THE LETTERS OF OLIVER GOLDSMITH

This first modern scholarly edition of the letters of Oliver Goldsmith (1728–74) sets the author of *The Vicar of Wakefield*, *The Deserted Village* and *She Stoops to Conquer* into a rich context, showing how Goldsmith's Irish identity was marked and complicated by cosmopolitan ambition. He was at the very heart of Grub Street culture and the Georgian theatre, and was a founding member of Dr Johnson's Literary Club; his circle included Edmund Burke, Joshua Reynolds, David Garrick, George Colman and Hester Piozzi. Containing a detailed introduction and extensive notes, this edition is essential for those wishing to know more about Goldsmith the man and the writer, and provides a rich and suggestive nexus for understanding the cultural cross-currents of the literary Enlightenment in eighteenth-century London.

Michael Griffin is a senior lecturer in English at the University of Limerick. He is the author of *Enlightenment in Ruins: The Geographies of Oliver Goldsmith* (2013). He has also edited *The Selected Writings of Thomas Dermody* (2012) and *The Collected Poems of Laurence Whyte* (2016).

David O'Shaughnessy is an associate professor in English at Trinity College Dublin. He is the author of *William Godwin and the Theatre* (2010), editor of *The Plays of William Godwin* (2010) and co-editor of the online edition of Godwin's diary. He has also edited a special issue of *Eighteenth-Century Life* (2015) on the London Irish of the eighteenth century.

THE LETTERS OF OLIVER GOLDSMITH

Edited by

MICHAEL GRIFFIN
University of Limerick

DAVID O'SHAUGHNESSY
Trinity College Dublin

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India

103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of
education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107474543

DOI: 10.1017/9781316145203

First published 2018
First paperback edition 2025

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-107-09353-9 Hardback
ISBN 978-1-107-47454-3 Paperback

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-107-47454-3 — The Letters of Oliver Goldsmith
Oliver Goldsmith , Edited by Michael Griffin , David O'Shaughnessy
Frontmatter
More Information

For Roger Lonsdale and Jon Mee,
with deep appreciation

CONTENTS

LETTERS

ILLUSTRATIONS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The editors would like to thank the staff at all of the various libraries that responded to our queries as we searched for letters. In particular, we would like to thank members of staff at the British Library; the Free Library of Philadelphia; the Rosenbach of the Free Library of Philadelphia; the Library of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania; the Beinecke Library at Yale University (in particular Alison Clemens); the Houghton Library, Harvard University (in particular John Overholt); the Huntington Library, San Marino; the Bibliotheca Bodmeriana, Switzerland; and the Library of the Royal Irish Academy. Colleagues in the libraries of the University of Limerick and Trinity College Dublin were unfailingly helpful over the course of the edition's preparation.

We would like to thank the National Portrait Gallery, London; the Houghton Library at Harvard University; and the Board of Trinity College Dublin for permission to use their images. Loren R. Rothschild graciously gave us access to the Goldsmith letters in his personal collection. Roger Lonsdale shared his notes on Goldsmith items which had emerged since Katharine Balderston's edition of 1928. Pamela Clemit kindly gave us a database of institutional addresses which was very useful as we searched for letters. Paddy Bullard was very helpful with a query on Burke's handwriting.

Research trips were facilitated by the generous support of an A.C. Elias award from the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, a Huntington Library Fellowship, and a Marie Curie Career Integration Grant. Support for images was kindly provided by the 'Manuscripts, Book and Print Culture' research theme at Trinity College Dublin.

We also wish to thank Victoria Parrin and Tim Mason at Cambridge University Press for their expert assistance in the preparation of this edition. Linda Bree was a wonderfully patient and supportive champion of this edition from its inception. Leigh Mueller's copy-editing was scrupulous.

We are very grateful to Norma Clarke and Jim Watt for taking the time to comment on an advanced draft of our introduction. James Scanlon provided invaluable research assistance early on in the project. Our thanks also to James Little for his excellent work on the index.

Finally, we would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the tremendous contribution that Roger Lonsdale and Jon Mee have made to our scholarly careers. They have been our teachers and our inspiration.

ABBREVIATIONS

The following texts are cited throughout the book; all references to them will be abbreviated as follows:

BL: Oliver Goldsmith. *The Collected Letters*, ed. Katharine C. Balderston. Cambridge University Press, 1928.

CW: Oliver Goldsmith. *The Collected Works*, ed. Arthur Friedman, 5 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966.

P: James Prior. *Life of Oliver Goldsmith, M. B.*, 2 vols. London: John Murray, 1837.

W: Ralph Wardle. *Oliver Goldsmith*. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1957.

INTRODUCTION

Though he wrote copiously across the genres in order to provide for himself, Oliver Goldsmith's corpus of letters is one of the least extensive of any major writer of his age. His 'disinclination to epistolary communication' was, according to James Prior's 1837 biography, well known. James Grainger's letter to Goldsmith's friend and first biographer Thomas Percy, of 24 March 1764, records as much: 'When I taxed little Goldsmith for not writing as he promised, his answer was, that he never wrote a letter in his life; and faith I believe him – except to a bookseller for money.'[1] Though not exactly true, it was certainly the case that, except for professional requests and courtesies, Goldsmith's correspondence, never copious to begin with, dwindled considerably once he had established himself in London. His communications became less effusive than those he sent to family and friends when he first set off on his medical studies in Edinburgh and Leiden and upon his first arriving in London. Once established, Goldsmith composed letters largely as or for favours. It is fair to say that, apart from missives to George Colman and David Garrick regarding theatre matters, and more particularly the production of *The Good Natur'd Man* in 1767,

[1] Cited in *P*, I: 487. James Prior's is the biography to which all other subsequent biographies are indebted. Building on the insights of Thomas Percy's 1801 biographical preface and assiduous in its collection of correspondence and detail on Goldsmith's early life in Ireland, Prior was a key source for John Forster, *The Life and Adventures of Oliver Goldsmith*, 2 vols. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1848), and Washington Irving, *Oliver Goldsmith: A Biography* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1850). The second half of the twentieth century saw the publication of three biographies which have been more substantial and analytical in their treatment of the complexities and contexts of Goldsmith's dealings in the increasingly professionalized world of eighteenth-century writing. Ralph Wardle (*W*) augments the nineteenth-century biographical tradition in the light of twentieth-century scholarship to that point; A. Lytton Sells, *Oliver Goldsmith: His Life and Works* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1974) emphasizes Goldsmith's Tory politics, as well as his command of the French language and sources; John Ginger, *The Notable Man: The Life and Times of Oliver Goldsmith* (London: Hamilton, 1977) situates Goldsmith's career amidst the increasing cultural influence of the middle class.

correspondence is sparse. Only in 1773 is there another flurry of correspondence concerning the production and positive reception of *She Stoops to Conquer*.[2]

The paucity of the corpus is evidence, perhaps, of Goldsmith's general lack of interest in biographical posterity, and it has long been the first obstacle to those who sought to reconstruct the life. Early biographers James Prior and John Mitford corresponded regarding this lack of biographical and epistolary materials. Prior wrote:

> I fear you found the pursuit of documents for the Life, laborious and unsatisfactory. It is astonishing how few there are available to the biographer. My search has been very extensive and unremitting for fourteen months; and though certainly I have gleaned a great deal, and found much new matter in his literary history and many press and political pieces not acknowledged by him, but unquestionably genuine, I find much difficulty in seeing letters of his which exist.— the illiberality of some of the collectors is surprising; I had almost said disgraceful; those I allude to are indeed men of no high character; but I could scarcely expect falsehood and meanness from men with the smallest pretension to a love of literature.[3]

Thankfully, by the time Katharine Balderston came to edit Goldsmith's letters in 1928, the original collectors' successors, or descendants, had become somewhat more liberal, and in the ninety years since, many of the letters collected by private citizens have, with a couple of mysterious exceptions, been deposited in libraries.

Yet obscurities and blind spots remain. Added to the small size of his epistolary oeuvre was Goldsmith's tendency to mislead or obfuscate where his own family background and early life and travels were concerned. Matters are only clarified (somewhat) where there are brief bursts of letter writing: during his medical education at Edinburgh and Leiden; during his initial, troubled acclimatization to London life and the world of professional writing; and around his attempt to gather Irish subscriptions for *An Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe*, his first major work. With a view to putting the correspondence in biographical and intellectual context, we give here an introduction which foregrounds those periods in his life around which the letters are clustered. And so, to begin, we give a brief account of Goldsmith's origins and his early life.

[2] Edmond Malone was also struck by the paucity of letters on reading Percy's *Life of Goldsmith*, commenting to Percy: 'Surely I once read two or three more letters than we have in print.' Letter from Edmond Malone to Thomas Percy, 5 June 1802, *The Correspondence of Thomas Percy & Edmond Malone*, ed. Arthur Tillotson (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1944), 97.

[3] James Prior to John Mitford, 26 January 1832. John Mitford Collection, Yale University Library, Osborn FC76 1/38, 39.

The Early Life

At the Duke of Northumberland's house, on 28 April 1773, Goldsmith gave to Thomas Percy details of his life which were to be collected for a biography – the first of substance – which would pass through a tortuous gestation, and through many hands, before publication in 1801.[4] Goldsmith dictated to Percy that he was descended from a Spaniard named Romeiro or Romero, who had married, and taken the surname of, a Miss Goldsmith, in the sixteenth century. In order to confirm or clarify this supposed connection and because Goldsmith had a tendency to lie about himself and his family background, Percy looked to Goldsmith's youngest brother Maurice for verification. Juan Romero, maintained Maurice, was Oliver's great-grandfather; he had come to Ireland in the seventeenth century as a private tutor to a touring Spanish nobleman.

A more clearly drawn ancestor was an early seventeenth-century John Goldsmith, who was Vicar of Burrishoole in Co. Mayo: Oliver's great-great grandfather (he may indeed have been the father or uncle of the Miss Goldsmith who married Juan Romero). John Goldsmith, apparently a convert to the Protestant faith, is noted as an owner of 20 acres of good land in 1641, the year of a violent Irish Catholic uprising. Men in his position would have had good reason to feel threatened. The middle of the seventeenth century saw the transfer of Irish property largely into Protestant hands. Some Catholics had converted to make their accommodations with the new dispensation, while many Catholic clergy travelled to the continent to study and worship more freely in Irish colleges there. John and his brother Francis fell on either side of this bifurcation. John was examined on oath by the commissioners assigned to measure the damage done to Protestants during the rebellion of that year. He relayed a warning conveyed to him in the preceding years by Francis, a Catholic priest in Antwerp, that he should take his family out of Ireland for their own protection. In his deposition, John Goldsmith indicated the mixed religious character of the Goldsmith family. The 'parson of Brashawl, or Burrishoole,' saith he perceiues by Letters of his brother a priest at Antwerp that the papists of this land entended the rebellion 4 yeares before that when it was ready to break out, he dicouered by their making so many skeines it was & gaue notice &c.'[5] In all likelihood, Father Francis Goldsmith would have resided at the Irish College in Antwerp. A familial or

[4] See Katharine C. Balderston, *The History and Sources of Percy's Memoir of Goldsmith* (Cambridge University Press, 1926); see also Thomas Percy, 'The Life of Dr. Oliver Goldsmith', *The Miscellaneous Works of Oliver Goldsmith*, 4 vols. (London: Printed for J. Johnson et al., 1801), I: 1–118.

[5] Folio 123r of the 1641 depositions, Trinity College Dublin.

ancestral connection to a continental culture of Irish Catholicism was possibly a factor in Goldsmith's sporadic residence in Irish colleges while on his travels through Europe in the 1750s.

The relative recentness and modest social class of the Goldsmith family's Protestantism was such that it did not condescend to the Catholic culture which surrounded it in the midlands, and interfaith relations in the region seem to have been generally benign in Goldsmith's time. Nonetheless, the memory of the 1641 rebellion was still very much alive, and fear among the administrative elite that Catholics might once again assert themselves, this time in support of the exiled Stuart monarchy, was genuinely felt. Whatever the relations between Catholics and Protestants on the ground – and there were some High Church Anglicans who had a nostalgia, even a sneaking regard, for the Stuarts and for the pre-commercial society with which they were associated – there was at the level of officialdom a profound suspicion of Catholicism. Thus, Goldsmith may have had cause to embellish the soundly Protestant, even solidly English, nature of his family's history. He related to Percy that his father was a native of Durham who had moved to Ireland to study at Trinity College Dublin before gaining a small living in England, returning to Ireland to become the rector of Kilkenny West in Co. Westmeath. Maurice, however, described their father as a native of the diocese of Elphin, from Ballyoughter in Co. Roscommon, and not of Durham, as his brother had claimed. Quite apart from political concerns, Goldsmith may have felt compelled to make an Englishman of his father to mitigate some of his cultural anxiety as an Irishman in London.

Goldsmith's father Charles, an Anglican vicar, married Ann Jones, the daughter of the Reverend Oliver Jones of Smith Hill, Co. Roscommon in 1718. An uncle of Ann's, who was rector of the parish of Kilkenny West, would give the young couple the use of a house in Pallas just across the county border in Longford (Figure 1). The family lived at Pallas for twelve years. Catherine was the oldest child; Henry, the second; Oliver himself, the third. Oliver was born, either in that house or in Smith Hill near Elphin, his mother's home place, on 10 November 1728. His younger brothers were Charles and Maurice. Another younger brother, John or 'Jack', died at an early age when Oliver was in Edinburgh. Their father became the curate of Kilkenny West in 1730, when the future author was just an infant, at which point the family moved to the Lissoy parsonage, where they held considerably more land and were measurably more comfortable.

As a child Goldsmith was stricken with a dose of smallpox, a misfortune which caused the pock-marked ugliness much commented upon by uncharitable peers – and even several friends – throughout his life. It was initially thought, given his illness, that he might not achieve much academically, but the precocious wit with which he responded to condescending remarks about his

Figure 1 A number of places referenced in the letters can be found on this contemporary map of the Irish midlands. Pallas, Goldsmith's birthplace, does not appear but it is located 3 miles east of Ballymahon ('Ballimahon' as marked on the map, just below 'LONGFORD'), Co. Longford. Lissoy, Co. Westmeath, where he grew up, does not appear either but is 6 miles southwest of Ballymahon. From *A new and accurate map of the Kingdom of Ireland* by Thomas Jeffreys [1759]. Reproduced by permission of the Board of Trinity College Dublin.

appearance indicated otherwise. When asked to dance a hornpipe for visitors to the family home, one of the company ridiculed his appearance as 'the personification of Æsop', to which Goldsmith briskly replied with an improvised couplet: 'Our herald hath proclaim'd this saying, / See Æsop dancing and his monkey playing'. Yet another visiting relative mockingly asked: 'Why, Noll, you are become a fright; when do you mean to get handsome again?' Goldsmith gave a cutting response: 'I mean to get better, Sir, when you do.'[6] Goldsmith may have been ugly, but he was feisty.

In spite of such inauspicious beginnings, Goldsmith began to flourish under a series of effective teachers: Thomas Byrne at the village school at Lissoy, Michael Griffin at the diocesan school at Elphin, and Patrick Hughes in Edgeworthstown. Thomas Percy would recount that Hughes was the most important of Goldsmith's teachers and that it was under Hughes that Goldsmith acquired a substantial starting store of knowledge in the classics. Washington Irving subsequently speculated that Goldsmith may have received additional tutelage in the French language from Catholic priests around Ballymahon in Longford.[7] Irving's theory has been supported by A. Lytton Sells, one of the best scholars of Goldsmith's French sources – in addition to being one of his most recent biographers.[8] Whenever and from whomever it was acquired, his knowledge of French and his facility with translation from French sources would be the bedrock of his survival as a professional writer in London. The relative rarity of French speakers in his native scene was a matter of which Goldsmith was aware; he wrote in December 1753 to his uncle Thomas Contarine with an air of confidence and relative superiority: 'I am perfectly acquainted with that language, and Few who leave Ireland are so' (Letter 4).

When his older sister Catherine eloped with Daniel Hodson, their father Charles, though greatly aggrieved, undertook to support his daughter to the amount of £52 a year, which rather dented Oliver's financial prospects, channelling money away from funds intended for his education. Thus deprived, he entered Trinity College Dublin in June 1745 as a sizar, that lowlier class of student who would pay their way by doing menial tasks for wealthier students. He was supported partially by his uncle the Reverend Thomas Contarine, a Contarini of noble Venetian extraction who married Charles's sister Jane and was given the prebendary of Oran near Elphin. Seemingly a man of considerable means, Contarine undertook to support Goldsmith for the longer term. His largesse was reflected in the substance and deference of Goldsmith's subsequent letters to him from Scotland and Holland.

[6] *P*, I: 28–30.

[7] Irving, *Goldsmith*, 35.

[8] See Sells, *Les Sources françaises de Goldsmith* (Paris: Librairie Ancienne Edouard Champion, 1924).

No letters from Goldsmith to his family survive from his years at Trinity College. He improved his knowledge of the classics and French at university. He suffered somewhat under the poor, ill-tempered and often oppressive tutelage of one Theaker Wilder (1717–78), originally from Abbeyshrule in Co. Longford, near Goldsmith's home place. It was thought, given their shared geographical provenance, that Wilder might provide good counsel to Goldsmith; their tempers were not well matched, however, and Goldsmith was consequently the object of harsh discipline. He did, however, cement his friendship with his distant cousin Edward Mills, with whom he would correspond from farther afield at a later point. Legend – rather than any firm evidence – holds that Goldsmith began his first forays into poetry and mercenary ballad writing in these Dublin years.

Charles Goldsmith died in 1747 and in May of that year the young student took a leading and dangerous part in a riot which engaged the police over the imprisonment of two student debtors. Goldsmith received a stern reprimand for his involvement. It could have been worse – two people died in the disturbance – but the incident suggests a young man more than a little unsettled at the death of his father.[9] After this point, his behaviour and academic performance at Trinity faltered, though he eventually took a Bachelor of Arts in 1750, two years later than he should have. Contarine used his influence to acquire for his nephew a living in the church; however, Goldsmith failed to impress in his interview with Dr Edward Synge, Bishop of Elphin, due to a perceived immaturity and lack of scholarly application.[10]

Upon his return to the midlands, Goldsmith spent much time in the company of Robert Bryanton – another future correspondent. The two socialized at George Conway's tavern – a model, legend holds, for the Three Jolly Pigeons in *She Stoops to Conquer*. There Goldsmith indulged with his friends a penchant for argument, for singing ballads and playing the flute, developing talents which would stand him in good stead on his later travels. He soon found something approximating gainful employment, thanks again to Contarine's solicitations, as a tutor to the well-to-do Flinn family of Roscommon. A row over a card game led to the discontinuation of his employment, with a severance of £30 and a horse, both of which he used to make his way to Cork with a view to emigrating to America.

He never emigrated; rather too literally, he missed the boat. After much misadventure, narrated by his sister Catherine in her account of his young life, Goldsmith returned to his displeased family in the midlands.[11] He lived with

[9] According to Edmond Malone, the incident was described in a letter, now lost, from Dr Thomas Wilson (1727?–99), a classmate of Goldsmith's. Letter from Edmond Malone to Thomas Percy, 2 March 1785, *The Correspondence of Thomas Percy & Edmond Malone*, 18.

[10] See *P*, I: 110.

[11] Catherine Hodson's 1776 narrative, the manuscript of which is in the British Library (Add. MSS 42516, fols. 20–26b), was included as an appendix in *BL*, 162–77.

the Hodsons for a spell before being sent to Dublin with £50 from Contarine to study the law in the winter of 1751–2. This money too was squandered. Goldsmith may have lived around this time with Contarine and his daughter Jane (later Jane Lawder, also a correspondent). Whatever his fallings-out with his immediate family – and they were no doubt beyond exasperated by his behaviour to this point – both Contarines were perennially fond and supportive of Oliver, and it was decided as a solution to his waywardness, and at the prompting of Isaac Goldsmith, a family cousin and the Dean of Cloyne, that Goldsmith should be further educated in the medical sphere. Contarine would provide £10 a year for the three years that a medical qualification would take, and an additional £15 was to be provided by other members of the family. Goldsmith set out for Edinburgh to take up his studies at that city's medical school in October 1752. It is at this point that Goldsmith's known correspondence begins, as he reports to family and friends the sights, sounds and intellectual life of Scotland in ways that would prefigure the cosmopolitanism of his later writing.

The Apprentice Cosmopolitan: Goldsmith in Edinburgh and Leiden

The tension between local attachment, national sentiment and cosmopolitanism infuses a great deal of Goldsmith's writing, not least his epistolary classic *The Citizen of the World* (1762). Such tension is evident in his own early correspondence from Edinburgh (and farther afield) to family and friends in the Irish midlands. Alan McKillop's 1965 piece on local attachment and cosmopolitanism remains a useful guide in thinking through some of Goldsmith's epistolary motifs, his will to Enlightenment rationality running up against, but not necessarily contradicting, his familial and local affiliations. Goldsmith was interested in cultural comparison, adept and accomplished at imaginative explorations of discrepancies between ways of thinking and being, between East and West, between Irish, Scottish, Dutch, English and French; his letters give, in their own initial orbit, an interesting perspective on mid-Enlightenment issues of cultural difference. As a younger man, writing longer letters home from places of learning and literary activity abroad, his commentaries instance the predicament of a young intellectual well equipped with useful knowledge in the sciences, in the classical languages and in French, searching for, and to some extent finding, an intriguing voice, at once cosmopolitan and homesick, and all the more revealing for that seeming contradiction.[12]

[12] See Alan D. McKillop, 'Local Attachment and Cosmopolitanism: The Eighteenth-Century Pattern', *From Sensibility to Romanticism: Essays Presented to Frederick A. Pottle*, ed. Frederick W. Hilles and Harold Bloom (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 191–218. See also James Watt, '"The Indigent Philosopher": Oliver Goldsmith', *The Blackwell Companion to Irish Literature*, ed. Julia M. Wright, 2 vols. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2010), I: 210–25; and Watt, 'Goldsmith's Cosmopolitanism', *Eighteenth-Century Life* 30.1 (2006), 56–75.

The earliest extant Goldsmith letter – to his brother-in-law Dan Hodson – reports on his early experiences of Edinburgh. It illustrates perfectly Goldsmith's awareness of his role as correspondent, acknowledging also his inability to fulfil that role satisfactorily. Unable to muster much in the way of cultural commentary, he accounts instead for his own average day:

> This country has little or nothing [which I can] give an account of so instead of a D[escription 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 L[ectures. At night] I am in my Lodging I have hardly an[y other s]ociety 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

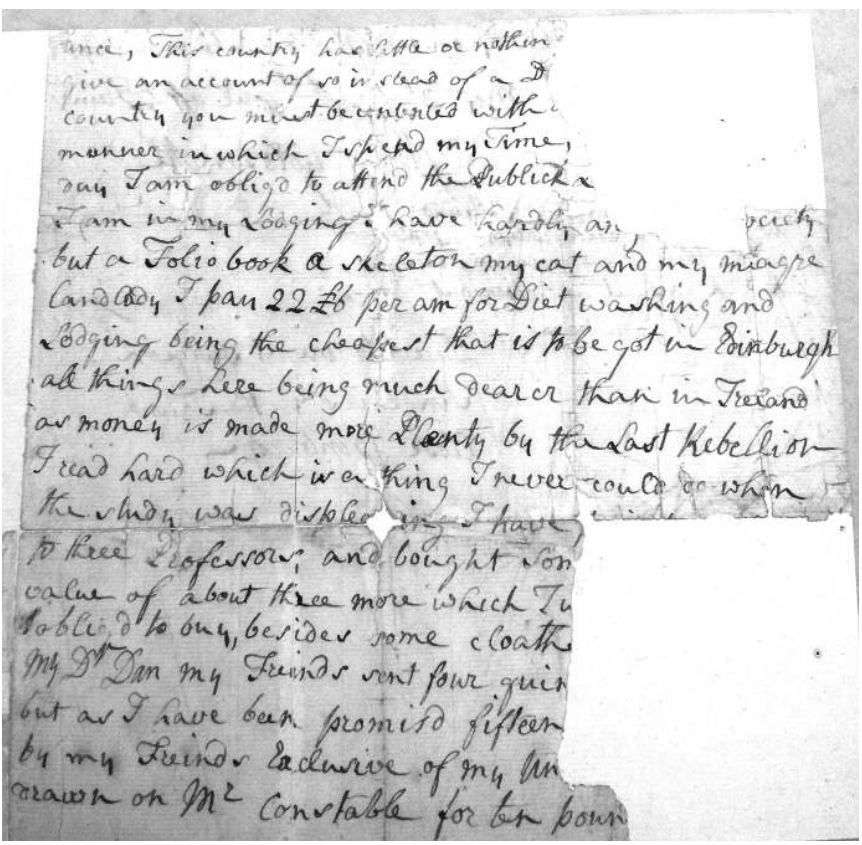

Figure 2 The earliest known letter by Goldsmith, written from Edinburgh to his brother-in-law Daniel Hodson in 1752. Reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library, San Marino.

> 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 displea[s]ing. (Letter 1, Figure 2)

The tone of this letter is informal, and it conveys with downbeat honesty the loneliness of the new emigrant. It touches only briefly on the nature of his scientific study, which the evidence of his correspondence generally indicates he found absorbing. In a more polite and deferential letter from Edinburgh to Contarine, 8 May 1753, Goldsmith worries that he may have rescinded his claim to be an aspiring philosopher by having

> le[f]t behind in Ireland Every thing I think worth posessing 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 abscence from [Ki]lmore that Ever knew i[t] 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. (Letter 2)

His reference point here is revealing: *The Turkish Spy*, a popular text in later seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Britain and France, may have given Goldsmith the first hint of an idea for a work of epistolary Orientalism and, if so, it provides an interesting sidelight on his later work. Originally published in 1684, and composed by Giovanni Paola Marana, a Genoese political refugee in the French court of Louis XIV, *L'Espion Turc* was 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 a key inspiration and model for Charles-Louis Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes* (1721) – an epistolary novel recounting the experiences and observations of two Persian noblemen who travel to France – and by extension *The Citizen of the World*.

When Goldsmith arrived at his lodgings at Trunk Close in central Edinburgh, the city was half the size of Dublin (Figure 3). Made up mainly of the old town bracketed by the castle and Holyrood with narrow streets flanked by medieval buildings, the city was quite unlike the emerging Palladian Dublin which Goldsmith had left behind. With a population not much more than 30,000, the city was still recovering from the effects of the Jacobite rebellion some seven years before, though, as Goldsmith's correspondence indicates, money was flowing freely into a Scottish economy now deemed more definitively stable, driving rents and prices upwards. The new town of Edinburgh would not be built until later in the eighteenth century; in the meantime, some of the fabric of the city was still somewhat shabby. The college buildings – clustered in the various structures that were in or near Infirmary Street, such as the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh – were generally thought to be in a near-ruinous state.

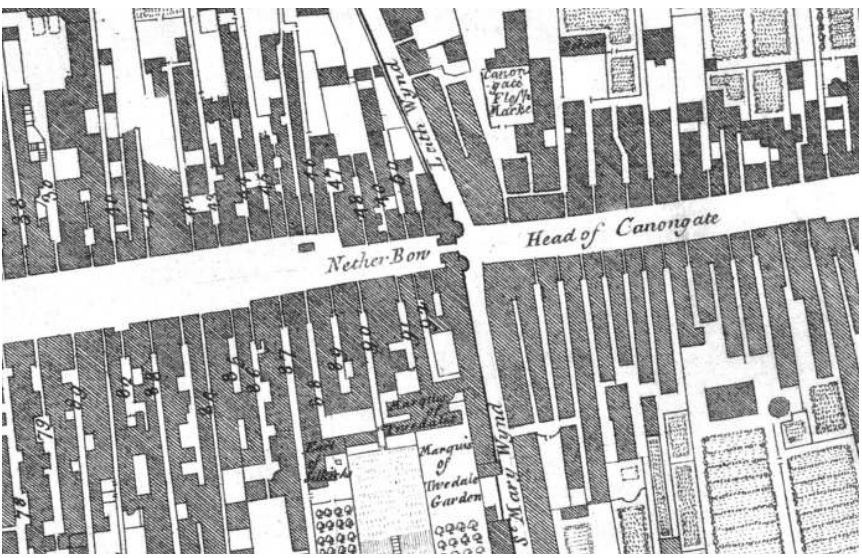

Figure 3 Goldsmith lived in Trunk Close, or Trunk's Close, a courtyard near the crossing of Nether Bow (now part of Edinburgh's Royal Mile) with Leith Wynd, which is site no. 48 on William Edgar's *Plan of the City and Castle of Edinburgh* (1742). Reproduced by permission of the Board of Trinity College Dublin.

While a student in Edinburgh, Goldsmith participated, with considerable enthusiasm, in the popular anatomy classes given by Alexander Monro (1697–1767), the founder of the Edinburgh Medical School, who had studied in Leiden under Herman Boerhaave (1669–1738), the most famous medical man of early eighteenth-century Europe. Under Boerhaave's auspices, Leiden, to which Goldsmith would eventually travel for further education, was an internationally renowned centre of scientific and medical influence. Many of Boerhaave's students went on to establish their own medical schools: in Edinburgh, but also in Vienna, Göttingen and in the American colonies. As Andrew Cunningham speculates, his influence was not due to any significant discovery of his own: his Scottish students seem instead to have been particularly excited by his teaching style; his lectures in themselves became the primary textbooks of the day. Cunningham cites the Scottish student James Houstoun to illustrate that it was Boerhaave's brilliant teaching that was crucial to the latter's reputation:

> I can no more judge of the *Genius* and Temper of the *Dutch*, than if I had never lived amongst them, for I knew no *Dutchmen*, but my Professors; but, if I am allowed to take Dr. *Boerhaave* for a Sample of the whole, I do say, that he was the most extraordinary Man of his Age perhaps in the whole

> World; a clear Understanding, sound Judgement, with Strength of Memory that nothing could exceed, and indefatigably laborious: It is true, he had not the Brightness of Invention, that some Authors may have; but with these his Talents he has done more Service to the World in the Knowledge of *Physick*, than all his Predecessors in the whole World put together; by digesting a huge Heap of Jargon and indigested Stuff into an intelligible, regular, and rational System.[13]

The whole culture of the Edinburgh school had been influenced by Boerhaave and informed by his pedagogical and experimental methods. Monro was appointed Professor of Anatomy in 1725, a year ahead of the inauguration of the school itself. Andrew Sinclair (*c.* 1698–1760) and John Rutherford (1695–1779) were appointed as joint Professors of the Theory and Practice of Medicine, while Andrew Plummer (1697–1756) and John Innes (1696–1733) were jointly Professors of Medicine and Chemistry. All five professors had been pupils of Boerhaave and taught using his texts. Monro was the brightest intellectual light at Edinburgh: the English Quaker physician John Coakley Lettsom (1744–1815) called him 'that great anatomical oracle, Monro, [who] attended to his numerous pupils with so much sedulous care, as justly denominated him the Father of the College; and no man knew better how to discriminate the genius of his pupils'.[14] Goldsmith's correspondence concurs on the issue of Monro's brilliance.

Non-conformist English students excluded from Oxford and Cambridge were welcomed in Edinburgh; so too were Irish students who for religious reasons were excluded from Trinity College. In the eighteenth century, only a fifth of Edinburgh's medical school was Scottish, another fifth was English, and a quarter, Irish. The remaining students were from the continent, from America, and beyond. As Matthew Kaufman explains:

> it was only after 1745, once the country had settled down after the Jacobite rebellion, that the cosmopolitan character of the Edinburgh medical intake became increasingly apparent. At the same time, the character of the clinical instruction available, based on the system that many of the early teachers had experienced in Leiden, proved to be extremely popular. Students came

[13] James Houstoun, *Dr. James Houstoun's Memoirs of his own Life-Time* (London: Printed for Lawton Gilliver, 1747), 56–7. See also Andrew Cunningham, 'Medicine to Calm the Mind: Boerhaave's Medical System, and Why it was Adapted in Edinburgh', *The Medical Enlightenment of the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Cunningham and Roger French (Cambridge University Press, 1990), 40–66. See also John Struthers, *Historical Sketch of the Edinburgh Medical School* (Edinburgh: Maclachlan and Stewart, 1867).

[14] John Coakley Lettsom, *Some Account of the late John Fothergill, M.D.* (London: Printed for C. Dilly, L. David, T. Cadell and J. Phillips, 1783), vii.