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Jacob Sider Jost
Dickinson College

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DAVID HUME, HISTORY PAINTER

BY JACOB SIDER JOST

Is David Hume an anatomist or a painter?⁹ Hume scholars will recognize what the answer to this question is supposed to be: in a letter to Francis Hutcheson discussing the unpublished manuscript of the *Treatise of Human Nature*, Hume identifies himself as a metaphysical anatomist, who discovers the “most secret Springs & Principles” of the mind or body, rather than a moral painter, who describes “the Grace & Beauty of its actions.” “I imagine it impossible to conjoin these two Views,” he adds.¹ Hume was so pleased with the juxtaposition of anatomist and painter that he gave it prominent placement in his major philosophical works. The image appears in the final paragraph of the completed three-volume *Treatise* (1739–40) and is a governing motif of the first section of the *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748), where the artist is associated with “easy and humane,” and the anatomist with “accurate and abstract” philosophy.²

Hume’s plea that he be understood as an anatomist rather than a painter serves several purposes. Most obviously, it responds to or anticipates the objection that exposing the mechanisms of morality diminishes their power. If we murder to dissect, then surely virtue is the last thing that should be brought into the anatomical theater. Such a procedure is legitimate only if the result is beneficial knowledge. As an anatomist, Hume claims for himself a third-order role in the project of morality, creating the scientific basis on which other writers will be able to create exhortations that will, he hopes, terminate in the actual exercise of virtue. Hume’s metaphor also has the secondary effect of making his reader the moral painter who puts Hume’s anatomical diagrams to use.

Hume could scarcely have chosen a better gambit for justifying himself to Francis Hutcheson. Hutcheson’s first book, the *Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Virtue and Beauty* (1725), undertook to demonstrate what Hume’s metaphor assumes: that aesthetic beauty is analogous to moral virtue, that both appeal to our senses, and that the terminology of the former can convey meaningful truths about the latter. Hutcheson was a clergyman and a disciple of Lord Shaftesbury, responsible for making the Earl’s suspiciously pagan

Characteristics safe for consumption by ministers in training at the Scottish universities. Both the Presbyterian homiletic tradition and Shaftesbury's rhapsodic style, which Hume was to parody two years later in his essay "The Stoic," would have made the role of a painter of virtue congenial to Hutcheson.³

But Hume's description of himself as an anatomist rather than a painter does not do justice to his writings in moral philosophy as a whole. Indeed, Hume's first formulation of the dichotomy in the letter to Hutcheson ends with the prospect of "a new Tryal, if it be possible to make the Moralist & Metaphysician agree a little better."⁴ Scholars have recognized that Hume responded to his own challenge in later works, such as the *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751) and *The History of England* (1754–61). The latter, which is most commonly read as a skeptical genealogy of the eighteenth-century English constitution, should thus also be seen as a "work of practical morality . . . an effective vehicle of moral instruction."⁵

Hume was almost certainly not thinking of the *History* when he wrote to Hutcheson in 1739, but the letter's association of the "moralist" and the "painter" provides crucial insight into Hume's purposes and techniques in that later work. The *History* is indeed the canvas on which Hume depicts the virtues and vices that he dissects in his more explicitly philosophical works. He uses visual language and metaphor at key moments in the *History*: in character sketches and scenes of execution, and as an iconographic shorthand when outlining theological or ideological conflicts. And he is equally a painter in the broader metaphoric sense he develops in the letter to Hutcheson, the *Treatise*, and the first *Enquiry*: a moralist who seeks to illustrate the beauty of virtue and the deformity of vice. His definition of these two terms, however, is one that Hutcheson would not have endorsed. Hume's jocular wish, recorded by Adam Smith, to postpone death in order see "the downfall of some of the prevailing systems of superstition" lacks the pugnacity of Voltaire's "écrasez l'infâme," but it is the ambition of an earnest moral activist.⁶ To read Hume as a retired philosopher and disinterested historian, declining polemical combat with William Warburton from the serene heights of his own Olympian irony, is to mistake Hume's rhetorical tactics for his moral-philosophical strategy. The *History* asks its readers not only to discard their illusions about the English constitution—whether the Whig myth of the ancient constitution or the Tory dogma of passive obedience—but also to reconceive their standard of human moral excellence in Hume's terms: sociable rather than ascetic, sentimental rather than rational, secular rather

than fideistic, and fitted for a polite and commercial society. Hume wanted his readers to admire lawgivers and merchants, not warriors or saints. Above all, he wanted them to decouple moral excellence from Christian piety and realign it with sentiment and sympathy. As a vehicle for this agenda Hume's historical style is thus less detached than critical commentary has suggested.⁷

Thinking of Hume as a painter draws attention both to his use of visual language and to his project of realizing moral exempla in his writing. This is not merely because predecessors such as Shaftesbury and Hutcheson associated aesthetic and moral beauty in their philosophies. For Hume himself, imagery, literary style, and moral argument are strongly linked. His philosophy of mind supplies a crucial connection. In his account, vividness of the kind created by visual images is integral to the process of belief, and thus also of knowledge. The first book of the *Treatise* and the first *Enquiry* explain why Hume, in order to become a moralist in the second *Enquiry* and the *History*, needed to become a painter as well.

For the literary historian, the stakes of this argument go beyond articulating the connections between Hume's comparatively neglected *History of England* and his earlier philosophical works and thereby revealing Hume as an eighteenth-century moralist. This is because Hume's binary opposition of the anatomist and the painter takes place at a transitional moment in the history of the concept of literature itself. "Literature" names two overlapping but distinct canons that operate as sources of symbolic power in the long eighteenth century.⁸ The first, which might be glossed with the phrase "polite letters," is constituted by its eloquent vernacular style and extends across a range of texts that are now called philosophy, science, history, the essay, and other designations. Hume, over the course of his entire career, is both a conscious exponent and central exemplification of literature in this sense.⁹ The second meaning of "literature," which we might gloss "imaginative literature," is constituted in large part (though not exclusively) by non-referentiality; it is the umbrella term for the grouping of novels, poems and plays which are studied as literature in the English and other language departments of the modern university. Hume is largely indifferent to, and in turn usually excluded from, the canon of works that constitute literature in this still-regnant sense. Yet, despite the fact that he both writes himself out of and also is written out of the tradition of what we now call "literature," Hume does use techniques that are conventionally literary in advancing his moral agenda; indeed, this is what Hume calls being a "painter." Hume did not recognize

literature in our modern sense as a category worthy of attention or esteem; yet, in order to advance his moral agenda Hume's philosophy entailed formal and stylistic demands on his historical writing that make him more "literary" than either he or we have hitherto been willing to admit.¹⁰

I. HUME AND VIVIDNESS

The *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* contains Hume's fullest development of the painter/anatomist antithesis, yet it also arouses suspicions that Hume's loyalty to the *métier* of the latter is not as absolute as he claims. Hume disavows his own painterly status by means of a striking juxtaposition of visual images:

The anatomist presents to the eye the most hideous and disagreeable objects; but his science is useful to the painter in delineating even a Venus or an Helen. While the latter employs all the richest colours of his art, and gives his figures the most graceful and engaging airs; he must still carry his attention to the inward structure of the human body, the position of the muscles, the fabric of the bones, and the use and figure of every part or organ. (*E*, 10)

Like a Renaissance *vanitas* depicting the skull beneath the skin, Hume's writing chiasmatically encloses the "richest colours" of mythology's greatest beauties between the "hideous and disagreeable objects" and the "muscles" and "bones" of the human body. In justifying the trade of the anatomist Hume sets down the scalpel and picks up the pencil.

This maneuver is a logical consequence of Hume's philosophical account of belief as expounded in the first *Enquiry* and in book 1 of the *Treatise*. For Hume, belief is an unwilling response to the compelling vivacity of an idea or impression, a matter of feeling rather than reason. Explaining this view of belief in the fifth section of the *Enquiry*, Hume confesses that "were we to attempt a *definition* of this sentiment, we should, perhaps, find it a very difficult, if not an impossible task. . . . It may not, however, be improper to attempt a *description* of this sentiment. . . . I say, then, that belief is nothing but a more vivid, lively, forcible, firm, steady conception of an object, than what the imagination alone is ever able to attain" (*E*, 48–49).¹¹ Manner follows matter here: Hume argues that belief is a question of sentiment not through definition, but rather through an accumulation of five evocative adjectives, including two synonym pairs (vivid/lively, firm/steady) in which a Latinate word is doubled by a succeeding

Germanic counterpart. In choosing to describe rather than define belief, Hume the epistemologist associates himself with the painter who “excite[s] and regulate[s] our sentiments” rather than the anatomist whose “speculations seem abstract,” as the two are described at the beginning of the *Enquiry* (*E*, 6).

Scholars attentive to this sentimentalist strand in Hume have demonstrated his indebtedness to both the theory and practice of ancient and modern rhetoric and dialogue; thus Adam Potkay argues that for Hume perceptions sway the mind just as Demosthenes swayed his Athenian auditors.¹² But belief for Hume has a pictorial as well as a rhetorical quality: “I hear at present, for instance, a person’s voice, with whom I am acquainted; and the sound comes as from the next room. This impression of my senses immediately conveys my thought to the person, together with all the surrounding objects. I paint them out to myself as existing at present, with the same qualities and relations, of which I formerly knew them possessed” (*E*, 50). Belief here turns sound into sight.

II. BELIEF VERSUS FICTION

A curious feature of Hume’s description of belief is his solicitude to distinguish it from its opposite, which he calls not “disbelief” but “fiction.” The imagination is able to create ideas—Hume’s examples in the first *Enquiry* are “the head of a man [joined] to the body of a horse” and “an enchanted castle”—that are distinguishable from reality only by virtue of their lack of the undefinable “vivid, lively” conception that accompanies belief (*E*, 48–50).

Hume’s examples of images that do not demand belief are taken from the fabulous register of mythology and fairy tale, “thing[s] feigned or invented,” as the first edition of Johnson’s *Dictionary* (1755) defines “fiction.”¹³ By contrasting “daily experience” or the sound of an acquaintance in the next room with a centaur or an “enchanted castle,” Hume in the *Enquiry* fights shy of an epistemological issue that British authors were throwing into ever-sharper focus at mid-century: what is the difference between the believable facts of historical record and common life and the realistic fictions that mimic them? We are in no epistemological danger from Mother Goose and Ovid, but how are we to distinguish Clarendon’s *History of the Rebellion* from Fielding’s *History of Tom Jones*, or Johnson’s *Life of Richard Savage* from Sterne’s *Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*?

Hume does address this question in the corresponding section of the *Treatise*, but in a manner that shows little interest in the literary and philosophical possibilities of prose fiction:

Nothing is more evident, than that those ideas, to which we assent, are more strong, firm, and vivid, than the loose reveries of a castle-builder. If one person sits down to read a book as a romance, and another as a true history, they plainly receive the same ideas, and in the same order; nor does the incredulity of the one, and the belief of the other hinder them from putting the very same sense upon the author. His words produce the same ideas in both; tho' his testimony has not the same influence on them. The latter has a more lively conception of all the incidents. He enters deeper into the concerns of the persons: represents to himself their actions, and characters, and friendships, and enmities: He even goes so far as to form a notion of their features, and air, and person. While the former, who gives no credit to the testimony of the author, has a more faint and languid conception of all these particulars; and except on account of the style and ingenuity of the composition, can receive little entertainment from it.¹⁴

As a description of eighteenth-century reading practices and of our own contemporary experience of fictional narrative, this account is, of course, utterly and completely wrong. There was nothing faint or languid about the English public's conception of the plight of the heroine of *Pamela*, for instance, when it reached print in November 1740, the same month as Book III of the *Treatise*. Readers of *Clarissa* (1747–8), Samuel Richardson's second novel, entered so deeply into the concerns of the persons involved that several wrote to the author pleading with him to give the story a happy end, and at least one wrote her own ending to the book when Richardson failed to comply (rewriting a book's ending can be therapeutic only if the reader cum writer understands it to be fiction).¹⁵ Not only did eighteenth-century readers form notions of the features, air, and person of fictional characters, they produced and purchased portraits, prints, and other visual representations of Inkle and Yarico, Gulliver, Pamela, Clarissa, and many others.¹⁶ Hume's final claim that fictional narrative can provide "little entertainment," though it may be true to his own experience, is simply bizarre in terms of literary history. It is even belied by the narrator of Hume's essay "Of the Study of History," who reports sending "a young beauty" a copy of Plutarch's *Lives*, convincing her to read them by "assuring her, at the same time, that there was not a word of truth in them from beginning to end."¹⁷

It is difficult to prove a negative, but Hume's works and correspondence provide scant evidence that he ever read seriously or thought philosophically about the "Lives," "Histories," "Memoirs," and "Narratives" that we now think of as the founding texts of prose fiction in English.¹⁸ He did read *Don Quixote*, and refers to it twice in his essays. One might expect Hume as an epistemologist to be struck by the eponymous hero's curious way of forming beliefs about the external world. Instead, both of Hume's remarks focus on Sancho Panza.¹⁹ Hume's literary criticism, explicitly derivative of Joseph Addison, privileges "fine writing" that strikes the perfect balance between "simplicity and refinement"; what he sums up as "style and ingenuity" (*Essays*, 191–6). The power of fictional narrative to make deep affective demands on its readers is not of interest. This is even true of his essay "Of Tragedy," which offers an account of tragic pleasure that is promiscuously applicable to painting, poetry, drama, and forensic oratory. Alex Neill's comment on this essay is perfectly accurate: "The deep problem with the account of tragic experience that Hume offers in 'Of Tragedy,' in a nutshell, is that it is not grounded in any sustained thought about tragedy."²⁰ Hume's remark to his fellow Scot William Strahan that the "best book, that has been writ by any Englishman these thirty years . . . is Tristram Shandy, bad as it is," is the saturnine dismissal of an Anglophobe, not the well-considered assessment of an eighteenth-century version of a Booker Prize judge.²¹ Finally, Hume's discussion of seeing "the print of one human foot," in the essay "Of a Particular Providence and of a Future State" from the first *Enquiry*, is itself a fragmentary and solitary trace, offering no indication of whether Hume had read *Robinson Crusoe* or merely assimilated the story from the circumambient culture (*E*, 143).²²

It would be uncharitable to fault Hume for not being a modern literary scholar, and for failing to see that Daniel Defoe and Samuel Richardson have philosophical potential as well as Cicero and Virgil. The point is that if we take Hume at his word in *Treatise* 1.3.7 (the passage cited on page 148 above), the features of reader response that Hume's novel-buying contemporaries and today's literary critics read primarily as driven by authorial skill—"lively conception of all the incidents," deep emotional investment in characters, vivid visualization of character and setting—are instead for him issues of veracity, whether or not the narrative to hand is a "true history." If only true history can create these effects, it follows that any narrative that creates these effects must be true history.

Hume imagines truth as that which creates a pictorial image in the mind of the reader, who “represents” actions and characters to himself, and “even goes so far as to form a notion of their features, and air, and person.” In his repeated attempts to describe belief in both the *Treatise* and the first *Enquiry* Hume is clearly gesturing toward a sort of sentimental *je ne sais quoi* that is not simply identical to being impressed by a good story, but because he characterizes belief as a feeling, his language fails to draw a firm barrier between rhetorical or narratorial suasion and epistemological conviction. Hume’s lack of engagement with realistic prose fiction, while a philosophical liability, is thus a rhetorical opportunity, because it means that he is not forced to distinguish between verisimilitude and vivacity, realism and reality. The *History of England* does not need to explain why it is true while the *History of Sir Charles Grandison* is not. Instead, it simply invites all the responses that the *Treatise* lists: we represent to ourselves the escalating confrontations between Charles I and his parliament; we imagine the person and features of Buckingham, James I’s undeserving favorite; and we “shed a generous tear,” as Hume puts it in *My Own Life*, “for the fate of Charles I. and the Earl of Strafford” (*Essays*, xxxvii). I have chosen all of these examples from the first Stuart volume of the *History* not only because it was the first to be published but also because in it Hume includes no references to his sources. By publishing his narrative history without footnotes, Hume in effect asks the reader to evaluate the truth of the work on the basis not of its use of evidence but rather of its ability to transmit a vivid, firm, lively impression.²³ In the first two volumes of the *History* Hume does not point to an original in the archive and invite the reader to compare it with his canvas; rather, he asks his reader to trust the brushwork.

III. PAINTING THE *HISTORY OF ENGLAND*: PORTRAITS, TABLEAUX, ICONS

Hume’s early essay “Of the Study of History” extols history as a visual pageant:

what more agreeable entertainment to the mind, than . . . To remark the rise, progress, declension, and final extinction of the most flourishing empires: The virtues, which contributed to their greatness, and the vices, which drew on their ruin. In short, to see the all human race, from the beginning of time, pass, as it were, in review before us; appearing in their true colours, without any of those disguises, which, during their life-time, so much perplexed the judgment of the beholders. What

spectacle can be imagined, so magnificent, so various, so interesting?" (*Essays*, 565–66)²⁴

The phrase "true colours," though proverbial, captures perfectly Hume's commingling of epistemology and style. It also points to Hume's solution to a historiographical problem that, as Mark Salber Philips argues, runs from the ancient world to the present day: the tension between mimesis and didacticism, "between those who identified history primarily as a faithful narrative and those who saw it above all as a literature of instruction."²⁵ Looking at eighteenth-century history writing as a whole, Philips generalizes that "as narratives move toward a focus on the mimetic, they concentrate on recording the concreteness of events . . . emphasizing the satisfactions of detailed narrative," while "didactic impulses . . . involved privileging intellectual order over representational concreteness."²⁶ In Hume's sentimental system of morals, however, there is no opposition between detailed narrative and didacticism. As he says in the *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, "proper representations of the deformity of vice and beauty of virtue, beget correspondent habits, and engage us to avoid the one, and embrace the other" (*E*, 172). Four sections later Hume unfavorably compares "the indifferent, uninteresting style of Suetonius" with "the masterly pencil of Tacitus" in their respective histories of Nero and Tiberius:

While the former coldly relates the facts . . . the latter sets before our eyes the venerable figures of a Soranus and Thræsea, intrepid in their fate, and only moved by the melting sorrows of their friends and kindred. What sympathy then touches every human heart! What indignation against the tyrant, whose causeless fear or unprovoked malice gave rise to such detestable barbarity! (*E*, 223–24)²⁷

In Hume's account, Tacitus's paintbrush draws the reader into the scene, as the "melting sorrows" of the first-century friends and kindred flow via osmosis into the sympathy and indignation felt in "every human heart."²⁸ Here again, Hume's ethics are built on his philosophy of belief. In the first *Enquiry*, Hume had pointed out that a visual stimulus not only elicits recognition but also awakens an emotional response: "[U]pon the appearance of the picture of an absent friend, our idea of him is positively enlivened . . . every passion . . . whether of joy or sorrow, acquires new force and vigour" (*E*, 51).²⁹ In the *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, this sympathy is indissolubly conjoined with morality: "If any man, from a cold insensibility, or

narrow selfishness of temper, is unaffected with the images of human happiness or misery, he must be equally indifferent to the images of vice and virtue" (*E*, 225).

Thus Hume embarks on the *History of England* with a theoretical program in place. The historian's task is to present a vivid, detailed narrative (usually conceived using metaphors from vision and the visual arts) that will appeal to readers' sympathies, showing the beauty of virtue and deformity of vice. This was not Hume's only goal in composing the history, perhaps not even his primary goal. As an array of recent criticism has demonstrated, the *History* must be understood first and foremost as a profound reinterpretation of the history of the English constitution, which Hume reads as discontinuous, fluctuating, and contingent.³⁰ But in addition to establishing his political thesis Hume used the *History* as a canvas on which a detailed representation of the past stimulated sentimental and therefore moral affect in readers. Hume's portraits of major figures, his tableaux of heroism, action, and (particularly) suffering, and his strategic use of iconic details such as the components of ecclesiastical costume all combine to transmit Hume's moral assessments and exhortations to the reader.

In the *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, Hume appeals to everyday language in order to argue for the reality and universality of human moral judgments: "The epithets *sociable, good-natured, humane, merciful, grateful, friendly, generous, beneficent*, or their equivalents, are known in all languages, and universally express the highest merit, which *human nature* is capable of attaining" (*E*, 176). As in his discussion of belief in the first *Enquiry*, Hume describes virtue rather than defining it. It scarcely needs saying that Hume has chosen a highly particular set of virtues, one that departs markedly from, for instance, the Christian/chivalric values of holiness, temperance, chastity, friendship, justice, and courtesy that structure Spenser's *Fairie Queene*, or alternately the Virgilian qualities of *pietas* and *virtus*. Under the cover of an appeal to universal consensus Hume offers a list that emphasizes the sentimental/sympathetic quality of virtue and blurs the distinction between morality and human excellence. And because these words "or their equivalents" universally carry positive connotations, merely listing them is sufficient to indicate moral approval. The second *Enquiry* contains no fewer than five further enumerations of virtues, as well as one list of vices and one of false virtues.³¹ Hume knows that this is a philosophically problematic procedure. "Of the Standard of Taste," written while the *History* was in progress and first published in 1757, observes that the "Alcoran" (likely not just the

Koran but also a code word for the Bible) recommends “equity, justice, temperance, meekness, charity” for deeds Hume thinks unworthy of the name: “Let us attend to his narration, and we shall soon find, that [the pretended prophet] bestows praise on such instances of treachery, inhumanity, cruelty, revenge, bigotry, as are utterly incompatible with civilized society” (*Essays*, 229). Yet Hume’s response to this apparent flaw in his ethical theory is rhetorical rather than logical: he responds simply by offering his own “narration,” the *History*, in which terms of moral approbation are reserved for virtues worthy of “civilized society.”

The same lexis of moral approval that runs through the *Enquiry* is ubiquitous in the *History of England*. Again and again, Hume introduces characters to the scene (or, almost as often, ushers them to the scaffold) with an explicit enumeration of virtues and vices.³² The character sketches of the Stuart kings are a notable example. James I’s “generosity bordered on profusion, his learning on pedantry, his pacific disposition on pusillanimity, his wisdom on cunning, his friendship on light fancy and boyish fondness.”³³ Hume likewise praises Charles I for “his dignity free from pride, his humanity from weakness, his bravery from rashness, his temperance from austerity, his frugality from avarice” before assessing him as “a good, rather than a great man . . . more fitted to rule in a regular established government, than either to give way to the encroachments of a popular assembly, or finally to subdue their pretensions” (5:542). These character sketches are part of Hume’s political thesis, and are designed to vindicate their subjects from Whiggish accusations of tyranny (perhaps joined to the secondary purpose of deflating Tory hagiography). But Hume also offers numerous character sketches that have no political/constitutional implications, and function instead purely to signify his own approval and disapproval, and solicit that of the reader. Leo X, pope during the final years of Henry VII and the beginning of the reign of Henry VIII, plays no consequential role in English history beyond giving the latter the title, unfortunate in retrospect, of Defender of the Faith. But Hume recognizes a kindred spirit in this scion of the Medicis, calling him “one of the most illustrious princes that ever sat on the papal throne. Humane, beneficent, generous, affable; the patron of every art, and friend of every virtue; he had a soul no less capable of forming great designs than his predecessor, but was more gentle, pliant, and artful in employing means for the execution of them” (*H*, 3:95). Hume does not provide comparable character sketches for the long sequence of pre-Reformation popes who appear periodically in his pages to fulminate excommunication against English rulers. Because Leo X has the virtues

of a sociable eighteenth-century virtuoso, Hume singles him out for the approval of the reader. Near the end of the second Stuart volume of the *History* Hume even more explicitly draws the reader's admiration to the character of the Duke of Ormond, especially his "patience and dignity" in mourning his dead son: "These particularities may appear a digression; but it is with pleasure, I own, that I relax myself for a moment in the contemplation of these humane and virtuous characters, amidst that scene of fury and faction, fraud and violence, in which at present our narration has unfortunately engaged us" (*H*, 6:411).

Hume does not limit encomiums of this kind to the royalist party. Admiral Robert Blake, who commanded the Commonwealth's most successful naval actions, receives very similar praise: "[D]isinterested, generous, liberal; ambitious only of true glory, dreadful only to his avowed enemies; he forms one of the most perfect characters of the age, and the least stained with those errors and violences, which were then so predominant. The protector ordered him a pompous funeral at the public charge: But the tears of his countrymen were the most honorable panegyric on his memory" (*H*, 6:84). Blake's mourners model the appropriate response to virtue in death or misfortune, just as the friends of Soranus and Thræsea prefigure our own indignation at the cruelty of Nero in the passage of Tacitus that Hume admired. Hume's own death was a carefully enacted performance, documented in *My Own Life* and in the writings of Adam Smith, James Boswell, and others, and he clearly held to the eighteenth-century view that "A Death-Bed's a Detector of the Heart," as Edward Young put it.³⁴ The deathbed (or, more commonly, the scaffold) appears throughout the history as a moral touchstone, not only because it reveals true character but also because its heightened emotional temperature facilitates the circulation of sentimental identification between victim, immediate onlookers, and Hume's reading audience. As in the second *Enquiry*, sympathy and virtue are closely braided together in such passages. Hume widens his narratorial scope from a sketch to a tableau in which an audience internal to the narrative models the correct response for the reader. The most notable example of this technique is his extended account of the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, which ends as follows:

She now began, with the aid of her two women, to disrobe herself; and the executioner also lent his hand, to assist them. She smiled, and said, That she was not accustomed to undress herself before so large a company, nor to be served by such valets. Her servants, seeing her in this condition, ready to lay her head upon the block, burst into tears and lamentations: She turned about to them, put her finger upon her

lips, as a sign of imposing silence upon them; and having given them her blessing, desired them to pray for her. One of the maids, whom she had appointed for that purpose, covered her eyes with a handkerchief; she laid herself down, without any sign of fear or trepidation; and her head was severed from her body at two strokes by the executioner. He instantly held it up to the spectators, streaming with blood and agitated with the convulsions of death: The dean of Peterborow alone exclaimed, "So perish all queen Elizabeth's enemies:" The earl of Kent alone replied "Amen:" The attention of all the other spectators was fixed on the melancholy scene before them; and zeal and flattery alike gave place to present pity and admiration of the expiring princess. (*H*, 4:250–51)

This passage nearly out-Richardsons Richardson in its portrait of female virtue in distress, beginning with the submerged erotic frisson of the beautiful queen undressing herself in public and centered on the contrast of Mary's still-living face, turned to her servants and the reader with her finger upon lips, and the Medusan decapitated head "agitated with the convulsions of death." It is no wonder that Hume's interpretation of the Stuarts infused the young Jane Austen with a fascinated love for Mary Queen of Scots and a corresponding hostility to Elizabeth I.³⁵

Even outside of deaths and executions, the *History* contains multiple scenes in which this sentimental circulation operates: a crowd that has been led into viciousness—usually by priests of either the superstitious or enthusiastic variety—cannot help reverting to virtue when faced with suffering and/or a superior moral example. Thus, while negotiating with the Scottish Covenanters while in semi-captivity, Charles I attends a church service at which a

preacher, after reproaching him to his face, with his misgovernment, ordered this psalm to be sung:

Why dost thou, tyrant, boast thyself

Thy wicked deeds to praise.

The king stood up, and called for that psalm which begins with these words,

Have mercy, Lord, on me, I pray;

For men would me devour:

The good-natured audience, in pity to fallen majesty, showed, for once, greater deference to the king than to the minister, and sung the psalm, which the former had called for. (*H*, 5:486)

Here "good-nature" is repeated from Hume's list of virtues at the beginning of section 2 of the *Enquiry Concerning the Principles*

of *Morals*. Similarly, the archbishop of St. Andrews harangues an Edinburgh congregation to “a more dutiful and more humane disposition” after a refractory junior clergyman refuses James VI’s orders to pray for his mother Mary and resists expulsion from the pulpit. In the endgame of the Civil War, the gallant Earl of Montrose, who has been captured by the Scottish Covenanters, is paraded through the streets of Edinburgh in humiliation. Yet “the populace, more generous and humane, when they saw so mighty a change of fortune in this great man . . . were struck with compassion, and viewed him with silent tears and admiration. The preachers, next Sunday, exclaimed against this movement of rebel nature, as they termed it; and reproached the people with their profane tenderness towards the capital enemy of piety and religion” (*H*, 6:22).

These two crowd scenes take place in Hume’s own Edinburgh. Having narrowly escaped excommunication at the hands of the Scottish clergy, Hume no doubt took comfort in reminding himself that even when agitated by their ministers the people of the city would become good-natured, generous, humane, and compassionate when faced with innocence and greatness in distress. His account of the role of religion in the Irish uprising of 1641–42 is far more lurid, sensational, and therefore damning. Hume describes the Irish Catholics as driven insane by religious hatred:

all the tortures which wanton cruelty could devise . . . could not satiate revenge excited without injury. . . . Even children, taught by the example, and encouraged by the exhortation, of their parents, essayed their feeble blows on the dead carcasses of defenceless children of the English. . . . Others, more ingenious still in their barbarity, tempted their prisoners, by the fond love of life, to embrue their hands in the blood of friends, brothers, parents; and having thus rendered them accomplices in guilt, gave them that death, which they sought to shun by deserving it.

Amidst all these enormities, the sacred name of Religion resounded on every side; not to stop the hands of these murderers, but to enforce their blows, and to steel their hearts against every movement of human or social sympathy. (*H*, 5:342–43)

Precisely when Hume’s language has brought the reader to a nearly unbearable pitch of sympathetic investment in the fate of the defenseless English planters, he informs us that religion has the dehumanizing effect of destroying sympathy entirely. The reader is implicitly congratulated on his or her heightened sensibility—and warned that religion will replace it with “enraged superstition” (*H*, 5:343).

Not all of Hume's villains are immune to human sympathy; some are haunted by it. Hume's treatment of Oliver Cromwell has, like the *History* as a whole, usually been read as a case study in the danger of constitutional innovation, and the ground of Hume's belief that too much freedom and democracy lead inevitably to dictatorship and oppression. But his account of Cromwell's sickness and death is written as the final act in the tragedy of an overreacher. Here sympathy serves as a goad to Cromwell's conscience, as he must recall the reproaches of his daughter Mrs. Claypole, "a lady endued with many humane virtues," whose final illness "prompted her to lament to her father all his sanguinary measures, and urge him to compunction for those heinous crimes, into which his fatal ambition had betrayed him. Her death, which followed soon after, gave new edge to every word, which she had uttered" (*H*, 6:104–5). In his final days, Cromwell resembles Shakespeare's Richard III as well as Macbeth, and the man who was flattered in his lifetime as a British Augustus comes in Hume's account to anticipate Gibbon's portraits of lesser Caesars like the paranoid, guilt-ridden, fratricidal Caracalla. Hume says of Cromwell that "all composure of mind was now for ever fled. . . . He felt, that the grandeur, which he had attained with so much guilt and courage, could not ensure him that tranquility, which it belongs to virtue alone, and moderation fully to ascertain" (*H*, 6:105).³⁶ Hume's perfectly balanced sentence yokes "grandeur," "guilt," and "courage," which it contrasts with "tranquility," "virtue," and "moderation." The strongly moralized opposition of "guilt" and "virtue" colors the more neutral pairings of grandeur/tranquility and courage/moderation, allowing Hume implicitly to qualify the heroic classical and medieval code by which "grandeur" and "courage" are unqualified goods.

By choosing the virtues that he will commend to readers in his character sketches and by modeling the appropriate audience response to heroism and suffering through sentimental tableaux, Hume makes the *History of England* a canvas on which he paints his moral system in colors chosen to allure the reader. In addition to these positive exempla and appeals, the *History* also does negative ethics, directing its readers in what to avoid. The *History* is filled with satirical barbs against Christianity, often sharpened by Hume's use of Christian iconography and descriptions of religious rituals and vestments. Hume is hostile to the moral claims of Christianity, which he sees as nothing more than a vehicle for the mental pathologies of enthusiasm and superstition. In order to save his argument in the *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* that virtue is just our word for qualities understood as

personally meritorious in common life, Hume stigmatizes the virtues of Catholic religious practice as not merely wrong but irrational: “[A]s every quality which is useful or agreeable to ourselves is, in common life, allowed to be a part of personal merit, so no other will ever be received, when men judge of things by their natural, unprejudiced reason, without the delusive glosses of superstition and false religion. Celibacy, fasting, penance, mortification, self-denial, humility, silence, solitude, and the whole train of monkish virtues . . . [we place] in the catalogue of vices” (*E*, 270). If superstition invents factitious virtues, enthusiasm discards both reason and morality: “[E]very whimsey is consecrated: Human reason, and even morality are rejected as fallacious guides: And the fanatic madman delivers himself over, blindly, and without reserve, to the supposed illapses of the spirit, and to inspiration from above” (*Essays*, 74).

Hume is a “common-sense moralist,” in David Fate Norton’s phrase, who holds views about the truth and normative force of Christianity that are far from the common run of eighteenth-century belief.³⁷ “Superstition” and “enthusiasm” are Hume’s grandfather clause and poll tax, excluding from the reasonable community of common life all those who cannot be relied on to vote for his chosen catalogue of virtues when building ethical consensus. In the *History*, Hume applies these tests retroactively. Religious beliefs are irrational and religious motivations in historical actors are self-deceiving at best (as in Hume’s sympathetic but demystifying account of Joan of Arc), but more frequently hypocritical and ridiculous. In the first chapter of the Saxon volume of the *History*, Hume mocks the theological debates of the seventh century:

The disputes, excited in Britain, were of the most ridiculous kind and, and entirely worthy of those ignorant and barbarous ages. . . . The priests of all the Christian churches were accustomed to shave part of their head; but the form given to this tonsure, was different . . . [T]he Romans and Saxons called their antagonists schismatics . . . because they shaved the fore-part of their head from ear to ear, instead of making that tonsure on the crown of the head, and in a circular form . . . that they might recommend their own form of tonsure, they maintained that it imitated symbolically the crown of thorns worn by Christ in his passion; whereas the other form was invented by Simon Magus, without any regard to that representation. (*H*, 1:53)

In the following chapter, the tonsure reappears to even more devastating satirical effect: “[Edgar] inveighed against the dissolute lives of the secular clergy; the smallness of their tonsure, which, it is probable,

maintained no longer any resemblance to the crown of thorns; their negligence in attending the exercise of their function; their mixing with the laity in the pleasures of gaming, hunting, dancing, and singing; and their openly living with concubines, by which it is commonly supposed he meant their wives” (*H*, 1:98). Lest the reader be tempted to enter into Edgar’s disapproval of clerical negligence and worldliness, Hume deflates the king’s harangue with the ludicrous image of an inadequately sized haircut. The Saxon king dwindles to the stature of Swift’s Lilliputian politicians, who argue about the size of shoe heels and whether to eat the big or little end of an egg.³⁸ This strategy would have been familiar to readers who came to Hume’s Saxon *History* from the Stuart volumes, where he uses Anglican Church ritual to the same effect. In the 1604 Hampton Court conference, in which James I participated in a debate between bishops and puritans, “the only appearing subjects of dispute were concerning the cross in baptism, the ring in marriage, the use of the surplice, and the bowing at the name of Jesus. These were the mighty questions, which were solemnly agitated . . . the king and his ministers being present” (*H*, 5:12). Similarly, Hume spends several paragraphs recounting in droll detail the ceremonies employed by Archbishop Laud in consecrating a church, including falling on his knees, scattering dust, marching around the church, blessing and cursing a wide variety of persons, implements, and architectural features, and bowing innumerable times in numerous directions (*H*, 5:224–26).³⁹

IV. CONCLUSION: DAVID HUME, MORAL ACTIVIST

This reading of the *History* as a visual pageant, complete with heroic portraits, sentimental tableaux, and satirically rendered religious icons, receives striking confirmation from the first letter sent to Hume by the Comtesse de Boufflers, a Parisian *salonnière* who became in later years the great romantic and sentimental passion of his life. In this first letter, written in 1753 after the publication of the first volume of the *History*, de Boufflers opens on a note of diffidence, unsure whether she is worthy to address so great an author. But in the end her admiration for Hume the historian wins the day:

Votre livre . . . anime d’une noble emulation, il inspire lamour de la liberté, et instruit en meme tems a se soumettre au gouvernement sous lequel on est obligé de vivre, en un mot c’est une source feconde de morale et dinstructions, presentées avec des couleurs si vives qu’on croit les voir pour la premiere fois.

La clarté, la majesté, la simplicité touchante de votre stile, me ravit. Ses beautés sont si frappantes, que malgré mon ignorance dans la langue angloise, elles n'ont pu mechapper. Vous etes Monsieur un peintre admirable. Vos tableaux ont une grace, un naturel, une energie qui surpasse ce que l'imagination meme peut atteindre.

[Your book . . . animates a noble emulation, inspires a love of liberty, while instructing one at the same time to submit oneself to the government under which one is obliged to live; in a word, it is a fertile source of moral instructions, presented with colors so vivid that one seems to be seeing them for the first time.

The clarity, the majesty, the touching simplicity of your style ravishes me. Its beauties are so striking that in spite of my ignorance in English they could not escape me. You, Monsieur, are an admirable painter. Your paintings have a grace, a naturalness, and an energy surpassing that of the imagination itself.]⁴⁰ (*L*, 2:367; translation mine).

De Boufflers notices Hume's political agenda, which is balanced between an appreciation of personal liberty and a deep respect for existing political institutions. But she saves her most rapturous expressions for Hume's achievement as a moralist and she perceives how apposite it is that he articulates this achievement through the visual language of the painter.

Scholars have noted that as a theorist of political institutions Hume did better as an Epimetheus than a Prometheus. Hume's rejection of the ancient constitution theory of the English past held the historiographical field until the publication of Thomas Babington Macaulay's *History of England* in 1848.⁴¹ His predictions for the future fared less well; Nicholas Phillipson argues that "Hume never wavered in his view that it was Britain, not France, that was heading for revolution in the later eighteenth century," and the sympathetic reader can only regret that the great reviser was unable to update his claim that "a mild government and great naval force have preserved, and may still preserve during some time, the dominion of England over her [North American] colonies" in view of the events that followed his death in 1776 (*H*, 5:148).⁴² But in his role as a prophet of secular morality for Europe in general and Scotland in particular, history has been kinder to Hume. Had Charon allowed him to loiter on to our time Hume would no doubt be gratified to see the power and prestige of the Kirk at an ebb.

Scholars have focused on the *History* as a polemical intervention in British constitutional historiography because it was original, controversial, and indisputably influential as such. It is less obvious that Hume's moralizing character sketches, sentimental tableaux, and

satiric jabs add up to a coherent whole. Moreover, there is nothing distinctively Humean about making history a forum for moral assessment and exhortation; for eighteenth-century readers raised on Livy and Tacitus, this was the oldest game in town. But the strength of Hume's moral project lies precisely in its subtlety. In a postscript to *Clarissa*, Richardson claimed that his objective in the novel had been to "steal in . . . the great doctrines of Christianity under the fashionable guise of an amusement."⁴³ Hume's goal is the opposite, but his method is the same. He asks his readers to admire Leo X and Alfred the Great but reconsider the supposedly saintly characters of Dunstan and Thomas à Becket. He debunks the holiness of the crusades, the virtues of medieval chivalry, and the sanctity of the Puritans. His judgments are rooted in an implicit but consistent moral system: sociable, sentimental, and above all secular. The reader who enters into Hume's character assessments cannot help internalizing this system. In this way, Hume should be understood as a moral activist, and the *History* as a canvas on which he paints "the deformity of vice and the beauty of virtue."

Dickinson College

NOTES

I wish to thank Adam Potkay for his thoughtful comments on an earlier version of this essay.

¹ David Hume to France Hutcheson, 17 September 1739, in *The Letters of David Hume*, ed. J. Y. T. Greig, 2 vol. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), 1:32.

² Hume, *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. P. H. Nidditch and L. A. Selby-Bigge, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 9. First published under the title *Philosophical Essays Concerning Human Understanding* (London: A. Millar, 1748). All subsequent references to this text refer to the Nidditch and Selby-Bigge edition and are cited parenthetically by page number and abbreviated *E*.

³ See Isabel Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment: A Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics in England, 1660–1780*, 2 vol. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1991), 2:157.

⁴ Hume to Hutcheson, 17 September 1739, in *The Letters of David Hume*, 1:32.

⁵ Donald T. Siebert, *The Moral Animus of David Hume* (Newark: Univ. of Delaware Press, 1990), 19.

⁶ Adam Smith to William Strahan, 9 November 1776, in *The Letters of David Hume*, 2:450.

⁷ See Leo Braudy, *Narrative Form in History and Fiction: Hume, Fielding and Gibbon* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1970), 35–36.

⁸ John Guillory, *Cultural Capital* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1993), 123–24.

⁹ For this argument see Jerome Christensen, *Practicing Enlightenment: Hume and Formation of a Literary Career* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1987).

¹⁰Though Ian Duncan, *Scott's Shadow: The Novel in Romantic Edinburgh* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2007) does comment on the connection between Hume and the novel.

¹¹Scholars now tend to the view that while Hume sees vividness as the key criterion for belief, he does not (as Norman Kemp Smith had argued in the mid-twentieth century) see it as the standard of truth. See Norman Kemp Smith, *The Philosophy of David Hume; a Critical Study of Its Origins and Central Doctrines* (London: Macmillan, 1941); David Fate Norton, *David Hume, Common-Sense Moralist, Sceptical Metaphysician* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1982); and Louis E. Loeb, "What is Worth Preserving in the Kemp Smith Interpretation of Hume?" *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 17 (2009): 769–97.

¹²Adam Potkay, *The Fate of Eloquence in the Age of Hume* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1994), 181. See also M. A. Box, *The Suasive Art of David Hume* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1990); and Jacob Sider Jost, "Hume's Four Philosophers: Recasting the *Treatise of Human Nature*," *Modern Intellectual History* 6.1 (2009): 1–25.

¹³Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, 2 vol. (London: 1755), s.v. "fiction."

¹⁴Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. P. H. Nidditch and L. A. Selby-Biggee, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 97–98.

¹⁵Elizabeth Echlin, *An Alternative Ending to Richardson's Clarissa*, ed. Dimiter Daphinoff (Bern: Francke, 1982).

¹⁶David A Brewer, *The Afterlife of Character, 1726–1825* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

¹⁷Hume, *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1985), 564. All references to this text are hereafter cited parenthetically by page number and are abbreviated *Essays*.

¹⁸For the relationship between these terms and what we now call the novel, see Leah Orr, "Genre Titles on the Title Pages of English Fiction, 1660–1800," *Philological Quarterly* 90.1 (2011): 67–95.

¹⁹The essays "Of Simplicity and Refinement" and "Of the Standard of Taste" show a fairly detailed knowledge of *Don Quixote*; see *Essays* 192, 234–35. Judging from a 1748 letter to James Oswald of Dunniker, Hume also seems to have known the heroic (that is, stylized and comparatively unrealistic) seventeenth-century romances of Scudéry and La Calprenède well enough to allude to their main characters; see David Hume to James Oswald of Dunniker, 29 January 1748, in *The Letters of David Hume*, 1:110.

²⁰Alex Neill, "Hume's 'Singular Phenomenon,'" *British Journal of Aesthetics* 39.2 (April 1999): 112–25, 115.

²¹Hume to William Strahan, 30 January 1773, in *The Letters of David Hume* 2:268. Besides, Sterne was Irish.

²²*Robinson Crusoe* quickly took on mythical status and was issued in several dozen different editions and abridgements from its first publication in 1719 to the 1750s. See Robert W. Lovett, *Robinson Crusoe: A Biographical Checklist of English Language Editions, 1719–1979* (New York: Greenwood, 1991).

²³Hume's explanation to Horace Walpole of his decision not to cite authorities by name supports this reading: "I was seduc'd by the example of all the best historians even among the moderns, such as Matchiavel, Fra paolo, Davila, Bentivoglio; without considering that that practice was more modern than their time, and having been once introduc'd, ought to be follow'd by every writer" (Hume to Walpole, 2 August 1758, in *The Letters of David Hume*, 1:284). Having himself been seduced, Hume seeks to become a seducer.

²⁴“Of the Study of History” first appeared in the 1741 first edition of *Essays, Moral and Political*, and was republished in collected editions of Hume’s essays in 1753, 1758, and 1760, after which it was withdrawn. For the publication history of Hume’s essays, see *Essays* xii–xiv. Hume likely abandoned the piece because it begins with several pages of self-described “raillery against the ladies” that recall the less durable essays of Richard Steele—not because he changed his mind about the didactic value of the spectacle of history (*Essays*, 565).

²⁵ Mark Salber Phillips, *Society and Sentiment: Genres of Historical Writing in Britain, 1740–1820* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2000), 21.

²⁶ Phillips, 23.

²⁷ In addition to admiring Tacitus, Hume identified with him, because, as he writes to William Strahan in 1757, he “wrote his Annals after his History; tho’ they treat of a preceding Period” (Hume to Strahan, 25 May 1757, in *The Letters of David Hume*, 1:251).

²⁸ Adam Smith’s lectures on rhetoric, as recorded by students who heard the 1762–63 course, recommend a very similar program for the writing of history (though Smith’s preferred model is Livy rather than Tacitus): “It is to be observed that no action however affecting in itself, can be represented in such a manner as to be very interesting to those who had not been present at it, by a bare narration where it is described directly without taking notice of any of the effects it had on those who were either actors or spectators of the whole affair. . . . [W]hen we mean to affect the reader deeply we must have recourse to the indirect method of description, relating the effects the transaction produced both on actors and spectators” (*Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, ed. J. C. Bryce [Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1985], 86–87).

²⁹ In the following paragraph, Hume uses this principle to account for the “mummeries” of the Catholic Church, which operate by “enlivening devotion” that “otherwise would decay, if directed entirely to distant and immaterial objects” (*E*, 51). In appropriating the ceremony and iconography of Catholicism for his own skeptical and satiric ends in the *History*, Hume no doubt thinks of himself as beating superstition at its own game.

³⁰ The classic study is Duncan Forbes, *Hume’s Philosophical Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1975), which reads Hume as constructing a secular and progressive justification for the Hanoverian regime. N. T. Phillipson’s *Hume* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1989) emphasizes Hume’s pessimism about the fragility of Britain’s unique mixed constitution, while Victor G. Wexler’s *David Hume and the History of England* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1979) insists strongly (perhaps too strongly) on Hume’s anti-Whiggism. Frits van Holthoorn argues that Hume’s history is fundamentally non-progressive, and therefore anti-Whig. He has also assembled an invaluable variorum edition of the *History*, thus far available only online through the Past Masters texts series of the InteLex Corporation. See David Hume, *History of England*, ed. Frits van Holtoorn, 6 vol. (Charlottesville: InteLex, 2000), <http://www.nlx.com/collections/64>. J. G. A. Pocock’s *Religion and Barbarism, Volume Two: Narratives of Civil Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1999) emphasizes Hume’s synthesis of history as the annals of war and statecraft with sociological analysis of changing cultural and economic conditions. It is also worth noting that Hume’s political project is an extension of the English “Freethinking” historiography of the previous generation, which sought to use religious history as a delegitimizing weapon against the Anglican confessional state; for this background see J. A. I. Champion, *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken: The Church of England and Its Enemies, 1660–1730* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1992).

³¹ See Champion, 204, 231, 242–43, 257, 277; 233; 270.

³² Potkay's *The Passion for Happiness: Samuel Johnson and David Hume* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 2000) argues that "for Hume character is not primarily an assemblage of 'virtues and vices'; it is, rather, a congeries of human *passions*" (144). I believe this does not do justice to the *History* as a whole, which contains many character descriptions driven by the language of virtue (for example, Charles I, which Potkay cites, but also Leo X, Alfred, and others discussed below) as well as that of passions such as hope, fear, pride, and humility.

³³ Hume, *History of England*, 6 vol., ed. William B. Todd (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1983), 5:121. Hereafter cited parenthetically by page number and abbreviated *H*. Readers may use the same citations to refer to van Holtoon's online text, which follows Todd's pagination.

³⁴ Edward Young, *Night Thoughts*, ed. Stephen Cornford (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1989), book 2, line 639.

³⁵ Jane Austen, *Juvenalia*, ed. Peter Sabor (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2006), 183–84. Austen actually encountered Hume indirectly through Oliver Goldsmith's *History of England, from the Earliest Times to the Death of George II* (London, 1771), which draws heavily on Hume; see Laura B. Kennelly, "Tory History Incognito: Hume's *History of England* in Goldsmith's *History of England*." *CLIO* 20.2 (1991), 169–83. The resemblance is too faint to suggest a direct debt, but Edmund Burke's famous description of the arrest and captivity of the Queen of Scots's great-great-great-great-granddaughter, Marie Antoinette, likewise uses the spectacle of the crypto-eroticized regal body in danger to appeal to the sympathy of the reader: "A band of cruel ruffians and assassins, reeking with his blood, rushed into the chamber of the queen, and pierced with a hundred strokes of bayonets and poniards the bed, from whence this persecuted woman had but just time to fly almost naked" (*Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. Frank M. Turner [New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2003], 60).

³⁶ Compare Edward Gibbon: "Neither business, nor pleasure, nor flattery, could defend Caracalla from the stings of a guilty conscience; and he confessed, in the anguish of a tortured mind, that his disordered fancy often beheld the angry forms of his father and brother rising into life, to threaten and upbraid him" (*The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* 3 vol., ed. David Womersley [London: Penguin, 2005], 1:155–56).

³⁷ Norton, *David Hume, Common-Sense Moralist, Sceptical Metaphysician*.

³⁸ For Jonathan Swift as an influence on the *History*, see Potkay, "Hume's 'Supplement to Gulliver': The Medieval Volumes of the *History of England*," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 25.2 (2001), 32–46. Potkay offers another noteworthy example of Hume's tendency to belittle medieval theological controversy through the use of ludicrous detail. In *History* 1:141–42 Hume mocks Anselm of Canterbury for attacking the fashion of pointed shoes at court; Potkay explains that Anselm was actually attacking the practice of sodomy (Potkay, "Hume's 'Supplement,'" 40).

³⁹ Pocock points out that Hume actually had some sympathy for Archbishop Laud's ritualism, seeing it as a modern version of the harmless, eclectic cultic paganism of antiquity; see *Barbarism and Religion* 2:210, 229. But the fact that Hume saw superstitious ritual as a defensible means of controlling the vulgar does not change the fact that he finds it risible and wants his enlightened reader to find it risible too.

⁴⁰ Comtesse de Boufflers to Hume, 13 March 1761, in *The Letters of David Hume* 2:367, translation mine.

⁴¹ For Hume's legacy, see Hugh Trevor-Roper's introduction to Thomas Babington Macaulay's *The History of England*, ed. Hugh Trevor-Roper (London: Penguin, 1986), 7–42, 11–13.

⁴² Phillipson, 18.

⁴³ Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa, Or the History of a Young Lady*, 3rd edition, 8 vol. (London, 1751), 8:279. A facsimile of this edition is also available as volumes 1–8 of *The Clarissa Project*, ed. Florian Stuber (New York: AMS Press, 1990).