GOLDSMITH'S **RISING VILLAGE** *AND THE COLONIAL STATE OF MIND*

David Jackel

Until recently, Oliver Goldsmith's *Rising Village* (1825) occupied a securely minor place in the history of Canadian poetry. Desmond Pacey, in "The Goldsmiths and their Villages,"[1] compared the Canadian poet's work unfavorably to his great-uncle's more famous *Deserted Village* (1770), judging it inferior both stylistically and intellectually. Fred Cogswell's summary comments in the *Literary History of Canada* present a judgment equally severe:

> . . . he borrowed tamely every conceivable trite phrase and hackneyed rhyme that had found its way into the eighteenth-century British couplet. As a result, his otherwise respectable lines are studded with cliches. Only in a few excursions into local description does his verse become more than a literary mosaic.[2]

The Rising Village seemed destined to remain an object of interest only to scholars as "the first volume of verse ever published in Canada by a native-born Canadian to receive serious attention at the hands of critics and literary historians."[3] In 1977 and 1978, however, there appeared two articles by Kenneth J. Hughes which challenged the prevailing assessment of the poem.[4] Indeed, Mr. Hughes sets out to argue that previous critical approaches to, and judgments of, *The Rising Village* are unsatisfactory in almost every respect. First, the comparison of the Canadian poem with the English one necessarily

---

[1]*University of Toronto Quarterly,* 31 (1951), 27-38. Reprinted in *Essays in Canadian Criticism, 1938-1968* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1969), 53-66.

[2]"The Maritime Provinces 1815-1880," *Literary History of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), p. 120.

[3]Cogswell, p. 119.

[4]"Oliver Goldsmith's *The Rising Village,*" *Canadian Poetry,* No. 1 (Fall/Winter 1977), 27-43; "Oliver Goldsmith's *The Rising Village*" in *Origins and Beyond: The Canadian Imagination,* a combined number of *The Lakehead University Review,* Vol. 7, No. 2, Vol. 8, No. 1 and No. 2 [Fall 1978], 35-53. The two articles are substantially the same; this is the result, I suspect (having been affected by the same circumstances), of the lengthy delay in the publication of *Origins and Beyond.*

prevents us from seeing clearly both the substance and the merit of the younger Goldsmith's work; it is, for Mr. Hughes, much less derivative and colonial than Professor Pacey found it and is "truly Canadian in the sense that it is an example of what Dorothy Livesay has defined as the 'documentary genre'."[5] Second, Mr. Hughes counters the criticism made by both Pacey and Cogswell of Goldsmith's style by arguing that the "charge of technical weakness . . . is without foundation and can only have arisen out of a misunderstanding of the poem."[6] Finally, Mr. Hughes offers an ingenious explanation of the function of the Albert and Flora episode, which Pacey, Cogswell and many other readers have long regarded as a structural excrescence.[7] "It is time," concludes Hughes, "for the poem to stand by itself for it is most assuredly capable of doing so."[8]

Mr. Hughes has done us all a service by looking more closely at the poem than any previous commentator; he is right to suggest that *The Rising Village* has been consigned, like other early Canadian poems, to the semi-oblivion of university study on the basis of less-than-thorough critical discussion. Yet, when closely considered, his claims are open to more than a few questions. The purpose of my paper is to argue that Hughes has arrived at an indefensible judgement of the poem: close analysis will demonstrate that *The Rising Village* deserves the severe strictures of Professors Pacey and Cogswell insofar as its content and style are concerned; Mr. Hughes is right, I think, to claim that the Albert and Flora episode is not merely an excrescence, but even here his argument gives Goldsmith more credit than he deserves. In summary, the poem merits the relatively minor place heretofore assigned it, and to consider it a serious work of art would be a disservice to our understanding of the tradition of Canadian poetry.[9]

---

[5]*Canadian Poetry*, p. 43. All further reference to Hughes' work is to the article in this journal.

[6]Hughes, p. 42.

[7]Archibald MacMechan refers slightingly to the story of how "a local Edwin jilted his Angelina" in *Headwaters of Canadian Literature* (1924; rprt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), p. 24. George Woodcock speaks sardonically of the "tenuous pathetic love motif . . . introduced in the sad tale of poor Flora driven mad by wicked Albert's betrayal" in "The Journey of Discovery," *Colony and Confederation* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1974), pp. 30-31.

[8]Hughes, p. 42.

[9]In "*The Rising Village* Again," *Canadian Poetry*, No. 3 (Fall/Winter, 1978), W. J. Keith has also questioned Hughes' attempt to elevate the reputation of the Canadian Goldsmith's poem. He bases his argument for the most part on grounds different from mine.

I

Desmond Pacey's criticism of *The Rising Village* is mainly based on his contention that the younger Goldsmith failed "to give us a detailed and accurate picture of social and economic conditions" in the Nova Scotia of his time; the Canadian Goldsmith "was saying the comfortable thing, saying what he knew everybody wanted to hear about the progress of the colony."[10] Pacey made the important point that Haliburton would show, a decade later, that there was scope for satire as well as celebration; he might also have noted that McCulloch's *Stepsure Letters* (which began appearing in December 1821) suggested similar possibilities. For Mr. Hughes, however, Goldsmith's celebratory intentions are not inherently unworthy: the poet "aims to show that Nova Scotia is now civilized like Britain, by which he means quite literally that it has been made civil. Men have imposed their vision and labour on brute nature and transformed it, which is to say that they have brought it out of a primitive state under their control. Moreover, the control is too new to be taken for granted."[11] The rise of Nova Scotia *was* a success story, and Goldsmith has shown this in his presentation of a colony in which "a new Britain has been realized."

We may admit the justice of Mr. Hughes' remarks while at the same time arguing that his method of defending the poem provides a good example of what has been termed the "intentional fallacy." To judge a poem in terms of its purpose only is to judge it incompletely. We need to consider not merely what Goldsmith intended but what he achieved, and when we undertake such a consideration we find serious weaknesses. First, Goldsmith's interest in the colony's success renders him incapable of documenting satisfactorily those aspects of Nova Scotia which distinguish it from Britain. Secondly, his inclination to celebrate, coupled with his colonial state of mind, leave him incapable of seeing the contradictions in his own political attitude to the Mother Country.

The most noticeable instance of Goldsmith's failure to document can be found in his lack of interest in the distinctive landscape of Nova Scotia. As Mr. Hughes has noted, what the poet wants to show is the colonial re-creation of the Britain left behind. The "uncivilized" landscape is therefore dealt with in summary fashion:

---

[10]*Essays in Canadian Criticism*, p. 63.
[11]Hughes, p. 42.

> When, looking round, the lonely settler sees
> His home amid a wilderness of trees:
> How sinks his heart in those deep solitudes,
> Where not a voice upon his ear intrudes;
> Where solemn silence all the waste pervades,
> Heightening the horror of its gloomy shades;
> Save where the sturdy woodman's strokes resound,
> That strew the fallen forest on the ground.
>
> (P. 3)[12]

We do not "see" the natural landscape of Nova Scotia, except in terms of its effects on the settler; it is a "solitude" and a "waste" productive of "gloom" and "horror" — to be removed as quickly as possible by the woodman (the vanguard of "progress") and replaced by "verdant meads," "crops of grain" and "smiling orchards." Goldsmith's aim is to show us that the new world can be made to resemble the old; he has no interest in its indigenous qualities. A similar lack of interest is also displayed with respect to the aboriginal inhabitants of that nature:

> Behold the savage tribe in wildest strain,
> Approach with death and terror in their train;
> No longer silence o'er the forest reigns,
> No longer stillness now her power retains;
> But hideous yells announce the murderous band,
> Whose bloody footsteps desolate the land. . . .
> Here savage beasts around his cottage howl,
> As through the gloomy woods they nightly prowl.
> Till morning comes and then is heard no more
> The shouts of man, or beast's appalling roar;
> The wandering Indian turns another way,
> And brutes avoid the first approach of day.
>
> (Pp. 3-4)

The Indians behave like animals, and like the animals and the forests they disappear before the march of civilization. Goldsmith celebrates this as "progress," incapable of seeing that there are human and ecological costs involveld. What he has documented is a state of mind vulnerable to serious criticism, but the documentation is inadvertent. The colonial mentality usually lacks the capacity for

[12]Page references incorporated in the text refer to David Sinclair, ed., *Nineteenth-Century Narrative Poems* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972). This contains the edition of *The Rising Village* from which Mr. Hughes draws most of his quotations.

self-criticism; its main concern is to show that it shares, in unquestioning fashion, the dominant attitudes of the originating culture.

This intellectual subservience is strongly evident at several points in the poem, and it works against Mr. Hughes' claim that "there was a shift in political consciousness on the part of Goldsmith from that of a pillar of the imperial establishment to that of a nationalist restive under the yoke of London between the years 1825 and 1834."[13] In his attempt to show that the later version of the poem was "Canadianized" Mr. Hughes can adduce only one piece of evidence from the poem itself — the excision of a twenty-line passage in praise of the Earl of Dalhousie (the other changes are to the dedication and footnotes of the poem). What Goldsmith chose *not* to change is far more indicative of a continuing colonial mentality than of his growing national feeling. There is, for example, the paean to Britain which concludes the poem; this hymn of praise makes very odd reading, set against the scandals of the Regency period and the confusion and repression of the reign of George IV (Shelley's sonnet "England in 1819" offers the extreme view on the other side of the question):

> Happy Britannia! . . .
> The nurse of science and the seat of arts,
> The home of fairest forms and gentlest hearts;
> The land of heroes, generous, free, and brave,
> The noblest conquerors of the field and wave;
> Thy flag, on every sea and shore unfurled,
> Has spread thy glory, and thy thunder hurled.
> When, o'er the earth, a tyrant would have thrown
> His iron chain, and called the world his own,
> Thine arm preserved it, in its darkest hour,
> Destroyed his hopes, and crushed his dreaded power,
> To sinking nations life and freedom gave,
> 'Twas thine to conquer, as 'twas thine to save.
> Then blest Acadia! ever may thy name,
> Like hers be graven on the rolls of fame;
> May all thy sons, like hers, be brave and free,
> Possessors of her laws and liberty;
> Heirs of her splendour, science, power, and skill,
> And through succeeding years her children still.
>
> (Pp. 13-14)

What we have here is a fine example of "colonial" patriotism, a kind of patriotism which is in many ways similar to the feelings most very

[13]Hughes, p. 38.

young children have for their parents. Imperfections cannot be admitted, those outside the family group are necessarily inferior or threatening, and the child has no desire to alter his dependent status. If Goldsmith's "political consciousness" had shifted in the direction of nationalism during the period 1825-1834 one could reasonably have expected him to alter this passage — particularly since the 1834 edition of the poem was intended for a local audience, not an English one. Yet the lines were not revised, nor was any change made in the section immediately preceding this passage, where Goldsmith gave the greatest share of the credit for Nova Scotia's development to Britain, *not* to the colony's early inhabitants:

> From all her shores, with every gentle gale,
> Commerce expands her free and swelling sail;
> And all the land, luxuriant, rich, and gay,
> Exulting owns the splendour of their sway.
> These are thy blessings, Scotia, and for these,
> For wealth, for freedom, happiness, and ease,
> Thy greatful thanks to Britain's care are due,
> Her power protects, her smiles past hopes renew,
> Her valour guards thee, and her councils guide,
> Then, may thy parent ever be thy pride!
> (P. 13)

The sentiments here expressed would seem the opposite of nationalistic.

The passage just quoted leads us to other difficulties: Goldsmith is simply unable to recognize — because of his unthinking loyalty — that there are some serious economic and social questions involved in any meaningful discussion of the process of colonization. Britain is said to deserve Nova Scotia's thanks for "wealth, for freedom, happiness, and ease," and the phrase is a deliberate echo of the section early in the poem which presents us with an idealized view of Britain:

> Cities and plains extending far and wide,
> The merchant's glory, and the farmer's pride.
> Majestic palaces in pomp display
> The wealth and splendour of the regal sway;
> While the low hamlet and the shepherd's cot,
> In peace and freedom mark the peasant's lot.
> There nature's vernal bloom adorns the field,
> And Autumn's fruits their rich luxuriance yield.
> There men, in busy crowds, with men combine,

> That arts may flourish, and fair science shine;
> And thence, to distant climes their labours send,
> As o'er the world their widening views extend.
> (Pp. 2-3)

Here "wealth" and "freedom" are explicitly named, and "happiness" and "ease" are certainly implicit qualities of the scene. Yet Goldsmith tells us, a dozen lines later, in praising the "courage" and "ardour" of those who emigrated to Nova Scotia, that these people went "In search of wealth, of freedom, and of ease!" The poet's economic naiveté, which consorts very well with his colonial patriotism, prevents him from seeing the contradiction. How can these people be praised for seeking, in an inhospitable foreign territory, the very benefits that Britain already provides in abundance? Goldsmith cannot seriously examine the emigrants' motives without abandoning his idealized view of Britain, and his fumbling treatment of this issue ought to make us suspicious of the value of the poem as a "Canadian" documentary.[14]

II

Against the charges, levelled by Pacey and Cogswell, that Goldsmith failed to use the heroic couplet in more than a pedestrian fashion, Mr. Hughes offers an interesting defense:

> Given the limitations of space and the vastness of the subject, Goldsmith could not have written the poem at all if he had approached it from the direction of naturalism rather than of realism. For, notwithstanding the title, the poem is not concerned with a specific rising village at all. . . . The rising village is at once all rising villages in this new land; it is the embryonic Nova Scotia itself which we see develop into full maturity in the poem. It is the first settlement and it is all the settlements that collectively constitute the geo-political entity known as Nova Scotia. Indeed, this is why Goldsmith deals in universal rather than particular terms.[15]

[14]The history of emigration to Nova Scotia was, in general, a sad business, readably described by Douglas Hill in *Great Emigrations I: The Scots of Canada* (London: Gentry Books, 1972). Goldsmith has nothing to say about Scottish poverty and the "Highland clearances"; his idealized portrait of Britain would not permit such "documentary" detail. Indeed, one might question the documentary value of his poem solely on the grounds that he makes no mention whatever of the Scottish qualities of "New Scotland."

[15]Hughes, p. 41.

We are wrong, therefore, to claim that Goldsmith employed stock eqpithets and hackneyed phrases because he lacked poetic skill. Rather, he was attempting to present a deliberately generalized picture of the pioneering process "for a diverse collection of readers, some of whom had been through the original experience and some of whom had not":

> His solution is to use a sort of shot-gun technique; he fires off a blast of abstract words which shoot out in the same general direction, and he does so with the sure knowledge that individual readers, regardless of their individual experiences, will be made to undergo the same *general* experience.[16]

There are three objections which can be made to this defense of Goldsmith's poetic technique. First, the metaphor of the "shot-gun" is hardly the one most readers would apply to the work of such masters of the heroic couplet as Dryden and Pope; the rapier or the razor, perhaps, but not so clumsy an instrument as the fowling-piece. Secondly, the poet's excessive reliance on generalizations and abstractions, which Hughes is right to see as deliberately used, diminishes the value of the poem as a documentary. Generalizations and abstractions work only when the poet and his readers share a set of conventions. The pioneering experience is not traditional or conventional but *new,* and abstract poetic diction cannot do it justice:

> See! from their heights the lofty pines descend,
> And crackling, down their pond'rous lengths extend.
> Soon from their boughs the curling flames arise,
> Mount into air, and redden all the skies;
> And where the forest once its foliage spread,
> The golden corn triumphant waves its head.
>
> (P. 3)

From forests to farms in six lines, an experience so generalized that one wonders how *any* reader could be expected to share it in a meaningful way. Goldsmith himself seems to have been somewhat uneasy about this passage, because he provided the following footnote to it:

> The process of clearing the land, though simple, is attended with a great deal of labour. The trees are all felled, so as to lie in the same direction; and after the fire has passed over them in that

[16]Hughes, p. 42.

> state, whatever may be left is collected into heaps, and reduced to ashes. The grain is then sown between the stumps of the trees, which remain, until the lapse of time, from ten to fifteen years, reduces them to decay. (P. 15)

This footnote, written in ordinary (not "poetic") language, is *documentary* in a way that the lines from the poem are not. Goldsmith's generalizations and abstractions can be said to work, in the fashion described by Mr. Hughes, only when the poet is intent on *asserting* (not documenting) that the inhabitants of Nova Scotia have reproduced in their colony the idealized rural landscape of Britain:

> Here the broad marsh extends its open plain,
> Until its limits touch the distant main;
> There verdant meads along the uplands spring,
> And grateful odours to the breezes fling;
> Here crops of grain in rich luxuriance rise,
> And wave the golden riches to the skies;
> There smiling orchards interrupt the scene,
> Or gardens bounded by some fence of green;
> The farmer's cottage, bosomed 'mong the trees,
> Whose spreading branches shelter from the breeze;
> The winding stream that turns the busy mill,
> Whose clacking echoes o'er the distant hill. . . .
> (Pp. 11-12)

There is nothing here to localize the passage in North America; we have instead a series of conventional epithets, on the basis of which Goldsmith invites his English readers to make the easiest of stock responses.

The third objection that one may make to Mr. Hughes' defense of Goldsmith's poetic technique is the most damaging of all: in stressing the poet's deliberate use of generalizations Hughes fails to give sufficient consideration to the lack of skill Goldsmith displays in presenting these generalizations within the framework of the heroic couplet. He does suggest that because "the couplet form itself is a superb example of . . . control, it is thus an appropriate vehicle for developing the essential portrait of a realized Nova Scotia."[17] Yet Goldsmith is unable, for the most part, to use the form skilfully. The passage of landscape description quoted in the preceding paragraph

[17]Hughes, p. 42.

shows the poet's characteristic inability to vary the pace of his lines; the infrequent use of internal punctuation produces a monotonous effect in nearly all the descriptive passages:

> Beneath some spreading tree's expanded shade
> Here many a manly youth and gentle maid,
> With festive dances or with sprightly song
> The summer's evening hours in joy prolong,
> And as the young their simple sports renew,
> The aged witness, and approve them too.
> And when the Summer's bloomy charms are fled,
> When Autumn's fallen leaves around are spread,
> When Winter rules the sad inverted year,
> And ice and snow alternately appear,
> Sports not less welcome lightly they essay,
> To chase the long and tedious hours away.
>
> (Pp. 7-8)

Against this monotony we may set, for purposes of contrast, one of the few sections of the poem which has been generally approved:

> Here, nails and blankets, side by side, are seen,
> There, horses' collars, and a large tureen;
> Buttons and tumblers, fish-hooks, spoons and knives,
> Shawls for young damsels, flannel for old wives;
> Woolcards and stockings, hats for men and boys,
> Mill-saws and fenders, silks, and children's toys;
> All useful things, and joined with many more,
> Compose the well-assorted country store.
>
> (P. 6)

In these lines Goldsmith demonstrates that he can use the heroic couplet to good purpose; the trochaic feet used for variety at the beginnings of some lines, the unexpected rhymes (seen/tureen, knives/wives), and, in particular, the internal punctuation which retards the movement of all but the last line — these effects combine to reinforce the point Goldsmith is making about the "well-assorted" quality of the country store.

In too many other passages, however, the poet uses the couplet mechanically, offering us a succession of iambic feet unbroken by punctuation, and a series of quite conventional rhyme-words:

> In some lone spot of consecrated ground,
> Whose silence spreads a holy gloom around,
> The village church in unadorned array,

> Now lifts its turret to the opening day.
> How sweet to see the villagers repair
> In groups to pay their adoration there. . . .
> (P. 5)

There are other sections more lively than this one, but not enough of them to enable us to speak very highly of Goldsmith's technical ability. Mr. Hughes may be correct in arguing that the couplet form was "appropriate" for the poet's purpose, but he has not shown that the form was *used* appropriately. In fact, his argument unfortunately suggests a deterministic relationship between the writer and his age that would in any case leave the poet little opportunity to use his chosen form ambitiously:

> It might appear at first that Goldsmith is working with an old and out-moded poetic form when he employs the eighteenth-century couplet rather than the blank verse of a Wordsworth. Such a view, however, is misleading. It fails to allow that verse forms operate in a necessary relationship with particular cultures at particular times. . . . Similarly, it fails to allow that the state of development often differs between one land and another.[18]

Because Nova Scotia was not as "advanced" as Britain we may, therefore, accept more readily, according to Mr. Hughes, Goldsmith's choice of a poetic form more characteristic of an earlier age. Yet this argument does not address the question of how well the form was used, nor does it accurately represent the history of poetic forms in English literature. We do not need to look back to Dryden and Pope to find materials for comparison with *The Rising Village;* Goldsmith's contemporaries show that the form could still be used to good effect. Byron had employed it for satirical purposes in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809); Keats had used a loosened form of the heroic couplet in *Endymion* (1818). More importantly, George Crabbe's *The Borough* (1810) and *Tales in Verse* (1812) demonstrate that, in skilful hands, the form could be the vehicle for precise observation and analysis of rural life. Rural life was also Goldsmith's subject, and his poem invites comparison with Crabbe's work, a comparison which reveals both the intellectual and technical deficiencies of the Nova Scotian poet. Crabbe does not idealize his materials, nor does he use the heroic couplet in a mechanical manner.

[18]Hughes, p. 42.

III

The most interesting part of Mr. Hughes' work is his defense of the story of Albert and Flora, an episode that most readers have considered merely an unnecessary sentimental interpolation. Mr. Hughes argues, however, that this abbreviated narrative of love and desertion has both sense and purpose, provided that we view it not literally but allegorically:

> That Albert is "foremost of the village train" and that he is "noble" suggests that, on the allegorical level, he is the embodiment of the English aristocratic ruling class when imperial-colonial relations were at their best. His perfidious desertion of Flora is thus the symbolic desertion of Nova Scotia by England in the developing period of economic stagnation following the economic boom of the Napoleonic Wars. The suggestion that the natural process of fertility has ceased to function [Mr. Hughes has asserted that Flora "is, of course the goddess of flowers"] points symbolically to the effects of British economic policy on the Nova Scotia economy and society. That Flora is rescued by a peasant implies that a sturdy and self-sufficient Nova Scotia can now go it alone without Britain if necessary. That the rescue is in a morning as the sun rises points symbolically to the new age that is being born.[19]

We are led in the direction of such a reading, says Mr. Hughes, because the fact "that Goldsmith has Flora lying out all night in the snow tips us off that this story within a story is allegorical. We are not expected to believe that an unprotected person could survive a Canadian winter night."

This account of what "tips us off" is the weakest part of Mr. Hughes' discussion. To find the highly improbable behaviour of fictional characters (especially sentimental heroines) a reason for allegorical interpretation would make necessary some considerable revisions in the critical analysis of many works of Canadian literature.

---

[19]Hughes, p. 35. Hughes also argues that the story of Albert and Flora is introduced deliberately to provide an offsetting flaw in the poet's "idealized and generalized picture of reality. . . . It is interesting to note that the one flaw in Edenic Nova Scotia Goldsmith attributes to human weakness" and not to "defects in the political, social, and economic structure" (p. 34). This may be disputed. Goldsmith presents the "civilizing" process quite deliberately: we have, in chronological order, the cottage, the tavern, the church, the store, the doctor, the school, and then "vice." This last seems to be the inevitable consequence of the process; a better poet than the Canadian Goldsmith might have made something interesting out of the implications.

To what, for example, would we be led by the following stanza from Charles Sangster's *The St. Lawrence and the Saguenay:*

> There was a stately Maiden once, who made
> These Isles her home. Oft has her lightsome skiff
> Toyed with the waters: and the velvet glade,
> The shadowy woodland, and the granite cliff,
> Joyed at her footsteps. Here the Brigand Chief,
> Her father, lived, an outlaw. Her soul's pride
> Was ministering to his wants. In brief,
> The wildest midnight she would cross the tide,
> Full of a daughter's love, to hasten to his side.

That the islands of the St. Lawrence did not house brigand chieftains and their romantic daughters hardly entitles us to suspect an allegorical treatment of existing maritime regulations or excise laws. It is far more likely, given the content, language and stanza form, that Sangster is giving us some reworked Byron — *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* adapted to a North American landscape.

Having set aside the "clue" that Mr. Hughes offers us, we should not, however, dismiss the possibility of allegory out of hand. Some readers will no doubt find his interpretation acceptable, but those who do so must admit that there are some difficulties with it. First, Goldsmith's allegory would have been more consistent if he had made Albert a British gentleman rather than a "native" Nova Scotian; the betrayal of Flora by an outsider would have made the "symbolic desertion" more apparent. Second, the point about Nova Scotia's "self-sufficiency" would have been stronger if the rescued Flora (the symbol of the colony's fertility) had not been left with a permanently "maddened brain"; this does not augur well for the province's future. Third, Goldsmith himself tells us that the story of Albert and Flora is not typical but exceptional: "Yet, think not oft such tales of real woe/Degrade the land, and round the village flow" (p. 11). Fourth, seeing the Albert and Flora episode as Hughes does depends in part on the other claims that he has made for the "nationalistic" quality of the poem; I have tried to suggest that these other claims are at least questionable. If Goldsmith has intended allegory, we can argue that he has handled it no more skilfully than he has his verse-form.

Some readers may continue to prefer R. E. Rashley's simpler explanation of the function of the episode, as one "which adds another hundred and ten lines on virtue and gives the moral element

the most prominent place in the poem, sufficient evidence that Goldsmith's society wished to be characterized by morality."[20] This fits well with the generally celebratory nature of the poem; it also suggests the possibility of making a hitherto unnoticed connection between *The Rising Village* and *The Deserted Village.* In the latter poem the English Goldsmith, after describing the destruction of the rural community, shows us the "rural virtues" preparing to emigrate. Hospitality, piety, loyalty, love — all these are forced to leave, and they are accompanied by something of even more importance:

> And thou, sweet Poetry, thou loveliest maid
> Still first to fly where sensual joys invade;
> Unfit in these degenerate times of shame,
> To catch the heart, or strike for honest fame;
> Dear charming nymph, neglected and decried,
> My shame in crowds, my solitary pride;
> Thou source of all my bliss, and all my woe,
> Thou found'st me poor at first, and keep'st me so;
> Thou guide by which the nobler arts excell
> Thou nurse of every virtue, fare thee well.
> Farewell, and O where'er thy voice be tried,
> On Tomo's cliffs, or Pambamarca's side,
> Whether where equinoctal fervours glow,
> Or winter wraps the polar world in snow,
> Still let thy voice prevailing over time,
> Redress the rigours of the inclement clime;
> Aid slighted truth, with thy persuasive strain
> Teach erring man to spurn the rage of gain;
> Teach him that states of native strength possest,
> Tho' very poor, may still be very blest;
> That trade's proud empire hastes to swift decay,
> As ocean sweeps the labour'd mole away;
> While self-dependent power can time defy,
> As rocks resist the billows and the sky.[21]

Poetry itself can no longer flourish in a land given over to the worship of trade and luxury, can no longer serve as the conscience of the community. The younger Goldsmith, however, in offering the story of Albert and Flora, is not merely giving us a "poetic" interlude, he is trying to show that in the new world poetry can fulfill the moral function insisted on for it by his great-uncle. Albert's conduct is

[20]*Poetry in Canada* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1958), p. 29.
[21]Ronald S. Crane, ed., *A Collection of English Poems,* 1660-1800 (New York: Harper & Row, 1932), p. 860.

severely judged, and is used to set off, in contrast, the more typical character of the rising village, where "virtue's charms appear in bright array,/And all their pleasing influence display" (p. 11).

Yet the moral force of poetry is operating, in the work of the Canadian Goldsmith, within very narrow limits. The English Goldsmith had argued that even the largest economic and social questions were of concern to poetry; the Canadian writer, as we have seen, finds no issues of substance in these questions. As Professor Pacey very aptly observed, the Canadian Goldsmith was saying "the comfortable thing"; whereas his great-uncle had hated commerce and luxury, he found them subjects fit for celebration:

> From all her shores, with every gentle gale,
> Commerce expands her free and swelling sail;
> And all the land, luxuriant, rich, and gay,
> Exulting owns the splendour of their sway.
> (p. 13)

The English Oliver Goldsmith would, one suspects, not have been pleased by the attempt on the part of his great-nephew to "emulate his fame/Whose genius formed the glory of our name" (p. 2).

Although Mr. Hughes has made a valiant attempt to assign *The Rising Village* a significant place in the Canadian canon, I think it possible to argue that the poem does indeed deserve the strictures of Professors Pacey and Cogswell. The poem has historical value, but it is neither a very good poem nor a Canadian documentary. What it "documents" is a state of mind, and that state of mind is not Canadian but colonial. To borrow one of Margaret Atwood's more felicitous phrases: Goldsmith is "a person who is 'here' but thinks he is somewhere else."[22]

University of Alberta

[22]*Survival* (Toronto: Anansi, 1972), p. 18.