing about” she finds the first page “so suitable to my taste”—“I admire of all things your Chinese.” Presumably Newbery or whoever wrote this editorial puff is using Goldsmith’s column to position the paper for a young female readership. On March 19, there is a letter apparently from a genuine reader who thinks that one Chinese Letter relating a tale of faithless spouses “contains some admirable hints for a theatrical production” and should be adapted for the stage. “We have already seen the Orphan of China,” the correspondent continues, linking Altangi’s correspondence to Arthur Murphy’s play performed at Drury Lane in 1759. In the *Critical Review* Goldsmith had expressed disapproval of Murphy’s *Orphan* for pandering to the growing taste for the oriental; this letter implies that at least one reader interpreted Goldsmith’s columns as a serious and not satirical appeal to the vogue (1: 170–71).

In the light of his commitment to the public and reforming role of literature, it is perhaps surprising that Goldsmith did not take advantage of the responsive periodical format to communicate more directly with his audience. Altangi's fictional editor, although present only in the occasional footnote (his Preface to *The Citizen of the World* was added later) interposes himself between the Chinese correspondent and *Ledger* readers. This strengthens Altangi's observer status but deprives him of the opportunity to write back. The closest Goldsmith comes to exploiting the newspaper form is to incorporate current events—whether war rumours or the summers' panic over mad dogs—into the appropriate letters as Altangi himself consults the English papers. Here, it is worth contrasting Goldsmith's oriental spy with the *Spectator*-type persona of "The Visitor." This series from "Mr. Philanthropy Candid" (whose father advises him to "consider yourself as a citizen of the world") ran concurrently with Goldsmith's, but incorporated real or fictional reader correspondence (*PL* 24 Apr. 1760). William Dodd, Church of England preacher and forger, was its probable author. In July 1760, Dodd neatly adapted Goldsmith's successful formula to treat his favourite Christian themes. On 25 July 1760, Visitor 27 published a letter from "Amurat," who is "neither a native of *England*, nor a professor of the christian religion" but who has lived a long time in the country with "*a man in black* (to borrow Altangi's phrase)" as his "friend and familiar." Amurat responds to the Chinese letter of 2 July, in which Altangi describes a visitation dinner of gluttonous, boorish priests. He has also attended a visitation dinner, he reports, but found it a considerably more dignified occasion.

In contrast to Goldsmith's, Dodd's Visitor column was an outlet for more self-conscious literary "in-jokes" to promote his own and the *Ledger*'s reputation. His most famous fictitious correspondents of 1760 were "Tristram Shandy" and other characters capitalising on Sterne's meteoric fame (Bandry 311–12). On 14 May, the *Ledger*'s front page printed letters from Shandy and Altangi's son Hingpo side by side, but Goldsmith never exploited the opportunity for a closer fictional exchange. Altangi maintains his dispassionate critical distance, making an oblique reference to the fashion for "*Bawdy and Pertness*" in contemporary novels (the defining phrase "such as Tristram Shandy" was only added in 1762) (2: 221). Nor did Goldsmith build up a sense of internal temporal integrity and exploit this for irony or narrative tension in the manner of epistolary fictions. Although he does this to a limited degree, most of the *Ledger* pieces are essentially interchangeable. Their exotic narrator aside,

the Chinese Letters bear many similarities to Goldsmith's periodical essays. They cover similar topics: London life and entertainments, politics and party, fashions and fads, and the paradoxes and frailties of human nature. When he edited them into *The Citizen of the World*, Goldsmith was able to rearrange their order and insert two additional previously-published pieces, "A City Night Piece" from the *Bee* and "On the distresses of the poor, exemplified in the life of a private centinel" from the *British Magazine* for June 1760. When compiling *Essays by Mr. Goldsmith*, he used nine Chinese letters and few "oriental" trimmings needed to be removed. The "pseudo-oriental" character of many of the letters is inconsistent enough to allow a relatively smooth transition between publications.⁶ Goldsmith was evidently most concerned to retain a neutral perspective and the flexibility to address whatever topic arose.

Revised and edited, the letters were republished in 1762 in two duodecimo volumes as *The Citizen of the World*. This is the form in which they have received the most critical attention, and which most exposes their internal inconsistencies. Wayne Booth argues in a 1976 article against the New Critical tendency to judge the collection as an organic whole. He points out that Hopkins and Quintana ignore over one hundred letters in order to demonstrate its unity and narrative continuities, whereas he proposes that around thirty letters are unclassifiable in any larger scheme (86). Contemporary reviewers, furthermore, judged it by standards of pleasure and utility rather than coherence. The *Critical Review* advised readers not to judge *The Citizen of the World* by the "standard of originality" but to make allowance for its periodical origins. As newspaper columns, the letters were "necessarily calculated to the meridian of the multitude" and admirably met the requirement to "supply a variety of tastes with daily entertainment" (13 1762: 398). Goldsmith apparently made little attempt to tighten their narrative structure or remove contradictions. According to Friedman, using the evidence of an accounts entry from the printer's shop of William Strahan, Goldsmith carefully proofread and revised *The Citizen of the World*, but the majority of revisions are stylistic (1: xi). It is difficult to discuss such a miscellaneous work without resorting to some generalisations that misrepresent the whole. Booth focuses upon Goldsmith's artistic skill in appealing to his readers, a criterion which usefully encompasses the editorial skills of extracting and adapting as well as the

⁶ Hamilton Jewett Smith in 1926 named the genre "pseudo-Oriental letters" describing them as "works in which a foreigner is pictured satirizing the country he visits in a series of letters, made public in alleged translation from the original tongue" (39). Lennon (124) pointed me to this first use of the term.

virtue of “imaginative richness,” and therefore allows him to survey the collection more comprehensively than others (95). In this study, I draw out some recurring themes of the collection that, although important, are not necessarily found throughout. I will also be treating *The Citizen of the World* as a set of “Chinese” letters, within a broader discussion of Goldsmith’s outsider personae. This requires some acknowledgment that, as mentioned above, many pieces give little or no indication that the narrating “I” is a foreigner.⁷

The genre of fictional correspondence from an Eastern traveller was predominantly an early-eighteenth-century development and well established by mid-century. It combined elements of popular observer or spy fictions such as Ned Ward’s *London Spy* with a contemporary fascination with travel accounts and the orient. There were many models available to Goldsmith that demonstrated the genre’s comic and critical potential. He was already familiar with Giovanni Marana’s popular *Letters of a Turkish Spy at Paris* (1684, English translation 1687) (*Letters* 5). Montesquieu’s highly successful *Lettres persanes* (1721) allied the form to an intellectual and philosophical critique of European culture, while George Lyttelton’s imitative *Letters from a Persian in England to his Friend at Ipsahan* (1735) adapted it to the local political aim of opposing Walpole’s government (Roosbroeck 433). Goldsmith borrowed from Lyttelton in at least one letter. The first name he chose for his traveller probably came from another partisan work, Horace Walpole’s *A Letter from Xo Ho, a Chinese Philosopher at London, to his Friend Lien Chi at Pekin* (1757), a short but trenchant satire provoked by his outrage at the execution of Admiral Byng.

Possibly because he admired Voltaire, who upheld the nation as a model for the West, Goldsmith decided upon China for Altangi’s nationality. Ros Ballaster figures the recycling of fictional representations of the region during this period as a Europe-wide game of “Chinese whispers,” with each account echoing and adjusting many others (203). The need to produce up to ten or eleven different pieces a month led Goldsmith to translate and adapt widely.⁸ Altangi’s letters are most indebted to the

⁷ As I will also discuss further below, the “English gentleman” voice of many of Goldsmith’s essays is to some extent a “foreign” persona for an Anglo-Irish writer.

⁸ After the initial four letters from 24 January, the *Public Ledger* published on average almost ten letters a month from February to October 1760. This average monthly figure then dropped to three letters, with none at all appearing in June 1761 and only one each in July and August (2: ix).

Lettres chinoises, ou Correspondence philosophique, historique et critique, entre un Chinois voyageur à Paris et ses correspondans à la Chine, en Moscovie, en Perse, et au Japon, an imitation of Montesquieu by Jean Baptiste de Boyer, Marquis d'Argens. First published in 1739, the work was translated as *Chinese Letters* (1741) and *The Chinese Spy* (1751), although Goldsmith used the 1755 French edition (2: x). Its title at once suggests its links with his work, and Ronald S. Crane and Hamilton Jewett Smith have shown that Goldsmith borrowed liberally from *Lettres chinoises* (87–91). Boyer's *Lettres juives* (1738) also supplied several passages.

Like other eighteenth-century fictions of the oriental observer, *The Citizen of the World* also draws upon travel accounts, often presented in epistles.⁹ For geographical and cultural information, Goldsmith relied mainly upon the third edition of Louis le Comte's *Nouveaux mémoires sur l'état present de la Chine* (1697), and Edward Cave's English translation of J. B. du Halde, *A Description of the Empire of China*, published in two volumes in 1738 and 1741 (2: x). From these he took suitably exotic names and maxims of Confucius as well as descriptions of customs, although he was often careless and inaccurate when transcribing these facts. His lack of attention to such authenticating detail is at least in keeping with his narrator's character as a "philosophic wanderer" more concerned with the larger questions of humanity and the slippery task of understanding the English people. In one letter Altangi satirises "*the manner of modern voyagers*" in their accounts by describing for Fum Hoam a journey from London to Kentish Town and dwelling on such exotic sights as turnpike gates and dunghills (2: 471–72). Nevertheless, the qualities Goldsmith assigns to his oriental persona, including those more usually attributed to European *philosophes*, owe much to the images of China circulated in travel accounts. Percy G. Adams in *Travelers and Travel Liars*, drawing upon work by Virgile Pinot, points out that the Jesuits Du Halde and Father Charles Le Gobien selectively edited their letters to present Chinese society as peaceful, enlightened and free from superstition. Du Halde's *Description de la Chine* therefore reinforces a Western myth of the "Oriental natural philosopher" very much alive in the depiction of Altangi (196–97).

⁹ At least one of Goldsmith's possible sources was itself a spurious fiction. Thomas A. Reisner traces his reference to the black teeth of Chinese women to George Psalmanazar's *An Historical and Geographical Description of Formosa* (1704).

Authorship and Imposture in *The Citizen of the World*

“The writer who would inform, or improve, his countrymen, under the assumed character of an Eastern Traveller, should be careful to let nothing escape him which might betray the imposture.” So Goldsmith declared in the *Monthly Review*’s notice of *Letters from an Armenian in Ireland*; the same journal six years later would comment that Lien Chi Altangi “has nothing Asiatic about him” (1: 90–91; *MR* 26 1763: 477). Christopher Brooks sees the notion of “imposture” as central to *The Citizen of the World*, and critics of Goldsmith’s own pretence as a Chinese national have noted the shifts and fissures in his representation of his persona (124). Lien Chi Altangi is first introduced by his merchant friend in Amsterdam as “a native of Honan in China” who was once a mandarin and has learned to converse with the English in Canton, though he remains “intirely a stranger to their manners and customs” (2: 16). His fluent command of the English language seems inconsistent with his total ignorance of the English way of life, an early indication that Goldsmith will have him perform multiple roles, some contradictory. We are told that he is a philosopher and seems an “honest man,” both important recommendations for a credible social critic. Interestingly, Goldsmith makes no concerted attempt to disguise Altangi as a genuine foreigner, even in the editor’s footnotes that appear in later letters. His correspondent has only an editor, for example, not a translator claiming to be working from the original Chinese. Altangi’s perspective is sufficiently satirical from the outset to suggest that only the most literal-minded reader would have been taken in.¹⁰

Altangi remains the central figure throughout, but Goldsmith employs two other Chinese correspondents to pass commentary upon his situation. Seven letters are from Altangi’s teenage son Hingpo, and four from his erudite friend Fum Hoam, “first president of the ceremonial academy at Peking” to whom most of his letters are addressed.¹¹ The historical practice of anthologising favourite extracts has foregrounded the cast of entertaining English characters at the expense of these figures, whose personalities are never fully developed. Hingpo’s tales of his

¹⁰ Brooks claims that the oriental persona “was at an early point in the publication of the Chinese Letters taken as a realistic construction,” but he draws his evidence from “various brief quotes” in *Goldsmith: the Critical Heritage* that I have been unable to locate (125).

¹¹ Again, this name does not seem to be Goldsmith’s invention. Thomas-Simon Gueullette’s *Chinese Tales: or the Wonderful Adventures of the Mandarin Fum-Hoam* was translated into English in 1725. It bears no other similarity to Goldsmith’s work (note to 2: 21).

adventures, though providing a sub-narrative and some glimpses into his character, serve more to pad out the last *Ledger* installments and to allow Altangi another opportunity to display his phlegmatic philosophy. Hingpo's fate as slave and lover represents the sudden changes of state and fortune of one exposed to the world, while Fum Hoam's is the steady voice of settled wisdom advising Altangi not to seek happiness in wandering—one of many echoes of Johnson's *Rasselas* in the work.

In contrast with the more serious, politically-aligned oriental figures of Lyttleton, Walpole and Montesquieu, Altangi plays a remarkable variety of roles. He is the essayist satirising culture from the inside, and the foreign observer estranging that same culture from the outside. Thus he combines, with mixed success, the polite worldliness of a coffee-shop commentator with the naïve ignorance of a traveller exploring an unfamiliar town. As an outsider in a group, he has a unique freedom to move among its members, observe their behaviour and record their candid conversation (Dalnekoff 121). For Charles Knight, he “looks at human pretensions in relation to human character” from multiple perspectives to sustain the topical versatility of the periodical form, but also to imply that certain experiences are universal (363). To the extent to which Altangi functions as the tool of a satirist spearing human vanities, his particular nationality matters less than the fact that he is a foreign visitor. Brooks points out that Goldsmith seems more interested in China “as a vehicle for ironic discourse” than as a genuine object of cross-cultural curiosity, and that “the method—imposture—becomes more important than the explicit vehicle—the oriental tale” (126). Altangi enables the work's irony, but the often-transparent fiction of his Asiatic nature makes him a victim of this same irony.

The fact that Lien Chi Altangi is Chinese may seem to undermine his critical authority, but in fact his origin is central to Goldsmith's ongoing analysis of British culture. According to Prior, Goldsmith abandoned his original plan to “make his hero a native of Morocco or Fez” because these were “barbarous” countries. “A Chinese was then chosen as offering more novelty of character than a Turk or Persian; and [for] being equally advanced on the scale of civilization” (1: 360). Prior's phrasing is revealingly ambiguous: by failing to state whether he is equating Chinese culture to that of Turkey and Persia, or to that of the West, he avoids the question of where China sits in relation to Britain on this scale. As I will discuss later in more detail, one of China's advantages for Goldsmith is precisely this uncertainty around whether it

was imagined as a realm of ancient wisdom or of falsehoods and lingering superstitions.

This double image of China is particularly noticeable in analyses of the all-important relationship between a nation's literary culture and its level of civilisation. At the height of the Chinese scale was the mandarin, "the deeply learned literary scholar and poet who," as David Porter notes, "occupied the highest positions in government and society" ("Sinicizing Early Modernity" 305). The appeal of such a figure to an ambitious author concerned about his profession's social status is obvious. Porter observes that Thomas Percy, Goldsmith's Irish contemporary and fellow anthologist, reconstructed his bardic "cultural hero" along these lines ("Sinicizing Early Modernity" 305). Significantly, Altangi is a *former* mandarin who has fallen from favour by leaving China against the Emperor's wishes, and his association with merchants in a commercial newspaper brings the disinterested scholar into contact with more mercenary popular culture. In his editorial Preface, Goldsmith likens *The Citizen of the World* to a commodity in the "Fashion Fair" of the literary marketplace, where oriental goods are in demand (2: 14). In this "market-carnival" of London Altangi is engaged in trading "ideas, misrepresentations, half-truths and subtle impostures" in order to expose the pretensions of his society (Brooks 127). The critical light he sheds upon the vogue for the Chinese "manner" in literature constitutes part of Goldsmith's project to reform English readers. Goldsmith therefore places his "small cargo of Chinese morality" among the "misrepresentations" of travellers and orientalist traders in the Fashion Fair, but remains aware that he cannot afford to withdraw from the fairground altogether (2: 15).

Throughout the collection Altangi continually comes into contact with members of this book trade and their products. Some nineteen of the Chinese letters concern literature and the theatre, booksellers, authors and reviewers, newspapers and periodicals, and the reading habits of the English. None of these pieces is derived from Boyer or other sources, and they therefore represent a distinctive theme of Goldsmith's pseudo-oriental collection. Donoghue summarises his approach: "[t]he fiction of a man witnessing the everyday business of culture for the first time, and describing it often as a foreign convolution of Chinese cultural customs, allows Goldsmith to pose, in a plausible way, basic questions about the production and consumption of literature" (94). Altangi's essential attributes here are his "oriental" gravity and detachment; as a "philosopher" he is cosmopolitan and well-read yet

placed at an ideal distance to observe the corruption of the London book trade. In his role as *eiron*, he accepts or pretends to accept appearances at face value in order to satirically expose their falsehood, yet he is not innocently free of preconceived views.

Altangi believes that the arts should be the province of learned scholars in a hierarchy of “just subordination,” subject to the patronage and licence of their rulers, whose shared purpose is to civilise and morally improve others. According to Confucius, he tells us, these scholars have a “duty to unite society more closely, and to persuade men to become citizens of the world” (2: 85–86). This perspective resembles an idealised image of the enlightened public sphere, or the myth promoted by earlier Augustan poets of a stable social order comprising individuals of fundamentally similar nature and outlook (Siskin 374). Since “*the republic of letters* is a very common expression among the Europeans,” Altangi expects to find a united community of London *philosophes* that conforms to this rhetoric (2: 85).

Instead, he discovers a fiercely competitive market where authors and critics clamber over each other to court public opinion and fight for reputation, an “anarchy of literature” without rules or boundaries (2: 85). What strikes the foreign observer immediately is the sheer volume of published material. At a rate of 23 books a day, Altangi calculates that 8,395 new works appear every year, yet he observes an ironic gap between the encyclopedic learning this “amazing fund of literature” implies and the level of knowledge the English actually display. Believing that literature exists to instruct, the mandarin Altangi casts doubts on the qualifications of English writers by observing that whereas in China the emperor takes personal note of the doctors “who profess authorship,” in England “every man may be an author that can write, for they have by law a liberty ... of saying what they please” (2: 124). Goldsmith employs Altangi’s foreign voice in all its artless irony here to point to the detrimental effects of the decline of patronage, while at the same time favourably contrasting English freedom of speech with oriental paternalism. Cheap print and an expanding readership create the public sphere, but they also erode the distinction between the enlightened scholar and the person who merely knows how to hold a pen.

When Altangi wonders “where writers could be found in sufficient number to throw off the books I saw daily crowding from the press,” the man in black takes him to a club of authors, a parody of a literary salon among the professional denizens of Grub Street. Four satirical portraits introduce “doctor Nonentity, a metaphysician,” a poet and balladeer, a political lawyer who “finds *seasonable thoughts* upon every

occasion,” and a versatile hack who “throws off an eastern tale to perfection” (2: 125–26). Disillusioned with the idea of original merit and jaded by readers’ neglect, the club requires that any member wishing to present his own work pay a fine of sixpence for the privilege and an additional shilling for every hour he reads. After paying his fee, the poet recites twenty lines adapted from a sample “heroicomic poem” Goldsmith sent to his brother Henry in 1759, usually anthologised as “Description of an Author’s Bedchamber.”¹² This verse sketch of a writer’s humorously squalid garret should be guaranteed a sympathetic audience, but the club responds with contempt behind the poet’s back and only praises him to prevent him reciting more; he then sits down, as Altangi notes, “contended with the commendations for which he had paid” (2: 131). In this cynical transaction, a kind of self-publishing, even recognition among peers must be purchased. Petitioning the nobility for subscriptions is increasingly futile, the authors complain, leaving them reliant upon the booksellers, but Altangi’s encounters in other letters reveal these businessmen too to be driven entirely by public demand. If a book sells, they publish more “upon the same plan” until the mode or genre is exhausted and “the sated reader turns from it with a kind of literary nausea” (2: 387). One bookseller boasts of his ability to always tell readers what they want to hear: “Others may pretend to direct the vulgar, but that is not my way; I always let the vulgar direct me; wherever popular clamour arises, I always eccho the million” (2: 214). Because Altangi’s anthropological eye leads him to generalise, this particular bookseller comes to represent the type; we are never introduced to the others who “pretend” to instruct the public.

The problem here is not only that the London populace have neither “piety, taste, nor humour,” as the authors complain, but that conservative critics associated a decline in taste with wider social consequences (2: 131). As discussed earlier, Goldsmith shared to a degree the reforming vision of the reviews. Donoghue describes their aim here:

Underlying the rhetoric of the *Critical* was a conception of reading as an activity that clarifies social hierarchy, and that perceived the spread of reading as a potential threat to social stability that needed to be aggressively contained. In the theories of social entropy that circulated

¹² Goldsmith reworked these lines into the description of the alehouse in *The Deserted Village*, where he associates the meagre furnishings more firmly with frugality and homeliness.

throughout the century (but reached a fever pitch in the 1750s), reading could be seen as an agency of refinement, a process that would correct and sustain the cultural disposition of gentlemen “of candour and taste.” This ideology of reading often found a place in conservative attacks on luxury and the degeneration of English values ... the threat to traditional class divisions ... and the increasing possibilities for upward social mobility. (26)

Reading both promotes refinement and foments unrest, either reinforcing or destabilising class distinctions depending on the material being consumed and the class of reader consuming it. Brooks points out that Goldsmith’s satire upon *chinoiserie* in *The Citizen of the World*, which includes the pseudo-oriental genre itself, seeks to undermine a fad that crossed class boundaries and could symbolise lower- and middle-class aspirations towards a more “refined” lifestyle (125).¹³ Of course, the distinction between “refinement” and “luxury,” both long synonymous with Eastern opulence, was by no means clear. As Altangi argues, echoing Hume in “Of Luxury,” the pursuit of material comforts leads to increased pleasure and stimulates intellectual and philosophical development—but only if restrained within limits (2: 51–53).

Perhaps books are the ideal commodities to impose these limits and “correct the vices of the polite,” Altangi suggests in another letter as he struggles to rationalise the demand for new publications:

In proportion as society refines, new books must ever become necessary In a polite age, almost every person becomes a reader, and receives more instruction from the press than the pulpit. The preaching Bonse may instruct an illiterate peasant, but nothing less than the insinuating address of a fine writer can win its way to an heart already relaxed in all the effeminacy of refinement (2: 311–12).

This conclusion is deeply ambivalent. It is clear by this point that Goldsmith does not believe that the press inculcates more virtue than the preacher. The gendered language renders the writer as a suitor “insinuating” himself into the affections of a passively

¹³ In Robert Lloyd’s satirical poem “The Cit’s Country Box,” first published in the *Connoisseur* for 26 August 1756, the city tradesman and his wife retiring to their suburban seat add “a railing, all Chinese,” employ “Chinese artists, and designers” and have an oriental temple erected in their garden (66, 96, 102–04).

languid and feminised reader. This passage implies that authors must imitate the strategies of romances (epitomes of publications appealing to “every person”), therefore communicating a patronising lack of faith in readers’ abilities to appreciate a plain or unaffected argument.

Altangi’s commentary upon the book trade and its customers feeds into a wider debate that raged in the 1750s and 1760s—at least among those Taylor calls the “self-appointed guardians of English learning”—around the relationship between literature, commerce and the state of British national culture (19). The spectacular success of John Brown’s *An Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times* (1757), which ran into six editions alone in its first year of publication, reveals the extent to which theories of cultural and moral decline had become intertwined. Brown’s impassioned and rather wild polemic characterised the “ruling Character of the present times” as “a *vain, luxurious and selfish EFFEMINACY*.” One symptom and cause of this was the rise of reading for leisure rather than improvement and the “meagre *literary Diet* of Town and Country” (67). “It has been so long the practice to represent literature as declining,” Goldsmith commented in *An Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe* (1759), but Brown was claiming that matters had reached crisis point (1: 257).¹⁴ The *Enquiry* is not an explicit reply to Brown, but capitalizes on the *Estimate*’s success while offering a somewhat bitter retrospective on Goldsmith’s early writing career. It also represents an early statement of his commitment to a broad-based analysis of culture. Employing the same “pseudocosmopolitanism” he uses in *The Citizen of the World* and *The Traveller*, he surveys the polite learning of other nations from an Anglocentric perspective to draw conclusions about England (Donoghue 89).

Unsurprisingly, Altangi in *Citizen* declares that China too is “degenerating from her antient greatness; her laws are now more venal, and her merchants are more deceitful than formerly; the very arts and sciences have run to decay.” He points as an example to the inferior quality of recent “manufactures in porcelaine” in which “even Europe begins to excell us” (Du Halde, Goldsmith’s source here, also blames

¹⁴ Similar publications critiquing culture and the book trade include John Gilbert Cooper, *Letters Concerning Taste* (1754), John Campbell, *The Present State of Europe* (5th ed. 1756), and James Ralph, *The Case of Authors by Profession or Trade* (1758) (Donoghue 88). Brown’s work inspired *The Real Character of the Age* (1757) and myriad other replies, while Samuel Foote’s farce *The Author* (1757) took the debate onto the stage (Taylor 19–20).

European practices for the new deceitfulness of Chinese merchants) (2: 262). China becomes a test case for Hume's thesis advanced in "Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences" (1742), which John Scheffer identifies as an milestone text in the mid-century's transition away from progressivist theories (159). Hume posits that decline is natural and inevitable once the arts and sciences of any nation reach perfection, because perfect models discourage apprentice artists from imitation. Imported masterpieces may also depress native talent, which is why Italian paintings have retarded the progress of English artists (Scheffer 160). Altangi's China is isolated from both "foreign improvement" and "external revolutions;" therefore the empire's decline must be natural (the similes Goldsmith uses are of the seasons and the agricultural cycle). These "enlightened periods in every age have been universal" across the globe, as have periods of "barbarity;" therefore Confucius and Pythagoras appear as contemporaries whereas the only difference between mid-eighteenth-century China and England is that England has stagnated faster towards ignorance (264–65).

Goldsmith's position here resembles what David Porter in a recent essay calls "historical cosmopolitanism," that is "a recognition of the contemporaneity of historical time across national and cultural boundaries." Porter goes on to offer a fascinating list of parallel developments in eighteenth-century England and China, including, in literature, "a dramatic expansion in commercial publication" and an emphasis upon sensibility. Of course, the resemblance is superficial: Porter's anti-nationalist analysis aims to deconstruct the simplified "East-West pairings" and "sterile orientalist clichés" that through projects like Goldsmith's sought to define the West against its "antipode," China ("Sinicizing Early Modernity" 299–300). As I will discuss in more depth below, Goldsmith's gestures towards both philosophical and historical cosmopolitanism were ambivalent, contradictory and largely Anglocentric. Furthermore, his *Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe* rejects the idea of natural decline, arguing that "the seeds of excellence are sown in every age, and it is wholly owing to a wrong direction in the passions or pursuits of mankind that they have not received the proper cultivation" (1: 260). The difference in perspective may account for this discrepancy: the *Enquiry*'s narrator hopes to correct the direction of English readers by pointing out their faults, while Altangi cannot criticise the character of his countrymen without undermining his own integrity as the embodiment of non-English virtues.

Goldsmith also subscribed to Voltaire's view, echoed in Gerard's *Essay on Taste* (1759), that artists seeking to surpass time-honoured models succumb to the pursuit of novelty, which estranges their work from nature and eventually corrupts public taste. James Marriot and Joseph Warton, writing in the mid-1750s, concurred that innovation leads to affectation, but Warton added another point: literary quality deteriorates once criticism becomes too highly developed (Scheffer 162–64). Goldsmith's *Enquiry* remains undecided whether rules and judgments inhibit or cultivate authors. Perhaps his most original conclusion, and one point where his cosmopolitanism seems contradictory, is that, as there is no universal standard of taste, criticism should be nationally relative. However, he fails to resolve the question of whether critics in Britain can rise to the challenge "to point out the symptoms, to investigate the causes, and to direct to the remedies of the approaching decay," which is perhaps "the only subject in which criticism can be useful" (1: 258).

The Citizen of the World offers no answers, but rather displays a marked hardening of opinion towards reviewers, critics and "compilers," whom Altangi likens to Russian wolves who devour each other when new books to savage are scarce. Instead of imposing some order upon the "anarchy of literature" and guiding readers around its pitfalls, these commentators are a chief source of its conflict (2: 88). Antonia Forster identifies three ways in which the term "critic" was commonly applied in authors' prefaces at the time. There were the "critics" of theatre audiences and coffee-houses, the reviewers for magazines, and finally, the more classical figure defined by Samuel Johnson as "a man skilled in the art of judging of literature" ("Introduction" 5). During a visit to a play, the Man in Black points out to Altangi the first group, the judges of the pit, who are entirely ignorant of critical principles but have "assumed the right of being censors because there was none to contradict their pretensions." If anyone who can write can be an author, anyone who announces himself a "connoisseur" becomes one, thus bringing the qualifications for both roles into question (2: 90). In his analysis of Foster's third category, the *Dictionary's* primary definition, Donoghue notes that the three exemplary quotations Johnson chooses "are pejorative in exactly the same way: they imply that the real definition of 'critic' is 'a man who *pretends* to be skilled in the art of judging of literature,' and who does so in order to usurp a cultural authority that rightly belongs to authors" (33). Whereas Goldsmith as reviewer had stated that a "true Critic" should "direct our taste," Altangi satirises the charlatan who "pretends to take our feelings under his

care, teaches where to condemn, where to lay the emphasis of praise, and may, with as much justice, be called a man of taste, as the Chinese who measures his wisdom by the length of his nails.” Du Halde explains that long fingernails among Chinese scholars indicate their freedom from the necessity of working for a living; Altangi’s simile therefore separates further the productive author from the idle commentator (2: 88).

However, as Donoghue observes, Goldsmith is too experienced to underestimate the reviewers, and pre-empts their attacks in “an astonishing rhetorical tour de force” by predicting and answering all their probable responses in one letter (98). The pragmatic bookseller assures Altangi that he has hired a reviewer able to criticise any work: “Suppose you should take it into your head to publish a book, let it be a volume of Chinese letters for instance; write how you will, he shall shew the world you could have written better” (2: 216). This suggestion on 23 June 1760 in effect prepares readers for the advertisement at the end of the series in August 1761 that “these letters will shortly be published, in two Volumes of the usual Spectator Size,” although *The Citizen of the World* did not actually appear until May 1762 (2: 476). Through the bookseller’s dialogue with Altangi, Goldsmith predicts the critics’ preprogrammed reactions: if the work is too rigorously Chinese, it will repel English readers, but if Altangi displays his cosmopolitan knowledge he will be instantly condemned as “uneastern, quite out of character.” Exasperated, he protests that he “must either be natural or unnatural;” he cannot be both. “Be what you will, we shall criticize you,” is the bookseller’s reply, even in reference to a book still entirely hypothetical (2: 216–17).

By reducing the critic to another employee in the mechanised book trade, Goldsmith makes his “most cynical assault” on its institutions, “without offering the saving hope,” Donoghue adds, “of the man of taste” (99). Yet in a sense Altangi resembles this figure. Viewing the chaotic London scene through the eyes of a stable eastern civilization, he is able to detect falsehoods in supposed eastern tales and travel accounts but also in romantic novels with their improbable images of happiness. In several letters, in which the fiction of the naïve foreigner becomes particularly strained, he acts as literary critic. He assesses English poetry, for example, arguing in favour of the formal constraints of numbered metre and praising Johnson and Smollett as “poets in disguise” for their strength of sentiment and expression (2: 171). The authoritative perspective on culture has been transferred from the reviewer to the

detached and learned observer. Goldsmith revised his *Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe* extensively before his death (it was published posthumously in 1774), and a brief overview of his revisions reveals more strikingly this change in attitudes towards authorship and readers. Financially independent “gentlemen writers” disappear from his account, as does their hypothetical reforming influence over the class of professional authors. Critics, too, vanish, leaving only the “man of taste [who] stands neuter in this controversy, he seems placed in a middle station ... between learning and common sense” (1: 306, Donoghue 90–92).¹⁵ This figure’s position removes him from the “anarchy of literature” but deprives him of the institutional power of the press; neutral, he is also less effectual.

From Paternoster Row to Parnassus

Throughout Goldsmith’s writings, poetry proves the most sensitive indicator of literary—and therefore social and moral—decline, and it was to poetry that he turned to address these concerns most memorably in *The Traveller* and *The Deserted Village*. The accounts of the genre’s rise and fall in *Citizen* and the *Enquiry* indicate that Goldsmith’s own verse will attempt to address what he sees as a growing gulf between poetry and rhetoric. Treatises on taste such as Edmund Burke’s *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* usually distinguished these two uses of language as eliciting the highest aesthetic response. Goldsmith argues that historically, the separation of poetry and rhetoric increases with literary sophistication, as the “orator, philosopher and historian” usurp the poet’s groundbreaking linguistic innovations, forceful arguments and public presence (1: 264). Consequently, contemporary verse is either, as Altangi puts it, “a parcel of gaudy images” that fails to exercise the reason, or it is “too polite, classical, obscure and refined, to be read” (2: 388–89). Goldsmith opposes the pedantic adherence to Greek and Latin models, particularly when it encourages prosaic blank verse or a “disgusting solemnity of manner.” Rhyme and meter are desirable because they restrain in order to intensify, like the aperture of a fountain. Effective verse expresses strong sentiment, but is concise, striking, and sublime without being opaque

¹⁵ Although the sense of “neuter” here is “impartial,” the word at the time also carried the meaning of being of indeterminate gender and might also imply an effeminate male (“Neuter,” def. 3a). It therefore recalls connections made elsewhere in Goldsmith and Brown among refined taste, luxury and effeminacy.

(1: 318–19). Goldsmith's approach to poetry is conservative but shows a professional author's attentiveness to his audience. Reviewing Thomas Gray's *Odes* in 1757, Goldsmith argues that Pindar's lyrics belong to a historically specific context, and neither their classical form nor their flighty spirit will appeal to the more stolid eighteenth-century English character (1: 112–14). He advises Gray to "*Study the People*," and it is true that Gray's odes raised a general complaint of obscurity among his contemporaries while Goldsmith's verse was more immediately popular (Jones 67).

"Publishers hate poetry, and Paternoster Row is not Parnassus." Thus Richard Cumberland encapsulates the perceived mid-century divide between the booksellers and the muses (173). Yet while a successful play or novel might be more lucrative, poetry on serious themes retained a privileged status, as Goldsmith's career shows. *The Traveller, or A Prospect of Society* was published in December 1764, but the dedication in the form of a letter to Goldsmith's brother Henry states that "a part of this poem was formerly written to you from Switzerland," where Goldsmith was travelling in the summer of 1755. By the time the poem appeared Goldsmith had achieved some reputation as a prose stylist, but *The Traveller* elevated him "from hack to literary celebrity;" in effect, with fewer than five hundred lines of verse, he had crossed Cumberland's divide (Kaul 117). Most evidence suggests that, with the exception of one essay in 1767 and four for the *Westminster Magazine* in 1773, Goldsmith withdrew from journalism entirely after 1762. The Preface to *Essays by Mr. Goldsmith* (1765) implies that he saw no advantage in continuing to produce work that sank unnoticed and added little to his reputation, yet was widely reprinted without his permission (3: 1–2). The title of this collection reflects the change: while his periodical pieces had generated little interest in their creator, Joshua Reynolds tells us that "[h]is *Traveller* produced an eagerness unparalleled to see the author. He was sought after with greediness" (44). Celebrity compensated for his notoriously awkward social presence. Mrs. Cholmondely told Johnson after hearing him recite the poem, "I never more shall think Dr. Goldsmith ugly" (qtd. in Lonsdale, *Poems* 626). He received invitations from prominent authors and even an offer of patronage from the Earl of Northumberland. Hawkins tells us that he rejected the latter with the Johnsonian declaration that he depended upon his "best friends" the booksellers and not "the promises of great men" (qtd. in Rousseau 208).

Critics' attitudes improved noticeably in a way that seems to justify some of Goldsmith's strictures on their susceptibility to fame and flattery. Though *Essays* largely repackaged work that had previously been received with indifference, *Lloyds Evening Post* praised "these excellent pieces" by "the so justly admired Author of *The Traveller*" (qtd. in 3: xi). The *Critical Review* changed its mind about the essays: "we ingenuously own that we now see in them many beauties that escaped our observation in their original form of publication" (19 1765: 474). This was not merely because the essays were now bound in book form; as the *Monthly Review* noted, duly disagreeing with its rival, this exposed many of their weaknesses (33 1765: 83). However, the author's name upon the title page now commanded attention.

The Citizen of the World and both poems have antecedents in Goldsmith's journalism, and it is worth considering briefly why, if canonical genres like poetry offered the recognition he sought, he delayed so long before publishing in them. On this point, Samuel Johnson's influence seems to have been pivotal. In the well-known episode in Boswell's *Life*, Johnson rescues Goldsmith from debt by selling the manuscript of *The Vicar of Wakefield*. Friedman places this incident between July and October 1762 and dates the *Vicar*'s composition to 1760 or 1761–62; in other words, when Goldsmith was producing his Chinese letters and composing *The Traveller* (4: 4–7). The latter work has a similar history to the novel: it was several years in the making, and most biographers agree that the poem would not have been finished or published without Johnson's advice and encouragement (Lonsdale, *Poems* 623). Johnson went so far as to contribute nine lines to the poem, just as he would supply the last two couplets of *The Deserted Village*.¹⁶ He also commended *The Traveller* in the *Critical Review*, praising it as "a production to which, since the death of Pope, it will not be easy to find any thing equal" (18 1764: 462). Johnson's invocation of Pope's name once more elevates Goldsmith from journalist to gentleman author. Yet it also brings into uncomfortable focus the gulf between the confident ambition of post-1688 poets and the uncertainty that had been growing around the place of writers in public life since the 1740s. In contrast to Johnson, Marshall Brown and other

¹⁶ Many believed after its publication that Johnson had written more, if not most, of *The Traveller*. At Boswell's insistence he marked the nine lines as his (420, 429–34, 437–38), but mentioned to Reynolds on another occasion that he had written "not more than eighteen lines" (Lonsdale, *Poems*, 624–25; Reynolds 77).

commentators have noted, Goldsmith embodies more completely the problems of self-definition and self-representation in this transitional period (113).

All of these mid-century anxieties over literary atrophy, professional authors, and a rapidly-modernising Britain might be said to converge in readings of one site: Westminster Abbey's Poet's Corner. In "Death and the Author: Westminster Abbey and the Meanings of the Literary Monument," Philip Connell traces the complex associations accreting to Poet's Corner as a formative "national literary pantheon," a focal point of both celebration and uneasiness around English literary culture (559). Goldsmith's own commemoration in 1776 as "poet, naturalist and historian" with Nollekens's monument and Johnson's epitaph, reinforces the privileged status accorded poetry in general, and English poetry in particular, within this pantheon. As Connell points out, however, public commemoration in the Corner was in fact largely "privatized," dependent upon individual wealth rather than state funds, and soon commodified, too, as a market arose in mass-produced miniatures of literary monuments (563, 570–72).

The Citizen of the World brings Poet's Corner into the "contemporary debate on the commercialization of culture" (Connell 572). Altangi visits the site in the hope of finding the "philosophers, heroes and poets" who represent the land's "true merit," guarded by priests for the sake of "disinterested patriotism" (2: 56). However, the Man in Black soon disabuses him: instead of shrines to greatness, the finest tombs in the Abbey are those of rich nobodies remarkable only for the "desire of being buried among the great." There is no memorial for Pope, because the "answerers of books" have not stopped reviling him (2: 59–62). The priests demanding payment at the Abbey gates are "simply the ecclesiastical equivalents of the 'mercenary bookseller' and his hired critics, buying and selling literary fame without regard to genuine merit" and reducing the poet's corner to "a tawdry memorial to the decline of enlightened cultural patronage and the transformation of literature into a mere trade" (Connell 572). Altangi does observe that public commemoration may inspire civic pride and ambition in a positive sense, but this opportunity is lost if its subjects no longer deserve the honour.

The sense that a way of life is passing intensifies in *The Deserted Village* (1770). Like Gray's *Elegy*, it addresses the absent denizens of the village and tours the sites of remembrance in a landscape of rural retreat. The narrator is once again an outsider, and his gently satiric character sketches sometimes recall Altangi's, but the

tone is far more sentimental—it is Goldsmith’s most personal poem. The final section describes the “melancholy band” of country-dwellers leaving England’s shores. Although Goldsmith sees specific socio-economic and political circumstances at the root of this problem, here the peasants are abstracted into “moral categories” and their absence into the symbolic departure of “rural virtues,” part of the wider story of national decline (Kaul 119–20). Last but not least to leave England is “sweet Poetry,” “neglected and decried” in a corrupt and degraded society because it nurtures both taste and morality: “Thou guide by which the nobler arts excel / Thou nurse of every virtue” (411, 415–16). This link between verse and virtue is also drawn in Thomson’s *Liberty*, Collins’ *Ode to Liberty*, Gray’s *Progress of Poesy* and many other works of this period (Lonsdale, *Poems* 693). Discussing Johnson’s endings to Goldsmith’s two poems, Richard Bridgman judges that “[w]ith his responsive sensibility and shrewd eye, Goldsmith could quite adequately set down the general malaise of the age;” what he could not do was articulate a satisfactory solution (270). In the following chapter, I examine in greater depth Goldsmith’s poetry and *The Citizen of the World* in the context of this literary tension between pessimism and nationalism, particularly as it relates to the growth of Britain’s global power.

Chapter Two

“Trade’s Proud Empire Hastes to Swift Decay:” Commerce and Cultural Decline¹

“A Comparative View of Nations”

For Goldsmith, the London book trade serves as an index of wider cultural decline taking place within an island nation that constitutes a nexus of global exchange. His traveller figures reflect his uneasy consciousness of the new mobility of people, ideas and capital, including the cultural capital of literature. On the one hand, their physical distance and social detachment from the familiar scene, analogous in some ways to authorial anonymity, enables the broad-based comparative approach that Goldsmith favoured when analysing what he perceived as the political and historical sources of Britain’s ills. Just as he imports his “cargoe of Chinese morality” to remedy the pernicious influence of the *chinoiserie* fashions, he also imports the fresh eyes of an objective viewpoint (2: 15). By “looking in on” or “over” Britain and its neighbours, his travellers are able not only to discern patterns of emigration, foreign trade, and colonization, but also to comprehend on a philosophical level the flows of virtues and values accompanying them. The resulting sympathy of Goldsmith’s narrators for greater humankind, another product of their geographical dislocation, is a crucial component of their authority, as I will discuss further in the following chapter. Here, I will address the way these texts analyse politics and culture on a national scale, and how they render abstract and theoretical spaces such as Europe, the Orient, the city and the countryside. They do so in order to fulfill the aim that Goldsmith assigns to the critic: to describe the symptoms and sources of British national decline and to attempt to remedy them.

To define these spaces, Goldsmith applies a global “schema” common at the time. As Pat Rogers explains, “from French ideologues, above all, mid-century writers learnt to construct their anatomies of the world in terms of comparison, often in the precise guise of a dialectical system” (108). “There is not perhaps a more

¹ From *The Deserted Village*, line 427 (written by Johnson).

pleasing employment,” declares the *Royal Magazine*’s correspondent “H. D.,” “than that of comparing countries with each other; if the traveller happens to be possessed of talents equal to the enquiry” (3: 69). “H. D.” is one of Goldsmith’s many periodical personae, a weary wanderer who after fifteen years of perils and disappointments overseas has been reunited with his beloved England. Like *The Traveller*, his essays on “A Comparative View of Races and Nations” imply that the wanderer’s “enquiry” begins in first-hand experience, but is most valuable when retrospectively distilled into a general account to help diagnose social ills closer to home. The desirable “talents” here are the attributes of a good moral essayist: organising material logically and possessing a “well-directed understanding” of the symptoms and underlying causes of national growth and decline (3: 69). In *The Citizen of the World*, Lien Chi Altangi’s attempts to understand English culture naturally proceed by comparison and contrast, even as his figure provides a comic foil to the Londoners he meets. In *The Traveller*, Goldsmith develops the theme of national difference into “a fully-fledged geographical dialectic” (Rogers 108). This dialectic operates throughout both poems (and to some extent *The Citizen*). Along with temporal contrasts of past and present, it delineates England in relation to neighbouring nations, and in relation to the powerful historical presence of the Roman Empire.

Although national variations among people were hardly an eighteenth-century discovery, the concept of unifying “nations” (Benedict Anderson’s “imagined communities”) really took shape in the mid-1700s (5–7). At this point, older allegiances to region, religion or ruler began to be absorbed into this idea of a shared national “character” and communal “soul” (Anderson 37–46). This process was facilitated by the growth of a sophisticated print culture, which “stabilized national languages and gave wide access to a common literary tradition” (Hudson, “Nation to Race” 256). Goldsmith wrote several essays influenced by anthropology and natural history, which form the background to his regional surveys in *The Traveller*, and in these he advances the theory that local populations were stamped with particular traits. Two factors, he argues, shape this national character: climate, and systems of government.² Here he departs from Hume, who had stated in 1748 that “physical

² In “A Comparative View of Races and Nations” and elsewhere, Goldsmith drew upon the *Histoire, naturelle, générale et particulière* (1749–88) of Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, who was the first to use “race” extensively as a scientific term to denote sub-groups of the human species (Hudson, “Nation to Race” 253). However, the texts I discuss here are more concerned with national rather than

causes” (“air and climate”) had no influence on the varying characteristics of populations, which were due rather to “moral causes” such as government and economic structures (198).³ Typically, Goldsmith takes the middle ground. He rejects strict environmental determinism and allows that cultures may refine and adapt themselves over time, arguing that both nature and custom fit people to their native soil. Occupying this middle ground enabled him to compare and analyse national populations while remaining free as an Anglo-Irish author to focus these analyses upon Britain.

As Suvir Kaul shows, there was a rich poetic vocabulary available at this time to the poet celebrating Britain’s natural and political advantages in the same breath. By appropriating patriotic discourses of natural liberty, Goldsmith could share in the public prestige awarded to such poetry. In his essays, too, he argued that Britain and England in particular provided the ideal environmental conditions for enlightened knowledge: a benign climate, sufficient population density, a high standard of living, and rational political systems. It was difficult to point to any significant climatic variations within the British Isles. Therefore, Goldsmith’s writings tended to emphasise a love of liberty and reason as the defining attributes of the English populace: attributes an expatriate citizen of the world might share.⁴ Nevertheless, the English were supposed to exhibit a *natural* desire for independence of government and thought. Hence, Altangi observes that it is the “characteristic differences of climate and soil” that impart toughness, vigour and “superior pride” to the vulgar English and to their “dogs and cocks” alike (2: 369). In *The Traveller*, “the lords of human kind” flourish in England’s mild weather “fresh from Nature’s hand;

“racial” difference, and with differing degrees of barbarity and politeness in particular. As Hudson comments, “Europeans of the Enlightenment were widely convinced that their own national diversity was far more significant than any comparable distinction among non-European ‘races’” (251). Hudson’s insight applies even to *The Citizen of the World*, despite its pseudo-anthropological passages.

³ Hume came increasingly to believe that these “moral causes” were themselves variable and non-essential, and by the 1753 edition of “On National Characters” he was convinced that nature had imbued peoples with innate racial characteristics (most notoriously, he appended a note beginning, “I am apt to suspect the negroes to be naturally inferior to the whites”) (208).

⁴ Goldsmith stated in his final “A Comparative View” essay of September 1760 that the English were renowned for “superior accuracy in reasoning” and considered by their continental neighbours to be a “nation of philosophers” (3: 85). He was probably aware that, at this time, “the epicenter of philosophical writing in Britain was surely in Scotland and, more specifically, Edinburgh” (Price 173). Nor does he acknowledge Irish philosophers like Burke. As I suggest below, Goldsmith’s Anglo-Irish background may actually have led him to overstate English cultural and philosophical achievements.

Fierce in their native hardness of soul,
 True to imagined right, above control,
 While even the peasant boasts these rights to scan,
 And learns to venerate himself as man. (329–34)

Goldsmith omits the usual step taken in georgics, where England's green fields nurture the agriculture that supports national wealth, and makes political freedom itself Nature's crop. More revolutionary calls to venerate the universal rights of man were yet to come. However, like Burke, Goldsmith maintains that native ferocity and love of freedom must be curbed by equally "natural" social bonds and traditions, an ideal balance of freedom and restraint signalled poetically in his choice to adapt the Popean couplet.

Many critics have noted the carefully-proportioned structures of *The Traveller* and *The Deserted Village*, formal expressions of the principles of balance, neutrality and order. *The Traveller* may be divided into three parts. The central and longest section conforms to its original title and later subtitle, "A Prospect of Society."⁵ Here, the traveller "placed on high" surveys "an hundred realms" and their inhabitants of every class from kings to shepherds (33–36). In such a topographical prospect poem, the landscape serves to mirror or embody human political and social relations. Leo Storm notes that *The Traveller* eschews the natural description that entered the genre with John Dyer's *Grongar Hill* (1726) and turns back towards the politically-charged tradition of John Denham and Pope (465). But, whereas in *Coopers Hill* and *Windsor Forest* the prosperous surrounds of London reveal a harmonious "order in variety" existing between God, monarch and muse, Goldsmith's vision is of a social order disrupted. Individualistic greed has divided people "till over-wrought, the general system feels / Its motions stopped or frenzy fire the wheels," an image of a cycle either grinding to a standstill or whirling violently, never resting poised in balance (347–48).

Moreover, the observer intrudes to a new degree. Lonsdale considers that Goldsmith altered the poem's title to *The Traveller, or A Prospect of Society* to indicate that "the narrator himself was to be as much the subject as its political content," a claim borne out by the opening hundred or so lines ("Garden" 12). These

⁵ Four quarto half-sheets with this title were discovered in 1902. They contain 310 of the 416 lines of the first edition of *The Traveller*, but with the blocks of text printed in reverse order, and probably represent a mix-up in the printing-house rather than a complete earlier poem (*Coll. Works* 4: 238).

concern the traveller himself: his nostalgia for his brother's homestead and the settled life it represents, his musings on his own rootless and dissatisfied existence, and his attempts to rationalise the sources of geographically-relative happiness. In this context, Goldsmith's theories about environmentally-determined character raise the question of how far national and personal identity can survive exile. His observer can identify with neither his patron nor his country estate. As Ingrid Horrocks points out, the professional author of Goldsmith's time "could quite literally not afford a prospect" once the "stabilizing fantasy" of the landed gentleman's gaze could no longer encompass the changing landscapes of enclosure and colonization (665–67). For the poet of *Windsor Forest* every natural feature proclaims a poetic and patriotic heritage in which he may share, while for the Romantic poet the uninhabited wilderness in itself offers epiphany or solace. Goldsmith's traveller seems unable to find either cultural meaning or aesthetic fulfilment in any location. Horrocks sees him as a transitional figure, in the process of "stepping down" from his elevation to a grounded but vulnerable position (666–67). Thus, he finds himself

Impelled, with steps unceasing, to pursue
Some fleeting good, that mocks me with the view;
That, like the circle bounding earth and skies,
Allures from far, yet, as I follow, flies;
My fortune leads to traverse realms alone,
And find no spot of all the world my own. (25–30)

In one essay passage on Ireland, Goldsmith suggests that "the English, transplanted there, in time lose their melancholy serious air, and become gay and thoughtless" (3: 84). The narrator of the lines above has no such haven, and the more he seeks it, the more his status as a homeless wanderer comes to define him.

If the prospect poem places the poet within a universal design, Goldsmith "uses the prospect form to reverse the procedure, to show that the traditional form is no longer supported by an adequate social and political structure." Likewise he reverses the movement from hilltop to the heavens—in fact, the journey across Europe ends in a hellish North America—before "there is ultimately a melancholic retreat back into the individual self" (Hopkins 68–69). The third and final section of the poem, roughly another hundred lines, condemns Britain's decline into party warfare, avarice and unbridled colonial expansion, and therefore appears to justify this retreat. But Johnson's stoic conclusion that "our own felicity we make or find"

offers scant resolution to the traveller who has already found that happiness depends upon one's nation, and that Britain's suffering is his own (432).

Yet *The Traveller* does not abandon its ambition to provide a prospect of society, but rather attempts to adapt the form to an international outlook. For Horrocks, this "extended vision" signals the "enlarged mind" of the traveller who transcends through his sufferings the narrow rhetoric of patriotism and party (677). As he sits down for his "pensive hour" in the Alps with the map of Europe laid out beneath him, he sets aside his personal troubles to theorise about collective happiness:

But let us try these truths with closer eyes,
And trace them through the prospect as it lies:
Here for a while my proper cares resigned,
Here let me sit in sorrow for mankind. (32, 99–103)

The pan-European survey that follows and forms the core of the poem demands greater objectivity, so Goldsmith marks a clear transition from the "I" to the inclusive "we," comparable to the essayist's invitation to his readers: "Come then, and let us take a view of this earth in which providence has placed us; let us at least examine the out-lines of the universal plan" (3: 69). Goldsmith implies that his traveller poet, having climbed into the Alps, can actually see where "far to the right ... Italy extends" and with a "turn" of the head either way, can also see Switzerland and France. Yet the lack of concrete detail in the following descriptions of nations suggests that he is applying "closer eyes" metaphorically. Like the reader of treatises or voyages, Goldsmith's poetic traveller conducts his entire survey of Europe sitting down. In fact, if we imagine that the "even now" of line 31 marks the present, then all his perambulations occur in memory and within his poem he never travels at all. Seated "high above the storm's career," he is immune to the hardships of foot travel, temporarily "disembodied" and "de-temporalized" (Rogers 113–14). This one mention of the weather is the only reference to his surroundings, apart from a simile comparing the traveller to "yon neglected shrub at random cast" that evokes his melancholy isolation (103). According to Prior, the title first proposed for the poem was "The Philosophical Wanderer," a description that both aligns it more closely to *The Citizen of the World* and emphasizes the broader cultural and political aim of the traveller's enquiry (2: 18).

As he had done in his *Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe*, Goldsmith conducts a survey of each nation's deficits and advantages. In the

dedication, he claims that he aims to present a balanced view “without espousing the cause of any party:”

I have endeavoured to shew, that there may be equal happiness in other states, though differently governed from our own; that each state has a peculiar principle of happiness, and that this principle in each state, and in our own in particular, may be carried to a mischievous excess.
(56, 58–62)

Condensed, this section presents a series of stereotypical contrasts. Italy enjoys a luxuriant climate and generous share of “Nature’s bounty,” but as a result its citizens have descended into “sensual bliss.” By contrast, the harsher weather and scanty resources of Switzerland have created a more self-reliant peasantry, but “if few their wants, their pleasures are but few.” In France, the idle “land of mirth and social ease” where “honour forms the social temper,” the love of praise and fashion leads to ostentatious vanity. In Holland, where the hard-working citizens have wrested their nation from the waves, “industry begets a love of gain,” and unbridled commerce, while bringing material advantages, breeds corruption and servility. Finally, Britain with its temperate climate and rational government suffers from an excess of “Freedom” that “keeps man from man, and breaks the social tie” (111–340). Each apparent benefit is shown to bring accompanying ills, and from this point, the poem proceeds to develop its pessimistic analysis of Britain’s decline.

Goldsmith uses the rhyming couplet to develop a “conversation” of thesis and antithesis throughout his verse “paragraphs” and also structures his poem around binary contrasts (Hunter, “Couplets” 21–22). Pat Rogers identifies a complex series of overlapping oppositional schemes that operate throughout *The Traveller* to reinforce its political and social argument. The broad design is a play of “hard” against “soft” that Rogers relates to “so-called ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ primitivism, as those have been differentiated within the eighteenth century ... a wider contrast, between peace, ease, opulence, plenty, as against tumult, penury, deprivation.” This scheme translates the “scale of civilisation” underlying the presentation of Asian nations in *The Citizen of the World* into European terms, complicated “by the new overtones of an old dichotomy—that between north and south” (108). Therefore the northerners (represented by the Swiss) are stereotypically cold, hard, tough; the southerners (the Italians and French) delicate, quick, warm and sensitive. The effect in this central section of the poem is to abstract national characteristics into a theoretical argument

drawing upon Buffon and Montesquieu's *De l'esprit des lois* (1748), which repeats the old observation that inhabitants of cold climates are vigorous but insensible, those in warmer climes feebler but sensitive. The new overtones to which Rogers refers posit the "primitive" attributes of northern cultures as a remedy for the increasing over-refinement of the south (109). Turning to *The Seasons*, Rogers shows that Thomson's "stock attributes" and terms used for winter—such as "storm," "gloom," "bleak"—and for summer—"bounty," "torrid," "smiling," and so on—apply in *The Traveller* to the climate and character of the Swiss and Italians, whereas the freshness of the French passages recalls spring, and the descriptions of the hard-working Dutch the harvesters of autumn (120–22). These terms, conventional to the point of invisibility, once more "enabl[e] Goldsmith to reinforce national stereotypes with contrasts drawn from the natural order" (109).

Amid this cultural taxonomy, Goldsmith keeps another distinction in play. As Lien Chi Altangi notes, it is only the "vulgar" English who display the courage and ferocity of fighting cocks. The peasantry of each nation live closest to nature and its climatic variations. "The polite of every country," he continues, "pretty nearly resemble each other" (2: 369). This sympathy of refined taste functions like the sympathy of the wanderer with other exiles to erase divisions between peoples. As I have attempted to show, it enables *The Citizen of the World*'s critical agenda by endowing Altangi with the authority to pronounce on European culture. The collection's title reflects its theoretical commitment to global citizenship. Yet in effect, Goldsmith is merely moving the dividing line, replacing ethnic divisions with those of education and "politeness." For Altangi, the East is synonymous with China as the West is with Europe, and between these two poles of learning and civilization lies wilderness. This is one obvious problem for those arguing that Goldsmith advocates a broad-minded cosmopolitanism. Altangi's prejudices against Persians and Turks chime suspiciously with those of the English—and run along similar lines to English denunciations of the Dutch or French. Moreover, Goldsmith's surveys of Europe take place under the assumption, as he puts it in his final "Comparative View" essay, that "the difference between the Asiatics and Europeans is striking and obvious; and even the natives of the east themselves acknowledge our mental superiority" (3: 84). I want to return now to *The Citizen of the World* and examine how Goldsmith employs this "striking and obvious" difference to examine Britain's status as a colonial and imperial power.

East and West and the Anglo-Irish Writer

In the Chinese letters, orientalist discourse shapes the presentation of the East, but Goldsmith also attempts to expose the flaws of British society by satirically examining the very oppositions between Orient and Occident that he employs. One primary function of the fictional east in *The Citizen of the World* is to contrast English “freedom,” both political liberty and geographical mobility, with its opposite. Early on, Altangi’s son Hingpo is taken by Tartar slavers and sold to a “voluptuous and cruel master” in Persia.⁶ The love story between Hingpo and his fellow slave, the “beautiful Christian” Zelis, begins in their master’s opulent court and “haram.” Here, luxury in the form of jewels, rich clothing and attractive slaves provides exotic detail and extends the classical critique of (and fascination with) Eastern absolutism and corruption (2: 95). Persia and Turkey here, as in *L’Espion Turc* and the *Lettres Persanes*, represent Islamic despotism (Ballaster 78–79). China, too, is under absolute rule. The Chinese emperor confiscates Altangi’s family and goods because he has dared to travel beyond its borders, and when Hingpo sets out in search of his father he is also seized as a possession.

China also represents a site of enduring moral and political tradition.⁷ Embroiled in the military and ministerial upheavals of Georgian London, Goldsmith shares his contemporaries’ awe of the Qing dynasty that eventually ruled from 1661 to 1799 with only three different emperors (Ballaster 208). China’s apparent stasis provides a sharp contrast to Britain’s accelerating modernisation. This is the context in which Altangi as mandarin and scholar critiques popular literature and the book trade. However, in the editor’s Preface, Goldsmith parodies Altangi’s unchanging “character” and pompous literary style: “The Chinese are always concise, so is he. Simple, so is he. The Chinese are grave and sententious, so is he. But ... the Chinese are often dull; and so is he” (2: 14). Such ironic moments where Goldsmith undermines Altangi’s national pride appeal, as Booth notes, to the self-congratulatory

⁶ Altangi’s narration draws here and elsewhere on a gendered opposition between Tartary (“powerful, military, masculine but barbarian”) and China (“effeminate, luxury-loving but highly civilized”) that operated in eighteenth-century European writings (Ballaster 213) and translates the binary pairs of north-hard, south-soft into Orientalist terms.

⁷ Chen Shouyi (288–90) gives a useful summary of information about Altangi and China presented in *The Citizen of the World*. For a critical comparison with actual Chinese cultural practices, see Tao Zhijian (21–28), and for a similar examination of the depiction of Japan in Letter CXVIII, see Takau Shimada.

patriotism of English readers who consider themselves cosmopolitan enough to chuckle tolerantly at foreign idiosyncrasies (90). Tao Zhijian insightfully observes that Goldsmith exploits a doubled representation of China. Once it has outlived its usefulness as a Utopian civilisation of past glories, he exposes it in present “reality” as a realm of faded grandeur and tyrannical government (24). Hingpo and Zelis escape slavery but choose to begin married life in England, while Altangi, who has been banished by the Chinese Emperor, will travel for the remainder of his days. Lacking a devotion to liberty, including creative literary freedom, Goldsmith’s China cannot provide a legitimate model for the future direction of British affairs.

The Citizen of the World rejects China as a political guide for Britain. It also singles out orientalist representations of the East among upper- and middle-class society as posing a particular threat to the “natural” character of both the English and the Chinese philosopher. Here, Goldsmith exploits his foreign observer’s social mobility while at the same time confining him within his foreignness. Altangi becomes, in Brook’s words, “the classic victim described by Said’s orientalism in that each of his English hosts attempts to redefine the oriental observer into an occidentalized version of what ‘should be’ a Chinese visitor” (Brooks 127). On two occasions, Altangi receives an invitation from “a lady of distinction” to whom he is an exotic (and erotic) curiosity. “Bless me! can this be the gentleman that was born so far from home?” exclaims the first lady as she admires the “outlandish cut of his face” and his “travelled air.” She is shocked when Altangi disdains her porcelain jars and “pagods” as useless and primitive: “a Chinese, a traveller, and want taste! it surprises me.” Just as her unquestioning Anglocentrism equates England with “home,” she assumes that those best qualified to judge authentic oriental taste are Europeans like her garden temple-designer Mr. Freeze (2: 63–64). As Brooks points out, Goldsmith’s ridiculous “sinophiles” satirise a particular band of society: “the newly rich mercantile classes, made rich by supporting England’s outward imperial motion,” in whom fetishistic pursuit of imported commodities has completely overwhelmed the desirable British qualities of reason and sound common sense (130).

Moreover, these middle-class consumers pride themselves on a polite taste grounded in false texts as empty of utility and value as the first lady’s tea-jars. Altangi’s second hostess has “collected all her knowledge of eastern manners from fictions ... under the titles of eastern tales, and oriental histories” (2: 142). Her guests, a “club of connoisseurs,” include a pompous author of such tales who would not be

out of place in the club of hacks satirised only three letters earlier. When he declares that Altangi's speech lacks the "true eastern manner," Altangi retorts by asking whether he has visited Asia or reads Chinese or Arabic; he has not. "Then how, Sir, said I, can you pretend to determine upon the eastern stile?" (2: 145). The author is not only a false authority, but a false critic. Speaking of Mahmut, Marana's Turkish spy, Ballaster points out the operation of what she calls the "'reverse' gaze" of the pseudo-oriental traveller: "Christian and classical culture is for him the world of fiction and imposture, Islam that of truth, a reversal of western Christian denunciations of Islam as imposture" (149). Using very similar terms, Altangi declares: "when I survey the absurdities and falsehoods with which the books of the Europeans are filled, I thank heaven for having been born in China, and that I have sagacity enough to detect imposture." (2: 69). His wisdom allows him to see through the *chinoiserie* fad and fabricated travel accounts alike, while his physical presence challenges English notions of what is or is not Chinese. Exasperated, he complains to Fum Hoam about the "presumption of these islanders, when they pretend to instruct me in the ceremonies of China!," provincialising England as a remote island whose would-be orientalist clings to their pretensions even when faced with a "genuine" Asian visitor (2: 142).

Yet, as we have seen, Goldsmith's presentation of Altangi is itself a transparent imposture. His satire insists upon mocking the English hosts' expectations of Chinese behaviour even when these expectations are entirely reasonable. His "sinophiles" are comically attached to external attributes and behaviours as markers of Altangi's nationality, and their opinion of him drops when he refuses to sit on the floor or wear a napkin, and instead of bear's claws or birds' nests, asks for a meal of beef. Friedman notes that here Goldsmith challenges mistaken notions about China but also misrepresents Du Halde, one of his principal sources (2: 143). Moreover, Altangi directly contracts himself in a later letter, exclaiming, "I'm for a Chinese dish of bear's claws and bird's nests" (2: 387). Similarly, Altangi asserts that Chinese literature seldom employs similes and metaphors, a judgement not only at odds with Du Halde and Le Comte, but contradicted in the Preface which states that "metaphors and allusions are all drawn from the East" (2: 14). Such inconsistencies may be due to the haste and serial nature of periodical composition, but Goldsmith did not edit them out in the 1762 edition, suggesting that he may have wished to draw attention to the unreliability of his presentation.

Implicating his own “eastern tale” in the traffic of falsehoods forms part of Goldsmith’s attack on leisured connoisseurs of oriental culture. Significantly, he shores up Altangi’s authority when critiquing the book trade in general, but undermines his credibility when attacking the *chinoiserie* fad. This change in attitude reflects what Porter describes as a significant shift in “China’s function in the realm of signification” away from the promise of changeless wisdom suggested by its apparently stable and universal linguistic system (“Writing China” 101). By the eighteenth century “no longer was [China] associated with ancient and universal truths; it rather became the site of capriciousness, folly and illusion” (108). Most intriguingly for *The Citizen of the World*, Porter associates this change closely with the growing trade in oriental-style export goods and the subsequent reaction from “classicist critics” that reversed previous judgements and realigned Chinese culture with the unnatural, novel and false (109–10). Therefore, Goldsmith’s pseudo-oriental letter collection had to incorporate the ironic awareness that he was attempting to advance this classicist cause in a genre already defined within its critique as inauthentic, part of the profusion of commodified objects and texts that were in conflict with “natural” taste.

Nevertheless, a Chinese persona offered an Irish author greater scope to challenge British orientalism as a colonial discourse. Wolfgang Zach finds it “no accident that it was the Anglo-Irishman Goldsmith who made the best use of the foreign-observer device to reflect on English ‘follies’ in the eighteenth century” (26). According to Joseph Lennon, *Irish Orientalism* was a distinct cultural historical phenomenon and constituted a project of self-definition as important as that of defining the foreign “other.” He argues that during the eighteenth century, aided by antiquarian and linguistic researches, Irish orientalist sought parallels between those “two antitheses of modern, enlightened Europe: the Celt and the Oriental” as sources of ancient, poetically-inspired cultures (Lennon xv). Lien Chi Altangi is clearly too inconsistent and comic a character to play the inspired prophet in the manner of Gray’s Welsh bard, but he does take on authority as a philosopher. He also narrates several oriental moral fables that, despite Goldsmith’s mistrust of the mode, provide vehicles for Goldsmith’s political and social ideas. Furthermore, Lennon proposes that an exotic but civilised Chinese narrator may have protected Goldsmith from English perceptions of “the barbarous Irishman” (130).

The manner in which Irish authors employ images of the orient also differs in Lennon's account. He argues that such literature engages in the widespread borrowing and adaptation of other texts characteristic of orientalism, but "one difference is that it often parodies the discourse in which it participates" (122). As examples of oriental letters, Lennon examines *The Citizen of the World* and *Letters from an Armenian in Ireland to his Friends at Trebisonde* (attributed to the Anglo-Irish writer Edmund Sexton Pery). As we have seen, Goldsmith's review of the latter work regretted its inability to present an authentic Asian voice, a criticism also levelled at *Citizen*. Of the two works, however, Pery's is largely standard for the genre, and Goldsmith's use of parody is more narrowly aimed at the *chinoiserie* fad. Goldsmith makes only a limited rhetorical assault on imperial discourse from a non-English perspective because his primary argument about extending colonialism is that it weakens England's power.

In his essays, Goldsmith elides or disguises his Irish roots, employing a mixture of ethnographic objectivity and received ethnic typing. Ireland, like the Orient, is reduced to a collection of attributes that serve to stabilise a conception of Britishness by defining its opposite. Therefore Goldsmith's Ireland plays what Declan Kiberd identifies as the dominant role assigned to it by England ever since colonization: that of "not-England" (*Inventing Ireland* 9). As with China, government, not climate, is the factor controlling differences between the nations. The English, who govern, are "solid," serious, phlegmatic, and politically and intellectually independent. The Irish, ruled over and protected, are light-hearted, pleasure-loving, irresponsible, almost childlike (but "Irish Papists" are "fawning" and "insincere") (3: 84–85, 25). Ireland is not among the nations *The Traveller* surveys, but there are notable parallels here with that "gay sprightly land" of France, including a love of music and dancing. Rodney Stenning Edgecombe traces the *Traveller's* imagery of French "idleness and flattery" to Montesquieu's description of courtiers under monarchical rule in *L'Esprit des Lois* (46). Therefore, France's absolute monarchy breeds a pride in "honour" and external appearances, whereas the Irish under the protection of England's balanced government are more truly carefree. Goldsmith apparently had little sympathy for the cause of Irish self-government or the plight of Irish Catholics (Zach 28). Attempts have been made to write him into the Anglo-Irish tradition, and to read his works through the history of Irish nationalism and independence. For William Butler Yeats in "The Seven Sages," and more recently for

Kiberd in *Irish Classics*, *The Deserted Village* presents a harrowing picture of Ireland's woes as a colony. The poem is "filled with images of famine, eviction and forced migration," Kiberd writes, and in general he sees Goldsmith as the eighteenth-century author whose work "most anticipates future developments" in Irish literature (107–08). Goldsmith was not a proto-nationalist. Yet his anthropological approach in many works stems partly from his need to understand the culture into which he had migrated in 1756 (Dixon 32; Kiberd, *Irish Classics* 112). Before moving from Goldsmith's national comparisons to examining his analysis of Britain in more detail, it is helpful to consider some ways in which the perspective he wrote from was, if not Chinese, not entirely English.

Despite his expatriation, the word "exile" echoes through Goldsmith's writing with some insistence and emotional force, suggesting a strong residual attachment to Ireland and anticipating a central theme of Irish authors. The need to express this personal "pain of exile" explains for Hopkins why Goldsmith chose a Chinese narrator so physically distant from his homeland (40). This separation is often conveyed through an image of shackles, or perhaps even an umbilical cord, suggesting that climatic and cultural conditioning is impossible to overcome entirely. Altangi writes to Fum Hoam: "The farther I travel I feel the pain of separation with stronger force, those ties that bind me to my native country, and you, are still unbroken. By every remove, I only drag a greater length of chain" (2: 20–21). From Fum Hoam's reply, he learns that in leaving China he has incurred the emperor's disapproval, that his family and property have been seized and that he is effectively banished (2: 38). Likewise, the poetic traveller to Henry Goldsmith, his dedicatee:

Where'er I roam, whatever realms to see,
My heart untravelled fondly turns to thee;
Still to my brother turns with ceaseless pain,
And drags at each remove a lengthening chain. (7–10)

And in *The Deserted Village* the narrator's hopes of peaceful retirement are destroyed when he finds the village abandoned; he is forever separated in time from the congenial place that he can now only conjure up in imagination. This act of imagining extends to the "sorrows" the "poor exiles" must have felt as, "shuddering still to face the western deep," they left their homeland (365, 369).

In none of these examples from Goldsmith is there any mention of Ireland, but

Patrick Ward places the concept of exile at the centre of Irish literary experience. Speaking of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy in the eighteenth century, he describes how their allegiance to England (upon which their cultural prestige and military security depended) made it impossible for them to claim true exile status. Rather, they resorted to an “unavoidable degree of self-deceit” that took the form of “oscillat[ing] between a glorification of England and the Empire in all their outward achievements and bitter resentment at what they judged to be its neglect of their contribution to its wonders” (59). If we include literary achievement among these “wonders,” it is easy to see Goldsmith caught in this double bind, asserting the superiority of the English cultural product and defending it against degradation, while resenting the lack of recognition for his own work. Donoghue does not discuss Goldsmith as an Anglo-Irish writer, yet this point adds a useful complexity to his analysis of the problems of reputation and fame. Maintaining the critical authority of the editorial “we” required that Goldsmith adopt the self-deception of his personae and write from an English point of view.

Liberty, Commerce and Patriotism

If Goldsmith’s wandering narrators experience the hardships of geographical homelessness, they are also aware of their political and emotional separation from the prevailing direction of British affairs as Goldsmith and other conservative commentators perceived it. The remainder of this chapter will examine *The Citizen of the World*, *The Traveller* and *The Deserted Village* in the context of what Hudson calls

an essentially *ideological* conflict about the very nature of “Britain” between proponents of free-market capitalism and the essentially conservative and traditionalist outlook of those who wished to contain capitalism within the constraints of morality, religion, and their patriotic image of Britons as a freedom-loving people. (“Britons” 560)

Relating this debate to the relatively new eighteenth-century field of political economy, Kazmin frames this as a theoretical choice between a “market” and a “moral” economy (656). Goldsmith’s poetry invokes the public and prophetic ambition of Augustan verse to advocate the latter course, while his traveller personae engage with the increasing tendency for Britain to envisage itself as a global, imperial power. During this period, the clash between market and moral motives appeared

most striking in questions of overseas commerce that included the war for colonial territory and the slave trade.

By 1764, when *The Traveller* appeared, the Treaty of Paris had ended the Seven Years' War. Although Britain restored many conquered territories to France and Spain, the war marked the clearest success up to that date for the partnership of military aggression and commerce. New colonies meant new markets and sources of raw materials, multiplying trading profits through imperial expansion. "Trade followed the flag," Linda Colley comments, "but it also helped to keep the flag flying" (99–100). In *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837*, she examines the "euphoria" of this moment when the British saw themselves, in the words of Goldsmith's poem, as "lords of human kind." Edward Gibbon, looking back on 1763 some thirty years later, recalled that "at the close of a successful war the British name was respected on the Continent, ... a ray of national glory illuminated each individual, and every Englishman was supposed to be born a patriot and a philosopher" (114). Conflict and rivalry with France above all, both on and off the battlefield, intensified the need to define and identify with this patriotic figure (Colley 1). However, the very extent and cost of the victory also provoked widespread concerns about stabilising and legitimising Britain's control over vast new areas of the globe (Colley 102).

Lien Chi Altangi, born a philosopher and like Goldsmith an ambivalent "Englishman," provides a critical commentary on the war while it is still raging. Tactfully framing his opinion within a tale of the fictional kingdom of Lao, he declares:

extending empire is often diminishing power, that countries are ever strongest which are internally powerful; that colonies by draining away the brave and enterprising, leave the country in the hands of the timid and the avaricious; ... that too much commerce may injure a nation as well as too little; and that there is a wide difference between a conquering and a flourishing empire. (2: 108)

According to Kaul, this case for internal stability lies behind Goldsmith's "refusal to participate in the general enthusiasm for commercial and imperial aggrandizement" that would have been evident to any London author (113). Just as he satirised *chinoiserie* at the expense of his Chinese philosopher's credibility, Goldsmith reacts against this enthusiasm by turning the terms of his own celebrations of British qualities into ironic parodies. Altangi's first attempt "to characterize the English in

general” employs the terms of patriotic cliché: the English are proud, polite, love politics, and are devoted to liberty.⁸ Yet in the context of a commercial newspaper filled with Foreign Intelligence, reports of ships captured and readers’ letters debating the peace, Goldsmith slants this assessment towards critique (2: 468).⁹ Altangi recounts a conversation he has overheard outside a prison between a debtor behind bars, a porter, and a soldier, all anxious about a rumoured French invasion. The prisoner is most concerned about freedom: “if the French should conquer, what would become of English liberty. My dear friends, liberty is the Englishman’s prerogative; we must preserve that at the expence of our lives.” The porter agrees that the French “are all slaves, fit only to carry burthens every one of them,” and the soldier rounds off the exchange by swearing by the devil and drinking a toast to the preservation of Protestantism from the Catholic invaders (2: 28–29). In his role as critic of print culture, Altangi opens an ironic gap between the present situations of these common citizens and the patriotic slogans they recite. Similarly, Mary Latter’s *Liberty and Interest: a Burlesque Poem on the Present Times*, published in early 1764 and referring to John Wilkes’s libel trial, dresses the goddess Liberty in an armour “Of bold *North Britons* tack’d together” that hides her true insubstantiality (102). In terms echoing Altangi’s letter, Latter describes Liberty as “The prisoner’s *wish*, the public’s *toast* / The patriot’s *claim*, the beggar’s *boast*,” as all things to all people, and therefore, an “empty name” (123–24, 204). In Latter’s poem, Interest has the last word.

The Traveller eschews this urban, satiric mode for a more pastoral celebration of the combined blessings of Britain’s mild climate and the “charms” of Freedom. According to the national mythology, famously espoused in the first stanza of Thomson’s “Rule, Britannia!,” the island rose to rule the seas by “Heaven’s command” not because Britons were free but because they (unlike the French) would never be slaves (1, 6). The most striking thing about this “negative definition of the national self,” as Kaul notes, is that it both “represses and disavows” the knowledge

⁸ Altangi’s observation that the English display a “universal passion for politics [that] is gratified by Daily Gazettes” agrees with those of contemporary European travellers (2: 29). Pierre Jean Grosley, for example, found Londoners in 1765 “infatuated with politics” and “passionate for news” (qtd. in Hunter, *Before Novels* 173).

⁹ On the front page of the *Public Ledger* for 24 January 1760, for example, Chinese Letter I appears sandwiched between an editorial discussing soldierly courage and a letter in favour of continuing the war with France.

that Britain's reign over the waves depended upon its participation in slavery and the slave trade (2). Whigs and liberals were more likely to overlook this connection, Hudson argues, because they "had made the heaviest political and economic investments in the mercantile class that prospered from the slave-trade," whereas Tories and conservatives such as Johnson and Goldsmith "were far more disposed ideologically and economically to find sentimental common-cause with the victims of British mercantile adventurism" ("Britons" 564). Thus Goldsmith's traveller sees and deplures "The wealth of climes, where savage nations roam / Pillaged from slaves to purchase slaves at home" (387–88). While he sympathises with the natives of Africa, India and Canada, however, the domestic focus of Goldsmith's critique means that the traveller identifies most with those "at home."

Goldsmith challenges Thomson by suggesting that some Britons *have* become slaves. The landscape of *The Traveller* is that of those left behind in the race to control the oceans, where "laws grind the poor and rich men rule the law," where magistrates and "self-dependent lordlings" flourish as the power of the throne declines and build their rich estates by forcing villagers to emigrate. "Have we not seen," asks the traveller, "round Britain's shore / Her useful sons exchanged for useless ore?" (397–98). Populating colonies by depleting the homeland, Altangi argues in *Citizen*, reduces people to the status of traded "commodities": "England, therefore, must make an exchange of her best and bravest subjects for raw silk, hemp, and tobacco" (2: 75). This is the point at which "too much commerce" weakens rather than strengthens the nation. The important economic comparison here is not with France or China, but with the province whose poetic description immediately precedes Britain's in the traveller's survey: Holland. Goldsmith draws several implicit or explicit parallels. Holland's rampart "scoops out an empire" from the ocean, creating a new realm. Industriousness is the national virtue, and "much loved wealth imparts / Convenience, plenty, elegance and arts." On closer inspection however, the poem continues, "craft and fraud appear, / Even liberty itself is bartered here." In other words, through the unfettered pursuit of profits, the Dutch have sold their freedom and now exist in "dull" conformity and "servitude" (290, 299–312). Lonsdale points out that Goldsmith applies the same expression from Johnson—"a land of tyrants and a den of slaves"—to Holland here and to Persia in *The Citizen of the World* (*Poems* 648).

The point of similarity is not only that foreign commerce exposes Britain to the corrupting influence of other systems of government, but that both the orientalist tyranny and the modern capitalist economy diminish the traditional role of the virtuous citizen. In Goldsmith's critique, according to Kazmin, "market economy is the exterior symptom of a collapsing moral economy" (656). Holland represents the shift away from agriculture and cottage industry to a modern financial system of property, stocks, and bonds ("Blest paper-credit") whose value may fluctuate in response to forces out of the individual's control. On a smaller scale, commercialisation of the book trade marks a cultural decline, but on the global scale, unregulated commerce threatens the social order and integrity of the nation itself. *The Traveller* therefore directs a prophetic warning at Britain. In two stand-alone couplets, the traveller concludes his survey of Holland by exclaiming how different the modern Dutch are to "their Belgic sires of old" and "how much unlike the sons of Britain now!" (313, 316). That this is not irony is made clear in the following sections where the speaker warns that although Britons still prize freedom, the "time may come" when the England of scholars, patriots and poets "one sink of level avarice shall lie," a metaphorical reduction of local landscape to match the literal basin of the Low Countries.

In *The Deserted Village*, Goldsmith's vision of the human cost of foreign commerce is more strongly symbolised by the fate of the land:

Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates and men decay:
Princes and lords may flourish or may fade;
A breath can make them, as a breath has made;
But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
When once destroyed, can never be supplied. (51–56)

The two sides of the scale are made explicit: men or wealth (Newey 94). The idea that the "bold peasantry" replenish, inspire and support the metropolis emerges from Goldsmith's "scientific" conclusions about the interrelationships between national character and conditions on the land, but also draws poetic intensity from pastoral and georgic traditions. Celebratory georgics like John Dyer's *The Fleece*, in which both sheep and farmers flourish in Britain's particular climate, also argue that national prosperity depends upon agriculture. However, they manifest this glory in widespread

trade and peaceful conquest, the same developments that for Goldsmith underlie rural decline.

Like that of *The Traveller*, the argument of *The Deserted Village* finds antecedents in Goldsmith's periodical prose, particularly in a 1762 letter to the editor of *Lloyd's Evening Post*. Again, the first-person narrator is a traveller of sorts, a city-dweller who has enjoyed a summer sojourn in a "primeval" community as tight-knit as an extended family, but whose stay ends when the villagers are forced off the land. "I was informed," he tells readers, "that a Merchant of immense fortune in London, who had lately purchased the estate on which they lived, intended to lay the whole out in a seat of pleasure for himself." This is a generalised phenomenon, he continues, the consequence of "the encrease of foreign commerce and the extension of our foreign conquests" (3: 196). As many critics have observed, the broad target of both essay and poem is the parliamentary enclosures of common fields that rapidly changed the rural landscape during the 1750s and 1760s. More narrowly, Goldsmith identifies a particular phenomenon: the rise of the rich merchant or "nabob" with a fortune gained overseas, who purchases "country-seats free of any manoral obligation" and lays them out in unproductive landscaping (Newey 94).¹⁰

Goldsmith therefore draws a parallel between the appropriation of colonies and the usurpation of the English countryside. In the *Lloyd's* piece, he describes the villagers living in a comfortably modest state similar to that of the Swiss or Canadian inhabitants of the "primitive" North (as opposed to the opulent South). The Canadians' existence has been disrupted by the English and French fighting over furs; that of the English villagers by a merchant enriched by overseas trade. Goldsmith describes Auburn past with almost saccharine pastoral sentiment, but clearly states the cause of its decline:

... The man of wealth and pride
Takes up a space that many poor supplied;
Space for his lake, his park's extended bounds,
Space for his horses, equipage and hounds ...
Around the world each needful product flies,
For all the luxuries the world supplies:

¹⁰ John Crowley, referring to one possible contemporary parallel, argues that the poem "actually dealt with the removal of villagers to improve Lord Harcourt's *view* at Nuneham Courtney," an extreme example of wealthy indulgence altering a landscape (139).

While thus the land, adorned for pleasure all,
In barren splendour feebly waits the fall. (275–78, 283–86)

The final couplet personifies the land as female, equated with the rich man's "equipage" and "luxuries;" the land's "barren splendour" is therefore an unnatural, infertile state that leaves it vulnerable to further exploitation.

Time Travel and the Attack on Luxury

The Deserted Village brings Goldsmith's socio-political argument "home" to the village and further develops the temporal contrasts that give his geographical dialectic a vatic dimension. Through the titles of the three works: *The Citizen of the World*, *The Traveller* and *The Deserted Village*, we may trace a progression from urban London and the Orient/Occident axis, through the countries of Europe, to the intimate local setting of Auburn. Altangi's idealised Orient, a possible analogue of a Celtic past, pits static tradition against the rapid changes of modernity. The traveller's survey, as Kaul points out, is simultaneously a "comparative historical and national analysis" in which the present conditions in European states point to possible futures for England, particularly so in the case of Holland and Italy where the comparison becomes a warning (112). In *The Deserted Village* the mood is one of nostalgia, in the eighteenth-century sense of homesickness and dislocation but also in the current meaning of a sentimental yearning for the past.

Goldsmith's most well-known poem contrasts the idealised but primitive village of the narrator's memory with the corrupt but civilized metropolis, microcosm of the globe across which the cosmopolitan citizen moves. For Richard Helgerson, the distinction between these "two worlds" of country and city governs all of Goldsmith's works during the 1760s. Thus, Goldsmith contrasts the "active urban world," whose material attractions he portrays with an "ironic perception of its spiritual insufficiency," and the "static world of the village home" that indulges both "innocent foolishness" and nostalgic sentiment (517). Lien Chi Altangi, philosophic representative of an unchanging China, parallels the country visitor to London, while the subjects of the two poems are city-dwellers retreating or returning to the country. Raymond Williams's classic account traces these two literary tropes through a "transition from reflection to retrospect" in two phases: poems that celebrate "humble and worthy" country folk by contrast with the "wealth and ambition of the city and the court" are followed by poems like Goldsmith's that "develop this ethical contrast

... into a historical contrast, in which the virtues are seen as unmistakably past, in an earlier and lost period of country life” (72). To travel to China, or merely into the countryside, is in some ways to travel back in time.

We might describe Helgerson’s model more accurately as opposing not two worlds, but the world with the unworldly, or the spinning globe with the spiritual core. From London, Goldsmith wrote to his cousin Robert Bryanton in 1758, “You seem placed at the centre of fortune’s wheel, and let it revolve never so fast, seem insensible of the motion. I seem to have been tied to the circumference” (38). Fortune’s wheel represents random and destructive change but also temporality, a distance in space but also time from the centre. The image of the circle recurs in these texts, and in the middle is the imagined “abode” to which the traveller’s “untraveller heart” constantly turns and where the chain that he drags is presumably anchored. In their psychological readings of Goldsmith’s poetry, Morris Golden and Laurence Goldstein have figured this separation as that of the son from the family home or the adult from the realm of childhood. Leaving the village for the city also involves immersing oneself in the time-bound world of daily newspapers, work for hire, and constant motion, a world where “the role of ‘fortune’ is increasingly assumed by the concepts of ‘credit’ and ‘commerce’” (Pocock ix).

Goldsmith’s contrast of the urban with the rural leads to what is possibly his fundamental political and moral theme: his attack on luxury. His dedication to *The Deserted Village* states succinctly:

In regretting the depopulation of the country, I inveigh against the increase of our luxuries. For twenty or thirty years past, it has been the fashion to consider luxury as one of the greatest national advantages; and all the wisdom of antiquity in that particular, as erroneous. Still however, I must remain a professed ancient on that head.... (34–41)

The timeline here conforms to Williams’ observation that such retrospective arguments, no matter when they are written, tend to place the desirable “organic community” two or three decades in the past (9–10). However, according to John Sekora, Goldsmith was correct to identify a profound mid-century change in thinking about the concept he calls “one of the oldest, most important and most pervasive negative principles for organizing society Western history has known” (1). Sekora’s definition proposes that whether “luxury” was taken to refer to “the intellectual concept, the moral vice,” or “some concrete thing,” it traditionally stood for

something the writer disapproved of (xiv). For Goldsmith and like-minded contemporaries, luxury, as it had for classical authors, represented a “subversion of necessity and hierarchy,” a trespass against limits of divine and secular authority and virtuous self-restraint (66).

However, this classical critique was losing its relevance to British society as secular defences from Locke, Defoe, Mandeville and Smith diminished luxury’s moral force and scope, reducing it to a category of economic theory (Sekora 112–13). “Luxury” became “shorthand for culture, leisure and choice,” and its attendant evils such as bad taste or overindulgence seemed a small price to pay for widespread access to new commodities in a capitalist free market (Pocock 431). “The language of luxury evolved,” write Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger, “to redefine “excess” as “surplus,” “vanity” as “refinement” (9). In his dedication to *The Deserted Village* quoted above, Goldsmith shifts between the old and new languages, denouncing luxury as the target of the “wisdom of antiquity,” but also using the term in its more material and economic sense to attack specific manifestations of wealthy living (“luxuries”), such as landscaped estates and *chinoiserie* goods. Such fluid language lent itself easily to debates about cultural decline in advanced nations. For Goldsmith and others, luxury was a key determinant of the “scale of civilisation.” As discussed in the previous chapter, for example, Letter XI of *The Citizen of the World* follows Hume’s “Of Luxury” in assigning the gratification of “sensual happiness” a civilising role—to a point, whereupon it proves corrupting (2: 51).

Early in *The Deserted Village*, Goldsmith identifies himself as an “ancient,” thereby declaring his literary allegiances but also referring to the textbook example of this tipping point between prosperity and corruption: ancient Rome. Those steeped in contemporary debates would have been very familiar with seeing Rome’s decline evoked alongside a catalogue of commerce’s ills. In the periodical piece on depopulation that anticipates *The Deserted Village*, Goldsmith concludes with an analogy to Italy before its “fall,” and a year before the poem appeared he published a *Roman History* attributing the decline to luxury. His poetic account of dispossessed peasants draws from Juvenal, Horace, Pliny and others, and particularly from Virgil’s “Eclogues” I and IX (Bayliss 166–69; Bell 769–70). *The Traveller* also compares classical Italy to modern Britain. Italy is the first place the wanderer sees, and significantly the mountain scene with wooded slopes contains a “mouldering” temple of “venerable grandeur” (109–10). Like any Grand Tourist, the traveller views Italy as

a “*memento mori* of civilization” (Black 10). He irresistibly contrasts the artistic and imperial glory of the past with the poverty and “meanness” of the present, a contrast condensed in the image of a peasant building his humble home among the ruins, ignorant of their origins.¹¹

The “sensual bliss” of the Italians is clearly “luxurious,” as the poem states, resulting from the decline of former greatness:

All evils here contaminate the mind,
That opulence departed leaves behind;
For wealth was theirs, nor far removed the date,
When commerce proudly flourished through the state. (131–34)

In case the warning to Britain is not clear, Goldsmith underlines the link with maritime metaphors, reminding readers that Italy’s decline began when “more unsteady than the southern gale / Commerce on other shores displayed her sail” (139–40). Crossing the sea for the first time, Altangi remarks on the oddity of the English “who have founded an empire on this unstable element” (2: 18–19). Although Britannia may “rule the waves” at present, the winds may change, while tides and swells warn that that which rises may eventually fall.

Goldsmith’s Virgilian picture of rural life disrupted by economic corruption received unlikely support from *The Deserted Village*’s most famous critic. In *The Village*, George Crabbe draws a similar link between agricultural work (presented here as relentless toil) and surplus luxuries, asking his readers to “own that labour may as fatal be / To these thy slaves, as luxury to thee” (132, 154–55).¹² (By 1807, Crabbe had revised “luxury” to read “thine excess,” another example of the semantic shift that increasingly deprived the term of its moral connotations (Fairer and Gerard 434)) John Robinson’s *The Oppress’d Village* (1771), an earlier tribute, claims that Goldsmith’s vivid depiction of decline has rendered the example of Rome redundant. It should be plain, he says, that “the growth of Luxury in a higher sphere; / For which

¹¹ In “The Effect which Climates have upon Man,” Goldsmith reconciles this decline with his climatic theory of national character by suggesting that winters in ancient Italy were much colder, while the warmer weather since has produced an “effeminacy of manners” (3: 112). His use of the word here recalls John Brown’s denunciation of the “character” of the times as a “*luxurious and selfish* EFFEMINACY.” The account of commerce in Brown’s *Estimate* is also similar to Goldsmith’s. He divides it into three stages—necessity, convenience and superfluity—and condemns the latter (152–53).

¹² *The Village* does identify Virgilian pastoral as the antithesis of true poetic “Fancy,” ironically in lines (15–20) contributed by Johnson, who had praised Goldsmith’s poems.

proud Commerce ransacks foreign shores” is the true cause of what he calls the spreading “Rustic Oppression” (144–45, iv).

The fact that Goldsmith’s verse inspired imitations (and retorts) shows that his reputation as a poet was now secure. *The Deserted Village*’s first reviewers praised its sentiment, elegant couplets and beautiful descriptive passages, but were less impressed with its socio-political argument. The *Critical Review* turned Goldsmith’s Augustan faith in order against him, claiming, in echo of Pope, that “Whatever is, must be ultimately right, and productive of universal good,” including the advances of modern civilisation. The poet, the reviewer reasonably pointed out, would never have achieved literary reputation nor happiness if he had forsaken London to rusticate in Auburn (29 1770: 436–37). John Hawkesworth in the *Monthly Review* stated concisely that “there can be no doubt that luxury produces vice, and vice misery; but luxury is, notwithstanding, essentially necessary to national greatness” (42 1770: 440). Having thus dismissed the poem’s critique of the prevailing patriotic mythos, reviewers proceeded to praise its literary merit.

Goldsmith’s dedicatory letter to Joshua Reynolds suggests that he knew that *The Deserted Village*’s success would rest upon whether readers recognised the real English countryside in his descriptions. Anticipating that his friends would object that “the depopulation [the poem] deplores is nowhere to be seen,” Goldsmith claimed to “sincerely believe” his assertions and to have painstakingly confirmed them in “country excursions” over several years (20–26). His less pastoral passages accumulate detail that the critic John Scott found convincing: “This is not poetical fiction, but historical truth. We have here no imaginary Arcadia, but the real country; no poetical swains, but the men who actually drive the plough, or wield the scythe, the sickle, the hammer, or the hedging bill” (qtd. in Rousseau 101). Scott does concede that Goldsmith glosses over labouring class vices, which could hardly be said of Crabbe, who vehemently denies the reality of Auburn’s “Arcadia.”

Several critics have argued persuasively that British readers either misunderstood or refused to recognise the more far-reaching political implications of *The Deserted Village*. In his Marxist account of the poem’s reception, Lutz shows that, while Scott and Robinson engage with *The Deserted Village*’s specific context of landed new money and enclosures, the “two Reviews” do not (177–78). However, as he points out, references to the poem and its argument recur in political and economic treatises, and it had an afterlife among political radicals who approved of its support

for freehold farmers (179–81).¹³ For Kiberd, who situates Auburn in Ireland, Goldsmith's nostalgic protest is more radical and meaningful as an Irish call for social reform (115). He points, for example, to the fact that Irish emigrants made up the largest proportion of "exiles" to America (118). Fifteen American states still contain places called Auburn, suggesting that *The Deserted Village* appealed to republican readers (Davie 84). For Donald Davie, however, this homage is evidence that its denunciation of commercial imperialism is "much more palatable and inoffensive" than that of *The Traveller*, and only becomes obvious if the poems are read side by side (84, 88–89). The common view is that *The Deserted Village* became an anthologists' favourite because it was more sentimental, but it is also possible that readers preferred its more localised and less challenging critique.

Some politically radical aspects of these texts, such as their relevance for republican or Irish nationalist readers, emerge more clearly from a longer literary historical perspective. Contemporary readers, however, must have recognised that Goldsmith's geographical comparisons hinged upon a critique of British commerce, liberty and luxury. Yet they apparently remained unpersuaded. Furthermore, Goldsmith remained uncertain about the grounds upon which he, as an essayist and poet, was making his protests. Searching for an explanation of his "striking rhetorical failure" to foreground his political and economic argument in *The Traveller* or *The Deserted Village*, Lonsdale makes a case against Lutz that both works are ultimately concerned not with politics but with the poetic imagination ("Garden" 22). They struggle to define a poetic self in a transitional context—pre-Romantic or post-Augustan—in which traditional means of addressing a readership are rapidly losing validity. *The Deserted Village* "enacts the collapse of the very poetic conventions in which it might have sought refuge: the pastoral and georgic modes are devastated within the poet's own imagination," denying either idealised rural retreat or unqualified patriotism and returning the focus to the exiled wanderer himself (Lonsdale, "Garden" 27). As I have shown, these texts insistently connect this collapse, and their vision of wider cultural decline, with the concerns of the professional author in England. The following chapter will seek to establish how far expressions of personal and vocational distress in these texts result from a retreat

¹³ Despite Goldsmith's conservative bent, *The Deserted Village* continues to be read as a "left-wing" *cri de coeur* against economic inequality, notably in British historian Tony Judt's recent *Ill Fares the Land* (2010).

away from the pressures of historical and social change. It will also investigate how far Goldsmith employs the language of feeling and sentiment to address his public themes, particularly the relationship between commerce and virtue.

Chapter Three

“The Sad Historian:” Nostalgia and the Sympathetic Community

The Social Role of the Language of Feeling

Goldsmith’s most enduring non-dramatic works, *The Deserted Village* and *The Vicar of Wakefield*, participate in the mid-century turn away from satire and towards genuine feeling that reduced the apparent distance between author and persona. Appeals to sentiment depend upon an assumption of sincerity that Goldsmith’s uneven works resist. Additionally, like oriental tales, sentimental novels, “graveyard” poetry, and literature with benevolent or anti-slavery themes were increasingly influential and marketable. As a result, it is again difficult to judge how far Goldsmith’s contributions to the mode were aimed at achieving popularity. Yet the reception history of his fiction and verse testifies that he did not merely cynically exploit the language of feeling. Sentimental literature focussed attention on the figures of the responsive individual in society, to a certain extent irrespective of class or rank, and was therefore a natural form within which to explore questions of authorship and self-definition. The eighteenth-century epitome of this individual, as Horrocks observes, is the wanderer: the varied encounters of travel narratives both occasion and justify sympathy (666). On a broader scale, therefore, sentimentality and sensibility offered paradigms of social relations that might transcend national boundaries and humanise or even replace networks of financial and colonial exchange.

Precisely what the sentimental mode entailed, however, remained unclear even during its mid- to late-century vogue. Histories of the language of feeling commonly draw from the “inchoate vocabulary of affect and moral thinking employed by eighteenth-century writers” a loose genealogy: “sense, sensible, sensibility, sentiment” (Festa 14). The term “sentiment” usefully bridged a gap between “opinion and feeling” (Mullan 8). Like empirical knowledge, a sentimental perspective relied upon embodied experience, but preferred warm emotional impulses to cool ratiocination. Fanny Burney, reading *The Vicar of Wakefield* as a teenager in 1768, found Goldsmith’s style “rational and sensible,” probably intending the latter term to mean easily comprehensible. But, she continues,

a *something* was wanting to make the book satisfy me—to make me *feel* for the Vicar in every line he writes, nevertheless, before I was half way thro' the first volume, I was, as I may truly express myself, *surprised into tears*—and in the second volume, I really sobb'd. (qtd. in Rousseau 52–53)

Her sudden effusive physical reaction marks the novel for her as a successful work of feeling; although comic at times, certainly not a parody. Sentimentality, however it is defined, is judged for “its performative efficacy—its ability to affect readers,” and these effects were usually measured in bodily terms, as Burney measures her progression from tears to sobs (Festa 15). “Sensibility,” or susceptibility to such reactions, was another term with myriad contemporary interpretations and connotations, and Markman Ellis argues that while the two words are not interchangeable, they cannot be defined separately (7). It is clear, however, that literature employing such modes fulfilled more functions than simply eliciting emotion in readers.

In his role as cultural commentator, Goldsmith mistrusted excessive sentimentality. Lien Chi Altangi's visit to the theatre provides an opportunity for him to mock improbably histrionic tragedies. Faced with relentless distress throughout the action, Altangi exclaims, “how is it possible to sympathize with them through five long acts; pity is but a short-lived passion” (2: 93). Goldsmith expressed similar reservations in his review of Murphy's *The Orphan of China*, the problem being that too much pathos early on dilutes the climactic “fine agony of distress” of a successful tragedy (1: 172). However, he did not oppose sentimental prose or drama outright. Several critics have noted that his denunciations of “sentimental” in favour of “laughing” comedy have been overstated and were probably intended as publicity for *She Stoops to Conquer* (R. Hume 238; Donoghue 87). His attacks upon romances were standard among periodical reviewers, and both *The Vicar of Wakefield* and the Chinese letters show clear influences of the sentimental mode.

Partly this is because, despite its apparent emphasis upon private interiority, the new language of feeling did not avoid questions of national conduct in politics and commerce. As John Mullan and other critics show, the “vogue of sentiment” arose out of a need to imagine and enact “harmonious sociability,” to represent links between individuals at a time when, as Goldsmith was acutely aware, these bonds were changing (2). New and broader conceptions of this sociability were necessary

because, even as the readership for all literature was widening to include those Primrose approvingly calls “the middle order of mankind,” sentimental works appealed to, and were often written by, women and other “amateur” readers (4: 102; Ellis 2–3). Moreover, because sensibility and its emotional responses were necessarily individual, an immediate problem arose of how to transfer these private experiences into “social understanding” that preserved politeness while at the same time allowing the free expression of desirable “natural” social qualities (Mullan 15–16). As we have seen, Goldsmith’s works are intimately concerned with exploring the public and collective significance of isolation or discontent experienced as personal. The “sentimental feeling self” was developing as “the Janus face of the Enlightenment rational subject, the possessive individual, the rights-bearing citizen” (Festa 4). In the works I examine, Goldsmith attempts to unite these two aspects of the emotional and political, the private and public.

In *The Citizen of the World*, he effectively embodies Festa’s doubled face in two personae. Like the oriental spy tale, the sentimental travelogue was a popular mid-century sub-genre, but one more perplexed by the problem of sustaining a “self” throughout different episodes. The philosopher Lien Chi Altangi is too phlegmatic, and too satirically comic, to fill its central role. If we compare the incident where the protagonist loses his watch in *The Citizen of the World* and a similar episode in Henry Mackenzie’s *Man of Feeling*, the difference is clear. Harley pawns his watch to succour a distressed prostitute, whose tale of woe may or may not be genuine, but Altangi is the victim of an amusing cultural misunderstanding. Mistaking the prostitute for a fine lady, he hands the watch over to be repaired and of course never sees it again; by the next letter he knows he has been duped. Altangi’s English guide and closest friend, however, is a figure closer to the sentimental type. The “man in black” has received critical attention for his apparent resemblance to Goldsmith and for his credentials as a “man of feeling.”¹ Altangi observes that he exhibits “some strange inconsistencies; and he may be justly termed an humourist in a nation of humourists” (2: 109). Quintana identifies him as an eccentrically amusing character,

¹ “Un homme habillé en noir” appears in Boyer’s *Lettres chinoises* but not in the central role of guide (note to 2: 57). Although Mr. Tibbs later names him as Will Drybone, Altangi continues to refer to his friend as the “man in black,” thereby helping reduce him to a type of English eccentric or melancholic. Many commentators have recognised similarities between the man in black’s narrative of his life in Letter XXVII and the biographies of Goldsmith’s father or Goldsmith himself.

but also “a figure of symbolic significance” who dramatises the transition from “false sensibility to the informed realism of the morally mature” by challenging ideals of “universal benevolence” (*Oliver Goldsmith* 71–72). Just as he helps Altangi negotiate the public spaces of London, therefore, this figure provides a way for Goldsmith to negotiate the question of the social utility of private feeling.

As Quintana observes, through the man in black, Goldsmith engaged with the ethical notion of universal benevolence. Earlier in the century, the philosophers of the “moral-sense school,” notably Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury, and Francis Hutcheson, had argued that human beings instinctively sense right from wrong and naturally take pleasure in virtue (Ellis 10–11). Sensibility could therefore lead one towards an innate fellow-feeling for humanity. For Goldsmith, however, this model of ethics gave too small a role to reason. In his review of Burke’s *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, he disagreed with the idea that beauty (a form of sensual pleasure) is the cause of our affection for other human beings and animals. Utility and selfishness, he contended, play a large role. Granted, we may perceive beauties of design or fitness for purpose, but “not from any mechanical operation on the senses, capable of producing positive pleasure, but from a rational inference drawn with an eye to self-interest, and which may ... be deduced from self-preservation” (1: 30). For Hopkins, this note positioned Goldsmith “squarely against the benevolent tradition of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson,” the latter having particularly emphasised that the moral sense had no dimension of deliberate self-interest (26).

The man in black exhibits this innate moral sense in conflict with the rational intellect. Goldsmith critiques his excessive sensibility, as he does the fashionable foibles of “sinophiles,” by having Altangi observe an ironic gap between his rhetoric and his true feelings and knowledge. However, in a reversal of the usual pattern of hypocrisy, the man in black speaks and acts less virtuously than he feels. Altangi tells us that “while some affect humanity and tenderness,” the man in black actually seems “ashamed of his natural benevolence”: “tho’ he is generous even to profusion, he affects to be thought a prodigy of parsimony and prudence; though his conversation be replete with the most sordid and selfish maxims, his heart is dilated with the most unbounded love” (2: 109). Goldsmith makes the common distinction between mere speech and more authentic physical manifestations of emotion such as a swelling heart. However, the alliterative excess of this passage with its free distribution of

“profusion”, “replete”, and “unbounded” sentiments pinpoints the problem as a lack of control and moderation on both sides of the question.

When the man in black wanders abroad, his uncontrolled sympathy makes him a parody of the sentimental traveller. On a country walk with Altangi, he confesses himself “amazed how any of his countrymen could be so foolishly weak as to relieve occasional objects of charity, when the laws had made such ample provision for their support.” The poor are a burden on the hard-working, not content with simple wants, and charity only “encourages idleness, extravagance, and imposture” (2: 109–10). As Brooks shows, a character crying “imposture” in *The Citizen of the World* is often an ironic signal that that character is about to be imposed upon, as indeed happens (124). In a series of encounters typical of sentimental fiction, they meet an old beggar with “a dying wife and five hungry children,” a sailor crippled at sea, and a ragged ballad singer. All the while continuing to condemn begging and praise frugality, the man in black empties his pockets for all three (2: 110–12). Later, he explains that his father valued learning and charity so much that he taught his children “that universal benevolence was what first cemented society” and so “wound us up to be mere machines of pity” (2: 114). Their impulses to relieve suffering are therefore not natural, but automatic and excessive, and they are so expert at giving away money that they hardly know how to earn it.

Clearly, some degree of self-interest would improve the man in black’s fortunes and make him a more effective philanthropist. However, if obeying Hutcheson’s moral sense might make one a “machine of pity,” Goldsmith could not wholly endorse the opposite more egotistical course. Hutcheson had been writing in response to Bernard Mandeville’s *The Fable of the Bees; or, Private Vices, Public Benefits* (1705–25), a controversial celebration of selfishness in which the individual pursuit of “vice,” pleasure and social approval leads (inadvertently) to “public benefits” (Ellis 11). Mandeville’s *Fable* was directly along the lines of later defenses of luxury that stressed the private pursuit of profit as a necessary condition of national prosperity. In many ways, it took Goldsmith’s argument that civilisation depends upon surpassing basic needs and a satirist’s recognition of human vanity to their logical conclusion. Writing in the *Female Tatler*, Mandeville points out that without the “vices” of pride, ambition and competitiveness, we would have no advances in the arts and sciences (M. Goldsmith 40). As a professional author concerned with his reputation, Goldsmith may well have conceded him this point. However, in general he

could not align himself with Mandeville's argument because it opposed the Augustan belief in civic and public virtue and divorced luxury from corruption (M. Goldsmith 3).

Unrestrained feeling itself could be construed as a kind of luxury; it is luxurious to indulge in charitable behaviour, as the man in black does, beyond the bounds of reason.² Like *chinoiserie*, sensibility over the course of the century became increasingly associated with inauthentic self-indulgence and unnatural excess, both emotional and material. With the commodification of sentimental objects and the consumption of lachrymose novels, feeling became "product not process" (Festa 21). Such conventionalised outpourings, many besides Goldsmith noted, did nothing to ameliorate the condition of the real poor. Adam Smith, in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), criticised the "whining and melancholy moralists" who profess "an affected and sentimental sadness" of no social utility (139–40). Elsewhere in *The Citizen of the World*, Goldsmith's treatment of charity, for example, suggests that he favoured public, collective measures over the expression of personal moral feelings.

Charity provides an important marker of social benevolence in the urban world Altangi explores. Nationalist discourse lauded charity as "the very characteristic of this Nation at this Time," as Henry Fielding declared in 1752, and Goldsmith also singled out the English as philanthropists (qtd. in Ellis 14–15). They are not only "more charitable than the rest of mankind," Altangi observes, but they are "most judicious in distinguishing the properest objects of compassion." Altruism in other nations often has the selfish aim of relieving the benefactor's "uneasy sensations," he continues, whereas in England the process is regularised and public, directed by "men of fortune and universal benevolence," supported by "the people" and accompanied by "cool discussion" and reason (2: 97–98). So-called "universal" benevolence obeys the social hierarchy here, remaining attached to propertied men with the financial means for large-scale philanthropy, while still receiving the approval of "the people." Goldsmith is referring here to real developments: the new practice of the charity subscription and the ongoing establishment of institutions like

² This is, of course, an indulgence only those with money can afford. Johnson was probably more in touch with contemporary conditions when he responded to Goldsmith's complaints against luxurious degeneration by advising him to "consider to how very small a proportion of our people luxury can reach" (Boswell 2: 218).

Thomas Coram's Foundling Hospital (Ellis 15). Through subscriptions, these institutions thus competed for the attention and money of consumers of printed publications, in which their charitable endeavours could in turn be advertised. In this way, literature, especially moralising sentimental novels, helped to shape public opinion, including the patriotic notion of English philanthropy, and effect social change (Ellis 16).

Interestingly, when the pages of the *Public Ledger* furnished Goldsmith with the opportunity to advertise such a charitable cause himself, he apparently declined. Admittedly, this cause was the controversial one of female prostitution. Altangi's naïve astonishment at the number of "invitations" he receives from these "daughters of hospitality" reflects the belief of many Londoners at the time that the city was overrun with fallen women (2: 42). Elsewhere in the *Ledger*, the Reverend William Dodd complained about the "numbers of unhappy prostitutes in the broad daylight, plying their miserable trade," and exhorted magistrates to act (qtd. in Ellis 161). Dodd had clear reasons for advocating a particular solution: he was the official preacher for the Magdalen Hospital for Reformed Prostitutes, which had opened in 1758. Dodd strategically inserted into the *Ledger* narratives of the lives of "Magdalens," part of a body of distressing yet morally instructive advertising literature that helped maintain financial support for the Hospital (Ellis 178). Two such front-page stories appeared in March 1760, supposedly written by a "Grateful Magdalen" but again probably by Dodd (*PL* 19 and 29 March). Hopkins claims that Altangi's letter "A City Night-Piece" was in fact a "clever and oblique ... piece of propaganda" designed to complement these narratives (56–57). However, this essay was not in fact originally published in the *Ledger* but in the *Bee* for 27 October 1759, so it seems unlikely that Goldsmith had any aim to benefit the controversial charity. Rather than addressing this social problem directly, he subsumes the prostitute's plight under his more abstract analysis of national decline.

Night and Day: Goldsmith's Moral Melancholy

"A City Night-Piece," although anomalous to Goldsmith's other periodical essays, makes a useful introduction to the more sentimentalised aspects of his writings. Short but poignant, distinctively melancholy in tone, it is aptly described by Taylor as a "meditative prose poem" and therefore represents a kind of transition between the genres (83). It opens with journalistic concern for place and time, and

Goldsmith perhaps altered the *Bee*'s "the clock has struck two" to *The Citizen*'s "the clock just struck two" to intensify the sense of Altangi's present-time narration (1: 430; 2: 452). Yet the essay's mood, structure and subject matter have much in common with Goldsmith's later verse. The observer's perspective is detached, as in a prospect poem. People become generalised types, "the drunkard," "the robber," and "the suicide," almost indistinguishable from personifications: "nothing wakes but meditation, guilt, revelry and despair" (2: 452). At the close of *The Deserted Village* a similar transition occurs as the peasants leave England and "their bodies and identities vaporize into Goldsmith's personifications of 'rural virtue'" (Kaul 119), except that here the abstract qualities are the negative results of urban alienation. Only one might be positive, "meditation," which Goldsmith added to the list in the 1762 edition. His only significant excision from the *Bee* piece was the final paragraph, which describes "the sanctified hypocrite" who indulges his vices under cover of darkness (1: 432). Without this satirically cynical reference to wrongdoers (including, presumably, the prostitutes' clients), the piece closes on the narrator's lament that his sensibility is insufficient to improve the lives of their victims.

The essay opens with an invocation of retreat and a shift from the daily world of literature to a nocturnal realm of experience. "Let me," Altangi exclaims, "no longer waste the night over the page of antiquity, or the sallies of cotemporary genius, but pursue the solitary walk, where vanity, ever changing, but a few hours past, walked before me" (2: 452). These lines, Friedman points out, recall the beginning of Thomas Parnell's "A Night-Piece on Death" (1722), an early "graveyard" poem, and Taylor likens the tone of the whole to Young's famous *The Complaint; or Night Thoughts* (note to 1: 341; Taylor 83). That Altangi becomes a melancholy prophet at night reflects the mid-century shift by which darkness becomes a beloved medium of poets (Sitter 84–85). Goldsmith's own poetry, however, sits in transition, with day and night retaining their human contexts rather than being celebrated in their own right.

Night, for example, provides a contrasting background for discerning glaring urban and social problems. Jack C. Wills compares *The Deserted Village* with Ecclesiastes which, "yokes darkness with vanity," pointing out that the poem's scenes of urban opulence take place at night (18–19). This may be true, but in fact "the long pomp, the midnight masquerade" is brightly-lit:

The dome where pleasure holds her midnight reign,

Here, richly deckt, admits the gorgeous train,
 Tumultuous grandeur crowds the blazing square,
 The rattling chariots clash, the torches glare. (261; 321–24)

The pleasure “dome” is possibly Vauxhall, or more likely Ranelagh with its rotunda. Both venues were famous for their select clientele and landscaped grounds (including Chinese pavilions), and especially for their brilliant lighting (Picard 245–47). One of the more successful comic episodes in *The Citizen of the World* describes an expedition to Vauxhall where Altangi marvels at the “illuminations” and the vanity of his English companions is thoroughly ridiculed (2: 294). Their behaviour at the elite venue exposes their social shortcomings and aspirations, and Goldsmith mocks their cultural pretensions with a scene where Mrs. Tibbs sings for her captive audience, just as the poet had regaled the literary club with his verses.

The false glitter and glare of torches here echoes the imagery of fire in *The Traveller* and *The Deserted Village*, where it represents the warm homely hearth, the “patriot flame,” the fire of poetic aspiration, or the “frenzy” firing the mob. In *The Traveller*, Britain’s national triumphs are “flaring tapers brightening as they waste” as expansive ambition consumes itself. In *The Deserted Village*, the subject expresses his modest desire to curb these worldly desires and retire to “husband out life’s taper at the close / And keep the flame from wasting by repose” (87–88). Pinpointing some ways in which Akenside and Young diverge from Pope, Sitter observes that they celebrate “unbounded ambition” rather than satirising it, and that they turn away from light with its suggestion of empirical clarity towards sublime darkness (161–62). By contrast, Goldsmith’s imagery suggests his more ambivalent attitude towards ambition and pride: it is both life-giving and dangerous. At two in the morning, “A City Night- Piece” remarks, “all the bustle of human pride is forgotten” and the few people who remain in the streets “no longer wear their daily mask, nor attempt to hide their lewdness or their misery” (2: 453). The essayist, perhaps, is laying aside the “daily mask” of his periodical persona to confront the true face of the city, one of sensual desire, of “lewdness and misery.” Darkness reveals the poverty underlying the appearance of prosperity, and enables the narrator to sympathise with it.

It is at this point that Goldsmith employs the pathetic figure of the prostitute as a powerful symbol of combined moral and economic deprivation. In striking contrast to the well-dressed ladies Altangi meets during his first days in London, or the flirts of Vauxhall, the women he encounters in the night streets are unmistakably social

outcasts (as he is), lost among the “strangers, wanderers, orphans” sleeping rough. Goldsmith rehearses Hogarth’s well-known seduction narrative in its new sentimentalised guise that includes the prospect of repentance and charitable relief (Ellis 163):

These poor shivering females, have once seen happier days, and been flattered into beauty. They have been prostituted to the gay luxurious villain, and are now turned out to meet the severity of winter. Perhaps now lying at the doors of their betrayers they sue to wretches whose hearts are insensible, or debauchees who may curse, but will not relieve them (2: 453–54).

The conventional terms of this narrative adapt themselves easily to the binary oppositions of Goldsmith’s arguments against luxury and commerce. Metaphorically, these women have fallen from the realm of summer daylight to that of winter darkness. As with Moll Hackabout, their former condition of summery innocence is located in the rural countryside. The female prostitute therefore becomes the ideal sentimentalised victim of the triumph of city vices over country virtues.

Thus, in *The Deserted Village*, Goldsmith directly follows the depiction of night revels quoted above with a recitation of her sad tale. To the reader who might think the vibrant city scenes “denote one universal joy,” he counters: “Ah, turn thine eyes / where the poor, houseless, shivering female lies

She once, perhaps, in village plenty blest
Has wept at tales of innocence distressed ...
Now lost to all; her friends, her virtue fled,
Near her betrayer’s door she lays her head,
And, pinched with cold and shrinking from the shower,
With heavy heart deplores that luckless hour,
When idly first, ambitious of the town,
She left her wheel and robes of country brown (324–28, 331–36).

In his illuminating reading of the poem, Robert Dingley sees *The Deserted Village* as “permeated at every level by images of female vulnerability,” with Auburn, the land (in simile, the “fair female”), the modest country girl and “thou, sweet Poetry, thou loveliest maid” all figured as feminine (5). Dingley observes that some critics have found the double presentation of the feminine countryside inconsistent. Landscaped and “adorned for pleasure all / in barren splendour [the land] feebly waits the fall” but

has effectively already “fallen;” the land, then, appears as both a helpless innocent and a woman who deliberately enhances her beauty to attract men. The “Harlot’s Progress” narrative, Dingley argues, encompasses both interpretations, figuring women as victims of masculine exploitation, whether sexual or economic (Dingley 2–3). In evoking the prostitute-as-victim, Goldsmith harnesses public feeling in support of his argument, particularly since he is no longer referring to city prostitutes *en masse*, but to a solitary “shivering female” in a country setting. Those who can feel for this distressed individual, he suggests, can also feel for the village or the nation. The appeal to sensibility is a way for him to appeal to public moral feeling after the decline of ideals of civic virtue, turning away from the iconography of luxury as female corruption and invoking a more sympathetic (if passive) femininity.

Sentimentalising Decay

Goldsmith’s appeals to feeling and nostalgia are problematic for several reasons, one being that they valorise the very decline that they deplore. Ruined Auburn enacts in part “the female narrative which the Age of Sentiment found most appealing”: that of “fallen innocence, which automatically guaranteed both moral pathos and the erotic spectacle of distressed beauty” (Dingley 7). So Goldsmith describes a young woman, parting from her lover to accompany her father to America, who grows “lovelier in her tears,” and Dingley offers parallels in painting that suggest how the eighteenth-century visual imagination would have easily imagined these sentimental vignettes (7). If Auburn’s “glades forlorn confess the tyrant’s power,” the abandoned village retains a melancholy attraction:

Here as I take my solitary rounds,
Amidst thy tangling walks, and ruined grounds ...
Here, as with doubtful, pensive steps I range,
Trace every scene, and wonder at the change,
Remembrance wakes with every busy train,
Swells at my breast, and turns the past to pain. (76–82)

Such scenes might encourage his readers’ hearts to swell with pity, but in doing so reduce the force of the poem’s social commentary. Goldsmith’s dilemma, in Dingley’s words, is that “he seeks to make a political intervention through an idiom designed to obfuscate politics altogether” (9). Just as the descriptive details required for poetic painting undermine Auburn’s force as a generalised location, the more

aesthetic value Goldsmith accords to its tumble-down cottages the less he is able to call for their restoration.

The figure of the ruined woman sentimentalises vulnerable humanity, as does the image of the ruined building. Classical ruins play a central role in Goldsmith's attacks upon imperialism and its attendant luxuries, but again their melancholy appeal threatens to weaken this critique. In "A City Night-Piece" the wanderer in the "temporary solitude" of the night-time city experiences a prophetic vision in which the people permanently disappear and London falls to ruins, vanishing from the face of the earth. The inevitable comparison with the great cities of the past follows, in which Rome is not mentioned by name but vividly present in the narrative of overweening pride, "luxury and avarice," and the city's eventual dissolution. "The sorrowful traveller wanders over the awful ruins of others, and as he beholds, he learns wisdom, and feels the transience of every sublunary possession" (2: 453). However, without the evidence of decline, the traveller would be unable to "feel" his mortality, or to enjoy the sublime frisson of contemplating, even in imagination, the overgrown traces of past glories.

By drawing rhetorical parallels with Rome in *The Deserted Village*, Goldsmith risks embellishing and elevating Auburn to the point where it is no longer the humble location he wishes to celebrate. Dingley notes the almost "Piranesian grandeur" of the village inn as a "tottering mansion" evoking "vain, transitory splendours," and remarks that Goldsmith's "tangling walks and ruined grounds" translate the winding paths and follies of a landscaped estate on to Auburn's village green (6). Partly, we can see the conventions of topographical poetry working here, conventions usually applied to grander prospects. The result is a curious disjunction: Auburn has been, or is about to be, transformed into a rich estate, yet simultaneously resembles that same estate fallen into neglect. Early in the poem, Goldsmith explains that "only one master grasps the whole domain," so we might expect a description of a large-scale farming enterprise or country seat to follow (39). Instead, the scene is gloomy and deserted:

No more thy glassy brook reflects the day,
But, choked with sedges, works its weedy way.
Along thy glades, a solitary guest,
The hollow-sounding bittern guards its nest;
Amidst thy desert walks the lapwing flies,
And tires their echoes with unvaried cries.

Sunk are thy bowers in shapeless ruin all,
And the long grass o'ertops the mouldering wall. (43–48)

This sombre landscape apparently represents Lonsdale's "internalized topography" (21). This passage after all, he argues, comes from a poet who wrote to his brother in 1753 that "Melancholy was beginning to make me her own," and described the conclusion of Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Church Yard* as "pathetic and interesting" ("Garden" 7; Goldsmith, *Letters* 16, *Coll. Works* 5: 320). So extensive is the poet's identification with the landscape, according to Newey, that the "glassy brook" that mirrors clear daylight provides an image of the sparkling flow of poetry that ideally reflects nature, but that now expresses only "choked" creativity (103). The value of Newey's observation, it seems to me, is that the Augustan image of nature's mirror reminds us that the stream, like literature, needs to be maintained and kept clear by a community. Auburn-past is alive with noise: music, voices, children playing, dogs barking, geese honking. "But now the sounds of population fail," and the weedy marsh and glades echo only with the "hollow-sounding" and "unvaried" song of wild birds (125, 46, 48). Solitude is less a source of inspiration than an unnatural state for human beings.

The only figure left inhabiting Auburn's wastes is a poetic persona very different to Gray's romantic youth. She is again a sentimentalised vulnerable female, but an old woman, a "widowed, solitary thing," physically feeble but "forced, in age, for bread" to pick cress in the marsh and gather her own firewood (129–31). As Newey notes, she therefore resembles the garret-dwelling author writing for his keep (103). She is living out her days in simple rural retirement from economic necessity, not choice, and the experience is miserable: she sleeps in a "shed and weep[s] till morn" (135). Isaac Taylor's frontispiece to the early editions depicts her as a stooped, discontented guide, pointing out the desolation beyond to an equally grizzled, bearded traveller, barefoot and leaning wearily on a stick. Auburn appears in the background as a mixture of tumble-down cottages and picturesque ruins; what appears to be the church on the hill has a romantically overgrown tower. Whereas Gray's poet under a similar tower must resurrect the dead peasants in imagination, Goldsmith's traveller can almost discern the exiles in the distance: "And trembling, shrinking from the spoiler's hand / Far, far away, thy children leave the land" (49–50). Taylor has depicted these wider implications of the old woman's tale by showing in the distance a ship in full sail heading out to sea. His image is more rustic than Richard Bentley's

elegant engraving for the 1753 edition of Gray's *Elegy*, but both represent a local resident pointing out to the traveller the physical remains of the past, in very similar postures. In Bentley's image the newcomer leaning on his walking stick is a young man peering at the poet's gravestone; in *The Deserted Village*'s frontispiece, the depopulated land, "a garden and a grave," represents the decline of poetry and the poet (302).

Taylor's frontispiece might bear a caption from "A City Night-Piece": "The sorrowful traveller wanders over the awful ruins of others, and as he beholds, he learns wisdom" (2: 453). Its title is in fact Goldsmith's line describing the old woman as "the sad historian of the pensive plain." "Pensive" was a little strong for the *Critical Review*: "Dr Goldsmith has given to his Plain too much of the sensibility and contemplation of the poet" (29 1770: 439). Yet in contemplating the ruins of Auburn Goldsmith is attentive to specific contemporary conditions, as his identification of the old woman as a historian suggests. His poems engage with these public concerns to an unusual extent, if we accept Sitter's proposition that mid-century poetry was "seeking to avoid history" (80). By history, he refers to those particulars of time, place and name that were the hallmarks of satire but increasingly relegated to the realm of the trivial or transient, as opposed to the domain of universal, timeless feeling (82). Goldsmith continues to employ these details; for example, the preacher's income of "forty pounds a year" (the same as Henry Goldsmith's recorded in the dedication) or the explicit references to enclosures, although they are often in tension with his appeals to sentiment (142). Yet his awareness of the vicissitudes of professional authorship and his gloomy appraisals of public affairs mean that his travellers do often attempt to retreat into the timeless.

In the mid-century, Sitter claims, "history's metonymy is conflict," whether war between nations or competition between classes and individuals (96). This results in poetic avoidance tactics whereby

the conflict and violence of public history as it is conceived metonymically by many of the poets leads to images of Retreat, images of shepherds fleeing as they sing, for example, hurrying towards the shelter of shady groves or the protection of caves, and ... these images of seclusion are also metaphors for the solitary poetic imagination itself. (102)

There is an image of such a flight towards rural nature in *The Deserted Village*, when the narrator admits his desire to end his days at Auburn “as a hare, whom hounds and horns pursue / Pants to the place from whence at first she flew” (93–94). Echoes of the depictions of bloodsports in *Windsor Forest* and *The Seasons* arouse sentimental sympathy for the hare, and Goldsmith links this effectively to his broader attack upon the predatory country estates of the rich. Retirement to the country was one resort for those who had the means to avoid the pressures of history in public life, but a market was also growing in imaginary “ideal property” that was immune to the kinds of depredations that Goldsmith describes (Goldstein 115). Increasingly, however, following the prescription set out in John Pomfret’s *The Choice* and establishing a private estate near town, either real or imaginary, no longer seemed sufficient. Both Goldsmith’s longer poems conclude that no such refuge is possible in the world, nor, perhaps, in poetic imagination.

Retreat from public history can take the shape of a re-immersion in personal history and the timelessness of childhood. This theme emerges so strongly in *The Deserted Village* that a critical tradition has been to match its poetic portraits with individuals from Goldsmith’s early life in Lissoy, County Westmeath (since renamed Auburn). Goldsmith’s village is of course a generalised ideal, with its idealism deriving some emotional force from memory. Yet childhood innocence, like that of the betrayed woman, is situated irretrievably in the past. It cannot be restored and can only be revisited within the imagination, which poses an obvious problem for the reforming aspects of Goldsmith’s work. It can of course be political, as Sitter suggests, to oppose the innocence of childhood and countryside against the turbulent world of adulthood (89). The child’s “internalized Golden Age” is a “prepassionate” state, whereas now the harmony is disrupted and “all / Is off the poise within: the passions all / Have burst their bounds” (Sitter 90; Thomson *Seasons* 1: 277–79). Thomson’s lines bear a significant resemblance to the passages in *The Traveller* condemning the “ferments” and chaos arising when “repressed ambition” breaks the social order (345–46). Of adult emotions, for Goldsmith those most politically dangerous are pride and misplaced patriotism.

If the traveller’s “seats of my youth” are free of such passions, they are also free of an opposite quality: mature reason (*Deserted Village* 6). Auburn’s innocence is child-like, its pleasures are those of games and young love. Preserved in this atmosphere of immature playfulness, the adult villagers remain sentimentalised and

passive. Two father-figures preside over their community: the village preacher, a version of Wakefield's vicar, and the schoolmaster. The master is an imposing figure whose authority over his school spreads out to influence all the inhabitants of Auburn, reducing them to gaping spectators of his rhetorical prowess as he triumphs in argument: "Amazed the gazing rustics ranged around / And still they gazed, and still the wonder grew / That one small head could carry all he knew" (214–16).

The master's only real intellectual opponent appears to be the preacher; the uneducated villagers have no voice. Elsewhere, the narrator admits that until Auburn declined, "I still had hopes, for pride attends us still / Amidst the swains to show my book-learned skill" (89–90), in the patronising tones of the worldly traveller among peasants. Goldstein suggests that "Goldsmith was aware that his flight to the city perfectly symbolized the disintegrating effect of urban civilization on the rural virtues" and therefore he attempted to atone by becoming "an arbiter of taste and a purveyor of truth" (98). However, he chose to do so as an author and cultural critic in the city. Thus, he situates any possible solution to Auburn's decline, as he situates its causes, outside the village. To the extent to which both Goldsmith's poems delineate wider economic developments that originate elsewhere and have a global reach, the pastoral setting is almost redundant and its sentimentality may work against the political argument in ways suggested above.

Aligning the traveller's personal retrospect with Goldsmith's theories about primitive societies and cultures exposes further rifts in the arguments of both poems. Auburn-past is an archetypal rural or undeveloped society, displaying self-sufficiency, communal harmony, hospitality to wandering strangers, strong moral leadership, and a spontaneous if unsophisticated artistic culture. In terms of Goldsmith's political argument, the village is rooted in place and time:

A time there was, ere England's griefs began
When every rood of ground maintained its man;
For him light labour spread her wholesome store,
Just gave what life required, but gave no more. (57–60)³

³ John Hawkesworth in the *Monthly Review* objected to the "absurdity of supposing that there was a time when England was equally divided among its inhabitants by a rood a man: if it was possible that such an equal division could take place ... it could not continue ten years" because property presupposes inequality of wealth (42 1770: 443). Hawkesworth simplifies Goldsmith's argument somewhat. Bell suggests that Goldsmith was echoing Juvenal and Pliny, whose point was that landowners used to be satisfied with smaller plots but now desire larger, more ornamental estates (769–

This was a place “where health and plenty cheered the labouring swain,” and where village work was lightened by summer holidays of dancing, sports and simple entertainments. Goldsmith is perhaps referring back two or three decades, to the time of his own youth. However, the poet and “labouring swain” Stephen Duck had already contested this myth in *The Thresher’s Labour* (1730), and Mary Collier in *The Woman’s Labour* (1739) had pointed out that not only was ceaseless work going on in the countryside, but it was mainly women who were doing it. These were preludes to Crabbe’s later and more famous accusations against pastoral utopias where the happy, piping peasants have time to spare. Lutz argues that Goldsmith emphasises the workers’ leisure to depict a “politically radical” rural economy made up of the “self-sufficient owner-occupier whose life revolves around the common,” people who are not defined by their economic roles nor devoted to round-the-clock production of surplus (181). “His vision of old Auburn,” Newey agrees, “is prospective as well as retrospective” (96).

Sadly, the villagers themselves remain ignorant of their political potential. All of these happy scenes remain “vain, transitory splendours” within the narrator’s memory. Did it exist, old Auburn would presumably become subject to the depredations of time and progress that threaten England. Goldsmith’s decline-and-fall narratives relate how, as communities move beyond a needs-based economy, primitive contentment succumbs to more complex social and political arrangements. Despite the “security and affluence” of the Kingdom of Lao, Altangi relates in his cautionary tale, “primitive simplicity soon began to aim at elegance, and from elegance proceeded to refinement,” refinement being perilously close to corrupt luxury (2: 104–05). In this scenario, happiness becomes almost a liability.

Furthermore, *over*-civilised societies may revert to a pre-civilised pursuit of pleasure. In a *Rasselas*-like allegorical tale inserted into *The Citizen of the World*, Hingpo learns that “they who travel in pursuit of wisdom, walk only in a circle; and after all their labour, at last return to their pristine ignorance” (2: 157).⁴ Many words

70). The “actual history,” according to Williams, is that enclosures and new farming methods *increased* agricultural fertility and the uses for the land (78). Goldsmith’s argument is against unproductive landscaping rather than improvement *per se*.

⁴ Goldsmith’s tale is more pessimistic. Johnson’s Happy Valley becomes “the valley of ignorance,” and the ambitious “unhappy youth” who climbs out of it is led astray on his journey to the Land of Certainty and finally plunges, Icarus-like, into the Ocean of Doubts (2: 157–61).

and images used to depict France and Italy in *The Traveller* recur in the picture of Auburn-past. True, contemporary Italy manages to be both “poor” and “luxurious,” as the vices of opulence outlast their material bases, but it is still a place of “low delights” where “the sports of children satisfy the child” (157, 154). The Catholic peasants enjoy the consoling “sports” of processions and rituals with a credulous piety recalling that of Auburn’s inhabitants (who are perhaps Irish Catholics). Similarly, in France the traveller plays music for the marvelling dancers and hears “the village praise [his] wondrous power” (249). Goldsmith’s depiction of happy “sweet Auburn” is more realistic than Crabbe allowed. Nevertheless, if Auburn-past is a potential utopia, with all the socio-political commentary this implies, it is also an Edenic Golden Age, albeit one requiring labour (Newey 96–97). As such, it too “waits the fall.”

The traveller’s goal is “to find / Some spot to real happiness consigned” for himself and humanity (61–61). Both Thomson and Goldsmith believed that this spot existed in the halcyon era when “the fabling poets took their golden age,” and that “amid these iron times” poetry might provide a source of regeneration (*Seasons* 1: 273–74). For Goldsmith, this regeneration cannot depend upon an ideal of universal benevolence, since such an ideal does not take into account self-interest. His wanderers, perhaps contaminated by their contact with the city, are exiled from the desirable community but have at the same time matured away from it. Hobbes in *The Leviathan* had offered an alternative model of primitive “savage” humanity in which life was explicitly antisocial and avaricious, the typical “antithesis of the rational, “civilised” individual” (Brantlinger 32). Yet the pursuit of this rational ideal also leads backwards. As Patrick Brantlinger points out, “Hobbes’s natural human seems little different from the civilised “possessive individualist” that supposedly makes for economic and political progress” (32). Whereas Goldsmith’s happy peasants are in danger of becoming equally passive victims or consumers in a world geared towards luxury, possessive individualism “keeps man from man” and threatens the same social prosperity it aims to produce (*Traveller* 340).

Harmonious order might no longer exist among human societies, but it might be found in nature. Praise of this natural order allowed Thomson to reconcile Whig progress with flawed humanity, but Goldsmith’s view is more that civilisation and culture were separate from nature and would revert back to it if neglected. Therefore, his “purest” passages of nature poetry describe Auburn’s desolation, and both poems

paint North America in lurid terms as a hostile, poisonous wilderness. Significantly, his poetic subjects seek refuge from the city in the village cottage rather than the shady grove, and their imaginative visions of ruins and wildernesses devoid of people occasion regret rather than sublime contemplation. Casting ruins primarily as prophetic warnings, and rugged landscapes as the negative of pastoral scenes, Goldsmith departed from the aesthetic of the picturesque that facilitated the desired fusion of culture and natural environment. One of the unique functions of the ruin during this period, according to Anne Janowitz, was “to shift the opposition of art and nature into a convergence of not only materials, but also intentions;” both emerge from the soil and the ruined building becomes a natural feature, little distinguishable from the rocky arches or overgrown grottoes that abound in paintings and poetry (5).

It is perhaps surprising that Goldsmith did not situate his social commentary within the resurgence of antiquarian interest that was translating this ancient soil from Greece and Rome to the British Isles. His ballad *Edwin and Angelina*, often titled “The Hermit,” shows that like Thomas Percy he had some interest in recovering earlier popular forms.⁵ For Rousseau, John Tait’s praise of Goldsmith in *The Druid’s Monument* (1774) suggests that Goldsmith’s poetry “appealed to writers especially interested in Celtic primitivism” (165). Yet his Chinese persona, Lien Chi Altangi, was an oblique gesture at best towards supposed affinities between oriental and Celtic traditions, while his essays describe the Irish from the point of view of a well-travelled Englishman.⁶ “The History of Carolan, the last Irish Bard,” written for *The British Magazine* in 1760, offered an opportunity for Goldsmith to resurrect or even ventriloquise a poet who may have made part of the oral traditions of his own native region (Friedman notes that Carolan died in 1738) (3: 119). This piece is, however, written with an urbane, anthropologising curiosity, proposing “to compare the rude Celtic simplicity with modern refinement” for “entertainment” and giving no indication of any personal connection to Ireland. Perhaps predictably, Goldsmith compares Carolan’s songs to Pindar’s odes of occasional praise (3: 119). He had also said of Gray’s *Odes* that they “breathe much the spirit of Pindar;” the subject of “The

⁵ *Edwin and Angelina* was privately printed in 1765 and appeared in *The Vicar of Wakefield* the following year. Its inspiration was apparently another ballad about which Goldsmith and Percy had corresponded (note to 4: 191–92).

⁶ Goldsmith’s review of Paul Henri Mallet’s *Remains of the Mythology and Poetry of the Celtes* (1756) is translated from a French periodical; Goldsmith probably never read Mallet’s work (note to 3: 5).

Bard,” he observed, appears to have been taken from Horace. His verdict was to wish that this “imitator ... did justice to his talents, and ventured to be more an original,” an irony that Gray apparently appreciated (1: 114–15, note to 1: 116). Ancient models for Goldsmith remained largely classical or Biblical.

Other avenues sought by mid-century poets like Warton, Collins and Gray, including a retreat towards feminised nature, “pure” visionary poetry, or even metaphorical death, were incompatible with Goldsmith’s aesthetic and political allegiances and his commitment to public utterance (Sitter 131, 146). The poignancy of his travellers’ positions, “remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow,” comes from the assumption that human life is social and that every person should have a “happiest spot” on the globe as in the social order. In *The Traveller*, Storm finds Goldsmith attempting to express this faith in order through applying the philosophy of the Great Chain of Being to position or class in the community (469).⁷ “Experience tells,” the traveller claims, that “in every soil / Those who think must govern those who toil” (371–72). Altangi’s Confucian sympathies allow him to express similar opinions about the “natural and political subordinations” necessary to balance independence (2: 307). Goldsmith’s works lament how fast these bonds of status and obligation are disintegrating, to be replaced by new conceptions of the individual. The “feeling self” was one of these, but of limited usefulness for Goldsmith’s purposes without its political face, the “self-grounding, proto-democratic subject” (Bird 189). This subject was patriotically “free,” but in the interests of restraining luxury and self-interest, Goldsmith advocated a strong monarchy. Thus he oscillated, according to Benjamin Bird, between unease about the monarchy’s constraint of personal liberties, and the anxiety that the subject’s quest for liberty is “inherently treasonous and illegitimate” (189). “Think not,” he is quick to state in *The Traveller*, “when Freedom’s ills I state / I mean to flatter kings or court the great,” yet he famously declared in 1773, “I’m for Monarchy to keep us equal” (qtd. in Lonsdale, *Poems* 652–53). In a recent essay, James P. Carson suggests that Goldsmith’s ideal was closer to “classical republicanism,” if the republic in question were small, unified and like ancient Rome, where the “popular element was dominant” rather than the aristocracy (173–74). The English republic of letters failed to conform to this ideal.

⁷ Goldsmith’s *A History of the Earth and Animated Nature* (1774) supposedly helped popularise the idea of the Great Chain of Being, but Arthur O. Lovejoy describes the work as a good example of how difficult it could be to actually apply the theory to natural history (93).

Sympathy and the Cosmopolitan Citizen

Despite his pessimism about the future of literature, Goldsmith clearly saw some potential to reconstitute a community through literary ties. Therefore he remained committed to public address. Hopkins, who emphatically does “*not* see Goldsmith as a muddling sentimentalist,” argues that because he could not take advantage of the “dual audience of dunces and perceptive insiders” available to earlier ironists such as Swift and Pope, he had to appeal to his “insider” audience using subtler irony that is often mistaken for sincerity (vii, 8–9). The view of Goldsmith’s work as purely Augustan or rhetorical is too limited to explain his obvious appeals to feeling, as are claims that he modelled his poetry on classical oratory and that emotion merely embellishes this framework.⁸ Paul Goring in *The Rhetoric of Sensibility* argues that Goldsmith was indeed aware that public address needed enlivening in the new climate, but that he turned for this inspiration to French and Methodist models in which the speaker’s emotions played a larger role. Writing in “magazines self-consciously engaged in the production of polite society,” Goring argues, “Goldsmith addresses the subject of public eloquence and argues for the appropriateness of powerful displays of the passions within polite public performances” (77). Goring notes Goldsmith’s support for the natural, “enthusiastic” Methodist preaching style founded upon the orator’s sincere personal belief rather than upon classical rules (78). When he tells us that the Auburn preacher’s “looks adorned” his church or that “truth from his lips prevailed with double sway,” he sums up the charismatic personal authority that supplements the wisdom he communicates (178–79). Goldsmith’s statement in the preface to *The Deserted Village* that “I sincerely believe what I have written” seems to demand that we appreciate the poem’s dedication to its own subjective world-view (23). Yet if this world-view originated entirely in the poet’s “idiosyncratic imagination,” then its political argument would collapse (Lonsdale, “Garden” 22).

A key difference between Goldsmith’s works and those celebrating retreat, as I have suggested, is that his travellers experience solitude as an involuntary and distressing situation akin to that of an author without an audience. In all three of these

⁸ See Quintana, *Oliver Goldsmith: A Georgian Study* and “*The Deserted Village*: its Logical and Rhetorical Elements,” Richard Eversole, “The Oratorical Design of *The Deserted Village*,” and Zong-Qi Cai, “Structural Antitheses in Goldsmith’s *The Deserted Village*.”

texts, Goldsmith seems to be addressing like-minded readers, albeit without much hope of reaching them. Thus, he turns to the epistolary form in the Chinese letters and *The Traveller*, and to the social cement of feeling and sentimentality in *The Deserted Village*. William Dowling in his work on the verse epistle suggests one reason why this shift occurs. “When we speak of the Augustan verse epistle,” he claims, “we are normally talking about a situation in which a male speaker, educated in classical values and seeking refuge, in the company of a few kindred souls, from a fallen social reality, addresses a male friend in a way meant to be exemplary for their society as a whole” (8). So the epistle, especially the traveller’s letter, aims to overcome separation in time and space as well as to combat solipsism, or mental isolation (26).

The epistle attempts “a conjuration of community out of distance or absence or flux,” and sensibility performs the same role for sentimental travellers such as Sterne’s Yorick (Dowling 35). Dowling argues that the “fallen social reality” Goldsmith laments is as much the “interior landscape created by Augustan poetry” as it is the real British countryside and civilisation. In his “elegiac Augustanism,” the desirable social order has retreated even further from the poet than it appeared to Pope, and the genre itself becomes a futile refuge (Dowling 114). This is evident to some extent in Goldsmith’s dedicatory preface to his brother Henry, in which he returns to the “fallen” state of poetry, marginalised by painting and music, distorted by innovations like blank verse, and beset by the turbulence of party politics—both in Parliament and in the book trade. The Augustan audience exists only in the past. Therefore, as Lonsdale points out, the address to Henry signals Goldsmith’s “enlargement of the decorously personal but non self-revelatory element in the traditional verse epistle” into the realm of the personal where he comments on his private and vocational doubts (“Garden” 11–12). Henry replaces the idealised landed aristocrat of Augustan verse (now the *bête noire* of Goldsmith’s critique) with a humble churchman on a modest plot who enjoys a steady but small income and represents the moral authority of the church.

If we accept a chronological development of Goldsmith’s themes and personae, as does Mary Elizabeth Green, we can see him rejecting the man in black’s “universal benevolence” in favour of practical, “worldly wisdom,” but finally preferring the *unworldly* universal of the Christian faith of Parson Primrose and Auburn’s preacher (207–12). For the village clergyman, the division of feeling and intellect is simple: “To [his flock] his heart, his love, his griefs were given / But all his

serious thoughts had rest in Heaven.” Unlike the ordinary man or poet with his head in the clouds, he resembles “some tall cliff” that while “round its breast the rolling clouds are spread / Eternal sunshine settles on its head” (187–89, 191–92). This last line echoes Pope’s *Eloisa to Abelard*, where significantly the reference is to pristine virtue, but also to forgetfulness. Since it is precisely the memory of better times and finer cultural tastes that inspires the traveller’s socio-political commentary and his elegiac verses, he is unable to forget the world to “rest in Heaven.” Comparing *The Traveller* to Johnson’s *Vanity of Human Wishes*, Brown observes that Goldsmith shifts away from Johnson’s faith in providence towards “a private, secularized alternative:” “Vain, vain, my weary search to find / That bliss which only centres in the mind” (423–24). This bliss is intimately associated with a place, a “spot,” (it is tempting to read Pope’s “spotless mind” in this sense also) somewhere on earth.

Or perhaps it is everywhere on earth. At the close of *The Citizen of the World*, Altangi watches his son and his bride prepare to settle down in England. “As for myself,” he says blithely, “the world being but one city to me, I dont much care in which of the streets I happen to reside” (2: 476). James Watt in “Goldsmith’s Cosmopolitanism” points out that, in interpreting the collection’s title literally, Altangi raises the hope of “a utopian sense of global community” which, being urban and cosmopolitan, transcends the problems of a literate traveller in the rustic countryside (57). Goldsmith’s “peripatetic personae” make “a considerable virtue of mobility” as well as complaining about its isolation (Watt 58). Their outsider viewpoint allows a survey, as from the mountaintop, that unites European nations with Asian ones. “The Chinese and we are pretty much alike,” the *Citizen’s* editor remarks; “Different degrees of refinement, and not of distance, mark the distinctions among mankind” and once again “the distinctions of polite nations are few” (13–14).

Civilised culture, by implication, rises above ethnic and political differences. The man in black proves an honest guide and a friend to the Chinese philosopher throughout, and Altangi’s resolution for the future links them both in the pursuit of true cosmopolitanism: “I shall therefore spend the remainder of life in examining the manners of different countries, and have prevailed upon the man in black to be my companion” (2: 476). His statement implies that national manners are distinct enough to bear examination, but not so alien that the English-Chinese pair will fail to understand or negotiate them (his cosmopolitanism does not extend to “impolite” regions.) This theme of intermingling, in Watt’s analysis, provides one satisfactory

interpretation of the otherwise-clumsy “quasi-novelistic resolution,” almost unique in the oriental letters genre, in which Altangi’s son Hingpo marries Zelis, the man in black’s niece (65). It should be noted that with her exotic name and her captivity in a Persian harem, including her near-marriage to her captor which would have involved conversion to Islam, Zelis is as much an orientalist victim as a convincing Englishwoman. Nevertheless their marriage, through “binding one link more in the universal chain” as Altangi puts it, raises “the theoretical prospect of Sino-British intermixture,” and of real happiness (2: 474; Watt 65).

Sentimental figures like the young lovers, in a time of imperial expansion, diminished apparent boundaries between cultures and allowed the strange to become familiar. At the same time by dissolving these boundaries, as Festa shows, sympathetic identification threatens to bring about the dissolution of the individual self. She refers to Jonathan Lamb’s work on the disorientation accompanying exploratory travel and cross-cultural encounter to suggest that “sentimental depictions of these moments of contact” attempt to resolve them into “scenes of benevolent reciprocity” (6). Goldsmith’s comic-romantic subplot is clearly on a lesser scale. Yet across these texts, Goldsmith’s commitment to maintaining national and individual difference remains in tension with his gestures towards generalised sympathy. Hingpo, for example, struggles throughout his narrative between conforming to his father’s stoic “Confucian” wisdom and yielding to his love for Zelis, often disguising his romantic passion as sympathy for her plight. “Excuse me,” he begs, “if I feel an emotion, which universal benevolence extorts from me” (1: 154). Benevolence may compel people to feel and act, as it does the man in black, against their better judgement and against themselves. Moreover, however uncomfortable his outsider position, the lone traveller or Chinese in London does have the virtue of distinction. If we consider Goldsmith’s position as a professional author and cultural critic, another of Brigg’s “disjunctions” emerges whereby he desires both to be absorbed into a like-minded community and to “shine” (a word both Boswell and Johnson used of Goldsmith) above it (Boswell 2: 231, 253). This is the enviable position of Auburn’s preacher or schoolmaster, or of Altangi in his more astute moments.

Culturally, then, Goldsmith elevates the politely learned individual and isolates such individuals from the majority as a result. Politically, however, he denounces the self-motivated ambition and patriotism such an individual might display as signs of divisive greed and nationalism. “Goldsmith’s diverse writings,”

Watt remarks, “often resort to the idea of a universal humanity as a political move, so as to invoke a sense of global community and underwrite an ethical anti-imperialism” (71). Specifically, this anti-imperialism stems from an awareness of the extent to which human relationships were becoming defined in economic terms. Foreign trade is the most damaging of economic relations because luxury originates overseas and proliferates through imported riches (Kazmin 666). The “benevolent reciprocity” of Hingpo and Zelis’s marriage is also a kind of trade, if of a more desirable sort. The entire endeavour of the Chinese letters, in fact, is a commercial transaction undertaken for a mercantile newspaper, and it was perhaps Goldsmith’s awareness of this contradiction that prompted his extended discussions of the dilemmas of the professional author in the world.

The sentimental mode may appear to eschew financial relations, but it is significant that Goldsmith’s sentimental scenes often involve money. The man in black’s philanthropy, the exploitation of prostitutes (and the ambition of the country girl who travels to the town), the traveller’s poverty and the exchange of people for “ore” in slavery and colonisation; all associate sympathetic feeling closely with commerce. Financial resources can help alleviate suffering, but riches are not ideologically neutral. At the close of “A City Night-Piece,” Goldsmith has his nocturnal wanderer exclaim at his helpless distress in the face of urban poverty: “Why was this heart of mine formed with so much sensibility! or why was not my fortune adapted to its impulse! Tenderness, without a capacity of relieving, only makes the man who feels it more wretched than the object which sues for assistance” (2: 454). Altangi, or the *Bee*’s narrator, emerges more strongly from these lines than the “object” of his pity, and though he may resent his poverty, it nevertheless helps distinguish him as the “indigent philosopher.”⁹ The same sensitivity and poverty that allows the solitary wanderer to sympathise with the poor ultimately separates him from them, as riches would also do. When the man in black is in a position to give charity, he does so to such excess that he impoverishes himself, and finishes worse off than those he succours.

Goldsmith concludes that the power to relieve socio-political ills imperils the self as much as the obligation to remain a powerless observer. The latter position may

⁹ The Indigent Philosopher is yet another of Goldsmith’s poor but honest peripatetic personae. He narrates a series of four essays that appeared in Newbery’s *Lloyd’s Evening Post* in early 1762, just prior to *The Citizen of the World*’s publication (*Coll. Works* 3: 180).

indeed be more powerful in a degraded society. This is Horrocks's view of *The Traveller*, where she sees Goldsmith creating a community of exiles sympathetically united in suffering and homelessness (681). As the poem reaches its end, the traveller gazes across at America where the "pensive exile ... Casts a long look where England's glories shine / And bids his bosom sympathize with mine" (419, 421–22). Horrocks and Lonsdale both note the significance of this reflexive last line that aligns poet and exiled villager through their collective and patriotic regret for England's lost "glories" (681; "Garden" 17–18). Goldsmith's travellers unmoor sympathy from any particular locality, just as financial capital and national glory have been unmoored from their traditional bases. While he locates luxury and corruption in the historical world of "exchange relationships," he locates this virtue in a lost past constituted from literary tradition (Kazmin 667). He reinvigorates this ideal by striking new notes of poignant regret for a literary landscape that many of his contemporaries considered a fitting victim of progress. In doing so, he also contributes to the experiments mid-century poetry was making in search of new forms to describe the experience of social upheaval. Noting the tension between "ethical structure" and descriptive detail in *The Traveller*, Storm concludes that "[Goldsmith's] ethics are overpowered by his compelling personal notes and charming descriptions that have always commanded the sensibilities of his readers" (476). After more recent work on the social functions of sensibility, we can no longer so easily separate these "personal notes" from broader debates about the nature of the self and how civic virtue might be interpreted into a rapidly-expanding empire, where the traveller sees his goal of happiness eternally receding over the horizon.

Conclusion

The Restless Mind and the Bounded Circle¹

“They must often change says Confucius, who would be constant in happiness or wisdom” (2: 476).² Thus, Lien Chi Altangi closes his correspondence with a fitting paradox: settled contentment is found only in motion. This maxim will provide the motto for his future philosophical travels with the man in black, and so it is appropriate that the change might be of location, knowledge or identity. Goldsmith’s traveller personae explore alteration in all these aspects. His preoccupation with mobility emerged from his sense of dissonance with the prevailing rhetoric and values of his period, yet this uncertainty of outlook embeds his works more thoroughly in their time. The varied perspectives from which he wrote extended his freedom as a cultural critic to transcend the limitations of his background, education and social manner. They also aided his attempts to reconstitute a community of like-minded readers. In a practical sense, Goldsmith’s periodical personae allowed him to write anonymously and masked the extent of his borrowings, translations and adaptations. For his social commentary it was important that these figures were impartial or cosmopolitan, albeit with a bias towards Britain. This apparently neutral and versatile stance was one strategy by which Goldsmith “constructed a career” in a competitive and rapidly-changing profession (Taylor 105). The outsider figure is distinctive but commands sympathy, embracing the functions of estranging and drawing together, just as epistles from abroad simultaneously work to expose differences and overcome distance.

As I have shown, his outsiders’ travels interest Goldsmith less than the state of *having* or *being* travelled and the outlook it brings. After each of these texts opens, in fact, his travellers experience not a departure but a kind of arrival. Lien Chi Altangi, the most culturally alien and far-ranging figure, begins his correspondence upon landing on English soil and thereafter never strays far from London. The speaker of

¹ The speaker of *The Traveller* describes the search for “Some fleeting good” that recedes before him “like the circle bounding earth and skies” (26–27).

² Goldsmith’s source Le Comte has “Un homme doit souvent changer, s’il veut estre constant dans la sagesse” (note to 2: 476). Goldsmith not only adds “happiness” but implies that the philosophic traveller must choose “happiness *or* wisdom.”

The Traveller has crossed Europe as far as Switzerland, but does not begin surveying his prospect of society until he has attained his mountain seat. Auburn's former resident covers the least ground; his travels are largely temporal as he comes full circle back to the location of his childhood in England or the Irish Midlands. Returning to or remembering some focal "spot" intensifies the isolation these figures experience. They therefore illuminate the changing relationship between the author and the metropolitan centre, a change brought into greater focus by examining Goldsmith's poetry alongside his prose. Retirement for poets like Pope, John Sitter notes, involved a complicated ongoing negotiation of one's position relative to the metropolis; maintaining a public presence remained crucial. "By mid-century," however, "retirement has hardened into retreat," characterised by the melancholy isolation of "solitary poetic wanderers" (Sitter 85). Goldsmith's wanderers by contrast, while they reject the clamouring ambition of the city, remain in search of community. In *The Deserted Village*, when the narrator's actual distance from home is minimal, his distress is most intense. Rather than valorising sadness, these wanderers seek happiness and strive to overcome their solitude through sympathetic identification with fellow exiles, or with the community of literature itself (Horrocks 683). When they arrive at the centre, they experience the sense of lack that gives Goldsmith's critique its force: no place remains untainted by national and global ills.

Altangi endures his first sea voyage to witness for himself the locus of England's naval and imperial power but, perhaps as Goldsmith had done, he finds that London disappoints compared with the reports of its grandeur. If we look back over the two centuries following 1750, Goldsmith's repeatedly-expressed conviction that "extending empire is often diminishing power" appears to misjudge British history (Kaul 121). But many commentators have noted that the Victorian era's enormous pride in its imperial might was not necessarily shared by the eighteenth century. Goldsmith's works can remind us that he and many contemporaries felt that the flows of import and export upon which the British empire then depended, rather than establishing England's future greatness, were leaving the nation barren and vulnerable. He also expressed prescient fears that "imperialistic policies" were placing strain upon the "benevolent" relationships between Britain and its colonies in North America and the Caribbean (Kaul 121). In the long historical view, Goldsmith's rise-and-fall narrative of empire seems more valid. Even his patriotic statements often express unease. By writing his pseudo-oriental letters from an Anglocentric

standpoint, Goldsmith made comic figures of his Chinese philosopher and those caught up in the rage for oriental goods, thus reasserting the superiority of European and English culture. Nevertheless, Altangi is not merely an ironic victim. His Confucian philosophy approximates the stoical humanism Johnson would later bring to Goldsmith's troubled poetry. As the representative of a formidably ancient and established civilisation, a parallel empire, he also raises a mirror to England.

Both Robert Markley and David Porter have argued recently that we need to recognise the extent to which Eurocentric accounts have underemphasised China's powerful historical influence. *The Citizen of the World* downplays China's economic dominance, yet keeps open the potential for cultural and intellectual trade in both directions. When seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English authors confronted China and Japan, according to Markley, the experience "became a catalyst for their recognition that the discourse of European empire was an ideological construct—part self-conscious propaganda, part wish fulfilment, and part econometric extrapolation to sustain fantasies of commercial prosperity, if not imperial conquest" (9). Tellingly, Goldsmith's "indigent philosopher" fails to discover true prosperity or national glory in China *or* England. As Altangi listens to the prisoner and porter decrying slavery, the fine lady lecturing him on Chinese taste, or a penniless beggar who has lost his leg in the wars crying, "Liberty, property, and Old England, for ever, huzza!," Goldsmith urges his readers to recognise the propaganda in the discourses of patriotism and empire (2: 465). Polite culture, he suggests, transcends such rhetoric. The market for oriental commodities and popular literature such as Altangi's letters may have devalued China as a model civilisation, as Porter argues, but the region continued to confront readers with "England's cultural backwardness, material dependency and relatively late arrival on the world stage" (*Chinese Taste* 7). The Chinese philosopher still has something to teach England. Watt observes that *The Citizen of the World* "gestures boldly in the direction of a transnational universalism," but concludes that Goldsmith is unable to articulate human diversity in any real sense (73). Nevertheless, the work remains important for understanding the history of eighteenth-century cosmopolitanism.

Although he gestures towards global citizenship, Goldsmith also makes concerted efforts to contain cultural differences within national boundaries and within conventional schemes of contrasting attributes, because movements of people have become too intertwined with movements of money and credit. For Pope a half century

earlier, the “various Off’rings of the world” flooding into England after the Treaty of Utrecht embellished both the nation and Belinda’s dressing table (1: 130). The resulting *concordia discors* incorporating the “spoils” of India and Arabia enabled the desired aesthetic of both the *chinoiserie* fad and the mercantile empire that facilitated the fashion (Jenkins 81). While Pope may have been ambivalent about this chaotic variety, Goldsmith criticises it without reserve (Newey 94). His mistrust of foreign commerce probably explains why he imported only one “cargoe of Chinese morality” and then returned to more recognisably English personae. Significantly, Goldsmith’s travellers also come to reject the search for wisdom or solutions outside themselves.

The confidence and ambition of Augustan poets, however enviable, accompanied an acquisitive and expansive poetics celebrating a trading nation and its growing empire (Doody 17). The essay, too, may be called the characteristic literary form of the “idea of discovery” that arose during an era of global exploration: the notion that knowledge was not stable or pre-existing, but needed to be sought out, usually by an individual venturing beyond previously-known limits (Hall 73, 79). Placing the mobile essayist and poetic traveller side by side allows us to construe even the moments of hesitation or contradiction in Goldsmith’s works as part of his larger critique of imperial expansion.

The foreign correspondent or poetic wanderer in these texts inhabits a world where culture itself is in motion. Kaul notes of this period that “Older models of the movement of culture (*translatio studii*) are now increasingly mapped onto those of the transition of empires (*translatio imperii*)” (Kaul 30). In the resulting narratives, the Westward movement of imperial civilisation begins in the Mediterranean, moves across Britain and shows promise of continuing into America. Goldsmith, of course, reads this process as negative, as his feminised Poetry joins the exiles at the end of *The Deserted Village* to personify the flight of polite learning from England (Kaul 121). Rather than identifying America as a site of potential regeneration, Goldsmith portrays it as a savage and hostile wilderness. However, in the process of becoming mobile, Poetry enters the state that endows his personae with their ambivalent power. Poetry partakes of the traveller’s freedom, disentangled from party politics and venal interest. Her voice, “prevailing over time” can even “redress the rigours of the inclement clime” in order to impart her cautionary truths (421–22). In other words, poetry is transnational and not subject to climatically-produced national differences or historical circumstances. It becomes the voice of the “fictional community of the

dispossessed,” a community by nature both dispersed and linked, like readers and writers (Horrocks 683). The poet farewells his Muse (“Thou source of all my bliss and all my woe”) yet this personal parting leaves intact, and in fact aids, Poetry’s ability to speak to literate “man” across time and space (413).

Goldsmith has been widely acknowledged as a “poet of enclosure” yet across the three texts I have examined he engages with a broader range of contemporary conditions than this tag suggests (Horrocks 676). Sitter sees the general poetic response to history over the mid-century as one of “a lyric flight from immediate history and a visionary approach towards History” (214). Goldsmith responds not with revelatory introspection, but by abstracting his specific observations into narratives of the cycles of civilisation. In this respect, he shared his contemporaries’ fascination with the larger movements of human populations and ideas, and with constructing coherent “plots” out of the past. History, John Buxton observed, was another fashionable genre open to the ambitious mid-century author, and one that Goldsmith turned to increasingly in the latter years of his career to capitalise on his ability to compile information from many sources in readable prose (71). In *The Deserted Village*, however, Goldsmith produced for many readers a vivid evocation of historical experience itself. He translated Williams’s rural retrospect into enduring images whereby the poem could become, in Lutz’s words, “shorthand for a particular economic view” (180). Its emotional charge may be carried via the conventional language of sensibility: “Remembrance wakes with all her busy train / Swells at my breast and turns the past to pain” (81–82). Goldsmith is also describing what the historiographer Frank Ankersmit identifies as the core of “sublime historical experience:” that our relationship with the past involves both “pain and pleasure.” We are aware of loss, of the break between the past and the present, but also “the moment of desire or love” that arises when we attempt to overcome this break (9).

With the problem of situating oneself in relation to the past, we return to the question of Goldsmith’s transitional place in literary history. After the publication of *The Deserted Village*, Goldsmith left aside rural idylls to produce the perennially-popular *She Stoops to Conquer* and the comic verses “The Haunch of Venison” and

“Retaliation.”³ Mid-eighteenth-century authors like Goldsmith, Brown argues, did not repeat original successes as often as later writers. Rather, they “typically succeeded better in their second (rarely their third) try in a given form than in their first,” and here he might have instanced *She Stoops to Conquer* and *The Deserted Village* (11). Goldsmith did often recombine proven elements and was a versatile manipulator of existing forms. T. S. Eliot judges him among “those who were just conservative enough in sensibility to be able to devise an interesting variation on the old idiom,” by combining “the old and the new in such just proportion that there is no conflict; he is Augustan and also sentimental and rural without discordance” (303). Goldsmith was too much in touch with the book trade and literary fashions not to recognise the limitations of oriental tales, sentimental travellers and lyrical verse even as he exploited these modes. Moreover, Eliot’s categories of “old” and “new” derive much from literary historical hindsight. For Goldsmith, the “sentimental” and “rural” are as much embedded in the past, in Juvenal and Virgil and the village childhood, while his urban satire is aimed at “modern” developments such as a consumer trade in oriental goods and a capitalist economy based upon foreign trade. Integrating these elements into a convincing whole, as I have attempted to show, posed a continual challenge. As Brown puts it, the innovative work performs the task of integrating three temporal components: the past (context), the present (the action or project) and the future (“incipience”) (11–13). Stylistically, Goldsmith’s verse adapts the Popean couplet to a “new sensibility and subjectivity” and develops “an emotional and musical lyricism” for heightened rhetorical effect (Lonsdale, *Poems* 673). Thematically, however, the strong pull towards the past in all these works leaves the future as their most problematic dimension.

“Among all the writers of the period,” Brown says, “Goldsmith is the one who confronts us most insistently, as he confronted himself, with the crucial dilemma: the difficulty of endings” and in fact Brown devotes an entire chapter of *Preromanticism* to this problem (114). Goldsmith’s dilemma is in one respect obvious: he was a versatile author with magpie tendencies attempting to balance and integrate often competing genres and modes (irony and sentimentality, for example). However, as Brown observes, he was also struggling with his own theories of inevitable decline, in

³ These poems were intended for private circulation among Goldsmith’s now-established literary and aristocratic circles. They have since entered the Goldsmith canon, unlike the large-scale popular history compilations he was also producing during the 1770s (Dixon 137–38).

which increased refinement always ends in “increasing artificiality, dissoluteness” and decay (114). This narrative of cultural decline-and-fall becomes naturalised into these text and its logic, so essential to their historical and political arguments, becomes internalised. *The Citizen of the World* ends by posing a paradox, the poems by asserting the individual’s impossible power to withstand the influences of environment and history. However, to read these texts as failing to reconcile profound tensions risks returning us to the old search for organic unity and polished syntheses that need not exist. The ending may simply be, as for Altangi, that the traveller keeps moving. Amidst his many binary contrasts and “disjunctions,” Goldsmith opens a space for the “expanded mind” to play with possibilities. Thus, for Briggs, he encourages readers “to feel the real force of divided issues” and “to maintain their minds in restless motion.” Inevitably, such observations lead Briggs and others to the quintessential figure of mid-century restlessness—and of unconsummated endings—Tristram Shandy (252–53).

Where Goldsmith most seems to anticipate the future is in his emphasis upon the individual. All of these texts come to rest with the traveller reliant upon his own resources and attempt to envision the type of person who could speak best to the new age. “Self-definition” and “self-regulation” are two of Brown’s central issues of preromantic sensibility (113). In this view, Goldsmith’s emphasis on constructing selfhood, on what Newey calls his “biblio-selving,” goes beyond creating an authorial persona and becomes a precursor of romantic individuality (Newey 108). To return to the Preface to *The Citizen of the World*, we can see the editor ventriloquising the unmoored position of the modern, professional author: “I belong to no particular class I am—but what signifies what am I.” (2: 15). Perhaps Goldsmith’s “entire journalistic canon,” Taylor proposes, “can be seen as a sort of metafiction of self-discovery and professional identification” (105). I have argued that the heterogenous nature of Goldsmith’s writing cannot sustain such a unified narrative. Taylor agrees that Goldsmith was not embarking on a solitary voyage of discovery but working in a professional milieu bounded by editorial directives, time constraints and the demands of his readership (105). We might read his “what signifies” as acknowledging that the author’s personality should remain subordinate to the lessons he communicates, or that his personal uncertainties are only important in so far as they are also vocational.

The attentiveness that Goldsmith’s outsiders display to specific social conditions distinguishes these works from those advocating a retreat into the creative

imagination. The professional author as a “solitary animal” may have been forced out of his forest retirement “to gratify human curiosity,” but in entertaining his audience he performs a public service (2: 15). The chain that limits his scope also ties him to his social and moral obligations, just as the traveller’s chain binds his heart to his homeland no matter how far he roams. Goldsmith’s narrators travel in search of wisdom, but retain the hope of bringing their knowledge back into the heart of the community. By remaining on the move, they can encompass rapid historical changes within their gaze, yet they wander within limits. The poignant authority of their cultural critique emerges from their middle state between motion and rest, where they can both survey the prospects of human societies and muse on the shifting position of the individual within them.

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MR *Monthly Review, or Literary Journal*

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