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# Quoting Speeches and Thoughts, an Insight into Historical Causality: David Hume and Eighteenth-Century Writing

Fiona McIntosh-Varjabédian

## ABSTRACT

The article analyses a specific section in the rhetorics of historical causality, *i.e.* the status of surmises and of reported speeches in David Hume's *History of England* and in eighteenth-century writing at large. The article compares Hume's practices concerning reported speeches and quotations with those of his major counterparts: Voltaire, Rapin de Thoyras and Robertson. Hume uses indirect speeches in order to blur the distinction between the characters' thoughts and the narrator's reconstruction of the actors' motives or beliefs. This practice, full of potential innuendoes and irony, creates a whole gamut of various discourses because the reader has to make a subtle distinction between the speeches that are implicitly rejected by the narrator as errors and those that are validated by his own explanations. This conscious stylistic blur, which appears essential to preserve the narrator's character as a moderate and enlightened observer, undermines some of the criteria that contemporary studies, both outside and inside the literary field, have promoted in order to draw a borderline between factual and fictional discourses.

**M**y aim is to analyse a specific section in the rhetorics of historical causality, *i.e.* the status of surmises and of reported speeches in David Hume's *History of England*<sup>1</sup> and in eighteenth-century writing at large. Indeed, according to a classical conception of History, the deeds of historical characters are the key of the narrative. However, if most actions can be traced back to documents, the speeches and the thoughts attributed to the character can either be considered as mere hypotheses deduced from their actions and from various historical sources or as sheer rhetorical achievements.

In Hume's case, Karen O'Brien stresses both his "impartiality and artistry" and his focus on "private sentiments and public consequences", as a proof of his mastery.<sup>2</sup> However, these two aspects seem largely incompatible and Karen O'Brien reminds us that Hume's sentimental language, while underlying the inner feelings of Charles I and James II, had been devised in order to enable "his readers to reevaluate Whig prejudice" against these two monarchs.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, the possible conflict between impartiality and emotional or psychological insight may be solved to a cer-

<sup>1</sup> The edition I refer to is *The History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution in 1688*, in six volumes, based on the Edition of 1778, with the Author's Last Corrections and Improvements (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1983), noted *HoE*.

<sup>2</sup> K. O'Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment, Cosmopolitan History from Voltaire to Gibbon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 59-61.

<sup>3</sup> K. O'Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment*, 66. See also V. G. Wexler, "David Hume's Discovery of a New Scene of Historical Thought", *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 10, 2 (1976-1977): 199. The article discusses Hume's anti-Whig stance but suggests that this stance does not make him an unconditional pro-Tory historian.

tain extent by referring to Hume's ideal of moderation and balance.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, Donald T. Siebert shows that although "he was sensitive to the possibility of 'interesting' scenes",<sup>5</sup> he was also very wary of any kind of "solitary pathos".<sup>6</sup> In this respect, one can notice that he rarely quotes his historical characters' memorable phrases directly, thus limiting their possible theatrical effect, for he is more interested in the depiction of motivations as part of the historical process, than in the signs of heroic grandeur. Historical characters thus acquire an identity as they become the centre of various feelings, thoughts and actions. Their speeches, although they are frequently reported in an indirect mode, belong mostly to the domain of historical actions because they had an influence on the other characters that were present at the time and thus have to be reported.

However, I shall contend that David Hume shifts the narrative viewpoints not only to ensure a balanced account of the past and that he uses indirect speech in order to blur the distinction between the characters' thoughts and the narrator's reconstruction of the actors' motives or beliefs. This practice might be read as a consequence of the philosopher's definition of belief since the difference between fiction and belief is based on their effects and not on their truthfulness. Erroneous beliefs, as proves the *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, may still have a "superior influence on the passions and imagination" than fictions based on real and truthful stories.<sup>7</sup> The narrative is filled with potential innuendoes and irony and the stylistic device creates a whole gamut of various discourses because the reader has to make a subtle distinction between the speeches that are implicitly rejected by the narrator as errors or fiction<sup>8</sup> and those that are validated by his own explanations. In order to capture Hume's specificity as a writer, I shall compare him to his major counterparts and examine how deeply Hume's practice in the matter of reported speech differs from Rapin de Thoyras's in *Histoire d'Angleterre*, Voltaire's in *Le Siècle de Louis XIV* and Robertson's in *The History of Scotland*. Finally, I suggest that this conscious stylistic blur undermines some of the criteria that contemporary studies in narratology have used in order to draw a borderline between factual and fictional discourses.

<sup>4</sup> For a comment on the multiplication of viewpoints in Hume's historical writings and his focus on balance, see C. Gautier, *Hume et les savoirs de l'histoire* (Paris: Vrin, 2005). See also L. Okie, "Ideology and Partiality in David Hume's *History of England*", *Hume Studies*, 1 (1985): 1-32. He details Hume's arguments and analyses their political impact or implications. His work supports the idea that the arguments are mixed, both *Whig* and *Tory*. However, the debate on Hume's partiality or impartiality never seems to be closed. See more recently D. Livingston, "David Hume and the Conservative Tradition", *Intercollegiate Review* (Fall 2003): 30-41.

<sup>5</sup> D. T. Siebert, "The Sentimental Sublime in Hume's *History of England*", *The Review of English Studies*, XL, 3 (1989): 362.

<sup>6</sup> D. T. Siebert, "The Sentimental Sublime in Hume's *History of England*", 359.

<sup>7</sup> See D. Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, ed. P. Milligan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 35: "I say then, that belief is nothing but a more vivid, lively, forcible, firm, steady conception of an object, is intended only to express that act of the mind, which renders realities, or what is taken for such, more present to us than fictions, causes them to weigh more in the thought, and gives them a superior influence on the passions and imagination."

<sup>8</sup> On the status of questionable beliefs inside the historical narrative, see: F. McIntosh-Varjabédian, "L'écriture de l'histoire et la légitimité des études textuelles: Peut-on encore parler de linguistic ou de cultural turn en littérature générale et comparée?". Published on the 01/30/2011, *Vox Poetica*, <<http://www.vox-poetica.org/sflgc/biblio/macintosh.html>> accessed 3/02/2012.

I. GIVING THE ACTOR'S POINT OF VIEW:  
IMPARTIALITY OR MANIPULATION?

It is not necessary here to enter the debate on whether Hume believed or not in the existence of personal identity,<sup>9</sup> since, by itself, the retrospective vantage point on the past creates the impression that various actions are linked together through the emotions and the volition of the historical actors who are represented “as the ultimate point of departure for all explanation”,<sup>10</sup> according to Nicolas Capaldi’s phrase. At this point, the style in *The History of England* resembles that of Robertson’s *History of Scotland*. Impressions, perceptions, expectations and feelings organise both analyses, for, as Louis E. Loeb demonstrates, they are based “on the relation of cause and effect”.<sup>11</sup> Indeed as Hume points out in *A Treatise of Human Nature*: “[...] [a]ll resembling impressions are connected together, and no sooner one arises than the rest immediately follow”.<sup>12</sup> Hence the historian must then try and decipher the inner workings of the associations of ideas and passions so as to establish why such and such a decision has been made.<sup>13</sup> His aim is to give order and seemingly separate the facts from the conclusions that the actors have drawn from these same facts.<sup>14</sup> The operation seems all the more plausible since particular circumstances or events are likely to give rise to the same unvarying feelings under the combined effect of *custom* and *practice* (*THN*, 293). Thus, the reactions and beliefs of the protagonists complete the commentaries made by the narrator himself, for, “[...] always [the historian] is sensible that the more unbroken the chain to which he presents his reader, the more perfect is his production”.<sup>15</sup> A coherent narrative depends on how both facts and intentions are linked to the subsequent events.<sup>16</sup> But as Sally Daiches underlines it in her dissertation, such a coherence is mainly a rhetorical construct, for the narrative must fill in the possible loopholes.<sup>17</sup> Thus as the historian tries and makes perceptible the actors’ point of view on a given situation in order to provide

<sup>9</sup> N. Capaldi, “Hume’s Theory of the Self”, *David Hume Critical Assessments*, ed. S. Tweyman (London; New York: Routledge, 1995), vol. III, 628; T. Penelhum, “Hume’s Theory of the Self Revisited”, *David Hume Critical Assessments*, 658.

<sup>10</sup> N. Capaldi, “Hume as social scientist”, *David Hume Critical Assessments*, 14.

<sup>11</sup> L. E. Loeb, “Intergrating Hume’s Account of Belief and Justification”, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 63, 2 (2001): 281.

<sup>12</sup> D. Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 1739, ed. Selby-Bigge, with revisions and variants by P. H. Niddich (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 283. See a few lines further: “’Tis evident, then, there is an attraction or association among impressions, as well as among ideas; tho’ with this remarkable difference, that ideas are associated by resemblance, contiguity, and causation; and impressions only by resemblance”. At this point passions and ideas are linked together in a neutral manner.

<sup>13</sup> I disagree with Claude Gautier on this point: Hume’s narrative is perhaps devoid of “moralizing stigmatisation” (I translate) (*Hume et les savoirs de l’histoire*, 125) but certainly not of “psychological remarks”.

<sup>14</sup> See also Gautier, *Hume et les savoirs de l’histoire*, 109.

<sup>15</sup> D. Hume, *Philosophical Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, 1748, in *The Philosophical Works of David Hume* (Edinburgh: Adam Black, William Tait, Charles Tait, 1828), vol. 3, 27. The passage is one of the *Enquiry*’s textual variants see the above mentioned *An Enquiry*, 2007, 179. The whole passage was deleted in the last 1777 edition.

<sup>16</sup> See U. Voigt, *David Hume und das Problem der Geschichte* (Berlin: Duncker & Humboldt, 1975), 25, 51.

<sup>17</sup> S. Daiches, *Über das Verhältnis der Geschichtsschreibung D. Hume’s zu seiner praktischen Philosophie* (Leipzig: Alexander Edelman, 1903), 16-17. The dissertation is old but it can be considered as a landmark after nineteenth century criticisms against Hume’s historical writing.

the reader with a plausible chain of events, the subsequent question is to which extent the narrator sides with his historical characters as he founds his narrative on *general rules* and *maxims* (*THN*, 293), for these various viewpoints can either be reliable according to eighteenth-century standards or seem imbued with superstition, enthusiasm or error, according to these same standards.<sup>18</sup> In the end, uncertainty about the very status of these beliefs deeply undermines the apparent impartiality of the narrative itself.

In that respect, two stances may emerge: either the author and the reader subscribe to the actor's opinions as they are described or quoted inside the narrative, or they consider these persuasions as erroneous. In the latter case, the reported thoughts and speeches relate to a kind of fiction and entail a critical or an ironical distance the reader may take for granted or not. If nevertheless a glimpse of the actors' minds is rendered in a seemingly neutral manner, the whole chain of events may come unquestioned, however mistaken their point of view may be in effect. This seeming neutrality may weaken the narrator's authority as a man of sound moral judgements founded on plausible inductions:<sup>19</sup>

But Henry was sensible, that there remained another foundation of power, somewhat resembling the right of conquest [...]; and that this title, guarded by vigour and abilities, would be sufficient to secure perpetual possession of the throne. He had before him the example of Henry IV [...]. He could perceive that this claim [...] might still have subsisted, withstanding the preferable title of York [...]. Instructed by this recent experience, Henry was determined to put himself in possession of regal authority; and to show that nothing but force of arms and a successful war should be able to expel him; [...]

These views of Henry are not exposed to much blame, because founded on good policy, and even on a species of necessity (*HoE*, III, 6).

The narrator at this point accepts Henry's usurpation cynically while echoing the monarch's own justifications. The syntax of the whole paragraph, based on finite clauses introduced by verbs expressing thoughts on past experience, confers great plausibility to the king's highly questionable reasonings. Thus the internal logic of the whole prevails over the morality of the arguments that seem rather matter of fact when taken one by one. Indeed, the so-called right of conquest refers directly to William the Conqueror thus founding all subsequent reigns on that initial usurpation. Moreover, it is a historical truth that Henry IV was a usurper himself and that he nevertheless succeeded in maintaining his power, thus gaining legitimacy from his sheer success. Hence, the whole paragraph sounds like a specious vindication of the legality of force and of the "fait accompli". But does this lack of good faith, to use the term in the Ciceronian sense of *fides*, mean in itself that the narrator sides with the king as he gives voice to Henry's point of view? The status of these insights is problematical despite the excuses that are given.

A trait of irony appears nonetheless a few pages later, in order to cast a more critical light on the king. Henry IV is not convinced by his own ingeniousness (*HoE*,

<sup>18</sup> See the distinction Hume makes between "philosophical probabilities" and "unphilosophical probabilities" as analysed by M. Martin, "The Rational Warrant for Hume's General Rules", *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 31, April (1993): 248.

<sup>19</sup> See S. K. Wertz, *Between Hume's Philosophy and history: Historical Theory and Practice* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2000), 17.



III, 11) and therefore appeals to the court of Rome in order to justify his reign. His pleading evinces that the so-called justifications are totally unjustifiable, for Hume's repeated hostility towards the papal power demonstrates that only a true usurper would search abroad the legal sanction he cannot possibly obtain at home. Thus, all the monarch's actions and decisions, whether in front of Parliament or towards foreign authorities, his suspicion and his avarice depend on the odious taint that stains his regime. The remarkable rhetoric of the passage conveys unity and coherence to the king's many caprices because his despotism is the consequence of his usurpation. Factuality and analysis are cleverly mingled here, whereas, generally speaking, Hume uses more balanced sentences in which facts and commentaries come at the two ends of the same sentence.<sup>20</sup>

In this particular instance, the rhetorical device works both ways: implicit rules that have already been asserted on other occasions link the various events together and confirm the whole narrative sequence and at the same time, the events themselves have been selected to form a causal chain and to help the reader extract a general meaning from the particular instances.<sup>21</sup> As Nicolas Phillipson shows, Hume had a particular audience in mind: "intelligent and thoughtful men and women" "too rich to be servile to the great, too poor to tyrannize the humble", men and women who had to understand "the history and culture of their own class and country".<sup>22</sup> In this respect, Hume sticks to the main argument of the age concerning the interest of history: facts and dates in themselves are of no interest,<sup>23</sup> they must lead to "general knowledge" to quote Rapin de Thoyras's editor in 1749, "maxims" and "reflections" help create a critical distance and ensure the "impartiality"<sup>24</sup> of the whole. However, we touch here a sore spot, for, as we shall see, these maxims, be they implicit or not, may fail to ensure the impartiality of the historical discourse because, in this case, the validity of the causal chain is less the crux of the narrative than the implied values and the judgements of the historian himself.

Thanks to Hume's apt syntax, references to the common nature of mankind through the prince's fears, jealousies and suspicions are closely intertwined with factual details, so that, at each step, the reader may recognize the validity of the facts and of the emotions involved, because these passions belong to the common stock of man's follies and errors.<sup>25</sup> As Ulrich Voigt points out, historical knowledge is based on an analogical thought.<sup>26</sup> This recognition becomes the key of the sympathetic

<sup>20</sup> See F. McIntosh, *Écriture de l'histoire et regard rétrospectif: Clío et Epiméthée* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2010), chapter I.

<sup>21</sup> See for instance J. Farr, "Hume, Hermeneutics, and History: A 'Sympathetic' Account", *History and Theory*, 17, 3 (1978): 285-310.

<sup>22</sup> N. Phillipson, *David Hume, the Philosopher as Historian* (London; New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2011, revised edition), 52.

<sup>23</sup> Moritz Baumstark argues that Hume knew how to conduct a "painstaking philological research" and to collect "scattered pieces of evidence". Hence, the comparatively reduced number of footnotes in the *History of England* can be accounted for a strong stylistic choice. See M. Baumstark, *David Hume: the Making of a Philosophical Historian. A Reconsideration*, PhD thesis (The University of Edinburgh: 2008), 78, <[www.era.lib.ed.ac.uk/1842/3265](http://www.era.lib.ed.ac.uk/1842/3265)> accessed 29/06/2012.

<sup>24</sup> Rapin de Thoyras, *Histoire d'Angleterre*, new edition with additions from the notes of Mr de Tindal, ed. M. de S. M. (The Hague: 1749), t. I; V. Further references from this edition will be noted *H d'A*.

<sup>25</sup> See THN, section IV, *Of the causes of the violent passions*, 418-422.

<sup>26</sup> U. Voigt, *David Hume und das Problem der Geschichte*, 102.

response the reader should have in front of the historical scene: a mixture of feeling and of rationality. But despite the obvious balance and moderation of the spectator, it is hardly possible to consider it as true impartiality, that is to say, as a chain of action the necessity of which can be recognized by any polished spectator, whatever his personal prejudices may be. Thus described, the causal chain meets with more or less implicit criticism because its plausibility as a sequence of events or decisions does not entail the legitimacy either of the motivations or of the subsequent actions. As Hume expresses the problem in the *Enquiry*, “[w]e learn the events of former ages from history; but then we must peruse the volumes, in which this instruction is contained, till we arrive at the eye-witnesses and spectators of these distant events” (*Enquiry*, 2007, 33). The problem is contained in the word “spectators”, for there is no *direct* observation of the mind, only surmises can be made. The reader’s discrimination is called forth, facts are to be judged mostly according to his own standards and observations despite Robertson’s protests against anachronistic evaluations (*HoS*, 373). As evidenced by the violent reactions Hume’s narrative caused on each side of the political scene, a constant shift of point of view could be resented as being highly manipulative and dishonest.<sup>27</sup>

Hume is not an isolated example of this form of historical characterisation founded on feelings and on possibly erroneous beliefs. Giancarlo Carabelli, after R. Hamowy, reminds us that the “unintended ends” were a popular doctrine among the Scottish thinkers of the Enlightenment as it enabled them to absorb, as it were, irrational consequences of individual (ill-)planning in their explanations.<sup>28</sup> In the *History of Scotland*, which, for its first edition, was published on the very same year as the fourth volume of the *History of England*, that is in 1759, William Robertson seems even to go one step further in this highly manipulative art of historical portrayal, while narrating how the Queen of England showed much hesitation in her dealings with Mary Stuart. The political cautions of the former are not founded on true rational motives but appear as the consequence of mere female jealousy, a general phenomenon the male reader is undoubtedly supposed to easily recognise in his every day life:

In judging of the conduct of princes, we are apt to ascribe too much to political motives and too little to the passions which they feel in common with the rest of mankind. In order to account for Elizabeth’s present, as well as her subsequent conduct towards Mary, we must not always consider her as a queen, we must sometimes regard her merely as a woman (*HoS*, 271).

Robertson mocks this instance of female coquetry, but his target is not only fraught with misogyny, since by giving so futile motives to political action, he debunks the figure of the rational political leader at the same time. However whether the rivalry between the queens is founded or not, the consequences on history are palpable enough. The economy of the device is evident since both the feelings and the actions

<sup>27</sup> I disagree with Claude Gautier who considers that these reactions corroborate the validity of the argument Hume develops in *My Life* (see Gautier, *Hume et les savoirs de l’histoire*, 287). The fact that the very same topic appears under the fictitious pen of the very unreliable Jeddiah Cleishbothom at the beginning of *The Heart of Midlothian* tends to prove that it must not be taken at face value only.

<sup>28</sup> G. Carabelli, *On Hume and Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics, The Philosopher on a Swing* (New York; Bern; Frankfurt am Main; Paris; Vienna: Peter Lang, 1995), 21.

described corroborate each other. As Robertson terms it later in the narrative: "It is by the effects of this reciprocal passion, rather than by their accounts of it, that subsequent historians can judge of its reality" (*HoS*, 385). It is conspicuous here that Robertson refers to *reality* and not to *truth*, for an irrelevant or immaterial fact may lead to material and even dire consequences. This avowal points out the historiographical trick used to build up a coherent discourse and to eschew the excesses of Pyrrhonism at the same time, all the more so since he admits that "it is almost impossible to form any satisfactory conjecture concerning the motives which influence a capricious and irregular mind" (*HoS*, 386). Thus irrationality and caprice become convenient categories in themselves to explain what cannot be explained and to justify the author's surmises.

Probably, in this particular instance, Hume's categories are more refined than Robertson's but this inherent quality of the former's narrative also conveys greater moral uncertainty: changing passions are not merely opposed to reason, they can serve as an extra fuel in rational decision-making, thus puzzling the reader's moral judgement even further. Indeed, Hume rejects part of the topical misogynous explanation and instead of focusing on Elizabeth's vanity only, accounts for the postponement of an interview in York between the two queens by stressing the unwillingness of the English sovereign to stand a comparison that might mar the affections of the people: since Elizabeth's power is built on her personal popularity, political and personal motives converge so as to become inseparable in the reader's mind (*HoE*, IV, 67). In spite of these slight divergences of interpretation, the portrayal technique is quite similar and there is a subtle interplay between the more permanent elements of human nature that the reader may recognize as such and the many changing circumstances. This interplay gives an air of probability to the narrative without which no credibility in what the historian says is possible.<sup>29</sup> Thus the study of character merges into what Neil Hargraves calls the "larger category of manners"<sup>30</sup> and conveys a formal coherence and unity to whole sequences of events on end.<sup>31</sup> The Plutarchian model is still obviously at work, as evidenced by Hume's own reference to the *Parallel Lives* while depicting Montrose (*HoE*, VI, 20), but on a minor mode, for true instances of moral greatness are much rarer than the many petty prejudices that disfigure past and contemporary politics.

However, needless to say, there is still a kind of fallacy at work since the feelings and the facts account for each other as above-mentioned. This fallacy explains why Robertson had to "face a long-standing prejudice, according to which only eye-witnesses would be able to penetrate the meaning of the actions of historical actors",<sup>32</sup> because as the historian himself had no inner knowledge, nor even any intimate relations with the actors, he had to supply this lack of information either by pointing out to general rules or by relying on the accounts contemporary actors or spectators

<sup>29</sup> See S. K. Wertz, "Hume, History, and Human Nature", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 36, 3 (1975): 491.

<sup>30</sup> N. Hargraves, "The 'Progress of Ambition': Character, Narrative, and Philosophy in the Works of William Robertson", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 63, 2 (2002): 264.

<sup>31</sup> N. Hargraves, "Revelation of Character in Eighteenth-Century Historiography and William Robertson's History of the Reign of Charles V", *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 27, 2 (2003): 25.

<sup>32</sup> D. Francesconi, "William Robertson on Historical Causation and Unintended Consequences", *Cromohs*, 4 (1999): 4, <[http://www.unifi.it/riviste/cromohs/4\\_99/francesconi.htm](http://www.unifi.it/riviste/cromohs/4_99/francesconi.htm)> accessed 3/03/2007.

made of the events. When the historian is fully responsible for what is said, because he can give a testimony of the speech and a token of the feelings involved, the argument is no longer purely circular and based on internal coherence only. It depends on the reliability of the speaker or of the witnesses themselves. A shift in the narrative can take place, for the authority of the historian is displaced onto those who speak in his place. A new stylistic dilemma appears because the main narrator must make the reader understand to which extent these reported voices are more trustworthy and more authoritative than himself. Thus the status of these speeches must be defined, for, once again, their *reality* might enter into conflict with their appropriateness. In this respect, I contend that Hume's practices belong mostly to him proper and for that very reason are far more devious than those of his major counterparts.

## II. CAUSATION AND SPEECHES: TWO NARRATIVE CHOICES

The prejudice according to which a reported speech or any form of insight into a character's mind must be based on witnesses is not to be found in the sole realm of history. As Cécile Cavaillac argues in her illuminating article "Vraisemblance pragmatique ou autorité fictionnelle"<sup>33</sup> on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century narratives, a writer, while referring to a character's thoughts, had to be able to answer the reader's question, *i.e.* how do you know? Thus, they had to be expressed in public, in front of (fictional) witnesses or be related in (fictional) letters or memoirs in order to satisfy the pragmatic verisimilitude of the whole scene and preserve the writer's authority. These literary expectations influence historical writings as well, since the actors' speeches need to be justified by the historian. If they cannot be verified by his own presence at the scene, personal letters, documents or any other converging testimonies have to be called up. As the article by abbé Maller in the *Encyclopaedia* of Diderot and D'Alembert proves, harangues, although they are still considered as one of the most useful parts of history, are liable to be questioned because they might have been invented as a mere decorative rhetoric device. As Maller's article offers a summary of the pros and cons of direct speeches in historical writing and gives a good idea of the dispute, I will refer to its main arguments. Moreover, since French historiography is considered during the eighteenth century as a lasting model<sup>34</sup> and part of Hume's and Robertson's aims was to prove that British achievements were not necessarily short of the Continental success,<sup>35</sup> the article can convey a good idea of contemporary standards.

First, the use of harangues seems highly questionable because they lack verisimilitude and break the narrative thread. Second, it is impossible to ascertain their fidelity to the original speech and thus they appear as mere inventions. Neverthe-

<sup>33</sup> C. Cavaillac, "Vraisemblance pragmatique ou autorité fictionnelle", *Poétique*, 101 (1995): 23-46.

<sup>34</sup> See P. Hicks, *Neoclassical History and English Culture, from Clarendon to Hume* (London: Macmillan, 1996) 11, 27 sqq; J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, vol. I, *The Enlightenments of Edward Gibbon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), chapters 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10.

<sup>35</sup> Hume refers to this judgement on British historiography in a letter to John Cleplane (5<sup>th</sup> January, 1753): see V. Wexler, "David Hume's Discovery of a New Scene of Historical Thought", *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 10, 2 (winter 1976-1977), p. 191. See Wertz (*Between Hume's Philosophy and History*, 137, n. 17) who underlines the probable influence of Voltaire's *The Age of Louis XIV* on Hume. Hume rejected the comparison, but it was taken for granted by many of his contemporaries (D. Wootton, "David Hume, 'the historian'", in *The Cambridge Companion to Hume*, ed. D. F. Norton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 283).

less, the article tells us, those who still defend the device underline the great variety of styles and of viewpoints it offers, a variety which enables the writer to reveal the enemies' thoughts and disclose hidden events. This many-sidedness is particularly important for political reasons when a deliberative assembly is the object of the narrative. Finally, last argument, there might be means to ensure the exactitude of these speeches.<sup>36</sup>

This last remark may account for Rapin de Thoyras's art of composition. Indeed, to satisfy the new critical thrust, and although, to quote Laird Okie, "he was no innocent in the art of paraphrase and compilation",<sup>37</sup> he gives a new importance to the documents and the direct testimonies they confer. To that end, he diverges from the contemporary stylistic ideal of ease and fluidity and breaks the narrative thread to quote the letters or the speeches, sometimes extensively.<sup>38</sup> Their exactitude is guaranteed, as it were, by the fact that they are clearly separated from the narrative or from the historian's commentaries, typographically or by quotation marks. If they have been modified or abridged, the narrator underlines the modifications and explains the reasons of his choice (*Hd'A*, IX, 20). Moreover, the different parts of the narrative itself are remarkably clear-cut, thanks to the narrator's noticeable interventions ("il est manifeste", "il est très certain", *Hd'A*, IX, 5, 6). Indeed, no irony is perceptible when Rapin reports opinions that are at variance and when he refers to "hidden intentions" (*Hd'A*, IX, 7), they are to be understood as mere anticipations of future events. No question on how the historian comes to such a such a conclusion or knows what is still dissimulated arises either. Contrariwise, as above mentioned, Hume's description of thoughts and opinions he does not share is not devoid of irony, thus arousing the reader's legitimate suspicion that the narration may be highly questionable.

However, Hume's strategies differ also from those used by Voltaire and Robertson, the other two great historians of the age. Indeed, he creates a unique textual hierarchy between some rare passages in direct speech, others in free indirect speech<sup>39</sup> and finally some in indirect speech. The latter technique is largely dominant. On the contrary, Voltaire in *The Century of Louis XIV*<sup>40</sup> prefers literal quotations, but in order to solve the problem of validity these passages create, he refers to many memoirs or he

<sup>36</sup> Art. "Harangue", *Encyclopédie Diderot, d'Alembert* (Marsanne: Redon), *np*. Hugh Blair in his 36<sup>th</sup> lecture (*Lectures on Rhetorics and Belles Lettres*, 1783) considers *orations* as an embellishment but rejects them. For that matter, the article in the *Encyclopédie* is more moderate and closer to the context in which Hume was writing.

<sup>37</sup> L. Okie, *Augustan Historical Writing, Histoires of England in the English Enlightenment* (Lanham: University Press of America), 61.

<sup>38</sup> See *H d'A*, 9, 8-13: Rapin de Thoyras quotes one of Pym's speeches during nearly five pages. As Hicks disparagingly puts it: "transcribing the evidence on every side of a historical event took more time than simply narrating the event, thus ballooning the text out of proportion" (Hicks, 150). The bulkiness of the footnotes cannot be excused by a kind of prudential irony as is the case with Bayle or with Gibbon. See A. Grafton, "The Footnote from Thou to Ranke", *History and Theory*, 33, 4, theme issue *Proof and Persuasion in History* (Dec. 1994): 53-76.

<sup>39</sup> Dorrit Cohn considers the terminology as German or French and uses "narrated monologue" instead. See D. Cohn, *Transparent Minds, Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 10, 13-14.

<sup>40</sup> I refer mainly to this work and not to his *Essay on Manners*, because the narrative pace of the former is comparable to that of *The History of England* or of *The History of Scotland*. *The Essay on Manners* hardly lingers on any episode, swift judgements are made and events are brought together in order to denounce the lasting errors and follies of the human race. Quotations are thus exceptional in the *Essay*.

alludes to the exchange of letters, papers or various diplomatic treatises. Voltaire delegates his authority thanks to many incidental clauses (“dit-il”) or declarative verbs (“il rapporte”) that make the real author of these remarks responsible for their tenor. He quotes memorable phrases that are supposed to give an insight into the character of the speaker and, in the case of Louis XIV, to give an instance of his grandeur. They have an illustrative and demonstrative value and their truthfulness is guaranteed by their sheer memorability and hence by the great number of possible witnesses: “Ce mot a été recueilli par plusieurs personnes, et l’abbé de Choisy le place vers l’année 1672”.<sup>41</sup> Very rarely does Voltaire use indirect speech because it seems to indicate a lesser degree of certainty in his prose structure, since he combines it with an impersonal construction (“On prétendait que”; “il espérait, disait-on, que [...]”<sup>42</sup>): literally they become mere words with no authority, mere hear-say, not proven facts.<sup>43</sup> These techniques enable the historian to distinguish different degrees of certainty and of exactitude and thus sustain the probability of the whole inasmuch as the narrator is able to separate facts for which he may be accountable from sheer surmises.

Robertson makes slightly different choices, although, as Karen O’Brien showed, he was greatly influenced by Voltaire’s historical writing. Nevertheless memorable speeches are still present in the narrative: they purport to exhibit the speaker’s abilities, thus the reader can recognize the effect they had on the listener:

No sooner did they [i.e. the French and Spanish ambassadors] make this declaration, than she astonished them with this reply: “You have declared the truth; I am far from setting an example of rebellion to my own subjects, by countenancing those who rebel against their lawful prince. The treason, of which you have been guilty, is detestable; as traitors I banish you from my presence” (*HoS*, I, 352).

The illustrative value of the quotation is stressed beforehand – “The expedient she contrived for her vindication strongly displays her character” (*HoS*, I, 351) – and the truthfulness or the supposed grandeur of the queen’s declaration become less important than her ability to turn the tables and to make a *farce* out of the ambassadors’ declarations. The theatrical metaphor present in the passage reminds the reader that the meeting was public. Other examples of direct speech prove that they have to be accounted for, by referring either to proclamations (*HoS*, I, 279, 325) or to maxims of law (*HoS*, I, 321) or to letters of which excerpts are given (*HoS*, I, 358). Since they are thus seemingly founded on facts, the narrator exhibits no real historical distance, except when their exactitude is a matter of dispute. But this case happens infrequently. However, because these quotations are less memorable than in *Le Siècle de Louis XIV*, their proportion has been diminished, although their frequency is still relatively high compared to the *History of England*. Correlatively Robertson resorts to indirect speech more easily than Voltaire. But generally, he focuses less on the seeming literality of the discourse than Hume, as I will show. The meaning is mainly summed up

<sup>41</sup> Voltaire, *Le Siècle de Louis XIV*, ed. A. Adam (Paris: Garnier Flammarion, 1968), 171, note: “this word has been recorded by many persons, and the Abbé of Choisy situates it towards the year 1672”. The first edition was published in 1751, but a manuscript of the *Anecdotes sur la vie privée de Louis XIV* was circulating among Voltaire’s friends in 1748 “to prepare the opinion” (Adam, preface, 7). The translations are mine.

<sup>42</sup> Voltaire, *Le Siècle de Louis XIV*, 207.

<sup>43</sup> “On” in French grammar is considered as a “non-person”, it refers to anybody and has no precise deictic value. Many celebrated historians play on its ambiguity.

and most of the speaker's argumentation is lost. Clauses introduced by the subordinator *that* are less conspicuous than gerunds or nouns that often confer an impression of greater abstraction or vagueness: "Though Henri published a proclamation, *disclaiming any knowledge of the conspiracy against Rizzio*, the queen was convinced, that he was not only accessory [*sic*] to the contrivance, but to the commission of that odious crime" (*HoS*, I, 379).<sup>44</sup> No longer does the historian have to prove that the words that were pronounced on the occasion were exactly those that are thus rendered in the text. They represent one of the many instances of "cold civilities, secret distrust, frequent quarrels" (*HoS*, I, 379) that succeeded the king's and queen's past affection. Robertson seems somewhat less interested in particular events or instances: he aims at creating a historical climate.

This digression was necessary to give a full scope of Hume's originality. Indeed, the author of *The History of England* frequently quotes famous words in the fifth volume, which was first in the order of writing. One has in mind the last words of Charles I that transform the king into a tragic character, his stoicism together with the steadfastness of his children serving as a foil compared to the Puritans' hypocrisy. History becomes a vehicle for the royalist myth, for according to Siebert's expression, the narrative evinces "that dignity, self-possession, and courage that Hume refers to as 'greatness of mind':"<sup>45</sup> no wonder Hume has been accused of being too favourable to the unhappy monarch. Quotations are also endowed with an illustrative value when Hume mocks James I: "here is baby Charles and Stenny" (*HoE*, V, 105). The trait is remembered by Walter Scott who quotes the phrase in *The Fortunes of Nigel*. Finally extremely long and frequent excerpts are given of the speeches in Parliament (*HoE*, V, 316-317): these will nearly totally disappear in later volumes in order to avoid the charge of prolixity (Baumstark, 167) and be replaced by passages in indirect speech in which each argument will be introduced by a subordinator. Greater literality is however conferred to the whole thanks to the impression of exhaustiveness that is conveyed by the cluster of "thats" (from four to ten after a declarative verb): arguments are not summed up contrary to Robertson because they directly relate to Hume's analysis. The same strategy appears when the narrator's train of thoughts coincides with the character's perceptions or calculations (*HoE*, III, 35). Cecil's formal and very articulated reasonings are thus reported and each new subordinate corresponds to the ten points both the character and the historian want to make (*HoE*, IV, 6-7):

Cecil told her, that the greater part of the nation had, ever since her father's reign, inclined to the reformation [...]: That happily the interests of the sovereign here concurred with the inclinations of the people; [...]: That a sentence, so solemnly pronounced by two popes against her mother's marriage, could not possibly be recalled [...]: That this circumstance alone counterbalanced all dangers whatsoever: That the curses and execrations of Romish church [...] were, in the present age, more an object of ridicule than of terror [...].

The argumentation examines five more points concerning the potential dangers of being a Protestant country and ends by dissipating the queen's fears. Since the events confirm the secretary of State's judgement, it is easy for the historian to side with

<sup>44</sup> The italics are mine.

<sup>45</sup> Siebert, "The Sentimental Sublime", 360.

Cecil. Moreover this heavy structure is so impressive that Elizabeth's thoughts and resolutions gain plausibility because they appear as a rational answer to her counselor's advice. The insight that is given into her mind can by no means be considered as a full-fledged soliloquy. However, Hume does refer to pieces of information he could not have obtained by exterior evidence only. We have here a slight breach in the normal procedures of historical writing.

When Hume refuses to commit himself, direct speech reappears frequently in the narrative, not as a vehicle for the reader's admiration but as an invitation to prudence. The technique is particularly conspicuous when he quotes the reformers in Scotland. Their expressions and exaggerations are rendered in a very plausible manner by the religious and biblical vocabulary, that can be considered as having a sociological value,<sup>46</sup> in order to express Hume's hostility to their fanaticism and of their preposterous bond: "We perceiving how Satan, in his members, the antichrist of our time, do cruelly rage, seeking to overthrow and to destroy the gospel of Christ" (*HoE*, IV, 19-20, 24). The historian dissociates the words that could be considered as an object of mockery from their real meaning, thus pointing out to their true intentions, that is to say to enter into rebellion. Subsequently, reported speech or infinitive clauses echo these quotations and thus suggests Hume's critical stance:

The general assembly importuned her anew to change her religion; to renounce the blasphemous idolatry of the mass, with the tyranny of the Roman Antichrist; and to embrace the true religion of Christ Jesus. (*HoE*, IV, 71)

The words of the protestant reformers are set side by side with Queen Mary's arguments, the verbal exchange is represented in an indirect manner in order to make clear the possible effects of these speeches on the events. If the reformers' expressions and phrases (*blasphemous idolatry of the mass, tyranny of the Roman Antichrist, the friendship of the King of Kings*) are more largely referred to, it is to ridicule their fanaticism and to show how politically inadequate their propositions can be:

As she answered with temper, that she was not yet convinced of the falsity of her religion or the impiety of the mass; and that her apostacy would lose her the friendship of her allies on the continent; they replied, by assuring her, that their religion was undoubtedly the same which had been revealed by Jesus Christ, which had been preached by the apostles, and which had been embraced by the faithful in the primitive ages [...] and that the friendship of the King of Kings was preferable to all alliances in the world (*HoE*, IV, 71)<sup>47</sup>

Free indirect speech is used likewise, when Hume narrates the apparition of Lutheranism in Germany (*HoE*, III, 141). All these instances are treated with irony: the speeches are perhaps true, because they took place, but they act as parodies. The historian, contrary to his usual gravity, is making fun of the characters, whereas, in most cases, indirect speech, articulated as it is by many subordinates, conveys an impression of order and of reflection that facilitates a form of blurring between the voice of the historical actors and the voice of the narrator. However, since these indi-

<sup>46</sup> J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, vol. 5, *Religion, the first Triumph* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 238.

<sup>47</sup> I have shortened the quotation but there were three more lengthy arguments expressed by the reformers.



rect speeches lay a greater stress on the literality of the discourse than the common usage, by referring to the speakers' expressions and vocabulary, parody and irony can be perceived in a genre that generally leaves little room for these rhetorical effects:<sup>48</sup>

He [*i.e.* Charles] issued a declaration, such as they required from him. He there gave thanks for the merciful dispensations of providence, by which he was recovered from the snare of evil counsel, had attained a full persuasion of the righteousness of the covenant, and was induced to cast himself and his interests wholly upon God. He desired to be deeply humbled and afflicted in spirit, because of his father's following wicked measures, opposing the covenant and the work of reformation, and shedding the blood of God's people throughout all his dominions. (*HoE*, VI, 26)

The passage is full of innuendoes for Charles recites the Covenanters' cant mechanically: despite the indirect speech, the reader can almost hear the outrageous declaration and the hypocritical masquerade that is taking place.<sup>49</sup>

Through this inner hierarchy of direct and indirect speech, the author conveys different points of view on a given situation, as when he depicts the first political conflicts that took place between Charles I and Parliament. Parliament's analysis of the king's financial situation is given with order and authority. However, the seeming objectivity and authority of the indirect speech, the fact that the writer implicitly subscribes to the detailed examination, are suddenly undermined when the Members of Parliament refuse to take the necessary consequences of this thorough argumentation (*HoE*, V, 157).

Thoughts and irrational feelings play an important role at the beginning of the English Revolution: the constant shifts of point of view,<sup>50</sup> the apt manner in which Hume accounts for the unhappy mixture of reason and folly, of sincerity and prejudice, of misunderstanding and penetration, tell a story in which the human mind with all its limitations plays a most active part. On some occasions, it is with a certain irony, but curiously enough, not always without sympathy that the writer reveals the gap between beliefs and reality: as Siebert underlined, the excessive reactions of the "weaker minds" during King Charles' execution are far from being endorsed by Hume, nevertheless the reader is invited to understand the climate of affliction the regicide entailed.<sup>51</sup> To a certain extent, this unique oblique insight into character blurs the distinction between factual and fictional narration, since, as above stated,

<sup>48</sup> Irony is considered by Hume as "an indirect manner of insinuating [...] blame" that seems "less shocking" (*THN*, 150) than open blame.

<sup>49</sup> I slightly disagree with Hicks who describes the speeches in the *History of England* as "rhetorical exercises stating the pros and cons of policy". According to him, Hume did not pretend that "the speeches were actually delivered in the words he presented, even in cases where transcripts of genuine speeches were available to him" (Hicks, 180-181). Baumstark, referring to Francis Jeffrey's own assessment of Hume's speeches, underlines that they were composed so as to "improve the arguments of the weaker side in the interest of maintaining his aim of impartiality" and to provide the reader with "summaries" of the main debates between the two parties. These analyses, though correct in many instances when the narrator agrees with the character's motivations, do not account for the irony and parody that can be involved in some passages and that imply some kind of implicit quotation.

<sup>50</sup> Laird Okie underlines how Hume with much dubiousness mingles both the narratives of Clarendon and of Clement Walker (Okie, "Ideology and Partiality in David Hume's *History of England*": 22-23).

<sup>51</sup> Siebert, "The Sentimental Sublime", 368.

inner thoughts do not supposedly belong to the domain of historical writing. These motivations, be they erroneous or true, participate in the chain of events, it is a lesson that other historians of political turmoils, such as Carlyle and Michelet, remembered during the nineteenth-century. Thus, different levels of reality are as it were confronted to each other in the narrative: pieces of factual evidence come side by side with rational thoughts and with irrational beliefs, all have to be judged by their eventual outcome.

These shifts give great interest to the account because the reader participates in the decision making when suddenly the impression of necessity that derives from the whole chain of arguments is shattered to pieces. The writer's implied conclusions are at variance with the resolutions that were eventually made. The reader is led into believing that the whole train of facts will take one direction when he has the surprise to discover that the events followed another course. Hume succeeds in a "tour de force" by conveying suspense, since the reader's anticipations are baffled, not so much as to see these same anticipations questioned, for things should have met the reader's more rational expectations, but to denounce the irrationality and the prejudiced blindness, in this case of the Parliamentarians: properly speaking we see irrationality at work.

### III. MAKING THE HISTORICAL ACTORS SPEAK AND THINK: TOWARDS A REVALUATION OF THE NARRATIVE DEBATE?

It appears Hume's practice of direct, indirect and free indirect speeches questions Dorrit Cohn's arguments on the "distinction of fiction" and on fictional modes of representing thoughts and beliefs. It challenges some assumptions that are often made in the domain of narratology and literary theory. Indeed, both in *Transparent Minds* (1978) and in *The Distinction of Fiction* (2000), Dorrit Cohn opposes the *linguistic turn* directly and the now popularised idea that fictional and factual discourses cannot truly be separated one from the other else by referring to the author's intention.<sup>52</sup> Because of the widespread influence of her book out of the literary field, and because of the subsequent generalization of her analyses,<sup>53</sup> her arguments – although they were first founded on late 19<sup>th</sup> century and contemporary examples and only marginally on some 18<sup>th</sup> century narrative cases – must be discussed here. My aim is not to abolish all boundaries between fictional and non fictional narratives but, thanks

<sup>52</sup> See J. R. Searle, *Expression and Meaning, Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts* (Cambridge; London; New York; Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 50. For reassessment of Searle's theory see A. Reboul, "The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse: what Searle's speaker can't say to his reader", *Speech Acts, Meaning and Intentions, Critical Approaches to the Philosophy of John R. Searle*, ed. A. Burkhardt (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1990), 349. Not to mention Hayden White in *Metahistory: the Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975) and the *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987). White has deeply qualified *The Content of Form* in *Figural Realism, Studies in the Mimesis Effect* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999). The book reproduces parts of "Figuring the Nature of the Times Deceased: Literary Theory and Historical Writing", *The Future of Literary Theory*, ed. R. Cohen (London: Methuen, 1988), 37-53. However, his efforts to mitigate some aspects of the *Content of Form* have not always been taken seriously.

<sup>53</sup> See P. Carrard, "The Distinction of Historiography: Dorrit Cohn and Referential Discourse", *Narrative*, 20, 1 (2012): 125-129.

to Hume's practice, to point out to some zones of possible transfer that have not received full attention.

Indeed Cohn assumes that there are stylistic devices that belong to fiction only, among them, she stresses the form of narrative that gives insight into the character's mind. This emphasis puts forward modern narrative and rejects the traditional novel inasmuch as the latter focuses on visible traits only and, in third person narratives, reveals the inner mind indirectly by speeches or by gestures<sup>54</sup> as Cécile Cavaillac demonstrated. Moreover the traditional narrator stresses events or resorts to generalisations that are opposed to the subjective form of narrative Cohn considers most proper to fiction. The older forms of the novel copy the protocols of evidence for historical writing: memoirs and letters in novels are a playful imitation of the factual mode of attesting how the information has been obtained. If the novel pretends that documents could be referred to, it is nothing but a pseudo-reference<sup>55</sup> that by no means could be mistaken for true proof because, according to Cohn, there needs to be no form of factual reference in fiction. However, in order to demonstrate that no competent reader could be led into error, Cohn idealises the "scrupulous historian": no scrupulous historian should make assertions on the actors' motivations or reactions without alluding to diaries, letters or memoirs or without using hypothetical constructions in order to show how these assertions are founded on plausible inductions or inferences (PF, 118). As Christine Montalbetti argues, in practice, historians, authors of memoirs and of letters may well omit all *signposts* of reference or of proof.<sup>56</sup>

Influenced by the well established historical methodology of the time concerning the authentication of documents and oral testimonies (Wootton, 286), Hume largely resorts to internal coherence and thus builds the plausibility of his reported speeches and commentaries not only on the documents themselves but on general psychological maxims or on the supposed character of the speaker. In this context of writing, Hume's irony is double-edged and proves that he gives insight into the mind even of those who are the less congenial to him, the assumed literalness of expression and vocabulary, although he does not refer explicitly to documents, evinces that he follows the workings even of the most irrational behaviour, while confronting these erroneous viewpoints with the reader's own expectations.<sup>57</sup> Not only does the historian base his inferences on exterior gestures that can be attested, but he also goes beyond the surface of the documents, as the comparison between Rapin de Thoras's techniques and Hume's shows. A stylistic blurring is achieved in *The History of England*: facts and more or less implicit commentaries are no longer distinguished from each other. The reader is to a certain extent asked to recapture the controversies and all

<sup>54</sup> Cohn, *Transparent Minds*, 25.

<sup>55</sup> D. Cohn, *The Distinction of Fiction* (Baltimore; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 113. To be noted DF.

<sup>56</sup> C. Montalbetti, "Les Indices de fictionalité: une enquête", *Acta Fabula*, <<http://www.fabula.org/revue/cr/150.php>> accessed 2/07/2012.

<sup>57</sup> Hume's ideal reader is not only a sort of male enlightened man of the world. Mark Salber Phillips demonstrates that he also had the figure of the female reader in mind. See M. Salber Phillips, *Society and Sentiment. Genres of Historical Writing in Britain, 1740-1820* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 104. Perhaps Catharine Macaulay's success, that for a time was much greater than his made him more attentive to that audience.

the opinions at variance in a manner that would not be merely enumerative as with Rapin. Thus irony creates critical distance but also insight, so that the narrative is not non-focalised in a continuous manner as Cohn assumes it is the case in historical writing only (*PF*, 119). As Siebert's commentary shows, the final adieu of Charles I to his children are seen through Cromwell's eyes, a gross anomaly according to Cohn which shows that boundaries are not as clear-cut as they *should* be.

The shifts of point of view in the narrative of *The History of England* enable Hume to demonstrate his inner understanding of the historical actors' motivations and, at the same time, to emphasise his values of moderation. The different modes of quoting play an important but controversial role in these shifts because their form, their tenor and their mere existence have to be justified. By amplifying the space accorded to indirect speech in the narrative, Hume liberates himself both from the form of the edifying but more and more outdated harangue and from the delicate question of the literal truth of the quotations. Hence he can choose when it is most effective to recapture the speaker's words and expressions, when it is more efficient to give a summarized account only. He can either privilege a neutral summary of the character's words or probable thoughts and assume a kind of Lucretian coolness both as a historian and a philosopher, as in his essay "Of the study of history",<sup>58</sup> or prefer a sort of tongue in cheek parody. According to eighteenth-century standards, irony might hinder the historian's gravity or authority and might thus be considered as a serious anomaly,<sup>59</sup> however it enables the author to convey various points of view while saving his own (philosophical) values. It was also a problem Voltaire and even Catharine Macaulay had to face.<sup>60</sup> For that matter, the narrative shifts and ironical stance certainly do not serve the impartiality of the whole but play an important role in the process of judgment making, for fictions and ill-founded beliefs can also have dramatic consequences, although the historian refuses to back them and at this point widens the historic distance that separates him from past actions.<sup>61</sup> The various attempts to save the historical narrative from the taint of fiction should also take into account these practices although they might be considered as belonging to an archaic and thus impure conception of history writing.

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<sup>58</sup> "Of the study of History", in Hume, *Essays moral and political* (1742), ed. E. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1987), III, VI, 7, <<http://www.econlib.org/library/LFBooks/Hume/hmMPL45.html>> accessed 30/06/2012.

<sup>59</sup> See Abbé de Mably, *De l'étude de l'histoire* (1775), *De la manière d'écrire l'histoire* (1789), Fayard, 1988. They are late but revealing studies.

<sup>60</sup> Voltaire was strongly criticized by Mably and during the end of the eighteenth century Macaulay lost her popularity and was considered as too partial. See F. McIntosh, "Macaulay et Wollstonecraft: écriture féminine de l'histoire ou remise en question républicaine de la société patriarcale?", *Etudes Epistémé*, 19 (2011), *Les femmes témoins de l'histoire*, ed. A. Dubois-Nayt and C. Gheeraert-Graffeulle, <<http://revue.etudes-episteme.org/?-19-2011>> accessed 4/02/2012. In Macaulay's narrative, the Royalists are most often the butt of her irony and like Hume, their speeches are used to convey her criticisms. Thus she seems to reverse both Hume's arguments and stylistic devices. A full comparison of the various editions of their works would be necessary in order to determine how both historians responded to each other's achievements. See N. Zemon Davis, "History's Two Bodies", *The American Historical Review*, 93, 1 (1988): 7-18.

<sup>61</sup> The latest issue of *History and Theory*, December 2011, theme issue 50, edited by J. de Hollander, H. Paul and R. Peters is entirely devoted to that question, although the focus is on nineteenth-century and twentieth-century historical writing.

COMPOSTO IN CARATTERE DANTE MONOTYPE DALLA  
FABRIZIO SERRA EDITORE, PISA · ROMA.  
STAMPATO E RILEGATO NELLA  
TIPOGRAFIA DI AGNANO, AGNANO PISANO (PISA).

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