'A CHIEF STANDARD WORK': THE RISE AND FALL OF DAVID HUME'S HISTORY OF ENGLAND. 1754-c.1900.

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Abstract.

This thesis examines the influence of David Hume's History of England during the century of its greatest popularity. It explores how far the long-term fortunes of Hume's text matched his original aims for the work. Hume's success in creating a classic popular narrative is demonstrated, but is contrasted with the History's failure to promote the polite 'coalition of parties' he wished for. Whilst showing that Hume's popularity contributed to tempering some of the teleological excesses of the 'whig version' of English history, it is stressed that his work signally failed in dampening 'Whig'/'Tory' conflict. Rather than provide a new frame of reference for British politics, as Hume had intended, the History was absorbed into national political culture as a 'Tory' text - with important consequences for Hume's general reputation as a thinker.

The twin themes, then, around which the thesis develops, are the reasons for the History's phenomenal success, and the party-politicised nature of its reputation. These developments are shown to have been closely related, and were both accentuated by the British reaction to the French Revolution. Hume's prominent role as a party totem in literary periodicals is highlighted, but his actual influence on early nineteenth-century 'Tory' historians is shown to have been shallow alongside varieties of Whig 'compromise' with his work, which are
followed from late eighteenth-century compilation histories, through the works of Hallam and his contemporaries, to mid nineteenth-century children's histories. The decline in Whig/Tory partisanship in the literary world of the later nineteenth century is shown to have contributed to the History's declining relevance. Ironically, the 'Tory' reputation which frustrated Hume's supra-party intentions for his History can be seen to have been crucial in maintaining its central role in British political culture for over a century.
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Introduction.

The writing of English history in late Hanoverian and early Victorian Britain was overshadowed by the resounding success enjoyed by David Hume's *History of England*. From shortly after its publication in the mid-eighteenth century, Hume's text acquired an intimidating stature. This was maintained through to the second quarter of the nineteenth - the *History* being commonly regarded in this period as the 'standard work' on the subject. The effect this had on ways in which the national past was commonly interpreted is especially interesting, given that Hume himself had clearly defined ambitions for his *History*. He had designed the work to encourage a distaste for political enthusiasms and pointless party conflict among the English public, by undermining the dangerous idealism inspired by Whig worship of the 'ancient constitution', as well as the 'divine right' theories associated with the Tories. This thesis examines the ways in which British political culture resisted many elements of Humean history, whilst absorbing others, over the course of the century when it stood as English history's central narrative.

Hume's distaste for 'patriotism', his pro-French cultural sympathies, and cool attitude towards English 'liberties' make him seem an odd candidate for 'standard' historian in an era when whiggish history enjoyed something of a golden age. These, and other paradoxes surrounding his
reputation as a historical writer have deterred serious investigation of it, whilst Namierite scorn for study of the meanings of 'Toryism' in a late eighteenth-century context has similarly contributed to discourage examination of the fortunes of a text which contemporaries regarded as a key 'Tory' work. Questions obviously need to be answered concerning how influential the History actually was, and whether it was influential in the ways in which Hume had intended it to be.

It seems especially apt to ask such questions now, when after a long period of critical neglect the study of Hume's History has begun to attract serious attention again. Forbes's Hume's Philosophical Politics opened the way for a serious reconsideration of the History's place in Hume's philosophical system, and books by Wexler and Phillipson have examined the internal structure of the work, and its relation to Hume's literary career in detail.¹ This revived interest has taken place over a wide academic front: literary scholars have advanced our understanding of how Hume's work related to the conventions of the contemporary world of polite letters; political philosophers have shown the coherence of thought between the History and Hume's Essays; and historians have furthered our understanding of Hume's Scottish

Enlightenment context.²

Less examination, however, has been devoted to the study of the reception and subsequent influence of Hume's History. Mossner's scouring of contemporary journals for his monumental Life of David Hume has usually been taken as sufficient. For example, a recent 'Eng. Lit.' approach to Hume's reception - Christensen's Practicing Enlightenment - produced nothing new in terms of primary material.³ Yet, as this thesis will show, there is a good deal of relevant matter beyond that explored by Mossner, to further our understanding of the status of Hume's History, and its important long-term impact on the writing of British history.

The lack of work on Hume's historical reputation is related to our deficient understanding of British historiography as a whole in the late Hanoverian era. The fact that the standard account of this subject is still T.P. Peardon's very broad study The Transition in English Historical Writing, 1760-1830 (1933), shows how this period has suffered neglect relative to the much-studied Victorian heyday of Macaulay and Carlyle. The later nineteenth

² Prominent examples include J.C. Hilson, 'Hume, the Historian as Man of Feeling,' in Augustan Worlds, ed. J.C. Hilson, M.M.B. Jones & J.R. Watson (Leicester, 1978), pp. 205-22; M.A. Box, The Suasive Art of David Hume (Princeton, 1990), is very interesting on Hume as polite writer, but unfortunately does not consider the History; D. Miller, Philosophy and Ideology in Hume's Political Thought (Oxford, 1981); R.B. Sher, Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment. The Moderate Literati of Edinburgh (Edinburgh, 1985).

century has also been better served, having recently inspired a number of fine academic biographies of historians, and treatments of the professionalisation of historical study. What biographical studies there are for the earlier period, like Peter Clark's *Henry Hallam*, suffer from a lack of detailed knowledge of the wider historiographical context - such as the manner in which events were treated in the vast array of popular historical literature not written by the standard names of 'high' historiography. This deficiency is all the more serious because of the close relationship between historical writing and political debate in this period. In particular, historiographical study is central to attaining a nuanced understanding of the shifting meanings of 'Whig' and 'Tory' over these years, embedded as these concepts were in differing interpretations of the national past. Hopefully, this study provides a new perspective on the golden age of 'whig' history, through a concentration on its 'enemy' and perceived anti-type - Hume's version - and the shifting meanings of its 'Tory' reputation.

Examining this involves combining a political focus with the widest possible contextualisation of the ways in which English history was conceived in the late Georgian and early Victorian periods. It involves studying popular and children's histories alongside the 'classics', like Hallam and Macaulay, as well as historical themes in the arts, and the use of historical argument in political

* P. Clark, *Henry Hallam* (Boston, 1982).
debate and periodicals. Such a catholic approach is the best way to further our understanding of the manner in which the deep historicism of British political discourse contributed to patriotism and political stability through this era - and of how the much-mentioned, but seldom analysed, 'triumph' of Whig history in the mid-nineteenth century ought to be interpreted.

Such an approach need not imply that each text studied is equally important or significant. An argument by a major writer was likely to be much more widely read through a thorough distribution in the reviews and papers, as well as being likely to possess more cogency than some of the productions of comparative 'hacks'. Yet the hurried inconsistencies of second and third-rate authors can sometimes be more revealing for our purposes than the carefully-turned phrases of a Macaulay or a Mill, since they more effectively lay bare the complexities and confusions in later audience's relations with Hume's reputations as 'Tory' historian, 'liberal' political writer and 'infidel' philosopher.

The widest possible comparison of materials has therefore been pursued. A survey of contemporary historical literature has been supplemented by looking at reviews of works dealing with Hume in different periodicals, and at various editions of encyclopaedias, biographical dictionaries and histories of English literature - the latter being a very rich, though previously neglected, historiographical source for the nineteenth century.
Complete comprehensiveness would be impossible - but hopefully all major shades of opinion have been represented. The initial result was necessarily confusing and kaleidoscopic, but broad trends in the treatment of the History can be identified, and such a wide-ranging approach needs to be attempted if a different perspective on Hume's reputation is to be achieved than can be gained by an exclusive focus on 'high' criticism by great names. Given that Hume's purpose was to reach a wider audience than previous serious historians - and given that he succeeded so spectacularly - only the broadest possible sampling of the mass of material relating to the History can do its impact justice.

However, some limitations in the scope of the thesis must be noted. Much less attention has been paid to Hume's writing and subsequent revision of the History than would have been necessary had these subjects not received much recent attention. It must also be made clear that the work is primarily a study of critical opinion, rather than a publishing history. Although details of the work's publications, its advertising and presentation, have certainly not been ignored here, more work certainly remains to be done in this area.

The structure of this study is broadly chronological, with each chapter containing several thematic sub-sections. The thesis moves from a broad consideration of the History's 'contemporary' impact up to
the 1790s, then divides to consider its relations with critics on either side of the ideological split the French Revolution helped produce, before looking widely again at its nineteenth-century reputation and concluding with a study of the popularisations, illustrations and continuations which grew up around it over the whole period under consideration.

Chapter one, then, concerns itself with the History's British reception until the French Revolution. It studies Hume's own attitude towards criticism, and the effects his responses to it had in moulding his posthumous reputation as an historian. Critiques of Hume's work, and its usage in other late eighteenth-century histories of England are also analysed, and it is argued that Hume's influence was an important component of a general shift towards a more pro-monarchical version of 'Whig' history, from the 1760s onwards. This made it a target of abuse for radical and opposition Whig groupings, but also for ministerialists who wished to preserve their 'Whig' credentials, whilst in fact taking on elements of Hume's analysis. Hume's extreme bitterness towards Whiggery, it is argued, is only wholly comprehensible if it is realized that he received scant credit in his lifetime for helping to supply the basis of a conservative Whig historical orthodoxy - centring around a qualified defence of Charles I - which consolidated itself in the later 1760s and 1770s, against the background of the Wilkes affair and the American crisis. This chapter also considers the reasons
behind Hume's popularity, focusing especially on the appeal of his style, and examines the links between the major works of later eighteenth-century History criticism, rooted in the culture of rational dissent, and those of the early nineteenth century, which were spearheaded by the Whigs of the Edinburgh Review.

Chapter two looks at the effect of the crisis of the 1790s on the way in which Hume's History was perceived, and examines its appeal to the revived 'Toryism' of the early nineteenth century. It follows the complex process whereby a work which inspired Paine and Godwin acquired, by the 1820s, a totemic status for commentators of the 'Right' in the Quarterly Review and Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine. Also examined are the critiques of the History which emanated from the 'anti-Enlightenment' engendered by the French Revolution. Evangelical distaste for the work is discussed, alongside the opposition of conservative corporatists like Burke and Coleridge, and recipients of German philosophical influences like the Liberal Anglican historians and Carlyle. For all these figures, Hume's denial of the spiritual element in the story of England's development was of more pressing concern than his mere political 'sins'.

Chapter three analyses the History's relationship with early nineteenth-century Whiggism, looking at the tensions involved in the Edinburgh Review grouping's attempts to square the scientific whiggism of the Scottish tradition of Smith and Millar with the 'vulgar' whiggism of
English political culture, and the classical narrative preferred by Fox. The limited nature of their success in this venture was made all the more galling by their infuriation with the way Hume's text, 'Tory' as they thought it, was regarded by large sections of the public as having already satisfactorily provided the reconciliation they were seeking between different historical styles. The varying levels of antipathy shown by different Whig writers at various points of time towards the History are examined, and a more complex picture emerges than the customary story of a unitary opposition stretching from Fox, through to Hallam and Russell, before triumphing with Macaulay.

Chapter four studies the History's nineteenth-century reputation, examining the reasons behind the maintainance of its popularity, and the forces which led to its decline. Special attention is given to the 1840s - when Hume suffered a precipitate drop in popular esteem stemming from a sharp, if temporary, vogue for highly dramatic historical narrative, furthered by the works of Carlyle and Macaulay. However, the chapter emphasises a notable critical revival in the History's fortunes in the later nineteenth century, which other commentators have missed, and analyses its political and cultural causes.

Finally, chapter five looks at some of the History's by-products over the century of its supremacy - illustrations, continuations and popularisations. It examines how they affected the work's image, and reflected changing public perceptions of the History. The section on
continuations includes a detailed study of Smollett's reputation as Hume's prime 'continuator', along with an analysis of the multitude of 'continuations of Hume and Smollett' which were made available - looking particularly at their political complexion as it related to the public's perceptions of the historical work they were appended to. The study of popularisations of Hume, as well as discussing abridgments of his text, assesses the extent to which it influenced children's and popular histories more broadly.

In conclusion, we will return to the question of Hume's intentions, and assess the History's fate in relation to his original plans for it. As he was a philosopher who sought to make a difference in the way English public life was conceived, such an evaluation must be central to an understanding of the nature of his achievement in his own terms.
Chapter One. 'Reproach, disapprobation, and even detestation'? Contemporary criticism and usage of Hume's 'History' before the French Revolution.

Introduction.

In the decades between its faltering debut in the 1750s and the outbreak of the French Revolution, David Hume's six-volume History of England established itself as the leading authority on the national past in the public mind, and as a keystone of British political culture. The British response to the History during this period seems to be a subject which has been curiously neglected - especially when one considers that there exists a thirty year-old monograph on the French reaction during the same period, and a fairly thorough account of the work's impact on opinion-forming Americans in the era of the War of Independence.¹ Interest in Hume the historian in his British context has perhaps revolved too tightly around the vexed questions surrounding Hume's own intentions, to do proper justice to his contemporary detractors. Their uninformed views on his motives have provided a justifiable target for those interested in rescuing Hume from an overly-simplistic, two century-long reputation as a 'Tory' historian. However, the dismissiveness of Forbes towards those unable to grasp the philosophical presuppositions

behind Hume's relativistic 'bi-focal vision' of English history, has perhaps helped to spread an assumption - particularly among historians of political thought - that responses to Hume's work other than those by writers who 'understood' him, like Millar, are unworthy of study. ²

Even less attention has been paid to how Hume's work was used by lesser known historians, or to what extent his rehabilitation of Charles I fitted into current political and historiographical trends. Forbes's comparative survey of historical works in Hume's Philosophical Politics was groundbreaking, but rather narrow, focusing as it did only on weighty texts of 'high' historiography.³ By widening the basis of comparison to include more ephemeral material, the political meanings that Hume's text assumed for late eighteenth-century readers can be comprehended more distinctly, and the sources of the widespread misunderstandings surrounding the History's reception can be better understood. I would argue that such misreadings are worth investigating in detail for what they can tell us about late eighteenth-century assumptions about the nature of English history - and that Hume's image as historian, his totemic role as bogeyman for all who thought themselves 'Whigs', is as worthy a subject for study as the more

² See, for example, D. Forbes, 'Introduction' to D. Hume, The History of Great Britain (London, 1970), p. 37. Phillipson, on the other hand, has recently stressed the importance of studying 'popular British historical culture' in the half-century following the History's publication, if Hume's influence is to be properly assessed. Hume (London, 1989), p. 138.

traditional exercise of reconstructing how he intended his History to be read.

This is not to say that I would consider it either possible or desirable to completely rule out discussion of what Hume himself desired to get across - as Bongie did in his study of the History's French reception. Such an approach can easily enough be followed in Hume's case so as to lead to a simple 'death of the author' argument - as has been shown in the concluding chapter of Graeme Paul Slater's recent Eng. Lit. thesis, Authorship and Authority in Hume's 'History of England'. As against this, however, in the first section of this chapter, I argue that Hume himself played a crucial role in fashioning his long-standing reputation as a 'Tory' historian, and look at the manner in which his reactions to criticism and to the History's initial reception built up to a deliberate undermining of his earlier intentions for the work. This culminated in his public acceptance of the 'Tory' role in his autobiographical essay, My Own Life.

The second and third sections help to explain why Hume should have grown so infuriated with Whiggery. He received very little credit for the fact that many of his manoeuvres aimed at creating a view of English history suitable to sustain a conservative Whig establishment were increasingly attractive to many writers as the decades of the Wilkes and American crises progressed. I argue that the

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reputation of Hume's *History* was a victim of the continuing strains involved in Whig history's attempts to adapt itself into a pro-executive creed. As the author of one of the most extreme examples of this trend, and as a Scottish 'alien', Hume was the perfect target both for those opposition Whigs and radicals who wished to attack the historiographical drift towards greater loyalism, and for those 'court' Whigs who were uncomfortable with the same developments even as they furthered them, and who wished to stress their 'Whiggishness' even as they became increasingly monarchical in their inclinations. Attacks on Hume served to externalise the threat of encroaching 'Toryism', and ensured that future commentators would regard him as having been further from the historiographical mainstream in the late-eighteenth century than he actually was.

Section four examines aspects of the *History*'s late eighteenth-century popularity aside from the political, and helps explain why the commentators examined in the last two sections should have seen it as such a threat. I show that this was never a matter of awe in Hume's scholarship, but rested on the power of Hume's style in a limited marketplace for literature which placed great importance on 'politeness' - a quality which Hume was regarded as having captured in a genre where it was very rare. That Hume's was always an historical supremacy based on stylistic effect more than scholarly content is important in understanding his continuing nineteenth-century historiographical
centrality, as shall be seen in chapter four. The present chapter though, concludes with an assessment of the legacy which eighteenth-century Hume critics left their nineteenth-century heirs. Long-term continuity in the parameters of the debate on the History is stressed - despite the disturbing effects on Hume's image evident in the 1790s, which are examined at length in the next chapter.

1. 'Miserable was my disappointment': Hume and the criticism of his 'History'.

David Hume's History of England, his last and longest work, had a long gestation - although many of the details concerning how it came to be written remain unknown. What does seem clear is that Hume approached the writing of history both as a means of gaining influence for his political philosophy, and as a source of pecuniary profit in order to secure a longed-for 'independence'. The public failure of his Treatise of Human Nature had greatly disappointed him, and the reception of his later works - even his relatively successful Essays - had not met up to his expectations. The History of England was designed as a vehicle for gaining the ideas contained in his political essays a wider dissemination, in an attractive narrative form. The work embodied Hume's distaste for metaphysical idealism, as seen in his philosophy, and applied it to popular 'misconceptions' concerning the nature of British politics. In this sense, the History represented the
culmination of Hume's campaign against the Englishman's dogmatic belief in the strength of his 'native liberties'. Like the Walpolean propagandists of the 1730s before him, Hume sought to strengthen the British establishment by persuading the reading public that English liberty was the fragile product of the Revolution settlement, the imperfections of which had to be understood in terms of its own immediate context - not in the glare of teleological Whiggish assertions about immemorial freedoms. What precursors modern liberty might have had in preceding periods were the transient products of accident, rather than the working-out of some kind of native genius for freedom.

In the first volume, on the early Stuarts, published in 1754, he sought to exorcise the divisive ghosts of the early seventeenth-century, which he considered to be the guiding spirits of those pernicious 'parties of principle' - 'divine right' Tories as well as Whigs - whose senseless conflict threatened to destabilize the post-revolutionary order. In later volumes he set out to wean the middling classes from other irrational beliefs

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6 Linda Colley, however, in *In Defiance of Oligarchy: The Tory Party, 1714-60* (Cambridge, 1982), p. 115, has argued that 'Hume was wrong' to believe that by the mid-eighteenth century the Tory party still owed its distinctive quality to its attachment to the House of Stuart. However, it is important for understanding why Hume was never a 'Tory' on his own terms, that he considered belief in the divine right of kings to be an essential quality of 'Toryism' - even if he was rather out of date in doing so.
- like the nostalgia for the 'golden age' of Queen Elizabeth, which had been central to Bolingbroke's opposition 'patriot' platform. Finally, in the last parts of the *History* to be published, in 1761 on the medieval period, he employed Brady's scholarship to attack the 'ancient constitution' itself - disparaging Anglo-Saxon liberties, emphasizing the importance of the Norman Conquest and stressing the relatively late origin of parliament. Hume believed that polite discourse on British politics, and a realistic attitude towards the role of party, would be furthered if a common-sense consensus on the recent and fragile nature of English liberties could be constructed.

History-writing was obviously the perfect vehicle for the wide propagatation of these lessons, and Hume believed that the moment was perfect for a true classical narrative of the English past to establish a hold upon a reading public which considered it axiomatic that 'every man is supposed to be provided with an English history'.

Against the mere 'compilers', like Rapin, who preceded him, Hume stressed the arts of abbreviation and literary skill. He also judged that, by the 1750s, the time was increasingly ripe for a history that was genuinely politically impartial. As he worked on the first volume to be published, on the reigns of the early Stuarts, his hopes were high that the scale of his success would match up to the grandeur of his aims.

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7 *Critical Review*, vol. 5 (1758), p. 90.
His initial attitude towards criticism reflected this air of optimism. In letters to friends as the History was published, Hume openly requested criticism and encouraged differing opinions of his work. Promoting polite discussion of the national past was part of Hume's plan to desacralise and relativise it. He wanted to break down the Whig monopoly on historical truth to allow a free play of discussion. Besides, controversy might be good for sales, and, if it came from all sides of the political spectrum, invest the victim with a greater reputation for impartiality. Criticism of his style was warmly welcomed, for Hume was as anxious as any contemporary North Briton with literary ambition to erase Scoticisms. If a change of fact was found to be necessary, he declared at one point, then he would glory in the retraction of error.

In his attitude towards rival historians he was markedly generous by contemporary standards. To those treating the same subject matter as himself, he showed far less jealousy than he received from them in return. He deprecated the proprietorial attitude towards the post-Revolution period displayed by Mallet when the latter was working on his History of the Duke of Marlborough. Hume sought to work with Robertson in the field of the sixteenth-century Scottish past, taking pleasure in the thought that people would enjoy comparing the two histories.

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- as contrasted with Robertson's unhappiness about their two treatments, (The History of the Tudors and The History of Scotland), appearing so closely together.\(^{10}\) He promoted his countryman Robert Henry's History of Great Britain - though much of its research superseded his own.\(^{11}\) Even towards Smollett's 'spoiler' history, Hume maintained an attitude of outward, if strained, good humour.\(^{12}\) The logic of Hume's desire to abbreviate and interpret seems in retrospect to make his work a decisive break with the 'definitive' histories of England which preceded his. Whereas their s had been the histories of England, Hume's scepticism would seem to dictate that he should view his as only being one version of the history of England, even if he regarded it as coming closer to an objective viewpoint than any previously. As things turned out, however, Hume had to defend the right to differ under conditions less propitious for such relativism than he had anticipated. Under the circumstances, it seems difficult to blame him if


his dissention became somewhat dogmatic.

When confronted with mobbish Whiggism, the fervent worship of Mary Queen of Scots, or irate Irish pride, the polite discussion Hume desired easily disintegrated into a trade of crude insults. To Hume, those who held such allegiances were 'beyond the reach of argument or reason', and 'must be left to their prejudices'. Generally, Hume kept his resolution not to answer criticism which he felt was commonly so wrongly motivated - a resolution which went along with a desire to keep matters impersonal. The reactions of Horace Walpole and Catharine Macaulay to anonymous criticism by Hume of the former, and an answer in a private letter to the latter, shows that this was probably the most sensible policy to pursue, given the heated sentiments his History evoked. Previously Walpole, while privately abhorring the History, had been full of praise for Hume's historical skills in correspondence to him, and tolerably polite towards him in his Historic Doubts on the Reign of Richard the Third. After criticisms by Hume on this work were appended to an article by Gibbon, Walpole vented his spleen in a long and typically acid dissection of Hume's case against his identification of Perkin Warbeck, which, equally typically, was not to be published until after his death. Macaulay, meanwhile,


seems to have sent Hume's letter to a co-operative periodical, which supported her against the arguments in Hume's friendly, if rather patronising, note of acknowledgment for the copy of her History she had sent him. Hume abhorred the printing of his correspondence, and presumably would have especially objected to its appearance in a patriotic London journal.

Earlier, the Monthly Review's pointed denial of the title of 'gentleman' to Hume was a visible example of what he would have viewed as Whig incivility. Although reviews of the History in periodicals were far from bad, we have the evidence of Smollett to back up Hume's bitter recollections in My Own Life that it initially aroused much adverse comment in society. The disastrous sales of the first volume before Hume switched publisher to Andrew Millar, must also have rankled - the work having fallen victim to the monopolistic world of London publishing's antipathy to Hume's first Scottish publisher. The greater initial success of Smollett's motley work, dedicated to the 'Vandal' Pitt, must have helped to confirm Hume's feelings that the English public were simply unable to appreciate the polite qualities his work embodied. As late as 1764, John Mortimer referred to Smollett as 'the favourite


historian of the present age'. The slow take-up of Hume's History seems to have affected him badly after all his former literary disappointments. His bitterness showed in the way he overstated the damning nature of its reception in his autobiography - and this no doubt reflected disappointment at a widespread failure of comprehension. Later, when Hume recognised the History's growing success, he attributed it to the increasing acceptability of its politics rather than allowing to the public a greater appreciation of its stylistic qualities, though both factors seem to have been operative by the later 1760s and 1770s.

The only critic, however, to receive an answer in a revised edition of the History itself, was a Scot - William Tytler - whose An Inquiry, Historical and Critical, into the Evidence against Mary Queen of Scots was a special case since Hume objected very strongly to its open accusations of lying - feelings presumably not alleviated by the work's sizeable success and influence against Hume's anti-Mary case. A page-long note, however, was certainly not going to assuage the minutiae-loving Marians. Whitaker was very abusive about it in his 1,200 page long Vindication, as was Tytler in revised editions of his work. In his arguments on the casket letters however, Hume refused to correct

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anything of substance. On the 1641 Irish massacre, he did correct his estimate of protestant deaths, but only slightly and evidently grudgingly, since he later changed it back in a further revision. The tone of works like that of O'Halloran, accusing Hume of ignoring the rules of polite discourse, could only have further discouraged Hume from any fundamental change, and helps explain why his attitude towards criticism of his History became less evidently positive in practise than might have been expected from his general philosophy of history, or scattered comments in his letters.

Illustrations of Hume's attitude towards correction include his well-intended note on the earl of Northumberland's medieval housekeeping, which followed Percy's polite request that Hume make his ancestor look less parsimonious by a clear explanation of the economic context of his expenditure. As Greig points out, the limited extent of the correction could hardly have wholly

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20 J. Whitaker, Mary Queen of Scots Vindicated (London, 1787), vol. 1, pp. v-vi; W. Tytler, An Inquiry, Historical and Critical, into the Evidence Against Mary Queen of Scots (London, 1790), vol. 2, pp. 341-374. For the Inquiry's immediate critical success at Hume's expense, see the comments in The Scots' Magazine, vol. 22 (1760), pp. 110-12, 390-2, 557-60, including extracts from the Monthly and Critical reviews.


22 S. O'Halloran, An Introduction to the Study of the History and Antiquities of Ireland: in which the assertions of Mr Hume and other writers are occasionally considered. (London, 1772), pp. 276-84, 366.
satisfied the Percy family. Similarly, the criticisms of Hume's friend William Mure were greeted with 'uneasyness', after having been eagerly requested. Here, Hume blamed Whig hostility to the volume, which had soured his mind to criticism. The letter where Hume writes of his concern that Dyson, the clerk to the House of Commons, had supposedly identified many mistakes in his history, is interesting. He was happy that the criticisms involved were of what he described as 'Reasonings & Views', and that the only error of fact involved was in a comment on William's reign which he had not fully studied. The many corrections which Mossner has enumerated in revisions of the History are generally stylistic or minor interpretative changes involving particular phrases, rather than facts as such.

Hostility to fundamental change came partly from the fact that the realities of London literary life pushed Hume into a position of defensiveness universal among historians, as described here by Horace Walpole: 'when an author has compiled our annals, I find he looks on the whole history of England as his property. It is an invasion of his freehold to contest a single fact that he has

occupied.' Hume's conviction of the transparency of his 'Candor, Disinterestedness & Humanity' was reflected in his clear, simple style, and in his releasing the first volume without any footnotes. After such openness, he was genuinely 'surprised' by the force of the refusal to take him at his word shown by 'factious barbarians'. Whilst this fear declined at the time of George III's accession, it came back stronger than ever by 1763, with anti-Scottish feeling in London increasing his disgust for the reading public of the metropolis. That there was a certain bloody-mindedness in Hume's attitude towards 'Whig' versions of history by his death is demonstrated by the passage in 'My Own Life', a work appended to every subsequent edition of the History, where he famously boasted of having made his corrections 'invariably to the Tory side' - which he must have known his critics would take as a confession of partiality. Immediately picked up on as such by Joseph Towers and the Gentleman's Magazine, and by numerous Whig critics afterwards, this was calculated to be provocative. Motivated by the desire to show his

27 H. Walpole, Historic Doubts, p. 131.


29 Shortly before Hume's death, and the writing of My Own Life, John Home recorded that 'a subject not unfrequent with him' was 'the design to ruin him as an author, by the people that were ministers, at the first publication of his history; and called themselves Whigs, who, he said, were determined not to suffer truth to be told in Britain.' The Works of John Home, Esq. (Edinburgh, 1822), vol. 1, p. 175.

unconcern for mobbish clamour, Hume wished to demonstrate how little their cries had affected his continued impartiality. The force of the reaction against him made him all the less likely to engage in any constructive dialogue with Whig critics. The wish to show that his historical practise was unswayed by popular pressure saw Hume co-operating in the construction of his 'Tory historian' image - this despite his stated intention to exorcise the shades of both the 'parties of principle', Whigs and Tories.

A further reason for Hume's reluctance to make fundamental changes was the fact that the work was a carefully constructed work of literature. He had freely adopted 'vulgar Tory' sources, such as Perrinchief's The Royal Martyr, for effect, in drawing his picture of Charles I as a sentimental hero. Concern for literary effect was also partly behind his limited use in later editions of the History of the important findings he made in James II's memoirs on the later Stuarts' transactions with the French court. After stating that he would make changes to show that he had been too sympathetic towards these monarchs, he limited major correction on this score to a single note.\(^3\)

203-4. That Hume's 'Tory' reputation was fully secure by the time of his death is illustrated well by his role in the 1777 publication, Dialogues in the Shades, wherein he achieves a posthumous sense of contrition for 'the crooked politics in which I imprudently wandered'. (p. 23).


Whilst certainly not afraid of rewriting, Hume's polishings were mostly stylistic in nature. Where they affected his argument, they tended towards honing his anti-Whig interpretation - partly because of Hume's growing personal spleen against the Whigs, and partly because 'divine right' Toryism, which Hume regarded as the only 'Toryism' worth the name, seemed less and less a threat. Whatever the precise balance of motivation, Hume's revisions - and his claims about their anti-Whig nature in his biography - certainly provided more fuel for widespread claims that his was a narrowly 'Tory' work.

2. 'A generous tear for the fate of Charles I': Hume and the politics of church and state.

Hume was greatly affronted by claims that he was guilty of what he termed 'the most terrible ism of them all, that of Jacobitism'. Against the implications of Hurd's attack in his Moral and Political Dialogues, Hume was happy to assert that his writings as a whole, which included the essay 'On Passive Obedience', proved him to be no Jacobite. The charge, though, appears to have been a

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33 I agree to a large extent with the views of Wexler, Okie and Slater that Mossner and Forbes were perhaps too keen to deny any 'unphilosophical' political bias in Hume's views - particularly his later views. However the latter two writers were undoubtedly right in portraying Hume as no Tory on his own terms - which as we have seen involved a sacred view of monarchy. See V. Wexler, David Hume and the History of England, p. 21; L. Okie, 'Ideology and Partiality in David Hume's History of England', Hume Studies, vol. 11 (1985), pp. 1-27; G.P. Slater Authorship and Authority, passim.

common one - linked as it was to strong anti-Scottish sentiment at the time of the History's publication, which was fanned by Wilkes. Antagonism towards Hume as a 'North British' supporter of tyranny is best understood against the background of the Bute affair - with all the pent-up charges of revived Scottish despotism attacking native English liberties then released. Hurd, as we have seen, thought that Hume's defence of the Stuarts had 'brought disgrace' on the History because of its Jacobitical implications. Charles Churchill attacked Hume's Scottish, 'Jacobitical' history-writing in verse in the mid 1760s.

For a Wilkesite attack on Hume as 'a foreigner', whose History amused 'the most ingenious of the present Tories, who take to reading', see A Letter from Candor, to the Public Advertiser, 2nd. ed. (London, 1764), pp. 48-51.

Linda Colley, Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837 (New Haven and London, 1992), pp. 101-132. Colley is particularly helpful in illuminating the tensions which caused the outbreak of Scotophobia in the 1760s. She diagnoses that it was 'the fact that the barriers between England and Scotland were coming down, savage proof that Scots were acquiring power and influence within Great Britain to a degree previously unknown', which caused its extremism (p. 121). This fits well with the existence of a new British historiographical dominance by Scots - Hume, Robertson and Smollett - which many English literary elements reacted badly to. This can be illustrated by the following passage from the preface to William Rider's A New History of England (London, 1761): 'The author being almost the only Englishman, that has lately attempted the history of England; it is not doubted but those whose hearts are truly patriotic will countenance an undertaking, which has no other view but the glory of England, no other motive but the information of Englishmen, and no other end, but that of rescuing the character of this kingdom from the misrepresentations of foreigners, or the misconstructions of partiality.' (vol. 1, p. xiv). Chapter 4 of Gerald Newman's The Rise of English Nationalism: A Cultural History, 1740-1830 (London, 1987), also provides some stimulating contextualisation - but it is a pity he insists on treating Smollett as if he were an unproblematic mouthpiece of an English viewpoint.

As late as 1785, a correspondent to the *Gentleman's Magazine* attacked Hume for his anti-constitutional attachment to 'that cursed race'. By the time of the *History's* publication, however, 'Jacobitism' had been a cant term of abuse for so long that its edge had been dulled. In January 1755, Elizabeth Montagu wrote to a friend that she was afraid the *History* would 'promote Jacobitism', but she added that 'it is entertaining and lively and will amuse you'. Horace Walpole's reaction, seeing the *History* as part of a new Jacobite conspiracy, must be viewed as that of a man committed to extreme Whiggery:

> though the Jacobites are the only men who abuse outrageously that liberty of the press which all their labours tend to demolish, I would not have the nation lose such a blessing for their impertinences. That their spirit and projects revive, is certain. All the histories of England, Hume's ..., and Smollet's more avowedly, are calculated to whiten the House of Stuart - all the magazines are erected to depress writers of the other side - and as it has been learnt within these few days, France is preparing an army of commentators to illustrate the works of these professors.  

Even if they did not generally accuse Hume explicitly of Jacobitism, critics united in decrying his lenient treatment of the Stuarts. William Pepys was representative of a wide section of opinion in declaring that 'Hume's *History* should rather be known as "the Apology for the

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The Whig *Monthly Review* predictably took exception to Hume's being 'too indulgent to the characters of our weak and wicked princes', but the more sympathetic *Critical Review* agreed with them on this point. Hume had 'a weak side' for the Stuarts, Smollett declared in his review of the second volume, and in 1778 the reviewer dealing with Towers' *Observations on Hume's 'History of England'* chose not to defend Hume directly against the charge of having too much compassion for Charles I. Both the *Monthly* and the *Critical* thought Hume showed too much indulgence towards Charles II and his brother. This supposed partiality for the Stuarts led directly to the widely current, and not entirely accurate, conclusion, drawn by the reviewer of Towers's work in the *London Magazine*: 'The historian was strongly attached to monarchical systems of government, and would have preferred living under a despotic sovereign to being without a king.' This mirrored Horace Walpole's belief that if Hume had been made ruler of a state, 'one must presume at best

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that he would have been an able tyrant'.

Hume wrote that he had leaned towards 'Tory prejudices' in his 'representations of persons', but that his 'views of things' were 'more conformable to Whig principles' - adding that the reason for the adverse reaction to his work was that people commonly regarded 'persons' over 'things'. Elsewhere, he attacked his critics for putting too much stress on the supposed family-resemblances between the Stuarts in their assaults on them. Hume's critics in turn however, led by Hurd, felt that it was he who had confused persons and principles, out of an ill-judged tenderness for Charles I which reached out to affect his treatment of his father and sons, and beyond that to warp his view of the nature of the English constitution as a whole. Hume was charged with selective quotation or ignorance of evidence that told against the 'unconstitutional' precepts favourable to prerogative which he had supposedly sought to propagate. Obviously, Hume had not foreseen the ferocity of the reaction he would provoke by asking readers to 'shed a generous tear' for Charles I.

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47 J.Y.T. Greig, ed., Letters, vol. 1, p. 237. This was a rather disingenuous excuse, since Hume had deliberately employed this psychological insight to further his own argument - evoking sympathy for Charles I as a person to encourage his readers to reconsider the rights and wrongs of his constitutional position.


Even Goldsmith, the most staunch of monarchists, saw fit to distance himself from his main source in the preface to his History of England, describing Hume as unfortunately having been too favourable towards kings.⁵⁰

Such sentiments could only have been strengthened by the ease with which parts of Hume's arguments slotted into William Smith's apologia for divine right, The Nature and Institution of Government, published in 1771. That he had relied heavily on Hume for sections of the work was realised by both the Critical and Monthly reviews.⁵¹ Only the Critical, though, seems to have realised the unHumean nature of the divine right, high prerogative argument which Hume's arguments about Elizabethan 'absolutism', and his defence of Charles I were being used to bolster. Smith altered Hume's tone, even in the sections where he followed his text most closely, so that it was more unquestioningly favourable to 'the good king', Charles I.⁵² Unlike Hume, or Clarendon for that matter, Smith did not make a distinction between the acceptability of the early and later measures of the Long Parliament - undoubtedly there was no 'bi-focal vision' here. Equally, his unquestioningly happy account of the Restoration, the true 'glorious revolution', was

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different in emphasis from Hume's. In fact, Smith's work presented the kind of high-Tory version of the past which Hume had aimed to undermine as much as the triumphalist Whig version. This would not, however, have prevented the browsing reader from merely noticing the parts of Hume's work which reminded them of the kind of arguments previously associated with non-juror histories, like John Lindsay's popular Brief History of England, which enjoyed a second edition as late as 1763.

Certainly, in the 1750s, the seventeenth-century Stuarts were still a live political issue. When Henry Fox wished to split the opposition in 1754, the year the early Stuart volume of Hume's work was first published, he advanced the abolition of the 30 January commemoration as a measure which would divide opposition Whigs from Tories. Gradually though, a change was occurring, which accelerated in the 1760s with the disintegration of a separate Tory force. Hume's 'generous tear' for Charles I and Strafford was soon far from exceptional - and his apologies for these figures were used in a variety of

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56 For the disintegration of Toryism, see I.R. Christie, 'Party in Politics in the Age of Lord North's Administration', Parliamentary History, vol. 6 (1987), pp. 47-64.
histories of England before the 1790s, where a patchwork technique of piecing together sections of other histories was the standard method of composition. Smollett was only the first to use Hume's narrative of Charles's reign extensively, and the influence of his work helped to ensure the presence of Hume's arguments in others. Seymou's 1764 work and Clarendon's 1768 one used Hume's character of Charles I. Mountague in 1771 and Russel in the late '70s, treat Hume's defence only as providing mitigating circumstances, but Sydney in 1775 employed it in full, down to the story of Charles sleeping through the sound of the construction of his scaffold. In the same decade, Goldsmith's highly successful history adopted the Humean defence for Charles that the old constitutional rules had become outdated, and that he did not realise he had to adapt them to a new situation. This section of Goldsmith's work seems to have been used by John Wesley in

57 G.P. Slater has noted how Smollett's treatment of Charles I's reign simplifies and truncates the language and interpretations of Hume, Order and Authority, pp. 249-253.


his History of England. Raymond’s 1787 defence of Strafford may also be mentioned as having been similarly inspired by Hume.

Hence The British Critic’s later analysis of the influence of Hume’s ‘apology’ for Charles I in the later eighteenth century might be regarded as broadly accurate:

When the House of Hanover became sufficiently established on the British throne, no encouragement was given to such wild theories (the original contract and the natural equality of man), and men began to reason more soberly on the origins of government and on the purposes which it is intended to serve. Among those writers, Hume appears to have been the first, who was at pains to do justice to the character of the ill-fated Charles; and since the appearance of his history, men have, in general, admitted the virtues of that monarch, and allowed, as an apology for the reprehensible part of his conduct, the peculiar circumstances in which he was placed.

Although overstated in its view of Hume as sole pioneer, (Guthrie was also important), and coloured by the even greater sympathy produced for executed monarchs by the French Revolution, this writer identified an important shift in attitudes towards Charles I which occurred around the time of George III’s accession, in which Hume’s History was the key text. Here Hume had helped engineer a post-


63 British Critic, vol. 27 (1806), p. 602. See also British Critic, 2nd. series, vol. 19 (1823), pp. 15-16: ‘Hume was the first who undertook to write the history of Charles, with any just claims to impartiality ... Reflection ... and the progress of moderate sentiments have induced the majority on both sides to adopt the conclusions of Hume.’
Jacobitism shift from the position of the Walpoleon propagandists, who had certainly not defended Charles I in their efforts to support the current executive. By the 1770s, a qualified defence of this monarch had become a standard feature of much Whig historical literature, and hence radical and opposition Whig attacks on Hume were all the more bitter. Wootton has drawn attention to the increase in the History's popularity brought about by the anti-Wilkes reaction, as noted by Hume himself in 1768:

"Licensiousness, or rather the frenzy of liberty, has taken possession of us, and is throwing everything into confusion. How happy do I esteem it, that in all my writings I have always kept at a proper distance from that tempting extreme, and have maintained a due regard to magistracy and established government, suitably to the character of an historian and a philosopher! I find on that account my authority growing daily; and indeed have now no reason to complain of the public."

The American revolution could only have increased this effect, with comparisons between the present government and Charles I's 'ship money' administration rife among pro-colonials on both sides of the Atlantic, making Hume's text all the more pertinent as a defence of the establishment.

The religious issues integral to such seventeenth-century parallels sharpened reactions to Hume's work. Non-anglicans were at the forefront of History criticism - their religious beliefs contributing strongly to their dislike of Hume's 'Toryism'. Catharine Macaulay and Joseph

Priestley were only the most notable examples of this tendency. Joseph Towers defended rational religion against Hume in his Observations on Mr. Hume's History of England, whilst William Harris was a keen apologist for the puritan cause against Hume's attempts to ridicule it. Meanwhile, in Scotland, the most concerted assault on the History came in the form of MacQueen's Observations on Mr. Hume's History of England - written as part of the campaign by traditionalist presbyterians to weaken moderate Scottish churchmen through their friendship with Hume. The work described 'the awful guilt' which Hume has contracted by insulting religion and treating it with indifference in the History. Hume's stance on early seventeenth-century politics was also criticised, but far more concisely than his treatment of religion which dominated Macqueen's comments. Both the Monthly and Critical Reviews strongly approved of the justness of Macqueen's criticisms on this score. It can be said that the pro-dissenter Monthly's general antagonism towards Hume was particularly marked by a dislike of his 'illiberal ideas on religion'. The second volume, in their review of it, won greater approval than the first, on the grounds that it contained 'none of those

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indecent excursions on the subject of religion'.

Anglican attitudes towards the work were mixed, but generally less hostile than those of rational dissenters. Gilpin's *Lives of the Reformers* berated Hume for his treatment of Wicliff, Cobham and Cranmer - although Gilpin maintained a relatively respectful tone towards 'Mr.' Hume than did most of his dissenter critics. Even more marked is the difference in tone between the treatment of Hume in Archibald Maclaine's notes to his translation of Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History*, and that of Towers's *Observations*. In the latter, Maclaine's criticism of Hume's attitude towards Luther was cited to bolster Towers's own case, attacking Hume's account of the Reformation. Maclaine, minister of the English Church at the Hague, was much more civil towards Hume, 'this elegant and persuasive historian', 'this elegant painter of minds'. Unlike Towers's very negative critique of the *History*, Maclaine actually cited Hume's comments on the High Commission Court, Laud, the independents, Newton and Hume's 'masterly'

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portrait of Henry VIII, to further his own arguments. Unlike Hume's dissenter critics, Maclaine recognised common ground between himself and another, if only de facto, defender of the Anglican establishment.

A precursor of the future vehement dislike towards the History shown by evangelicals, however, was seen in Bishop Porteus's explicit attack on it in a Charles I commemoration sermon. Elsewhere though, evidence that the History was regarded as perfectly respectable reading matter, even by another 'forerunner of the Evangelical movement', comes from the letters of the Rev. John Penrose, which were written with the intention of publication. In these he openly admits having borrowed the first volume for 'amusement' during a stay in Bath in 1766. According to Boswell, only the presence of Adam Smith's controversial letter about the serene manner of his friend's demise marred the History's suitability for young readers. He firmly distinguished between 'Mr Hume's excellent History of England' and 'what are called his Philosophical Works'. Here we see how Hume's avoidance of outright irreligion in the History obviously helped to bolster its

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polite success."

Indeed, the first recorded examples of praise for Hume's History from 'the powers that be' had come from the primates of England and Ireland, congratulating the author for the first volume of his History of Great Britain, on the reigns of the early Stuarts. Hume wrote, in My Own Life, that:

I scarcely, indeed, heard of one man in the three kingdoms, considerable for rank or letters, that could endure the book. I must only exclude the primate of England, Dr. Herring, and the primate of Ireland, Dr. Stone, which seem two odd exceptions. These dignified prelates separately sent me messages not to be discouraged."

The approval of George Stone, archbishop of Armagh, is easiest to comprehend. A highly politicised ecclesiastic, favourable towards toleration of Catholics, Hume's pragmatic portrayal of anglicanism might well have appealed to him. Known as a 'second Wolsey', he would presumably have appreciated Hume's relatively sympathetic portrait of the 'King's Cardinal' in a later volume."

Archbishop Herring was a Whig devoted to the interests of the Hanoverian family, and therefore his approval of Hume's 'sceptical Whig' tactic of defending the present

74 Though the passages which he expunged from the first edition continued to be cited against him by critics - e.g. J. Towers, (anon.), British Biography, vol. 2 (London, 1766), p. 369.

75 David Hume, 'My Own Life', in The History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution in 1688 (Indianapolis, 1983), vol. 1, p. xxxi.

establishment through a rehabilitation of the Stuarts is interesting, and in line with the future development of court Whiggery. His tolerance, distaste for theology and impassioned religious appeals, and stress on the practical aspects of religion, along with his evident dislike of anti-Tory prejudice, are all suggestive of why he should have written to support Hume. However, Herring was archbishop during the mid-century period when latitudinarianism was at its strongest in the episcopacy. His approval cannot be taken as unproblematic evidence for the sentiments of the late eighteenth-century hierarchy, which in George III's reign became more theologically conservative.

These bishops' attitude towards Hume's treatment of the early Stuarts can be tested through examining the commemoration sermons for Charles I delivered on January 30 every year to the Commons and Lords, which nearly always contained a general overview of the causes of the disputes which led to civil war. What follows is based on an


79 Robert Hole describes how the sermons were normally delivered by 'new arrivals on the bench', meaning 'that, as well as rapidly reflecting changes in the ideological complexion of the episcopal bench, the sermons were also the work of men still seeking preferment. Almost invariably they occupied junior sees and looked to those in political power to elevate them to more lucrative livings.', Pulpits, politics and public order in England 1760-1832 (Cambridge, 1989), p. 14. This makes them a
examination of the collection of these sermons for the period 1758 to 1810, held by the British Library. Though Hume's history of the early Stuarts was not the only source for the historical views expressed in these, its arguments do seem to have exercised a pervasive influence in setting the terms of discussion for many of the speakers. The sermons demonstrate how potentially congenial Hume's defence of Charles I could be to churchmen who wished to qualify their criticism of the 'martyr king'. Despite a prevalent Whiggishness, selected aspects of Hume's interpretation were adopted - though the result was usually somewhat confused.

Only one speaker - John Douglas, Bishop of Carlyle, in 1790 - actually cited Hume in favour of his arguments.** Elsewhere, when searching for the 'influence' of Hume's work without its being specifically mentioned, one obviously has to be careful to detach it from that of other historians - particularly, in this case, Clarendon, whom Hume relied on for much of his account. Clarendon was the historian most frequently referred to in the sermons, and via his account readers could absorb elements of the Humean view - in particular, a general approval of the early measures of the Long Parliament and a stress on the economic prosperity enjoyed during the years of Charles I's

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** J. Douglas, A Sermon Preached before the Lords ... on ... January 30, 1790 (London, 1790), p. 8.
'personal rule'. Hume's defence of Charles I, however - particularly in later editions of the History - was less qualified than Clarendon's, and more sympathetic towards his constitutional position. His unnostalgic, unrelentingly secular story had no place for an 'ancient constitution'.

One must also note the continued attention shown to Rapin - his account resembling Hume's in its attempt to be fair to both sides, though he favoured parliament as much as Hume favoured Charles. Some of the clerics were also able to cite authorities like Whitelock and Rushworth, though this too could take place within an interpretation that showed Humean influence.

Only a few of the speakers who made an attempt to discuss the early seventeenth-century failed to show signs of contact with Hume's interpretation - specifically his arguments about the constitutional instability of the period. Notable among these 'non-Humeans' were staunch

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81 E.g. R. Terrick, Sermon Preached before the House of Lords ... on ... January 30, 1758 (London, 1758), pp. 9-10; R. Hind, Sermon Preached before the Honourable House of Commons ... on ... January 30, 1765 (London, 1765), pp. 17-18; T. Thurlow, Sermon Preached before the House of Lords ... on ... January 31, 1780 (London, 1780), p. 12; J. Warren, Sermon Preached before the Lords ... on ... January 30, 1781 (London, 1781), p. 14.


83 This is very evident in J. Warren's 1781 Sermon, passim, where obvious close usage of Hume goes hand in hand with wider knowledge of sources.
political Whigs like Samuel Squire and Richard Watson.\textsuperscript{44} Though Hume was only mentioned by name in one other sermon beside Douglas's - that of Beilby Porteus which strongly attacked him - his arguments about the unstable state of the constitution before the civil war and stress on the religious causes of the conflict were central to many of them.\textsuperscript{45}

Hume's arguments about the unsettled state of prerogative and parliamentary powers in the early seventeenth-century, which we have seen used in other late eighteenth-century histories of England, also appeared in many of the commemoration sermons of the period. These could be employed to provide a partial apology for the actions of Charles I, without putting the 'patriots' in the wrong - an important consideration for clerics desperate not to be politically controversial in what was traditionally a tricky duty - and could help to put forward the conventional message that party strife ought to be reduced, and that the monarch ought to be respected.\textsuperscript{46}

Take, for example, the Bishop of Peterborough's 1768 comments:

\textbf{If an unhappy Prince attempted what was unnatural to the temper of the constitution, and the}

\textsuperscript{44} S. Squire, \textit{Sermon preached before the Lords ... on ... January 30, 1762} (London, 1762); R. Watson, \textit{Sermon Preached before the Lords ... on ... January 30, 1784} (London, 1784).

\textsuperscript{45} B. Porteus, \textit{Sermon Preached before the Honourable House of Commons ... on ... January 30, 1767} (London, 1767), pp. 9, 20.

\textsuperscript{46} For the difficulties of preachers on this day, see W. Mansel, \textit{Sermon Preached before the Lords ... on ... January 30, 1810} (Cambridge, 1810), p. 9.
liberties of a free people, many circumstances of his situation conspire to bespeak our pity for him: led to this fatal exertion of power, by early prepossessions in favour of it; encouraged by the vague exercise of Prerogative in former reigns.

Similarly, in 1781, John Warren, Bishop of St. David's, produced a very Humean portrait of Charles:

Thus fell this unfortunate Prince, who was embued with qualities, which might have rendered both Him, and his Subjects, happy, had He lived in better days: but an undefined Prerogative, and an intemperate Zeal in matters of Religion, prevailing at that period, created such difficulties, as no one of his Predecessors had ever experienced. If the limitations, respecting the rights of the Crown, had been fixed and determined, there is reason to believe, that his integrity and love of justice were such, as would have prevented Him from exceeding the bounds of his Authority. But it was his misfortune to ascend the Throne of this Kingdom, at a time, when the Principles of our Constitution were but ill understood; when all the Precedents, for a century, and upwards, had been too strongly on the side of arbitrary Power.

However, this did not represent a whole-hearted acceptance of the entire Humean schema. Warren's formula had erased the recognition of the possible benefits of absolute monarchy present in Hume's original, and he went on to add a very unHumean clause about the time in the early seventeenth century 'when our antient love of Freedom and Liberty had been gradually reviving'.

Other speakers muddled things further in their efforts to partake of the political benefits of Hume's apology for the king, without diverting too far from what

87 R. Lamb, Sermon Preached before the Lords ... on January 30, 1768 (London, 1768), p. 10.

they regarded as the Whig version. Some argued, in Humean paraphrase, that the prerogative was 'undefined', but then still declared it Charles's 'fault' that the constitution was 'broken', or, like the Bishop of Peterborough, Robert Lamb, in 1768, appealed to the true 'temper' of the constitution which Charles had ignored.89

Hume's version could also provoke vehemently Whiggish rebuttals - as from Thomas Bray in 1763: 'And should prescriptive rights and constitutional privileges be undermined by subtilty, or on some of those extraordinary conjunctures which nations are subject to, be wrested by power from the immediate possessors; a recovery, when practicable, is not only innocent but meritorious.'90 In similar vein came George Stinton's claim in 1768, that there was 'a distinction between temporary expedience and permanent right' and that 'no prescription can abolish those essential privileges of human nature', or that of the Bishop of Lincoln in 1789, that there were 'fundamental laws' to consider, even if the prerogative was not 'accurately defined'.91

Hume's relativistic story of the history of England's several constitutions was circumvented in some

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89 J. Barnardiston, Sermon Preached before the Honourable House of Commons ... on ... January 30, 1766 (London, 1766), p. 15; R. Ferrick, Sermon, p. 10.

90 T. Bray, Sermon Preached before the Honourable House of Commons ... on ... January 31, 1763 (London, 1763), p. 8.

91 G. Stinton, Sermon Preached before the Honourable House of Commons ... on ... January 30, 1768 (London, 1768), p. 12; G. Pretyman, Sermon Preached before the Lords ... on ... January 30, 1789 (London, 1789), pp. 12-13.
cases by taking an 'ancient constitution' for granted during the medieval period, and blaming its loss on the actions of the Tudors alone - ironically employing Humean arguments in the process."

Bishop Warburton was especially strong in condemning Hume's disposal of absolute constitutional verities. To him 'a breach' had been 'made into a well-framed Constitution, perfected by the wisdom, and regulated on the experience of old Policy'." Randall describes this sermon as 'perhaps the most scholarly' ever preached on the Anniversary, though she is wrong to say that 'there is not a trace of propaganda' in the piece." Warburton had obviously gone to some trouble here to construct a public rebuttal of Hume's work which he had strongly denounced in a letter to Hurd about ten months previously:

Hume has out-done himself in this new History (The History of the House of Tudor), in shewing his contempt of Religion. This is one of those proof charges which Arbuthnot speaks of in his treatise of political lying, to try how much the public will bear. If his history be well received, I shall conclude that there is even an end of all pretence to Religion. But I should think it will not: because I fancy the good

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92 T. Thurlow, Sermon, pp. 9-10, perhaps came closest to the Humean relativistic view of English constitutional history. For concentration on the Tudors, see J. Barnardiston, Sermon, pp. 8-10; C. Moss, Sermon Preached before the House of Lords ... on ... January 30, 1769 (London, 1769), p. 10.

93 W. Warburton, Sermon Preached before the ... Lords ... on ... January 30, 1760 (London, 1760), pp. 2-5. Against this might be cited Porteus's admission that the constitution, though 'vigorou's, was 'disordered': Sermon Preached before the Lords ... on ... January 30, 1778 (London, 1778), p. 11.

reputation of Robertson's proceeded from the decency of it. - Hume carries on his system here, to prove we had no Constitution till the struggles with James and Charles procured us one. And he has contrived an effectual way to support his system, by beginning the History of England with Henry VII. and shutting out all that preceded, by assuring his reader that the earlier history is worth no one's while to enquire after.  

The other element of Hume's analysis that was obviously influential - though one which he shared with Clarendon - was his stress on religion as the primary cause of the civil war - a controversial matter on an occasion when it was traditional to emphasise the role of religion as a social stabilizer. Porteus, signalling the beginning of a long history of evangelical antipathy towards the History, attacked Hume directly over this:  

it may very safely be affirmed, that to represent Religious Controversy as the original and principal cause of those disorders, and the political disputes about Power and Liberty as only subordinate to them (* Hume's History of England, Quarto, vol. v. p. 255), is to indulge a spleen against Religion at the expense of Truth.  

Others were more cautious, pointedly relegating religion to a secondary cause, or stressing that it was a 'perverted' form of faith which had caused such outrages. Strikingly though, many speakers felt it had to be brought up, though they did this with a heavy heart. If this part of the

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96 B. Porteus, Sermon, pp. 6-14, 22; see also, J. Hinchcliffe, Sermon Preached before the Lords ... on ... January 30, 1773 (London, 1773), pp. 3-4.

Humean version was hard to avoid, other religious emphases acted against the wholesale acceptance of his brand of historiography. Providential interpretation was obviously often important to these speakers, as was a stress on moral reformation and public virtue - neither of which could have sat happily with a Humean style.\(^8\)

I would argue then, that these sermons did see Hume's interpretation occasionally being used for polemical purposes by the anglican hierarchy - but only in a limited way, and with strong signs of uneasiness. As in other varieties of Whig 'compromise', mitigations for Charles's behaviour taken from Hume were slotted into a wider view of England's constitutional development which remained staunchly Whiggish. Nevertheless, Hume's agenda can clearly be seen to have been influential - if only because so many of the speakers felt they had to engage with it. In itself, the defence of Charles I became, of course, much more straight-forwardly attractive after the execution of Louis XVI. However, a study of late eighteenth-century attitudes in compilation histories and sermons seems to show a revival in the king's image long preceding this, and earlier, even, than the 1780s watershed postulated by Robert Hole.\(^9\) Political developments underlaid this

\(^8\) E.g. J. Egerton, *Sermon Preached before ... the Lords ... on ... January 30, 1761* (London, 1761), p. 14; S. Barrington, *Sermon Preached before the Lords ... on ... January 30, 1772* (London, 1772), pp. 15-18; W. Barford, *Sermon Preached before the Honourable House of Commons ... on ... January 30, 1770* (London, 1770), p. 17.

process - but the popularity of Hume's text was a major stimulant to its progress.

The attitude of the monarch himself towards the History is interesting. Hume's pension was later taken by Whigs as a sign of his work being an integral part of George III's 'new authoritarianism', but the king certainly detested Hume's philosophy, and his keenness to induce Robertson to write a history of England, regardless of Hume's, suggests coolness.\(^\text{100}\) The partisan 'Tory' hue the History had acquired suggests that neither the king or his church could have allowed themselves to appear entirely comfortable with it.\(^\text{101}\) Perhaps this was changing by the 1780s, however, when this anecdote about the Prince of Wales recorded in The Times suggests a growing willingness to accept the History as a bastion of monarchical power - certainly on the part of the paper, and if it is true, also by the Prince himself:

A certain noble Lord, who is a Trinity of Horse-racing, Literature, and Whiggism, last year importuned the Prince very much to read Dr. Towers's Letters on Hume's History of England. His Royal Highness, whose good nature seldom suffers him to resist any solicitation, which has a tolerable

\(^{100}\) D. Stewart, Biographical Memoirs of Adam Smith, LL.D., William Robertson, D.D., Thomas Reid, D.D., ed. W. Hamilton (Edinburgh, 1858), p. 133. For the King's 'particular' approval of Hurd's Dialogue on the British Constitution, which attacked the views in Hume's History, see F. Kilvert, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Right Rev. Richard Hurd, D.D., Lord Bishop of Worcester: with a Selection from his Correspondence and other Unpublished Papers (London, 1860), p. 120.

\(^{101}\) For the impeccably Whiggish historical education George had received in the 1750s, see J. Brooke, King George III (London, 1974), pp. 109-111.
reasonable pretext, at length consented; and actually waded through that volume of Nothing, from beginning to end. My Lord soon after met his Royal Pupil at Newmarket. "Well, Sir, you have perused the letters I had the honour to recommend to your R-1 H-ghness? What sort of race does your R-1 H-gh-ss think the Doctor makes with the great Historian?" "Why, my Lord, as near as I can judge, much such an one as a common hackney would make with Rockingham, at even weights over the Beacon Course."\(^{102}\)

The 1790s could only have heightened such royal sympathies with Hume's work. By 1791, we know that the History of England was a central part of the younger princes' education.\(^{103}\) In 1795, a compilation called Memoirs of King Charles I. and the Loyalists who Suffered in his Cause, including Hume's character of the king, was published by Hindmarsh, 'Printer to his Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales'.\(^{104}\)

3. 'A regular plan of liberty'? The Humean interpretation of constitutional history: opposition and adoption.

'Whig history', from its early seventeenth-century origins in the common law arguments against the constitutional 'encroachments' of the early Stuarts, represented an oppositionist viewpoint on the English past. After 1688, however, Whigs when in power had to confront the problems involved in adapting their creed to serve

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\(^{102}\) The Times, No. 1032 (Friday, March 28, 1788), p. 2.

\(^{103}\) A. Aspinall, ed. The Correspondence of George, Prince of Wales 1770-1812 (London, 1964), vol. 2., p. 151.

\(^{104}\) Memoirs of King Charles I. and the Loyalists who Suffered in his Cause; chiefly extracted from Lord Clarendon's History of the Rebellion. (London, 1795), pp. 18-22.
establishment purposes an intellectual 'Toryism' was much better suited to perform. The establishment of the Whig oligarchy after the Hanoverian succession pushed the tensions involved in utilising an oppositionist creed in support of ministers' actions to breaking point - resulting in the abandonment of traditional Whig history by some Walpolean propagandists after its adoption by Bolingbroke as part of his attempts to create a united 'patriot' opposition. The efforts of Walpole's literary defenders, however, were a failure - their arguments sat uneasily with deep-set English assumptions, and were representative of the general lack of success enjoyed by attempts to popularize the early Whig establishment through literature and the press. In the 1740s, 'court' Whiggery turned back to ancient constitutionalism, and writers like Samuel Squire performed balancing acts to make it support a Pelhamite rather than an oppositionist form of Whiggery.  

With the decline of Jacobitism as a threat, however, and the extinction of the Tory party after the accession of George III, Whiggism became less well-defined as it became all-encompassing. By the later eighteenth century, Whig history had established a sure dominance over divine-right narratives - but the fact that it was shared by radical dissenters, patriotic Chathamites, Rockingham Whigs, and King's Friends alike was bound to lead to further stresses. Increasingly from the 1750s - as charges

105 See R. Browning, Political and Constitutional Ideas of the Court Whigs, pp. 117-150 on Squire.
of 'Toryism' became less frightening - Whig history became more pro-monarchical, more deferential to the powers that be. Hume's was an early and extreme example of this trend, undoubtedly helped to further it, and was a perfect target for the wrath of patriotic Whigs as the work of a 'foreigner'. Even establishment Whigs, keen on elements of Hume's message, were able to externalise any misgivings they had about qualifications in the old Whig story, by attacking Hume. As 'establishment Whiggery' was always close to being a contradiction in terms in its ideological underpinnings, there were constant tensions in the adaption of the Whig narrative of England's constitutional development to conservative ends. Hume's History was the perfect target of blame for Whigs of all shades when these tensions became too great.\footnote{Pocock's explanation of Whig hostility to Hume's work seems, to me, to rely too much upon political responses to events following George III's accession - which cannot explain the hostile criticism the History had been receiving for half a decade previously. See J.G.A. Pocock, The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law. A Study of English Historical Thought in the Seventeenth Century. A Reissue with a Retrospect (Cambridge, 1987), p. 376.}

Specific issues besides the Stuarts over which these strains manifested themselves included the extent to which Elizabeth ruled despotically, the origin of parliament and the nature of the Norman Conquest. Hume's propagation of Carte's arguments on the late origin of parliament was thought important enough by an 'ancient constitutionalist' like Camden to warrant a denunciation in his House of Lords' speech against the Rockingham ministry's declaratory
Gilbert Stewart's attack on the same point as being part of Hume's 'plausible defence of prerogative' was cited by the Monthly in its review of Towers' Observations. Hayley's assertion that Hume 'profanes the spirit' of England's 'antient laws' was one common among Whigs who, like Walpole, could use his carelessness in this part of his work against the reputation of the whole: 'the flimsy, ignorant, blundering manner in which Hume executed the reigns preceding Henry VII, is a proof how little he had examined the history of our constitution'. The English Review declared that the medieval volumes were only fit to be considered 'the commencement of his ingenious apology for the families of Tudor and Stewart'. Both Hume's stress on the importance of the Norman Conquest and his leniency towards Edward II and Richard II also touched a nerve with more radical commentators.

Yet in many other histories of England published in the later eighteenth century the 1265 origin of the Commons was accepted, (if guardedly), the impact of the Norman

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110 English Review vol. 22 (1793), p. 137.

111 e.g. in J. Towers Observations, pp. 13-24; 33-47.
Conquest was taken for granted, and Edward II was pitied.\textsuperscript{112} Even one of Hume's most virulent Whig critics, Richard Hurd, approved of Hume's treatment of the Middle Ages, presumably because it coincided with his own estimate of the usefulness of feudalism - although he still criticised Hume for failing to recognise that in all ages the constitution had been mixed, and that this was far more important than any of the changes in the relative power of the constituent parts which Hume emphasised in his attempts to demonstrate that the medieval constitution was shifting and unstable.\textsuperscript{113} Only Hume's charitable treatment of Richard II was a rarity in contemporary historiography, but even here he was followed on occasion.\textsuperscript{114} What Burrow has termed the 'Whig compromise' with Hume was, in one form or another, in the making long before the age of Hallam - fuelled by the dislike felt by more conservative Whigs towards the excesses of oppositionist ancient-constitutionalist rhetoric.\textsuperscript{115}

\textsuperscript{112} See the histories of England by Clarendon, Goldsmith, Mountague, Raymond, Russel, Seymour, Sidney and Wesley mentioned above.


\textsuperscript{114} See, for example, T. Sydney, New and Complete History of England, p. 168.

\textsuperscript{115} It seems that a qualified 'compromise' is a better way of describing Hume's late eighteenth-century relationship with Whig history than Pocock's - which implies that the 'intellectual power of Hume's History', taken neat, was a bulwark of 'Scientific Whig' support for George III's ministries. There is little evidence in the historiography for such a deduction - though the influence of Hume's Essays on Court Whigs may well
Hume's assertion that the despotic rule of the Tudors represented a definite break in the 'ancient constitution', was one which more pronounced Whigs were bound to dislike. The comparison between Elizabeth's rule and that of a Turkish despot, in particular, brought bitter responses to Hume like that by Hayley, who wrote that Hume's *History* affected the free constitution like 'Asia's soothing opiate Drugs, by stealth'; or by Walpole, who asserted Hume's works were 'full of Turkish opium'.\(^{116}\) Hume was wrong to think that Whigs were particularly attached to worship of Elizabeth as a person by the 1750s - an attitude which had been particularly associated with Bolingbroke's 'Country' programme.\(^{117}\) Hurd, Towers and Macaulay were quite willing to concede significant and protracted stretches of prerogative under the Tudors. They fell back on arguments about the continued existence of parliament, the extraordinary effects of the Reformation coming after a depowering of the peerage, Elizabeth's exceptionally clever governing style, and above all, the survival of the principle of limited government, as instanced in the works of writers like Bishop Aylmer and Sir Thomas Smith. Building on this last point, they were willing to abandon have been more straightforward. See J.G.A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce and History. Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 255.


the argument from precedent altogether, rather than play it on Hume's narrow terms - arguing about natural rights to liberty and resistance in a more general sense as well. Precedent and abstract principle were as one in the more radical brands of eighteenth-century Whig historical thinking, which looked to an immutable, original ancient constitution in the form of Anglo-Saxon liberties which embodied an Englishman's political 'rights'.

The coexistence in their writings of arguments from precedent and others from abstract principle, which can look like inconsistency, can also be seen as powering an effective popular attack on the cool, 'unEnglish' Hume. The strength of 'ancient constitutionalism' remained its flexibility in combat, unsophisticated populism and sheer naturalness in an English context. Hume's arguments were far harder to precis and far less in tune with English national sentiment. A common Whig refrain was that they were strained and 'paradoxical'. Many would have agreed with the writer who declared in 1770 that 'I cannot willingly quit my antient constitution and law', for Hume's 'new-fangled legal conceits'.118 In piecemeal form, however, elements of Hume's view certainly found their way into mainstream histories, and their conservative value must have been appreciated.

I agree, reservedly, with Smith's argument that 'Hume's History was too iconoclastic to be easily absorbed

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118 Another Letter to Mr. Almon, in Matter of Libel (London, 1770), p. 154. (This was probably written by Charles Pratt, Earl Camden.)
into English political apologetic: it was duly resented by those politicians for whom history was too important to be entrusted to historians.\(^{119}\) As we have seen, though, Hume’s text was not quite as discordant with late eighteenth-century historiographic trends as this would suggest, and his defence of Charles I was influential. The popularisation of his 'presentist' conservatism on a wider scale was more rare - but was certainly tried. One example of this is the anonymous An Essay on the Constitution of England which went through two editions between 1765 and 1766. Of this, Hume remarked in a letter to William Strahan in January 1765, that

I see in your Chronicle an Abridgement of a Treatise on the Constitution; which Treatise seems to be nothing but an Abridgement of my History; yet I shall engage, that the Author has not nam’d me from the beginning to the end of his Performance.\(^{120}\)

The work certainly borrowed liberally from Hume and shared a belief in the dangers posed by Whiggish historical beliefs to civil stability, though its anxieties were aimed at a lower social stratum:

A motive of this sort set me first upon writing the following sheets. I had frequently heard the ancient constitution of England cried up as a model of perfection: I had frequently heard that the possession of liberty was inseparable from the inhabitants of Britain: I had frequently heard that Magna Charta was the completion and fixed standard of this liberty; and that it shone with unparallelled (sic) lustre under the HENRYS, EDWARDS, and ELIZABETH. All this might be heard without uneasiness; but when I discovered that those prejudices had been industriously

\(^{119}\) R.J. Smith, Gothic Bequest, p. 98.

propagated amongst the unlearned in order to depreciate the liberty we now enjoy under the best of Kings, at the head of a free Parliament, I must own I felt some indignation at the attempt; and thought I could not better perform the part of a faithful subject and good citizen, than by endeavouring to point out, to the well meaning part of my country-men, how unjust those comparisons were, and how extremely groundless the discontents they had conceived in consequence of them.\textsuperscript{121}

The aim of the work was:

to trace the actual progress of English liberty, from its lowest ebb to that glorious height to which it has arrived; to shew that this encrease was constant and gradual, not arising from any providential laws or contrivances of men; but from a certain tide of things which flowed, not only against the means that were contrived to prevent it, but sometimes flowed the faster by those very means. To shew that Magna Charta was not the cause, but the consequence of a degree of liberty, and that what was liberty then would be no better than slavery now.\textsuperscript{122}

John Brewer cites the following section from the work, commenting 'This was a remarkably similar argument to those deployed by the defenders of Walpole a generation earlier':

the freedom of the subject in England is now arrived at the highest degree of perfection consistent with the nature of civil government, and that it is the duty of every good Englishman to cry, with a late ingenious author, ESTO PERPETUA, without adding any contradiction to this pious wish, by wishing for any innovation or pretence of improving it.\textsuperscript{123}

Given the generally Humean nature of the argument, one can probably safely say that this 'remarkable' survival of Walpoleon argument was in fact a revival engineered by


\textsuperscript{122} Essay on the Constitution, pp. v-vi.

Hume.

In the longer term, the History's politics had a regular defender, in the form of the Critical Review. From Smollett's original reviews of the volumes as they appeared, this periodical often took an approbatory line towards the political principles involved in the work. Unlike most other observers, Smollett appreciated Hume's reservations about the right of resistance, whilst realizing that he still considered resistance just, if only in extremis. In the same review of the Tudors volumes, Hume was quoted as praising England's 'noble liberty', and as opposing arbitrary monarchy. The Critical's review of William Smith's History of England, already mentioned, implied that Hume's narrative did not wholly accord with Smith's 'high idea of monarchical power'. The article on Towers' Observations, unlike those in the Monthly and London reviews, and in the London Magazine defended Hume's version of English constitutional history, declaring him to be correct in his description of the medieval constitution as 'not rightly poised', among other comments. The Critical also appeared Humean in its view of English

124 For the Critical Review's general politics around the time of the History's publication, which resembled Hume's on many issues, see R.D. Spector, English Literary Periodicals and the Climate of Opinion During the Seven Years' War (The Hague, 1966), pp. 84-87.


history on other occasions. Its criticisms of Whiggish Revolutionary commemoration sermons in 1688, answered their invocations of the ancient constitution in Humean terms, which seem worth quoting at length:

Our freedom was however brought to us by the Saxons, from the woods of Germany; but we must allow this freedom to have existed only in speculation. In an aera when the rights of men were ill defined, when the claims of individuals were little attended to, and when society was not guarded by laws, or secured by regulations, liberty was scarcely more than a shadow; and the laws which did exist were forgotten at some periods, disregarded in others, while the occasional and interrupted appearance of liberty showed that she did exist, but that she existed without force and without effect. Supported by the customs of many years, the Tudors ruled with rigid hands; and the Stuarts advanced little farther beyond the Tudors, than they did beyond the Plantagenets. But, in the times of the Stuarts, the rights of mankind were more attended to; the human mind, escaped from the trammels of superstition, felt its own strength, and pervaded also the subjects of legislation and of government. Men began to see that the Stuarts had acted wrong, and they resisted: the whole was put to the issue of war, and liberty triumphed. In this state, while we possessed liberty de jure, we had in reality and in fact lost it; nor were the first Stuarts so blameable in not being acquainted with the real constitution of a foreign country, as our authors have imagined: but the arguments which acquit the first Charles fell with redoubled force on the second James; and with the allowances which we have stated, we can cheerfully join in the joy occasioned by the late anniversary, the hundredth that has now been beheld of this important event. We can join with Dr. Kippis and Dr. Towers, in thinking that the improvements in science, our expanded notions of civil and religious liberty, our extended commerce, and increased happiness, are very intimately connected with that event.\(^{127}\)

Elsewhere the journal agreed with Noorthouck's approval of the Humean line in his History of London, and cited it at

length. The Critical can hardly be reckoned an insignificant publication, and one therefore needs to qualify the impression Forbes gives that the highly unrepresentative figure of Bentham was virtually the only person before the twentieth century to empathise with Hume's historical purpose.¹²⁸

Even those who found much to complain of in what they perceived to be Hume's politics were not necessarily blind to the usefulness of his conservatism. The London Review approved of Towers's rebuttal of Hume in general, but agreed with the historian in his doubts as to whether all men were capable of choosing in religion. The Gentleman's Magazine approved of Hume's disparaging attitude towards Quakers.¹²⁹ Even the Monthly Review found itself agreeing with Hume at one point, that praise for the early seventeenth-century patriots ought to be tempered. On another occasion, in the same journal, Ruffhead defended 'the sturdy Hume' against claims by Mrs. Macaulay that he had been overly hostile towards popular assemblies.¹³⁰ On the other hand, dissenters - generally the History's most bitter enemies - enjoyed the picture of themselves therein as the begetters of modern English liberty; though they obviously disliked Hume's opinion that this had been an


unintentional by-product of their fanatical conduct.\(^{131}\)

The subject of the Monthly's criticism, Catharine Macaulay, will make an interesting case study to end this section. As perhaps Hume's most formidable 'true Whig' opponent, her career illustrates some of the main themes of the last two sections. These include the degree to which Hume's treatment of the seventeenth century had moved closer to the historical mainstream by the 1770s, and the effect which the political events of that decade and the next had in making the kind of Whig history which the public wanted more pro-monarchical.

Macaulay considered that Hume had chosen his interpretation for commercial reasons. That this might not just be retrospective bitterness is implied by a Monthly review in the 1750s, which claimed that the Tory case of the seventeenth century was advocated by 'the Bravoes of the press' because it guaranteed a good sale.\(^{132}\) By the 1770s and '80s, though, Macaulay was certainly angry at Hume's History having 'fallen in with the prejudices of the prevailing faction in the country', while her work's reputation was swept away on a tide of loyalism. Her growing disillusionment with 'the people' is reflected in


her comments on Hume's 'short-sighted readers', and on how he aimed at 'inspiring every unlearned, incurious and negligent reader'.¹³³ Whilst she wrote against 'the countenance of the great, and the gratification of popular applause', Hume was 'assiduously careful not to offend in any point of popular recommendation' - this on his praise for William III.¹³⁴ What she regarded as his pro-Cromwell line was another example of his tendency towards orthodoxy for Macaulay, though here probably few would have agreed with her.¹³⁵

That she genuinely admired Hume's 'genius and profound sagacity' seems clear, especially in earlier volumes of her History. She cited him on various points, including the political attitudes and European politics of the seventeenth century, and was quite prepared to use his words for her own case when convenient.¹³⁶ There were similarities in their treatments - including Macaulay's stress on the intellectual change that affected the nation around the time of James I's accession, her dislike of the


Presbyterians and her emphasis on the need for the Scots to provide a trigger for the crisis which led to civil war, as she recognised that the patriots' efforts, in themselves, were not enough.\textsuperscript{137} She also showed herself fully capable of appreciating the relativistic element in Hume's historical thought, when she turned his argument about how the Revolution Settlement would have been very different had it happened 100 years later against the conservative interpretation he had glossed it with.\textsuperscript{138}

In her last three volumes however, published after a decade's break in the 1780s when critical opinion had stiffened against her republicanism, there was a perceptible hardening in her attitude towards Hume. This can be seen in the preface to volume six with its attack on Hume, and vindication of her own viewpoint. Later in this volume a standard Whig attack on the reputation of Monk - deploring his failure to place limitations on the monarch's power at the Restoration - was given a harsh anti-Hume twist, including the assertion that he had no sense of honour, justice or integrity'. Her defence of Sidney was couched in similar, vehemently anti-Hume terms.\textsuperscript{139} This tone continued when she wrote of the moral depravity of the Restoration court, which she felt had infected the whole kingdom - suggesting the return of the plague to Charles


\textsuperscript{138} \textit{Gentleman's Magazine}, vol. 60 (1790), p. 1,111.

II's England, after it had spared the republic, was significant. Hume's irreligion was stated to render him part of the evil which the Restoration court had spread - its 'corrupt and carnal policy' being integrally linked to its revival of deism. These volumes reflect a passionate 'pure' Whiggism, that increasingly felt itself marginalised in historiography as against varieties of 'compromise' with Hume's work.

4. Scholarship, style and method. The reputation of the 'History' to the 1790s.

The great popularity of Hume's *History* by the 1770s and 1780s, however, cannot be ascribed merely to the congruence of its perceived 'Toryism' with current political trends. In order to understand its appeal, it is worth examining the aspects of the work which garnered praise from critics regardless of their party-political orientation. This might help to explain how Hume's text weathered continual attacks upon the quality of its scholarship - attacks which we will consider before turning to the elements critics admired.

Outside the work of Harris, Macaulay and a few antiquarians, most of the many scholarly criticisms made of Hume's *History* in the later eighteenth century consisted of stock comparisons with familiar authors like Clarendon, or were founded on assertions of probability rather than

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offering an alternative explanation based on ascertained fact. The controversies surrounding Mary Queen of Scots and Richard III, to which Hume's contribution were central, are good examples of this latter tendency. Reviews in the Monthly, Critical and English reviews and in the Annual Register, as well the reaction of a general historian like Charles Coote, who was willing to profess neutrality between Hume and Walpole's views on the identity of Warbeck, seem to point towards a great deal of general acceptance for the 'findings' of the Marian apologists, and a concommitant tendency to publicise their low estimations of Hume's scholarship. 

We have seen how Hume was charged with suppressing and giving a false idea of Tudor and Stuart source material. However, it was the scholarship, or absence of it, involved in the medieval volumes which gained the worst reputation before the eighteenth century had ended. Hume's lack of attention to the earlier parts of history received much criticism. Hume's classic blunder of confusing

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141 Detecting Hume in suppressions of Clarendon on occasions when his text was unfavourable to Charles I was a favourite critical tactic, e.g. D. Macqueen, Letters, pp. 254, 272-3; J. Towers, Observations, p. 88.


leading Lancastrians with Yorkists was eagerly leapt upon by Walpole, and Whitaker obviously enjoyed the spectacle of the great sceptic rendered a servile copier of Carte, blindly wandering into all his mistakes.\textsuperscript{144} The antiquarian Thomson thought Hume's work worthless, but another medieval specialist, Percy, despite his errors, still considered Hume one of 'our best Historians'.\textsuperscript{145} Perhaps this was because he, like Ruffhead in the Monthly, was impressed by Hume's treatment of medieval manners, and the lightness of touch which he brought to a customarily arcane subject.

The History's style and 'philosophical' reflections on social as well as political history were aspects which brought praise from all but Hume's most hardened critics. Considering his style, Hurd and Towers were united on his readability. The latter referred to his 'beauty of diction, harmony of periods, and acuteness and singularity of sentiment'.\textsuperscript{146} Robert Bisset, an extreme admirer, can be quoted to show how little Hume's defects as a scholar mattered to some critics:

Some paltry antiquarian, I forget the man's name,

\textsuperscript{144} This mistake was also commented on by the Whig historian Malcolm Laing in his appendix to Robert Henry's The History of Great Britain, from the First Invasion of it by the Romans under Julius Caesar. Written on a New Plan, vol. 6 (London, 1793), p. 699; H. Walpole, Historic Doubts on the Life and Reign of King Richard the Third (Gloucester, 1987), p. 157; J. Whitaker, The History of Manchester (London, 1771-5), vol. 1, pp. 464-469; vol. 2, pp. 550-70.


\textsuperscript{146} J. Towers, Observations, p. 1.
has lately been nibbling at our illustrious historian, and raking into some old Saxon books with a view to prove that he (Hume) is erroneous in the names of one or two monks. The Spectator has a very fine paper on a fly which, viewing St. Paul's Cathedral, from its diminutive optics, might, he conceived, discover some roughness in the surface of a particular part, though so totally unable to comprehend the beauty and grandeur of the whole building.  

The *Monthly* could speak of 'the eloquence, the dignity, and the precision of Hume'. Only the 1790s *Critical*, after its conversion to an extreme anti-History stance, declared outright its dislike of Hume's style.  

He came under scrutiny by Smollett for scoticisms, and by Priestley for an unnecessary reliance on the French idiom - but, as has been shown, Hume was far more flexible when confronted by suggestions for stylistic change than he was when facts were involved, and the tone of these criticisms was moderate.  

The consensus on the quality of Hume's writing, however, carried with it a frustration on the part of political critics at the popularity which this stylistic ability had secured. Andrew Millar's skilful marketing no doubt helped the *History*'s success, but it was Hume's

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149 *Critical Review*, vol. 2 (1756), p. 394; vol. 7 (1759), p. 290; J. Priestley, *The Rudiments of English Grammar*, 4th. ed. (London, 1826 - first published 1761), e.g. pp. 96, 108, 116, etc. Priestley apologised (p 7), if he seemed to have concentrated overly on Hume's errors, described grammatical exactitude as 'the smallest point of excellence', and showed he was equally willing to highlight the compositional shortcomings of a historian whose politics he found more conducive - Mrs. Macaulay, on pp. 83, 105.
readability which made his the English history most in demand. Even Hurd, despite expressing qualms about Hume's 'too frequent affectation of philosophical disquisition; & an incorrect, & sometimes an inflated style', professed his work 'the most readable (sic.) General history we have of England.' We have seen Catharine Macaulay rail at the popularity which followed from this attractiveness, and so, more poetically, did Lord Gardenstone:

Some folks imagine pious Hume,  
Attain'd to Virtue's highest pitch:  
They had been silent, I presume,  
But that the writer died so rich;  
The press, when's that's the case, abounds  
With "dulcet and harmonious sounds."

His lively periods may procure  
Attention to the end of time;  
But will the world, for such a lure,  
Forget chicanery's a crime?  
This prince of sceptics scarce could tell  
Why china shiver'd when it fell!  

The other area in which Hume reaped much eighteenth-century praise, was in his 'philosophical' reflections, which included his consideration of social factors and the manners and morals of the past. In its review of the second

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150 A good example of Millar's innovative marketing skill is his having published the 1764 edition, at least, on the basis of a five-shilling volume a month, 'for the benefit of those who do not choose to purchase them all at once.' G.L. Craik, Sketches of the History of Literature and Learning in England. With Specimens of the Principal Writers. (London, 1845), vol. 5, p. 238. See also C. Knight, The Old Printer and the Modern Press (London, 1854), pp. 223-4.


volume, the Monthly praised his 'just and lively' sketch of the improvement of civil polity, and the fact that, in his work, 'philosophy and jurisprudence constantly go hand in hand with History'.\(^{153}\) Decades later, Millar praised his achievement as 'the complete union of history with philosophy'. He had obviously learnt much from Hume, at one point even correcting him in a Humean direction against the English peculiarity of county courts. The use by both Millar and Ferguson of Hume's account of the death of Edmund I as an example of the monarch's lack of proper resources in that era, shows how Hume's narrative contained valuable hints to those who wished to construct more generalizing 'conjectural' texts.\(^{154}\) Priestley approved of his treatment of manners and property, as well as praising his grasp of historical causation, in his Lectures on History and General Policy.\(^{155}\) Even the 1790s second series of the Critical Review, generally hostile towards Hume, contained praise of his 'philosophical penetration' - if only to achieve a contrast with the lack of such a quality in the Foxite Whig historian Belsham's work.\(^{156}\)

The movement towards a wider view of history was certainly not a purely Humean achievement, however - as Okie's work on other English Enlightenment historians like

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Ralph and Guthrie indicates. Hume noted that he was commonly regarded as a copier of Voltaire in this respect - and although he claimed there had been no direct influence upon himself, the great popularity of Voltaire's histories in Britain until the 1780s was certainly a means by which a similarly wide, and designedly multi-causal, undogmatic view of history could be disseminated.

Hume suffered the common fate of the pioneer - by the time of the publication of Henry's History it was being written that his views of past societies were far too brief and quite inadequate. By the 1790s, his revolutionary approach towards writing a 'standard' history of the English past in a relatively short and accessible way, went unregarded by the Critical reviewer who described him as too 'prolix'. However when the same decade saw an abridgment of the History without the 'reflections', the Monthly described them as 'some of the most valuable parts of the work'. Their initial novelty had undoubtedly contributed to the attractions of Hume's historical style.

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158 For the popularity of Voltaire, and his histories in particular, see B.N. Schilling, Conservative England and the Case Against Voltaire (New York, 1950), esp. pp. 209, 350.

159 R. Henry, The History of Great Britain (London, 1771), vol. 1, p. vi. See below, chapter four, for nineteenth-century attacks on Hume as an historian who paid scant attention to the social life of the nation, in favour of a narrowly high-political narrative.

This literary workmanship was to remain a key element in the general popularity of his *History* through to the mid nineteenth century, despite the continued prevalence of a low estimation of his scholarship.

**Conclusion.**

This chapter has shown how Hume's 'Tory' reputation was created through anti-Scottish prejudice and Hume's own later willingness to play the part. This willingness came about in reaction against the rough-and-tumble of the London literary marketplace, where party and religious ties trampled upon the polite conventions of the international republic of letters to which Hume at heart belonged. The *History* 'Tory' image which resulted from this, masked a range of relationships with varieties of late-eighteenth century Whiggism. Establishment Whigs formed compromises with Hume's version, employing elements of his interpretation where his conservatism was useful, but distancing themselves from his lack of reverence for England's historical liberties. More radical Whigs went further in branding Hume an unEnglish bogeyman, whose popularity proved the vitality of despotic 'Tory' principles. Such critics found Hume's scholarship an easy target, but by the 1780s even they admitted the admirable nature of his style.

Hume, then, had succeeded in writing a truly readable narrative history. He had not, however, succeeded
in creating a text which effectively disseminated his utilitarian conservatism. The resilience of historic Whig-Tory frames of reference within English political culture buried any chance that 'the most important contemporary vehicle for his thought', as Phillipson has termed it, would achieve the polite dissolution of 'irrational' political conflict which Hume desired.\textsuperscript{161} The next chapter will show how the British reaction against the French Revolution acted to accentuate the factors which weighed against Hume's text promoting the kind of balanced detachment he had intended.

In studying the history of Humean criticism the years around 1800 form a natural hiatus. The next chapter will show that the 1790s was a somewhat exceptional decade in this, as in every other respect. In terms of personnel, there was also a shift from the rational dissenters who formed the most vociferous of the History's opponents in the late eighteenth century, to the writers on The Edinburgh Review who served the same function in the early nineteenth. Despite this, however, the general terms of the anti-Humean case were handed intact across the turn of the century - an integral element of opposition Whiggery's rhetorical arsenal.

The extent to which prominent eighteenth-century Hume critics gained an early nineteenth-century readership in their own right is difficult to estimate - but there is

\textsuperscript{161} N. Phillipson, \textit{Hume}, p. 3.
no shortage of evidence that the next generation of Whig writers found their views significant, despite the decline of the culture of rational dissent which was so central to Hume criticism in the later eighteenth century. William Harris's works received a reprint in 1814, with the preface declaring that they were greatly in demand. Henry Hallam, among others, made much use of Harris's researches, and not infrequently animadverted against Mrs Macaulay's interpretation in his footnotes, despite having stated that 'nobody now reads' her. Hill has chronicled the decline of Macaulay's reputation in the face of a growing appreciation of the extent of her republicanism. I can add that she was even abandoned by the Analytical Review in the 1790s, which one might have expected to appreciate her. It disagreed with Priestley's praise in its review of his Lectures on History, as did the English Review. Priestley on history was reprinted in the early nineteenth century, however, securing at least one voice in Macaulay's favour. Another was that of J.S. Mill, influenced by his father's regard for Macaulay's work, which was used in the younger Mill's attack on Hume in his Westminster Review article on Brodie's History of the British Empire (1824).

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162 W. Harris, Historical and Critical Account, vol. 1, p. v; H. Hallam, The Constitutional History of England (London, 1884), vol. 2, pp. 37, 62, 178, 180, 243, 265, 328, 368, 388. Rather more, though still few, were thought to read Harris, see p. 41.


A more Whiggish benefactor from Macaulay's work might have been Fox, in whose *History of James II* (1807) there seem to be echoes of some of her more memorable anti-Hume passages. Not mentioning her by name would have been understandable given the state of her reputation, but something of the 'patriotic' attack on Hume as falling in with the prejudices of a ruling faction and hypnotising a credulous multitude, came across strongly in Fox's attitude, and by absorption in Jeffrey's review in the *Edinburgh*. Such a stance had been clearly laid out in the preface to volume 6 of Macaulay's *History*. Later, in the 1820s, a number of historical articles in the *Monthly Review* recommended a revival of Macaulay-reading.

It was a rich store of general arguments, rather than a comprehensive factual demolition of Hume, that nineteenth century critics inherited from their predecessors - and in some ways early nineteenth-century efforts can seem like merely variations on a theme. The continuity of Whig modes of assault is striking. Hallam's approach to the Tudors reminds one strongly of Hurd's. Brodie's attack on Hume's account of Elizabethan despotism reads as an expanded version of Millar's few pages on the same subject, and Thomas Babington Macaulay's criticisms of Hume's advocate-

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like defence of Charles I seem to owe something to the same author.\textsuperscript{167} Millar’s influence on Jeffrey, though he distanced himself from him in his 1803 review of the Historical View, was obviously great, and became more striking once he became less moderate in his attitude towards English history than he was in the early years of the Edinburgh. That arguments tended toward circularity during the century after Hume’s publication was understandable considering the pre-professional nature of historical writing, and the relatively limited number of accessible sources. It would take the revolution in source scholarship of the later nineteenth century, along with the fading vitality of Whiggism as a political culture for which Humean history had provided a convenient antitype, to turn minds fundamentally from the basic terms of the old Humean controversy.

If many of the arguments in themselves were similar, the passion with which they were put forward seems if anything to have increased after the French Revolution. This event appears to have secured the central position the History enjoyed in political culture. The text which Louis XVI was obsessed with in his last years was a defining force in the development of the Right in France.\textsuperscript{168} Similarly, in London, Bowyer’s Gallery of English history


\textsuperscript{168} L. Bongie, David Hume, p. 121.
paintings - its pictures based on Hume's text - saw Hume's 'classic' text given a place at the heart of British loyalist patriotism. The Whig-Tory divide - which had never gone away so far as discussion of the *History* was concerned - was reinvigorated by the events of the war years. The Foxite Whigs emerged as clear guardians of the 'true Whig' line on Hume, whilst key figures in the reemerging 'Tory' party praised the *History* to the skies. Hume's *History* provided one of the chief ideological linkages between the period in the mid-eighteenth century when the Whig-Tory conflict collapsed, and the era of the French Revolution when it was renewed. The continual public debate about it since the 1750s had been one of the means by which a Whig-Tory frame of reference had retained its vitality through the years when it had hardly any practical meaning. Hume's wish to erase 'parties of principle' was therefore cruelly disappointed. The *History*, as shall be shown in the next two chapters, actually contributed to the revival of effective Whig/Tory distinctions.
Chapter 2. 'The Tory side'? The impact of the French Revolution, the new 'Toryism' and Hume's 'History'.

Introduction.

This chapter examines the effect of the events of the revolutionary crisis on the way in which Hume's History was regarded. First it explores how the British reaction against the Revolution strengthened 'whig' history - in Butterfield's sense of the term - and weakened any possible sympathies for Hume's sceptical deconstruction of the 'ancient constitution', such as the Critical Review had displayed occasionally before the 1790s. I show how the extreme historical arguments put forward by Paine and Reeves could have helped to discredit Hume's disjointed view of constitutional history through association, in decades which saw a whiggish historiography stressing continuity in high demand. The panic about infidelity triggered by the supposed triumph of 'philosophe' principles in France also caused complaints concerning the influence of Hume's irreligion on his History to reach a peak in the 1790s and 1800s.

Secondly, though, I go on to examine the ways in which the revolutionary crisis, at the same time that it extinguished any chance that the History would be widely read in the way Hume intended, paradoxically also acted to secure the work's place as a standard 'national' history. Hume's text as 'classic' literature, the English History, was a fit subject for national pride at a time when
patriotism was at a premium. Its sympathy for Charles I now had more currency and its well-established 'Tory' reputation was a badge which increasingly recommended it to sections of the nation. I conclude by examining the varieties of work produced by 'Tory' historians in the early nineteenth century, and their relationship to the History as a text they all praised. I conclude that their debt to Hume's work was generally shallow, and that the history written by the Right in the early nineteenth century was far from being 'Humean' in any real sense. However, his treatment of the causes and course of the civil war, in particular, was much drawn upon by commentators of the Right - as it had been by conservative Whigs in the latter half of the eighteenth century, reacting to the Wilkes crisis and the American revolution.

Through this chapter, we see the importance of Hume's text in sustaining and replenishing a political culture of 'Toryism' over these years. My use of 'the Right' as the main label for the groups I examine, especially in section three, follows Sack in regarding this as the least awkward description available.¹ 'Tory' was a title specifically refuted by Sharon Turner and Isaac D'Israeli, and Southey was certainly no 'Pittite'. Despite the difficulties of nomenclature, however, the rise of a

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¹ See J.J. Sack, From Jacobite to Conservative. Reaction and Orthodoxy in Britain, c. 1760-1832 (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 1-7. Sack believes that the very fact that the term 'the Right' was not employed in contemporary British usage helps to make it 'both politically meaningful and politically neutral vis a vis "Tory" and "conservative".'
political establishment which had cast aside Whiggery, in however attenuated a form, certainly allowed Hume's work to sit more comfortably in its place as standard text than it had in the later eighteenth-century, when Whiggism was still an all-encompassing creed. Whether this close association with revived Toryism harmed the long-term reputation of the History, however, by helping to precipitate the sharp decline in its critical fortunes in the 1840s when this Toryism split apart, is a question which will be examined in chapter four.

In addition, this chapter examines another 'conservative' trend in criticism of the History produced by the reaction against events in France - this one violently antipathetic to Hume's work. This movement was the broad anti-Enlightenment shift towards greater spiritual awareness and social corporatism, often referred to under the labels of 'romanticism' and the 'gothic revival' - which stemmed in large part, in its political manifestation, from the writings of Burke and the German thinkers he influenced. Along with various 'Tory radicals', I look especially at the attitude taken towards the History by Coleridge and Carlyle - the latter's alternative model of historical writing representing what was possibly the most formidable challenge to its status which Hume's work faced during the century of its hegemony.
1. Polarisation. The crisis of the 1790s.

The general crisis facing British political culture in the 1790s saw a dramatic change of context for the treatment of Hume's History. Nowhere was this seen more clearly than in the pages of the Critical Review which changed its editorial line decidedly, and abruptly, in favour of the Whig-dissenter cause. This was significantly reflected in the volte face it executed in regard to the History, which received this attack in a 1794 review of Coote's History of England:

Notwithstanding the popularity which Mr. Hume has obtained, we will honestly confess, at the risk of some censure from his violent admirers, that his history is no favourite with us. It wants in the early periods research and accuracy; in the succeeding ones honesty and truth. In his heart a republican, Mr. Hume was, from the basest of motives, an adulator of power, and a supporter of despotic authority. He neither understood nor admired the British constitution, and takes a secret pleasure in calumniating all those estimable characters who contributed to its establishment. His partiality to the bigoted, despotic, and faithless house of Stuart, is notorious. Destitute of religious principle, he never omits a sneer at Christianity; and the reformation of religion, and the glorious revolution in our government, are equally objects of his censure.

These views were repeated in a later review of an abridgement of Hume.

The Whiggish complexion of the major periodicals in

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the early 1790s - the *Monthly*, *Critical*, *Analytical* and the *English* Reviews meant that Hume was disliked by all of them. The last volume of Henry's *History of Great Britain* and the first ones of Coote's *History of England* were both greeted enthusiastically as the long awaited works which could displace Hume from his place of preeminence.\(^5\) The attitude shown towards the *History* by the *British Critic*, the conservative journal designed to remedy a Whig monopoly on reviews at a time of perceived crisis, is obviously of interest. This journal too, took a negative view of Hume's work, criticising especially its spirit of irreligion and lack of accuracy. However, there were some usages of the *History* for illustrative purposes in political articles which resemble the way it was later used by the *Quarterly* and *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*.\(^6\)

Generally though, the 1790s can be said to represent a hiatus between the decades when Hume's chief periodical defender, the *Critical*, appreciated his sceptical brand of conservatism as close to its own, and the early nineteenth century when the Right-wing reviews regularly praised him without necessarily being clear about how Humean history differed from their own revived 'Tory' history. The impact of the Revolution was responsible for this transition. Though, in time, it meant that his supposed 'Toryism' gradually became less offputting, his 'irreligion' was

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\(^5\) *British Critic*, vol. 2 (1793), pp. 126, 310-12, 419.

frightening given the anti-philosophe attitudes the early years of the Revolution provoked.

The traditional dividing lines which defined political attitudes towards the History were temporarily distorted by the unprecedented events of the 1790s, with the new element of polarisation they introduced into British politics. Joseph Towers, rational dissenter critic of the History, became a member of the Society for Constitutional Information, and was questioned before the Privy Council in June 1794. The influence of Towers's anti-Hume Observations was acknowledged in the New and Impartial History of England written in 1796 by the radical John Baxter, a member of the London Corresponding Society. However, Baxter's stress on the role of successful tyranny in English history led to him sounding Humean at times himself. Hume was described as 'so great a man' - particularly in his account of the Tudors. Pressing for change meant that the widespread glorification enjoyed by the present constitution had to be countered. Stressing Edward I's power over his newly elected Commons, and citing Hume, Baxter went on to declare:

how little reason the advocates of this corrupt system have to boast of our ancient and glorious constitution! Would Britons but read the history of this constitution, they would see the radical rottenness, and mischievous effects of our

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parliamentary representation; and that it never was intended to give them any real security, but only to cheat them into an opinion that they taxed themselves, in order to keep them quiet under the pressure.¹⁰

Though he was unPainite, and unHumean, in his stress on the need for a revolutionary revival of Anglo-Saxon government, his account of history since the conquest showed the influence of both these writers. In emphasising the discontinuities of England's past in order to legitimise revolutionary change in the present, Baxter's work demonstrates why Hume's strategy, embodied in The History of England, for the defence of the status quo in the 1750s was so unsuitable for this purpose by the 1790s. The 'ancient constitution' was now seen as the bulwark of loyalism against an apparent Painite threat which amounted to a rejection of the validity of standard historicist modes of political argument.

Hume's History was used to press the need for revolutionary change in a less sophisticated fashion by the radical Thomas Muir. The memorials which he laid before the French Minister for Foreign Affairs when arguing for an invasion included a sketch of Scottish history which illustrated the tyrannical treatment of the Scots by the English in the seventeenth century. It employed the authority of Hume, whose work was immensely influential in French political debate during the 1790s.¹¹ Southey's


¹¹ H.W. Meikle, Scotland and the French Revolution (Glasgow, 1912), pp. 174-5.
radical poem Wat Tyler appealed to the same text. It was prefaced with an excerpt from Hume, presumably to lend it greater weight.\textsuperscript{12}

As against these proponents of instant solutions to political problems, William Godwin developed his highly individual reading of Hume's historical work into inspiration for his so-called 'Jacobin' novels, with their stress on social determinism, and the consequent need for a gradualist approach to reform.\textsuperscript{13} At the same time, Hume's History was also enlisted for loyalist purposes. Hume's account of the Commonwealth was invoked by the Right in much the same way as it was on the other side of the Channel. It was published as no. 5 of Reeves' Association Papers as The Fatal Effects of Republican Principles, exemplified in the History of England from the Death of Charles I to the Restoration of Charles II.\textsuperscript{14}

However, though the 1790s saw the History firmly established as a standard history of England whose authority could be profitably invoked by all and sundry, the decade also saw an end to any hope that Humean history

\textsuperscript{12} R. Southey, Wat Tyler: a Dramatic Poem (London, 1817), pp. 3-6. Southey's account differed greatly from Hume's - rationalising the actions of the peasantry and downplaying the monarch's role. The inappropriateness of using Hume under such circumstances was implied by the Critical Review on the event of the poem's reappearance, series 5, vol. 5 (1817), p. 188.


might be more widely adopted in the iconoclastic manner Hume had intended. The general accentuation of public preference for more conservative history-writing was a process accelerated by the American Revolution — and the precipitate fall from grace of the republican denigrater of 1688, Catharine Macaulay. The French Revolution obviously heightened this desire for a sense of continuity — especially against Thomas Paine's assertions that there was no English constitution, which happened to be based in part on Hume's arguments about the lack of a singular English constitution.¹⁵ The most Humean passage was part of the four pages of Rights of Man, Part the Second which Paine was successfully prosecuted for by the government in 1792. Part of Erskine's unsuccessful defence in court was that Paine was merely expressing arguments already put forward by Hume:

Mr. Hume himself states expressly, that the Constitution of this country was nearly an absolute monarchy, notwithstanding the numerous panegyrics upon it. It is impossible to say one man is to be punished for what another man has written who has become as great a classical author as any in the language. All the world will not make that intelligible. Notwithstanding all the numerous panegyrics upon English liberty, it may be said to be an absolute monarchy till the

¹⁵ T. Paine, Rights of Man, Common Sense, and Other Political Writings, ed. M. Philp (Oxford, 1995), pp. 245-6. I owe the insight that 'some of Paine's bullets had been shaped by David Hume' to Smith, Gothic Bequest, p. 125. Few authors until recently have explicitly linked the two writers. A rare nineteenth-century exception was 'A Reformed Whig', 'A Dissertation on the English Constitution', in Lord Viscount Bolingbroke, The Patriot King; and, an Essay on the Spirit of Patriotism (London, 1831), p. 78: 'PAINE boldly denied the existence of an English Constitution, and DAVID HUME so feebly maintains it, that it may be said, there is scarcely any virtual disagreement between them.'
last century; it appears so from all Mr. Hume has recorded. Shall it be said, if a grave historian writes that, that another man shall be made criminal for asserting the same principles?" 

The anti-Paine panic, therefore, cannot have done much for the sympathetic reading of Hume's *History*. The Critical Review's 1794 assertion that Hume 'was at heart a republican', quoted above, and Baxter's use of the *History*, have to be considered in this context. The later association of Hume's ideas with Paine's *Age of Reason* did nothing to help his image either.

At the same time, Humean historical ideas were also associated with the extreme Right, in the person of John Reeves. His ultra-loyalist *Thoughts on the English Government* followed Hume in stressing parliament's monarchical origin, the primacy of religious rather than political motives in triggering the civil war, and the relative unimportance of political as contrasted with civil liberty. It led to a well-publicised motion in parliament that he be prosecuted for a libel on the House of Commons. In defending Reeves, Windham argued that Hume or Macaulay might as well have been prosecuted as Reeves for

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17 As late as 1810, Hume's *History* could be attacked as the work of a man who was 'avowedly a Republican and a Freethinker'. T. Camden, *The Imperial History of England*, vol. 1 (London, 1810), p. iii.


their historical work - the very idea was absurd. Pitt, perhaps with his father's parliamentary indictment of Hume's History in mind, supported the idea of prosecution.

Judging by the parliamentary display of attachment for Whig history which the Reeves debates provide, Hume's historical writings, if read in the demystifying manner he had intended, could not have seemed particularly attractive to the governing classes during the crisis of the 1790s - whatever some commentators have written on the usefulness of his utilitarian conservatism. The latter was probably absorbed more commonly through the writings of Paley, or perhaps through Hume's political Essays, than through the six large volumes of the History, imperfectly understood as they commonly were, and surrounded by obfuscating political controversy. In terms of his historical views, Paley had an advantage when it came to popular acceptance, in that his works had a reassuringly Whiggish stress on continual improvement of the constitutional 'mansion', even as he shared Hume's deprecation of the idea that any 'first principles' of the English constitution had ever existed.

Similarly, the historical views in many of Hume's earlier political essays were more Whiggish in tone than he would

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later be happy with - which must have made them more politically palatable to most readers than the History.\textsuperscript{22}

Written at mid-century, with 'patriotic' radical Whiggery and 'divine right' Toryism envisaged (as far as Hume was concerned) as the main threat to stability, Hume's historical arguments hardly functioned effectively by the 1790s, in defending a strongly monarchist, but decidedly 'Whig', establishment which claimed a monopoly on 'patriotism' against what it perceived to be popular Painite anti-ancient constitutionalist arguments - drawn partly from Hume's History itself. As the fear of 'Painism' subsided, and a patriotic, ancient-constitutionalist radicalism reappeared in the next decade, along with the increasing tendency for 'Whig' to refer only to the opposition, matters were to change somewhat in favour of the History's reputation - as shown in section three below.

However, as the 'classic' narrative of the nation's past at a time when the Britain's heritage was increasingly treasured, Hume's work, paradoxically, managed to weather the storms of the revolutionary decades with its status as 'standard text' if anything enhanced. Despite having all five major reviews lined up against it in the early 1790s, the expiry of the work's copyright stimulated the appearance of new part-work and duodecimo editions - which

the market swallowed up.\textsuperscript{23} Besides the evidence of continual new editions for Hume's 'extraordinary share of popularity', one can cite the unique Bristol library lending records, published up to 1784.\textsuperscript{24} These show Hume's work already securely established on the eve of the French Revolution as the most popular historical work on offer to an upper middle-class clientele, which represented the sort of people in a position to buy books in the later eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{25} The \textit{Critical} complained twice in the 1790s about the harm its new anti-Hume stance would do to its popularity.\textsuperscript{26} The same decade saw the publication of two abridgments of the \textit{History}, as well as continuations and publications like \textit{Selections from the Harleian Miscellany, Many of Which are Referred to by Hume} (1793). This broad popular base helps explain how the \textit{History} weathered the greater religious criticism it faced during the French wars. Bowyer's decision to mould his gallery of English history painting around Hume's 'immortal work' is indicative of the kind of status it had acquired by the turn of the century, despite opposition from the major


\textsuperscript{24} The quotation is from C. Coote, \textit{The History of England} (London, 1791), vol. 1, pp. iii-iv.

\textsuperscript{25} P. Kaufman, \textit{Borrowings from the Bristol Library 1773-1784: A Unique Record of Reading Vogues} (Charlottesville, 1960), pp. 8-10, 40, 122.

\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Critical Review}, vol. 10 (1794), p. 361; vol. 13 (1795), p. 76.
reviews to its perceived political principles. Less well known, however, is the rival, or spoiler, project planned by Kippis and Towers around a 'corrected' edition of Hume's work - which again illustrates the political divisiveness anything involved with the History invoked.

Bowyer's Hume - with so many of its militarist messages being contrary to Hume's intended views - shows how Hume's History as a product disconnected from its author and his infidelity was managing to secure a place by the 1790s as a symbol of 'Britishness' which was fully compatible with English 'aristocratic' values. From its hegemony over Scottish views of their relationship with England, to its quotation in the Irish Union debates on the unionist side, to the attacks made by Thelwall on it as a manifestation of the 'aristocratic' British establishment, the History - despite the vicissitudes of its author's personal reputation - was moving onto a new plane as national symbol by the turn of the century.


terms in which the Edinburgh Monthly Review described the 'well-proportioned fabric' of Hume's History in 1820 had their origins in the cultural conflicts of the 1790s:

to the author of such a work as the History of England, the fame of the most illustrious names is almost irrevocably confided. His is the grand court of appeal; and when judgment has once been pronounced in this tribunal of the last resort, it is in vain that the inferior jurisdictions, - the antiquaries, memorialists, chroniclers - give utterance to their inaudible murmurs. The wide range of Mr. Hume's work thus gives it a prodigious advantage over any partial compilation, however laboriously put together, and however ancient or authentic the materials. We love to wander through its various magnificence, and repine when withdrawn to any curious speculations about the quality of the materials of which it has been constructed, or any nice inspection of the rubbish which ancienly occupied its scite.31

2. Organicism and evangelicalism. The anti-Enlightenment reaction.

For those who viewed the History as irreligious, its widespread popularity was pernicious, and had to be opposed. The 1790s saw Hume attacked as an 'infidel' historian with greater intensity than before - and the French Revolution's long-term impact, with the reaction against it encouraging religious revivalism and organicist nationalism, opened a new front of ideological disagreement with the History which produced repeated skirmishing

1989), p. 110; G. Claeys ed., The Politics of English Jacobinism. Writings of John Thelwall (Pennsylvania, 1995), pp. 140-41, 265, 268. For a striking piece of visual evidence for the History's early nineteenth-century role as an icon of British unity, see the 1822 edition, printed by J.F. Dove, which was designed so as to picture a rose, a thistle and a harp on each volume's spine.

through to the mid-nineteenth century. Before examining the revived 'Toryism' which claimed Hume's work as its own, we shall follow this thread of 'anti-Enlightenment' argument through to the works of Carlyle - a line of thought which produced a more thorough-going criticism of Hume's work than those of Whig critics, many of whom maintained a respect for Hume as a political thinker and viewed the History as an unfortunate aberration.

Initially in the early 1790s, as British opinion set its face against the revolution across the channel, Hume's fortunes were caught up with those of Voltaire and Gibbon in a flood of anti-philosophe sentiment, which overswept even the immediate posthumous reputation of Adam Smith. William Jones gave a sermon in 1791 which savaged Hume and Voltaire for ridiculing religion, encouraging infidelity, and Hume especially for trying to explain events in purely material terms in his history. Over the next two decades, evangelical distaste for the History was widely expressed. Hannah Moore went out of her way to point out its atheistical dangers in her Hints towards Forming the Character of a Young Princess. Meanwhile, a concrete

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32 For Smith, see I.S. Ross, The Life of Adam Smith (Oxford, 1995), pp. 409-10. Even by 1803, the Monthly Review could not criticise an attack on Hume's philosophical works, without feeling it necessary to add that: 'We are no bigots to Mr. Hume's opinion; ... and we belong to no lodge of Illuminés, nor any set of Encyclopédistes'. Enlarged series, vol. 41 (1803), p. 188.


example of an unbeliever using Hume as his 'apostolic specimen' was provided by Thomas Ritchie in his Life of Hume, which John Forster reviewed damningly in The Eclectic Review for January 1808. To Forster's evangelical eyes, Hume's History was of a piece with his philosophical productions:

it will perpetuate the moral, as well as the intellectual cast of his mind; it will show a man indifferent to the welfare of mankind, contemptuous of the sublime feelings of moral and religious heroism, incapable himself of all grand and affecting sentiments, and constantly cherishing a consummate arrogance, though often under the semblance and language of philosophic moderation.  

The fourteen-year old Macaulay, a key product of the 'Clapham Sect', and a regular visitor to Hannah More, reflected turn-of-the-century evangelical attitudes towards Hume's History in a letter to his mother, where he refers to

the broad and shameless Scepticism of Hume, who in his history of the great Rebellion puts religion at the head of the political engines which an able governor should employ, and honestly avows, at least by fair inference, that that is its only use. ... (Hume's History was) disgraced by the utter want of religious principle. ... Hume discards or omits everything about religion, except a very little which he distorts and misrepresents. I think that History should not only be pleasant and authentic, as Critics say, but that the Historian should not be entirely cold and incredulous upon the most important topic in every point of view that ever occupied the attention of man.  

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35 J. Foster, Contributions, Biographical, Literary, and Philosophical, to The Eclectic Review (London, 1844), vol. 1, p. 88. The 'apostolic specimen' reference is from p. 83.

Similar sentiments were expressed by George Nicholson in his Extracts on Education, where he condemned Hume's History on the grounds that he had been 'the avowed enemy of the two principles which conduce most to the happiness of mankind; religion and liberty'. Claims that Hume's infidelity was reflected in his historical work were far more frequent during the two decades following the French Revolution than either before or after. Previously, Hume's treatment of protestantism had been much criticised, but his History had not generally been prominent in attacks on his writings against religion - a sign that his policy of not spreading infidelity 'ad populum' had some success. The reaction of the 1790s, however, produced more treatments blurring Hume's 'irreligious' philosophical works into his historical.

In the British reaction against philosophes and irreligious system-building, Hume suffered from the panic-induced tendency to lump all infidels together. Perhaps the supreme example of this is the place Hume assumed in the personal demonology of his one-time friend, Edmund Burke. Despite their twin roles as founders of 'conservatism' in the annals of the history of political thought, Burke was extremely antipathetic to Hume's works by the 1790s - and

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37 G. Nicholson, Extracts on Education, Selected and Arranged from the most Popular Writers (Stourport, 1810), vol. 2, p. 345.

38 This reaction lingered, in certain quarters, into the 1810s, e.g. The Christian Miscellany, vol. 1 (1816), pp. 119-20. For its decline over the next few decades - before reviving again at mid-century - see below, pp. 122-129.
treated him with scanty more respect than he did Rousseau. The similarities between the attitude Burke and Hume sought to foster regarding the exceptional nature of the 1688 Revolution was overwhelmed by Burke's dislike for Hume's irreligion - ironically creating similarities between his attitude towards the History, and that shown by the rational dissenters he despised.\(^3\) In Burke's paranoid state, he revealed his distrust of the History in the way he quoted from its description of the Peasant's Revolt in his 1791 Thoughts on French Affairs - portraying Hume as some kind of dangerous democrat.\(^4\)

Not all of Burke's antipathy can be blamed on his agitated state of mind in the 1790s. The religiosity of Burke's fragment of medieval history, written decades earlier, had been the very antitype of Hume's.\(^5\) Acton was to lament that Burke had been discouraged by Hume's historical success from continuing his work, noting his 'intelligence and appreciation' of medieval institutions, as against 'that system of prejudice and ignorance'.

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3. Robert Bisset, Burke's first biographer, thought that the 'religious sentiments of Hume' were the cause of Burke's disapprobation. See The Life of Edmund Burke, (London, 1800) vol. 2, p. 428.

4. L.G. Mitchell, ed. The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke, vol. 8 (Oxford, 1989), p. 369. See also R. Bisset, Edmund Burke, vol. 1, p. 442: 'If Burke had not been incensed against Hume, it is probable he would have considered the general scope, rather than particular passages of his writings.'

5. R.H. Murray, Edmund Burke. A Biography (Oxford, 1931), pp. 77-8. Mackintosh's first Lardner volume, discussed in the next chapter, might almost have been an uneasy attempt to reconcile Burke's view of medieval history with that of Hume. In the atmosphere of the 1790s, no such reconciliation was thinkable.
epitomized by Hume. Such sympathy with medieval Catholicism was related to the more specific grudge which Burke bore Hume's History. This concerned its comment on the unshakable prejudice of an Irishman where the Irish massacre was concerned - a remark which, according to Bisset, Burke thought referred to him personally.

Burke's place in the common-law tradition, which sacralized accretive, gradual change, also set him apart from Hume, whose Scottishness and dislike of the law as a pursuit rendered this approach doubly alien to him. Again, an extra, more personal, reason for bitterness might be available in Burke's anger against Fox's usage of Humean arguments about medieval history in the regency debates. Fox had used Hume's line on the worthlessness of medieval history to present-day politics in defending the Prince of Wales's right to govern in his father's stead against precedents which told against him. Burke's fury about the

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46 E.g. 'Were the Committee to select their precedents from such times, and to govern their conduct by such examples? From a time, too, when the House of Commons was prostrate at the feet of the House of Lords, when the third estate had lost all energy and vigour, and when the power lay wholly in the hands of the barons. Precedents drawn from such times could not be resorted to with safety because there was no analogy between the constitution then, and the constitution as established at the
way his research for the Whig cause had been brushed aside by Fox cannot have been eased by his leader's having turned instead to arguments from a History he disliked.

Burke's respect for the value of a corporatist world-view, such as that provided by medieval Catholicism - although it was incomprehensible to many of his contemporaries - was to be influential in the developing 'gothic' strain of early nineteenth-century thought, working alongside that of the Romantic German philosophy which valued his work so highly. German antipathy towards Hume's History could be directly influential in a British context when a translation was made available of a work like Frederick Schlegel's Lectures on the History of Literature (1818). This described Hume as 'a careless, superficial, and blundering historian' who 'could not transport himself back into the spirit of remote ages'. Schlegel opposed Hume's extension of his sceptical outlook

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Revolution, and since practised. All precedents taken from periods preceding the Revolution, must be precedents which bore no analogy to the present case; because, at no one period before the Revolution, was civil liberty clearly defined and understood, the rights of the different branches of the legislature ascertained, and the free spirit of our constitution felt and acknowledged. The earlier periods of history were such, as only showed the changes of hands were such, as only showed the changes of hands into which power shifted, as the circumstances of the times ordained. In one reign, the power would be found to have been in the king, and then he was an absolute tyrant; in others, the barons possessed it, and held both King and Commons in the most slavish subjection; sometimes the democracy prevailed, and all the oppressions of a democratical government were practised in their fullest enormity.

No precedent, therefore, drawn from times so variable, where right and wrong were so oftener confounded, and where popular freedom had neither an existence nor a name, ought to be considered as of the least authority.' T.C. Hansard, The Parliamentary History of England, from the Earliest Period to the Year 1803 (London, 1818), vol. 27, columns 757-8.
'to all the principles of morality and religion' as being 'by no means becoming in a great national historian', and indicted him for having 'no principles at all, and a deadening want of feeling, warmth, and passion'."'

Some did not require translation to fall under the spell of 'historismus' - a trend, though, which Forbes has shown occupied only a minority of early nineteenth-century British historians." However his work, on the 'Liberal Anglican' grouping around Thomas Arnold has shown the coherence of their historical view, and though they lacked universal appeal, what influence they did have was thrown squarely against Hume. J.C. Hare's objections to Hume's historical work were representative of the group: 'few men have been more poorly endowed with the historical spirit, or less capable of understanding or sympathising with any unseen form of human nature'." Milman, as a writer for the Quarterly, was probably the most widely-read of the school. He made it clear to the periodical's readers - used to more favourable treatments of the History - that his objections to Gibbon, whose text he edited for Christian sensibilities, extended to Hume. This can clearly be seen in his 1826 review of the Roman Catholic Lingard's History

47 Frederick Schlegel, Lectures on the History of Literature, Ancient and Modern (Edinburgh, 1818), vol. 2, pp. 221-2.


of England, which he attacked by comparing his methods to those of Hume:

The author has studied the art of composition in the school of Hume and Gibbon, and has used the consummate artifice, which they employed against Christianity, to the disparagement of the Protestant religion of this country. His purpose is effected rather by the general tendency of the whole narrative, than by particular misstatements, which, as they are open to contradiction and unanswerable detection, are infinitely less dangerous, than the system, long and constantly pursued, of perceptible, yet scarcely definite, misrepresentation ... the greatest skill is shown, as by his able predecessors in this mode of historical writing, in managing the interest, and exciting the enthusiasm of the reader. While he is captivated with a specious appearance of fairness, the argument on the one side is completely neutralized by an insidious qualification, while on the other, the warmth of admiration or the emotion of pity is left unalloyed, or cherished with new excitement.  

The rational historian, to Milman, was concerned with externals - with stylistic techniques rather than essentials.

A similar line on the History had been taken by one of the chief influences on the Liberal Anglicans, Coleridge - for whom German biblical criticism seems to have aroused the same antipathy towards Humean history which ancient constitutionalism produced in Burke. He attacked the work as the product of a man with 'the head and heart of an atheist', a 'heartless sophist who, in this island, was the main pioneer of that atheistic philosophy, which in France

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50 Quarterly Review, vol. 33 (1825-6), pp. 5-6.

transvenomed the natural thirst of truth into the hydrophobia of a wild and homeless scepticism'. Hume's mode of historical writing was the entire opposite of its proper function - 'a voice from the sepulchres of our forefathers', instilling respect for the heroic spirits of the past, and thereby hope for the future. To Coleridge, the History addressed itself, as Morrow has written, to 'the understanding and could not enlighten the reason or enliven the soul.' Like Carlyle later, who inherited many of Coleridge's attitudes towards history, he defended the usefulness of enthusiasm in morals, religion and patriotism, against Hume's typical eighteenth-century denigration of it. 'Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm', he declared. Hume's work as a whole was comprehensively damned as a perfidious romance, not a history; the apologist for priestcraft, while it undermined the first principles even of natural religion; extravagantly sceptical concerning the laws, where they have been wantonly broken by tyrants, and then only decisive, and embittered by the breach, when the offence has become necessary and the offenders have been patriots; often false in the statement, and still more frequently attaining the purposes of falsehood by the omission of facts; in reasoning a model of the mock-profound, and in style, Irish, Scottish,

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54 J. Morrow, Coleridge's Political Thought, p. 123.

Gallican, -any thing but English.  

The attitude of Coleridge and the Liberal Anglicans towards Hume closely resembled that of Thomas Carlyle, whose critique of Hume's historical method, though largely implicit, was probably far more influential. Like them, he stressed the role of the spiritual in the study of the past, as against the secular view contained in a History which had contributed to his original loss of faith in Christianity. Carlyle attacked Hume for his lack of feeling for the past, and his French Revolution provided an anti-type to the Humean model of polite, controlled, high-political historical narrative. Past and Present looked to the middle ages which Hume had despised for solutions to current problems, whilst his Cromwell did much to rehabilitate the arch 'enthusiast' whom Hume's work had long been mainstream in attacking as a hypocrite. However, more than the other writers discussed in this section, Carlyle maintained a certain respect for Hume, whose work he read several times. As Kaplan has noted: 'The acid common sense and intellectual power of Hume and Gibbon set standards for which he had the deepest respect, no matter

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57 D. Forbes, The Liberal Anglican Idea of History, p. 150: 'Carlyle's was the contemporary conception of history in England which the Liberal Anglican idea most closely approaches.'

how corrosive of traditional religious belief their logic and conclusions. He may well have approved, like Thierry, of Hume's stress on the discontinuities of English history as against a smooth whiggish progression. He certainly recommended the reading of Hume's 'characters' to his brother, implying an approval of Hume's stress on the potential difference an individual 'legislator', like Alfred or Edward I, could make in history, as against the more socially deterministic line taken by other Scottish Enlightenment thinkers.

The heyday of Carlyle's influence - the 1840s - coincided with a precipitate decline in Hume's popularity, which will be discussed in chapter four. The fashion for more circumstantial, dramatic history-writing - which revealed the 'spirit' of an age as well as unfolding a narrow political narrative - was heavily influenced by Carlyle. In this sense, he was the most influential of these 'anti-Enlightenment' writers in his attacks on Humean history, even as, ironically, he was the one most positively influenced by Hume's work. The popular thirst for a different, less rational, more empathic study of the past, however, was much more a literary than a philosophical conversion of public taste, and its full flood soon subsided.

In its prime, however, Carlyle's anti-Hume

59 F. Kaplan, Thomas Carlyle, p. 49.

influence was reinforced by the early Victorian craze for medievalism, which was accompanied by an emphasis on the superior stability of corporatist, pre-modern societies. Cobbett's *History of the Protestant Reformation*, a tribute to the paternalism of medieval Catholicism, was a hugely popular work, full of blistering attacks on Hume.\(^6^1\) To Cobbett Hume was, as Carlyle later described the Scot, 'the father of all succeeding Whigs' - meaning, a writer who stood for the atomistic, aspiritual present against the traditional values of an earlier, allegedly more considerate age.\(^6^2\) Similarly, in the 'radical' Bulwer's *Last of the Barons* - an historical novel published in 1843, set during the Wars of the Roses - Hume is implicitly attacked for defending the (proto-bourgeois) Edward V against Warwick 'the Kingmaker', the latter supposedly having been a model of the paternalistic responsibility engendered by classic feudalism.\(^6^3\) In such works, as in Carlyle's, an anti-Enlightenment emphasis on the role of empathy in historical study over that of reason was joined to a very conservative socio-political message, which effectively aligned Hume's comparatively progressive brand


\(^{63}\) E. Bulwer, (anon.), *The Last of the Barons* (London, 1843), e.g. vol. 1, p. vii. The title itself was borrowed from a passage of Hume's. Bulwer, however, lent the phrase a nostalgic aura - whereas Hume had been critical of the barons' role in destabilizing medieval government. See his *History of England*, vol. 2, p. 428.
of conservatism alongside that of contemporary Whigs.

Attacks such as those we have discussed here, represent the most comprehensive critiques Hume's History received during the century of its supremacy. They were potentially more effective, when conducted with literary skill, than any variety of 'Whig' assault, because they seriously questioned the philosophical underpinnings of Hume's method rather than quibble over individual facts. Arguably, Carlyle's histories were more important in dislodging Hume from his ascendancy than Macaulay's work. The latter is more generally ascribed with this feat, but, as discussed in the next chapter, Macaulay's historical method can be understood in large part as a development out of Hume's. Carlyle, on the other hand, though he did have debts to his fellow Scot, represents a far more radical break with the eighteenth-century British tradition of historical-writing.

3. 'The declension of Whig sentiments': A 'Tory' interpretation of history?

As we have seen, the polarisation of political culture which occurred in Britain in the 1790s, pulled the History's reputation in two opposite directions at once. The 'ancient constitution' which Hume had sought to undermine became more sacrosanct, at the same time as his 'classic' narrative of the national past was valued all the more as an icon - simply because it was regarded as the
English History. The 1800s saw a certain resolution work itself out, with Hume's reputation benefitting from the political Right's gradual acceptance of a 'Tory' identity—though not from the fact that this was attached to a whiggish historiography. As we have seen, Hume's History was not immediately attractive to government supporters in the 1790s, beyond the advantages that could be taken by using its authority as a 'classic work'—a tactic also open to radicals. In the 1800s, as non-Whig histories appeared, they were therefore at first less than comfortable with identifying themselves with Hume, even as they followed earlier 'establishment Whig' histories in adopting elements of his interpretation.

A good example of this is John Andrews's Historical Review of the Moral, Religious, Literary, and Political Character, of the English Nation, from the Earliest Periods (1806). The medieval sections of this were very whiggish, and the Elizabethan section contained attacks, which resemble those of Towers and Brodie, on the Humean notion that the idea of a mixed constitution was dead in the late Tudor period. In the chapters on the early Stuarts, however, Andrews began to rely very heavily on Hume's narrative in favour of Charles I and Strafford—and was severely rebuked by the Monthly for doing so: 'The author copies, and even exaggerates, the misrepresentations of Hume on the subject of the grand struggle between Charles I and his parliament ... Heaven forbid that our youth should form their notions of this period of our history
from the lessons of Dr. Andrews. The Critical however found nothing iniquitous about the work's politics - advising that it 'may be advantageously used by the young student of history, as a judicious and useful compilation'. That after the generally strong whiggishness of Andrews's account, he could still follow Hume so closely on the causes and progress of the civil war - as well as the fact that the Critical found this innocuous - perhaps suggests the effect of the French Revolution in further consolidating the conservative Whig tactic of qualifiedly defending Charles I which had been in use, under Hume's influence, since the 1760s.

An examination of the work of another author with a high view of monarchy shows that Hume's work did not automatically appeal to such tastes in the immediate aftermath of the revolutionary period - thanks to the stigmas attached to it of irreligion and Toryism. Major Samuel Dales's An Essay on the Study of the History of England (1809) was written along staunchly loyalist lines which were praised by The British Critic. His approval of Hume's History was somewhat limited: 'let me recommend to your attention that part only of Hume's history which treats of the rise and progress of the feudal system; it is

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"British Critic, vol. 38 (1811), pp. 409-10."
admirably well written." This was Dales's only reference to Hume's work. He was more 'whiggish' than Hume in assuming a fixed medieval constitution, but also showed his strong monarchism in the terms on which he defended Richard III - whom Hume had followed the mainstream historical tradition in attacking. On the causes of the civil war, Dales lambasted Rapin for having been 'too whig', whereas other writers had been 'too tory'. Perhaps the key, however, to his general disregard for Hume's work was his very sceptical attitude towards historical 'truth', and his insistence that as many works as possible should be read in its pursuit. Hume's sloppiness towards his authorities, and the deadening effect on historical inquiry of a 'standard work' securing a monopoly of public attention might have been calculated to annoy Dales. However his obvious fondness for Brady, the source of Hume's section on the rise of feudalism, and Carte - both authors which Hume had used extensively - show that he was able to reach behind Hume's work for monarchist texts which were more to his liking. His insistence on the complexity of historical truth was akin to the other anti-Enlightenment authors discussed above, with their disdain for what they saw as the glib generalisations of 'philosophical history'.

By the 1800s, however, there are also signs that the adoption of Hume's text by a resurgent 'Toryism' was

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68 S. Dales, Essay, p. 162.
underway. George Rose, in answering Fox's criticism of Hume, produced the following interesting defence for the historian in 1809:

That Mr. Hume had prejudices I do not mean to dispute; but they were the prejudices of system, not of party. Viewing, with the eye of a philosopher, the origin and progress of the British Constitution, he probably thought he discovered in it more of the monarchical, and less of the democratical preponderance than common opinion had sometimes ascribed to it. That this general theory occasionally influenced his opinions, and even coloured his narrative, I admit; but in his details of this very portion of the British history, which Mr. Fox has chosen as an era in the settlement of its constitution, his account of the conduct of King James, and his reflections upon it throughout his reign, appear to me as severely reprehensive as could well be expected ... his narrative has always appeared to me to be correct and impartial.*

Significantly, Rose went out of his way to defend Hume against the Foxite Heywood's suggestion that he had approved of Charles I's trial.† With the fate of Louis XIV in mind, those whose monarchism had been strengthened enough that they felt themselves sidling towards acceptance of a 'Tory' label could reach for Hume's History as a reassuringly familiar, already mainstream, notoriously 'Tory', text.

By the 1810s and '20s, many leading 'Tory' reviewers had apparently taken the History to their hearts in an even more whole-hearted way. In Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine

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* G. Rose, Observations on the Historical Work of the Late Right Honorable Charles James Fox (London, 1809), pp. xi-xii. Elsewhere, Rose was severely antipathetic to Fox's statement that Hume had set up a justification for King Charles's execution; pp. 8-9.

'Christopher North' declared: 'I love the memory of David Hume - the first historian the modern world has produced - *primus absque secundo*, to my mind! His account of the different sects and parties in the time of Charles I. is worth all the English prose that has been written since'. 71 (This singling out of Hume's treatment of Charles I's reign for especial praise was characteristic of the post-French Revolution 'Tory'.) Lockhart was equally complimentary in the *Quarterly*: 'That book has taken its place as the classical record, and can no more be supplanted by anything else on the same subject than Macbeth, or the Paradise Lost, or the Dunciad.' Any attempt to write a new history of England sank after 'tumbling half seen in the wake of the good ship David for a few years'. 72

'Tories' were apt to quote their favourite historian in a politically charged context. When Robert Southey wished to savage Hallam's *Constitutional History of England*, it was Hume's text which he reached for - selectively quoting from the *History* to 'prove' the merits of Laud and congratulating the Scot for his approval of Strafford: 'gratitude is due to him for having made a part of Strafford's admirable defence familiar to general readers. Owing to him it has become one of the speeches which boys declaim at school'. 73 In other numbers of the *Quarterly*, Southey sided with Hume against attacks in

73 *Quarterly Review*, vol. 37 (1828), pp. 231-2, 243.
Nugent’s *Life of Hampden*, and quoted him approvingly on the merits of the royalist Lord Astley.⁷⁴

Polemical use of the *History* in right-wing journals was especially popular during the Reform Bill debate. 'The Revolutions of 1640 and 1830', a notable *Quarterly* article by Croker and Lockhart, compared the Reform Bill with the triennial act - using Hume's description of the latter as having been destructive of the constitution for factional ends. It also quoted Hume on the Long Parliament's use of popular violence to achieve its aims, and on the desire of its leading figures to subvert the ecclesiastical establishment and abolish the House of Lords, drawing obvious conclusions out of this for the present crisis.⁷⁵ Archibald Alison in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* illuminated the threat to the Lords with a similar Humean parallel in his own 'Reform Bill' essay, and in a later piece on 'The British Peerage', on this occasion using the Whigs' demands for a creation of peers as an excuse to quote Hume's powerful passage on Cromwell's dissolution of the Long Parliament - the incidents being somewhat tenuously linked by both being supposedly based on a specious plea of 'necessity'.⁷⁶ The Cromwellian theme continued in 1837, when Alison cited Hume at length to

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⁷⁵ *Quarterly Review*, vol. 47 (1832), pp. 276-278.

compare the policies of the 'Whig-Radicals' with the major generals' assault on traditional freedoms."

Alison - significantly a writer whose major work, like Croker's, was dedicated to analysing the effects of the French Revolution - might be regarded as the Tory master of the politicised Hume-quote. In the 1830s and 1840s, he made extensive use of the History in essays in Blackwood's and elsewhere. The Reform Bill, as already noted, was a favourite target, with Alison equating it with the Petition of Right as seen by Hume, rather than the triennial act as Croker and Lockhart had done, but to much the same purpose. It was 'as Mr Hume observes, " ... so great a concession to the Commons, that it in truth amounted to a revolution."

The History's potent narrative was also directed against enemies on a wider Tory front. Charles II's shameful alliance with France, as Hume had related it, was transcribed at great length as a parallel to the Whigs' Belgian policy, and the Commons' 'ignorant' refusal to accept necessary taxation, (in Hume's view of the 1630s and Ship Money), was used to attack the


78 For the background to Alison's familiarity with the History, see A. Alison, Some Account of My Life and Writings. An Autobiography, ed. by Lady Alison (Edinburgh and London, 1883), vol. 1, pp. 30, 65. At the time of writing this, he still possessed the five-volume edition of the History which had been the first book he had bought as a child. When at university, he had 'generally read every day', 'fifty pages of Gibbon, Robertson, or Hume.'

dismantlement of protectionism, which Alison fiercely opposed.\(^{80}\) Generally, most of Alison's references to Hume were consistent with his stated admiration for the Scot's 'profound sagacity' - yet the picture of Hume's thought displayed in his work was one distorted by Alison's own polemical purposes.\(^{81}\) He somehow managed to see in Hume's History the principles of political economy behind his own dogmatic protectionism, and - although he claimed that only Hume could have written an acceptable history of the eighteenth century - the 'true' version of eighteenth-century British history which he propounded, Chathamite and mercantilist, was far from being Humean.\(^{82}\) Alison's work is illustrative of many of the tensions involved in the attempt to equate Hume's views with early nineteenth-century Toryism. He criticised Hume both for being too great a monarchist and, elsewhere, for being too favourable towards the Long Parliament.\(^{83}\)

However, as might be expected, it was the issue of religion which raised the biggest potential problems. A man like Alison who believed that 'Conservative government ... must be based upon religion' was not likely to be entirely happy with Hume's very secular brand of conservative

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\(^{81}\) A. Alison, Essays, vol. 2, p. 70.


\(^{83}\) A. Alison, Essays, vol. 2, pp. 287-8; vol. 3, p. 647.
thought." Alison's doubts about it were reflected in the inconsistencies between two articles published in 1844, within months of each other. The first, a review of Michelet, appeared in Blackwood's and contained a standard early nineteenth-century Tory eulogy of the History:

Considered as calm and philosophic narratives, the histories of Hume and Robertson will remain as standard models for every future age. The just and profound reflections of the former, the inimitable clearness and impartiality with which he has summed up the arguments on both sides, on the most momentous questions which have agitated England ... must for ever command the admiration of mankind. ... (The History) continues its majestic course through the sea of time, like a mighty three-decker, which never even condescends to notice the javelins darted at its sides from the hostile canoes which from time to time seek to impede its progress."

Yet, only a few months later, in an article on Guizot in the Foreign and Colonial Review, Alison hurled such a 'javelin' himself. The article just quoted had portrayed Hume as an eminently practical man - now he was criticised as over-theoretical in his attitudes, too lazy to acquire accurate data and with no power to unfold 'general causes' because of his unwillingness to search for the workings of divine providence. Alison now declared that

Hume is far from being gifted with the philosophy of history. ... He was essentially a sceptic. He aimed rather at spreading doubts than shedding light. Like Voltaire and Gibbon, he was scandalously prejudiced and unjust on the subject of religion; and to write modern history without correct views on that subject is like playing Hamlet without the character of the Prince of

\[84\] A. Alison, *Essays*, vol. 1, pp. 360-1.

Denmark. Such inconsistency can be partly explained by the nature of periodical journalism, which hardly allowed every word written to be a considered opinion - especially if the writer was as prolific as Alison, who Disraeli described as 'Mr. Wordy'. Yet Alison's differing estimates of Hume's worth, so close to each other in time, do reflect a real problem which the Right might have expected to face in adopting a notorious infidel as its favourite historian - given the strong predilection many of its writers held towards exclusivist anglicanism. The degree to which, in practise, leading 'Tory' writers managed to reconcile themselves to this situation may at first appear surprising. However, in large part, Hume's History could fairly be used to strengthen the Right's position in religious matters. His text dealt approvingly with church establishments (in utilitarian terms), and approved of the Reformation in its English manifestation for the social and political benefits it brought. Although Hume praised religious toleration in a general way, this was far from offputting to early nineteenth-century Tories, who were quite capable of defending themselves as the champions of

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86 A. Alison, Essays, vol. 3, p. 78.

87 See A.G. Dickens & J. Tonkins, The Reformation in Historical Thought (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1985), p. 140.: 'Hume is far more generous in his judgment of the English Reformation than of its Continental counterpart, and he seems to regard the English movement as the nearest approach to "true religion."' Hume's views on the utility of church establishments were cited by a Tory commentator in 'Attacks on the Church', Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, vol. 35 (1834), p. 739.
a practical level of toleration as established in law. Anyway, this aspect of Hume's work was rather outweighed by the force of his contempt for the fanaticism of seventeenth-century puritans - which was reflected throughout his narrative of the early seventeenth century and the civil war, and was particularly admired by Southey, as his common-place book shows.\textsuperscript{88} The anti-Catholicism of Hume's medieval volumes, a real problem for the History's large conservative following in France, was also likely to accord with the general sentiments of a British Tory audience.\textsuperscript{89}

In the Quarterly, reviewers frequently went out of their way to distinguish Hume from other unbelievers, even apart from his History, claiming in one article that he had secretly hoped religion to be true, and elsewhere that if he had only met Bishop Butler he would have been saved.\textsuperscript{90} Though Hume's philosophy was anathema to Southey, Croker and Wilson, only the first of these thought that his brand of infidelity had effected the goodness of his general character.\textsuperscript{91} Even Southey, despite his strong reservations, wrote that: 'Hume is an author from whose high and well-


\textsuperscript{89} The reviewer of Southey's Book of the Church in the British Critic, vol. 21 (1824), p. 453, could describe Hume as a 'predecessor' to Southey, 'in representing Dunstan as a cruel, ambitious, hypocritical cheat.'

\textsuperscript{90} Quarterly Review, vol. 28 (1822-3), p. 517; vol. 64 (1839), p. 337.

\textsuperscript{91} Quarterly Review, vol. 15 (1816), p. 562; vol. 6 (1811), p. 435.
deserved reputation it is very far from our wish to detract; he is a most able and delightful writer; and a very sagacious one upon all points in which a sense of religion is not required.' Favourable comparisons of Hume's treatment of religion in his History to that of Gibbon - far more assertive in the propagation of unbelief in his history, especially in the first volume of the Decline and Fall - were a commonplace of early nineteenth-century Hume criticism. This was in contrast to the situation during the immediate aftermath of the French Revolution when, as seen above, Hume and Gibbon had been tarred with the same brush. Then, Hannah More had even gone so far as to suggest that Hume 'is perhaps more dangerous, because less ostensibly daring than some other infidel historians.'

Compared to the histories of Gibbon and Voltaire though, that of Hume more successfully retained its respectability through the first half of the nineteenth century. The History of England written by the Roman Catholic John Lingard suffered far more in these years from charges that the religious principles of the author effected its 'truth'. When it came to any claim that Hume's History inculcated unbelief, many of the Right by the 1820s

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92 R. Southey, Essays, Moral and Political (London, 1832), vol. 1., p. 300.


would have found much to agree with in the words of William Maginn in *Blackwood's*: 'It requires an immensity of special pleading to extract anything like deism from Hume's History of England, and had we not known the character and opinions of the man it never would have been suspected.' Even the high church *British Critic*, deeply opposed to the influence of Hume's 'irreligious' history previously, had come round to praising it by this time. A transitional stage seems to have been reached by 1809, when it commented on the *History* in a review of Ritchie's *Life of David Hume*:

> It is as an historian and political writer that Hume will probably be best known to posterity; and it is in these capacities that he can be read with the greatest pleasure and advantage by the friends of sound morals and sincere religion. Yet even as an historian Hume has many faults; he does not scruple to disguise facts from party motives, and he never loses an opportunity of throwing out his cool sceptical sneer at what he calls fanaticism and superstition; by which we are to understand a reverence for the doctrines of Christianity.

A far more whole-hearted endorsement of the *History* was possible in the *British Critic* by the 1820s - as the article on Brodie's *History of the British Empire* clearly shows. The review of Godwin's *History of the Commonwealth*, apparently by the same writer, could ignore Hume's religious tendencies enough to declare that 'if his work be any where defective, it is unquestioningly in the

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95 *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, vol. 16 (1824), p. 481.
collection of materials'. Hume's History was too powerful and popular an anti-Whig symbol for a reemergent Toryism not to be keen to appropriate as a support for its own agenda.

This playing-down of Hume's irreligion when describing the History was helped by the similar policy of the Edinburgh reviewers. Their general reliance upon an Enlightenment inheritance, which included a secularized historiography, had led them to defend the History from charges of irreligion which they were presumably worried would reflect upon themselves. In 1806, the Edinburgh agreed with Hannah More that it would be appalling if young readers should learn from Hume's History that the Reformation was 'not worth contending for'. However, the benefits which the reviewer believed the Reformation had brought were the very Humean ones of spreading the light of reason and true philosophy, of casting aside superstition, and of preventing encroachments of the ecclesiastical upon the civil power. It was left to the high-church British Critic to praise More's anti-Hume sentiments in the spirit in which they had been expressed. In 1809, Jeffrey

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99 British Critic, new series, vol. 22 (1824), p. 1. Hume was described here as 'a luminous and philosophical narrator'.

100 That such worries might well have been justified can be demonstrated by the Anti-Jacobin Review's jibe at 'the petit maitre of the Edinburgh Review', that Hume was 'his Julian'. See vol. 32 (1809), p. 3. See also H. Brougham, The Life and Times of Henry Lord Brougham (Edinburgh & London, 1871), vol. 1, pp. 262-3.


opposed Warburton's snipings at Hume's reputation for personal goodness - claims approved of by the fledgling Quarterly - and implied the unreasonableness of holding in such religious contempt 'even ... the historical work of the author', which 'we ... were not aware ... was generally looked upon as an irreligious publication'.

Against this general consensus that Hume's religious views were best separated from discussion of his historical work, Francis Palgrave's 1844 Quarterly article stood out. Here it was claimed that Hume's main motive in writing history had been the propagation of his anti-religious views. A sure criterion for Hume's praise, Palgrave claimed, was hostility towards the church - thus he showed favour towards William Rufus and Henry I. Those figures whom Hume admired who happened to be devout in their faith had it hidden from the reader - Alfred and Charles the First being the chief examples. Hume's elimination of providential explanation was also deplored, as was his lack of patience in the all-important task of understanding the religious morality of the Middle Ages on its own terms.

A strong indication of the survival of religious hostility to the History, this article nevertheless seems to have been alien to the general treatment of the History during this period. Palgrave's sympathy towards Catholicism and

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disillusioned Whig politics singled him out among reviewers. Hallam and fellow Edinburgh writers expressed themselves to be very unhappy about his approach - one of Macvey Napier's correspondents declaring that the article had caused a general fuss in society, and that the author was deliberately courting controversy through 'paradox'.

The reasons why Jeffrey and other Edinburgh contributors greatly disliked Palgrave's article presumably included, as well as its stress on Hume's irreligion, its attack on Robertson and the Moderates of late eighteenth-century Edinburgh, and the fact that it ignored Hume's political sins altogether. All of these deficiencies were corrected by Empson's seventy-two page review of Burton's Life of Hume in the Edinburgh three years later.

Other reviews of this biography, across a wide range of periodicals in 1846, occasionally complained that Hume's scepticism rendered him unqualified to deal with the history of specifically religious matters - but none attempted to claim that they disqualified him from writing history altogether. Certainly, in the most important early nineteenth-century periodicals, many writers seem to have been happiest to detach Hume's religious views from the

105 William Empson to Macvey Napier, April 25, 1844, Macvey Napier Papers, B.L., Add. MSS. 34,624, fo. 424-5; A. Hayward to Macvey Napier, April 27th. 1844, fo. 431.

106 Macvey Napier, ed. Selection from the Correspondence of the Late Macvey Napier, Esq. (London, 1879), p. 463.

107 Edinburgh Review, vol. 85 (1847), pp. 1-72, esp. pp. 23, 49, 53. The article was overseen by Jeffrey - see Napier, Correspondence, p. 539.
consideration of his historical work. The usefulness of the greatest of 'anti-Whig' histories to the Tory cause, and the reliance of the Edinburgh Whigs on an Enlightenment inheritance, including a secularized historiography - which they had had to defend fiercely against charges of irreligion during the French wars - help to explain how this rather odd situation occurred.\textsuperscript{108}

For the heart of the Right's historical effort in the early nineteenth century, however, one has to turn to the circle of writers around John Murray - in particular John Wilson Croker, Robert Southey, Sharon Turner and Isaac D'Israeli, and perhaps including Sir Walter Scott at one remove. Whilst agreeing with Sack that the whig interpretation of history reigned supreme in these years, I would argue that he underestimates the existence of a nascent 'Tory' version in the writings of these historians - though their general emphasis on foreign history and failure to deal with the controversial seventeenth century in major works makes this less obvious.\textsuperscript{109} This very difference in subject matter, however, divided them from

\textsuperscript{108} It is interesting to note that despite his 'Tory' reputation, Hume's philosophical works remained part of the ideological armoury of radical infidels like Holyoake and Cooper into the nineteenth century - which helps to explain why respectable writers should wish to distance themselves from them. See E. Royle, Victorian Infidels. The Origins of the British Secularist Movement 1791 - 1866 (Manchester, 1974), pp. 24, 155, 215. A writer in Holyoake's The Movement described Hume as 'the best analyst, as a mere analyst, that Britain has produced.' Alongside praise for Hume's sincerity, his analysis of natural theology was remarked to be 'searching and indisputable'. See G.J. Holyoake, ed. The Movement. Anti-Persecution Gazette and Register of Progress (New York, 1970), p. 53.

\textsuperscript{109} J.J. Sack, From Jacobite to Conservative, pp. 68-74.
the Whigs, as did the greater monarchist, anglican and imperialist flavour of many of their writings. Perhaps the most striking difference, however, was the praise they lavished on Hume's *History* - which strongly suggests that they were attracted to the possible benefits of linking their work to that of the most popular, 'anti-Whig' history. These effusions in favour of Hume appeared mainly in periodicals, as has been seen. When one looks at the actual histories they produced covering the same periods as Hume's, the debt they owed him seems less impressive than some of these expressions of respect might lead one to expect.

This can be seen especially clearly by studying Croker and Southey's historiographical relation to Hume's work, as reflected in their writings on English history. Both Southey's pious treatment of the Reformation in his *Book of the Church* and Croker's uncompromising defence of Charles I against his 'wicked' subjects, lacked Humean balance. Southey's common-place book reveals that an appreciation of Hume's harsh attitude towards the puritans was offset by a certain distrust of his politics. This can be illustrated by the fact that Southey made a note of Johnson's comment that 'Hume is a Tory by chance, as being a Scotchman; but not upon a principle of duty, for he has

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no principle. If he is anything, he is a Hobbist.

Elsewhere, Southey commented adversely on Hume's style - something very few writers did: 'Hume I think wants a character of style. A little individuality there should be.' The dense narrative Southey adopted for his intended masterpiece, his massive History of Brazil, was seen by reviewers as designed as an antitype to the smooth generalities offered by Scottish historians. The British Critic's reviewer commented that 'Mr. Southey might well deprecate the imperfect and delusive picture drawing of our most popular Scotch historians, with whom, as some one has said, the facts are like so many isolated pegs to hang pre-conceived systems, and opinions upon; he might well delight in the faithful, the hearty, the realizing, and individualizing minuteness, and simplicity of the old chronicles'. Southey's model, like that of Coleridge, was far more the medieval chronicler than the Scottish sceptic. Similarly, what strikes one about Croker's historical work is its minute scholarship. Hume's


114 S.T. Coleridge, Essays on his Own Times, vol. 2., p. 597.

historical workmanship was not something he admired apart from its usefulness in periodical polemic.

The only member of John Murray's 'Tory' circle to write a 'history of England' proper, was Sharon Turner, who shared with Hume a similar style of narrative structure, and a stress on the progress of material improvement over that of civil and political freedom. He also showed the standard, if slightly qualified, 'Tory' deference to Hume as historian, significantly praising form rather than content: 'Mr. Hume has composed (a history) with beauties of style too universally felt to be disputed or surpassed ... The graces of Mr. Hume's easy diction, and the general beauty of his reflections, whenever occasional peculiarities did not interfere with his penetration, it is not for me to praise, because they have long established their claim to a high rank in English literary composition.'\textsuperscript{116} Turner's religiosity, however, pervaded his work. Though he might have been able to agree with Hume's critical estimate of Becket, he was laudatory about Joan of Arc.\textsuperscript{117} His strong monarchism also led him, unlike Hume, to defend Richard III, and Henry VII and VIII.\textsuperscript{118} His account of Edward III's French wars, where 'England was taught its intrinsic national greatness', could not be less

\textsuperscript{116} S. Turner, The History of England during the Middle Ages (London, 1825), vol. 1, pp. x-xi.


like Hume, and neither could his defence of the Crusades. Above all though, there was his invocation of providential causation - especially evident in his Tudor volumes. The distance separating his work from that of Hume was therefore very wide. In the words of Burrow, 'Turner, though in contemporary terms ... a Tory, is in historiography a Whig of Whigs; for him the proved capacity of the past to beget the present, often somewhat mysteriously or at least providentially, becomes its sole claim to sentimental regard.'

Walter Scott's use of Hume, as perhaps might be expected from his being a late product of the Scottish Enlightenment, was more sensitive than that of other 'Tory' writers. In the notes of his edition of Dryden and of

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121 Burrow, *Liberal Descent*, p. 117. See also C.A. Simmons, *Reversing the Conquest. History and Myth in Nineteenth-Century British Literature* (New Brunswick & London, 1990), pp. 59-60 on Turner having been a 'Whig historian' in Butterfield's sense, with his 'stress on continuity'. Why Turner did not continue his history onto the reigns of the Stuarts is an interesting question. Ill health seems to provide much of the answer, but the obituary in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 27 (1847), p. 435, also suggested that the prospect of being 'entangled' 'in the political feelings which followed the unhappy disputes between Charles and his parliament' was part of the cause. One suspects that he would have produced a fulsome defence of Charles I in terms less sophisticated than the far more Humean D'Israeli.

122 The best treatment of 'Scott and the Enlightenment' is in Graham McMaster, *Scott and Society* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 49-77. Here I stress the continuities between Scott's work and that of Hume as a corrective to the common interpretation emphasising radical disjuncture - but for a contrasting view which stresses Scott's role in breaking the 'decorous historical mould' of
the Somers Tracts, his spirited quotation from Hume gives
the impression of true fellow-feeling against the Quakers
and Shaftesbury, and in favour of Strafford. This could,
however, be interpreted as more like the one-dimensional
use of Hume in periodicals and political debate for party
point-scoring than a sign of deep influence. More telling,
if more difficult to quantify, is the degree to which Scott
the novelist drew from Hume's 'bi-focal' historical
viewpoint - a concomitant of the Scottish emphasis on the
social consequences of material progress which they
certainly shared.

Scott's treatment of Jacobitism shared with Hume's
narrative of the reigns of the early Stuarts an opportunity
for readers to empathise with those washed up by the tide
of whig history - though both in the end drew a firm line
between the urgings of sentiment and the dictates of common
sense. This did not stop mid-nineteenth century Liberals

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eighteenth-century Scottish history, see Marinell Ash, The
Strange Death of Scottish History (Edinburgh, 1980). (The
quotation is from p. 21).

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W. Scott, The Works of John Dryden (Edinburgh, 1821),
vol. 10, p. 141; A Collection of Scarce and Valuable Tracts, 2nd.
252. See also the anti-Catholic Hume quote in the notes to
Peveril of the Peak (Edinburgh, 1871), p. 597.

On Scott's side this is brought out well in David Brown's
Walter Scott and the Historical Imagination (London, Boston &
Henley, 1979). This work is in large part an elaboration of
Forbes's insights concerning Scott's debt to philosophic history
in his 1953 article 'The Rationalism of Walter Scott' - but Brown
makes no mention of Hume's History.
from tarring them both as pure and simple Jacobites.\textsuperscript{125} Earlier, Hazlitt had failed to comprehend how Scott could hope to strengthen the throne of the Georges by glorifying the cause of Bonnie Prince Charlie - in much the same way that Whigs in the previous century had been stunned into incomprehension by Hume's similar strategy involving the rehabilitation of Charles the First.\textsuperscript{126} Scott shared with Hume a subtler, more truly historical, appreciation of the relationship between political authority and public opinion than most of his contemporaries, and must have appreciated Hume's attempts to convey effectively the complexities of the historical process in this regard.

Thus Scott was capable of taking it as a compliment when Lockhart wrote in 1827 that his father-in-law's \textit{Napoleon} had 'the most historical tone of anything that has been written since Hume.'\textsuperscript{127} He would not have recognised the absolute demarcation, which was emerging in criticism by the 1840s, between Enlightenment historical writing and his 'more historical' Romantic view. Cockshut, then, had an insight which few Scott critics have followed up, when he


\textsuperscript{126} See W. Hazlitt, \textit{Lectures on English Poets. The Spirit of the Age} (London, 1910), p. 231.: 'Through some odd process of servile logic, it should seem, that in restoring the claims of the Stuarts by the courtesy of romance, the House of Brunswick are more firmly seated in point of fact, and the Bourbons, by collateral reasoning, become legitimate!'

\textsuperscript{127} A. Lang, \textit{The Life and Letters of John Gibson Lockhart} (London, 1897), vol. 2, p. 11.
declared that he doubted 'whether Scott's aims or his achievements in uniting the seventeenth century can be fully understood without reading (Hume).\textsuperscript{128} Even he, though, may have underestimated how much Old Mortality owed to Hume in a positive sense. Certainly, Thomas MacCrie viewed the work as of a piece with Hume's treatment of Scottish presbyterianism.\textsuperscript{129} Scott united a Humean attack on enthusiasm with an indictment of the cruelty of the Restoration regime in Scotland, for which Hume could equally provide authority. Elsewhere, one may note that Macaulay viewed the portrayal of James I by Hume, and that by Scott in The Fortunes of Nigel as being two halves of the same portrait - and indeed Scott's novel leant explicitly on Hume's view of the monarch.\textsuperscript{130}

A concurrence with Hume on the constitutional position of the early Stuarts was shared by the only 'Tory'

\textsuperscript{128} A.O.J. Cockshut, The Achievement of Walter Scott (London, 1969), p. 132. The fact that Cockshut recognised, and attempted seriously to analyse, Hume's influence on Scott is more than can be said for many other Scott critics. Unfortunately though, his view of Hume's attitude to history now looks seriously dated. Anderson's Sir Walter Scott and History gives the subject more attention than anyone else. John MacQueen's The Rise of the Historical Novel (Edinburgh, 1989), is disappointing in considering the influence of Hume's Treatise on Scott - but not his History.

\textsuperscript{129} J. Anderson, Sir Walter Scott and History with other papers (Edinburgh, 1981), p. 104.

\textsuperscript{130} T.B. Macaulay, Miscellaneous Essays and The Lays of Ancient Rome (London, 1910), p. 37; W. Scott, (anon.), The Fortunes of Nigel (Edinburgh, 1822), vol. 3, p. 63: 'It was not, as has been well shewn by a late author, that James was void either of parts or of good intentions; and his predecessor was at least as arbitrary in effect as he was in theory.' This reference is missing from James Anderson's, otherwise very useful, listing of Scott's explicit usages of Hume. See Sir Walter Scott and History, p. 142.
historian probably closer to Hume in thinking than Scott - Isaac D'Israeli. He stood right at the centre of the Murray circle, as the trusted adviser of the elder Murray, co-operated with Croker over historical work, and was a close friend of Turner.\textsuperscript{131} When Southey wanted information for an attack upon Nugent's Whiggish \textit{Life of Hampden}, it was to D'Israeli that he thought to turn.\textsuperscript{132} D'Israeli's rather latitudinarian attitude towards religion, however, marks him off from other early nineteenth-century historians of the Right, and, like Scott, he was of a generation which came of age before the French Revolution - which gave him an attitude towards the works of the Enlightenment which was somewhat more engaged than that of Croker or Southey. He modelled his intellectual life on that of Bayle, and his only modern biographer shows him to have been something of a would-be 'philosophe'.\textsuperscript{133} Perhaps this background goes some way towards explaining his ability to achieve a sceptical distancing from the 'whig' view that was perhaps the closest any major writer came after 1800 to a Humean analysis of the early seventeenth century.

Certainly D'Israeli much admired Hume as an

\textsuperscript{131} He was also, of course, the father of Benjamin Disraeli - who inherited his father's relativistic outlook. More specifically his support for Charles I and ship money, 'the most patriotic and popular tax that ever was devised by man', might reflect the influence of Hume, whether filtered or direct. See B. Disraeli, \textit{Sybil}, book IV, chapter 6; W.F. Monypenny; G.B. Buckle, ed. \textit{The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield} (London, 1929), vol. 1, pp. 666-7; vol. 2, p. 1433.


historian, for his 'penetrating genius' and 'philosophical sagacity'. This admiration is clearly visible in his major historical work - *Commentaries on the Life and Reign of Charles the First, King of England*. The *Westminster Review* 's critic was correct in judging that 'the historical style of the Author has been moulded on that of Hume'. Like Hume, he aimed to stand above the partialities of both Whigs and Tories, and, also like Hume, he wished to produce a 'history of human nature'. He praised Hume's historical sense even whilst correcting him - though Hume 'with his habitual ease' adopted 'the Court-gossip of Clarendon', 'his sagacity could not fail to betray its astonishment' at some of what he was relating. When D'Israeli differed from him over Charles the First's conduct concerning the Petition of Right, he only did so in the most flattering manner possible: 'Even Hume censures Charles the First for his evasions on this occasion; but at the same time, his philosophical mind could not pass by such a political crisis without taking the most enlarged

134 I. D'Israeli, *Commentaries on the Life and Reign of Charles the First, King of England* (London, 1828-31), vol. 1, pp. xix-xx. See also the judgment of J. Ridley in *The Young Disraeli* (London, 1995), p. 67, that Isaac was 'a follower of the philosophical historian David Hume.'


Brodie's attacks on Hume were undermined by stressing 'the complicate difficulties of the situation' in consumate Humean style, and excuses were made for Hume's errors. It was explained that 'Hume, in his day, was not supplied with some of the most valuable materials of our history at this period.'

D'Israeli had studied his work closely enough to be able to benefit from a comparative reading of the first and second editions of the first volume.

This close reading was translated into broad similarities of interpretation which went beyond mere verbal borrowings - as when he quoted Hume on the Petition of Right producing 'such a change in the Government as was almost equivalent to a revolution.' D'Israeli came to his sympathetic view of Charles by employing the same 'bifocal' analysis as Hume, and seeing the Commons' actions as being less admirable when placed in their proper context, however much their conduct might have appeared praiseworthy in retrospect. He stressed the difficulties of the situation - how both parties in the dispute felt the constitution was on their side, and that both fought for 'freedom'. Charles himself faced social and constitutional revolutions. He was 'placed in the shock of a past and a future age.' The influence of Hume's radical undermining of Whig surities is clear in passages like the following:

There is something in the subject which seems intractable, and the historian himself occupies a position as peculiar as that of the unfortunate monarch. All things seem to fluctuate in the very act of contemplation. ... There are moments in the study of the reign of Charles the First, when we almost suspect that "the tyranny" of Charles may be as fictitious as "the Rebellion" by which Clarendon designates the Civil War. 

In Hume's portrayal of Charles's fate, D'Israeli found the same kind of deterministic view of man's inability to escape his historical context which William Godwin admired in the History, but which Marilyn Butler thinks that other English progressives of the 1790s must have abhorred. D'Israeli's summing-up bears definite signs of the influence of Hume's version, and of his sympathies with a classical, non-christian world-view:

Charles the First could not avoid being the very man he was - his errors, his prejudices, his devotion to the institutions of his country, were those of his times and of his station, but his calamities, his magnanimity, and the unsubdued spirit, were more peculiarly his own. There is not in human nature a more noble spectacle than the man long wrestling with his fate, like the OEdipus of the Grecian Muse. His inevitable errors, and his involuntary guilt, seem not to be his - his virtues and his genius alone triumphed

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D'Israeli's real understanding of Hume's argument enabled him to point out the awkwardness involved in certain Whig historians' relationship with the *History* with more damning clarity than any other anti-Whig critic:

Laing, when censuring the arbitrary conduct of Charles, alludes in this manner to its cause - "Whether his exalted notion of the Prerogative in England were derived from established or irregular precedents of an unsettled Constitution, is an inquiry foreign to the design of this history." Thus honestly, though awkwardly, the historian indicates the explanation in respect to Charles, which he avoids to give. Mr. Hallam, on the same topic - "He had shown himself possessed with such notions of his own prerogative, no matter how derived." Here we find the same truth crossing the historian's mind, and as cautiously passed over."

Alongside D'Israeli's *Charles I.*, should be mentioned another 'Right-wing' history exceptional in the closeness with which it followed Hume's historical arguments - *The Good Old Times. The Poor Man's History of England*, an 1817 partwork intended largely for free distribution as anti-radical propaganda. Every issue centred around long quotations from Hume, using his arguments against ancient constitutionalism to attack the honesty of the radical leaders who had appropriated it. Hume's text was useful, the compiler claimed, because 'though he did not live to our times, he knew rogues and deceivers, calling themselves PATRIOTS, would always be at hand to betray and mislead

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Anglo-Saxon annual parliaments and universal suffrage, and the golden days of 'Good Queen Bess' were the main targets, but the conservative potential of Hume's narrative of the civil war and Commonwealth were recognised too. The whole aim was to show, in true Humean fashion, the superiority of the liberty that existed at present over anything that the past had to offer. The Whigs were derided as an opportunistic aristocratic faction, and every effort was made to stress that the people of Britain had 'never had it so good' as under the present ministry. Apparently very popular, at least with those who were going to distribute it, the full exploitation of Humean historical conservatism seen in The Good Old Times, with its stress on de-idealizing the past, was also very rare in the early nineteenth century. Thanks to the shadow of the French Revolution, it took a large-scale crisis of confidence in the social order before a 'Tory' author was willing to jettison reverence for the past - and the crisis did not last.

Conclusion.

In the last section we have seen that praise of Hume's work did not generally transfer much into historical practise in the early nineteenth-century. Southey and Croker were no happier with 'bi-focal', relativistic

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145 The Good Old Times; or, the Poor Man's History of England (London, 1817), p. 122.

146 For the series's popularity, see Good Old Times, p. 65.
history than was Hallam. D'Israeli was the exception here, but his religious background was in itself exceptional. In general, Hume was most prized by 'Tory' writers where his agenda overlapped with theirs—notably over the defence of Charles I. His unnostalgic record of England's multiple medieval constitutions, on the other hand, was far less influential. His religious views could provoke problems, and did so especially in the immediate aftermath of the French Revolution. They did not, however, prevent a large proportion of early nineteenth-century 'Tories' revering Hume's History as a venerable anti-Whig icon by the 1820s, almost in lieu of creating a coherent version of the English past of their own independent of whiggery.

Burke's very negative attitude towards the History, as with his views on so many other matters, formed no template for early nineteenth-century 'Toryism'.

However, his distrust of Hume's irreligious scepticism was shared, if to a reduced extent, by many 'Right-wing' figures in the post-revolutionary period. This distrust joined with their patriotic attitude towards the English past to temper the degree to which they were prepared to view the History as a whole as containing a usable version of British history, even as they antagonized Whigs by repeatedly praising it in general terms. The Good Old Times shows dramatically the road not taken by the historians of

the Right in 'high' historiography. In the main, when early
nineteenth-century 'Tories' made a practical rebellion
against the dominant 'whig' version of the English past,
they looked back to Restoration-Jacobite images of the
martyr-king Charles I, (in a manner less compatible with
Humean history than some of the pre-French Revolution
commemoration sermons and conservative Whig histories
studied in chapter one), or at Henry VIII as a protestant
hero. They did not in general look forwards, to Hume's
self-consciously 'modern' form of adaptive pragmatic
conservatism - anti-nostalgic and overwhelmingly secular.
The accentuation of the desire to stress English history's
continuity caused by the French Revolution must have had
much to do with this.

Tory history, save notably for Froude's, merged with
conservative Whig history of Hallamian type by mid-
century.\textsuperscript{146} Liberal prejudices against Hume lingered on.
John Stuart Mill wrote in 1849 that 'the sons and daughters
of tories to this day get their first notions of English
politics from a History written by one of them, and very

\textsuperscript{146} Lord Mahon, a Conservative, was an interesting
transitional figure in this development, whose pronouncements on
Hume's 'merit and ability' as an historian were joined with an
appreciation of his friend Hallam's work. See, for example, his
History of England from the Peace of Utrecht to the Peace of
Versailles. 1713-1783, 5th. ed. (London, 1858), vol. 6, p. 310:
'The perusal of his (Hume's) narrative, upon the whole, is found
to afford so much both of pleasure and instruction, that, in all
probability, it will never cease to be the common guide and hand-
book of our history until the Revolution; the student, however,
not neglecting those invaluable lights which later writers, and
none more than Mr. Hallam, have collaterally brought to bear upon
the subject.' See also pp. 304, 307-10.
false notions they are. Yet Hume had spawned no 'Tory' school. Though many 'Tory' historians had praised Hume mightily, few of them seem to have moulded their view of history around his. Perhaps the History's most profound effect on the actual historical practice of the heterogeneous forces of the 'Right' occurred on those anti-Enlightenment writers discussed in section two. In helping to stimulate Coleridge and Carlyle's visions of the past, Hume's History may be said to have had an effect as significant, in a negative sense, as that his philosophic works had produced on the thought of Kant.

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Chapter Three. 'Senseless clamour'? The 'History' and Whiggery in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Introduction.

Hume's historiographical relationship with the 'varieties of whiggism' which existed during the century his work dominated the British historical scene was fraught with complexities. We have already seen how English 'vulgar' whiggery reacted adversely to his attempt to defend the Whig oligarchy on grounds which had been originally staked out by Napoleon Whig propagandists of the 1730s. At the same time however, Hume's long-term success with the British public owed much to the fact that he was not so pure a 'scientific' whig as Adam Smith, and was prone to the occasional whig 'vulgarism' himself, as well as being a master of the narrative form. When the Edinburgh Review generation set out to reconcile the Scottish historical method with the 'vulgar' English whig tradition, they found that Hume was a predecessor in this key venture as well as a political enemy - which obviously

1 When dealing with nineteenth-century historiography, I have found it useful for purposes of clarity to make, where possible, a distinction between Whig history and whig history. The former category encompasses all works by those who considered themselves 'Whigs', in a party-political sense. Nearly all these writers were also 'whig' historians, in the sense defined by Butterfield - proponents of an unHumean teleological view of English 'liberty' s development. On the other hand, Sharon Turner or William Stubbs are examples of historians who might be labelled 'whig' historians, but not 'Whig' ones. Such a distinction seems irrelevent in an eighteenth-century context - and there only 'Whig' history has been referred to.

complicated their reactions to his work.

This chapter approaches the difficult relationship early nineteenth-century Whiggery enjoyed with Hume's History from four angles. Firstly, it looks at two widely varying Whig answers to Hume which inspired the writers of the Edinburgh - those of Fox and Millar. Then the various ways in which Hume's work was either attacked or accommodated will be examined through looking, secondly, at the Edinburgh itself, as well as at other 'liberal' periodicals for comparison, thirdly at Hallam and Russell's books on the English constitution, and finally at Mackintosh and Macaulay's attempts to replicate Hume's successful blend of 'classical' narrative and 'philosophical' insight.


John Millar's Historical View of the English Government from the Settlement of the Saxons in Britain to the Accession of the House of Stewart was published in 1787, with an additional volume covering the period to 1688 appearing posthumously in 1803. The work carried a fulsome dedication to Charles James Fox, a man supposedly 'superior to prejudice; equally capable of speculation, and of active exertion; no less conversant in elegant literature, than accustomed to animate the great scenes of national business; possessed of the penetration to discover the genuine principles of the constitution, and of the virtue
to make them an invariable rule of conduct.' Millar declared that it seemed to him 'scarcely possible for any man to write a constitutional history of England, without having Mr. Fox almost constantly in his thoughts.' Fox's reaction to the work is revealing. He thought it a book 'written on the best and soundest principles; but I fear it is more instructive than amusing, as, though a very sensible man, he was not a lively one.'

The two men adhered to different conceptions of the historian's role, but the political principles they shared led to a common desire to refute the version of England's past which had been presented by David Hume. In examining the different ways their histories attempted this, we can trace the origins of frictions between 'philosophic' and 'vulgar' Whiggery, and between literary and 'scientific' aspirations, which beset early nineteenth-century British 'high' historiography. These tensions complicated the relationship between Whig historians and Hume - a writer who had already resolved them half a century before in a fashion they found unacceptable, but which, maddeningly, appeared fully to satisfy most of the reading public.

John Millar's work was the most substantial Whig answer to Hume to appear from the Scottish school of 'philosophical' history which Hume himself had done so much

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to create. Millar's reverence for Hume was easy to recognise - he was declared responsible for 'the perfect union of history and philosophy' and many of his insights were expanded upon. Phillipson has claimed that Millar 'understood Hume too well to be able to answer him effectively', meaning, presumably, that the philosophic underpinnings of Millar's book were simply too Humean to comfortably support the Whiggish line he took on England's constitutional development. What resulted was an awkward amalgam, lacking both the transcendent messianism of 'vulgar' Whig history, and the effortless logical progression of Hume. The social inevitability of the rise of the House of Commons was treated in a far more deterministic manner than in Hume, and Millar's work in general was more impersonal in flavour - it lacked anything like Hume's celebrated 'characters', and Hume's glorification of individual legislators like Alfred and Henry II was deconstructed by Millar's emphasis on long term and impersonal forces. This approach, however, was occasionally compromised - as when after agreeing with Hume that it was the Commons who were the innovators after the Petition of Right, he defended them by portraying their actions as correcting the imperfect 'workmanship' of earlier 'makers' of the constitution. The book used the

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method which Dugald Stewart termed 'conjectural history' - employing reasonable deduction where evidence was in short supply - far more than Hume, who remained wedded much closer to the traditional narrative of documented 'fact'. This allowed Millar slightly more freedom than his predecessor for the occasional exercise of wistful Whiggism in the medieval period. Hallam would condemn Millar's laxity with particulars - but, like many Whigs before them, both used lack of evidence as an excuse to postulate that the commons were called to parliament before de Montfort summoned them. The latter origin, of course, was an uncomfortably Humean one.®

Millar's work, often arranged thematically, simply lacks the satisfying forward momentum of either mainstream Whig history, or Hume's. As an example of the Commons' power by the end of the fourteenth century, he gave the success of their support for endowing Richard II with absolute power - his Humeanism here negating the moral force of his Whiggery.® Similarly, his constant use of European comparison is far more reminiscent of Hume than of Fox and English Whig historians in general, with their stress on the inherent love of liberty in the English national character. Notably, while defending the county court against Hume's assertions that it was an agency of monarchical power, he compromised the status it was to

® H. Hallam, View of the State of Europe During the Middle Ages (London, 1872), vol. 1, p. vi.
attain in nineteenth-century Whig history as a peculiarly English symbol of liberty, by presenting an array of comparable continental institutions as evidence against Hume's charges.¹⁰

As contrasted with Millar's academic tomes, Fox's History of the Reign of James II - the fragment of a much larger projected work published by Lord Holland in 1808 - was both intended and received as a tract for the times. It represents an, at times explicit, apologia for a statesman whose blighted career was blamed on the king's personal prerogative, and on the fatal lack of public spirit which had allowed the British to be blindly led into American and French wars, and into the Whig apocalypse of the 1784 election.¹¹ Fox did not want the evils of James's reign to be particularised and explained away by the king's religious preferences, as he thought Hume had done.¹² Rather, he highlighted the crown's general absolutist


¹¹ Fox's devoted secretary Trotter admitted the validity of criticisms that the work's historical value suffered from its constant reminders of the Whig leader's own career: 'I do not hesitate to say, that it would have been desirable that he had gone further back, or chosen a larger period, and one unconnected even by analogy with modern politics. An involuntary association of ideas and feelings, tending to form a comparative view of epochs and circumstances, may have had an influence, unsuspected by the author, and have led to his dwelling, as it has appeared to some, with prolixity upon peculiar passages in the unhappy reigns of Charles and James.', J.B. Trotter, Memoirs, p. 29. For the centrality of the events of 1782-4 to the Foxite creed, see L. Mitchell, Holland House (London, 1980), pp. 43-4, 61-2; p. 44 contains an explicit comparison (unsourced) Fox made between George III and James II, and the same author's Charles James Fox (Oxford, 1992), p. 71.

intentions, and made quite clear the enthusiasm of the nation as a whole - intoxicated by Tory principles - towards the reactionary policies instigated after the Exclusion Crisis. The parallels with the events of the 1790s as viewed by the Foxites were obvious, and Fox's personal empathy with the persecuted voices in the Whig wilderness - his distant relative Monmouth, and still more Argyle - can be quite striking.\textsuperscript{13} The power of his work lay in its status as a Whig cri de coeur, decanting all the bitterness of decades of opposition into a cathartic narrative detailing the bloody acts of ancient opponents. It also contained a faint gleam of hope for the future in Fox's reminder of how close salvation actually was, in this the Whigs' darkest hour.\textsuperscript{14}

According to Holland, Fox first planned to write a history beginning at the Revolution, but, 'after a careful perusal of the latter part of Hume's history', he changed

\textsuperscript{13} C.J. Fox, History, pp. 77, 153-6 for Fox placing the blame for the time's evils on 'Toryism' as opposed to the unchanging values of Whiggism as expounded on p. 167. The Rockingham Whig position on the American War is explicitly justified on p. 60, while pp. 146-7 curse 'this disgraceful period' when loyalty has been turned to servility, in terms that bring the 1790s to mind, especially when modern treason legislation is criticised. Fox's empathy with leading Whigs is displayed throughout the text. Monmouth's 'remarkable' ability to arouse fondness among his followers might be self-portraiture (pp. 165-6). Elsewhere, the difficulty Argyle has in getting 'ardent lovers of liberty' to compromise and cooperate recalls Fox's dilemma in leading the Whig party in the early '90s (p. 187). The theme of noble retirement, seen in the picture of William Temple, and repeated in the captured Monmouth's desire to return to the side of his mistress, also assumes a certain poignancy from Fox's own situation when he was writing the work (p. 26).

\textsuperscript{14} C.J. Fox, History, p. 58.
his mind. 'An apprehension of the false impressions which that great historian's partiality, might have left on the mind of his readers, induced him to go back to the accession of King James the Second, and even to prefix an Introductory Chapter, on the character and leading events, of the times immediately preceding.'\(^5\) The identification of Hume's History with the monarchist cause was, as we have seen, a late eighteenth-century commonplace. As Heywood pointed out, even Rose in answering Fox's work ranked Hume among the prerogative writers.\(^6\) Fox wrote to Laing describing the 'ridiculous' nature of Hume's 'partiality to kings and princes', 'more like the foolish admiration which women and children sometimes have for kings, than the opinion, right or wrong, of a philosopher' and regarded him as having betrayed the duties of the historian in providing apologies for tyrants. Hume's attempt to exonerate the executive in the trials of Russell and Sidney was, Fox thought, the most 'reprehensible passage' of his 'whole work'. Individual moral responsibility was at the heart of Fox's message - whilst agreeing with Blackstone's characterisation of Charles II's reign as being one of 'good laws and bad government', he added the unhumean gloss that constitutions were worthless if not reinforced by the personal virtues of ruler and nation.\(^7\)

\(^5\) C.J. Fox, History, p.vii.


\(^7\) C.J. Fox, History, pp. 49-50; 20-22.
An admirer of Fox's work praised 'his unfeigned and unceasing regard to truth' and his skill at exposing 'the partial decisions, the disingenuous omissions, and the captivating but sometimes unauthorised discussions of Mr. Hume.' Certainly, Fox went to a great deal of trouble to ensure the accuracy of his scholarship - he expressed surprise that Hume could have relied on 'Text Books' to get his history second-hand. Such an unquestioning attitude paralleled the unmanly passiveness which Whigs saw as Hume's preferred political stance. Fox also sought to be more discriminating in his use of popular stories - his gloss on that concerning Argyle's sound sleep on the night before his execution is directly aimed at Hume's famous account of Charles I's stoical pre-execution slumber.

Yet Hume was treated more kindly by Fox than were his fellow 'Tory' historians, Dalrymple or Macpherson. 'You will easily believe', he wrote to Laing, 'that I do not class Hume with the others except as to the bad tendency of their representations.' One evangelical critic actually thought Fox too light in his chastisement of Hume - referring to 'his strange prejudice in favour of Hume's

\cite{Varvicensis2013}
\cite{AddMSS51510}
\cite{FoxHistory}
\cite{FoxtoLaing1800}
moral qualities'. Through a note on Hume of Ninewells, Fox had indeed praised his descendant's personal qualities, above all his humanity, which was described as having been superior to party zeal in his personal contacts. Above all Hume was admired as a profound political thinker, who had been the first to recognise that the power of prerogative was back on the rise, and that absolute monarchy was Britain's likeliest fate, even if he had drawn very different lessons from this than had the Foxites.

Both Fox and Millar, therefore, disliked Hume's monarchism, but at the same time admired him as a philosopher and as an individual. This instilled a vein of ambiguity into their relationship with his historical work which continued through all the Whig writers we are to consider - running weaker, perhaps, in Hallam or Palgrave, both influenced by evangelicalism, but stronger in Allen or Mackintosh. It is the dissimilarities of Fox and Millar's texts, however, which are most striking. James Mill and Lord Holland both wrote of Fox's work as being opposed to the speculative type of philosophic history which was so fashionable, reinstilling morals into a past where they had

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23 Fox to Laing, undated, Add. MSS. 47,578, fo. 45.

24 Laing to Fox, 22 October 1800, Add MSS. 47,578, fo. 5. For Fox's references to Hume's conviction that absolute monarchy was 'the easiest death, the true Euthanasia of the British constitution', see J. Dinwiddy, 'Charles James Fox as Historian', in Radicalism and Reform in Britain, 1780-1850 (London, 1992), p. 26.
been relativised away - 'Indulgence is too likely to be attended with Indifference', claimed Holland. At the same time, Fox's work was thought by some to move too far in the opposite direction - back to a 'pure' model of particularised classical narrative, which after a brief attempt at Millarisms in its opening pages was bare of useful generalisation. Hume's 'complete union of history with philosophy' had been attacked from both sides, but the frontal assault which could displace it remained a Whig dream.


For almost fifty years, the Edinburgh Review opposed the influence of the History on the basis of principles inherited from Millar and Fox. Like Millar though, the periodical's originators laboured under the immense influence Hume wielded over their way of thought. Editor, Francis Jeffrey owed much to 'that admirable writer and most excellent man' in his views on epistemology, morals and the art of criticism itself. In political terms, Hume's advocacy of religious toleration, freer trade and opposition to extended warfare meant that by the mid 1840s,

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25 See The Annual Review and History of Literature, vol. 7 (1808), pp. 101-2, for Mill. Add. MSS. 51510, (unfol.), fos. 164-6. This document is a 'Fragment of Criticism', in which Holland juxtaposes 'philosophical' or 'speculative' history with the 'classical' mode adopted by Fox: 'The character of Charles II as drawn by Mr. Hume & by Mr. Fox well shews the different tendency of these modes of writing of which the one more directly enlarges the understanding & the other is better calculated to amend the heart.'
co-founder Henry Brougham could describe him as 'the father of the liberal, enlightened, and rational system of national polity, which has the general approval of statesmen, and would be everywhere adopted but for conflicting interests, and popular ignorance'. To Carlyle he was simply, and damningly, 'the father of all succeeding Whigs'. However, despite this 'paternal' relationship, Edinburgh writers like Jeffrey and Mackintosh disliked the sterility of Hume's sceptical methodology, even whilst they approved of most of the common-sense opinions he had eventually been driven to. Where they came into most conflict with Hume was in his application of this scepticism to England's constitutional history, with the consequent ill-treatment of venerated 'Whig' persons and events. The vehemence of this opposition to Hume as 'Tory' historian is all the more impressive seen against the weight of the liberal debt owed him. The strength of disapproval shown belies Lockhart's picture of a generation of intellectual midgets, mesmerized by 'the prince of sceptics'. Lockhart claimed that, among Hume's 'pious disciples', meaning Edinburgh Whigs,

David's Toryism is always talked of, as one little foible which should not be too hardly thought of in the character of so great a man. ... They are delighted with the notion, that, in one thing at least, they are wiser than their master; and it would almost be a pity to put an end to so much pleasantry."

However, Whig objections to Hume's supposedly 'despotic' stance in his History were anything but light-hearted. Indeed, opposition to the work may be said to have been central to their political creed.

The Edinburgh's case against the History is best studied in two reviews by Jeffrey, sixteen years apart. The anti-Hume assault began, significantly, with his important analysis of Fox's James II in 1808. In this article Hume was accused of disseminating an 'Epicurean and ignoble strain of sentiment in this country', 'that habit of presuming in favour of all exertions of authority, and against all popular discontent or interference, which is so remarkably the characteristic of the present generation' - a generation fatally attached to an over-powerful executive. Because of Hume's rejection of the current-day value of all history before 1688, people were encouraged to rely on the Revolution settlement too unquestioningly. 'This indolent reliance on the sufficiency of the constitution for its own preservation' had replaced the 'constant spirit of jealousy and of resistance on the part of the people' necessary to preserve liberty intact against despotism. Thanks to the unfortunate over-reaction to the

French Revolution, and to the History's popularity, the example the patriots of the seventeenth century had set in 'the old principles of English constitutional freedom' had been cast aside by respectable opinion. Jeffrey thought it essential that the desire for private happiness be reconnected with a feeling for the necessity of free government in the minds of the people, against the total unconcern for forms of polity which Hume had supposedly shown.  

The reasons why the History, this 'great support of speculative servility and sincere Tory opinions', was so dangerous were explored in a review of George Brodie's History of the British Empire, written specifically as a Whig antidote to Hume's work. The importance which Jeffrey attributed to the publication of Brodie's work shows how seriously he took Hume's political influence. He attempted to get both Mackintosh and Allen to review them before doing so himself at great length. In the opening paragraphs he sought to justify the importance which he placed on undermining the History's supposedly 'Tory' opinions:

We are aware that to many practical politicians it may appear fantastic and even ridiculous to ascribe such effects to a book - and especially

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29 Edinburg Review, vol. 40 (1824), pp. 92-146. The quotation is from p. 93.

to a book in four quarto volumes, published nearly seventy years ago: But when it is considered how universally, and at how early an age, it has been read ... how pleasant it is to read, and how easy to understand and remember - how much clearer, in short, and concise and comprehensive it is than any other history of equal extent - how reasonable and sagacious are the greatest part of the observations it contains - and how plausible the most erroneous of its conclusions, - nay even how just, upon the premises of fact which it assumes, while so very few of its readers can be supposed to have either leisure or inclination to inquire into the truth of these assumptions

- here lay the power of Hume's 'artful apologies'.

Other Edinburgh writers - though their wider reactions to the History varied as shall be seen - were at one with Jeffrey in damning the dangerous nature of its political influence. Francis Horner followed Fox in objecting to Hume's 'intolerable and ridiculous partiality to kings and princes'. Brougham's opinions were expressed in a review of Hogg's Jacobite Relics, where he accused Hume of 'a sort of speculative Jacobitism', a kind of 'twin brother to the newfangled doctrine of legitimacy', in his partiality for prerogative. James Mackintosh agreed with his editor on the negative influence of Hume's political thought. He wrote of 'the detestable distinction, lately


32 Edinburgh Review, vol. 15 (1809), p. 190; vol. 34 (1820), p. 149. For Brougham's approval of Brodie's attack on Hume, see his History of England and France under the House of Lancaster (London, 1852), p. 376. His antipathy to Hume was especially important since it was reflected in his influential work on public education, as can be seen in a letter to Althorp, where he wrote of 'eradicating Hume's errors in ecclesiastical and civil matters', Brougham to Althorp; Althorp MS. Cited by A. Aspinall, Lord Brougham and the Whig Party (Manchester, 1927), p. 298.
attempted in this country ... between freedom and political power' which 'never can be allowed in practise, without, in the first instance, destroying all securities for good government, and very soon introducing every species of corruption and oppression.' Elsewhere, he attacked as a 'Tory attempt to falsify English history' Hume's attempt to lure his readers 'with a very dexterous diffidence' into a belief of the genuineness of Charles I's authorship of the Icon Basilike. In the late 1820s, Macaulay followed up Jeffrey and Brodie's attack on Hume's account of the early Stuarts with an eagerness he later moderated, suggesting an urgency influenced by the current political situation. As late as the 1840s, Jeffrey's son-in-law Empson, and old trooper Moncreiff were still pressing the same line in the Edinburgh's pages.

Not surprisingly, given the unanimity of periodical opposition which we have seen in the 1790s, the Edinburgh Review was not alone in its hostility to the History's political influence. The Monthly Review continued its antipathy towards a 'writer who, under the guise of a calm and dispassionate historian, has been the most successful of party-combatants'. It cheered the publication of Fox's rejoinder as 'the manual of those principles and doctrines of liberty, which form the palladium of our state', and damned the History in 1825 as 'An Apology for the Tyranny

of the Stuarts by a Scotch Tory' who showed 'wilful and
criminal ignorance of the constitution'. It is tempting
to see this periodical as pursuing a more insular, English
'vulgar whig' line as contrasted with the Edinburgh - its
links with dissent rendering it more antipathetic than
Jeffrey's periodical to the History on religious grounds.
Even in instances where a softer attitude was taken towards
Hume, he was still only conceded second place among
'English' historians, after Gibbon - and it was primarily
due to a sense of national proprietorship that the Review
found space to praise Hume's History against a Frenchman
who ignored 'our' historical models. Monthly reviewers
often followed the old-style 'true Whig' above-party line -
Fox was praised for 'constantly disdaining all party
trammels' in his History, and the reviewer of Godwin's
History of the Commonwealth looked back nostalgically at
Mrs. Macaulay's 'admirable history'.

The Westminster Review constantly attacked Hume's
views on English history. There was no sign here - even in
its more orthodoxly Benthamite periods - that any notice
had been taken of Bentham's opinion that Hume had genuinely

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36 Monthly Review, vol. 57 (1808), pp. 76, 198; vol. 97
(1822), pp. 354-5.

281; vol. 107 (1825), p. 334.

p. 251.
aimed for political neutrality." In a review of Brodie's work, a youthful J.S. Mill savaged the History as tyrannical - though, unlike Jeffrey, he was complaining of the apologies made for Charles I's actions in themselves, not at Hume's unconcern for an 'ancient constitution'.

Another Westminster contributor, Robert Bisset, author of many anti-Hume articles on seventeenth-century history, criticised his constant support for government rather than the oppressed. Similarly, the Monthly Magazine's brief liberal period was marked by continual criticism of the political tone of Hume's History in its historical reviews, combined with a sad recognition that this was the only history people read. Godwin's History of the Commonwealth was praised, as was Brodie's work, for undermining Hume's authority - whilst Isaac D'Israeli's Commentaries on the Reign of Charles I was attacked for following too closely in the footsteps of Hume, described as the 'heedless or ignorant eulogist' of Clarendon in a review of a book on

39 D. Forbes, Hume's Philosophical Politics (Cambridge, 1975), p. 292. The influence of James Mill might well be of importance in explaining this. William Thomas attributes to him a 'long-standing dislike of Hume', and accounts for it in a way that links it to the general Whig-Radical distrust of Hume's relativistic undermining of absolute values: 'He may have come to reject belief in God, but some form of evangelical zeal remained essential to him. Scepticism in the sense of non-commitment, indecision between one belief and another, horrified him. ... Before he lost his faith, he condemned Hume for his infidelity; but even when he had come to share that infidelity, he still continued to undervalue him.', The Philosphic Radicals (Oxford, 1979), p. 98.

the 'Tory' Chancellor. Reviews of historical works in the liberal, but often anti-Whig, Spectator through the 1830s painted a similar picture of Hume as having been dishonest and inaccurate.

In the case of the Edinburgh, however, general respect for Hume meant that criticism of the History could not be one-sidedly negative. Even the Monthly Review and Spectator were prepared to praise Hume's talent as a writer - some Edinburgh contributors were prepared to go further. For the first few years of the review, Jeffrey's treatment of the History was much kinder than it was to become, and more in line with his sympathetic attitude towards Hume's achievement as a whole. In his 1803 review of Millar's Historical View, he held the scales fairly evenly between Hume and his Foxite Whig opponent, accepting that 'there is a great deal of truth and a great deal of partiality in both writers'. Contrary to his later opinions, he stated that Hume neither suppressed nor falsified facts and - though he followed Millar in describing the English constitution as always having been mixed - he defended Hume's criticism of the 'patriots' of

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42 e.g. Spectator (1833), p. 239; vol. 11 (1838), p. 90.
43 Monthly Review, vol. 108 (1825), p. 138: 'Of Mr. Hume's History we have always some reluctance to speak with the severity which it deserves; for such is the fascinating elegance of its composition, that it must ever be read with admiration and delight.'; Spectator, vol. 11 (1838), p. 900.
the English civil war." In 1805, when reviewing Bailly's Memoirs, he used the 'most profound and philosophical of histories' to show the inevitability of the arbitrary violence of the French Revolution leading to the rule of one man, using a passage on Cromwell 'deserving of the most profound meditation', in the style which Archibald Alison would later employ in attacking the Reform Bill." Clive has referred to the 'occasional echoes' of Burkean conservatism in the early Edinburgh, and perhaps the initial cautiousness of what began as an above-party journal can be seen as part of the explanation for Jeffrey's early relaxed attitude towards the History." It was certainly a very different line from that which he was taking before the decade was out. By then, the recent defeat of the Grenville ministry by king and country presumably served to influence the strong attack on the History in his Fox article, recalling as it did the spirit of 1784 which pervades Fox's book.

The 1800s, however, did not see the end of positive usages of Hume's History in the Edinburgh, or by Jeffrey himself. When he attacked the 'slavish doctrines' of Hume and Burke in an 1811 article, he described Hume's statement that the English people in the 1630s had enjoyed every


"Edinburgh Review, vol. 6 (1805), p. 142. Flynn, Francis Jeffrey, pp. 117, 131, 195, cites this passage as if it were representative of Jeffrey's attitude towards Hume as a historian - heavily downplaying his later animosity towards the History.

blessing except liberty as being particularly perverse. Then however, he reached for another passage from the History as a corrective, citing Hume's disapproval of treating the people as if they were a 'dangerous monster'.47 Similarly, he cited Hume's view of the Oxford decree approvingly in 'High Tory Principles'.48 Because Hume's History was a source which ministeralists were thought to respect, plundering it for examples was regarded as an especially effective tactic for opposition writers.49

Other appreciative usages of the History in the Edinburgh revolved around admiration for what were often termed Hume's 'philosophical insights', of which two examples in articles by James Mill might be cited. Hume's Elizabeth volume was used to provide ammunition against the East India Company's monopoly, and a passage on the Irish Rebellion of 1641 provided a tag for a plea for a more liberal Irish policy, (the same account was later quoted by Alison in Blackwood's, with a diametrically opposite moral attached).50 Respect for Hume's philosophic insight extended in Francis Horner's case to admiration for Hume's thought on the historical method itself - his 'emphasis on 'particular facts' arising from history, his admonitions against reasoning too finely from a lengthy chain of

observable circumstances, and his disdain for hurried
generalization', as a recent commentator has emphasized.\(^{51}\)

However, the most favourable treatment of the
thinking behind the History in the Edinburgh itself, came
from John Allen, whose own theoretical republicanism
presumably helped him to empathise with Hume's
'philosophical politics'. After twice using Hume's Essays
in political articles, he expressed warm admiration for his
History in a review of John Lingard's History of England,
a year after Jeffrey's appreciative treatment of Brodie's
rejoinder to Hume. Allen found Lingard's Roman Catholic
'bias' singularly distasteful, and had already hinted a
decade previously that Hume's History was superior to his
work.\(^{52}\) In his 1825 review, he praised the History 'for
those general and comprehensive views, that sagacity and
judgment, those masterly lessons of political wisdom, that
profound knowledge of human nature, that calm philosophy,
and dispassionate balancing of opinions, which delight and
instruct us'. Against Lingard, he defended philosophic
history's capacity to use the past to teach the present,
and asserted that Hume had been correct to present on
occasion the type of arguments which might have been used
by historical figures, even if he had lacked direct
evidence for them. Like 'the speeches in Livy', they were


'political disquisitions, applicable to all times and places', and much could be learnt from them. Fox, Brodie and Jeffrey, as well as Lingard, had viewed them as frauds, but Allen stated that he doubted 'whether he (Hume) has ever had readers simple enough to believe, that the controversial discussions inserted in his history took place in the form and manner there related.' In effect, Allen was congratulating Hume on a successful union of philosophical history with the kind of classical literary narrative Fox had sought to revive.

Unlike Jeffrey, Allen stated that he did not doubt Hume's attachment to abstract liberty, or the 'cause of humanity and toleration'. He cited 'the beautiful animating passage, where he describes the opening of the Long Parliament'. However, Allen thought that Hume's dread of public disorder had caused him to dampen his readers' desire for political exertion - encouraging the practise, though he did not propagate the principles, of passive obedience. This deficiency was accompanied by a partiality toward the Stuarts, which Allen sought to explain by the inherent attractiveness of a gallant cause.53 Although, belatedly, Allen came to endorse the Edinburgh's editorial line on the pernicious political influence of the History, the generally positive treatment of the work here shows that the Review was hardly uniform in its Hume criticism. The inconsistency was noticed in the Westminster which, siding with Lingard against his assailant, mocked Allen's

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praise for his 'favorite historian', Hume. Elsewhere Allen praised an insight of Hume's into the origin of county courts which told against the existence of the dark age democracy believed in by ancient-constitutionalist radicals - displaying appreciation in the *Edinburgh* for Hume's conservative potential.

Such a treatment of Hume's work, by Holland House's clearest representative on the review, may perhaps be said to undermine the centrality which Trevor-Roper implies belonged to Holland House in the early nineteenth-century Whig campaign against the *History*. The impetus for the 'campaign', if such is not too organised a term, would seem rather to have come from Scottish Whig circles - from Jeffrey, Laing and Brodie. Fox's *History* certainly acted as an influence, but Laing and Lauderdale were guiding spirits here too. The 'pet' historians of Holland House, James Mackintosh and Thomas Babington Macaulay were, as shall be seen, usually rather cooler in their hostility towards the *History* than were those who remained in 'North Britain'. Perhaps this was because the baleful force of prerogative which the work was supposed to strengthen was felt more forcibly in Scotland. Certainly, claims were made that the *History* had aided the survival of Jacobitically passive

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3. The 'Whig compromise'. Henry Hallam and Lord John Russell.

Among early nineteenth-century Whig historians, Burrow has identified a phenomenon he terms 'the Whig compromise' with Hume, which appeared most strikingly perhaps in Henry Hallam's influential works on the English past. This is a concept I think it would be profitable to expand upon, showing the degree to which the History's ubiquity in the early nineteenth century tempered 'vulgar' whig history, and resulted in notable concessions in both tone and content. Most importantly this involved the jettisoning of the Anglo-Saxon 'ancient constitution', and a concentration on the political developments of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, leading to a Lancastrian constitution which was held still to be in


58 J. Burrow, A Liberal Descent. Victorian Historians and the English Past (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 28-35. The via media offered by Hallam's version was applauded by the Monthly Review, 'The fierce republican invectives of Brodie and Godwin, have been opposed, with at least equal prejudice, to the monarchical prepossessions of Hume, and a crowd of inferior Tory partisans. ... The dignified philosophy and enlightened judgment of Hallam, in the splendid work which he has consecrated to the history of our constitution, have balanced the angry exaggerations of faction.', (New and Improved Series), vol. 8 (1828), p. 427. The similarities which appear on many points between Hallam and Hume's versions are noted in Peter Clark, Henry Hallam (Boston, 1982), p. 69.
existence - never having been wholly overthrown. Here, Hallam took a stand against Hume and his claims that the modern constitution was born in 1689 on the one hand, and against democratic radical advocates of 'Norman Yoke' theory - amongst whom he ranked Catharine Macaulay - on the other. In the interests of conservatism, Hallam, like many similarly conservative Whigs in the later eighteenth century, had here moved half-way towards the position of Walpole's propagandists against an earlier popular opposition movement based on nostalgia for an Anglo-Saxon past. As we have seen in chapter one, such a 'Whig compromise' had been in the making since the time of the History's first publication. Hallam stood at the end of this tradition. His version of the 'compromise' was the most coherent yet achieved, with its clear formulation of a parallel between Richard II's deposition and the events of 1688-9 standing as a firm anti-Humean core to a version of English constitutional history which leaned in the Scot's direction over so many other issues.

59 Again, even the Monthly Review appreciated the conservative value of Hallam's Anglo-Saxon history against the backdrop of post-war unrest: 'we particularly recommend it to those who have formed very extravagant notions of the state of English liberty in antient (sic.) times. Some of the more violent but ill-informed advocates of popular rights, in the present day, have talked as if the turbulent periods of the Saxon history contained the most perfect model of representative government and civil liberty: but no instance of representative government can be found in the Saxon times', vol. 87, (Enlarged series) (1818), p. 140.

60 Most notable was the, slightly reluctant, acceptance of a 1295 origin for the House of Commons. Thomas Creevey, writing in 1826, was so happy with this part of the 'compromise', that he could cite Hume on the 1295 parliament - whilst regarding it as the basis of a new ancient, or 'original' constitution which
For example, Hallam was unromantic in his treatment of Elizabeth, an area where most early nineteenth-century Whigs followed Hume's sceptical approach rather than the popular patriotic account of her conduct — beloved of Bolingbroke, Chatham and Wilkes — which Hume had wished to debunk. (A notable exception was Russell, whose rather bullish attitude towards foreign policy and approval of Elizabeth's anti-catholic measures was not shared by the main contributors to the Edinburgh.) Though Whigs objected to Hume's picture of an Elizabeth as absolute as the Grand Turk; they recognised and deplored the arbitrary conduct of the Tudors. Stressing that parliament's approval was constitutionally necessary for the Tudors to achieve some of their most extreme stretches of power, the Whigs had to stress lack of public virtue among the populace, alongside other reasons, in order to explain why the constitutional checks they wished to believe had then existed had not been applied. Russell wrote 'there is some truth in the remark of Mr. Hume that the English of this age, like eastern slaves, were inclined to admire those acts of violence and tyranny which were exercised over themselves and at their

parliamentary reform could restore. Letters to Lord John Russell, upon his Notice of a Motion for a Reform in Parliament (London, 1826), pp. 16-17.

Hume's account of Tudor tyranny could even be embraced by Whigs who wished to stress the endurance of the English constitution under pressure, when countering Radical calls for violent redress. See 'Liberator', A Letter to an English Nobleman. Respectfully Submitted to the Serious Consideration of both Houses of Parliament (London, 1817), especially pp. 21-2.
own expense. The unflattering picture of sixteenth-century public-spiritedness which resulted from this tactic was to be strongly objected to by Froude. He was rather fond of Hume's narrative, but does not seem to have realized that the standard denigration of sixteenth-century mores he deplored in early nineteenth-century writers had come about as a direct result of attempts to escape the logic of Hume's arguments on the 'absolute' nature of Tudor kingship.

Hallam accepted Hume's case most closely in his approval of the early actions of the Long Parliament mixed with condemnation of its later activities which led to the Civil War. He differed from his predecessor in approving of Strafford's removal, though not the means by which it was attained. He is also less logically satisfying than Hume, in not considering Charles I as trustworthy, and yet maintaining that the checks obtained by the Long Parliament

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64 The same 'Humean' line, with an acknowledgment to Hume's 'very striking' arguments, was taken by the Whig professor William Smyth in his Lectures on Modern History (London, 1843), vol. 1, pp. 379-80. See also the 'Life of Wentworth', in John Macdiarmid's Lives of British Statesmen (London, 1807), pp. 252-474, which Hallam regarded as a 'deservedly popular publication', Constitutional History, vol. 2, p. 41. That Hallam 'shared many of (Hume's) preoccupations' in his account of the civil war period, has been noticed by M.G. Finlayson, Historians, Puritanism, and the English Revolution: the Religious Factor in English Politics before and after the Interregnum (Toronto, 1983), pp. 17-19, 60.
could have controlled him when the Petition of Right had not done so earlier. Hume's insistence upon Charles's entire trustworthiness, (against the explicit complaints of Clarendon which Whig historians loved to quote against him), was a necessary element of a watertight conservative case. Macaulay attacked this weakness in Hallam, and supported the actions of the Long Parliament which led to war, in Edinburgh Review articles written in the heated political atmosphere of the late 1820s. In the 1840s, however, Macaulay followed the "Whig compromise" in all three of its major elements mentioned here, in the first chapter of his History of England.

Concerning the later Stuarts, Hume's version was far less controversial. Hallam, and even Robert Vaughan's works contain far fewer anti-Hume footnotes in the volumes which cover this period. Over James II, few writers followed Fox in distinguishing too finely between his religious and political motives, and could happily agree with Creasy's endorsement of Hume's general verdict:

> Even Hume, the artful and unscrupulous partisan of the House of Stuart, confesses of James II., that "almost the whole of this short reign consists of attempts always imprudent, often illegal, sometimes both, against whatever was most loved and revered by the nation."\(^{65}\)

Russell's Essay on the History of the English Government and Constitution was heavily dependent on Hallam's work, and another transmitter of much of the 'compromise'. Yet we can also trace in it, as we can in

Hallam, a more insidious effect of Humean arguments on historical discourse. Russell remarked that 'He (Hume) is to the Whig writers and historians what Bayle is to the ancient and modern philosophers.' Hume's corrosive effect combined with Whig worries about the fragility of liberty in their era - worries which chimed perfectly with those Hume had held - to produce statements like that of Hallam, that if Henry VIII had been less frivolous England would have been rendered absolute, and Russell's similar thoughts on how the nation would have been prepared to give up its liberties if James II had been a protestant. To imply that the whole future of the country's liberty could be staked upon the actions of a single individual was utterly opposed to the forthright 'vulgar' views traditional to full-blooded English whiggery, here expressed by the Monthly Review in 1820:

Scarcely any doctrine is more false or more injurious than that which teaches us that man is the creature of destiny ... The spirit of English freedom is not to be quenched by any reign, however extended, of humiliating bigotry. It is not a Philip, a Charles, or a James, who can chain down the energies of

"men who their duties know,
And know their rights, and knowing dare maintain."

Englishmen have long enjoyed, and, by God's blessing and their own bold wisdom, will long continue to enjoy, the freedom and the happiness which they claim as men; not looking for support to the blind partiality of destiny, but to the

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firm and constant exercise of the powers with which Heaven has endowed them. Nor is it to the storm and the hurricane that the arm of British valour is indebted for success and triumph:— in the stoutness of its own strength, and in the gallantry of the heart that guides it, we may place a surer faith. When England once ceases to rely on her own powers for her own preservation, then,

"Unwise in her glory, and great in her fall."

her name shall be added to the scroll of empires which have been.

Hallam's own occasional reliance on 'Providential' arguments seem expressions of insecurity in the face of an unpredictable historical process, rather than the confident expressions of faith one can find later in Bishop Stubbs - removed as he was from both the shadow of Hume, and that of the French Revolution.

When their mood was more assertive, the compromise established by early nineteenth-century Whigs with Hume's work could falter upon their adoption of ideal absolutes of 'public spirit' which transcended the Humean model - even if they failed to match the patriotic zeal of the Monthly writer quoted above. Hence Russell followed Fox in declaring of the Whig victims of the Tory reaction in Charles II's reign that 'It is to their spirit, and the spirit of men like them, rather than to any unalterable law, that we owe the permananency and the excellence of our

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69 For the boundless confidence of Stubbs's faith, see J.W. Burrow, Liberal Descent, p. 132. P.B.M. Blaas describes how the 'Whig myth' in English historiography was more intense in Stubbs's work than in that of his early nineteenth-century predecessors, in Continuity and Anachronism, pp. 156-70.
ancient constitution.' Hallam and Brodie both criticised Hume for a faulty knowledge of the law, and the brunt of their attacks on Hume focused on his presentation of precedents - but it seems incorrect to describe their approach as narrowly legalistic as Forbes has done.

Hallam's disdain for the idea of 'a jury of antiquaries' being allowed to sit in judgment on a nation's freedom seems to have been aimed at Hume as much as at anybody. He was prepared to appeal to 'hyper-constitutional law' to justify the Revolution Settlement, after being more Humean than Hume in stressing that the Tories possessed a stronger legal case.

Similarly, Russell thought that before the Civil War, the 'constitutional royalists' like Falkland had the better arguments according to the letter of the constitution, but argued that the parliamentarians were correct, under exceptional circumstances, to act in defence of its 'spirit.' Hallam and Russell's commitment to a constitutional 'essence' of freedom was mirrored in other

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70 J. Russell, The Life of William Lord Russell, vol. 2, p. 179. Richard Brent, Liberal Anglican Politics. Whiggery, Religion, and Reform 1830-1841 (Oxford, 1987), pp. 40-63, stresses the primacy of Russell's 'constitutional moralism', but I see it as having been tainted not only by the cyclical civic humanist tradition of growth and decay, as Burrow suggests (A Liberal Descent, p. 30), but also by the respect the Holland House tradition in which Russell was raised still granted to Hume as a political thinker, and to his History as a work of literature. For an early positive reference of Russell to Hume as 'the most profound of modern historians', see J. Russell, (anon.), Essays, and Sketches of Life and Character, 2nd. ed. (London, 1821), p. 63.


72 P. Clark, Henry Hallam, pp. 59, 83.

authors - Mackintosh's portrayal of Magna Carta as a repository of the English spirit of freedom is in striking contrast to Millar's description of it as a useful collection of precedents for later ages. Such unHumean appeals to transcendental forces fed partly on English 'vulgar' Whig notions of inherent English superiority, but also perhaps show, in Hallam and Mackintosh, the beginnings of the influence of the German historiographic spirit which was to become so powerful in the second half of the century.


Hume's success at reconciling an entertaining narrative with profound explication was the main basis for Whig appreciation of his History. According to Jeffrey, in his review of Brodie's work, the historian who could replace Hume would have to be eloquent and 'philosophical' - Brodie himself being disqualified, in Jeffrey's eyes, by his lack of literary accomplishment and disdain for Adam Smith. Mackintosh singled out a similar combination of achievements as unique to Hume: 'No other narrative seems to unite, in the same degree, the two qualities of being instructive and affecting. No historian approached him in the union of the talent of painting pathetic scenes with

that of exhibiting comprehensive views of human affairs'. What Rendall has written of Mackintosh might be said to have applied to many contemporary historians - that he 'was torn between the need for wide-ranging analysis of political behaviour, and the minutiae of historical drama.' Hume's *History* was the text which came closest to suggesting a model of how such a reconciliation could be achieved.

The desire to combine literary and explanatory skills was inspired by the Ciceronian tradition of history as a branch of rhetoric - the ideal of 'philosophy teaching by example'. In the case of the major *Edinburgh Review* contributors, the 'philosophy' to be imparted through lucid narrative had to amount to more than just vague moral exhortation. Their Scottish Enlightenment heritage gave them a more substantial type of practical philosophy to transmit, whilst they held that historical study itself could promote understanding of the 'science of politics'.

At the same time, increasingly rigorous standards of research led to a growing emphasis on original sources. The resulting weight of responsibilities worked against the production of histories that also managed to be great

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literature. To Macaulay in 1828, producing an entertaining compound of narrative truth and philosophical instruction seemed to have become almost impossible. What 'philosophy' had lent to history in depth, had been more than lost in vividness and readability.\footnote{Macaulay's analysis is cited in M. Philips, 'Macaulay, Scott, and the Literary Challenge to Historiography', \textit{Journal of the History of Ideas}, vol. 50 (1989), pp. 120-1. For the passing of the 'accessible' Enlightenment, see R. Sher, \textit{Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment} (Edinburgh, 1985), chapter 8, esp. pp. 316-8 on the decline of narrative-philosophical history.}

Perhaps the two most notable attempts to meet this challenge in the first half of the nineteenth century were the histories of England written by Mackintosh and Macaulay themselves. It must be stressed in advance that they were very different types of book, written under widely varying circumstances. Mackintosh's was designed as a short popular history of England for Lardner's \textit{Cabinet Cyclopaedia} series, while Macaulay's narrative of history before James II's reign is covered in just two chapters. Both men died before their works were completed - Mackintosh before he reached the reign of James I, Macaulay before he finished that of William. The scale of the two endeavours was totally different - only Mackintosh's is really designed as a confutation of Hume's \textit{History}. Macaulay's, as will be seen, is perhaps better described as a sort of continuation.

Mackintosh played down the importance of his 'abridged narrative' of English history. A work which he ranked as a mere 'sketch' was certainly not the classic...
history he had hoped to pen. However, it is still worth considering in a study of his thoughts on Hume, who he referred to in the text as 'one of the greatest of historians'. The work was strongly influenced by Hallam - his *Constitutional History* being a source from which Mackintosh could 'seldom differ, and never without distrust of my own judgment.' The 'Whig compromise' was followed through the medieval period, though Mackintosh was perhaps particularly severe on Edward II and Richard II - as against Hume's attempts to blacken the Commons' assertions of their 'right' to hold kings to account. Very different from Hallam's approach was Mackintosh's use of the narrative form, without any thematic division or appendices. This allowed him to retell many of the classic anecdotes to be found in Hume, which he sometimes tempered but seldom dismissed altogether, as Lingard tended to do. If nothing else, he took them as indicators of the way in which popular feeling has developed about certain events.

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81 J. Mackintosh, *History of England*, vol. 2, p. 99; see also vol. 3, p. 5: 'The sagacity and accuracy of Mr. Hallam are such, that I consider his assertion, though he quotes no authority, as almost equivalent to testimony.'


83 For example, Edward I's supposed massacre of the Welsh bards, narrated by Hume. Mackintosh rejects its truth, but thinks it useful as an example of the deep-rooted hatred which was caused by the conquest among the Welsh. (History of England, vol. 1, p. 255.)
Mackintosh was opposed to Hume's aim of removing strong feeling from historical study - believing party interest had benefitted the study of controversies over Mary Stuart and the authorship of Icon Basilike. Piety was extolled as beneficial to liberty. Mackintosh defended religious figures such as Dunstan from Hume's accusations of fraud and hypocrisy, and attempted to understand the psychology of the medieval faith in miracles and crusades. Above all he asserted his own attachment to England's liberty, the country's 'peculiar and characteristic glory', in true 'vulgar' whig style.

Macaulay's debt to the tones of 'vulgar' whiggery was of course even stronger than that of Mackintosh. Yet, I would argue, his History is more comparable to Hume's than might be generally recognised. Hamburger's picture of the mature Macaulay and Forbes's of Hume illustrate men who shared a pragmatic view of the making of the Revolution Settlement. Both admired the 'trimmer' Halifax, both


85 J. Mackintosh, History of England, vol. 1, pp. 51, 55, 122; see also p. 80, for Mackintosh's recognition of the 'vulgar Whig' in Hume: 'The Anglo-Saxon government inspired the philosopher with those noble feelings of liberty which exalt his style above its general beauty.'

86 The generally-held impression of Macaulay as simply the sworn enemy of Hume's historical work is one which dates back to the embattled rhetoric of nineteenth-century Edinburgh reviews, and is still being conveyed in commentaries as recent as R.C. Richardson's The Debate on the English Revolution Revisited (London and New York, 1988), pp. 69-70.

87 J. Hamburger, Macaulay and the Whig Tradition (Chicago, 1976) and D. Forbes, Hume's Philosophical Politics (Cambridge, 1975), passim.
abhorred Churchill, and both stressed the role of William III as the hero of the day - rather than the squabbling Convention. Macaulay's motives in writing his history of the Revolution were in fact similar to Hume's in writing his *History of England* - both wanted to desacralize the past. The sacred, unchangeable Revolution Settlement had been the touchstone of Toryism in Macaulay's youth, and he wished to contextualise and demystify it in the same way that Hume had sought to remove the quasi-religious awe from the idea of the Ancient Constitution. Both writers wanted to encourage their readers to study the actions of the great politicians of the past in their full context, so that correct lessons could be drawn. The Revolution to Macaulay had to be defused as a contemporary defence for religious intolerance, just as Hume had wished to prevent the Norman Conquest being invoked as an excuse for political extremism. By the 1840s and '50s too, Macaulay had moved from the opposition Whig position from which he had attacked Hume so fiercely in the 1820s, to the situation of being a Whig in government, or supporting the government. That this brought about a shift in Macaulay's attitude towards aspects of the English past has long been recognised - but it also has to be seen in the much wider context of the tensions which had always been inherent in the Whig narrative whenever its proponents found themselves in office.

His main debt to Hume, though, perhaps lay in an area he was unwilling to recognise. His longest published
comments on Hume came very early in his career, in the article 'On History' in which so much of his mature approach to the historian's task is already evident. The famous passage bears repetition:

[Hume was] an accomplished advocate. Without positively asserting much more than he can prove, he gives prominence to all the circumstances which support his case; he glides lightly over those which are unfavourable to it; his own witnesses are applauded and encouraged; the statements which seem to throw discredit on them are controverted; the contradictions into which they fall are explained away; a clear and connected abstract of their evidence is given. Everything that is offered on the other side is scrutinised with the utmost severity; every suspicious circumstance is a ground for comment and invective; what cannot be denied is extenuated, or passed by without notice; concessions even are sometimes made: but this insidious candour only increases the effect of the vast mass of sophistry.®®

Though Macaulay's judgment was viewed by J.B. Black to be 'perhaps the most severe criticism ever passed by one historian on another', its charges were hardly very original by the late 1820s.®® Mill and Milman had made the same complaints earlier in the decade. The great influence Jeffrey exercised over a still young Macaulay has to be taken into account in considering the warmth with which he here enters upon the Edinburgh's anti-Hume crusade. The passage has appeared in many evaluations of Hume as historian through to the current day, but it is notable that Macaulay never reprinted it in his lifetime. Once it


had been republished, it was commented that it described Macaulay's approach quite as well as it did Hume's. Perhaps a reason for Macaulay's reluctance to republish was that he recognised that his own method of writing popular, readable, 'party' history owed much to Hume's - who shared his talent for telling historical stories 'very agreeably'. Elsewhere he had mused that 'we are not certain that the best histories are not those in which a little of the exaggeration of fictitious narrative is judiciously employed.' Certainly, he respected Hume himself as 'the ablest writer of his class', and praised the History as 'one great entire work', which should not be defiled by editorial tamperings or additions. Suggestive of the kind of level on which Hume's influence might have worked on Macaulay is this interesting passage from the Athenaeum:

Mr. Macaulay's portrait of William the Third may stand, as a literary performance, by the side of Hume's portrait of Charles the First. Both are elaborate delineations. Both are drawn with the

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93 *Edinburgh Review*, vol. 54 (1831), p. 16. Despite the stress often put upon the unprecedented sales achieved by Macaulay's History, Peter Gay has usefully reminded us that he was still writing for 'a relatively small reading public'. Though larger than that which Hume had experienced, as shall be discussed in chapter four, it was still not the true mass market which was to emerge at the end of the century. This makes Macaulay's aspiration to head Hume's 'class' of writers more explicable. See P. Gay, *Style in History* (London, 1974), p. 120.
greatest love and with the greatest care. Both are meant by their authors as master-works of literary art. They have the same merits and the same defects, though there is scarcely any resemblance between the manner in which Charles is introduced into the reader's heart and that in which William is made to stand before the reader's eye. They are both remarkable for the skill with which the better side of the hero is presented. Not that either writer hides entirely the less gracious features of his model. Ordinary artists get over the difficulty of a lost eye by painting in profile or of a pug nose by painting the full front. But real masters disdain the shifts of mediocrity. Hume threw in just enough of shade to give relief to his portrait; and Mr. Macaulay has followed the example. Yet the lights and the shadows are equally conventional - tricks of art, not traits of nature. Hume is the more subtle and seductive painter; Mr. Macaulay excels in the vigour of his outline and the splendour of his colour. The older historian paints like the Italians of the school of Raffaelle: his outlines are soft and vanishing, his tints are delicately blended, his personages, whether high or simple, are ennobled by devotion or genius. The younger historian paints in fresco; his forms are more muscular, his hues are brighter, his drawing is firmer, but his treatment is less graceful. Both artists succeeded in the purpose they severally had in view: each created the image of an historical personage agreeably to his own conceptions and to the demands of his party. Each triumphs over great natural difficulties. The two writers have created finished works of literary art out of more or less faulty models: admirable pictures, very slightly resembling the originals.94

One turn-of-the-century commentator recognised Hume and Macaulay's affinity, and summed up his feelings in less

What he (Macaulay) did he did excellently, but ... it was not the highest kind of work. Nor was he one of the highest kind of men, and that is why we feel it to be an impertinence to include his name in the category of Burke, and Johnson, and Carlyle. His English prototype is Hume or Gibbon; his Latin, Sallust.  

Mackintosh's public verdict on Hume's method was slightly more charitable than the young Macaulay's in the Edinburgh. In defending the French Revolution, he felt that to contrast the delineation of it which might have been given by the specious and temperate Toryism of Mr. Hume, with that which we have received from the repulsive and fanatical invectives of Mr. Burke, might still be amusing and instructive. Both these great men would be averse to the Revolution; but it would not be difficult to distinguish between the undisguised fury of an eloquent advocate, and the well-dissembled partiality of a philosophical judge.  

Like the other Edinburgh contributors considered above, Macaulay and Mackintosh obviously admired Hume's 'philosophy'. Clive and Burrow have shown how Jeffrey and Macaulay relied on distinctively Scottish 'stages of society' arguments. Elsewhere in his Edinburgh reviews, Macaulay found himself steering towards Hume's version. In his 'Burleigh and his Times' essay, he veered closer to Hume than to Brodie in the level of Tudor 'despotism' he was prepared to believe had existed, and in his 'Mackintosh' review he quoted Hume approvingly in an attack

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96 J. Mackintosh, Miscellaneous Works, p.588.

on Shaftesbury and the Whigs of his day.\textsuperscript{98} Mackintosh himself was prepared to praise Hume's historical skills in the Edinburgh, rating them far higher than Macpherson's, (which Hallam admired), and was happy to quote Hume at length on the state of Scotland under Charles II.\textsuperscript{99}

Such compatibility led to Mackintosh being widely considered as the natural author of a continuation of Hume. Contemporaries often seem to have viewed Macaulay's work itself as a continuation of Hume's - much as this contradicts the common perception of it as being a rival History, which one still finds in recent historiography. Thomas Moore seems to have been told by Macaulay himself in 1841, to expect a history of England from him, 'taken up ... where Hume leaves off.'\textsuperscript{100} The London Review later went so far as to suggest that Macaulay began with the accession of James II from 'a conviction that grace of style would have the effect of long preserving the defective narrative of Mr. Hume'.\textsuperscript{101} Macaulay's famous anecdote concerning his amusement at seeing Hume's History being advertised as 'highly valuable as an introduction to Macaulay', did not derive its humour so much from the incongruity of two 'incompatible' works being joined together, as has been

\textsuperscript{98} J. Burrow, Liberal Descent, pp. 40-1; T.B. Macaulay, Critical and Historical Essays (London, 1907), pp. 86-7; 325.


thought, but from the reversal of the classic formula, 'a continuation of Hume' - which all histories of the eighteenth-century, including Macaulay's, were regarded as for most of the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{102} This, and the relation of Hume and Macaulay's conceptions of 'social history' will be further considered in chapters four and five.

The assimilation of Hume and Macaulay's works in the public mind was increasingly possible by mid-century thanks to a reduction in the political temperature and, partly as a result of the consequent decline of party history, an increasing recognition of the difficulty of complete historical impartiality, which tempered criticisms from several quarters of both Hume and Macaulay.\textsuperscript{103} For example, The Gentleman's Magazine declared in its review of Macaulay's History, 'Absolute impartiality is scarcely attainable by human nature' - all historians, the writer stated, including 'the Tory Hume' having had their


\textsuperscript{103} E.g., (out of many possible examples - see chapter four), London Quarterly Review, vol. 6 (1856), p. 208; R. Denny Urrin, On the late Lord Macaulay, pp. 15-16.
partialities.¹⁰⁴

Conclusion.

The effect of this decline in party-politicised history, and the relationship of Hume's text with the less contentious form of 'whig history' which resulted from it, will be discussed in more detail in chapter five. This chapter has sought to explore the varieties of Whig response to the History in the early nineteenth century, and carefully to assess the varying levels of antipathy shown towards the work. The longevity of Jeffrey's editorial influence over the Edinburgh perhaps created an impression of monolithic dislike, which like Macaulay's supposed hostility, appears more variegated upon closer inspection. Trevor-Roper's stress on Holland House as the centre for the 'campaign' against the History must be severely qualified, given John Allen's admiration for the work, and Fox and Holland's affection for it as a work of literature. Hallam and Smyth's appreciation of the usefulness of Humean conservatism on occasion got the better of their Whiggishness, and Mackintosh followed Millar in having to counter a history written by a man whose work was perhaps the single greatest influence upon his thought.

These qualifications apart though, a critical stance towards the History was a major component of opposition

Whig ideology in the early nineteenth century, as much as it had been in the late eighteenth. Hume's 'excessive' monarchism, his unnostalgic relativistic attitude towards the constitution, his down-grading of political liberty as against civil liberty, his stress on material and intellectual progress over and above the progressive development of English freedoms and his cynical attitude towards the usefulness of public virtue - all of these served as a profound statement of what early nineteenth-century Whigs were opposed to. The status which the History had acquired as a 'standard work' helped to inflame Whigs with a sense of purpose, a conviction that there was a dragon to be slain in an arena - English history - where they were used to winning arguments. This especially applied in the years before 1830, and most strikingly in the 1820s - when the number of editions of the History being published peaked and Whig office-holding had faded to a distant memory. Macaulay's Edinburgh attack on Hume in 1828 must be seen in the context of the decade when the Whig assault on the History was most intense. Hume's History, written to reduce party passions, in fact showed an incredible propensity to ignite them, even seventy years after its initial publication.

Chapter 4. 'A possession for all time'? The History's reputation in the nineteenth century.

Introduction.

Hume's History began the nineteenth century with the seeming prospect of an unlimited reign as the classic narrative of England's past. Its style was everywhere admired, the number of editions appearing continued to increase and it held a central role in political debate. However, by the end of the century this supremacy appeared to have collapsed, with the History disappearing out of print in 1894.

Hume's continuing nineteenth-century historical vitality has been either little examined, or treated as a quaint curiosity. The outlines of the story of his critical decline remain unreconstructed, as against common, vague assertions that he was 'replaced' in mid-century by Macaulay, which find their origin in contemporary Whig propaganda, and assumptions that his decline in critical favour was simply an inevitable process, long belated.

Historiography's customary emphasis on progressive improvements in scholarship as the main motor of change in history-writing has perhaps led to an overestimation of its importance in precipitating Hume's fall from favour. Having shown that Hume's scholarly reputation was never an enviable one, I emphasize the primacy of stylistic factors

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in his early nineteenth-century supremacy, and in his mid-
century fall from favour, which occurred in the face of a
strong, but temporary, trend towards highly vivid
historical narrative. Then, as against the standard
interpretation which relates remorseless nineteenth-century
decline, I note the interesting recovery which took place
in Hume's historical reputation in some critical quarters
during the second half of the century, and stress the
exceptional nature of the historical fashions of the 1840s
and '50s which revolved around the work of Macaulay and
Carlyle. An over-concentration on the work of the latter
two figures has, I would argue, created a skewed view of
nineteenth-century historiography, which I seek to remedy in
this study by closely following shifting historiographical
trends over the whole course of the century. These left
Hume's relationship with historical orthodoxy subtly
different in every passing decade. This leads to an
interpretation in which Hume's supremacy was not toppled by
Macaulay's History, as in the common over-personalised
generalisation, but by a sharp shift in historical taste,
of which Macaulay's work was only a relatively late, if
very significant, component.

This chapter is arranged into three chronological
sections, the early nineteenth century, the 1840s and '50s,
and the later part of the century - though the three basic
themes of these sections, Hume's supremacy, its decline,
and the circumstances of his mild critical recovery after
mid-century, lead to a certain amount of overlap.
Section one examines the underpinnings of Hume's early nineteenth-century supremacy - focussing on its stylistic advantages, and its comparative status relative to other histories past and present, particularly compared to those of the other two members of the eighteenth-century historical 'triumvirate', William Robertson and Edward Gibbon.

Section two focuses on the trend for more dramatic and pictorial historical narrative which occurred at mid-century, and which turned opinion sharply away from admiration for Hume's unadorned line in literary effect.

Section three briefly surveys the critical fortunes of Hume's History up to the end of the nineteenth century - correcting the common assumption that it suffered a complete eclipse after the 1850s, but noting that this was much more a literary than a historical rehabilitation. Especially interesting is the increased sympathy for Hume's perceived political position after the 1880s. This section concludes with a brief examination into why Hume's revived critical status as an historian failed to carry over into the twentieth century.

1. 'A chief standard work': The early nineteenth-century supremacy of Hume's 'History'.

By the early nineteenth century Hume's History of England was firmly established as 'a chief standard work',
the history 'read by every one'. It was an age when it was considered that a definitive history of the nation was both possible and desirable, and Hume's 'classical record' - having cornered the market for an authoritative yet readable history when it emerged in the mid eighteenth-century - benefitted from the accretions of authority which its longevity embued it with in the eyes of the reading public. Gifford noted approvingly the conservatism of the British where their national history was concerned. He argued that driving Hume out of the market was impossible, for: 'The nation is no more disposed to welcome a new history than a new constitution'. Milman, on the other hand, bemoaned the establishment of a very masterly work as the acknowledged authorized history. He felt it held up the general dissemination of any subsequent discoveries, given the superstitious reverence Hume's text had acquired in many households. Hallam complained of 'those ... who know nothing but what they find in Hume', as if he encountered them with infuriating frequency. The deadening effect of such ubiquity was felt by Charles Lamb, who included the History in his index of unreadable 'books which are no


books', alongside 'court calendars, directories, pocket-books, draught-boards bound and lettered on the back, scientific treatises, almanacs, statutes at large ... and generally all those volumes which "no gentleman's library should be without".

This authority meant that even those who disliked Hume's work saw potential advantages in appealing to his 'wisdom' - John Russell and Major Cartwright, for example, both referred their audiences to 'the sagacious Hume' when it suited them to. However, this same air of authority, could dissolve into comical dependence in the case of writers for whom Hume's was the only history to which they had ready access. A particularly amusing example is provided by Thomas Brooke Clarke, Chaplain in Ordinary to the Prince of Wales and Domestic Chaplain to the Duke of Cumberland, who, in the preface of his Memoirs of the King's Supremacy (1809) had to apologise for the erroneous dates given at the heads of all his chapters, due to the misleading nature of the dating of Hume's chapter-break after Charles's execution - which, at short notice, he had only been able to check against Smollett. Since the latter's treatment of the Stuart period was so derivative

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of Hume's, as discussed in chapter one, it is hardly surprising that Clarke found himself confirmed in his error. Such dependence upon Hume must have been a common enough situation. Less dramatically, there was the obvious reliance of some reviewers and popular history-writers on Hume as the reference of first resort. All this in turn worked to amplify the History's importance in British historical culture.

The Monthly Review referred to the problems caused by Hume's unchallenged supremacy in 1819, when it complained of the inferiority of historical works written since Hume's, and their abject dependence upon his. All emergent histories of England until Froude's were judged by a Humean standard in the reviews. In an attempt to escape this Humean straightjacket, John Lingard 'studiously avoided consulting Hume' during the composition of his History of England. He claimed he hardly knew in what passages he differed from Hume. This did not stop John Allen in the Edinburgh from claiming Lingard's work was one long attack on Hume. The Catholic historian could not, however, help being pleased when The British Critic compared 'some points' of his work favourably with

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8 T. Brooke Clarke, Memoirs of the King's Supremacy; and of the Rise Progress and Results of the Supremacy of the Pope, in Different Ages and Nations, so far as relates to Civil Affairs (London, 1809), p. vi.

In the long term, Lingard's history failed to displace Hume's as 'standard text' - despite relative longevity, its author's religious persuasion undermined the attractions of its greater accuracy. Suspicion dogged an author who was 'a strict Roman Catholic, and as such shields the church in every instance.' Chambers's *Cyclopaedia of English Literature*, in 1844, noted that Lingard was 'generally more impartial than Hume, or even Robertson', however he added that 'it is undeniable that his religious opinions have in some cases perverted the fidelity of his history'. His favourable treatment of Mary Tudor - as contrasted with Hume's traditional villainess - was not likely to be welcomed by a nineteenth-century audience. For example, *The Pictorial History of England* - not a work generally fond of Hume - specifically recommended his account of the queen's reign over that of Lingard. The Reverend H.J. Todd, meanwhile, saw fit to employ 'the indignant eloquence of Hume' in attacking Lingard's account of Mary. Lingard's more iconoclastic

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10 M. Haile & E. Bonney, *Life and Letters of John Lingard 1771-1851* (London, 1911), pp. 208, 183. The *British Review*, and *London Critical Journal* was not the only periodical to believe that the most telling way to review Lingard's work was 'by comparing some parts of his narrative with the corresponding narrative of Hume'. Vol. 16 (1820), p. 429.


13 *The Pictorial History of England: being a History of the People as well as a History of the Kingdom* (London, 1837-41), vol. 2, p. 539; H.J. Todd, *A Reply to Dr. Lingard's Vindication*
attitude to figures such as King Alfred was equally unlikely to win more public respect than Hume enjoyed. In the '50s, Lingard had to be satisfied with standing on an equal basis with Hume as a set text for classmen at Oxford. Previously an American publisher had gone to the trouble of interlacing an edition of Hume with 'corrections' from Lingard - a position of subordination which was continued through to The Student's Hume, where Lingard was among the authors relegated to providing a gloss on Hume's narrative. Quiet infidelity on the part of an author, it seems, was preferable to vocal Catholicism as far as most nineteenth-century reviewers of historical works were concerned.

The works of Hallam and Brodie were more explicitly extended critiques of Hume's version of British history - the latter even setting itself out as such in its title. Even Mackintosh, for merely intending to write the history


16 The History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar, to the Revolution in 1688. by David Hume, Esq. With Notes and References, Exhibiting the most important differences between the author and Dr. Lingard (Philadelphia, 1856), first published 1832? D. Hume, The Student's Hume. A History of England from the Earliest Times to the Revolution in 1688 (London, 1859), e.g. pp. 22, 243, 276, 439. Earlier the British Critic had suggested that Lingard limit himself to filling up the parts of Hume which were 'deficient'. New Series, vol. 13 (1820), p. 55.
of England on a Humean scale, had his ability to live up to his model cast in doubt by Alison, who decided that Mackintosh could not have continued Hume in a style of equal popularity. 17 Although, as was argued in the last chapter, a Whig historian's relationship with Hume could be a creative one, it was also undoubtedly intensely intimidating.

This intimidation was partly the effect of a widespread feeling, which lasted until the 1840s, that eighteenth-century historiography as a whole was inherently superior to that which had been produced since. Hume was often regarded as one member of a classic eighteenth-century historical 'triumvirate' alongside William Robertson and Edward Gibbon. James Montgomery's flattering description of the 'simplicity, elegance, and splendour' of their dissimilar styles providing a 'triple contrast and harmony' demonstrates the status the three historians shared as historical exemplars in the early nineteenth century. 18 The eighteenth century was often looked back upon as a golden age for historiography, with its works providing models of composition which the current century had failed to match. Allan Cunningham, for example, judged the historians of the previous fifty years to be inferior to their predecessors - 'more remarkable for diligence than


dignity; for graphic spirit of detail, than loftiness of sentiment or massive vigour of narration. Chambers made a similar comment - that most historians from 1780 to 1835 did not measure up to the standards of 'polish and brilliancy' set by their mid-eighteenth century forebears. The sentiments of such 'constructive' criticism were echoed in Disraeli's biting attack on Lord John Russell's literary abilities, where he found that the best way to mock his Memoirs of the Affairs of Europe was to charge him with having 'resolved on rivalling the fame of Hume and Gibbon.'

Even during this period, however, when the three 'classic' British historians were frequently invoked together as models of historical excellence, there were differing critical estimates of the relative quality of Hume, Robertson and Gibbon's work. A comparison with the nineteenth-century fates of Robertson and Gibbon's reputations can therefore provide some illuminating parallels and contrasts with that of Hume. In comparative assessments of the three, Hume's style was generally judged the best. Hume's simplicity, as discussed below, was thought the superior historical manner. Robertson's prose was criticised as being over-dignified, Gibbon's as being

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20 R. Chambers, History of the English Language and Literature (Edinburgh, 1836), p. 239.

too ornate. Still, Robertson's style was generally seen as preferable to Gibbon's, and the continuing importance of literary qualities in historical writing was demonstrated by the long survival of his classic status, and the continued appearance of new editions of his works. Though Hume was often stated to be superior to Robertson, the latter was generally regarded as more accurate and scholarly through the first half of the nineteenth century. This side of his reputation was severely shaken in mid-century when the revolution in source scholarship affected his works even more than Hume's - since his works on Charles V and South American history were now subject to reevaluation from whole archives of key documents unavailable in his day, and for which he had not been able to rely on the findings of a Spelman or a Brady who had gone through them before him. As early as 1803 Robert Southey, working on his history of Portugal, had considered that Robertson's lack of grasp on major sources made him 'a bad historian'. Yet his main reviser, the American historian Prescott, maintained an understanding attitude to the problems faced by his predecessor 'the illustrious Scottish historian', and Robertson retained some fragments of a much-reduced reputation, until a fairer reevaluation of his pioneering efforts occurred at the end of the century, when Prescott himself had come to be considered

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out of date.\textsuperscript{23} By the 1920s, Black's very influential book *The Art of History* on Britain's eighteenth-century historical 'triumvirate' - along with Voltaire - saw Robertson's allegedly more scholarly approach, as favourably contrasted with that of Hume, fully appreciated again.

Religious considerations might well have been influential on those few occasions in the early nineteenth century when Robertson was rated superior to Hume - the former having been, of course, a leading figure in the Scottish kirk. This certainly seems to have been the case with the evangelical John Foster, who praised Robertson for infusing moral interest into his scenes, rather than producing 'a scene of the dead' like 'his frigid contemporary'.\textsuperscript{24} On the other hand, as was seen in chapter two, Hume was described by others as being preferable to Gibbon, because of the less combatative nature of his unbelief as seen in his historical work. Though Gibbon's attitude towards religion was widely disliked however, and despite a general preference for Hume's style over his through the first half of the century, sound scholarship won out in the second half when Gibbon was everywhere described as the greatest historian of the eighteenth-century trio. By 1856, G.H. Lewes remarked that 'Gibbon


\textsuperscript{24} J. Foster, *Contributions, Biographical, Literary, and Philosophical, to The Eclectic Review* (London, 1844), vol. 1, p. 81.
still maintains his rank, while Hume and Robertson decline every year. Gibbon had the advantage over Hume that his work could be closely scrutinised by initially unsympathetic editors like Milman and Guizot, and emerge with its reputation for accuracy enhanced. Its overwhelmingly superior reputation in the later years of the century - by 1900 Gibbon was very widely regarded as the greatest of English historians - shows the growing importance of factual accuracy over literary qualities in historical writing, as Gibbon's style encountered much criticism throughout the century. As late as 1853, William Spalding had declared that Gibbon's 'manner wants that dramatic animation, which would entitle him to be ranked in the highest order of historians'.

The nineteenth-century reputations of two other, earlier, historians overlap with a study of Hume's historical supremacy - Clarendon and Rapin. Rapin de Thoyras's early eighteenth-century History of England maintained a respected status among critics into the nineteenth century. In part, this often seems to have reflected discomfort at Hume's supremacy - Rapin's Whig partialities being commonly preferred. George Nicholson held up 'honest Rapin' against Hume in 1810, and the Monthly Review defended him against Hume's criticisms in

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The praise of Sharon Turner for 'industrious Rapin' however, cannot be construed as having such political motivation. Despite this though, the reasons which had led Hume to judge Rapin's work 'despicable' were often mentioned. Goodhugh praised Rapin's accuracy, but complained that his history made heavy reading. George Gregory, in 1808, described a reading of Rapin's work as necessary if one was looking for truth, but described the book itself as being 'ponderous'. Hume's tactic of abridging the kinds of materials which other historians had commonly printed in full, like treaties and important acts of parliament, had made Rapin's lengthy collection of such texts an unattractive read in comparison — despite Nicholson's special pleading that if one passed over the state papers in Rapin the work would 'not be found more voluminous than Hume'. Rapin's narrative lacked Hume's sense of overall design. In the parlance of the day, as The


29 Hume had instanced Rapin's popularity as among the ill effects of the Whig party's long supremacy. His work was mentioned as being among the 'Compositions the most despicable, both for style and matter,' which 'have been extolled, and propagated, and read; as if they had equalled the most celebrated remains of antiquity.' D. Hume, History of England (Indianapolis, 1983), vol. 6, p. 533.


British Critic commented, it was not 'philosophic'. Indeed, 'the philosophic students of history will turn with disgust from pages, where the vein is scarcely rich enough to reward the trouble of extracting it from the mine; and toil is repaid by little more than the weariness which it has occasioned.' Though the same writer derided Hume's work as being 'little more than a finished and elegant sketch', it is easy to see which description would appeal more to the general reader. By 1838 the Biographical Treasury was referring to Rapin's reputation in the past tense.

More intimately connected with the reputation of Hume was that of Clarendon, on whose History of the Rebellion Hume had relied greatly. Clarendon traditionally had a very high reputation for historical integrity. Goodhugh, for example, following Dibdin, praised Clarendon for 'his inflexible adherence to truth', in his English Gentleman's Library Manual. Opponents of Hume could contrast Clarendon's 'manly honesty', with the 'covert and insinuated' sophistry of his 'Tory' descendent. It was claimed that Clarendon defended his cause with 'honest bluntness', while Hume hid behind 'false and treacherous' displays of fairness and candor. In 1827, however,

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Ellis's biography of Clarendon bemoaned the high historical reputation enjoyed by the 'Chancellor of human nature'. This was just one of the works produced during the 1820s, a period of increased militancy in Whig-party historiography, which attacked Clarendon's reputation. Hallam did so in measured terms, while Brodie was more virulent in his abuse. Because Hume made such extensive use of Clarendon, this attack on the older 'Tory' historian worked in tandem with the heightened Whig assault in this decade on Hume. Ellis noted that 'Hume of course praises him', meaning Clarendon, and Hume was implicated by Whigs in disseminating Clarendon's 'dishonesty', leading to charges that he was either a dupe, or an original liar. After mid-century, the tone of those who criticised Clarendon became less urgent, and his specific circumstances were given more consideration - a parallel development with the treatment of Hume as historian in the later nineteenth century, which was related to the decline in Whig-Tory tensions. An area where Hume always benefitted from comparison with Clarendon, however, was in style. Clarendon's endless sentences, what Robert Vaughan


37 That this antipathy toward Clarendon was novel for Whigs in the 1820s might be deduced from the Edinburgh Review's admission that 'there are few delusions of which it has been so painful and discouraging to us to be disabused, as that under which we once fancied Clarendon a sort of English Sully.' See vol. 47 (1828), p. 296.

38 G.A. Ellis, Historical Inquiries, p. 9.
described as his 'cumbrous' 'stately march', simply could not compete with Hume's simple lucid prose.⁹

An examination of Hume's reputation relative to that of earlier and contemporary historians then, shows that his continued early nineteenth-century supremacy rested primarily on a widespread appreciation of his style. What was praised about this differed from critic to critic, some directly contradicting each other on what its qualities were. Above all, though, it was his clarity that was admired, followed by his skill in constructing narrative. It is interesting that his style was often described as attractive and lively, and that there were also occasional complaints about its lack of correctness through the first half of the century. Hume's text still seems to have been commonly regarded as sufficiently close to informal discourse to be a pleasant read. Later in the century, the qualities of his style were recited as if by rote, passages from the History being frequently reproduced in handbooks on composition. Gosse's description of Hume's manner as 'sententious' shows how far the historian's approach now seemed from the 'easy' style valued earlier.⁴⁰ Already, by 1860, the Universal Review could misconceive Hume's purpose enough to believe that he 'wrote only for a scholarly audience', in contrast to Macaulay's journalese.⁴¹

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Noticeably absent from nineteenth-century appreciations of Hume's style is any recognition of his use of irony, which one recent writer has argued is central to an understanding of the History.\(^2\) Indeed, Hume was even described as a 'grave and philosophical historian' not given to 'levity' in his publications by one commentator, and another commented on the failure of his efforts at humour.\(^3\) In the following anecdote from 1811, it seems to me that Flaxman was reading Hume in what was, for his era, a typically straight-faced way, and Henry Crabb Robinson, the narrator, showed a rare sensitivity in approaching the History's meaning. The fact that he needed to explain Hume's intentions so laboriously shows how difficult they

\(^2\) J.V. Price, *The Ironical Hume* (Austin, 1965). Price rather exaggerates his case, to the point where Hume is never to be taken seriously. However, I think he is right, insofar as irony was certainly one of the methods whereby Hume constructed a challenging narrative which would appeal to a variety of audiences on a number of levels. The continual doubt in the mind of the reader as to whether the narrator was being serious at any given moment - or as to which political 'side' he was really on - was an integral part of Hume's design. Arguments about Hume's real intentions at some points could be as endless as those as to which participant is 'right' in the Dialogues concerning Natural Religion - debates which recent commentators have viewed as beside the point. (See, for example, J.R. Smitten, 'Hume's Dialogues concerning Natural Religion as Social Discourse', in J. Dwyer & R.B. Sher, ed. *Sociability and Society in Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1993), pp. 39-56.) Nineteenth-century readers recognised Gibbon's biting satiric irony, although they did not like it. Hume's conception of history as an open-ended discourse was so alien to them that they failed to recognise the possible ironic interpretation of many passages, and continually read the work on what Hume would have regarded as the most simplistic interpretative level. As a writer who set out to be a great historical communicator, Hume was rather too clever for his own good.

were for his contemporaries to grasp:

As a proof that Hume wished to apologize for Charles II. he quoted the sentence, "Charles was a polite husband and a generous lover;" and he did not perceive that this was a mere statement of fact, and by no means implied a wish to defend or vindicate. Hume could not have imagined that politeness is the appropriate virtue of a husband, or that the profusion of a king towards his mistresses is laudable."

This tendency to take Hume too literally was in large part due to the high moral assumptions universally made about the study of history in the early nineteenth century, which the evangelical influences working on many historians could only have intensified. The moral intensity of Whig attacks on Hume's scholarship led to claims of 'lying' and of having deliberately ignored evidence - actions deemed 'criminal'. Brougham referred to Hume's 'habitual carelessness (not to say bad faith)'. The old classical device, employed by Hume, of writing rhetorically-impressive arguments for characters which there was no proof they actually made, but which were supposedly in line with what they could have said, was criticised as being untruthful. The 1845 Encyclopaedia Metropolitana's article on 'History' declared that: 'The first moral quality which the historian should possess is a great sincerity. He should be of a plain and downright honesty'.

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Hume's work, however, was marked by 'a lurking and insidious purpose of insincerity'. The Christian Remembrancer similarly berated Hume's lack of 'a burning zeal for truth'. In Brougham's writings on eighteenth-century historians, there is an interesting development from an Enlightenment stress on the importance of the scientific 'usefulness' of history in the 1800s, to concentrating on history's role as a provider of moral exemplars in the 1840s.

This desire that history should teach the 'truth' was antipathetic to Hume's 'bi-focal' method of approaching the past on its own terms, as well as with the benefit of hindsight. Hume's historical 'philosophy' was only appreciated so long as it amounted to individual lessons which fitted the old maxim about history being philosophy teaching by example. However, Hume's wider anti-systematizing 'philosophy' was derided for incoherence and self-negation, and in so far as his history followed its tenets, its reputation with nineteenth-century critics suffered. Failure to comprehend Hume's intentions, along with incomprehension of his irony, led to the common charge of inconsistency, or, as Jeffrey put it, 'a double and

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47 Encyclopaedia Metropolitana (London, 1845), vol. 9., p. 18.
discordant tone'.

Writers like Isaac D'Israeli and John Allen who, as has been shown, demonstrated an appreciation of how Humean history was supposed to work, were men at one remove from the religious and party-political trends of the day — one a sceptical Jew, the other a republican and atheist. Hume's intended effect was difficult to appreciate for a nineteenth-century audience, who after the French Revolution and its accompanying cultural panic, expressed a strong preference for unambiguous texts rather than more daring forms of literary discourse — the striking decline of the epistolatory novel being a key example of this process.

Given such a background, it is not surprising that the favourite nineteenth-century model for a historian was an omnipotent 'judge'. Hallam and Acton at either end of the century sought to fulfil this role. Hume was frequently indicted as an 'advocate', and perhaps some of his popularity came from the greater inherent interest in following an advocate's plea than a judge's summation — which could be fairly tortuous in Hallam's case.

Certainly, Hume's American biographer, Eugene Lawrence, considered that this was an attractive element of his

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What we admire in Hume's History is the display of intellectual power. We read it, not so much for information, as for an agreeable intellectual exercise. In this view it was written, in this it is read. We admire its subtile disputation, its artful array of facts, the genius which shines in its false narrative, and illuminates its unsound disquisitions. The consciousness that its narrative is unsound heightens the interest of the tale. We yield to the skillful partisan as the spectator yields to the gifted tragedian. Its scenes of pathos fascinate us, although we feel that our pity is wrongly bestowed. Its nice balance of opposing arguments, with a bias ever to one side, satisfies our judgment as a specimen of peculiar mental power. It is the skillful by-play of the barrister defending an almost defenceless cause solely by his own ingenuity; and we rank Hume the first of historians, not because he has written a truthful narrative, but because he has shown what an admirable book he would have made, had he taken up a better cause.\footnote{E. Lawrence, The Lives of the British Historians (New York, 1855), vol. 2, pp. 209-210.}

As shown in the last chapter, Macaulay seems to have learnt something about how to write an attractive popular history from Hume's method - which he had earlier criticised for leaning to the bar rather than to the bench. Perhaps he might not have minded the suggestion that he employed Hume's techniques for 'the better cause' mentioned by Lawrence.

The literary historian Craik remarked upon the interest which lay in Hume's work through following the personality that was clearly stamped upon it: 'it has ... the high charm, indispensable to every work that is to endure, of being impressed all over with the peculiar character of the author's own mind, interesting us even in
its most prejudiced and objectionable passages (perhaps still more, indeed, in some of these than elsewhere)'). In terms of benefitting from its singularity, Hume's work seems to have retained a certain success born of scandal, which caused early nineteenth-century readers to think there was something slightly dangerous about it. This in itself must have been an attraction to many.

The reaction against Hume's work in the 1840s, fuelled by the growing demand for more vivid historical narrative - which will be discussed in the next section - should not lead us to underestimate the real attractions the History possessed for earlier readers, even if it remains hard to believe that it was 'read with delight by all classes of persons'. John Malham, in 1816, had been able to argue that the publication of Hume's History had 'superseded' the 'rage for romance' represented by the mid-eighteenth century novel, as 'It was then found that real incidents, and real life, when forcibly and correctly delineated, have the advantage of fabulous narrative, and

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56 See, for example, Pitt Crawley's opinion in chapter 10 of Thackeray's Vanity Fair, which would seem better designed to excite curiosity in Hume than to discourage a reading of him: 'Once, when Mr. Crawley asked what the young people were reading, the governess replied, "Smollett." "Oh, Smollett," said Mr. Crawley, quite satisfied. "His history is more dull, but by no means so dangerous as that of Mr. Hume. ..."'

57 D. Brewster, ed. The Edinburgh Encyclopaedia (Edinburgh, 1830), vol. 11, p. 341.
engage the mind with more interest and attention'.

Hume's dramatic techniques were appreciated by Mill, though he abominated the kind of political uses such literary skills were put to. As we have seen in chapter three, Macaulay praised Hume's ability 'to tell a story', and the whole relationship of the Edinburgh reviewers with the History was marked by their appreciation of, and infuriation at, the narrative talents which had secured his appeal. In 1856, Walter Bagehot commented in his review of Macaulay's History of England that Hume's text was like a two-dimensional chart, to which Macaulay had added relief. How far this was from the viewpoint of an earlier generation may be seen from Brougham's 1845 assertion that in Hume, 'all is breadth and broad relief. His persons are finely grouped, and his subjects boldly massed. His story is no more like a chronicle, or his views like a catalogue of particulars, than a fine picture is like a map of the country or a copy of the subject.'

Appreciations such as this may help us in grasping the History's potential appeal to the reading public as a

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work which bridged public demands for self-improvement and entertainment. Crabbe's *Tales of the Hall* features a husband whose efforts to instruct his wife on the history of English liberties by reading Hume to her are frustrated by her exasperating fascination with 'trivial' matters, such as Queen Elizabeth's relations with Essex. Hume's work had something to offer both these readers, and, in an early nineteenth-century context, provided a compromise between the sort of pure, and heavy-going, constitutional history provided by Hallam, and the work of 'mere' memorialists like Lucy Aikin, John Jesse, Agnes Strickland and other popular writers. Large numbers of comments on the lines of William Smyth's opinion that Hume's was the history 'read by every one' are available, and the sort of view expressed by Thomas Carlyle in 1820, that 'very few' ever managed to read Hume through, was rare before the 1840s. Carlyle's opinions themselves may be taken with a pinch of salt - since at the same time he commented on the History's 'pleasantness', as well as on its 'utility'. Considering his opposition to so much of what Hume stood for, it is a tribute to the History's early nineteenth-century status that Carlyle, of all people, could write that: 'No one without it can be said to understand the first principles of the laws, church-government or manners

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of his own country."


Later, however, Carlyle's influence would be important in triggering the flood of demand for picturesque and dramatic history offering a degree of engagement which left Hume's subtler appeal far behind. A comment in The Class-Book of English Prose in 1859 that Hume's 'measured language of philosophical indifference' about the civil war would now be 'considered highly improper' had become more true than ever. This shift in historiographic culture was fed by the sub-Scottian historical novels of Ainsworth and James, and by the craze for history-painting which contributed to the atmosphere which infused the work of Macaulay and Froude. Whereas Macaulay, in 1828, had portrayed the contributions to history of Scott and Hume as of equal value, there was a growing tendency by mid-century to concentrate on the ways in which Scott was superior. Alison, writing in 1845, commented on how Hume's Elizabeth, though 'admirably portrayed', fell short of full literary

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interest alongside that of Scott, 'the one which is engraven on every mind'. By mid-century, the 'old historians of the Hume school' were damned for having 'treated a man simply as a bundle of attributes'. History now needed human interest to be critically successful. When reviewing Burton's *Life*, the Westminster commented on 'the feeble development' in Hume's 'nature of the sentimental and emotional elements of humanity'. Moncreiff, in reviewing Macaulay, remarked that, in comparison, reading Hume was now 'a study, an effort of the intellect'. Contact with Carlyle's *The French Revolution* had earlier left John Stuart Mill equally dissatisfied:

> Does Hume throw his own mind into the mind of an Anglo-Saxon, or an Anglo-Norman? Does any reader feel, after having read Hume's history, that he can now picture to himself what human life was, among the Anglo-Saxons? how an Anglo-Saxon would have acted in any supposable case? what were his joys, his sorrows, his hopes and fears, his ideas and opinions on any of the great and small matters of human interest? Would not the sight, if it could be had, of a single table or pair of shoes made by an Anglo-Saxon, tell us, directly and by inference, more of his whole way of life, more of how men thought and acted among the Anglo-Saxons, than Hume, with all his narrative

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67 A. Alison, *Essays. Political, Historical and Miscellaneous*, vol. 3, p. 532; see also p. 108: 'Sir Walter Scott’s *Life of Napoleon* does not prove that he was qualified to take a place among the great English historians; but, to the end of the world, Richard Coeur-de-Lion, Queen Mary, and Elizabeth will stand forth from his canvas more clearly than either from the rhetoric of Hume, or the eloquence of Robertson.'


skill, has contrived to tell us from all his materials?" A young Huxley, writing in the early 1840s, found Hume's work 'an insufferably dry & profitless book', which he abandoned 'in utter disgust & despair.' This new historiographical taste would appear to have had a direct effect on sales of Hume's History. The 1840s saw a substantial falling-off in the number of editions being published, and the Edinburgh twice claimed a sizeable decline in Hume's popularity.

Not even everyone on the Edinburgh however, thought the new historical culture an unmixed blessing. Herman Merivale, in reviewing Charles Knight's Pictorial History of England, complained that 'the school of Hume and Robertson now appears to us cold and colourless, from the want of that appropriate finish for which we have acquired an appetite.' However, he felt that in terms of analysis something had been lost. In a similar turn to Hume for support in an early reaction against the school of Scott, a writer in Fraser's Magazine remarked that he knew no writer than Hume better endowed with 'what is called in German the 'historical sense'. ' At first, this would appear to be particularly interesting, since a historiographical tradition running from Carlyle to Meinecke regarded Scott

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as a British helpmate to the spread of 'historismus', and Hume as its antitype. Unfortunately, the author seems to have mistaken the meaning of the German term, and his point is essentially the same as that made by Merivale - that Hume's method allowed greater scope for analytical understanding than the over-particularised narratives fashionable at the time. This, a year before the publication of the first volumes of Macaulay's History - the trend's most significant product. This Fraser's writer's generous appreciation of Hume is an early sign of the ways in which the latter's historical reputation could gain later in the century from a widespread reaction against the 'Scott school' of historians:

With some remarkable deficiencies, as for instance his incapacity for appreciating enthusiasm and religious faith, he had yet a distinct historical theory, and a full comprehension of national progress and social advance. He has in his day done more than any other man to show how the mere indications of one age become the sharply-defined characteristics of the next, and to demonstrate the fore-ordained aim and ultimate union and convergence of those innumerable, seemingly irreconcilable particulars which Scott and his school treat as distinct and isolated facts."

Elsewhere, there were defence of Hume's work as a bastion of classical taste against the rising tide of popular history. The Gentleman's Magazine's review of The Student's Hume held up the sad state of this one-volume edition as a victory for the tastes of the masses - 'a tasteless patchwork', as against 'Hume's gentlemanly

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quartos, printed ere reading for the million ... was thought of'." Croker's contrast in the Quarterly between Hume's gentlemanly style and Macaulay's vulgar rope-dancing manner of rhetoric played upon the same sort of chords." Alison's intimation that Macaulay tried too hard in his prose, that he lacked Hume's ease, or the manner of the 'unambitious Livy', put Hume on the side of the aristocratic order in the same way that Gifford earlier had remarked that Hume's work was superior to Robertson's thanks to his greater experience of polite society - which 'transferred some portion of easy high breeding from his manners to his writing'." The social factors involved in the growing sales of historical writing, along with all other printed matter, from the 1830s onwards, undoubtedly played a part in dissolving the kind of historiographical culture which had crystalised in the second half of the eighteenth century around Hume's History. The gradual move towards cheaper books and away from an upper middle-class book-buying hegemony took the full length of the nineteenth century to reach its conclusion. However, the late 1820s, the 1830s and '40s saw the first 'heroic' era of cheaper publishing - associated particularly with the name of Charles Knight, whose publications were generally hostile

to Hume.  

The decline in the party-political temperature from the 1840s onwards also played a role. Here Hume suffered from the worst of both worlds in the mid-century period. Thanks to Burton's seemingly authoratative examination of editions of the *History*, Hume's assertion that his corrections had been made in a 'Tory' spirit was proved to be 'correct'. Reviews of Burton show how Hume's 'Toryism' was confirmed and accentuated at a time when Whig history was approaching its mid-century supremacy, and the 'Tory' history of the John Murray circle had disintegrated as a recognisable entity, save for Disraeli's role in the unscholarly antics of the 'Young England' group. Burton's authority ensured that Hume's reputation as, to quote Lecky, 'the best exponent of the Tory view of English history' would be carried through to the mid-twentieth century, until Mossner questioned the thoroughness of Burton's comparative study of Hume's corrections.  

Using Burton's materials, a French commentator in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* came to the modern-sounding, Forbesian conclusion that Hume was 'un Whig modéré' - but British reviewers latched onto Burton's confirmation of the 'Tory'  

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78 See, for example, the entry on Hume in *The Penny Cyclopaedia of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge* (London, 1838), vol. 12, pp. 339-341, which criticised Hume's 'partiality, misrepresentation and want of accuracy.' It declared that: 'As a political writer, Hume cannot be ranked in the first class.'  

nature of Hume's corrections, and were satisfied. On the other hand, glimmers of the above-party reality of Hume's views, which some readers discerned in his now easily available correspondence, were no more calculated to do his reputation any good in Britain at a time when the need for 'party' was acknowledged by nearly everyone - despite, or perhaps because of, its break-down as an agency of government in the mid-century period. The Spectator was unusual in praising Hume's opposition to party. Similarly, one might say that Brougham's maverick position in 1843 was exemplified by his quoting the following passage from the History with approval in the chapter of his Political Philosophy on party:

> it is no wonder if faction be so productive of vices of all kinds; for besides that it inflames all the passions, it tends much to remove those great restraints, honour and shame, when men find that no iniquity can lose them the applause of their own party, and no innocence screens them against the calumnies of the opposite.

At the same time, Burton's publication of Hume's correspondence brought home to critics the historian's

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80 Revue des Deux Mondes, vol. 60 (1856), p. 130. French treatments of the History were usually more willing to accept Hume's supra-party claims at face value. See Bongie on this for the later eighteenth century, and, for an early nineteenth-century example, M. Campenon, 'Essai sur la Vie et les Écrits de David Hume', in Histoire D'Angleterre par David Hume (Paris, 1839), vol. 1, p. XII, which refers to 'l'impartialité courageuse de David Hume'; The Spectator, vol. 19 (1846), p. 255.


anti-English prejudices, which most of the reviews of the biography stressed. Here again, Hume's expressions were often taken too seriously by his Victorian interpreters, and the jokey exaggeration of much of his railing against the 'factious barbarians' on the Thames went unrecognised. Despite Burton's own admiration for Hume, reviewers pounced upon the negative impression Hume's letters gave of his personality. Empson in the Edinburgh was particularly savage in the personal attack he mounted against Hume using the materials provided by Burton. In a massive 72-page long article, supervised by his father-in-law Jeffrey, Empson pictured a Hume who acted like 'a foreigner, or a woman' in his panicky attitude towards the Wilkes affair. Hume's letters, he claimed, showed an unpatriotic detachment, a fatalistic acceptance of national decay which meant his political views were infused with an anti-English spirit. Here, and elsewhere in these reviews, we can see the Whig version asserting its monopoly on patriotism as the English version of history - a contention that was to find its mirror in the bellicose foreign policies preferred by Palmerston and Russell. This identification of 'Whiggism' with 'patriotism' is clear in comments like Moncreiff's that Hume had detested Whiggery even more because it was

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"The anti-Scottish attacks on the History of the 1750s and '60s had disappeared by the 1790s, only now reappearing. By the 1840s, Hume's work had long been integrated as a 'British' literary classic, by a writer often referred to as an 'English historian'. See, for example, The Literary Gazette's 1845 description of Hume as 'the first national leader' in history-writing. No. 1477 (Saturday, May 10, 1845), p. 294.

'English' than because it was 'Puritanical'.

Hume's 'My Own Life' - 'this UNQUESTIONABLE account of his LIFE, and of his DEATH', as the Monthly Review termed it on publication - enjoyed a long supremacy over biographies of its subject. It was a work in which Hume had striven to elicit sympathy and admiration for himself - bending the truth slightly in the process. The ubiquity of this account of Hume as heroically stoical in the face of repeated disappointment provoked an overreaction, once it was toppled by the first reasonably representative collection of correspondence, towards stressing the interesting new evidence this provided of Hume's supposed pride and selfishness. None of this was calculated to strengthen his position as national historian. Part of the History's long-term strength had been provided by its textual detachment from the contemporary debates of the 1750s. The reviewing of Brougham and Burton's works in the mid 1840s put a new stress on the realities behind Hume's History, rather than the timeless artefact, prefaced by the story of success through stoicism given in My Own Life, which the public was used to. The great reliance of biographers for so long on Hume's own defensive narrative of the events of his life, its very short length and readability, along with its privileged position at the beginning of editions of the History, had undoubtedly helped Hume's long-term reputation. Its dominance over

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earlier Hume criticism can be demonstrated by the fact that, as late as 1826, it could be described as 'his only written defence of his greatest work, his "History of England"'. The critical failure of Ritchie's 1807 biography - due in part to his irreligious and republican views - and the fragmentary nature of earlier correspondence selections, the Rousseau affair generally receiving a disproportionate amount of attention - had meant that previously Hume's life and work had been viewed very generally along lines which he had laid down himself. The mass of biographical dictionary articles on Hume had taken his account on trust - a situation which a solitary hostile critic like the unitarian John Aikin had been unable to influence.

Burton's work also helped to begin a shift in critical interest back to Hume's philosophical work. At the time, however, it was his stress on Hume's achievement as

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89 Robert Chambers's A Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Scotsmen (Glasgow, 1835), vol. 3, p. 109, blamed 'the family connexions of the philosopher' for the lack of any detailed memoir of Hume save that by Ritchie. Hume's family 'to all applications for the materials which they possess for an extended memoir, have invariably returned for answer, that, as their distinguished kinsman wrote his own life, and no doubt put into it all that he desired to be known respecting himself, they do not consider themselves at liberty to publish any more' - providing Hume's autobiography with an unusually long monopoly over public perceptions of his career. Chambers felt that Ritchie had been 'strikingly inferior to his task' as Hume's biographer. This was a judgment shared by the Monthly Review which complained of his 'incompetence', 'ignorance and presumption'. Enlarged Series, vol. 62 (1810), p. 65.

a political theorist and economist which received more approbation. Brougham and Burton's attempts to increase Hume's status as a philosopher were not generally welcomed in the reviews of their works. The mid-nineteenth century saw Hume's reputation as a philosopher at what has possibly been its lowest ebb. Dictionaries of biography and encyclopaedias, from the late 1820s through to the 1860s, often described Hume as the 'historian and philosopher' rather than as the 'philosopher and historian' - which was the universal formula afterwards, and the standard one before. The 1842 edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica's article on Hume declared that: 'It is indeed as an historian and a political writer that Hume will perhaps be best known to posterity.' The 1850s edition was dismissive of both his philosophical and historical

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92 The Encyclopaedia Britannica or Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and General Literature, seventh edition (Edinburgh, 1842), vol. 11, p. 722.
reputations. By the next edition in the 1880s, his reputation as philosopher had undergone an amazing change for the better - but this was a product primarily of the late Victorian period, by the end of which it could be suggested that the History itself was chiefly valuable for the light it shed on his philosophy - an attitude which continued to dominate criticism of the work until very recently. Earlier in the century, however, the philosopher's reputation had been thoroughly submerged in that of the historian. An influential example of this was Buckle's treatment of Hume in his History of Civilization, where claims that he was an anti-empiricist in philosophy found their origins in Whig attacks on the a priori theory of monarchical supremacy read back from the views of James I, which supposedly lay behind Hume's treatment of English constitutional history.

Claims that Hume was an abstract theorist in history were strengthened in mid-century by the ever-greater weight of material criticising his scholarship. This had never rested on entirely secure foundations, and in the early nineteenth-century even 'Tory' admirers of the History had

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commented on its inadequacies. However, Blackwood's could still insist that little details were unimportant in the face of Hume's literary achievement as a whole. In 1824, 'Timothy Tickler' wrote to 'Christopher North', concerning the Edinburgh's review of Brodie, that 'It is rather late in the day now to think that any worthy young lad, such as you see lumbering about the Outer House, will be able to demolish a great historian on the strength of petty facts.' When confronted with Macaulay's inclusion of minutaie into his literary history, and Carlyle's construction of a history with literary value out of a patchwork of original documents in his Cromwell, this kind of defence was inadequate. By 1842, the same periodical admitted that 'more exact' historical knowledge had 'gradually diminished' interest in Hume. Among assessments of Hume's historical aptitude in reviews of Brougham and Burton's lives, The Gentleman's Magazine's assertion that he had been a hard working historian was exceptional." The opinion of Tait's that he lacked 'the first virtue of every historian, patient and thorough investigation' was otherwise universally held.

Burton's sensible defence, that Hume's achievement was as a synthesiser rather than as a researcher, was not calculated to appeal to the reviewers of Brougham's life a

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year earlier in *The Athenaeum*, or of his own work in the *Dublin University Magazine* who condemned Hume's lack of knowledge of original authorities in severe terms.\(^{101}\) One school-book, by 1859, complained about the obsession with detail of recent historians - but Hallam rather than Hume was held up as the model historian, one who bridged the supposed generation gap between the philosophical historians like Hume, and those contemporaries who were concerned with the accuracy of the minutest particulars. By mid-century, many had followed Lingard and Guizot in regarding 'philosophic' history as a by-word for generalised theories lacking in research - if not pure imaginative fiction - in the face of a growing realisation of the demands of modern source-scholarship, and Britain's tardiness in meeting them as contrasted with France and Germany.\(^{102}\) Here, Hume was an easy target for modernizers to parody as absurdly old-fashioned - although still an important one given his place on the history curricula which were emerging in efforts to catch up with the Germans.\(^{103}\) Only in the later nineteenth-century, when the

\(^{101}\) *The Athenaeum* (1845), p. 455; *Dublin University Magazine*, vol. 27 (1846), pp. 369-70.


\(^{103}\) We have already seen his being recommended to history students at Oxford in the 1850s. J. Birchall, in *England Under the Normans and Plantagenets: a History*, Political, Constitutional, and Social. Expressly arranged and analyzed for the use of Students (London, 1859), pp. iii-iv, wrote that Hume occupied pride of place in the history syllabus offered by the
idea that a definitive history of England could be written by a single man had collapsed - one can note the defensive deprecation Green employed when discussing his 'Little' history with academic friends - was Hume going to be fairly and consistently judged by the historic standards of his day.¹⁰⁴

The mid-nineteenth century also saw growing dissatisfaction with Hume's treatment of 'social' history. Milman complained of the 'unsatisfactory brevity' of Hume's appendices, used for the miscellaneous non-political matter which could not be included in the main narrative, according to the dictates of classical historiography.¹⁰⁵ Hume's American biographer Lawrence noted that Hume had modelled his history too closely on that of the Greeks, 'neglecting all the suggestions which the enlarged inquiries of modern times demanded'.¹⁰⁶ The Spectator observed that Macaulay's method of interlacing social detail with his narrative, provided a text fuller and more detailed than could square with the accustomed "history" of

Training Colleges for teachers, and sought to make sure that examinees for the Civil Service, or for 'the new title of Associate in Arts offered by the Universities to the Middle Classes' should not have to content themselves 'merely with the philosophy of history as it is to be found in the volumes of Hume, but as it is presented to us in those of Mackintosh, Lord Macaulay, and others.'


classical writers - among whom Hume was instanced, alongside Livy, Sallust and Voltaire. Taine in his widely-read *History of English Literature* was especially sharp in his criticism of Hume's failure to produce anything like the 'total' history of Macaulay. Thomas Shaw, an influential writer of text-books on English literature, had similarly criticised Hume's text for lacking detail of social life.

In the early nineteenth century, Hume was seen primarily as a historian of high politics - and Burton, like Eden before him, had to make a special point of stressing Hume's role as a pioneer in pushing for a wider view of history. He declared, in his concluding section detailing the influence of Hume's works, that: 'In History he was the first to divert attention from wars, treaties, and successions, to the living progress of the people, in all that increases their civilization and their happiness. The example thus set has been the chief service of the

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107 *The Spectator*, vol. 21 (1848), p. 1187.


109 T.B. Shaw, *Outlines of English Literature* (London, 1849), p. 348. See also the writer in the *English Review*, vol. 5 (1846), pp. 129-31, who criticised Hume's account of the reign of James I for being 'the history rather of the court than of the nation'.

"History of England".¹¹¹ Brougham, a year previously, had given much more of the credit for this to Voltaire.¹¹² Burton, being especially keen to make a case for Hume as a founding father of the science of political economy, wanted to stress the social history side of his work. He emphasised this more than he did his other claim for Hume as historical pioneer - that he established a model for modern constitutional histories.¹¹³ This latter achievement might be considered Hume's more important historiographical legacy - for, as Nicholas Phillipson has stressed, Hume is best interpreted as preeminently a political historian.¹¹⁴

The model for English histories which Hume created was one where non-political history was subordinated and marginalised. His status as classic helped to perpetuate the common deference to the dictates of classical historiography, which were interpreted to dictate that non-narratable matter had to be banished to an appendix. In the 1840s and '50s, some critics who disliked the new trends being set by Macaulay and Carlyle continued to find Hume's method preferable. The Gentleman's Magazine thought it would have been better if Macaulay's famous third chapter on 'English society in 1685' had been thrown into an appendix, rather than have it interrupt the flow of the

¹¹¹ J.H. Burton, Life and Correspondence of David Hume (Edinburgh, 1846), vol. 2, p. 519. See also pp. 127-30.
¹¹⁴ N. Phillipson, Hume (London, 1989), pp. 139-140.
narrative. Hume's authority was invoked for this recommendation. William Spalding in his 1853 History of English Literature praised Hume's work, along with that of Robertson and Gibbon, for being 'properly Histories, not Historical Dissertations. They are narratives of events, in which the elucidation of the laws of human nature or of the progress of society is introduced merely as illustrative and subordinate. The distinction is note-worthy for us, in whose time the favourite method of historical writing is of the contrary kind.' He added, 'Perhaps history, so conceived and limited, was never written better than by David Hume.'

As the century wore on, Burton's influence filtered through to popular textbooks on English literature, where Hume was commonly congratulated as a founder of a wider form of historical study. By 1901, Mathew's History of English Literature even claimed that Hume, having been the first to treat the state of the people in his History, had awakened the interests of Macaulay in this line of inquiry. This kind of statement reflected the tendency of the 'whig interpretation' of English literary history to

117 E.J. Mathew, A History of English Literature (London, 1901), p. 379. For a similar exaggeration, see H.A. Dobson, The Civil Service Handbook of English Literature, for the use of candidates for examinations, public schools, and students generally (London, 1874), p. 150, which claimed that Hume had 'added a new feature to historical writing', 'by incorporating chapters on the people with his work'. (my italics)
dissolve the history of British historiography into a smooth progress.\textsuperscript{118} The 'social history' element of Hume's influence has continued to be stressed into the second half of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{119} It has meant that the domination of Hume's *History* over British historical literature for about a hundred years has not been interpreted, as it should have been, as contributing to the kind of attitudes which produced the following statement made by Thomas Seccombe in 1900. He congratulated Hume with having been the first to introduce 'the social and literary aspects of a nation's life' into his work, but 'in due subordination to its civil and political history'.\textsuperscript{120} Similarly, Professor Adamson, in the 1881 edition of *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* felt that Hume deserved praise for being the first to introduce the social and literary

\textsuperscript{118} I borrow the concept of the 'whig interpretation of English literature' from the essay of the same name in Stefan Collini's *Public Moralists. Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain 1850-1930* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 342-373. He stresses the emphasis this mode of literary history put upon the 'celebratory and consensual', p. 347.

\textsuperscript{119} A recent example is in Maurice Lindsay's *History of Scottish Literature*, rev. ed. (London, 1992), p. 247: 'Hume undoubtedly revolutionized the approach to the writing of history, in that his work is a first attempt at comprehensively treating historic facts, regarding sociology and literature as of importance in a nation's life.' This development was actually a much more broad-based Enlightenment achievement, involving English writers such as Guthrie and Johnson as well as the French and the Scots. Voltaire carried the new trend much further than Hume, and the great popularity of his histories in Britain until the 1780s must have been been a major stimulus towards the writing of wider forms of history. I would argue that, in the long term, the high-political priorities of Hume's narrative, acclaimed as a model 'classic' history, might well have had a retardative effect on such experimentation.

aspects of a nation's life 'as of importance only second to its political fortunes'.

3. Indian summer. The later nineteenth century.

Hume's historical reputation in the latter part of the century was not in quite so bad a state as most commentators, including most recently Philippson, have described it. Contrary to popular historiographical opinion, (started in the Edinburgh Review at the time and enshrined in Ranke's History of England), Macaulay's History did not single-handedly wipe out Hume's credit overnight. Instead, Macaulay suffered a remorseless decline in critical good opinion during the rest of the century, while Hume's reputation as historian made a modest revival towards the end, partly at Macaulay's expense - helped in part no doubt by the anti-whig reaction in high historiography which set in during the 1880s, as chronicled by Blaas.

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121 The Encyclopaedia Britannica, 9th. ed., vol. 12 (Edinburgh, 1881), p. 350. Ranke's enormous influence undoubtedly played a role in the establishment of political history's primacy - but he in turn had been influenced by Hume's work in terms of his conception of what constituted a proper national history. See, for example, E. Schulin, 'Universal History and National History, Mainly in the Lectures of Leopold von Ranke', in G.G. Iggers & J.M. Powell, ed. Leopold von Ranke and the Shaping of the Historical Discipline (Syracuse, 1990), p. 78.

122 N. Phillipson, Hume, p. 139.


124 On the decline in Macaulay's critical fortunes during the latter half of the nineteenth century, see M. Cruikshank, Thomas Babington Macaulay (Boston, 1978), pp. 139-41.
In purely literary terms, Hume's *History* retained its status as a classic example of English prose throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century. Late in the century, Saintsbury could still comment that:

We shall never have a greater historian in style as well as in matter than Gibbon; in style at least we have not yet beaten Hume, though there has been more than a century to do it in.\(^{125}\)

What had been destroyed in the mid-century period was Hume's general popularity with the reading public, and though his history was praised for its literary qualities in the burgeoning array of works on 'English Literature', he became an author very little read - except in the bastardized form of *The Student's Hume*. Though still regularly held up as a classic of English prose - perhaps, indeed, because it had acquired the mausoleum taint of a rarified classic - the *History* disappeared out of print in the 1890s, not to re-emerge until the 1970s.

Stepping back to mid-century, however, early evidence that Hume's critical status weathered the storms of the 1840s in fair order may be garnered from Russell's speech at the opening of the Bristol Athenaeum in 1854. His subject was the lack of a 'really great' history of England, and all the standard Whig complaints against Hume's work were employed - stressing in particular, at the time of the Crimean War, his lack of patriotism.\(^{126}\)

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\(^{126}\) *The Times*, No. 21,883 (Friday, October 27, 1854), p. 5.
Macaulay might have been influenced by his dissatisfaction with the latter's treatment of his ancestor William Russell in *The History of England*. However, the same could not be said of *The Times*, which in editorialising on Russell's speech agreed entirely with his stress on Hume's continuing standard status:

> Yes; in the year of our Lord 1854, after a generation of such progress in art, science, and politics as was never known before, welcome at last to HUME, whose history closes in 1688 - that is, 166 years ago - and who published his History exactly a century since. We have gone through great changes in the course of this century. We have emancipated ourselves from the French school of scepticism in religion and ultra-classicism in taste; we have explored the growth of our constitution, and Lord JOHN RUSSELL himself has acted a distinguished part in its development; we have almost effaced the last vestiges of Toryism which even sceptics once admired; yet we have no other History of England than HUME's. ... DAVID HUME is still master of the field. He still wears the champion's belt and the waterman's silver scull. ... We have not the resolution - nor, we may add, the genius - to supply a substitute. He has conquered a certain territory, and we must uphold him, as we do the Turk, or as we have done the house of HAPSBURG, - not because we like him, but because we like others still less, and nature, geography, and history equally abhor a vacuum.

Years later, James Hannay, referring back to the debate provoked by Russell's assertions, declared that: 'It was then decided pretty generally, that Hume still remained our foremost man'. As if to belabour the point, the

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128 *The Times*, No. 21,884 (Saturday, October 28, 1854), p. 6.

publishers of a part-work edition of the History published in 1854, incorporated part of Russell's speech into its advertising blurb, playing down his anti-Hume statements, and declaring that their edition of 'David Hume's Real English History', continued down to the present day, was exactly the 'really good' history of England Russell had demanded.  

In the later part of the nineteenth century through to the first world war, rather than suffer permanent oblivion at the hands of Macaulay, Hume's reputation even gained from a reaction against the literary excesses of Macaulay, Carlyle and Froude. A.J. Grant, writing in 1906, seems representative of many readers over the last half century when he declared that Hume's style 'does not, as is the case with the styles of Carlyle and Macaulay, fatigue the reader by the brilliancy of its episodes: Hume is always conscious that he has a long journey before him, and travels smoothly and at a brisk pace.' Even as early as 1864, the evaluation of Hume as historian in Shaw's textbook had been modified to be more favourable than it had been in 1849. By 1882, Canning thought Macaulay had censured Hume 'rather severely', and pointed out the applicability of the 'accomplished advocate' charge to

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Macaulay's own work.\textsuperscript{133}

Hume's removal from a totemic role in contemporary political debate also served to make the harsh criticisms of earlier Whig historians seem overblown and prejudiced. Millar, in 1902, considered that Hume's political animosity towards the Whigs was a more important factor in his downfall than his 'reputed' superficiality. He added that perhaps critics had been too contemptuous of Hume's cynicism - that Whig authors had been too ready to think well of people.\textsuperscript{134} As early as the 1850s, Lawrence thought there was a Whig/Tory consensus on the work's merits - certainly the Quarterly and Blackwood's had long dropped their staunch defence of the work.\textsuperscript{135} In 1879, a writer in the most important Conservative journal, The Saturday Review, could write that 'in politics Hume is at his weakest'.\textsuperscript{136} Even when Salisbury drew off Hume's utilitarian conservatism, it was the Essays, rather than the History, to which he was indebted.

Though some historians in the 1860s and '70s retained a shadow of party-political allegiances when it came to Hume - Freeman execrated him, while Froude was 'very fond of Hume' - this no longer had any practical implications


for their work.137 By the end of the century, Thomas Seccombe could clinically examine the reasons for Hume's antipathy towards Whiggery in a way that would have been impossible fifty years previously.138 Similarly, in 1912, Lang could write that on the History's first appearance: 'like most honest histories it at first offended all parties.'139 Even concerning Hume's treatment of religious issues, a different tone was perceptible by the century's end: 'There is no reason to believe that he was ever intentionally unfair to any sect, or that he was ungenerous towards its disciples, even if he thought them zealots'.140

In writing his popular literary history of the eighteenth century, Gosse examined other histories of England of the time, as well as Hume's, and was thereby better able to judge the 'signal excellence' his work had possessed in its context.141 Even Leslie Stephen's work, with its influential criticisms of Hume as having lacked the 'evolutionary' idea he considered essential to


139 A. Lang, History of English Literature from "Beowulf" to Swinburne (London, 1912), p. 489.

140 W. Knight, Hume, p. 67.

historiography, had the benefit of stressing Hume's empiricism - as against earlier Whig accusations that he had been devoted to theory. As Hallam, Lingard and their contemporaries came in turn to look outdated, critics were prone to be more charitable towards the work which their histories had been built around attacking. Literary historians like Millar denied the claims standard in the early nineteenth-century that Hume had distorted facts to accord with his prejudices. As contrasted with earlier orthodoxy, Professor Henry Calderwood's opinion, that Hume's 'devotion to historical research is beyond all praise', is striking.

This new-found admiration for Hume's historical skills found concrete form in John Brewer's second edition of The Student's Hume, where these authors were replaced as authorities by Stubbs, Gardiner and contemporary historians, with a nod from Brewer to Hume's 'excellent good sense and sound judgment', though he was 'not entirely free from prejudice'. Elsewhere, he praised Hume's

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142 J.P. Von Arx, Progress and Pessimism. Religion, Politics, and History in Late-Nineteenth Century Britain (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1985), pp. 44-47.


144 H. Calderwood, David Hume (Edinburgh & London, 1898), p. 68. Calderwood's favourable opinion seems to have been in part prompted by the recent publication of Hume's letters to Strahan, which illustrated the trouble the historian had taken over revision.

'shrewd good sense'. Brewer's sentiments reflect a late-century historiographical shift from the earlier exaggerated notions that releasing every available manuscript would solve all historical problems - the kind of naive intoxication with the value of the sources 'as they were' which had fuelled the craze for minutely detailed histories and historical paintings and novels that had marked the mid-century period. Whilst Brewer felt comparing Hume to a scholar like Gardiner would be ridiculous, he recognised the value of the former's scepticism as a historical tool above and beyond whatever sources it was applied to. Brewer, a pioneer in the editing of state papers, was working on a new edition of the History for John Murray when he died. Had this been completed it would have been a monument to the late nineteenth century's more sympathetic attitude towards the historian, and might even have carried it successfully into the twentieth. This sympathy was especially marked by the 1880s and '90s, when a general ideological shift from the mid-century Liberal supremacy was occurring.

It was a sympathy, however, largely confined to academics. Hume was held to be little read, and the

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144 A parallel to this is Herman Merivale's assertion, in the Edinburgh article mentioned above - where he opposed the excesses of 'pictorial' history - that Hume's 'intuitive perception', his 'rare sagacity', had made up for his ignorance. Edinburgh Review, vol. 74 (1841-2), p. 432; Francis Jeffrey, as one might predict, disliked this review. See M. Napier, ed. Selections From the Correspondence of the late Macvey Napier (London, 1879), p. 372.

portrayal of his work in literary text-books as a classic of late eighteenth-century prose was unlikely to attract back a mass audience. Neither was the massively successful Student's Hume which was inflicted upon generations of schoolchildren from 1856 to the end of the century. Hume's original was hardly recognisable in this highly tampered-with abridgement, which was quite devoid of any literary value. George Bernard Shaw has left us with a memorable description of the soul-destroying tedium its usage by unimaginative teachers could produce on their classes. Such victims were hardly likely ever to associate the name of Hume with a pleasant read! The standardized descriptions of the History in text-books on English literature, sometimes with accompanying test questions, (on the lines of 'Name the chief historians who wrote during the period, ((1760-1798)) and give a brief account of their works'), cannot have helped to boost Hume's appeal.

However, the absorption of Hume into the prevalent whiggish view of English literary history contained in these books meant that it was his contributions to the progress of English historiography which had to be stressed - such as his pioneering of 'social' history - thereby laying the ground-work for the revival in his critical fortunes. An early, and extreme, example of 'whig' literary

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history was Wade's *England's Greatness: Its Rise and Progress* which eulogised every author it listed - their glory contributing to the reputation of the nation. Hume was praised for his 'learned research' through 'vast libraries'. Later school histories of English literature were not quite this charitable to Hume, but did continue to laud his work as an English classic. On literary grounds, Hume's description of the last days of Charles I, with his sympathetic character-sketch, was now held up to children as a model of prose which they should aspire to.

**Conclusion.**

Hume's nineteenth-century reputation may at first sight appear to have come full circle - having reached its lowest point in the 1840s and '50s - but the praise he was receiving at the end of the century was very different in nature from that which he had received at the beginning. The scholarship which had been execrated then, now found its champions, and the style previously praised for its popular touch was now held up in text-books on literary history as a precious relic of the past - the finest example of late eighteenth-century English prose. The fragility of this favourable reinterpretation of the *History* is demonstrated by the way in which it rapidly

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faded in the twentieth century, as literary historians became less interested in non-fictional prose. History academics had not been prominent in the new favouring of Hume. The study of historiography was as yet in its infancy in Britain, and in its early development it was to be heavily influenced by Collingwood, the 'historismus' of Meinecke, and the Christian idealism of Butterfield - this century's descendents of those like Thomas Arnold, Carlyle and Milman, whose contact with German philosophy had left them with scant respect for the historical work of Hume.

The end-of-century revival in critical appreciation was shallowly established in comparison to the way in which Hume's text had previously been closely interwoven with political and religious debate. The long-running counter-interpretations of the History favoured by the Monthly and Critical reviews in the late eighteenth century, and the Edinburgh and Quarterly in the early nineteenth, found no later parallels. The relative depoliticisation of literary life after mid-century was in part responsible for this development, and it revealed the extent to which the vitality of Hume's reputation had rested on its being an instrument in an ongoing Whig/'Tory' conflict. The perceived disintegration of any serious 'Tory' threat was the precursor for Hume's obsolescence as a live agent in British political culture. Whigs no longer needed to define their brand of historiography against an un-Whig 'other'.  

152 See S. Collini, Public Moralists, p. 20, on the 'tamer world' of letters in the second half of the nineteenth century, less swayed by 'mere party feeling' than earlier.
and there were no more significant non-Whig groupings, as there had been since the 1800s, seeking to utilize Hume's formidable 'Tory' reputation for their own purposes.

Alongside his slipping political relevance slithered his stylistic supremacy - though by the end of the nineteenth century it had yet to fall quite so far. Previously, his narrative directly, or indirectly as the next chapter will show, formed the basis of the story of English history for many readers. Hume's care over style, literary qualities and readability had paid dividends in terms of long-term popularity, as had his compromising over Christian feelings in his revision of the first volume. The lack of discussion of sources or engagement with his critics in the History itself, helped to create the feeling of a timeless classic - more easily enabling each generation to accept it as its own. In sales terms, the History benefitted from being on the ground floor of the mid-eighteenth-century expansion of the market for readable, yet elegant, histories of England for a middle-class readership. Hume had identified the need and succeeded in cornering the market early on, and by the time its copyright expired the unstaunchable nature of the demand for the History seemed staggering, providing a safe investment for dozens of publishing houses, with the number of editions being published not peaking until the 1820s. Its very longevity helped to enhance its authority, until

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the growing changes in the nature of the marketplace for historical literature operating strongly from the 1830s onwards, began to undermine the cultural assumptions Hume had made about his readership. Reading Hume's work increasingly seemed an effort rather than a pleasure in comparison with more colourful, cheaper historical fare. The inevitable and ironic result of this process was that Hume, the great popularizer and synthesizer of historical scholarship, should find himself - by the end of the nineteenth century - much more appreciated by an audience of academic commentators than by the public at large.
Chapter Five. 'Additional lustre'? Popularisations, illustrations and continuations of Hume.

Introduction.

Having examined at great length the progress of the History's critical reputation and its relationship with politics and 'high' historiography, we now turn to the way the History was treated by popular historians, and the effect on its image of the illustrations and continuations which often accompanied it. Many assertions of the History's status by critics have been quoted, but how far these can be translated into reliable indicators of its influence on the way the reading public regarded their past is more difficult to ascertain - especially considering the enormous quantities of historical literature which the nineteenth-century print explosion produced.

Comments by reviewers that popular history was under Hume's thumb do little in themselves to inform us of the nature of Hume's influence - since writers for periodicals were often motivated by political and religious affiliations which encouraged them to exaggerate the level of the threat they thought they were facing. On the other

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For the purposes of this chapter, 'popular' history is defined as those works without pretensions to original scholarship or literary merit, which contemporary reviewers generally ignored. Constructed in a patchwork manner from other secondary sources, such histories usually assumed no prior knowledge of the subject on the part of their readership. School text-books are a division of this genre, which might also be termed 'low' historiography as contrasted to the 'high' works of Hallam or Macaulay. This is not to deny, of course, that the latter histories were very 'popular' in terms of sales.
hand, simply counting citations of Hume in historical works could be as misleading as merely taking critics' comments at face value, if their full context was not taken into consideration. Several works which did not mention Hume at all were far more reliant upon his account than others which cited him frequently. Because most children's histories did not cite sources, dogmatically asserting any particular historian's influence upon them can be dangerous. However, certain generalisations about the nature of popular views of English history in the age of Hume's supremacy can be made, which show that his account was an important background factor in sustaining a conservative brand of the whig interpretation as orthodoxy, through to the second half of the nineteenth century.

An understanding of the continuations which accompanied Hume's work can also contribute to an assessment of the way in which Hume's text was experienced by later readers. This is obviously true in terms of the political stance the continuators took, and perhaps also in terms of the type of history they chose to write. The question of Smollett's reputation, as the author of the standard continuation to 1760, also forms an interesting parallel to that of his fellow Scottish historian. Any examination of the History's image would be deficient which ignored either these continuations - which often formed most of the work as sold - or the illustrations which accompanied some editions. The latter can be studied in terms of the ways in which illustrators themselves
interpreted the History, and for the manner in which their illustrations in turn may have affected readers of the editions they appeared in.

This chapter begins by looking at the relationship of Hume's History with the genre of popular history-writing in the later eighteenth-century, and the interesting ways in which critics focused on his popularity as a ground for attack. The nature of popular history-compilations in these years are looked at, along with the ways in which they used Hume's text, and the extent to which such plagiarism was accepted practise. An examination of the reasons behind Hume's appeal to popular writers will lead into a discussion of the explosion of children's histories in the first half of the nineteenth century, and the degree to which they depended upon Hume. The assertions of influential commentators like Hannah Moore and Francis Palgrave, that Hume had achieved a stranglehold on children's texts which were thereby spreading his anti-christian prejudices, will be inspected and declared to be severely exaggerated. The extent to which Hume's version of English political history was dominant will be analysed - as will the transition to the mid-century period, when Hallam's works achieved great authority over popular histories. Continuing an argument in earlier chapters, I emphasize the degree to which Hume contributed to upholding what, in the later eighteenth-century, might least confusingly be described as a 'conservative Whig' version of the British past, which Hallam in fact agreed with in
many of its essentials. The patriotic whiggish illustrations gracing many editions will be surveyed to press this point. Finally, continuations of Hume from the later eighteenth century through to the mid-nineteenth are examined, as a last way of examining the manner in which the History was popularly experienced. A conclusion outlines the ways in which this chapter underlines developments in the History's reputation detailed in previous chapters.

1. 'Suited to every capacity': The popularisation and illustration of Hume.

Hume's History has to be placed in the context of other popular multi-volume works produced in the latter half of the eighteenth century. From this perspective, Hume's paraphrasing reliance on other historians was representative of an age in which, as Roy Porter has put it, 'the times were not propitious in England for profound and original historical scholarship.' Many readers were disillusioned with the study of history as compared to that of natural science - feeling its truth-claims to be shaky and inseparable from party quarrels. Much necessary source material was unavailable, and most histories were patchwork constructions, pieced together from each other. Horace Walpole described a 'History of England' as being a byword for repetition and tedium. 'Our story is so exhausted', he

wrote, that 'I not only know what has been written, but what would be written'. Such a response was understandable, when the great public demand for historical reading was mainly being fed by hack compilers.

It must be recognised, however, that Hume's work was in many ways itself just a much cleverer and more stylised exercise in compilation. And though his success may have lent a new status to history-writing - the Annual Register congratulating him for having been the first writer to show that 'the British genius' could shine in this field - he could not completely escape the charges commonly levelled against the 'popular history' genre. Politically, as we have seen, he was treated as a party writer like any other historian of England. As a popularizer and simplifier he was treated with scorn by certain scholars - a scorn not untainted with a distaste for literary populism. Richard Hurd wrote disdainfully of 'Hume's abridged English history', 'a work that pretends to be nothing more than a compilation' - thereby suggesting its kinship with popular hack histories. William Harris attacked Hume for having 'servilely copied' Clarendon; Whitaker criticised him for

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4 Annual Register, vol. 6 (1761), p. 301.

having blindly followed Carte. George Nicholson merely stated that 'HUME's History is a bad compilation.' The scholar in Lord Gardenstone could join with the Whig in considering Hume's designedly populist chronological span by far too extensive to be completed by any single pen. It was necessary to write a book of a saleable size. As an epitome of English History, it is too large; but as a complete history, it is by far too short. We often see whole folios printed on the antiquities of a single town, or a single country parish. Why then should we think it tiresome to read twenty or thirty volumes on the national history of our ancestors? Mr. Hume, like many men of eminence, has performed too little, by attempting to perform too much; yet his writings afford universal and lasting pleasure.

This last admission, from a professed Whig, shows the important sense in which Hume differed from other popular historians - the quality of his prose - which led to his work in turn being a prime target for pilfering. Whigs were sure Hume gained popular influence thereby - they detested the prospect, and in their anger probably exaggerated its likelihood. Already by the 1780s, Catharine Macaulay was referring to Hume sarcastically as 'that great oracle of history'. Three quarters of a century later, Robert Vaughan could still complain that 'from the pages of this historian' a biased quotation derogatory of the Puritans

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8 Lord Gardenstone, Miscellanies, p. 208.

'has passed freely into our literature.' Speaking more widely, Vaughan remarked that Hume was 'an author who has been allowed to influence English ideas in regard to English history beyond any other man through nearly a century past.' One may question, however, whether these writers exaggerated Hume's hold by generalising out from his influence on early seventeenth-century history - the period they, and most of their contemporaries, felt the most important. Vaughan's frequent remonstrances against Hume in his work on the early Stuarts die away almost to nothing in his writings on other periods. This is especially noticeable in the History of England which he wrote for the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge. Many popular works, as we shall see, borrowed greatly from Hume without simply replicating his political views.

The potential attractions of Hume's History to abbreviators of the national past are obvious. The work was valued for its relative brevity, skilful synthesis and masterly versions of anecdotes - like Alfred burning the cakes, Edward I's massacre of the Welsh bards, or Elizabeth and Essex's ring - which he turned into parts of his 'well told tale'. Hume, as a writer in the Monthly Review in 1819 commented, had always rejected the uninteresting. Thanks partly to this, 'Since the time of Mr. Hume, the


histories of this country have generally been little more than a *crambe recocta* of his work and those of Rapin and Carte, his laborious predecessors. Increasingly in the early nineteenth century this provoked charges, like Gardenstone's above, of superficiality in certain areas. Lord Campbell, for example, criticised Hume's account of the reign of Edward I on these grounds in his *Lives of the Lord Chancellors*. However the same author, unsympathetic Whig though he was, praised Hume's 'beautiful abstract' of one parliamentary speech, and his 'admirable summary' of another.

Such qualities meant that Hume's was soon generally marked out as superior to other compilations. According to the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1788, 'compilers' were 'void of common talents: and the only modern histories of England, in request, are written by Rapin and by Hume'. Hume's dominance through to the second quarter of the nineteenth century was helped by the inferiority of his rivals, and by the general expense of books: 'In most small libraries, one book on the history of England is thought sufficient; Hume's, for instance'. Yet, such other 'Histories of England' as were available were often potential agents of his influence rather than proponents of alternative

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interpretations. Hence, J. Holt's method of composing his
Characters of the Kings and Queens of England (1788), was
'to extract them from Hume, Smollett, Rapin, &c.'.
William Cruise's 1815 Chronological Abridgement of the
History of England might more honestly have been termed an
abridgment of Hume.

Understandably, most compilers were modest about the
originality of their efforts. William Smith made grandiose
claims for his work, and was cut down to size by the
Monthly, which pointed out that part of his character of
Charles I 'is copied from Hume, and forms a part of the
character of Alfred. Our Author, though a copious
transcriber, makes no acknowledgment of obligations of this
kind.' Even Robert Henry, a researcher in his own right,
seems to have leant upon Hume's text on at least one
occasion. The reviewer in the British Critic found this
worthy of notice - though not in this case of censure.
The boundaries of 'acceptable' adoption of other's words in
works of history-writing were obviously somewhat flexible
to eighteenth-century critics. Plagiarism was the norm, yet
not wholly accepted as good practice. How it was received
depended on whether the author made unjustified claims to

15 Monthly Review, vol. 78 (1788), p. 536. See also
are the Historians to whom he is principally indebted for the
"Royal Characters"'. Neither reviewer criticised the practice of
borrowing from other authors. Both, on balance, received the work
favourably - the latter regarding it as useful for those who
needed to be economical with their time.


originality, on the audience the book was aimed at, and even upon the political attitude of the reviewer towards the author. Smith's 'high prerogative' views made his plagiarism fair game for hostile reviewers. The Monthly's attack has already been seen. The Critical used the same tactic to undermine his credibility:

He seems in the present work to have followed in general the authority of Mr. Hume, and that often so implicitly, as even to borrow entire passages from that celebrated historian, without any marks of quotation. Though this be a practice we do not think very creditable, yet the elegance of the parts selected may plead some apology for the plagiarism. Their only bad effect is, that they make the work appear of an unequal texture, and form a very unfavourable contrast to that vulgarity of sentiment and expression so familiar to the author of this production.18

Reviewers also had ulterior motives for taking the high moral ground they did over plagiarism. Pointing out similarities must often have been a space-filling tactic for hack-reviewers in lieu of more demanding criticism, which would require more familiarity with texts than the time at their disposal allowed them to acquire. It allowed them merely to transpose large sections of text rather than produce original material - a virtual necessity given the amount of writing and the number of books late eighteenth-century reviewers had to get through.19 Through to the nineteenth century, recognition of plagiarism also showed off a reviewer's learning, as in this review of Wade's

19 For a balanced assessment of the limitations of late eighteenth-century reviewing, see D. Roper, Reviewing before the 'Edinburgh', 1788-1802 (Cranbury, New Jersey, 1978), pp. 36-48.
British History:

HUME ... has furnished Mr. WADE with much of his criticism on RICHARD the Third; and in making verbal alterations he has not particularly improved the style. He would have done better to have quoted the historian exactly; which, if inverted commas had been dispensed with, would not have subjected Mr. WADE to the charge of plagiarism, after the candid exposition of his objects and avowal of his authorities in the preface.²⁰

Here, as elsewhere though, borrowing is reckoned acceptable in 'popular' works. WADE's was described as a 'useful, almost indispensable volume' which contained the pith of other histories which few could procure or consult.

Though the construction of 'patchwork' texts could serve a useful function in an age when few readers had access to a variety of the originals, popularisers who mixed and matched the works of different historians still laid themselves open to charges of lack of taste - a more heinous sin in the eyes of most reviewers than plagiarism. Goldsmith felt it necessary to provide an artful defence for splicing Rapin, Carte, Smollett and Hume: 'They have each their peculiar admirers, in proportion as the reader is studious of historical antiquities, fond of minute anecdote, a warm partizan, or a deliberate reasoner.'²¹ The Critical Review had this to say in 1788 of the Rev. John Adams's The Flowers of Modern History:

When flowers are plucked from their native beds, they soon wither, and become offensive; ... Mr. Adams has decked himself with the strength of

Hume, the splendor of Robertson, the copiousness of Guthrie, the varied elegance of Burke, the curiosa felicitas of Chesterfield, and the unadorned neatness of Goldsmith; and, on the whole, has rendered himself disgusting with ornaments. They are misplaced and improperly connected.²²

The elegance of Hume's work was an important point in its favour as a source for popular works. The 1793 abridged edition of the History described itself as being 'for the use of schools and young gentlemen', and the editor assumed that its purpose was to produce 'a polite scholar'.²³ Cooke's abridged edition, probably from 1800, was advertised as 'being printed in a style of Elegance that may challenge Competition, and in a Size equally calculated to avoid the extremes of diminutive Inconvenience and ponderous Inutility.' The publisher stressed gentility, and was notably uncomfortable with emphasising cheapness. The 'elegance' of Hume's style was singled out as a reason for studying his History.²⁴ This was an significant factor in recommending Hume's work to the young, since histories were expected to improve the readers' use of language as well as


enlarge his knowledge. The end of the work's copyright protection allowed new ways of distributing Hume's 'civilising' influence to be tried — for example, the separate 'reigns' which were made available in slim, illustrated editions by Brewman. These seem to have been designed primarily for the female market — five of the seven illustrations in The History of the Reign of Henry VIII, for instance, were devoted to the fate of Henry's queens, and another to the 'singular execution of the Countess of Salisbury'.

An interesting parallel to critical treatment of Hume's work, is provided by that of Goldsmith's popular compilation. The Monthly's review of the 4-volume version praised his taste, but not his critical penetration or historical knowledge. Like Hume, he was felt to have 'leaned with too much partiality to the prerogative of our kings', but there was no complaint here of unwarranted novelty and paradox which dogged Hume's reputation: 'One would almost imagine that he had intended to present the public with whatever is most obvious, or least interesting in the history of England.'


helps to explain its immense nineteenth-century popularity. An 1821 commentator praised its 'ease, grace, and simplicity' and 'grace of composition', but felt it 'at best', 'incorrect and superficial'. Russell claimed that Goldsmith had 'put him (Hume) out of boys' schools', and the work was certainly one of the most successful children's histories in the nineteenth century. By 1858 it had reached a forty-sixth edition.

Its use of Hume was typical of late eighteenth-century compilers - and a major force in seeing a conservative Whig 'compromise' with Hume carried over to early nineteenth-century children's histories. Goldsmith leant most on Hume for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and was more whiggish in his account of the later middle ages. Though deemed a 'Tory' by many early nineteenth-century commentators, his work was not to the taste of that self-conscious 'Tory' Jane Austen. Her *History of England*, a satire on the norms of school histories, expressed a far stronger monarchism than either Goldsmith, Hume - or virtually any popular histories of the era - espoused. Her work might be interpreted as

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29 *The Times*, No. 21,884 (Sat. Oct. 28, 1854), p. 6.

30 She defended Richard II, Richard III and Mary Queen of Scots, and thought that the 'one argument' needed to vindicate Charles I 'from the Reproach of Arbitrary and tyrannical Government' was 'that he was a STUART.' Her chosen authorial persona - 'a Partial, Prejudiced, and Ignorant Historian', with its inversion of the usual claims made by popular historians in their prefaces and titlepages - shows how aware she was of the gap between her treatment and that of the mainstream. See J.
influenced by frustration at the lack of a thoroughly 'Tory' version of English history by the end of the eighteenth century, which we examined in chapter two.

Late eighteenth-century critical scorn for compilations was continued in the early nineteenth against the increasing flood of children's and popular histories, which rarely received attention in serious periodicals. Froude referred to 'innumerable popular schools' where

Epitomes of Hume, or Lingard, or Sharon Turner, or Burnet, or Collier, are run together on the principles of the various shades of opinion; these writers being implicitly followed when they do not contradict each other, and when they do, being either made to neutralise each other by a judicious intermixture, or else the choice between them being determined by the theological or political sympathies of the compiler. No original research is exercised, no intellect or imagination is felt to be necessary; scarcely ever are references verified, except to the most obvious sources: the facts are simply pieced together, or washed in with a faint water colour of moral sentiment; and the books thus formed are put into the hands of boys and girls, who are required to read them and pass examinations in them, and then all is supposed to be done.  

In similar fashion the Spectator bemoaned that our popular writers not only do not write from original authorities - they do not even write from the best secondary ones. If they give us mere abridgments of Grote, Hallam, or Finlay, we might be thankful. But they do nothing of the kind. They seem to write from one another in some extraordinary kind of way, till one does not know


which is the elephant and which is the tortoise.\textsuperscript{32}

Froude was representative of mid-century commentators in claiming that 'For no period whatsoever of our history can Hume's account be trusted as a text-book', but not so usual in adding 'in saying this of him, we say it of all the rest.'\textsuperscript{33}

Popular works did not necessarily have to agree with Hume to use his words. As indicated in the passages above, much usage of Hume's work was fairly mindless. However, some writers, more interestingly, managed to use chunks of Hume in frameworks which negated much of his message.\textsuperscript{34} An early example of this was Edward King's 1767 \textit{Essay on the English Government and Constitution}, which be-Whigged Hume's interpretation by stressing the progressive element in his linking the rise of commerce to that of political liberty - a tactic which Burrow has ascribed to Macaulay


\textsuperscript{33} J.A. Froude, 'Suggestions', p. 60.

\textsuperscript{34} E.g. The British Plutarch's use of a whiggish passage from Hume in its article on Hampden: 3rd. ed. (London, 1791), vol. 3, pp. 189-90. R.H. Sweet has noted that this kind of treatment was common in her study of eighteenth-century urban histories: 'It is possible to uncover an interesting combination of sources in some less erudite histories, making it quite clear that the reader/writer had not taken in the conceptual framework of his authors at all. The Anglo-Saxon Constitution might be idealised in glowing terms with reference to whig authors such as Macaulay or Rapin. The decline of baronial power, after the subversion of these liberties by the Normans, would then be explained according to Hume's account, ignoring the fact that he had argued that English liberties did not arise until the seventeenth century.' The Writing of Urban Histories in Eighteenth-Century England, Oxford D. Phil. Thesis (1993), p. 138.
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almost a century later.\textsuperscript{35} The 1782 \textit{Beauties of Hume and Bolingbroke} included many passages from the \textit{History} and \textit{Essays}, but attacked Hume's political views, and encouraged the reader to follow the whiggish precepts offered by Bolingbroke instead.\textsuperscript{36} Compilers used Hume's accounts of the Tudors and Stuarts, whilst employing other authors for the medieval periods. Later, the 'Family' edition of the \textit{History} edited out anything in Hume's text which could be regarded as derogatory to religion - in its protestant varieties at least - whilst leaving his political views virtually intact.\textsuperscript{37}

It is useful to keep such flexibility in mind when turning to early nineteenth century charges against the \textit{History}'s great influence over popular writers. Francis Palgrave's 1844 essay in the \textit{Quarterly}, 'Hume and his Influence upon History', discussed in chapter two, claimed that Hume held a stranglehold on popular history writers, and especially influenced their treatment of religion - causing them to minimize its importance wherever possible. Palgrave's claims were backed by examples of the way

\textsuperscript{35} J. Burrow, \textit{Liberal Descent}, pp. 40-1.

\textsuperscript{36} \textit{The Beauties of Hume and Bolingbroke}, 2nd. ed. (London, 1782), p. iv. That Hume's writings were the more favoured by the reading public by the 1780s can be deduced from the \textit{Gentleman Magazine}'s 1788 reference (vol. 58, p. 405) to St. John as 'a once fashionable author'.

\textsuperscript{37} On 'the most vigilant attention' which the editor Mitchell paid to the 'religious parts of the work', see \textit{Eclectic Review}, New Series, vol. 8 (1817), p. 319. His alterations however - though thorough on behalf of Knox and early protestants - did not extend to any toning-down of Hume's treatment of Catholicism.
popular treatments of Charles I and Alfred hardly mentioned their piety - following Hume. His case was exaggerated - as a survey of one of his main examples, Mrs. Markham's History, can show.

Mrs. Markham's hugely successful History of England was designedly an abridgment and simplification of Hume's work for young readers, intended - so the introduction claimed - for her son Richard, who

When he was about ten years old ... became very inquisitive about the history of his own country, and begged hard to be allowed to read Hume's History of England. His father consented, and he began it accordingly: but he soon found in it so many words and things he could not understand, that he was quite discouraged; and, bringing the book back, said, with tears in his eyes, that he believed he had better give it up till he was older.\(^8\)

In the process of providing Richard with a text he could understand, Markham, as befitting the wife of an Anglican minister, steeped her history in providentialism and reminders of the Almighty - which make Palgrave's claims seem rather odd. Charles I's piety was stressed, as were Alfred's devotions.\(^9\)

The catechismal arrangement of many children's histories was in itself a negation of Humean history, and a reminder of the dominance of divinity-study over

\(^8\) Mrs. Markham, A History of England from the First Invasion by the Romans to the 14th Year of the Reign of Queen Victoria, new and revised ed. (London, 1853), p. vii.

\(^9\) Mrs. Markham, History of England, pp. 381-2; 22.
Thomas Keightley's History of England of 1837 was prefaced with the remark that 'Religion is of more importance to a state than self-styled philosophers represent it. It is in fact so essential to our nature that society cannot long exist without it: where it is pure, civil liberty will generally be found in its train; where it has sunk to mere superstition, despotism is its usual ally.' Nevertheless, clergymen allowed themselves to be directly associated with editions of Hume's History through writing continuations - which did not fail to include the spiritual dimension which Hume had ignored. The Reverend Henry Stebbing prefaced the edition of Hume for which he wrote a continuation with an essay which contained very unHumean comments on the need for awareness of 'God's eternal providence' when studying history. T.S. Hughes, the author of one of the better-regarded continuations, which ran to several editions, was also a man of the cloth.

As we saw in chapter two, anglicans were less likely than dissenters to take offence at the supposed

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40 The latter point might be illustrated by Samuel Maunder's Treasury of History, 2nd. ed. (London, 1844). The section of this on English history before 1688 is unusual among popular texts for the abject nature of its dependence upon Hume. Yet the frontispiece to the work portrayed an unHumean view of history, which ranked biblical events such as the 'universal deluge' and the drowning of the Pharaoh alongside the 'death of Harold' and a rather sympathetic depiction of 'Augustine preaching Christianity'.


'irreligion' in the lack of discussion of religious issues in Hume's work, thanks in large part to the common perception that Hume was favourable towards the established church in the all-important conflicts of the seventeenth century. Interestingly, the *Exercises in the History of England, for Families and Schools* published on behalf of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge in 1833 seems to have used Hume, especially in its attack on seventeenth-century dissent - which included the story in Hume concerning Hampden and Cromwell's supposed attempt to emigrate - and in its defence of Strafford.43

In chapter two, we examined the evangelical dislike for the *History* of which Palgrave's attack was part. This was enhanced by fears that Hume's work was especially influential in the teaching of the young. Hannah Moore thought this could only be harmful, as did the *Eclectic Review* when faced with Charlotte Smith's 1807 *History of England*:

Mr. Hume appears to have been the principal guide of Mrs. C. Smith, down to the period of the Revolution; ... We are sorry to find Mrs. Smith has followed her philosophical historian, not only so far as to adopt his political prejudices, but, what is much worse, to countenance his sceptical sentiments in religion and morals.44

In 1816, as we have seen, an edition of Hume 'Revised for Family Use' was published - by far the most effort in its bowdlerising having been put to pruning Hume's views on

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religion, particularly his treatment of presbyterians and dissenters. However, there was less of this sort of complaint in the 1820s and 30s - indeed it had always been exaggerated. Palgrave's assertions were hardly justified - even by the examples he provided. Charles I's piety was routinely stressed in popular histories - including the ones he cited.

Direct refutation of Hume was certainly much rarer in popular histories than it was in more scholarly works - perhaps one of the reasons for the somewhat over-blown attacks on his influence by Whigs and evangelicals. Serious attempts, however, to implement anti-whiggish Humean views of history in popular works were limited to The Good Old Times discussed in chapter two. Similarly there seems only to have been one Brodie-style full-length popular attack on Hume, the anonymous Conversations on the English Constitution, in 1828. Most reliance on Hume was the result more of convenience than 'infidel' or 'Tory' designs. The appeal of Hume's monarchism to some writers did not prevent them from altering the religious tone of his work when they borrowed from it. Paul Langford's comments on the tone of post-Hume historical writing are borne out by a study of popular historiography:

The evangelical tendencies of the 1770s did not reduce interest in history: they did, however, help to create the sense that the springs of historical knowledge must not be polluted by the unsound principles of historians. ... The next generation had an obvious mission: to erect on the newly established foundation of serious

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historical interest, a great superstructure of safe, edifying, unsensational literature, suitable for a devout and disciplined public.\(^6\)

In pursuit of 'safe' disciplining literature, popular historians were unlikely to adopt Hume's cool tone towards nationalism - especially when they felt that part of their job was, in Lady Callcott's words, to 'lay the foundation for patriotism'.\(^7\) Jeremy Black has remarked that xenophobia was an integral part of popular 'hack' history-writing in the eighteenth century.\(^8\) Hume's work alone, of course, could not sway such deeply-founded prejudices - especially in the face of the fervour fanned up by the French wars. This even affected the way his History itself was presented. Bowyer's project in the 1790s had a patriotic purpose, and missed few chances to display martial, and in particular naval, valour in its illustrations. Similarly, Thurston's designs for Hume illustrations included suitably stirring patriotic frontispieces. One featured 'The historic Muse presenting to Brittania the volume of her history, which contains a relation of her history, which contains a relation of the

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splendid victories of Cressy, Poictiers, and Agincourt.' Hume, like Hallam after him, was disapproving of the Hundred Years War. Neither would he have been entirely happy with the sentiments behind the picture of 'Neptune presenting to Britannia his Trident, emblematically denoting her dominion of the sea.'

The 1819 Regent's edition of Hume devoted frontispieces to Whig heroes Hampden and Milton, as well as Cromwell. Otherwise, literary figures and naval heroes were the main choices for illustration rather than political leaders or events - the latter, of course, had been Hume's main interest. In this edition, Hume's insertion of literary history - which he had seen as being of secondary importance - was brought centre-stage by illustrators wanting to stress national, supra-party themes.

49 A comparable frontispiece was featured in volume one of D. Hume & H. Clarke, The History of England and a Further Continuation to the Reign of William IV (London, 1813), which featured 'Britannia, crowned by Victory, trampling upon the chains of France', holding 'in her right hand the Trident of Neptune, as Mistress of the Ocean' and Magna Charta in her left, 'whilst Fame is proclaiming to the World the Glory of her Arms, by pointing to some of her principal Battles inscribed on her Shield'. (Preface, p. i).


51 Not all History illustration was so drastically unHumean in its sympathies. For example, Worthington's engravings in The Oxford English Classics edition (Oxford, 1826), were restricted to portraits of heads of state - which had been the most common choice for pictorial representation in eighteenth-century histories. The nineteenth-century trend, however, was towards more pictorial variety, and a less restrained approach towards the 'dignity' of history on the part of illustrators. For the technological and cultural background to these changes, see P. Anderson, The Printed Image and the Transformation of Popular Culture, 1790-1860 (Oxford, 1991).
Shakespeare's occupation of the frontispiece of volume four is particularly noteworthy, given Hume's notoriously cool comments on his literary worth. The bard's status as a symbol of Englishness here evidently outbalanced any need to reflect the spirit of Hume's text.

Such a presentation of Hume's work, by stifling his iconoclastic undermining of English 'greatness', could only have strengthened Hume's position as an 'establishment' text - a status which might otherwise be difficult to understand at a time when British nationalism was being molded by a long conflict with a nation, France, for which Hume had a great degree of respect. Images of Britannia adorned History frontispieces - in place of the simple portrait of Hume himself, which had been his only compromise with demands for illustration. Such a patriotic reworking of Hume continued through mid-century - when a part-work edition published during the Crimean War made the most out of the current conflict in its marketing. The wrapper of an 1868-'71 partwork omitted any mention of Hume at all - merely carrying the History of England title and an 'honi soit qui mal y pense' garter around an illustration of an Elgin marbles-style warrior trampling a

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On Shakespeare's status, see G. Taylor, Reinventing Shakespeare. A Cultural History from the Restoration to the Present (London, 1990), p. 133: 'As the Glorious Revolution was to politics, Shakespeare was to literature: an ad hoc model, scornful of a priori principles, adopting and adapting accepted national practice, endorsed by subsequent generations.' Critics from Towers to Russell attacked Hume's comments on Shakespeare as evidence of his unEnglishness.
dragon with his horse. The 1890s saw the ultimate product of this trend, when an Imperial edition of Hume was published. People aware of such presentations of Hume were unlikely to heed Whig claims of his anti-English prejudices, unless they gave the text close examination, and freed themselves from any sentiments induced by its current appearance - something few were likely to attempt. Presentation and illustration, tailoring a sceptical text to more chauvinistic prejudices, must therefore have played a significant role in maintaining the History's status as a 'standard work'.

In chapter one, we saw how often Hume's account of Charles I's reign was used by the compilers of late eighteenth-century popular histories. It is more difficult to attribute the direct influence of Hume to the sympathetic reservations most early nineteenth-century children's historians took in their criticisms of Charles, since their versions are so much shorter. However, it seems reasonable to cite Hume's general influence as a background factor. Jeffrey's assertion in 1808 that praise for the early seventeenth-century patriots was all but extinct was exaggerated - but one can find some backing for it in school texts, like the influential Mrs. Trimmer's Concise History of England, which firmly followed Hume in regarding


the leaders in the House of Commons under James I as the constitutional innovators in their attacks on prerogative.\textsuperscript{55} After the 1800s, however, few authors, however, adopted a thorough-going defence of Charles - though those who did usually seem to have owed something to Hume.\textsuperscript{56} Once the reaction against the French Revolution had faded, the vast majority, especially after the 1820s, entertained no doubt as to Charles's constitutional guilt - even if some sympathy could be held for him personally.

Julia Corner's judgment was representative:

I need not enter into the particulars of the quarrels between the king and the House of Commons; it is sufficient to say, that they all had one source and one object; the king desiring to act without control, the Commons being determined to maintain their proper share of the government of the country.\textsuperscript{57}


\textsuperscript{56} E.g. G.R. Gleig, \textit{The Family History of England} (London, 1842), vol. 2, p. 223; \textit{A Plain and Short History of England, for Children: in Letters from a Father to his Son} (London, 1829), pp. 186-7. This is one of the few texts which used Hume's false story of Charles sleeping through the noise of his scaffold's construction - which Palgrave was to use as an example of his misleading influence. However, it also gives Charles a pious end, which Palgrave thought that Hume had successfully erased from the public consciousness.

\textsuperscript{57} J. Corner, \textit{The History of England: from the Earliest Period to the Present Time} (London, 1840), p. 197. For an example of the much rarer adoption of Humean arguments in a mid-century children's history, see A.L. Bond, \textit{The History of England: for the Use of Young Persons} (London, 1858), pp. 184-5.: 'For several years, the history of those times consists entirely of quarrels between the king and the parliament. Charles did many unwise things; he insisted on governing his kingdom by laws of his own, and tried to get rid of much of the authority of the parliament; and the parliament, on the other hand, seemed determined to oppose him in every way possible, and to render him as uncomfortable as it could, by refusing to grant his requests,
By mid-century, then, the Edinburgh's arguments, represented here by John Hill Burton, were increasingly outdated. To Burton, Clarendon's accounts, as used by Hume, were the soul and substance of the history that was read everywhere, from the library to the schoolroom, and re-echoed in every European tongue. For those who choose to be set right we have the valuable criticisms of Brodie, Hallam, Forster, and many others; but a natural touch of indolence in mankind leaves a plausible story well told long in the supremacy it has once gained.\textsuperscript{58}

This is certainly an exaggeration, and even as Burton wrote, Hume's influence was further declining. In the second half of the century attitudes towards Charles, as towards George III, grew less sympathetic. Reasons for this no doubt include the rehabilitation of Cromwell, and the growing power and respectability of protestant dissent as a force in late Victorian politics and society.\textsuperscript{59} The earlier dominance of Hume's text had suited an era of non-persecuting anglican supremacy, but its mocking deprecation of seventeenth-century dissenters was increasingly unacceptable as the nineteenth century progressed.

Hume's account of Tudor despotism, once detached from his assumptions that it absolved the early Stuarts from any blameworthy conduct, was accepted by early Whig critics, and was fully incorporated into nineteenth-century

\textsuperscript{58} Edinburgh Review, vol. 144 (1876), p. 54.

\textsuperscript{59} See T. Lang, The Victorians and the Stuart Heritage. Interpretations of a discordant past (Cambridge, 1995), especially chapters 3-5.
whig accounts. As far as these writers were concerned, the more pressing Tudor tyranny was thought to have been, then the more impressive was the resilience of English freedoms. Hence, Hume's assaults on Elizabeth - whom he had regarded, puzzlingly, as a Whig icon - could be easily assimilated into whig narratives.

Reactions to Hume's critical stance on Mary Queen of Scots were exceptional in the story of the History's long-term relationship with historical debate. For once, the serious historians - 'Whig' and 'Tory' both - were on Hume's side. As the Edinburgh Review remarked in reviewing Froude's attack on her: 'our greatest historians, Robertson, Hume, Laing, Hallam, and Sharon Turner, have been persuaded of her guilt; and even the Catholic Lingard, though inclining to her side, has scarcely ventured to acquit her.' Despite this, popular histories commonly took on a sympathetic attitude towards Mary. The four pictures featuring Mary commissioned by Bowyer for his Hume project, by Smirke and Opie, all contributed to this

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61 Hume's conviction that Elizabeth was a Whig icon no doubt stemmed in part from his habitual elision of 'Whiggery' and popular English patriotism, and also from his adoption of Rapin as his chief Whig 'foil' - Rapin's treatment of Elizabeth having been eulogistic.

62 For a convenient sampling of writings on the Marian debate for this period, see I.B. Cowan, ed. The Enigma of Mary Stuart (London, 1971).

sympathy. Cadell's 1790 edition, with portraits of English monarchs, made a point of advertising its bonus portrait of Mary. The fate of Marie Antionette gave Mary's end new poignance, and the same forces which increased the acceptability of Hume's treatment of Charles I, made that of Mary less palatable.

If one turns to the influence of the final third of the History to be completed - that on the Middle Ages - Hume's impact seems at its most qualified. It can be said that in the later eighteenth century, the Montford origin of the House of Commons was given a boost in acceptance by Hume's influence. Camden's 1766 complaint in the House of Lords against the declaratory bill that taxation and representation had always been inseparable, was one with little backing in popular history texts by the end of the century:

I am sure some histories, of late published, have done great mischief; to endeavour to fix the aera when the House of Commons began in this kingdom, is a most pernicious and destructive attempt; to fix it in an Edward's or Henry's reign, is owing

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64 See R. Strong, And When Did You Last See Your Father? The Victorian Painter and British History (London, 1978), p.130, on the contribution of Opie's pictures to the nineteenth-century 'cult' of Mary. R. Samuel, Theatres of Memory. Volume 1: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture (London, 1994), pp. 31-2, has pointed out the incongruity of the 'high Tory romanticism' which prevailed in nineteenth-century visual treatments of 'doomed and tragic monarchs', alongside a written history moving 'in a definitely Whig direction'. In the case of Mary, though not of Charles I, this romanticism certainly pervaded popular history more generally - cutting it off from the 'high' historical texts of either a Hume or a Hallam.

65 The Times, no. 1567 (Saturday, January 2, 1790), p. 1.

to the idle dreams of some whimsical, ill-judging antiquarians: but, my lords, this is a point too important to be left to such wrong-headed people.\footnote{T.C. Hansard, The Parliamentary History of England, from the Earliest Period to the Year 1803 (London, 1813), vol. 16, p. 179.}

Hallam basically accepted Hume's account of the origin of parliament, and in so doing he was merely following many writers of conservative Whig histories before him.

As we have seen, however, Hume's account of the Middle Ages was relied upon less by late eighteenth-century compilers than other parts of his work. Most popular writers, then and later, differed sharply from Hume over his sympathetic treatment of Richard II, whose fall Hallam systematised into a precursor of 1688 - exactly the parallel Hume had denied, and which many writers were naturally attracted to. Here the teleological tendencies of English historical thought overcame the ascendent monarchism of the revolutionary era in Britain. Elsewhere - in their treatment of Magna Carta, the Petition of Right, and the Glorious Revolution itself - writers could happily cite Hume's approval, but still tended to view the three events as part of an inexorable process in unHumean fashion.\footnote{See, for instance, John Malham, The Grand National History of England, Civil and Ecclesiastical, from the Earliest Period of Genuine Record to the Year 1816, 2nd. ed. (London, 1816), p. 663. which quoted Hume's passage on how the Revolution formed 'a new epoch in the constitution', while elsewhere he celebrated Magna Carta in whiggish terms as a confirmation of Saxon 'rights and privileges'. (p. 202.)} Very few could follow John Wade's modernising 'Whig' view, which could happily assimilate Hume's
dismission of precedent.** Though Humean discontinuity came
to be commonly admitted in the 'dark ages' and early
medieval period, and again - to an extent - in the Tudor
epoch, popular writers clung to a basic continuity in
English liberty's 'spirit' between Magna Carta and the
Revolution, in ways which were often frankly contradictory
with some of their concessions to Hume.°° The writer who
succeeded in tidying up this 'Whig compromise' with Hume
was Henry Hallam.

Hallam's influence was commented upon in awe-struck
tones in the mid and late nineteenth century. Already, in
1837, The Spectator could remark that 'the Middle Ages of
HALLAM exceeds Peter Simple in the number of its editions;
and the demand for that most amusing fiction is rivalled by
the History of the British Constitution'.°° Later in the
century, Creasy gave the following estimate of Hallam's

°° J. Wade, British History Chronologically Arranged
(London, 1839), e.g. p. 140. Wade's metaphor for the historical
writer - that of a 'physician' who 'dissects' the national past
is suggestive of his affinity with the discontinuities presented
in Hume's view of English constitutional history. (p. vi.)

°° Chancellor has argued for the dominance of the 'whig
interpretation' in school history books for the entire period
1800-1914, in her survey of the genre History for their Masters.
She minimizes the influence of 'Hume's generally dispassionate
account of constitutional struggles', and gives little sense of
any development away from his shadow over the course of the
century. When examined more carefully, however, even the passage
from Baldwin's 1812 History of England, which she produces as an
epitome of the 'whig interpretation' might be more accurately
labelled a variant of the 'whig compromise' - with its cautious
reminder that 'the sort of freedom enjoyed' in medieval times
'was not exactly the sort of freedom required in a present state
of civilisation'. (pp. 49-50).

importance:

he has influenced the political opinions and conduct of the best and ablest classes of Englishmen, more than almost any other leader of thought that modern times have produced; and his influence is certain to be permanent. Before Hallam's time nineteen-twentieths of such educated Englishmen as studied their country's history at all, formed their ideas of it from the artful misrepresentations of Hume.' Hallam had 'taught our University students and our educated youth in general the true nature and the priceless worth of the free but orderly institutions, that have grown up in England during long centuries, expanding their popular organization and energy, as the people expanded its capacity to use them, but preserving their primary principles intact, and as abhorrent of anarchy as of despotism. ... Conservatives now acknowledge Hallam's merits as freely as do all loyal Liberals."

In a similar vein, Henry Raikes thought Hallam's was 'a work, whose silent but irresistible influence on the reading public has been, to establish at least the theory of Whigism (sic), and to alter the character and dogmas of Toryism itself'.

It is unlikely that such a transformation was produced through the influence of Hallam's books acting on their own. Their unreadableness was proverbial - even among literary Whigs. Francis Jeffrey wrote to Brougham that he had heard The Constitutional History much abused for its dullness." The Monthly Review greeted the same book by

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commenting on 'the appalling size of the work', which it felt disqualified this 'elaborate dissertation' from ever being popular. It was not considered a book for the general reader.\textsuperscript{75} Macaulay's review in the Edinburgh came to much the same conclusion, though in a less forthright fashion.\textsuperscript{76} Despite the respectable level of the work's sales, comments on it continued to suggest that it was seldom opened by most of its owners. Hallam's obituarist in The Times in 1859 thought that 'The reader for mere pleasure would never go through one of Mr. Hallam's works'. They were 'more for the student than the idle reader.'\textsuperscript{77} An observer a year later considered that Hallam's work 'although much read by students for the information it contains, is little read by the public at large. ... it enjoys little popularity, and exercises little influence on the great world.'\textsuperscript{78} Another commentator, later in the century, similarly noted Hallam's lack of appeal to 'general readers': 'Hallam's work, though most valuable as a book of reference, is not ever likely to be popular.'\textsuperscript{79}

Hallam's influence stemmed, rather, from his work

\textsuperscript{75} Monthly Review, New and Improved Series, vol. 6 (1827), pp. 332-3.

\textsuperscript{76} T.B. Macaulay, Critical and Historical Essays, vol. 1, pp. 3-4.

\textsuperscript{77} H. Hallam, Constitutional History (London, 1872), vol. 1., p. 7.

\textsuperscript{78} R. Denny Urlin, On the late Lord Macaulay, his Life and Writings (Dublin, 1860), p. 16.

having formed the template for many mid-century popular histories, which greatly abridged his interpretation of English constitutional development, and made it more accessible to school-children especially. His own intended audience had been one of serious scholars - but even the less conscientious of the latter had received abridged versions of the *Middle Ages* and the *Constitutional History* by the later nineteenth century.60 By mid-century, Hallam was cited as a dominant influence in the authorities given by writers such as William Douglas Hamilton in his *Outlines of the History of England* and Philip Vernon Smith in his *History of the English Institutions* (1873).61 David Rowland based his examination of 'our constitutional progress' largely on 'the great works of Mr. Hallam'.62 Thomas Keightley wrote in 1837 that 'It is almost superfluous to mention my obligations to the writings of Mr. Hallam, for it would be mere presumption to write a History of England without their aid.'63

As we have seen, the 'whig compromise' with Hume -


involving the abandonment of an Anglo-Saxon origin for the constitution, basing the origin of English liberties in the thirteenth century and stressing the role of the Glorious Revolution in securing them - was present in late eighteenth-century compilations and early nineteenth-century popular histories. Hallam systematised and rendered more coherent a conservative Whig/Hume amalgam which had already been orthodoxy in popular accounts for half a century. Hallam added numerous Foxite Whig caveats to Hume's version, but agreed in substance with far more than he argued with. Hence, Hallam's mid-century dominance as a popular-history authority entails less discontinuity than might be presumed if one held assumptions of a 'Tory'-dominated historical scene before mid-century. Hallam's text was merged with Hume's in The Student's Hume and the Imperial Hume. In David Rowland's 1859 Manual of the English Constitution, Hume's similarities with Hallam were brought out in an account which cited Hume in favour of a

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84 In arguing that a qualified whig view remained very much the norm in British history-writing as a whole from the late eighteenth through to the early nineteenth century, one needs to point out the exaggerations inherent in older interpretations - based in large part on early nineteenth-century Edinburgh Whig polemic - that Hume 'temporarily disintegrated' the Englishman's 'sense of continuity', or that 'Macaulay set out to restore Whig history'. E.g. H. Trevor-Roper, From Counter-Reformation to Glorious Revolution (London, 1992), p. 265.

85 Hence interpretations which talk of a 're-Whigification of English history' in the nineteenth century, as Hallam and Macaulay 'overthrew' Hume, are misleading because of their exclusive focus on 'high' historiography. E.g. B.H.G. Wormald, Clarendon. Politics, Historiography and Religion 1640-1660 (Cambridge, 1989), pp. xv-xvi.

conservative Whig interpretation which relied mainly on 'the great works of Mr. Hallam', 'the great pioneer in Constitutional History.' The fact that Hallam's distinction between the legitimacy of early and later (post 1641) acts of the Long Parliament was also to be found in Hume did not escape some readers. Such a continuity between Hume and Hallam is well expressed by Harriet Martineau's later amazement that The Constitutional History had ever been a politically controversial work. She referred to it as 'that highly Conservative History'.

If there was a noticeable change in tone, it came in the last decades of the century as children's histories began to reflect mid-century works discussed in the last chapter. Hallam's patrician Whiggism, though still influential, was out of step with more popular currents which rejected the top-down political view provided by both Hume and Hallam. In this sense, the enormous success of Green's Short History of the English People marks a period. 'With such a text-book as this English history becomes for the first time a living thing, and makes a great step towards becoming that Bible of the English race which Mr. Carlyle has so truly said it ought to become.'

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90 The Athenaeum (1875), p. 323.
'An Introduction to English History (1881), became (after Green's Short History) the most influential textbook of its day. His sympathy for the seventeenth-century puritans went against both Hume and Hallam's dislike. Its accompanying Introduction to the Study of English History mentioned Hume only in the context of praising Brodie's 'protests' against his 'specious representations'.

Even after Hume's eclipse as an historical authority however, we have seen in the preceding chapter that he retained his literary standing. This helps to explain how a passage of Hume's work, 'the staple of evenly told narrative', could find its way into a collection of Historical Selections for teaching young children published in 1868. Though the favoured authors of the work were Palgrave, Freeman and Milman, the temptation to reach for Hume when the reign of Henry I was reached, where 'there is little that has caught the imagination of writers' was too great to resist. Andrew Amos, Downing Professor of Law at Cambridge, did not list Hume as an authority for his The English Constitution in the Reign of Charles the Second. Hallam was his chief influence - but Hume's touch for

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colourful examples was also made use of." Cheap editions of the History were available in the second half of the century in the series 'The World Library of Standard Works' and 'Sir John Lubbock's Hundred Books'. Any direct influence upon popular or school histories, however, seems to have been long past by this period.

2. 'Catchpenny chaos': Continuations of Hume.

Nineteenth-century accounts of eighteenth-century British history were virtually synonomous with 'continuations' of Hume. In the words of Charles Knight:

More than a century and a half of the most instructive history of modern times is to be sought in professed "Continuations," which, if they are free from the taint of Hume's manifold defects, have little claim to share the honour of his surpassing merits. Smollett takes up the narrative of Hume; and, with no great labour of research, finds his way through another seventy years. We have to choose between the "Continuations" of Smollett, for the history of nearly a century before we reach our own period."

These voluminous 'continuations of Smollett' generally began in 1760, making them neat histories of George III's reign. Only one edition - the Parsons one of the 1790s - seems to have used Smollett's pro-Bute account of the early years of George III's rule. A remark in the advertisement to this work suggests that this last volume of Smollett's

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Complete History was not generally known about.\textsuperscript{97}

Quite apart from Smollett and his continuers, the label 'continuation to Hume' was applied even to works that failed explicitly to declare themselves as such - like Bisset's, which Goodhugh declared the best 'continuation' in his English Gentleman's Library Manual.\textsuperscript{98} Which history of George III's reign one decided to have bound to match one's Hume would depend upon political disposition. In youth, Macaulay was drawn towards the 'Tory' Adolphus's work as a continuation to his Hume and Smollett. The posthumous sale catalogue of his library, however, lists as a single item his Hume alongside the Foxite Whig Belsham's history, which in maturity he had obviously preferred to both Smollett's, which we know he despised, and that of Adolphus.\textsuperscript{99}

Near-contemporary history was, if anything, even more prone to party partisanship than that of the seventeenth century. A sceptical response was guaranteed for any author who claimed to have detached himself from party feelings in writing of the recent past.\textsuperscript{100} Particularly in the 1790s


\textsuperscript{100} E.g. British Critic, vol. 10 (1797), pp. 483-4.
and 1800s, continuations of Hume were therefore as highly charged politically as the work they were attached to. The monarchist de Moleville wrote 'to counteract the pernicious effects of erroneous and inflammatory opinions propagated by some continuators of Hume. These imprudent writers, mistaking democracy for patriotism, have stated as constitutional principles, republican doctrines and exaggerations, fit only to inculcate a dangerous spirit of faction'.\textsuperscript{101} The Whig Monthly Review naturally regarded these charges as exaggerated, though it in turn complained that the Reverend Stewart Whittaker's continuation of Goldsmith lacked the 'spirit of impartiality' needed in 'a work intended for youth', in that it 'far exceeds his precessor in his Tory prejudices, and in his partiality for what are called high-government principles.'\textsuperscript{102}

Towers, as mentioned above, was linked to the production of a continuation in the 1790s as a rival to Bowyer's.\textsuperscript{103} Bowyer himself withdrew from an agreement with the Welsh radical David Williams to write the continuation from the Revolution to his edition, as British hostility to the French Revolution hardened.\textsuperscript{104} These radical

\textsuperscript{101} Ant. Fr. Bertrand de Moleville, A Chronological Abridgment of the History of Great Britain, from the First Invasion of the Romans to the Year 1763 (London, 1812), vol. 3, p. v.


\textsuperscript{103} Gentleman's Magazine, vol. 69 (1799), p. 529.

continuations may have failed to appear, but a purchaser in the 1790s did have either a loyalist or Foxite, anti-Pitt follow-up to choose from.\textsuperscript{105} Political variety was not as pronounced in early nineteenth-century continuations, which tended to a similar moderate position - pronouncedly 'liberal' by the second quarter of the century. This was a liberalism, however, which owed its flavour far more to warm praise of Canning and Peel, and attacks on Pitt the Younger and Liverpool, than to Whiggishness. Interestingly, given Whig attacks on the political influence of Hume's work, there were no 'high-Tory' continuations - although a pronounced bias in favour of the Whig party was uncommon.\textsuperscript{106}

A lack of extreme opinions might be expected given that 'continuations' of Hume for new editions were commonly the product of hack-writers, churning out works on their publishers' specifications. Le Senne, Robert Darnton's epitome of a late-ancien regime 'poor devil', included a 'new enlarged edition' of Hume's History amongst proposals for commissions he could undertake.\textsuperscript{107} He had plenty of counterparts on the other side of the channel by the turn

\textsuperscript{105} C.M. Cormick, \textit{The History of England, from the Death of George the Second to the Peace of 1783. Designed as a Continuation to Hume and Smollett} (London, 1790); J. Barlow, \textit{The History of England, from the year 1765, to the year 1795. Being a CONTINUATION of the HISTORIES of Mr. HUME and Dr. SMOLLETT} (London, 1795).

\textsuperscript{106} Of early nineteenth-century continuations, only John Burke's of 1825 was pro-Whig.

\textsuperscript{107} R. Darnton, \textit{The Literary Underground of the Old Regime} (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1982), p. 79.
of the century. The poet Thomas Campbell was trapped in literary journey-work which included a continuation of Smollett for an amount he thought 'not sufficient to put my name to it.' Another continuation-writer, Hewson Clarke, was described by Byron as 'Condemned to drudge, the meanest of the mean'. This was too cruel - but the amount and range of work completed by 'continuators' like Tomlins or Gaspey obviously mark them out as literary journeymen who only dabbled in history. Few of their productions had much claim to literary merit. Heavily dependent on *The Annual Register* and the most obvious printed sources - and no doubt upon each other - 'continuations' to Smollett were as mismatched in length and style to the latter, as Smollett was to Hume. Any rise above plain narrative was very much the exception. Some were mere annals. John Burke,

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109 Quoted in D.N.B. on 'Clarke, Hewson'.

110 J.R. Miller's *The History of Great Britain from the Death of George II. to the Coronation of George IV. Designed as a Continuation of Hume and Smollett* (London, 1825), was merely an, (unacknowledged), abridgment of Robert Scott's 4-volume *The History of England during the Reign of George III. Designed as a Continuation of Hume and Smollett* (London, 1824).

111 Thomas Hughes's *Continuation* must be mentioned as an honourable exception here. His range of references to printed sources was impressive and his use of them intelligent. He was the only 'Hume and Smollett' continuator noticed by Butterfield in his *George III and the Historians* (London, 1957), who noted that 'he had a certain notion of the processes which take place in history'. (See p. 85.) Yet even the contemporary biographer of the writer of this 'standard authority' admitted 'that the deep historic philosophy of a Hallam, or a Guizot, and the laboriously minute research of many modern historians, could not be expected from him'. See 'Biographical Sketch of Thomas S. Hughes', in D. Hume, T. Smollett & T. Hughes, *The History of*
for example, went out of his way to make it clear he was a 'simple chronologist' who would not 'presume to aspire' 'to develope the motives of action, and to delineate the characteristic traits of the great actors in the political drama'. These were tasks for 'the enlightened and philosophical historian' - which he did not claim to be.\footnote{D. Hume, T. Smollett & J. Burke, The History of England (London, 1825), vol. 6, p. 236. Thomas Wright similarly distinguished between his own 'chronicle', and 'the discriminating character of the history of more remote times' - which political and source difficulties prevented the historian of the recent past from aspiring to. See T. Wright, History of the Reigns of George IV. and William IV., being a Continuation of Hume, Smollett, and Miller's History of England to the Present Time, including the History of the Reform in Parliament (London, 1836), p. vi. Such modesty is striking in a golden age of literary 'puffing', and suggests these writers really felt their works needed apologizing for. Thomas Gaspey was less contrite - quoting Hume on the necessity of abridgment in historical writing as justification for his own chronicle-like method. See The History of England under the Reigns of George III., George IV., William IV., and Queen Victoria (London & New York, 1852-4), vol. 1, p. 1.}

As a genre then, 'continuations' of Hume were notoriously badly written. Gardenstone's verdict on Smollett's 'Continuation' was typically harsh:

The continuation of his English History, from 1748 to 1764, is a mere catchpenny chaos, without even a spark of merit. There is great reason to believe that he, or rather his journey-men, copied at random from somebody else, most of the quotations and references arranged with so much parade on the margin of his text.\footnote{Lord Gardenstone, Miscellanies in Prose and Verse (Edinburgh, 1792), p. 204.}

William Stebbing, writing in 1887, summed up the feelings...
of over a century of commentators when he remarked that:

To Smollett's 'Continuation of Hume,' and the book trade which tyrannically forced it upon several much-enduring generations of readers, must be imputed not a little of the extraordinary superstition that the eighteenth century is the most tedious portion of British history."14

By the mid-nineteenth century the hybrid nature of Smollett's 'continuation' had been long forgotten by the public. William Keddie was therefore able to produce as an 'anecdote' the fact that 'Smollett never wrote a continuation to Hume's History, but the booksellers, wanting a continuation of Hume, took that portion of Smollett's history from the Revolution to the death of George II. and printing it in 5 volumes in 1791, called it Smollett's Continuation of Hume.'15 In fact, the booksellers had been even more economical with the truth. Editions of this spliced version of the latter part of Smollett's Complete History of England and his slower-paced Continuation to the Complete History, were described as The History of England, from the Revolution to the Death of George the Second. (Designed as a Continuation of Mr. Hume's History), so public ignorance about the legitimacy of its union with Hume's work was understandable.16 Such ignorance could only enhance the common dissatisfaction with Smollett's History as a work of literature. A writer

15 W. Keddie, Cyclopaedia of Literary and Scientific Anecdote (London & Glasgow, 1854), p. 44.
16 E.g. The London 1818 edition, or any other.
in the *North British Review* for 1856 exclaimed that "Hume and Smollett" ... (was) now a kind of permanent literary entity in the British mind."\(^{117}\) This was despite the common opinion that Smollett's work 'suffers much from juxtaposition with Hume.'\(^{118}\)

Smollett's carelessness with facts was attacked in a similar manner as were Hume's similar faults.\(^{119}\) A few critics went against the general tendency towards blanket derogation of Smollett's historical work. Naturally, Smollett's own *Critical Review* was favourable in its review.\(^{120}\) The *Annual Register*'s obituary considered the History had 'real intrinsic merit', and 'considering the time and circumstances in which it was written, it is indeed a prodigy of genius, and a great effort of application.'\(^{121}\) Another tempered appreciation ran that 'This work is often deficient in impartiality, and many instances of misrepresentation occur in it; but some parts of it are much superior to others, and it has great merit in point of style.'\(^{122}\)

As with Hume and Goldsmith, where critics did

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\(^{117}\) *North British Review*, vol. 25 (1856), p. 423.


\(^{119}\) E.g. *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 67 (1797), pp. 539-40.

\(^{120}\) *Critical Review*, vol. 20 (1765), pp. 270-74. In 1771, the *Critical* was still praising Smollett's 'clear, succinct, nervous stile.', vol. 31, p. 364.

\(^{121}\) *Annual Register* (1775), p. 48.

\(^{122}\) *The British Plutarch*, 3rd. ed. (London, 1791), vol. 8, p. 121.
praise Smollett, they tended to focus on his literary abilities. One commentator, writing in 1834, thought him 'not unworthy of comparison' with Hume, Robertson and Gibbon, as 'although immeasurably distanced by them in the qualities of judgment, accuracy, and impartiality; in elegance and animation of style, he is not exceeded by any of them.' Interestingly, he also denied what he took as a common accusation, that Smollett showed 'mutability in his political sentiments', which he sees rather as 'independence'.¹²³ (Smollett's 'Toryism' was generally taken for granted - but like Hume's it disintegrated under a close inspection wielding early nineteenth-century modes of reference.) Goodhugh was prepared to estimate Smollett's earlier volumes 'sufficiently pleasing', despite his having lacked 'the dignity of history', and the way he 'takes anything upon trust'.¹²⁴ Similarly qualified was the British Critic's approbatory comment that the Continuation was 'a work in some respects not unworthy of him'.¹²⁵ Chambers' Cyclopaedia of English Literature joined this praise for Smollett's narrative, noting his account of the rebellion in 1745-6, and his observations on the act for the relief of debtors in 1759 as 'excellent specimens of his best style and his benevolence of character'.¹²⁶

Most comments on Smollett's readability however were negative - and his lack of study and preparation were universally condemned. 'Continuations of Hume', as a genre, did nothing to popularize the study of eighteenth-century history. In 1841, Macaulay could remark that 'even to educated people' eighteenth-century England was 'almost a terra incognita'. Lack of enthusiasm for the period - which in the latter half of the twentieth century has so often been blamed on Namier - was in the nineteenth blamed on Smollett. Certainly, the disconnected, ill-proportioned, annalistic narratives of Hume's continuators - gleaned from newspapers and the Annual Register - acted to excentuate the lack of 'a central, defining event' which Linda Colley has suggested is central to understanding 'the torpor that so often characterizes (eighteenth-century) historiography.'

What continuations added to a reader's perception of Hume's place in literary culture is questionable. They can

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127 A negative critical reaction to Smollett's History began even as it was first being published - despite, or perhaps partly because of, its great popular success. One commentator has noted that at the time, 'favorable comments on the work seem to have been almost completely lacking'. See F.W. Boege, Smollett's Reputation as a Novelist (Princeton, 1947), p. 19. In the nineteenth century, appreciation of Smollett's work as an historian can only have been hindered by a decline in his repute as a novelist. The idea that he was 'an uncouth man who wrote uncouth books' became common. See L. Kelly, Tobias Smollett. The Critical Heritage (London & New York, 1987), p. 2.


only have confused interpretations of its politics. Turning
from Hume's account of 1688, to Smollett's of 1689, readers
were jolted by diametrically opposed views of the success
of the Revolution and the character of William III.\textsuperscript{130}
Smollett's dislike of the latter, his praise for Queen Anne
- rare by the nineteenth century - and praise for
eighteenth century 'Tories' can only have helped to bolster
'Hume and Smollett''s collective 'Tory' reputation in the
minds of critics.\textsuperscript{131} To attentive readers, however, the
obvious distance between Hume and Smollett's brands of
'Toryism' might have diluted charges of narrow party-
partisanship - whilst the political variety of the long
'continuations of Smollett' must have further confounded
any desire for consistency. Here, as with the
popularisations of his text, the impression Hume had
originally designed was smothered by clumsy appendages.
What he gained by ubiquity in the early nineteenth century,
he lost though the incomprehension of his continuators and
popularisers - the hack workmen of the 'Hume industry'.

Conclusion.

The most obvious conclusion one can draw from a
study of offshoots and popularisations of Hume's History is

\textsuperscript{130} H.T. Dickenson, 'The Eighteenth-Century Debate on the

\textsuperscript{131} T. Smollett, The History of England, from the Revolution
to the Death of George the Second. (Designed as a Continuation
of Mr. Hume's History.) (London, 1818), vol. 1, p. 443; vol. 2,
p. 292.
that they were not primarily interested in furthering his political philosophy through a reproduction of his method. Most used Hume's name for purely commercial reasons, as an easily available source of authority for a scantily-researched text, and many were positively antipathetic to what they felt the History represented. Though many late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century popular works appreciated Hume's monarchism, hardly any unreservedly approved of his sceptical deconstruction of the ancient constitution, and most distanced themselves from his coolness towards religious belief and nationalist sentiment. Continuations of Hume's work into George III's reign and beyond, separated anyway from Hume's text by the very different one by Smollett, never made any effort to conform to a 'Humean' style. In turn, illustrators of 'Hume and Smollett' more than justified Hume's own antipathy towards the idea of adding a visual dimension to his carefully balanced text. Artists followed thematic trends of their own, with the History just providing a convenient vehicle to hang them on. The shallowness of all this work's relationship with the History might lead one to conclude that Hume's work was just a cypher, which could just have well have been Rapin's or Smollett's as far as most of those producing spin-offs were concerned.

There is obviously much to be said for this view. We have seen the lowly status of most of the authors churning out historical compilations and 'continuations', who can rarely have had much time for the finer points of
the philosophy of history. Yet, as we have also seen, this is not the whole story. However unthinkingly, or at however many removes, borrowings from Hume did take place on a large scale. They contributed to changing the ways the British viewed the origin of parliament, the predicament of Charles I and the relative importance of the Revolution settlement - even if Hume's text failed to batter down the teleological whiggish framework of English historical thought, which had managed to absorb these elements of his interpretation. As we saw in chapter two, the reaction against the French Revolution acted to reinforce a British need for assurance in the age-old nature of their liberties, whilst on the other hand boosting acceptance of certain areas of Hume's version - especially the defence of Charles I - a process reflected in popular and children's histories published during the war period. Hume's History was therefore not uninfluential politically, even if Whig critics tended to exaggerate the extent to which popular writers were in its thrall.

The large numbers of continuations and popularisations also deserve to be considered important in their own right - for the evidence they provide of Hume's popularity and his History's ubiquity. The fact that histories of eighteenth-century Britain were virtually de facto 'continuations of Hume', and an appreciation of the low status of this genre, is important in understanding how Victorians approached the history of the previous century, and especially in comprehending Macaulay's historical
project. The great importance of Bowyer's 'Hume' gallery for the development of British history-painting has long been appreciated by art historians. Late Georgian popular and children's history-writing, meanwhile, has attracted few commentators, but certainly deserves to be studied for what it can tell us about this crucial period in the evolution of a 'British' national identity, quite apart from the degree to which it might or might not have been influenced by Hume. Though Hume himself would probably have been horrified at most of these by-products of his History, the present-day historian can still find them fascinating for what they can tell us about the relentlessly self-devouring culture of popular British historiography on the eve of professionalisation.
Conclusion.

To conclude, I will attempt to answer the key questions raised by the History's long-standing 'standard text' status - beginning by asking how the work attained such a position, and how it managed to retain it for so long. To deal with this, I will summarize the factors which ensured its longevity and centrality in British historical writing, as discussed through this study - stylistic, economic and political. A second, and more difficult, question, concerns the extent to which the History's longevity actually mattered - not only in the historiographical sphere, but also in wider political and religious areas. Did its existence make a difference in the way in which the politics of British history were generally conceived, as Hume had intended? This leads us into the third and final question - how the History's effect should affect our assessment of Hume's overall achievement as a philosopher who sought to popularize a particular way of viewing public life. Did his History accomplish what he had wanted it to, and for the reasons he had thought it would? Did its popularity serve to enhance his real influence, or to detract from it through a radical failure to convey the messages he had intended it to carry? My essential conclusion is that though Hume's work performed a conservative stabilizing role in British political discourse for almost a century, it did so in ways its author had not entirely intended, but which it is unlikely
he would have disapproved of - especially in the circumstances of the world after 1789.

To turn first to the factors underlying the History's longevity, this study has shown that an appreciation of these must rest upon its attractiveness in an historical marketplace which placed great emphasis upon 'classical' authority and polite style. The literary qualities of Hume's smooth narrative stood out as compared to its rivals, and its length at six volumes carried reassuring weight, without representing an insuperable effort to read through - like Rapin's sixteen or Lingard's ten, longer, tomes. Skilful marketing was only part of the story behind the work's long success, though many of the editions were certainly desirable objects in their own right - quite apart from their historical contents. Its status became self-sustaining once it was established as the 'classic' text, through decades of popularity, near-universal stylistic acclaim and widespread usage. That it was widely considered as the narrative of English history at the time of the British reaction against the French Revolution must also have helped secure its canonical position. Efforts to refute it only acted to confirm its status through filling the historical reviews in the periodical press with an ongoing debate about the work. Its role as a political icon aided its ubiquity - since the highly party-politicised press were thus all the more likely to publicise its fortunes, alongside their appeals to its 'timeless' authority in their policy debates.
However, the work's popularity declined precipitately in the mid-nineteenth century - when the literary and political factors which had sustained it ceased to operate as powerfully as they had before. This occurred in the face of a wave of more popular and dramatic narrative history and the collapse of the Whig-Tory faultline in historical writing, which had been revived in the 1800s and flourished through to the 1830s.

To move secondly to a discussion of how much the History mattered in its effect, one can argue that it played a defining role in the field of British narrative history-writing for a century. Its unprecedented status encouraged a hegemonic reading of its standing in a marketplace for 'library' histories, where expense and the power of custom operating on the purchaser did little to encourage pluralism or experimentation. Spoken of as the history of England, criticism revolved around talk of 'displacing' it from its place of preeminence. The notion that it was the history which 'everyone' read, even if exaggerated, encouraged emulation of its particular format. Its status enforced notions of the key topics and most appropriate dividing dates in English history which deeply affected the way others approached their historical tasks. Hume's focus on the rise of the House of Commons as the central issue under the early Stuarts provided a model for nineteenth and twentieth-century whig constitutional
histories.¹ The fact that his History ended in 1688 had a good deal to do with why Lingard finished his work with the Glorious Revolution, and why Mackintosh and Macaulay began there. Indeed the writing of eighteenth-century British history was entirely subordinated to the priorities established by Hume. Histories of the eighteenth-century became, de facto, 'continuations' of Hume — and his gravitational pull ensured that Smollett's 'continuation', usually published as an accompaniment to his work, was the one which people were most familiar with.

As a work read above all as a 'high political' narrative, Hume's History worked to help enforce the notion that non-political matter was only fit for appendices, and kept wider forms of historical investigation from the full lustre of historical 'dignity' — which might be contrasted with the effect on French historiography of Voltaire's more extended treatment of cultural history. In Britain, a late flowering of romantic historical depth was triggered most notably by historical novelists — and Macaulay and Carlyle, after a brief flourish, had less long-term impact than Hume on the manner in which English history was conceived. The late nineteenth-century popularity of The Student's Hume shows how Hume's structural priorities accorded well with the type of history considered serious by the rising academic profession. The History's place on the first Oxford history syllabus in the 1850s, despite all the

doubts about its scholarship, show how indispensable its authority was in conferring weight upon the study of English history. In this regard, even the fact that Hume wrote *The History of England* and not *The History of Great Britain* as first conceived, may be said to have had an effect on the way in which the nascent British historical profession conceived the national past, the effects of which are only now being undone.

Critical contemporaries felt that Hume's supremacy stifled the dissemination of new research, that readers fell back instinctively on the tried and tested *History* they possessed, and that Hume's protracted standard-text status reflected a deep conservatism of the English towards their history, which it in turn also encouraged. As the importance of a more systematic and thorough-going attitude to source scholarship was increasingly propagated, Hume's work stood out as an exemplar of narrative-history writing, and kept the ideal of history as a branch of the fine arts very much alive. Since its chief attractions were held to be its 'simplicity', its clarity and its relatively contained size, those who sought to surpass it whilst improving greatly its scholarship, found themselves exposed to insuperable pressures of length and complexity - hence, in part, Mackintosh and Macaulay's failures of completion.

In contrast, however, with this story of the *History*'s hegemony as a negative influence on historical writing - a crippling unsurpassable weight on historians' backs - one may also note the creative inspiration the work
itself provided in other art-forms. From a verse drama like Fanny Burney's *Edwy and Elgiva*, through the art of Bowyer's gallery, to historical novels like Bulwer's *Last of the Barons* and Scott's *Old Mortality*, Hume's work provided more positive frameworks for creative effort. Historians who approached his *History* in a receptive spirit, like Isaac D'Israeli, could also gain from an emulation of his style. For most historical writers, though, his example was an intimidating one, until the later nineteenth-century collapse of the ideal that the writing of an authoritative 'history of England' was a fit task for a single individual - an ideal the life of which it seems likely that the spell of Hume's historical supremacy unhelpfully prolonged.

Where Hume's *History* had a limited effect was in destroying a whiggish teleological view of the English past. If anything, Hume only managed to temper it, causing Whigs to push forward their dating of the beginning of constitutional progress to the thirteenth century. Generally, 'vulgar' whig elements in Hume's narrative acted to undermine the influence of his overall thesis. The focus provided by illustrators would help to draw the readers' attention to his approval of Magna Carta, the Petition of Right and the Glorious Revolution, and the strength of prevailing contemporary assumptions would dictate that his

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deviations from the expected would be condemned as 'inconsistencies' more often than they were examined as part of an anti-whig synthesis.\(^3\) If his assault on the 'false philosophy' of optimistic nationalist history was less successful than he might have hoped, so was his contribution to secularising the study of history. The widespread influence of a work which, despite its conservatism, was decidedly non-theological was worrying to writers like Hannah Moore and Francis Palgrave. However, one only has to look at Mrs. Markham's very popular children's *History of England* which saw no problem in steeping what was avowedly a simplication of Hume's work in providential explanation, to see that their fears were somewhat exaggerated. Here, as with whiggish history, Hume's work faced the limits of its influence, which was strongest when it worked with the grain of popular English sentiment.

Nowhere did this apply more than in the field of party politics, where the English addiction to the 'parties of principle' born of the seventeenth century was only further encouraged by the *History*’s role in political debate - whilst in turn it helped to secure this 'Tory' work's place at the centre of British political discourse. Hence, Hume was far from successful in removing destabilizing historical models from party political thought. If anything, the controversy surrounding the *History* was a factor helping to keep the label of 'Toryism'

alive during the late eighteenth century - at a time when it had little concrete existence - until the 1810s and '20s when a revived Tory party took Hume to their hearts as a somewhat unlikely icon of their creed.

However, I would argue that Hume undoubtedly succeeded in helping to shift Whig history in a conservative direction in the late eighteenth century. His rehabilitation of Charles I was especially influential through to the end of the French wars. Meanwhile, his arguments against the idealisation of Anglo-Saxon liberties were popular even with Whig opponents of his work, when they were faced with Radical ancient-constitutionalism as an argument for 'excessive' reform. The classic status accorded to Hume's History, the greater respect it won for the writing of history as a pursuit and the consequent emulation it inspired in many gifted political thinkers, alongside its wide dissemination and the obsession generations of Whigs had with refuting it - all this helped to keep British political culture stolidly historicist. Interpreted in this sense, the History acted as a largely successful bulwark against the widespread 'infection' of British political thought with any anti-historical form of 'natural rights' language, in the face of a revolutionary crisis in the 1790s which Hume had certainly not anticipated - but in a manner which, under the circumstances, I do not think would have unduly concerned
The History's ironic influence, then, was to help in establishing a supremacy for conservative Whig history, and then to serve as the central pillar of a golden age for whiggish nationalist writing. 'The greatest monument of historical literature in our language', as Hallam termed it, acted as goad and inspiration for generations of historians. The breadth and importance of the History's influence has been little understood until recently. Famous negative comments on Hume by figures like Macaulay, and the apparent incongruity in claiming such an effect for a writer whose thought was long held to be an anti-historical, as well as anti-English, prevented a fair appreciation of his History's legacy.

The roots of such misunderstandings had been present from the work's publication, and during the nineteenth century they became firmly enshrined in Hume criticism. Central to their development was the politically-partisan nature of most critical comment on the History. By the

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4 The conservative implications of the domination of historicist frames of reference over British political discourse were best summed up by Burke: 'Few are the partisans of departed tyranny; and to be a Whig on the business of an hundred years ago, is very consistent with every advantage of present servility. This retrospective wisdom, and historical patriotism, are things of wonderful convenience; and serve admirably to reconcile the old quarrel between speculation and practice. Many a stern republican, after gorging himself with a full feast of admiration of the Grecian commonwealths and of our true Saxon constitution, and discharging all the splendid bile of his virtuous indignation on King John and King James, sits down perfectly satisfied to the coarsest work and homeliest job of the day he lives in.' F.G. Selby, ed. Burke's Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents (London, 1905), pp. 7-8.

nineteenth century, Hume's motives in writing the work had been thoroughly obscured by the overwhelming impression, cemented by Hume himself in My Own Life, that a 'Tory' historian tag was all-explanatory - which generally now involved the additional misapprehension that mid-eighteenth-century 'Toryism' was the same as early nineteenth-century 'Toryism'. At the same time, a party-politicised split in Hume appreciation helped to prevent a unified analysis of his work - the Edinburgh and Quarterly reviews holding diametrically opposed views on Hume's value as a 'Tory' historian, a 'liberal' political essayist and an 'infidel' philosopher.

The heated controversy surrounding the History prevented rounded studies of Hume's work as a whole. His reputation was too thoroughly politicised. That his philosophical works, in particular the Treatise, should have been widely appreciated, was hardly a likely prospect in the post-Revolutionary period. However, the highly-charged political arguments surrounding the History may have made the situation even worse. Frequent charges of inconsistency against the historian backed up accusations of incoherency against the philosopher - as claims of lying and dishonesty in the History could be linked to the immorality of the 'infidel'. The overwhelming evidence for Hume's slackness in source scholarship, along with constant Whig claims that he was a slave to theory in his desire to use the whole of English history to apologise for the actions of the early Stuarts, acted against the development
of a widespread appreciation of the empirical as opposed to the sceptical side of his philosophical thought - which one might think the popularity of his History would have furthered.⁶

Even the fame of his stylistic abilities, particularly as displayed in the History, did little to endear him to many Victorian critics, who valued moral content and methodical rigour above presentational gloss.⁷ Indeed, the effortless sleekness of his prose was regarded by some as a sure sign of his untrustworthiness, as his French sympathies in the arts - demonstrated most famously in the History's criticism of Shakespeare - were seen as grossly un-English, and even unmanly.

All in all, the circumstances of the History's success did nothing to render more palatable Hume's philosophic works. His thought as a whole was therefore bound to be badly misunderstood, and his reputation as a wholly negative, destructive thinker remained entrenched through to the later nineteenth century, when the History was fading from public consciousness. Far from helping to popularize Hume's demystifying philosophical 'system', the battles surrounding the History helped ensure it would rarely be examined coolly, or without misleading

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⁶ Certainly, the novel attention paid to the History by Hume scholars over the last three decades has been central to the achievement of a more rounded appreciation of Hume's 'sceptical empiricism'. Its earlier centrality in critical assessments of Hume's oeuvre, however, can be seen to have had entirely the opposite effect.

⁷ M.A. Box, The Suasive Art of David Hume (Princeton, 1990), pp. 5-6.
preconceptions. His political Essays were commonly regarded as having been written on different, more 'liberal' principles - simply because they lacked the History's emotive 'Tory' aura, sustained by generations of critical comment. Yet Hume had clearly intended the two texts to be complementary, and to be read in tandem if his 'philosophical politics' were to be accurately comprehended.

We may conclude that, although in the century after 1750 David Hume enjoyed a level of audience and influence which few philosophers have ever enjoyed, his History achieved what success it did in furthering a cautious attitude towards politics without its readership possessing a nuanced understanding of its writer's intentions. Varieties of Whig 'compromise' in historiography, the work's enduring association with 'Toryism', and chauvinistic presentations of the text, ensured that the History's image became encrusted with misconceptions. Though this lack of accurate appreciation might have been frustrating for Hume, it seems a fitting legacy for a writer who had such a low view of rational intention, and who put such an emphasis on the power of custom and unreasoning forces like party passions - exactly the factors which I would argue helped to keep the History a 'chief standard work' for so long.
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