LETTERS
TO DANIEL HODSON, [EDINBURGH, OCTOBER–NOVEMBER 1752]

I

To Daniel Hodson

[Edinburgh, October–November 1752]

Daniel Hodson, the son of 'a gentleman of good property' from St John's in Roscommon, near Athlone, was Goldsmith's brother-in-law. He eloped with Catherine Goldsmith in 1744, and in so doing occasioned a withdrawal of financial support for Goldsmith's studies at Trinity College Dublin. Hodson was at the time of the elopement a young student of Goldsmith's brother Henry, then curate and teacher at Pallas. Both families were initially aggrieved at the elopement, but would eventually make a settlement. Charles Goldsmith legally engaged himself on 7 September 1744 to pay Hodson £400 in dowry. The Hodsons would earn £40 a year in income from the Lissoy farmland, and £12 in tithes until the Goldsmiths could pay the £400. As a result of this diversion of funds, Goldsmith was admitted to Trinity as a sizar rather than as a pensioner. This letter appears to be the first that Goldsmith sent home to Ireland following his entry to the medical school at the University of Edinburgh in October 1752. It also indicates that, while studying at Edinburgh, Goldsmith's uncle Thomas Contarine would furnish him with £10 a year. The Hodsons and Henry Goldsmith would supply him with £15 between them.

The copy-text is the manuscript in the Huntington Library, California. It was first published by Balderston in 1928. The manuscript is in very bad condition, substantially torn and obscured (see Figure 2). Missing passages were conjecturally added by Balderston, based on the amount of space obscured and the context. We include her suggested insertions.

[___] ance, This country has little or nothing [which I can] give an account of so instead of a Description of the country you must be contented with [an account of the] manner in which I spend my Time, [during the] day I am obligd to attend the Publick Lectures. At night] I am in my Lodging I have hardly any other society but a Folio book a skeleton my cat and my meagre landlady I pay 22£6 per am for Diet washing and Lodging being the cheapest that is to be got in Edinburgh all things here being much dearer than in Ireland as money is made more Plenty by the Last Rebellion I read hard which is a thing I never could do when the study was displeasing. I have [_____] to three Professors, and bought some value of about three more which I was obligd to buy, besides some cloaths

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TO THE REVEREND THOMAS CONTARINE, EDINBURGH, 8 MAY 1753

My Dr Dan my Freinds sent four guineas______ but as I have been promised fifteen [_______] by my Freinds Exclusive of my uncle____ drawn on Mr Constable for ten poun[ds__________ gener]ously contributed to make mine happy [_____]

My D' Brother your aff Freind

Oliver Goldsmith

[_____]very Freind [____] as [_____] particularly [me]ntioned Each, there is one on whom I never think without aliction but conceal it from him

Direct to me at Surgeon Sincl[a]irs in the Trunk Close Edinburgh

2. £22 6s. The high rent was a consequence of an economic dividend following the defeat of the Jacobite rebellion of 1745, as Goldsmith suggests below. Balderston transcribed this as ‘22Lb’.
3. Alexander Monro, Andrew Plummer and Charles Alston. Goldsmith elaborates on the qualities of each professor in the following letter.
4. A tailor’s account beginning on 24 January 1753 is in the Centre for Research Collections, Edinburgh University Library, La.II.195. It refers to Goldsmith’s purchases of drapery materials including white and ‘sky-Blew’ satins, shalloons, allapeens, durants, silks and fustians. Goldsmith’s debt to this tailor is increased in February and November 1753, amounting to £5 15s 4½d by the year’s end, a considerable amount. His tastes in fabrics and clothes were, regardless of his fluctuating circumstances and financial dependencies, extravagant then and later.
5. Trunk Close, or Trunk’s Close, was a courtyard near the crossing of Edinburgh’s Royal Mile with Leith Wynd. See site no. 48 on William Edgar’s 1742 map of Edinburgh (Figure 2).
May 8th 1753
My D' Uncle

In your letter (the only one I receivd from Kilmore) you call me the Philosopher who carries all his goods about him yet how can Such a character it me who have left behind in Ireland Every thing I think worth possesing freinds that I love and a Society that pleasd while it instructed, who but must regret the Loss of such Enjoyments who but must regret his absence from Kilmore that Ever knew it as I did, here as recluse as the Turkish Spy at Parris' I am almost unknown to Every body Except some few who attend the Proffesors of Physick as I do, apropos I shall give you the Proffesors names and as far much as occurs to me their characters and first as most Deserving Mr Monro Professtor of anatomy this man has broght the science he Teaches to as much perfection as he it is capable of and not content with barely Teaching anatomy he launches out into all the branches of Physick where all his remarks are new and usefull tis he I may venture to say that draws hither such a number of stu[dents] from most parts of the world Even from Russia, he is [not] only a skilfull Physician but an able Orator and delivers things in the[n] nature abstruse in s[0] Easy a ma[nn]er that the most unlearn'd may, must understand him, Plumer Professor of chymistry understands his busines well b[ut] delivers himself so ill that He is but little regarded, Alston Professor of Materia medica speaks much but little to the purpose, the
TO THE REVEREND THOMAS CONTARINE, EDINBURGH, 8 MAY 1753

Professors of Theory and Practice say nothing but what we may find in the books laid before us and speak that in so droneing and heavy a manner that their hearers are not many degrees in a better state than their Patients you see then Dr S' that monro is the only great man among them so that I intend to hear him another winter and go then to hear Albinus the great Professor at Leyden. I read a science the most Pleasing in nature so that my labours are but a relaxation and I may Truly say the only thing here that gives me Pleasure how I enjoy the pleasure of returning with hope of [returning] with [skill, and to] find my Freinds stand in no need of my assistance how many happy years do I wish you, and nothing but want of health can take from your happynes since you so well Pursue the paths that conduct to Virtue

I am My D' Uncle your most oblig'd.

mos' affectionate Nephew

Oliver Goldsmith

PS I draw this time for Six pounds and will draw next october but for four as I was obligd to buy Every thing since I came to Scot[land] Shirts not Excepted I am a little more early than the first year than I shall be for the future for I absolutely will not Trouble you before the Time hereafter.

My Best love attend M' and M' Lawder and heaven preserve them. I am again your Dutifull nephew OG

I have been a month in the Higlands I set out the first day on foot but an ill naturd corn I have got on my Toe has for the future prevented that cheap method of Travelling so the second day I hired a horse of about the size of a ram and he walkd away (Trot he could not) as pensive as his master in 3 days we reachd the Highlands this letter wod be too long to contain if it containd the description I intend giving of that country so shall make it the subject of my next

1 Originally published in 1684, *L'Espion Turc* was composed by Giovanni Paola Marana, a Genoese political refugee in the French court of Louis XIV, and published several times in translation through the following decades as *The Eighte Volumes of Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy, who liv'd five and forty years, undiscover'd at Paris*. Marana's work was an inspiration for
Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes* (1721) and Goldsmith’s Chinese letters, collected as *The Citizen of the World* (1762).

2 Alexander Monro (1697–1767), surgeon and the first Professor of Anatomy at Edinburgh, and a founder of the Edinburgh medical school. Apprenticed in 1713 to his father, the surgeon John Monro, the younger Monro enrolled in November 1718 as a student at the University of Leiden where he studied clinical medicine and chemistry under Herman Boerhaave. He did not take a degree at Leiden; returning to Edinburgh in 1719, he took up a professorship in anatomy which had been established in 1705 by Edinburgh’s town council. With his appointment, the position would become more closely associated with the foundation of a medical school. Monro offered a yearly course on anatomy between 1720 and 1758. By 1751, his popularity as a teacher was such — his style was compelling, non-dogmatic and he taught in English rather than in Latin — that his enrolment neared 200 students of several nationalities. Monro’s annual lectures lasted from October to May. See introduction, xxv–xxvi.

3 Andrew Plummer (1697–1756); Plummer was from 1733 the chief teacher of chemistry and chemical pharmacy at the University of Edinburgh. He invented — and his wealth was greatly enhanced by — a widely used ‘Plummer’s Pill’, consisting of a mixture of mercury chloride with antimony sulphide and guaiacum (a tropical lowering plant) which was originally intended for the treatment of psoriasis, but would eventually be used against syphilis, leprosy, and other causes of lesions and ulceration. Whatever his successes with his famous pill, Goldsmith obviously thought little of his teaching. The doctor and naturalist John Fothergill praised his ‘universal knowledge’ but conceded that his ‘diffidence’ hobbled his lecturing style, which was ‘Laborious, attentive, and exact’. His modesty was such that ‘he spoke to young audiences, upon a subject he was perfectly master of, not without hesitation’: Fothergill, *A Complete Collection of the Medical and Philosophical Works* (London: Printed for John Walker, 1781), 643.

Charles Alston (1685–1760) was a physician, botanist and the first professor of botany and materia medica at Edinburgh. Born at Eddlewood in the parish of Hamilton, Lanarkshire, Alston entered the University of Glasgow in 1700 but could not graduate because of financial difficulties after the death of his father. He became a servant in the household of the Duchess of Hamilton. After the Jacobite rising of 1715 caused the superintendent of the physic garden at Holyrood to flee, the duchess had him installed in the vacant post. With further application he became King’s botanist, a post which he would hold for life. To formalize his qualifications, he returned to Glasgow University and studied for a year under Boerhaave in Leiden in 1718–19. While at Leiden, Alston befriended Monro, and a connection was formed which made possible his teaching post at Edinburgh. Among Alston’s key published works were his three dissertations on quick-lime and lime-water (1752, 1755, 1757), *A Dissertation on Botany* (1754) and *Lectures on Materia Medica*, 2 vols. (1770).

Bernard-Siegfried Albinus (1697–1770), German-Dutch anatomist and son of the highly regarded Bernard Albinus (1663–1759). The older Albinus was professor of medicine in Frankfurt before moving to Leiden in 1702, where in 1709 his son would take up his medical and anatomical studies — aged just 12 — under Boerhaave. Albinus would in 1721 succeed his own father as Professor of Anatomy and Surgery, and in 1745 became Professor of the Practice of Medicine. He was a pioneer in the study of the mechanical structure of the skeletal and muscular systems. Alongside Monro, Albinus would become one of the most famous teachers of anatomy in Europe. His works included *Historia Muscularum Hominis* (1734), *Icones Ossium Foetus Humani* (1737), and *Tabulae Sceleti et Musculorum Corporis Hominis* (1747). *The Explanation of Albinus's Anatomical Figures of the Human Skeleton and Muscles. With an Historical Account of the Work*, a translation from the Latin of some of his key ideas, was published in London in 1754.
TO ROBERT BRYANTON, EDINBURGH, 26 SEPTEMBER 1753

To Robert Bryanton

Edinburgh, 26 September 1753

Originally from Ballymahon, Co. Longford, Robert Bryanton was a schoolmate
of Goldsmith’s and subsequently a fellow student at Trinity College Dublin,
where he matriculated on 18 November 1746, aged 15, and graduated BA in 1751.
The two were also, as indicated here, part of the same social circle at George
Conway’s inn in Lissoy, a possible model for the Three Jolly Pigeons in She
Stoops to Conquer. The letter contains rare references to Goldsmith’s mother –
with whom he seems to have had a fraught relationship before leaving Ireland,
probably because of his wayward behaviour – in its opening and in its postscript.

The copy-text is a contemporary copy in an unknown hand of the letter sent
to Thomas Percy by Goldsmith’s brother Maurice, now in the British Library.
It was first published by Percy in 1801. It is addressed to ‘Ballymahon | Ireland’
(some of the address is torn away). ‘Via London’ is also written beside the address.
Balderston proposes that Percy’s transcript was the most literal; we follow this
principle in using it as our copy-text, with words struck through re-introduced.
Significant variations from Prior are indicated in the notes below. Towards the
end of the letter, sections of lines are missing. Balderston supplies those parts
from Prior’s suggestions, with some changes. We do likewise, indicating in the
notes where those differences occur.

William Shaw Mason refers to a copy in an unknown hand then in the pos-
session of one Mrs McDermott of Ballymahon, which may be the copy now in
the library of Trinity College Dublin. This copy also appears to have been the
source of the first printed version of the letter published in Dublin in Anthologia

My dear Bob

Edinburgh, Sep’ ye 26th 1753

How many good excuses (and you know I was ever good at an
excuse) might I call up to vindicate my past shamefull silence? I
might tell how I wrote a long letter at my first coming hither, and
seem vastly angry at not receiveing an answer; or I might allege
that business, (with business, you know I was always pester’d) had
never given me time to finger a pen; but I supress these, & twenty,
more, equally plausible & as easily invented, since they might all
be attended with a slight inconveniency of being known to be lies;
let me then speak truth; An hereditary indolence (I have it from
the Mothers side) has hitherto prevented my writing to you, and still prevents my writing at least twenty five letters more, due to my friends in Ireland—no turnspit
3 gets up into his wheel with more reluctance, than I sit down to write, yet no dog ever loved the roast meat meal better than he turns, better than I do him I now address; yet what shall I say now I am enter’d? shall I tire you with a description of this unfruitfull country? where I must lead you over their hills all brown with heath, or their valleys scarce able to feed a rabbit? Man alone seems to be the only creature who has arrived to the naturall size in this poor soil; every part of the country presents the same dismall landscape, no grove nor brook lend their musick to cheer the stranger, or make the inhabitants forget their misery poverty; yet with all these disadvantages to call him down to humility, a Scotchman is one of the proudest things alive. the poor have pride ever ready to releive them; if mankind shou’d happen to despise them, they are masters of their own admiration. and that they can plentifully bestow on themselves: from their pride and poverty as I take it results one advantage this country enjoys, namely the Gentlemen here are much better bred, then among us; no such character here as our Fox hunter and they have expresed great surprize when I informed them that some men of a thousand pound a year in Ireland spend their whole lives in runing after a hare, drinking to be drunk, and geting every Girl with Child, that will let them; and truly if such a being, equiped in his hunting dress, came among a circle of scots Gentlemen, 4 they wou’d behold him with the same astonishment that a Country man does King George on horseback; 7 the men here have Gennerally high cheek bones, and are lean, and swarthy; fond of action; Dancing in particular: tho’ now I have mention’d dancing, let me say something of their balls which are very frequent here; when a stranger enters the danceing-hall he sees one end of the room taken up by the Lady’s, who sit dismally in a Groupe by themselves on the other end stand their pensive partners, that are to be, but no more intercourse between the sexes than there is between two Countrys at war, the Lady’s indeed may ogle and the Gentlemen sigh, but an embargo is laid on any other closer commerce; at length, to interrupt hostility’s, the Lady directeress or intendant, or what you will pitches on a Gentleman & Lady to walk a minuet, which they perform with
TO ROBERT BRYANTON, EDINBURGH, 26 SEPTEMBER 1753

a formality that approaches despondence, after five or six couple have thus walked the Gauntlett, all stand up to country dance’s, each gentleman furnished with a partner from the aforesaid Lady directress, so they dance much, say nothing, and thus concludes our assembly; I told a scotch Gentleman that such a profound silence resembled the ancient procession of the Roman Matrons in honour of Ceres and the scotch Gentleman told me (and faith I believe he was right) that I was a very great pedant for my pains: now I am come to the Lady’s and to shew that I love scotland and every thing that belongs to so charming a Country II insist on it and will give him leave to break my head that deny’s it that the scotch ladys are ten thousand times finer and handsomer than the Irish to be sure now I see ye. Sisters Betty & Peggy vastly surprized at my Partiality but tell ye flatly I don’t value them or their fine skins or Eyes or good sense or—a potatoe for I say it and will maintain it and as a convinceing proof of (I am in a very great passion) of what I assert the scotch Ladies say it themselves, but to be less serious where will you ind a language so prettily become a pretty mouth as the broad scotch and the women here speak it in its highest purity, for instance teach one of the Young Lady’s at home to pronounce the Whoar w[u]ll I gong with a beccoming wideness of mouth and I’ll lay my life they’ll wound every hearer we have no such character here as a coquett but alass how many envious prudes some days ago I walk’d into My Lord Killcoubry’s don’t be surpriz’d my Lord is but a Glover, when the Dutchess of Hamilton (that fair who sacriified her beauty to ambition and her inward peace to a title and Gilt equipage) pass’d by in her Chariot, her batter’d husband or more properly the Guardian of her charms sat beside her strait envy began in the shape of no less than three Lady’s who sat with me to ind fault’s in her faultless form—for my part says the first I think that I always thought that the dutchess has too much of the red in her complexion, Madam I am of your oppinion says the seccond and I think her face has a palish cast too much on the delicate order, and let me tell you adds the third Lady whose mouth was puckerd up to the size of an Issue that the Dutchess has ine lips but she wants a mouth at this every Lady drew up her mouth as If going to pronounce the letter P. but how ill my Bob does it become me to ridicule woman with whom I have scarce