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Chapter 2. How West Becomes East in Colonial Georgia Poetry

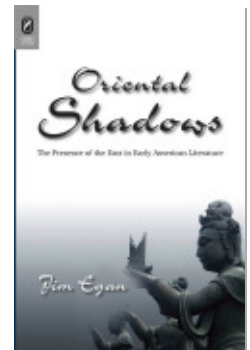
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East in Poetry

How West Colonial Go

's *Magazine* foretells its brief summary of the Trustees for establishing the Colony of Georgia: of the occasion, the design of a contemporary, appears as a series of numbers of attention devoted to what it calls "Domestic

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Occurrences." There we learn that Georgia's Trustees "order'd a common seal to be made with the following Device: One Side two Figures of Rivers resting upon Urns, representing the *Altamaha* and *Savannah*, the Boundaries of Georgia; and between them the Genius of the Colony, seated with the Cap of Liberty upon her Head, a Spear in one Hand, and a Cornucopia in the other, with this Motto, *Colonia Georgia Aug.* The Reverse is to be *Silk Worms at Work*, with this Motto, *Non sibi sed Alia.*"²

Most twenty-first century readers are likely to find the images on this seal representing liberty, military might, and natural abundance quite in keeping with basic assumptions about the United States' colonial origins:

but the image of silkworms would probably surprise most Americans today. To be sure, the stories we have told ourselves about the development of the colonies that eventually formed the United States focus our attention on a variety of topics: tobacco, religious faith, clashing political ideologies, slavery, taming or despoiling the natural environment, building an entirely new nation on a new land or perpetrating an act of genocide in order to clear the space necessary for that nation, or some combination of these and other now-familiar motifs. When we note silk in our stories of America's

development, though, if we mention it at all, we tend to do so in passing as a mere fantasy of America's promoters unworthy of our analysis given its subsequent unimportance.

The decision by the Trustees to single out silk as *the* representative product from what they cast on the other side of the seal as a cornucopia of goods should lead us to wonder what conceptual—as opposed to, say, strictly economic or purely historical—implications such a choice of figures might have for those of us who study British American colonial literature. Just what ideas, issues, problems, and/or images did, after all, eighteenth-century British and British American readers associate with the figure of silk that might be relevant to the study of early American literature and culture? To be sure, they would have connected silk with specifically economic concerns and possibilities, but it seems almost too obvious to say that the associations attached to a commodity of such extraordinary value would be limited to the domain of finance. If we accept the premise that eighteenth-century British and British American people connected the image of silk with a variety of ideas and issues beyond the purely economic, what might these figurative associations—related to one another in eighteenth-century British and British American symbolic systems even if they are not related in what we tend to call “fact”—tell us about the underlying assumptions that allowed at least some British American colonists to make sense of their world which we have thus far overlooked?

If we were to begin our investigation of these issues by examining what the Trustees themselves said about their choice of silk for the seal, though, we would be sorely disappointed. For no records remain of the Trustees' deliberations—if any even took place—over the decision to feature silk on the colony's seal.³ If we have no explicit statements explaining the Trustees' logic in choosing silk, we can reasonably infer from what documents we do have that the Trustees had a choice to make. For the records of the Trustees' meetings and the promotional material they authorized show that silk was only one among many products they expected Georgia to supply, including “*raw Silk, Wine, Oil, Dyes, Drugs, and many other Materials for Manufactures.*”⁴ So while the Trustees themselves never spell out their reasons for choosing silk as the image with which they wanted Georgia to be associated, we know that it was a choice. The choice of silk, in turn, necessarily associated Georgia with all those concepts, ideas, and values to which silk had become attached for eighteenth-century British and British American consumers, associations of which the Trustees must surely have been aware.

I think the available evidence allows us to conclude that most eighteenth-century British and British American readers of the *Gentleman's Magazine* would have expected references to silk in British American promotional material; very likely they would have grown accustomed to such allusions given that America's promoters had long been trumpeting America as a place where Great Britain could obtain a good that had become such a huge commercial success throughout Europe. In the discursive systems of 1730s Anglo-America, though, silk's symbolic associations extended well beyond its connection to the colonization of North America. For well more than one hundred years before the birth of any of Georgia's board members, silk had been linked in European culture with East Indies trade goods in general and with China in particular.⁵ Indeed, the desire to obtain silk products—among *many* other goods—from the East fueled the very discovery of the New World and subsequent European efforts to produce silk on its continents in the first place.⁶

To say that British consumers had long associated silk with the “East” in general and “China” in particular begs a crucial question: just what did these consumers understand these terms to mean in the first place? I noted in my discussion of Bradstreet's *Several Poems* that not only did readers of English in the late seventeenth century understand the term “East” differently than we do today, but also that the word itself lacked stability and precision in its geographic denotation. By the time Georgia's Trustees began their promotional blitz on behalf of the colony in the 1730s, the “East” had achieved slightly more stability than it had had fifty years earlier. Georgia's promoters wrote, like Bradstreet, during the very period when the modern meanings of East and West came into being.⁷ Georgia's promotional documents reflect the broader usage of the time when they include what appears to a modern reader to be an extraordinarily diverse body of regions and countries within the single category of the “East”: “Barbary, *AEgypt*, and *Arabia*,” “Asia” and “*Asia Minor*,” “the Kingdome of Kaschmere,” “India,” “Persia,” and “China” are all part of the “East,” as is the “East Indies” from which Great Britain gained so much of its trade in the period.

It is ironic that, by the 1730s, very little of the silk hanging in British or colonial homes, adorning the nation's bodies either on Britain's home isle or in its colonies, or being put to any of the many other uses to which British people put the fabric were actually imported from countries in what was considered by early-eighteenth-century readers to be the “East.” In spite of their place of production, silk, porcelain, and other Eastern products retained their symbolic associations with Eastern cultures, styles, and

aesthetics.⁸ It was its symbolic ties to China and the East rather than any material connection that allowed silk to play such a key role in the “Chinese rage” known as chinoiserie that swept all of Europe in the middle of the eighteenth century.⁹ That contemporaneous audiences connected Georgia’s promotion to the East geographically and symbolically can be seen by the way in which one set of the colony’s critics, who would come to be known as the Clamorous Malcontents, characterized the man who ran Georgia in its early years, James Oglethorpe. In their pamphlet criticizing the management of Georgia, the Malcontents cast Oglethorpe’s own characterization of the colony as “like the Illusion of some *Eastern Magician*.”¹⁰ To an eighteenth-century British and British American audience, then, the decision to affix an image of silk to all official documents from the Georgia Trustees would have seemed, perhaps, only the most bold and aggressive attempt not simply to obtain so-called East Indian goods from America but also to associate a colonization effort understood by all—even in a period in which Europe’s conception of the globe was rapidly changing—to be in the West with a product conceptually linked to the worlds and cultures of the East.¹¹

In asking their readers to imagine British people living in Georgia while producing materials associated symbolically if not materially with the East Indies, Georgia’s promoters faced a number of daunting practical objections. For starters, Georgia was designed to be different from previous colonies.¹² Unlike previous British colonies—those that succeeded as well as those that failed—Georgia was set up as a charitable organization. The Trustees of Georgia received permission to colonize the land between the Savannah and Altamaha rivers for the purpose of putting to work those idle British subjects now languishing in prison for their unpaid debts.

This was by no means an easy sell. In the first place, what came to be known as the “Georgia plan” would have to fight a general skepticism toward all colonial ventures among 1730s British readers. This skepticism was born, in part, of the deep scars that appeared in the wake of the South Sea Bubble of the 1710s and 1720s, which had left many individual investors in dire straits and threatened the financial health of England itself. In addition to these concerns about American colonization, the Georgia plan in particular offered much upon which skeptics might seize. Such skeptics might well ask, for instance, what mechanism the backers planned to use to induce people thought to be congenitally lazy to transform themselves into productive laborers once they were separated from England by an ocean. Even if such undesirable elements of society could be prodded into working the land, how could the profits from their labor generate the kind of

cash necessary to cover the enormous expense of transporting them to and housing them in such a forbidding territory?

Assuming the backers could credibly demonstrate that potential profits would more than offset such costs, one had to concede that Georgia's location placed it in an especially vulnerable spot. The colony's promoters unabashedly acknowledged that the colony would sit precisely between Britain's most southern colony, South Carolina, and Spain's most northern colony, Florida. Not only did they acknowledge this fact; they went so far as to use it in promoting the colony to South Carolina residents and the British government. Georgia, they claimed, would serve as a buffer, safeguarding Britons' profitable holdings in South Carolina from further incursions of Spanish troops. Were debtors struggling to work an untamed land for profit supposed to simultaneously defend it from Spanish forces who might attack at any time, transforming all the money investors had sunk into Georgia into mere American ashes? If all these challenges did not deflate the hopes of a potential contributor, perhaps the threat the local native populations would surely pose to another British settlement and, of perhaps more concern to potential contributors, by extension to any charitable contributions would be enough to dissuade even the most generous of potential patrons from giving to a project whose success faced seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

The conceptual hurdles posed by the plan were perhaps still more daunting even though they were not expressed as explicitly as the practical concerns. Whether one focused on its symbolic associations or the place of its material production, all of silk's promoters in England had, by the 1730s, conceded that it couldn't be produced in Great Britain. Silk was, all agreed, an entirely "foreign" product. By insisting on the way in which clearly "alien" goods could be produced by British subjects in the decidedly un-British environment of America, Georgia's promoters seemed to put the very Britishness of those subjects at risk. If, after all, Georgia was so much like these "foreign" regions that one could literally substitute products from this part of America for ones that had to be imported from outside Great Britain, were the English people living in Georgia to lose their very status as British while living in such distinctly "foreign" locales? If climate had anything to do with the distinctive characteristics of a nation, as many eighteenth-century theories of identity formation held, what was to become of the British men and women consigned to live in such an environment?¹³ Were the economic, social, and cultural advantages to be gained by this charitable proposition so great that they outweighed the risks involved?

And what of these so-called advantages? A number of commentators in early-eighteenth-century Great Britain were already worried about the corruption of British society by an overreliance on luxury items. To them, the colonization of a region that would make silk, porcelain, and other Eastern items even easier for English consumers to obtain loomed as more of a threat than an opportunity. The production of such items in Great Britain's own colonies would only cater, these commentators argued, to desires better thwarted than encouraged. Silk gowns, porcelain vases, chinaware, and other items for the so-called refined taste threatened the very moral foundation of British culture. Was Britain's status as a "civilized" nation—for Georgia's promoters suggested that nothing less was at stake in bringing the colony's products to Great Britain—to be bought by sacrificing some of her subjects' very claims to that civilized identity by living abroad while corrupting those who remained at home by encouraging them to indulge their basest desires for material objects associated with the East?

Perhaps some in Great Britain were willing to accept such a bargain, but Georgia's promoters in both the colonies and Great Britain insisted that what they consistently cast as "Eastern" products obtained from the soil of British Georgia need not come at so high a price. In order to investigate the way in which Georgia's promoters initially cast the cultural advantages to Great Britain of the production of silk and other products in the region between South Carolina and Florida, I have examined the many writings relating to the colony of Georgia that appeared in print from the beginning of the promotional campaign that launched the colony in 1732 up through the publication of critical material by—and official responses to—the Malcontents in 1742. These writings suggest that Britain needs its own source of distinctly "Eastern" goods in America in order to maintain the nation's economic and social health, protect its strategic military interests, and elevate itself to the most elite status of civilized communities. In order to interrogate in the greatest detail the various complications and problems that such a position raises, I focus my attention in this chapter on a single poem from the promotional campaign: "An Address to James Oglethorpe, Esq," first published in *The South Carolina Gazette* in the 10 February 1732 issue and attributed by David Shields to James Kirkpatrick.¹⁴

I have chosen to focus the bulk of my attention in the following pages on this poem in particular in part because of its American origins. "An Address . . ." was first published in British America by a writer living in the colonies when he penned his verse.¹⁵ Its colonial origins allow us to use it as evidence of the way at least one British American writer figured the East in relation to what he considered a New World discovered in the West in

the 1730s. Like the promotional material that came out of London or that was written with a specifically British audience in mind, Kirkpatrick's, too, focuses our attention on the value of Georgia's silk in particular as a way of satisfying consumer demand while simultaneously working to enhance the civilized status of Great Britain in general. In collapsing the distinction between the geographic East and West, "An Address . . ." not only explicitly calls our attention to the metonymic qualities of the American environment but, in the process of doing so, also elevates what British America has to offer the world when its author makes the system of values that are never stated directly but which nonetheless provide the philosophical foundation for such metonymies equivalent to the values that underlie Britain's social system at large. To put this perhaps more provocatively, this writing from the British American colonies suggests that America helps Britain look more civilized by allowing it to look more "Eastern." Given this, we might be tempted to ask how such a work fits into the story of the development of British American literature—to say nothing of the broader British American cultural history—as we have traditionally told it. How, in other words, does a focus on the symbolic associations connected to a single product, silk, to which a single poem grants considerable political and aesthetic power lead us to rethink, if it does, the literary history of America? Our investigation of how the poem prompts such questions, though, must begin not with the poem itself, but with the role of silk in New World colonization before Georgia. In order, that is, to understand the implications of Kirkpatrick's use of the figure of silk in the 1730s, we must first understand how it came to be associated with the New World in the first place and the implications of those associations as they came down to Kirkpatrick's readers.



GEORGIA'S PROMOTERS were by no means the first to suggest that England cultivate silk in her New World possessions.¹⁶ Quite the contrary.¹⁷ They were the very last to argue that America could satisfy Great Britain's seemingly boundless desire for silk.¹⁸ References to silk occur so frequently in the histories, sermons, poems, pamphlets, and other printed material promoting English activity in North America that it seems almost as if these writers were not allowed to talk about the colonies without talking about silk. So while some of the promotional tracts from this period provide elaborate descriptions of the possibilities for silk production in the New World, others mention it only in passing. The long lists of commodities that could be had in the wilds of America prominently featured in works promoting

America mentioned silk almost without exception. If such lists divide the New World into its various parts, in the process presenting the natural world as no more than a set of discrete objects whose value depends on their ability to be transformed into money, then silk, as a part of this list, becomes part of the very stuff that makes up and defines New World value.

To give some idea of the ubiquity of references to silk, let me provide a few snapshots from relevant works. Visions of New World silk as a source of vast riches for Old World investors appear, in fact, in the very first wave of English promotional tracts for American settlement in the late sixteenth century. Thomas Hariot lists “*Silke of grasse or grasse Silke*” at the very beginning of the list of “MERCHANTABLE COMMODITIES” the New World offers that opens *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* (1590), and, in case his reader fails to grasp the importance of silk from its pride of place, he removes any doubt by putting “Worme Silke” second on the very same list.¹⁹ The New World promoter long credited with being the most realistic and/or pragmatic about what the genuine opportunities for the production of New World commodities were, John Smith, never fails to mention silk in his catalogs of possible New World products.²⁰ He mentions silk in his works almost as many times as he does Pocahontas, a figure with whom he has become forever associated in the U.S. myths of origin even as his links to silk production have been entirely forgotten. The dream of American silk producing English wealth continued up through the early eighteenth century, focusing especially on the colony to Virginia’s immediate south, Carolina. The failure of some “French Protestants” at producing silk in what would become South Carolina, Thomas Ashe contends, should not be seen as an indication of the difficulties involved in such a project but, on the contrary, as a sign that England’s very enemies have sought to exploit the “the numerousness of the Leaf” in the colony.²¹ By 1708 John Oldmixon claimed in *The British Empire in America* “a great Improvement” in Carolina’s silk production.²²

But no previous British American colony matched Georgia in the extent to which it focused potential investors’ and settlers’ attention on silk to the exclusion of other products. To demonstrate this focus, I want first to turn again to the image of silkworms on Georgia’s common seal.²³ Every colony in British America at some point during its life prior to the Revolution had a common seal. Indeed, some had several seals while they were colonies of Great Britain. Of all of these seals among all the British colonies on the continent and in the Caribbean, only Georgia’s contains an image of silk in any form. I am afraid I am only stating the obvious when I note that common seals serve a representative function in that they work to associate

the colony with whatever images appear on that colony's seal. When we add to this the fact that images of a cornucopia appear on the opposite side of Georgia's seal, thus singling out silk among a figuratively limitless supply of products for the viewer's attention, I think it is reasonable to conclude that Georgia's seal associates the colony with silk in an unprecedented way among the colonies.

The legal power afforded a seal's status as a representation of the deliberate, expressed will of a corporation's board supplements this first-order representative function.²⁴ Seals literally stand in the place of the corporation's members who cannot be present whenever the goals expressed on the sealed document are to be realized. The seal's imprimatur would make things happen by providing an image that would authenticate any document produced by the corporation as legitimately the result of its collective will. The common seal would authorize the expenditure of monies for the transportation of colonists; it would prohibit the use of slaves in the colony; it would place restrictions on land tenure; and, among the various other things it would help make happen, it would confer political power on particular individuals. In this way, seals bear a striking resemblance to performative speech acts in the way they function. Like performative speech acts, seals make things happen.

They do so, it should be added, only through the implicit agreement of all parties who read the document to accept the image of the seal as a figure for the intention of a specific corporate body. Eighteenth-century British law treats corporations as fictitious persons, and the corporation's common seal acts as a stand-in or representative of that fictitious person. The seal signifies the deliberate will of an imaginary individual to transform mere writing into action in the world. In serving as the signifier for the deliberate, considered will of the entire fictitious corporate body, the seal ensures that the corporation's members do not have to be physically present to attest to the document's authenticity. The seal thus serves a function very similar to that of a signature for an individual, but with the added and quite important complication that a visual image rather than a specific order of letters operates as the authenticating mark and that this signifier is the product of the will of the corporate body rather than, as with someone's signing their own name, an act whose naming stands outside (at least in general practice) the individual's agency. We are given the names we write when we pen our signatures. We do not choose the signifying marks that identify us, in other words. In the case of corporate seals, however, the members of the corporate board choose their own signifying mark. They get to choose the image with which they want to be represented.

As a figure for that which it is not, a seal works via the logic of metonymy. Unlike most metonymic figures, though, the particular association underlying this metonymy—when one thinks of a silkworm, one should necessarily think of colonial Georgia—grows out of the Trustees' hopes and desires rather than any existing historical, economic, or cultural relation between silk and a colony that does not even exist when the seal is approved. Georgia's common seal thus represents an act of willful association in which the seal serves as a way of producing an association before it becomes a historical reality. It is in this sense that the seal is performative in a second way. For the seal not only makes money transfer hands, disallows slavery, and so forth; it also works to produce the very association it purports to represent. The seal makes real that which is—at the moment of its conception when the Trustees approve the seal, through the many times it is affixed to documents, until long after the removal of the silkworms from the seal after the American Revolution—real only in the world of discourse. We do not even need to attribute any intentionality to the Trustees in order to classify the seal as a kind of performative speech act. For regardless of whatever the Trustees intended, and even if they intended the seal to be entirely representational of a material reality they believed to exist, the seal does, in fact, produce an association of Georgia with silk in the discursive system of the period even if no silk exists in Georgia in fact.

That a British colonial project focusing so much attention on silk as the colony's signature commodity would be born in the world of 1730s London should come as no surprise, though. For the widening trade imbalance that had long helped fuel England's dogged pursuit of New World silk grew only more pronounced in the first two decades of the eighteenth century. The imbalance begins to take on noticeable proportions a century before Georgia's birth. While England struggled to produce silkworms in the British Isles or in her colonial possessions abroad, imports of both raw and thrown silk became, in the words of Linda Peck, "the most valuable of all the raw material imports throughout the middle and later seventeenth century."²⁵ "The value of imported silk fabrics," Peck points out, "more than doubled between 1560 and 1622," so that by 1622 "silk fabric had grown to 5.1 percent of all imports."²⁶ Raw silk imported for the sole purpose of being woven by English workers—or at least workers living in England if not English by birth—saw the most startling increase, moving from £118,000 in 1622 to £175,000 in 1640 to £263,000 in the 1660s to £344,000 by the end of the century. When viewed as a whole, raw silk constituted "23–29 percent of the total value of imports."²⁷ As one might expect, the number of silk workers in England experienced a similarly rapid growth during the century. While

silk weavers had been working in England since at least the late fourteenth century, the trade was still quite small in the early years of the seventeenth century, with no more than around several hundred employed in the early 1620s. By 1666, estimates place the number at approximately 40,000.

Such local production failed to stem the tide of foreign import of silk products. Gerald B. Hertz writes that “700,000 of fully manufactured silk goods had still been annually imported from abroad between 1685 and 1693” in spite of all of England’s efforts to manufacture silk goods in England itself.²⁸ Since England produced virtually no homegrown silk, British writers concerned with trade and commerce frequently invoked “China’s fragrant Leaf” as the prime threat posed by “foreign” products to Great Britain’s economic health. Indeed, Louis Landa even goes so far as to call silk “[p]erhaps the most objectionable of all the ‘foreign trumpery’ . . . because of the large amount imported, both raw and wrought, and because imported silk hindered the endeavors to establish a flourishing domestic silk industry.”²⁹ In response to such concerns, the British government prohibited the importation of thrown silk from France, India, and China, prohibitions that were relaxed only after 1713 and then only with heavy duties substituted for outright prohibition.³⁰

In spite of the fact that the vast majority of silk bought by English consumers during the period 1700–1740 was in fact imported from Italy and France, silk continued to be understood by eighteenth-century English consumers as the “classic . . . luxury import from Asia to Europe.”³¹ We can begin to account for silk’s association among eighteenth-century English-speaking peoples with China in particular and the East in general by looking at contemporaneous understandings of the etymology of the very word “China” and the history of silk production.³² Let me examine briefly only one relevant example: Thomas Boreman’s *A Compendious Account of the Whole Art of Breeding, Nursing, and Right Ordering of the Silk-Worm* (1733). Boreman dedicates his book “On the Management of the SILK-WORM” to “The Trustees for Establishing the Colony of *Georgia in America*.”³³ In addition to a seemingly exhaustive description of the many procedures required to produce raw silk, Boreman provides a brief preface that, among other things, offers his readers a history of silk production. In a footnote to this history, Boreman claims that “The whole countrey of *China* was antiently (as *Ptolemy* says) called *Serica*, from its abounding with Silk.”³⁴ In this way, Boreman makes silk quite literally synonymous with the country of China. At least in one of the classical languages considered by eighteenth-century British elites to be a foundation of civilized thought, the two entities—silk and China—share the same name and, at least in some sense, are

identical. This etymological footnote appears in the midst of Boreman's brief history of the origins of the cultivation of the silkworm. Boreman's narrative casts silk's origins as Eastern when he writes that "it is certain that" China and Persia "had the Knowledge of Silk very early, and were the first that propagated Silk, and reap'd the Profit and Benefit of it many hundred Years before any other Country."³⁵

Eighteenth-century European narratives of China's economic history account for another part of the reason why silk continued to be associated with the East long after the silk used by people in Great Britain came from elsewhere. British writers on trade and commerce in the period considered silk the key ingredient in China's development as an economic power. So while British advocates for the American production of silk were well aware of Great Britain's dependence on French and Italian silk, they asked their readers to look to China—rather than to Italy or France—as the model for the benefits silk production offer a country. If we are more like China in our silk production, these writers claimed, we will enhance Britain's own civilized status. So, for instance, in what Verner Crane calls "one of the most widely read of the commercial tracts of the century," Joshua Gee writes in *The Trade and Navigation of Great-Britain Considered* that "if Care was taken to cultivate and improve the raising of Silk in our *Plantations, Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania*, would produce the best of Silk."³⁶ But China, Gee reminds his readers, produces the best-quality silk and, therefore, its silk should serve as the silk to be emulated. When Gee begins to argue that Great Britain should devote vast resources to silk production, though, he bypasses a discussion of quality but invokes the very same Eastern image in order to convince his readers to support the efforts of British American silk producers. Look what silk has done, Gee insists, for its producers in China: "The vast Riches of *China* by this Manufacture [that is, the manufacture of silk in England's colonies]," Gee writes, "is sufficient to demonstrate the great Advantage therefore."³⁷

To the historical narrative and economic advantages that tied silk conceptually to the East in general and to China in particular must be added the question of the symbolic capital conferred on silk through its association with the East. Given the dramatic rise in demand for silk we can safely assume that display of this particular fabric was viewed as a desirable supplement to one's wardrobe or room. But how was the nature of that supplement understood? What would such an association have meant to eighteenth-century British consumers and/or audiences? Would silk's Easternness have signified a kind of celebrated decadence of the kind for which the Restoration became known? Would it serve as a sign of one's cul-

tural sophistication and taste? Products associated with the East Indies in general and with China in particular enjoyed considerable status in British society for more than one hundred years before the promotion of Georgia. The importance of porcelain, various kinds of textiles, and tea made “in the China fashion” gained such prominence before 1700 that Hugh Honour argues, “[b]y the end of the second half of the seventeenth century a vogue for orientalia was well established in nearly every part of Europe,” with England being particularly found of tea.³⁸ Indeed, as Honour notes, “the English conception of what eastern fabrics should, ideally, look like was sufficiently distinct by the 1640s to necessitate the instruction of eastern craftsmen in making textiles in the English ‘China fashion.’”³⁹

But as Honour and others have taught us, the “epidemic of “China-mania” that came to be known as “chinoiserie” that “attacked” England in the eighteenth century far eclipsed the “vogue for orientalia” of earlier years.⁴⁰ While chinoiserie attracted great interest across Europe, it enjoyed perhaps its greatest appeal in Great Britain, where it “reached remarkable heights of popularity.”⁴¹ Chinoiserie literally transformed the social and physical landscape of Great Britain. British gardens were remade and buildings erected in what was imagined to be the “Chinese” style; people redecorated their sitting rooms, drawing rooms, and bedrooms with furniture, wall hangings, and porcelains so that they could display their “Chinese” taste; audiences crowded into theatres to see plays purported to be about China or adaptations of plays by Chinese authors; and, of course, women and men draped themselves in gowns made of silk or simply added silk accessories to their wardrobes as a way of announcing their commitment to what they considered a distinctly “Chinese” aesthetic.

The Georgia promotional campaign occurs just prior to the period scholars consider to be the height of chinoiserie, the 1740s and 1750s. The classic texts of various kinds found during the chinoiserie period in Great Britain help produce what David Porter calls “a transformation in prevailing attitudes toward China” that, he argues, ultimately resulted in the “deflation of the cultural authority of the Chinese” by “transforming symbols of awe-inspiring cultural achievement into a motley collection of exotic, ornamental motifs.”⁴² Porter notes further that after China critics emerged during the middle years of the eighteenth century in England, “China had been transformed . . . from an unassailable seat of cultural legitimacy to a wellspring of depravity that threatened to unravel the very fabric of a well-ordered society, one enchanted viewer at a time.”⁴³ The chinoiserie movement, Porter demonstrates, “represented an explicit rejection, in the aesthetic domain, of the very principle of substantiality that had been ascribed to China.”⁴⁴

Given the way in which the promotional material casts England in relation to the East and China in particular, though, I believe the promoters sought to capitalize on at least a significant portion of their eighteenth-century British and British American audiences' understanding of references to silk products as ways of signifying one's cultural sophistication. Since objects were often, as David Porter notes, "perceived as being 'about' the place to which, however reductively, they referred"; the use of silk in one's attire or in one's furnishings was seen as a reference to Chinese culture.⁴⁵ It is for this reason that we can see that the use of such silks by British consumers "[was] intended," as Robert Leath notes, "to blend with Chinese-inspired patterns in architecture to create a single, repetitious allusion to the Chinese taste."⁴⁶ The turn to silk as a component of "chinoiserie" was associated "[w]ithin the context of the European luxury debates," Berg argues, "not with sensuality and excess, but with ethics, harmony, and virtue."⁴⁷ Europeans who gravitated towards ideas and objects associated with China did so as a way to achieve "their own aspirations to human elegance and refinement." Through the possession of silk that was associated with China, consumers, according to Berg, "sought to access levels of civilization beyond the market" even though such objects were, in fact, creations of the market itself.⁴⁸

We can see this attitude toward silk as an Eastern figure associated with the height of the refinement displayed by the most civilized of cultures in a widely read promotional piece, Samuel Wesley's 1736 "Georgia: A Poem." Wesley not only suggests that raw goods serve as signifiers of particular cultures whether they are literally produced or imported from that culture; he even goes so far as to suggest that in serving as signifiers of a culture regardless of their point of origin, raw goods also signify that entire culture's understanding of itself. He does this when he notes that the silk British women currently wear is something about "Which Asia boasts" and puts "Eastern Pride" on display (1. 180). We must remember as we read these lines what Wesley takes pains to point out elsewhere in the poem: the silk from which British women's gowns have been made up to this point more often comes from Italy or France than from China, and a significant proportion of that silk has been woven into its final form by workers somewhere on the British Isles. The feeling of "pride" that Wesley attributes to some mystical "East" when British women wear silk comes not from the knowledge of people in the "East" that objects grown and/or manufactured in their region are on display in Great Britain but, rather, from the fact that objects symbolically associated with the East—objects that are "Eastern" regardless of their place of production—are on display in Great Britain.

Wesley classifies what he calls “Eastern” cultures as the source of British aesthetic standards. He does this when he substitutes Georgian silks for the silks women in Great Britain have been wearing that, at least according to Wesley, carry the East’s seemingly unmistakable symbolic mark. So it is, Wesley tells us, that prior to the production of raw silk in Georgia, “Asia” could “boast” and “Eastern Pride” would be on display when English women wore silk that made them beautiful. With the introduction of Georgia silk, though, “all the Beauties” of England would now “owe” their aesthetic qualities to “home-wrought Silks” of Britain’s American colony (1. 170). Even when Georgia’s silks replace those associated with the East adorning British bodies, the East remains the standard by which those Georgian garments are judged. For the products coming from this new colony will be considered an aesthetic success only insofar as they can be said to “emulate the Chint’s alluring Dye” (1. 182). Since Wesley never suggests that Georgia will replace the East as the place with which silk is symbolically associated even when the silk itself does come from there—he never suggests, in other words, that eventually silk will become a “Western” or “American” or “British” or “Georgia” product as opposed to an “Eastern” or “Chinese” one—the poem leaves us with the impression that this explicitly Eastern aesthetic will remain the standard used to judge silk’s aesthetic value each time one wears or in any way displays silk as a way of demonstrating one’s civilized status. Indeed, by casting Georgia’s silk as gaining its status through the continual emulation of those associated with the East, the poem sets up a structure in which any display of silk ceaselessly reproduces the East’s status as the final arbiter of aesthetic value. Emulation, in this case at least, does not lead to the displacement of the values to be emulated but, rather, to their continual and seemingly never-ending reinscription as the superior set of values by which one will always be judged.

This structure of continual emulation establishes an aesthetic hierarchy that ensures the East’s superiority to Great Britain on all aesthetic matters. There exists, according to Wesley at least, a subtle but unmistakable contest between Great Britain and the East for the right to clothe women in material that can be categorized as aesthetically pleasing. It is, after all, “With skillful China’s richest Damask” that Great Britain must “vie” (1. 162). In this way, Wesley places Britain in an aesthetic as much as an economic competition in which the “world’s” gaze on and subsequent evaluation of women’s clothing serves as the ultimate arbiter of a whole culture’s place within a hierarchy of civilized nations dating back in time. This is a battle Great Britain will always lose, though, so long as the East remains the standard to be emulated. For even once the “British Loom” transforms raw

silk imported from Georgia into beautiful garments so that British hands assume full responsibility for the production of the most prized aesthetic goods, even when the “Beauties” of Great Britain “owe” the appeal of their garments to labor performed entirely by British subjects, even then the standards they are emulating—the standards with which they are in competition—provide the basis for judging aesthetic value (1. 179).

The subservience to Eastern standards and the fear of the consequences of circulating such a distinctly “foreign” product even more widely within the imagined social body of Great Britain led some of those connected with the promotion of Georgia to go so far as to Westernize silk’s genealogy. Boreman, for one, undermined any genealogical claims that contemporaneous Chinese or Persian—or other contemporaneous Eastern—cultures might make on silk by framing his remarks on its origins with the possibility that, in fact, Noah might have been the first to “take notice” of silk since he is said to have “propagated [silkworms] in *China*, where he is supposed to have settled after the Flood.”⁴⁹ In doing so, the work attempts to give credit for the introduction of silk to the East to a biblical character to whom the colonists would have claimed genealogical connection over the Chinese.

Boreman does not rest with references to Biblical figures from whom Europeans in general and English people in particular claim to be specially chosen descendants. He pulls out all the stops in his attempt to show that in spite of its Eastern associations, silk remains fundamentally tied to English people’s own narratives of development. As one final piece of evidence on top of all the others, Boreman offers a plate that depicts “two Monks who first brought Silk-worms Eggs into Europe” as the visual authorization of his story of the historical movement of silkworm production from East to West. Boreman concludes his discussion of the history of silk’s production in the East in China and Persia by referring specifically to the image of these Monks. In so doing, Boreman casts the production of silk in China and Persia as simply the inevitable precursor to the introduction of silk into the West. The images serve, in other words, as a visual culmination of a well-known narrative of the movement of culture Westward, an implied reference to *translatio studii*.



BOREMAN’S WORK takes us right up to the period in which Kirkpatrick wrote his poem, and we are now prepared to turn our attention to Kirkpatrick’s verse. Given the rather obscure nature of the poem and its author, even to scholars of British American literature, we must put off our analysis of “An Address to James Oglethorpe” just a little longer so that we can

provide some brief background on the poet, the context in which the work came into print, and the imagined and actual audiences for the poem. Born in Ireland, he studied at the University of Edinburgh without earning a degree and, in 1717, emigrated to South Carolina. He practiced medicine while living in Charlestown until he left for London in 1742. Kirkpatrick came to the attention of British officials when, in 1738 during an outbreak of smallpox in South Carolina, he sought to stem the epidemic by administering inoculations. This medical success prompted George Townshend, Commander of the Fleet in British America, to suggest that Kirkpatrick's medical talents could be more usefully employed in London. His *Analysis of Inoculation* was published in London in 1754, and the work earned him great renown throughout medical communities across Europe.⁵⁰ He died in 1770. Before he achieved fame as a physician, though, Kirkpatrick published several poems, at least one of which, *The Sea-Piece* (London, 1750), which David Shields calls "one of the major works of colonial American belles-lettres," suggests he hoped to become the British laureate of empire.⁵¹ Indeed, Shields contends that *The Sea-Piece* represents "the most thoroughgoing and ambitious meditation on Britain's maritime destiny composed by any eighteenth-century poet."⁵² It was, he writes, "the British American testament to the empire of the seas."⁵³

"An Address to James Oglethorpe" was first published in the February 3, 1733, issue of the *South Carolina Gazette*.⁵⁴ The poem occupied approximately three-quarters of the first page of the issue, and it was followed by, among other items, notes devoted to "FOREIGN AFFAIRS," as well as notices of lists of people arriving and departing on local ships, and advertisements for salt, horses, and "Field Negroes." Its appearance in the *South Carolina Gazette* was, it seems clear, part of Georgia's promotional efforts, in this case, to enlist the support of residents of the colony in the campaign to found a British colony to their immediate south. Given that one of the purposes of Georgia would be to serve as a defense against incursions from Spanish colonies even further to the south, some South Carolinians were, to some extent at least, initially happy to offer their support.

Although it was not published in Georgia—indeed, Georgia had no press until 1763—we can be confident that at least some people in both Georgia and other colonies read the poem.⁵⁵ We can be confident of this, first of all, because the poem was reprinted one year later in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*. The *Gazette* takes note of the poem's colonial origins when it points out that it was first "published in [the] *South-Carolina Gazette*" even as it tries to indulge in a little light-hearted intracolony rivalry by saying the poem will "supply the place of Foreign News."⁵⁶ To be sure,

the pun demonstrates that the figurative possibility existed for imagining one British American colony as “foreign” to another such colony, but the fact that the poem’s inclusion does not, in fact, take the place of foreign news in that week’s edition of the paper but, on the contrary, reduces the amount of space devoted to such news in previous editions of the paper suggests an alternate reading. The *Gazette’s* editors’ prefatory remarks indicate that by literally occupying “the place” in the paper usually reserved for news from abroad, the poem will “supply pleasure to most of [the *Gazette’s*] Readers.” That is, material focused on colonial British American issues, even if from another colony, produces pleasure in colonial British American readers.

If its appearance in the *Gazette* demonstrates that the poem enjoyed at least some readership within the colonies, its appearance in the April 1733 issue of the *Gentleman’s Magazine*—that is, just two months after its initial appearance in South Carolina—only increases the likelihood that the poem had readers not only in Georgia but elsewhere in British America.⁵⁷ The *Gentleman’s Magazine* enjoyed a wide circulation not only in Great Britain but throughout the American colonies as well.⁵⁸ But if the poem was initially presented by a British American for an imagined audience of other British Americans, the editors of the *Gentleman’s Magazine* frame the poem in such a way that only enhances its status as a specifically colonial product. Read this work, they seem to ask their readers, differently from the other works of poetry in our magazine. The magazine’s organization and titling of these colonial poems encourages its readers to treat Kirkpatrick’s work as a distinctly American response to specifically British leaders visiting the colonies. So, the front page of the magazine lists the poems together—unlike all the other matter listed under “Poetry” for that issue—as “Of Ld. Baltimore and Mr. Oglethorpe.” The table of contents gives “A Poem to James Oglethorpe, Esq.; Georgia” as the title of the Kirkpatrick poem and “—To Ld. Baltimore in Maryland” as the title of the other poem.⁵⁹ When it comes time to provide some context for the poems themselves, the editors choose to give Kirkpatrick’s work the title “An Address to James Oglethorpe, Esq.; on his settling the Colony of Georgia,” but without the Latin that preceded the poem in its South Carolina version. In the right-hand column on the very same page immediately following Kirkpatrick’s poem, the editors list Lewis’s poem as “A Description of Maryland, extracted from a Poem, entitled, Carmen Seculare, addressed to Ld. Baltimore, Proprietor of that Province, now there,” then go on to explain that it is by “Mr. Lewis, Author of the Beautiful Poem inserted in our 4th Number, entitled, A Journey from Patapsko to Annapolis.”⁶⁰

While the *Gentleman's Magazine* editors might have framed the poem in such a way as to ask their readers to read it as a specifically colonial product, the poem itself does not limit itself to what might be classified as peculiarly or distinctly or uniquely colonial issues. Indeed, the figure of silk and other products from the so-called East to which the poem draws our attention associates it with some of the most hotly debated topics of 1730s England. For when the poem was published, concerns over the importation of “luxury” items, such as but by no means limited to silk, into Great Britain had reached their peak as “the debate as to the meaning and value-laden status of luxury came into prominence.”⁶¹ Contemporaneous debates over the value of “luxury” combined with the fascination with chinoiserie that overtook Great Britain at the same time, and that contemporaries linked directly with the problems and possibilities offered by luxury items, thus place, I would argue, the Georgia pamphlets in general and Kirkpatrick’s poem in particular in a different discursive context than previous works extolling the virtues of English efforts to produce American silk.⁶² Kirkpatrick’s poem offers a rather unusual perspective on the overlapping rhetorical battles fought over luxury items in general and over chinoiserie in particular.⁶³ I classify it as unusual for the following reason. This poem was written by a British American while living on the very landmass Europeans hoped would produce the luxuries that serve as the poem’s focus. The poem, in other words, offers a view of the taste and refinement conferred on people by certain Eastern objects, but it offers this view from a spot on the globe where refined objects are produced rather than from a place where, at least according to eighteenth-century environmentalist theories, they can be truly appreciated or even understood.

We should be clear here. What we have seen so far in this chapter is not meant to suggest that Kirkpatrick’s simple interest in and focus on silk in particular or on luxury items in general distinguishes his poem from the work of his contemporaries. As Louis Landa pointed out long ago, the lady of taste dressed in silk had become a stock figure by the 1730s. In a pair of essays investigating the image of the silkworm in British literature produced in the early eighteenth century, Landa demonstrates the many uses to which a wide array of poets and prose writers from the period, including but hardly limited to such canonical figures as Alexander Pope, Jonathan Swift, and James Thomson, “assimilated [the image of the silkworm] into their works.” He further contends that the use of what Pope calls the “busy little Animal” in this literature was, first of all, “peculiarly related to the fine lady,” which, in turn, “deeply embedded” the very image of silk “in a whole cluster of ideas.”⁶⁴ Among the ideas Landa mentions is “the fabulous wealth

of the Indies,” which, in turn, is associated by British writers of the period with “thoughts of greatness and magnificence.”⁶⁵

So while Kirkpatrick’s focus on the figure of silk as a crucial component of the colony’s value to Great Britain is a further testament to the importance of this figure in the promotion of Georgia, it does not distinguish the poem from other contemporary works. Kirkpatrick does do something none of the poets Landa mentions do, though, when, while establishing the frame to draw our attention to the colony’s potential as a place for silk production, he collapses any geographical distinction between East and West. He does this when he literally substitutes the name for a region in the East for a British American colony when he refers to Georgia in the second line of his poem as “India”: “While generous O-g-P’s unwearied Pain / Wakes up a Muse from India’s savage Plain” (1. 1–2).⁶⁶ Why cast America as the East—making it, presumably, more foreign than it has to be—rather than try to argue, as so many other contemporary writers did, that British subjects in the New World were transforming America into British soil? If Kirkpatrick wants his readers to think of Georgia as an ideal environment for the production of silk, why not cast it as China rather than India?

We find that when we investigate the possible meanings of the word “India” for Kirkpatrick’s readers we see that the multiple, sometimes seemingly mutually exclusive meanings “India” would have signified in 1732 work precisely to Kirkpatrick’s rhetorical advantage. First of all, we should remember that the word was more often used to refer to what was then an ill-defined region and/or regions of the world than to the current political entity that, of course, did not exist when Kirkpatrick wrote. But it is not simply that the reference for the literal location of a place known as “India” resists being identified with any precision in the real world because no such political entity existed at the time or because eighteenth-century English speakers had yet to agree on just what specific boundaries would demarcate the land known as “India.” While the overwhelming usage pattern of the day associated India not with America but with regions in what British people would have called the “East” in general and most especially with the East India trade in particular, the word carries within it a history of references to America. The word “India” contains for Kirkpatrick’s readers, in other words, the sublimation of West into East that occurred when Europeans “discovered” America while looking for the Indies. This extraordinary geographic error—of Europeans thinking they had found a part of one huge landmass when, in fact, they had stumbled upon an entirely separate body of land—continued to be reproduced in English until well after Kirkpatrick’s poem. That is, writers quite often continued to refer to one continent,

America, with a word that designated a completely separate one well after the disjunction between signifier and signified became known.

Kirkpatrick's use of a word designating a region in the East as a way of referring to specifically American soil stands out because it defies the overwhelming usage pattern of Kirkpatrick's time. While one can still find isolated examples from the period of references to America as India, for the most part the practice had ended by the 1730s. To be sure, the colonies were often referred to as the "West Indies" or even "West Indian" and "West India," but the term "India" alone was almost exclusively reserved for references to what we would now refer to as East Asia. In going back to an older usage, Kirkpatrick can use etymology to, as it were, have his cake and eat it too. He can claim to be referring to America while, at the same time, asking his reading to subsume one space on the globe into the completely separate space that is, quite importantly, more closely associated with the products Kirkpatrick wants his readers to associate with Georgia.

Aside from benefiting from the geographic ignorance registered in the word's history, "India" provides a set of powerful associations that work like magic to advance the conceptual and commercial associations that Georgia promotional material in general sought to make real. Kirkpatrick's decision to refer to America as "India" does all this while allowing the greatest amount of associative flexibility. For, as a casual glance at the OED will demonstrate, "India" might very well in Kirkpatrick's time have been intended to make reference "allusively [to] a source of wealth," and the word served in other cases as a specific reference to silk produced in India. Referring to American soil as "India" calls forth images of great wealth and valuable commodities while mystifying the precise location of their production. "India" mystifies place because of the simple fact that the word "India" connotes all the things Kirkpatrick wants his readers to have in mind—America, wealth, silk, the East Indies, but also porcelain, wine, perfume, dates, and so forth—without pointing to a specific, identifiable, bounded place on the globe. So, although as we have already seen that China in particular was associated with silk (among a number of other products) in the British world of the 1730s, the range of commodities with which it was associated was more limited than was the case for the figure "India." Because "India" refers to the "East Indies" as well, and the "East Indies" includes China, Kirkpatrick is able to link India, China, and America through the use of a single word. In doing so, he is able to promote Georgia as a fertile spot for silk production while subtly suggesting that the colony's environment could produce a range of other valuable commodities as well.

Kirkpatrick goes on in the body of the poem to use this very same

associative strategy to show Eastern products literally growing in Georgia soil. In Kirkpatrick's telling, Georgia simply and literally takes the place of the East through its production of the very same raw materials associated with the East.⁶⁷ It's not that Georgia produces raw materials *like* those found in the East. Kirkpatrick's language asks us to understand Georgia's signature products to be precisely the same as those found in the East. Nor does Kirkpatrick say that Georgia will produce silk to match the quality and quantity found elsewhere in the world. He goes even further than this. Those Georgia settlers who seek silk will find "on the well examin'd Plain . . . China's fragrant Leaf" itself (1. 92). Look no more to India for its distinctive perfumes and ointments, for "the costly Balms" previously found only in "Indian Groves" in such great quantities that their precious goods drip out of them without human labor grow, too, in Georgia's "consenting Climate" (1. 93–94). One could even quench one's thirst by drinking the very berries until now found only by wandering through "*Mecca's Vale*" (1. 100).

Eastern commercial products are not the only things of the East that one finds in Georgia. The very air itself is Eastern. Kirkpatrick accomplishes this atmospheric sleight of hand by rewriting a line from a popular British poem on women's fashion. In *Clarinda*, published in London three years before Kirkpatrick's poem appeared in the *Gazette*, James Ralph writes that "*Arabia* breathes its spicy Gale" so that British women's bodies, through the perfume made—or supposedly made—with Eastern goods, will have enticing body odor.⁶⁸ One might say that Britain's merchants breathe "Arabia's Gale" so that women might have the products they are said to desire. As Laura Brown points out, in Ralph's poem it is "as if navigation, trade, and expansion are all arranged solely for the delectation and profit of womenkind" so that women "bear responsibility" for "the systematic, bureaucratic, piratical, or mercenary dimensions of imperial expansion."⁶⁹ Kirkpatrick's subtle alteration of the line fundamentally shifts not only who breathes Arabia's air but also and even more importantly the geographic location of the air. British laborers are now breathing this Arabian air, which can only mean that somehow Arabian air exists in Georgia as well as Arabia. Or perhaps another way of putting this would be to say that, according to Kirkpatrick at least, one could speak of the air of Arabia as if it were indistinguishable from, one and the same, literally interchangeable with American air. So whereas in the Ralph version the poem suggests that British merchants' breathing of Arabian air represents a sacrifice or excessive labor done on behalf of those women who, it is claimed, crave the latest fashions, in Kirkpatrick's version British subjects consume such Arabian air

“with small Pain” and, apparently, without labor.

This is a particularly important substitution given the importance of “air” to eighteenth-century notions of the environment. It would be safe to say that for those of Kirkpatrick’s generation and profession, air serves as the primary indicator of an environment’s habitability. As a doctor, Kirkpatrick would have known about the relationship posited between air, health, and identity. He would have learned in his readings that the quality of air differs greatly across the globe, and those same sources would have indicated that these differences could be used to account not only for the different body types to be found throughout the globe, as well as the diseases associated with specific regions, but also for the differences, at least to some extent, in cultural practices one finds in the different parts of the world. The air one breathed was often held largely responsible for the way one behaved, in other words.

Kirkpatrick challenges such theories with a simple metaphor. The phrase does not suggest that air across the globe is precisely the same; to suggest this would be to undermine the very way in which he has sought to have his readers understand America’s value. Georgia is valuable to Great Britain not because the air everywhere is precisely the same, but because the air in Georgia is precisely the same as the air in Arabia. Difference still exists, but the difference between East and West has been collapsed in this instance so that West can literally be substituted for East. He challenges at least some of the reigning theories of the day by offering no suggestion that the breathing of Arabian air by British subjects poses any threat to Great Britain.

Kirkpatrick’s position on the causes of identity formation differs from the standard understanding held by most other early-eighteenth-century European elites. It is entirely consistent, however, with the position on such issues put forth in other parts of this poem. Let us examine just one example. Kirkpatrick has the character of Oglethorpe say that King George “calls the Wretch of every Clime his Son” after “Wretches” “run” to the “Isle of Heroes” (65–66). In using “Clime” as a figure for nation, Oglethorpe suggests that George’s powers are so great that his simple call will be able to overcome the power of environmental theory when he incorporates people from every climate on the globe into the British family. This simple act of voicing, of calling, indicates the power of the monarch’s voice to transform or overcome the environmental theories.

Far from posing a threat to Britain’s sense of itself as British, this Arabian Georgia actually expands the British bloodline. Georgia works to transform people from countries around the globe into happy British sub-

jects. Indeed, Kirkpatrick goes so far as to suggest that in the opening up of Georgia to British settlement, the English bloodline gains perpetual life and literally alters genealogies. The work of Georgia's settlers, Kirkpatrick claims, will produce "an endless Race" drawn from "the Wretch of every Clime" who owe their allegiance to the British nation (1. 73; 66). Kirkpatrick uses "Race" here not in the modern biological sense. He does not suggest that Georgia will produce a new category of people who are somehow distinctly British and not British at the same time. Instead, he uses "race" here in the sense in which it was commonly used in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as a figure for a family line. He makes this clear when he refers to those non-British peoples who willingly emigrate to Georgia as members of King George's immediate family. Literally every "Wretch" who comes to Georgia from abroad becomes George's own "Son."

At the same time that it perpetually expands the British race, Georgia works to limit the growth of competing races. Kirkpatrick indicates this when he uses geographic boundaries as figures for what he refers to as "racial" ones but which we would understand as "bloodlines." "Iberia's motley Race a bound shall know," Kirkpatrick has Oglethorpe announce in the poem, when Georgia's "happily increasing Band" of settlers "replenish the inviting Land" between the Savannah and Altamaha rivers (1. 49; 47; 48). Given that the poem focuses a good deal of its reader's attention on the production of the seemingly distinct category of geographic lines used to set boundaries between antagonistic political entities, the poem's use of "line" in reference to social relations only encourages the confusion of any distinction between the kinds of boundaries erected to separate geographical entities and those used to distinguish social communities.

But in spite of the challenge to such dominant environmental theories offered by the poem, Kirkpatrick remains fearful of giving up on environmentalism entirely. We see this in the way the poem consistently displaces the British American colonists—and, to some extent, British people in general—from the land in which they live. Britain might claim Georgia as its possession, British people might live on its soil, but the poem's language consistently draws a boundary between British things and American soil. This distinction begins in the origin narrative the poem offers in its opening lines. The poem comes to life when Oglethorpe's "pain . . . Wakes up a Muse from India's savage Plain." Lest we see this "pain" as American-born, the narrator quickly assigns it an English birth. For these pains were "form'd" when Oglethorpe "explor'd" the "Horrors, Dungeons" to be found in English prisons in the 1720s (1. 16; 17). Oglethorpe not only "Caught" the "Wretches Woe, and Mourners' Sighs" he found in the jails; he "makes"

the pains of the “Distress’d” he found there “his own” (1. 12; 12; 10; 10).

Kirkpatrick very carefully avoids any link between these pains and American soil. Whether one construes these “pains” as emotional or bodily or some combination of the two, they can be said to awaken the Muse but they are never said to directly touch her “unform’d” ground (1. 5). Instead, Kirkpatrick suggests it is the “humane Design” developed by Oglethorpe to alleviate these pains that are said to come into contact with the explicitly non-British Muse (1. 3). For it is this “Design” that is said to have “Warm’d” the Muse and that serves to “inspire” the poem to follow (1. 3).

Oglethorpe is not alone in being distanced from the very continent that establishes his place among the greats of British history. For in the process of magically transforming Georgia into India, the structure and language of the poem simultaneously distances the poem’s own readers from the land about which it speaks. Thus Kirkpatrick changes his British American readers, who are already separated geographically from their homeland, into spectators of the land on which they do live. In this way, readers in South Carolina are placed in the very same position with regard to the production of East Indian goods in Georgia as that of readers in, say, London.⁷⁰ The poem leads us to this conclusion in the following way. First, we must remember that the poem was written by a South Carolinian and published in a periodical whose circulation was limited to colonial British America. While the *Gentleman’s Magazine* was read on both sides of the Atlantic, no evidence exists that anyone in the colonies imagined that colonial American papers would enjoy a readership in Great Britain. The poem’s imagined audience was thus surely colonial British Americans. Second, the poem, we should remember, asks readers to adopt the same position as its speaker—that is, we are to view the scenes from the perspective of the narrative voice of the poem—who goes out of his way to avoid placing himself in any particular place on the globe, including from the perspective of “India’s savage Plain.” Given all this, we can reasonably conclude that the poem works to distance its original readers from the place in which they are reading. In going to such elaborate lengths to frame this very poem as speaking from the position of a colonist, the editors of the *Gentleman’s Magazine* merely underscore the way in which the poem itself tries to obscure the geographic position of its speaker. In steadfastly placing the speaker in no particular place, Kirkpatrick allows his colonial reader to separate him- or herself from his or her “foreign” surroundings in America. Other colonial writers of the period adopted a strategy that called forth their place in the New World as a way of authorizing their claims about British America. In choosing to position his speaker and readers in no place, then, Kirkpatrick specifically

rejects the colonial position in favor of a position no place and, in the process, distances his speaker and his readers from the very surroundings that allow for the claims that Georgia can be a British East Indies.

The colonists, it turns out, are no different from the King in their relation to American land. The monarch himself, the poem assures us, ventures no deeper than the surface of America's soil. We see this when Kirkpatrick writes, "*George's* name adorns the teeming Ground" (1. 34). An adornment, of course, beautifies, but it does so by adding a quality or set of qualities on top of an existing object. An adornment does not, in other words, penetrate the object it adorns, but merely supplements that object. In this way, Kirkpatrick asks us to understand *George's* name as something added on top of or as covering American soil but specifically not penetrating the very soil it serves to name. Figuring *George's* name as an "adornment" thus establishes a safe difference between the monarch and the land that bears his name.

In asking us to think of the naming of Georgia in this way, Kirkpatrick makes *George's* name bear the same relation to the American soil as that of silk to British women. I say this because "adorn" is the verb contemporaneous poets frequently choose when speaking of British women wearing silk. Samuel Wesley claims, for instance, that when Georgia's silks "adorn'd" British women those women "shall shine compleat" (1. 185). In using the very same word to characterize the relation a name bears to the land it nominates as the fabric from which an item of clothing is made bears to the person wearing that item, Kirkpatrick effectively asks us to understand an imperial act—the naming of lands whose legitimacy rests solely on the military power to defend all challengers, including the native inhabitants of the land—in terms of aesthetics. *George's* name enhances the value of the land in the same way a fine piece of clothing enhances the value of the person being clothed: both become more beautiful to anyone observing them. Such aesthetization of imperial acts hides the violence inherent in such acts while shifting the focus of attention to a question of beauty. Saying that *George's* name "adorns" the land leads us to question—if we question at all—the nature of the beauty rather than the violent processes that led to the naming in the first place.

If equating the relation that *George's* name bears to American soil hides imperial acts under the cover of aesthetics, it does so while subtly acknowledging a hierarchy of values. Why would American soil need to be "adorned" if it were not in some way deficient? What does America lack that makes such adornment necessary? In conferring aesthetic status on what would otherwise be a suspect or at least unimpressive object on its own, the act of granting the colony the name "*Georgia*" shows that the

name of the British king has greater aesthetic status than the American continent. Of course, the same logic applies to Georgia silk “adorning” British women. Why, after all, do they need such “adornments” in the first place? What lack does such adornment imply, and what kind of hierarchy of values does such a system suggest? In the case of silk, the logic of supplemental adornment for British women implies that as objects these women are inferior to silk, a product long associated with the East. Georgia promotional material thus implies that British women must wear clothing associated with the East in order to make up for their own inadequacies. Just as George enhances the aesthetic value of American soil without penetrating that soil and, in the process, putting his own status at risk, British women can enjoy the aesthetic enhancement silk confers on them without risking their own status as British subjects. Silk, after all, remains on the surface; it does not penetrate the skin.⁷¹

Kirkpatrick challenges the very hierarchy of values that the need for George’s “adornment” of the American continent exposes, even as it relies on the figure of British women as the representative for a lack of refinement on the part of the culture as a whole. For while its promoters cast Georgia as a conservative project that would serve as, in Jack Greene’s words, “a mirror or counterimage that would stand as both a reaffirmation of old values and a repudiation of the baser tendencies then rampant in British life,” the guiding assumptions that give meaning to the way Kirkpatrick’s poem envisions the colony’s success operate on a very different set of values than the conservative tenets expressed by the colony’s promoters.⁷² We can see Kirkpatrick’s challenge to these conservative values when he offers a definition of what success would look like for the colony. At the conclusion of the poem, he gives us a vision of Georgia that will allow us “to see the Work compleat” (1. 80). Kirkpatrick’s anaphoric use of “Till” to begin lines 81 and 83 poses a variety of challenges to standard eighteenth-century aesthetic and social hierarchies.

’Till *Georgia’s* silks on *Albion’s* Beauties shine,
Or gain new Lustre from the *Royal Line*;
’Till from the sunny Hills the Vines display
Their various Berries to the gilded Day;

In this passage, Kirkpatrick’s use of the coordinating conjunction “Or” equates British women whose status derives solely from their aesthetic qualities with people whose birth confers on them royal status. Georgia silks serve as the sole link between these two figures of decidedly different

status, at least according to conventional wisdom, and in bringing them together in this way work to break down the differences by casting them as equal indicators. Georgia's work will be complete when "either" England's beauties wear that silk or members of the royal family do.

By linking the second of these two pairs of lines with the first pair through anaphora, Kirkpatrick uses the collapse of social hierarchies enacted in the first two lines as a prelude to his erosion of the difference between the relative values afforded social and natural displays in eighteenth-century British society. For the anaphora extends the vision of the completion of Georgia's work that Kirkpatrick offers here beyond the world of elite British society into the carefully cultivated natural world British settlers hope to create in Georgia. The anaphora challenges any preconceived hierarchies the reader may have about the relative value of these two very different kinds of displays. According to Kirkpatrick, then, the simple display of American foodstuffs in their natural environment is equally valuable a signifier of Georgia's as the display of a product long associated with the aristocracy and high fashion, silk, by British women who are understood to occupy the highest social and aesthetic ranks. As a result the "display" of Georgia's "Vines" serves equally as a sign of Georgia's success as the "shine" one might see when looking at British women wearing silk from Georgia. In categorizing them in the same way, Kirkpatrick collapses any distinction between the value of women's dress as an aesthetic object that displays a culture's sophistication and the simple existence of raw materials in their natural environment. The product of British labor in America becomes equally a matter of display as the social finery of dress by British women and British royalty.

In challenging the conventional hierarchy of values that elevates royal blood over the purely aesthetic and displays of taste by fashionable women over the mere appearance of foodstuffs in their natural environment, vision serves as the fundamental arbiter of success in each instance. Our evaluations of Georgia, Kirkpatrick tells us, should be based on what the eye can see. When the products of Georgia can be classified as objects upon which one can gaze, Georgia's work will be complete. We will be able to *see* when Georgia completes its work. Georgia will be a success when "*Georgia's silks on Albion's Beauties shine,*" when the colony's "sunny Hills the Vines display," when "pleasant Olives shine," and when "*Hesperian Apples show*" themselves to the almonds growing nearby (1. 85; 88). The work will be complete in Georgia when people in England *see* British women wearing silks made from Georgia's silkworms; when the berries growing in the colony's vineyards become visible; when the wide variety of fruits the colony's

settlers will tend can be seen.

The distinctiveness of Kirkpatrick's focus in his closing lines specifically on the visibility of exchangeable goods growing in America becomes clearer when we compare it with the way Wesley closes his roughly contemporaneous poem. The two poems use such similar language that "Georgia" reads at points like an echo of the earlier poem. Where Kirkpatrick describes the region of Georgia's settlement as a "savage Plain," Wesley labels it a "naked Plain"; Georgia possesses a "teeming Ground" in the *South Carolina Gazette*, whereas Georgia itself "teems" in Wesley's work; Oglethorpe speaks of the new colonists as an "increasing Band"; Wesley has Georgia's leader cast those same colonists as a "chosen Band"; where Kirkpatrick claims that "*Albion's Beauties . . . gain new Lustre from the Royal Line*," Wesley writes that Georgia's silk will "add new Lustre to the Royal Maid"; Kirkpatrick uses Georgia to envision a British colonial future in which "the wealthy Lands increase," while Wesley speaks in more general terms of "new Colonies" that show King George's "Domains increase."⁷³ The most conceptually significant similarity occurs when Wesley, too, casts Georgia's "success" in terms of female display. Georgia's work will be "compleat," Wesley's narrator tells us, when "Admiring Strangers . . . view" British women of high social rank "adorn'd" in Britain's own "home-wrought Silks" (1. 185; 187; 185; 190). The "dazzle" and "Splendor" produced in those strangers' "Eyes" when they see the "Product" of Georgia on "each sweet Form" of British women will "aid" these women's "Conquest" of suitors that, in turn, will "increase" rather than simply maintain British political dominance throughout the "World" (1. 186; 188; 187; 195; 184; 195; 195; 205).

But whereas Kirkpatrick's poem asks us to envision the "completion" of the colonial project as the moment when the more refined aesthetic taste that Georgia silk allows British women to display makes, at the very same moment, the exchangeable goods of America visible to the world, Wesley connects the display of Georgia silk on British women to the extension of royal power. Once Georgia's silks "aid" British women in their "Conquest" of foreign suitors, Wesley writes,

thus maintain

The steady Tenor of your George's Reign;
And let th' admiring World One Sovereign know,
Of Good all studious, and without a Foe;
With such high Worth let Him the Age adorn,
And call forth other Nations yet unborn;
Still by new Colonies enjoy the Stores

Of other Climates, and remoter Shores;
 And see unenvy'd his Domains increase,
 The work of Wisdom, and the Gifts of Peace.
 (1. 197–206)

Only after British women conquer suitors through their display of silk will the rest of the World truly know King George. In this sense, Wesley suggests that the extension of George's political power outside the British Isles to "other Climates," and "remoter Shores" than the American continent emerges out of and is produced through the aesthetic displays of British women. These displays, in turn, allow George to take the position of the object viewed—in this case, the "One Sovereign" whom all the world now "admires"—that, in the previous stanza, had been occupied by British ladies who wear American silk. Women thus become crucial to English power through their display of fine goods, but only insofar as a masculine figure almost immediately co-opts the power of display for his own political and acquisitive purposes, purposes established in the name of all British peoples. In co-opting women's power of display here, the King seems to gain women's reproductive powers as well, for it is only at this point in the poem that George gives birth to new nations when he is said to "call forth other Nations yet unborn."

How different from Kirkpatrick's vision of completion. Wesley puts a more visible monarch in precisely the same structural location where Kirkpatrick places figures celebrating the visibility of exchangeable goods produced through British labor in America. In Wesley's poem, we end with a vision of the extension of British political power produced by Georgia's goods, whereas in Kirkpatrick's poem those same goods are made equal in value to the qualities they are said to gain from their association with British people of royal birth. In the ending to his poem, Kirkpatrick relegates the usefulness of Georgia's goods to the empire at large secondary to their status as objects on display. The poem draws our attention not to the political power that results from the colonization of Georgia, then, but to the value of visibility and labor in their own right, regardless of their relation to empire.

I want to be clear in what I am trying to argue here. I am not trying to suggest that we see Kirkpatrick's poem as celebrating the aesthetic qualities of a distinctly American nature in contrast to Wesley's demonstration of how the American environment can be made to serve the purposes of British expansion across the globe so that, in effect, Kirkpatrick substitutes American nature for British monarchical power. I do not believe, in fact,

that Kirkpatrick celebrates anything that can be called a distinctly American nature here at all. Instead, Kirkpatrick's final lines celebrate the demonstration of the American environment's metonymic potential. He celebrates its ability to stand in for something that it is not. And he celebrates this metonymic characteristic of America as an aesthetic quality that is to be appreciated as a thing in and of itself, as adding to rather than paving the way for Britain's political aims. I believe it is no coincidence that we find this perspective in a poem written by a British American colonist for, at least originally, a British American audience, because it elevates America's aesthetic status to the level of noble bloodlines while disabling any critiques of the potential degenerating effects of the American environment on British bodies. How can, after all, America be said to drain British bodies of any claims they might have to civilized status if the environment they inhabit does not seem to penetrate the surface? So, for instance, while we are told that Georgia's laborers breathe the Mecca's air, we are not permitted to travel beneath the surface of those workers' skins to some imagined state of interiority. We remain, instead, on the outside, where the poem assumes we will be satisfied with the vision—and only the vision—of objects whose symbolic associations remain what they had, supposedly, always been regardless of their point of origin.

In asking us to value the aesthetic qualities of surfaces in and of themselves while steadfastly refusing to reveal what's beneath those beautiful exteriors and, at the same time, associating this particular set of values with British America in particular, the poem—wittingly or not—establishes a set of values that stand in stark contrast to those put forth by many of the period's elite writers when they imagine the impact of silk and other so-called luxury products on British society. The concern of British commentators over luxury items such as silk from the so-called East was not lost on Georgia's promoters. They understood that they might face opposition from those voices in eighteenth-century Great Britain who would see their colony as merely another means of making it even easier for people to acquire the luxury items these commentators believed threatened the very fabric of British society. The promoters had a number of direct and indirect responses to such concerns that do not precisely fit into the focus of my argument. Because the Kirkpatrick poem's praise of the aesthetic quality of American goods seems at least an indirect reference to these concerns, though, I want to investigate very briefly how the poem differs from a standard critique of luxury items made at the time that Georgia's promoters cite.

To do so, we need only look at the concluding paragraphs of one of the colony's very first promotional tracts, *Reasons for Establishing the Colony*

of Georgia.⁷⁴ Written by the colony's secretary, Benjamin Martyn, *Reasons* alludes on its final page to a poem published only a few months earlier by then-famous Alexander Pope that investigates the very problems raised by the use of wealth to purchase luxury goods such as silk.⁷⁵ Martyn invokes the "Man of Ross" character from Pope's "On the Use of Riches" as a way of positioning the colony on the conservative side in contemporaneous rhetorical battles over the value of luxury items.⁷⁶ "On the Use of Riches" portrays a British society in which people of the highest rank and social standing have become more interested in the accumulation of wealth for wealth's sake, even if this means placing their own interests over those of the nation at large. Such devotion to wealth for wealth's sake on the part of Great Britain's social elite leads Pope to have a Wizard in the poem ask us to "See Britain sunk in Lucre's sordid charms" (1. 143). The corruption that results from the desire for wealth among those who are entrusted with the rule of a nation leads to the breakdown of the social hierarchies that allow the nation to exist, so that this same Wizard proclaims: "Statesman and Patriot ply alike the Stocks, / Peeress and Butler share alike the Box" (1. 140–41). How could a brief reference to a recently published poem cast the colony as conservative on matters of luxury when Martyn devotes virtually every word prior to this in his book trying to convince his readers that Georgia could serve as a place for the production of wine, silk, olive oil, and dates, items that could hardly be called necessities?⁷⁷

As it turns out, Pope's poem works perfectly for Martyn's purposes. "On the Uses of Riches" does not eschew wealth or even the display of wealth so much as advocate for its proper use and display. Pope allows those in power the "Splendor" such wealth can allow, asking only that they "balance" such displays with ones of "Charity" (1. 217–19). Similarly, Martyn asks that his readers aim only to "be Beneficent in some Degree," a state he contends "[e]very man" can attain, rather than fully or thoroughly or entirely or completely devoted to charitable acts. He doesn't ask his readers, in other words, to give all their wealth to charity or to avoid all displays of those luxury items they have been able to buy.

For Martyn as for Pope, then, wealth and luxury in and of themselves pose no fundamental threat to Great Britain. The two part company, though, when Pope casts the fundamental danger facing Britain's social structure in linguistic terms, and it is the terms in which Pope casts the fundamental problem the poem addresses that I think bear discussion in light of Kirkpatrick's poem. Pope's narrator voices the fear that drives the poem when he has two characters wonder as they die, "Virtue! and Wealth! what are ye but a name?" (1. 328). In equating virtue with wealth

as mere signifiers, Pope's characters express their fear of the insubstantiality of the concepts that serve as the foundations for the very language that gives meaning to their lives. What if, his characters ask, no transcendental signifieds exist to which these signifiers point? What if they are only words whose meanings derive not from their correspondence to ideas, concepts, and values that exist outside and independent of language but, rather, from within the signifying system itself? This vision of the problem as a fundamentally linguistic one explains the different kinds of images Pope uses to figure wealth and virtue. Most commentators agree, for instance, that paper serves as the figure for wealth in the poem, and, as we might expect from the linguistic way Pope characterizes the problem with which the poem wrestles, we will hardly be surprised to find that the poet consistently casts paper money as being without substance or ground. Paper-credit "lend[s] Corruption lighter wings to fly!" as, like a leaf, it allows it to "scatter to and fro / Our Fates and Fortunes, as the winds shall blow" (1. 70–76).⁷⁸ Virtue, meanwhile, literally "fill'd the space" where one would normally find the "Name" on the record of the life of the Man of Ross, Pope's exemplary character.

It is precisely the same kind of insubstantiality, of surfaces without depth, that Kirkpatrick's poem celebrates as a sign not merely of the success of Georgia but, indeed, as a quality to be celebrated on its own terms. Whereas Pope casts the triumph of the metonymic, where paper money gains its value through its relation to gold in a figurative system, as a threat to the very foundations of Britain's social system, Kirkpatrick envisions the very same kind of metonymic system, in which America substitutes for the East that it is, in fact, not, as absolutely crucial to the continuing health and reproduction of that very same social system. Pope casts the move from paper money to gold and the accompanying desire for luxurious items as a threat to the very foundations of what constitutes the civilized in the first place, while Kirkpatrick's poem imagines the authority that provides the basis for any nation to claim "civilized" status as fundamentally metonymic. Civilized status depends for Kirkpatrick on displays of objects, items, behaviors, and so forth that demonstrate that status. Great Britain enters the realm of the most elite of civilized nations through the display of external surfaces, through the display of objects whose depths seem unimportant and/or irrelevant to the point at hand. We can only conclude, then, that this poem wants us to understand the things that demonstrate a nation's status among the civilized communities of the world as mere adornments whose interiorities are irrelevant. These civilizing adornments, in turn, lead the reader to see that in order to be something that it is currently not, that

is, civilized, Great Britain must become something other than what it currently is. In such a system in which one's status derives from one's performance, as it were, on the world stage, what could be more valuable than a place whose significance derives from its ability to stand in for some other place that it is explicitly not?

In such a world, though, where performance counts for so much, the American environment that we have often said was celebrated by British American colonists for its distinctiveness, its differences from those they had previously known, was, at least in the case of this poem about Georgia, valued for precisely the opposite reasons. America gains its value in this promotional pitch through a structure reminiscent of metonymy. Like metonymy, according to which a word gains its meaning from its common and/or historical association with some other object, event, or concept, America derives its value from silk's association with some other place, the East in general and China in particular. In this way, Georgia's promoters value America for what might be called its "figurative" dimension rather than for some unique or peculiar quality of the place that points to its having some essence that distinguishes it in some fundamental way from other places. Georgia is valuable because it is like other places. At the same time, Georgia's value stems from its explicitly not being China or the East, since if it were, it goes without saying, Britain would have a much more difficult time reaping the extraordinary economic and cultural benefits from it that Georgia's promoters foresee.

If we think of the poem, then, as casting America's value in metonymic terms, we might see the colonial writer as writing from a location whose value derives from its likeness to other, presumably inherently or essentially more valuable locations. This way of understanding the position from which at least this particular colonial British American poet writes would seem to bear some similarities to the position of the colonial and postcolonial writer that scholars in colonial British American literary studies and eighteenth-century British literary studies have recently begun to investigate.⁷⁹ In the way this colonial or postcolonial scenario is most often presented, the colonial or postcolonial writer is cast as writing from a set of values and conceptions that are borrowed—or perhaps even imposed upon him or her—from his now-forsaken homeland. Thus, we tend to cast British American colonial writers as endlessly pining after British scenes, British places, and British forms even as a radically different continent exists at their very fingertips.

This scenario certainly applies to some extent in the case of the promoters of Georgia, but I think America's metonymic status as a suitable

substitute for the East raises some provocative issues. For in this case, at least, the more prized location is pointedly not the colonial writer's homeland. Instead, the East occupies the position in this structure of the place to be emulated, of the transcendent signified that seems to provide the ultimate source of value. To be sure, the value of the East on which these works draw comes from Great Britain in particular and from Europe more broadly, but this imported value system does not place Britain at the top of the cultural hierarchy. In fact, Georgia's promoters cast the East—what commentators in the twenty-first century often refer to as the “third world” or, more recently, “developing world”—as superior to Great Britain in some rather fundamental areas including, it would seem, as the very picture of a thoroughly civilized, sophisticated society. In serving as a key figure in remaking Great Britain into what it is not, then, this poem quite pointedly and explicitly asks us to imagine America's value in relation to what it classifies as “Chinese” and/or “Eastern” standards and objects rather than in terms of either the distinctive products to be found in the American environment or some resemblance to the mother country of Great Britain. Instead, the poem uses figures it links to the East to ask readers to judge its success by its ability to display its resemblance to things which are not unique to it.