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1

The Grammar of the Imagination

UNION, n. [Fr. *union*; It. *unione*; L. *unio*; to unite, from *unus* one]

1. The act of joining two or more things into one, and thus forming a compound body or a mixture; or the junction or coalition of things thus united. *Union* differs from *connection*, as it implies the bodies to be in contact, without an intervening body; whereas things may be *connected* by the intervention of a third body, as by a cord or chain.

Webster's American Dictionary of the English Language, 1828¹

To even, is sometimes made use of in Scotland, for *to lay out one person for another in marriage*. Nor does it matter whether the match is *equal* or not: generally it is *unequal*, and the person who is said to be *evened to the other*, has the better of the bargain.

John Sinclair, *Observations on the Scottish Dialect*²

An anonymous pamphlet printed in Scotland in 1706 embodies the mutual saturation of political and personal, discursive and fictional discourses in the debate surrounding the Union. Its titlepage carries an enigmatic warning similar to the graphic caveat of 'Join, or Die':

He that diggeth a Pit, shall fall into it; and whoso breaketh an Hedge, a Serpent shall bite him.

Whoso removeth Stones shall be hurt therewith: And he that cleaveth Wood, shall be endangered thereby.³

To separate may be as dangerous as to join. 'The Comical History of the Marriage-Union betwixt *Fergusia* and *Heptarchus*' vividly particularises the allegorical wooing of 'a Lady of venerable Antiquity, of a competent Estate and Fortune' by the 'young, lusty, very opulent and rich' Heptarchus who dwelt on her 'South Border'.⁴ The nuptial has been proposed by Judith (Queen Anne) to 'keep her Dominions from being dismember'd on her Demise' (7). Like the prudent old maid she is, *Fergusia* puts up a spirited resistance to Heptarchus's sudden and violently renewed suit, pointing to their ancient 'confederacy' and recalling an earlier proposal which 'preserves my Independency and Sovereignty' (11). Heptarchus is passionate in his protestations: 'No, I can never be happy, till you and I become one Flesh, and be intirely Incorporated' (12). *Fergusia* is not fooled:

Incorporated! . . . It looks plaguely like your Love to your Bag-Pudding, that you'd devour me, and bury me in the midst of your self; . . . at least it looks like Jonah's Punishment, swallowed up in the Belly of the Whale. This is the Notion I have of Incorporating; and if this be it, I had better live unmarried still: And indeed, Heptarchus, I'm jealous there is a Snake in the Grass; for your People have oft bragged, I would not be a Breakfast to them. (12)

She reminds him slyly of their old 'Covenant', 'which was the nearest Union we had together', and professes herself willing to renew that, but makes no bones about her distaste for the disempowering consequences of his present proposal:

It's plain by this Union, all I have becomes yours, and is perfectly at your Disposal, and nothing you have becomes mine, so as to be at my Disposal; because there is no Ballance of Power in my hand as will be in yours. (18)

Pointing to other ill-assorted European unions of unequals, *Fergusia* prophesies secession and divorce should their marriage be forced upon her: 'what *Norway* is in respect to *Denmark*, since its Union, I'll be with respect to *Heptarchia*. *Sweden* and *Denmark* never flourished, when united; but now separated, are become both formidable States' (24). In a word, she's not convinced, and resists his blandishments with self-preserving urgency:

It's plain Self-Murther! This Surrender, this Incorporation, by coming under the Power of a Government, wherein I can make no Balance, makes me as much subjected and dependent on the absolute Will and Determination of your People, in all my Concerns, Civil and Sacred, as if I were your conquered Slave. (26)

This little excursus into anti-Unionist political pamphleteering economically sketches the prevailing contours of the debate and some of the terms in which it was conducted: marital union, division, and dismemberment; confederacy and incorporation; balance of power and secession; self-sacrifice, subjection and enslavement. Secondly, this resistant drama of acquisitive wooing draws attention, in advance, to a structural analogy which underlies Hume's arguments about personal identity.

David Hume's political *beliefs* were not even covertly anti-Unionist. Born into a land-owning family in the Scottish Borders four years after the Treaty's ratification in 1707, Hume saw in his lifetime the economic benefits brought to Scotland by the Union; all his writing suggests that his consciously held opinions – and in biographical terms we can penetrate no further – were unequivocal about the advantages of the Union to both Scotland and England.⁵ Nonetheless, his first and most important philosophical work, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739–40), presents an analysis of the human mind that is very much of its time and place, in more than the empirical thrust of its inquiries. Once we pay attention to Hume's vocabulary and the texture of his language in the *Treatise*, it becomes clear that the structure of his thinking was shaped by the marriage of the political and personal in the Union debates, with their highlighting of the opposing implications of federation and incorporation for the emergent composite state. The form of this argument, as much as its propositions, proved powerfully enduring in the prose (and on occasion poetry) of the Scottish Enlightenment, and helped to determine the shape of literary, political and philosophical debate in the early years of the American Republic. Consciously and inadvertently, Hume's antagonists and detractors adopted aspects of his rhetorical strategy that reinforced the pattern and ensured its transmission, particularly, into structures of expression in American Enlightenment and Romantic writing. There is, then – to put it no more strongly – an embedded political analogy within the vocabulary of union and fragmentation which structures the expression of Hume's ideas about personal identity. I will go on to argue, further,

that from a literary point of view the laws of association which underpin his 'system' are predicated on grammatical and syntactic relationships as much as philosophical principles. Hume's influential version of the nature of human experience emerges from the *Treatise's* dynamic play between political, epistemological and grammatical frames of reference.

The *Treatise* is a youthful work (Hume was still in his twenties when it was published) and in many respects, as he himself came to recognise, a raw as well as an incautious one. For this reason, perhaps, it reveals at their starkest the form and structure of ideas that Hume later refined and smoothed out. As with many people, Hume's views hardened as he grew older in the direction of subordination and authority-structures; in this sense also his greatest work is a young man's book. His later writings in the two *Enquiries* and the essays are altogether smoother and suaver: more directly influential in some ways, but ultimately less potent. A political analogy is explicit in the *Treatise* and pervades Hume's later work: 'the true idea of the human mind', he writes,

is to consider it as a system of different perceptions or different existences, which are link'd together by the relation of cause and effect, and mutually produce, destroy, influence, and modify each other. Our impressions give rise to their correspondent ideas; and these ideas in their turn produce other impressions. One thought chaces another, and draws after it a third, by which it is expell'd in its turn. In this respect, I cannot compare the soul more properly to any thing than to a republic or commonwealth, in which the several members are united by the reciprocal ties of government and subordination, and give rise to other persons, who propagate the same republic in the incessant changes of its parts. And as the same individual republic may not only change its members, but also its laws and constitutions; in like manner the same person may vary his character and disposition, as well as his impressions and ideas, without losing his identity.⁶

Hume's later essays, as I will suggest, support and develop the political implications which are largely submerged in the philosophical rhetoric of the *Treatise*. But the embedded, metaphorical

nature of the vocabulary in the epistemological context permits a richer, more revealing ambiguity and implication. His discussion of the possible forms of 'union', for example, readily recalls the federative and incorporative alternatives canvassed in 'Fergusia and Heptarchus'. Read in the context of Queen Anne's instructions to the Marquis of Queensberry to block any move in the Scottish Parliament towards federal union, on the grounds that 'nothing can prove a solid and lasting settlement for the Peace and happiness of our Subjects of this Island but that of an entire Union',⁷ Hume's apparently abstract analysis of our ideas of space and time acquires new and more ambiguous resonance:

Suppose two bodies containing no void within their circumference, to . . . unite in such a manner that the body, which results from their union, is no more extended than either of them; 'tis this we must mean when we talk of penetration. But 'tis evident this penetration is nothing but the annihilation of one of these bodies, and the preservation of the other, without our being able to distinguish particularly which is preserv'd and which annihilated. Before the approach we have the idea of two bodies. After it we have the idea only of one . . .

Taking then penetration in this sense, for the annihilation of one body upon its approach to another, I ask any one, if he sees a necessity, that a colour'd or tangible point shou'd be annihilated upon the approach of another colour'd or tangible point? On the contrary, does he not evidently perceive, that from the union of these points there results an object, which is compounded and divisible, and may be distinguish'd into two parts, of which each preserves its existence distinct and separate, notwithstanding its contiguity to the other? (*Treatise*, 32)

Resistance pervades the imagery of union-as-penetration and annihilation: this argument from geometry is sharply inflected by outrage at the plight of the ingested body, which has suffered a fate 'plaguely like' (to borrow Fergusia's term) '*Jonah's Punishment*'.

Philosophically speaking, on the contrary, as Hume insists in the anonymous 'Abstract' in which he subsequently attempted to summarise his arguments, 'Union' may be taken no further than a convention of connection; its 'necessity' is experiential rather than inherent in the nature of things: '. . . in no single instance [is] the ultimate connexion of any object . . . discoverable, either by our

senses or reason . . . 'Tis their constant union alone, with which we are acquainted' (415–16). But in Hume's narrative of human understanding, unions (like republics, like whole stories) break down into fragments of meaning: 'Every thing, that is different, is distinguishable; and every thing, that is distinguishable, may be separated' (29). His most contentious proposition, regarding the integrity of personal identity, is a direct corollary of this thought:

what we call a *mind*, is nothing but a heap or collection of different perceptions, united together by certain relations, and suppos'd tho' falsely, to be endow'd with a perfect simplicity and identity. Now as every perception is distinguishable from another, and may be consider'd as separately existent; it evidently follows, that there is no absurdity in separating any particular perception from the mind; that is, in breaking off all its relations, with that connected mass of perceptions, which constitute a thinking being. (137–8)

The possibility of perceptual secession must be accommodated, at least in the abstract: 'This uniting principle among ideas is not to be consider'd as an inseparable connexion' (12). 'That term of unity', he asserts a few pages further on, 'is merely a fictitious denomination, which the mind may apply to any quantity of objects it collects together; nor can any such an unity any more exist alone than number can, as being in reality a true number' (25). 'Union' that is, in this context is an imaginary principle, a fiction – but it is also (once the philosopher steps, as he must, outside the circle of empirical introspection) a 'fact' established by custom and habit, and what stabilises our sense of identity. Union, identity, integrity are the imagined products of aggregated fragmentary observations; our world 'is the universe of the imagination, nor have we any idea but what is there produc'd' (49). This is a crucial insight for Scottish and American fiction.

Inquiring what kind of bond might be able to hold elements together without totally subsuming and annihilating one within another (Ferguson's anticipated 'incorporation' or digestion into Hephtarchus's 'Bag-Pudding'), Hume develops a familial analogy:

Cousins in the fourth degree are connected by *causation* . . . but not so closely as brothers, much less as child and parent. In general we may observe, that all the relations of blood depend

on cause and effect, and are esteem'd near or remote, according to the number of connecting causes interpos'd betwixt the persons. (13)

What 'degree' of closeness is there between Scotland and England, and how many 'connecting causes' that may be disjoined? After much play with forms of connection, Book I concludes that the problems associated with personal identity belong to language rather than to philosophy: that is, they have to do with the *verbal* relationship between the parts (the fragments) which are themselves the objects of philosophical analysis. The *connectives*, which cannot be observed by empirical introspection, are the products of expression and dissolve under scrutiny:

all the nice and subtile questions concerning personal identity can never possibly be decided, and are to be regarded rather as grammatical than as philosophical difficulties. Identity depends on the relations of ideas; and these relations produce identity, by means of that easy transition they occasion. But as the relations, and the easiness of the transition may diminish by insensible degrees, we have no just standard, by which we can decide any dispute concerning the time, when they acquire or lose a title to the name of identity. All the disputes concerning the identity of connected objects are merely verbal, except so far as the relation of parts gives rise to some fiction or imaginary principle of union . . . (171)

At this point, the *nature* of the grammar of 'relations' which permit the mind's easy transition from fragmentary perception to unitary sense of identity becomes crucial, for it is by means of this connective tissue that we do or do not cohere as individuals. 'This uniting principle' in the imagination, Hume suggests, is 'a gentle force, which commonly prevails, and is the cause why . . . languages so nearly correspond to each other' (12–13). The connection between the structure of language and the structure of thought becomes an increasingly important part of the epistemological argument, and one which Hume attempted to clarify in his subsequent redaction of the *Treatise* in Section III of *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748):

Among different languages, even where we cannot suspect the least connexion or communication, it is found, that the words,

expressive of ideas, the most compounded, do yet nearly correspond to each other: A certain proof, that the simple ideas, comprehended in the compound ones, were bound together by some universal principle, which had an equal influence on all mankind.⁸

Hume returned to the nature of the connective tissue in the 'Abstract', which extends the syntax of union and separation: the author [that is, Hume himself] 'asserts, that the soul, as far as we can conceive it, is nothing but a system or train of different perceptions, those of heat *and* cold, love *and* anger, thoughts *and* sensations; all united together, but without any perfect simplicity or identity' (414; my emphasis). It is a vision of Union without integrity, an infinite syntactic parataxis. 'Everything,' as the American poet Elizabeth Bishop would later put it, 'only connected by "and" and "and"':⁹

every thing, that exists, is particular: And therefore it must be our several particular perceptions, that compose the mind. I say, *compose* the mind, not *belong* to it. The mind is not a substance, in which the perceptions inhere. (414; italics in original).

Mind, that is, has a 'federative' not an 'incorporative' – or corporeal – structure; its syntax is paratactic not hypotactic: there is no 'core' of identity other than the sum of the parts, which may, philosophically if not experientially speaking, be regarded separately. We do, however, *experience* wholeness or integrity; Hume's explanation for this finds anticipatory expression for arguments both about political secession (in, for example, the rhetoric of Jefferson's *Declaration of Independence* or Crèvecoeur's *Letters of an American Farmer*, which I will discuss in Chapters 4 and 5) and associationist aesthetics. In effect, he articulates a narrative of mind, an account of how we *compose* the fiction of personal identity:

Our imagination has a great authority over our ideas; and there are no ideas that are different from each other, which it cannot separate, and join, and compose into all the varieties of fiction. But notwithstanding the empire of the imagination, there is a secret tie or union among particular ideas, which causes the mind to conjoin them more frequently together, and makes the one, upon its appearance, introduce the other. Hence arises . . . the connexion of writing; and hence that thread, or chain of thought, which a man naturally supports even in the loosest *reverie*.

That connecting 'thread or chain' of association not only enters the American lexicography of 'union' in Webster's *Dictionary*, but a few years later would become the psycho-topographical structuring principle of Margaret Fuller's *Summer on the Lakes* (1844). For Hume,

so far as regards the mind, these are the only links that bind the parts of the universe together, or connect us with any person or object exterior to ourselves. For as it is by means of thought only that any thing operates upon our passions, and as these are the only ties of our thoughts, they are really *to us* the cement of the universe, and all the operations of the mind must, in a great measure, depend on them. (*Treatise*, 416–17)

Our *experience* even of 'the union of cause and effect' under analysis 'resolves itself into a customary association of ideas . . . identity is nothing really belonging to these different perceptions, and uniting them together; but is merely a quality, which we attribute to them, because of the union of their ideas in the imagination, when we reflect upon them' (169). The 'secret tie or union' which directs the imagination is, then, the aggregative process of association: contiguity rather than causation is the 'connective tissue' which holds together disparate perceptions and ideas, and forms 'to us, the cement of the universe'. The 'Abstract' identifies this use of the principle of association as the *Treatise's* most fundamental originality. The succession of associations has a narrative character: 'We always follow the succession of time in placing our ideas, and . . . pass more easily to that, which follows immediately after [an object or event], than to that which went before it' (275). Even after association has unified fragmentary perceptions into integrated experience, the 'total' experience (or narrative) retains the traces – though not, perhaps, the memory – of its constitutive elements.¹⁰ Hume explains how the 'easy transition or passage of the imagination, along the ideas of these different and interrupted perceptions . . . makes us ascribe to them a perfect identity', while 'The interrupted manner of their appearance makes us consider them as so many resembling but still distinct beings . . . The perplexity arising from this contradiction produces a propensity to unite these broken appearances by the fiction of a continu'd existence . . .' (136). As long as we acquiesce unthinkingly in the fiction, then, we remain 'whole' to our own perception. But once reflect on the process of this 'self-composition' and it dissolves, like a conjurer's act interrupted.

James Boswell, the relationship of whose diaries to Hume's epistemology will be the subject of Chapter 3, was haunted by the spectre of Hume's account of the fragmented self. His *London Journal* embodies the young man's wish to attain 'a composed . . . character'; and articulates the anxiety when separate 'units' won't cohere because the imagination cannot find a single smooth passage between them; the exercise of diary-writing is a conscious attempt to find an appropriate style for the expression of identity, to tell a single, consistent narrative of self.¹¹ Uneasiness and depression fragment his sense of coherence and reduce the diarist to silence; the return of equanimity puts him 'in fine humour for composition' (189). Writing out self-contradictory elements of experience bestows at least the connective tissue of remembered sequence:

Sunday 28 November. . . . I went to St. James's Church and heard service and a good sermon on "By what means shall a young man learn to order his ways," in which the advantages of early piety were well displayed. What a curious, inconsistent thing is the mind of man! In the midst of divine service I was laying plans for having women, and yet I had the most sincere feelings of religion. I imagine that my want of belief is the occasion of this, so that I can have all the feelings. I would try to make out a little consistency this way. (62)

In these journals, Boswell literally wrote himself into existence as the product of his moment-by-moment perceptions.

Book I of the *Treatise* systematically pursues the line of inward-facing empiricism, but its narrative issues in conclusions that enforce the disintegration of that system: turning the methods of empirical scrutiny inwards so that the mind considers its own workings is a hazardous activity analogous (as I've argued in another context) to a Calvinist understanding of the pursuit after unlawful knowledge; this is, philosophically and personally, a dead end.¹² Not only universal scepticism, but internal distress and the fragmentation of connected narrative ensue:

Where am I, or what? From what causes do I derive my existence and to what condition shall I return? Whose favour shall I court, and whose anger must I dread? What beings surround me? And on whom have I any influence, or who have any influence on me? (175)

This is the consequence of a brief predominance of the reasoning faculty over the feelings, an unbalancing that is potentially disastrous for the sense of integrated selfhood. The solipsistic moment breaks, famously, on the return of relationships: unmitigated empirical introspection, it emerges, is a narrative strategy of Hume's exposition – a prelude to the introduction of sympathy as the 'cement of the [social] universe.' By the end of Book I the argumentative sequence has demonstrated both the uselessness and the untenability of empirical thinking in its analytic or fragmentary phase, and the imperative need to put it back into a social context. Subsequent sections make it clear that 'Reason is, and ought only to be, the slave of the passions' (266). The union of the faculties can only be accomplished on such incorporative terms. Sympathy becomes the subject of the following Books of the *Treatise*, and a crucial issue in Hume's continuing philosophical reflections. Where logic (analytic thought) fragments, writing (communicable feeling) establishes connections; these, Hume is clear, are the continuities of fiction, but they are nothing short of *necessary* fictions. 'Union', as we have seen, is a product of the imagination, which holds together the infinitely divisible sequence of perceptions. The analogies between the political compound of Union, and the philosophical, psychological and grammatical forms of the *Treatise* and its narrative sequels the essays, exist primarily not at the level of political philosophy, but in terms of the rhetoric of sympathy and division. Sympathy, in Hume's account, unites – but it also separates. A point of connection is not the same as a merger: 'sympathy is the chief source of moral distinctions' (394). Hume's solution to his self-created epistemological conundrum enacts before the fact the paradox of *e pluribus unum*.

The importance of maintaining the tension between unity and fragmentation in Hume's writing extends, in formal terms, beyond the *Treatise of Human Nature*. The *Treatise* is his 'system', and it remained – as a unified expression of the nature and operation of mind – substantially unaltered after 1740. This, however, was not the form in which most readers encountered his thought, nor was it divided only after publication: a private letter to Henry Home, Lord Kames makes it clear that Hume had already detached a portion of the argument (which would become the essay 'Of Miracles') from the whole, a division which, in rendering the work 'safer' also camouflaged its overt challenge and thereby perhaps diminished its impact on publication.¹³ Following his disappointment at the initial

reception of the *Treatise* (which, as Hume famously put it himself, quoting Pope, 'fell *dead-born from the press*'), he devoted the remainder of his life to repackaging ideas by which he essentially continued to stand, in discrete essays designed explicitly for social consumption.¹⁴ In 1775 he ordered his London printer William Strahan to publish an 'Advertisement' which was subsequently prefixed to all editions of the *Enquiries* up to the end of the nineteenth century, and which emphasized the jejeune status of the earlier work: with reflection, 'he was sensible of his error in going to the press too early, and he cast the whole anew in the following pieces, where some negligences in his former reasoning and more in the expression, are, he hopes, corrected.'¹⁵ This dissociation of the parts of the system was not so much condescension to an audience unprepared to digest the difficulty of systematic philosophy, as a logical continuation of the *Treatise's* inquiry into the nature of the connective tissue which binds the fragmentary perceptions of self. Where the 'whole' had failed of its aim, the 'pieces' perhaps would succeed in reaching an audience. It is worth noting that Hume directs his self-criticism almost exclusively at the *expression* of the *Treatise*: breaking up the connected argument, he spun off the dangerous, and misunderstood, unitary logic into separate redactions (the *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*) which put the elements of the system into different contexts of relation. In the essays a carefully calculated easy sociable address replaced the *Treatise's* tone of philosophic iconoclasm. Communication was of the essence: clarity, transparency and availability became Hume's major stylistic preoccupations, and redirected the focus of attention onto the question of the relationship between identity and expression. Social exchange depends, it is clear, on an assumption not only of the reality of both writer and audience, but the real possibility of ideas being passed between them by words. It is the great achievement of these essays to find a voice in which scepticism, individual isolation, subjectivity, perceptual relativity, pyrrhonism itself, all became available for discussion in the intensely *social* context of the Scottish Enlightenment.

The concerns are demonstrably continuous, however. In topics ostensibly distant from the analysis of mind, similar forms of argument recur: 'Of Commerce', for example, discusses the relationship between the greatness of a state, that of the sovereign, and the happiness of his subjects in the vocabulary of separation and union.¹⁶ The confluence of terms describing personal and national identity persists into the essay, 'Of National Characters', which develops

this idea of a nation as ‘nothing but a collection of individuals’; national identity comes into being through the operation of a ‘sympathy or contagion of manners’ (*Essays*, 198, 204). Interestingly, Hume describes the bonds holding together the ‘English Nation’ (that is, the united countries of England and Scotland) as the least cohesive and homogenising of all: ‘Hence the English, of any people in the universe, have the least of national character’; he finds the ‘particular manners of the English not to hav[e] the same effect’ in ‘the neighbouring country of Scotland’ (207). Analogous beliefs about the inevitability of internal disunion in the absence of sympathetic bonding appear to have determined Hume’s early support for colonial independence, against the prevailing temper of opinion amongst Edinburgh literati. As early as 1768 he wrote of his ‘long[ing] to see America . . . revolted totally & finally’; it was his settled opinion that ‘our Union with America . . . in the Nature of things, cannot long subsist.’¹⁷ A pamphlet by his friend and cousin John Home advocating war against the Americans provoked the sceptical reply,

I make no doubt, since you sound the trumpet for war against the Americans, that you have a plan ready for governing them, after they are subdued; but you will not subdue them, unless they break in pieces among themselves – an event very probable. It is a wonder it has not happened sooner.¹⁸

‘Join, or Die.’ The vocabulary persisted in Hume’s ‘Idea of the Perfect Commonwealth’, which proposed an associative structure of ‘hundreds’ comprising the fragments of the ideal union (a view later adopted by Thomas Jefferson, despite his contempt for what he regarded as Hume’s Tory principles of political economy). Another essay, ‘Of the First Principles of Government’ found ‘collected’ groups ‘quite unfit for government’; ‘dispersed’, on the other hand, they would be ‘more susceptible of reason and order’ (*Essays*, 36).¹⁹ In Hume’s view, this principle of aggregated fragments constituted the internal cement of a large republic; according to Douglass Adair, James Madison drew on this aspect of Hume’s thought in *The Federalist* no. 10, where ‘he took these scattered and incomplete fragments [of political theory in Hume’s essays] and built them into an intellectual and theoretical structure of his own’, a correspondence I shall return to in Chapter 5.²⁰ There was impeccable Classical authority for a Scottish–American genealogy of political confederation. Tacitus had described the organisation of ancient Caledonia as a

series of petty republics which confederated for composite strength under threat of war; in the eighteenth century Maitland's conjectural history had adopted and developed this model of ancient British political structure; this in turn influenced both James Macpherson's whig *History of Great Britain* and his reconstructions of the milieu of Ossian.²¹ Jefferson (as I shall suggest in Chapter 4) was not only deeply impressed by the Ossianic poems; his *Commonplace Book* played with ways of linking America's origins with the Celtic and Saxon worlds, including a proposal to represent Hengist and Horsa on the new national seal.

Hume's *History of England* (1754–62) makes clear the extent to which his thought increasingly became aligned with rather than antagonistic to the discourse of his milieu. Hume the historian, we might say, told a more unequivocally Unionist story than Hume the philosopher. Like William Robertson's, Tobias Smollett's and James Macpherson's Anglo-Scots histories, Hume's made a complete separation between Scotland's independent past and the British present. As far as Scotland was concerned, he suggested that the 'great chain of events' which constituted connected history began at the Union, when as part of Great Britain, the old backward, feud-torn assemblage of warring factions was given the possibility of a connected future.²² It can be no coincidence that these North British histories were (unlike the *Treatise*) produced in the aftermath of the Jacobite Rising of 1745, which subjected the Union to its severest test; for a short period, fragmentation appeared to be a real political possibility. In 1752, Hume's friend Robertson articulated an aggressively incorporative principle that 'There can be no union, and by consequence there can be no society, where there is no subordination.'²³ Robertson's *History of Scotland* (1759) not only took it for granted that the Union was incorporative rather than federative, but described its benefits enthusiastically in terms of the dissolving of local peculiarities into a single, unified, national identity.²⁴ According to his biographer Dugald Stewart, Robertson's high-handed quashing of presbytery rebellion against church patronage in 1751 taught Scots a 'useful lesson of that subordination which the peace of society requires.'²⁵ 'Robertson's achievement', as Richard Sher has put it, 'was to portray Anglo-Scottish relations not as they were but as polite society might wish them to be.'²⁶ The rhetorical sweep of the Unionist histories made their stories hugely compelling political parables of national development and – most importantly in relation to the fear of violent revolution – continuity. During discussion of

the draft *Declaration of Independence* in America, for example, disquiet was expressed about the danger that Union might lead to loss of sovereignty for individual states. According to Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin (referring perhaps to 'Fergusia and Heptarchus') dismissed this by crafty recourse to the parable of Jonah and the whale, noting that

at the time of the Union between England and Scotland the latter had made the objection which the smaller states now do . . . That their advocates had prognosticated that it would again happen as in times of old, that the whale would swallow Jonas, but he thought the prediction reversed in event and that Jonas had swallowed the whale, for the Scotch had in fact got possession of the government and gave laws to the English.

John Witherspoon, incensed by what he regarded as Franklin's sophistry, responded with the need to distinguish between 'an incorporating & a federal union. The union of England was an incorporating one; yet Scotland had suffered by that union: for that it's [*sic*] inhabitants were drawn from it by the hopes of places & employments.' The American proposals, on the other hand, were based on an acceptance that 'All men admit that a confederacy is necessary.'²⁷

The parable of Jonah and the whale, like all stories, could be told more than one way; Hume's Unionist historiography was the product of deliberate choice: narrative, as he put it in a passage already quoted, was dependent on the principle that events 'must be related to each other in the imagination, and form a kind of *Unity*, which may bring them under one plan or view, and which may be the object or end of the writer in his first undertaking.'²⁸ Literally 'telling a single story', Union is a principle of historiographic composition in response to political events, and it made the *History of England* his most widely read and admired work. Like Macpherson, at once the author of a stridently Unionist *History of Great Britain* and the compiler of the fragmentary *Poems of Ossian*, Hume's *oeuvre* encompasses both a defence of political incorporation and a narrative of human understanding which is less ideologically – as well as less expediently – and more sceptically mounted.

Despite his close social and intellectual affinities with the milieu of the Scottish Enlightenment, Hume's contemporaries – frequently also his friends – were alert to the perceived threat of this scepticism. The Common-Sense philosophy which developed in reaction was almost universally opposed to the fragmenting implications of Hume's empirical analysis; it was, by and large, emphatically a literature of union. Adam Smith and Henry Home, Lord Kames were perhaps (in print, at any rate) the nearest to allies that his *Treatise* enlisted. Most of the other important figures: Reid, Campbell, Beattie, Blair, were clergymen either too politically cautious or too alarmed by the implications of infidelity to countenance the claims of association over those of subordination. Following the publication of the *Treatise*, Hume's character was attacked on the basis of selective reading of his connected arguments; he always regarded himself a victim of misrepresentation through fragmentation, his parts detached from their whole, one set against another. 'Some perhaps may blame me', wrote his most vocal opponent James Beattie blandly in an *Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth in Opposition to Sophistry and Scepticism*, 'for laying any stress on detached sentences . . .'²⁹ Hume's attempt on two occasions to gain a university Chair were thwarted on the grounds that he was an atheist and infidel; defending his position in a letter to Kames, he complained of 'how easy it is, by broken and partial Citations, to pervert any Discourse, much more one of so abstract a Nature.'³⁰ Given that the overwhelming evidence of Hume's writing suggests that some form of sceptical Deism would more properly describe his philosophical beliefs and that sociability and communicability are clearly primary imperatives throughout his writing, the explanation for this inflammatory reputation is probably to be found in the strategies of his philosophical antagonists. Where Hume's analogies keep ambivalence alive, his critics either try to suppress it, or have to confront the challenge of its openness. His writing preserves a space where Union and the fragmenting, seceding impulse can co-exist in relations of association; this very openness contributed to the unacceptability, for his contemporaries, of the *Treatise* and its philosophical spin-offs.

The *Treatise* was not republished in Hume's lifetime and achieved only very limited circulation, although greater notoriety. It may therefore seem quixotic to assert its cardinal importance for the development of an idiom of union and fragmentation across psychological, political, philosophical and aesthetic contexts. This is nonetheless demonstrably the case, through at least three mechanisms

of propagation. Firstly, consciously or otherwise, Hume's antagonists incorporated the vocabulary of his analysis in their refutations. Secondly, the logical structures of his argument were sufficiently compelling for writers such as Smith to adopt the aesthetic and rhetorical consequences of its *form* of argument even as they challenged its theological, political or ethical implications. Thirdly, the 'unacceptable' element of sceptical fragmentation in Book 1 of Hume's *Treatise* is in fact inseparable from the 'common-sense' moral philosophy based in sympathy propounded in the later phases of its argument; adopting and developing their own versions of sympathy, as Reid, Smith and Beattie did, they confirmed the tendency for subsequent moral philosophy to turn its attention away from the civic responsibilities of the individual towards a focus on internal feelings.³¹

Reid's and Beattie's 'refutations' of Hume, for example, effectively propagated the union-fragmentation tensions in his thought in the very form of their negations, at the same time as their stories of the self extended the implications of his analogy between identity and grammar.³² The vocabulary of fragmentation and the structure of Hume's argument percolate (inadvertently on Beattie's part, we must assume) into the *Essay on Truth*: the universe, he says, 'is a vast collection of things' (121); 'What shall we say to this collection of strange phrases?' (325). Though the *Essay on Truth* does not take Hume's epistemological or ethical analysis any further, it unwittingly propagates its terms and forms through direct quotation and unintended adoption of the *Treatise's* vocabulary and rhythms.

Body and spirit are utterly annihilated; and there remains nothing (for we must again descend into the gibberish of metaphysic) but a vast collection, bundle, mass, or heap, of unperceived perceptions.

Such, if Mr Hume's words have any meaning, is the result of his system.³³

All three writers were agreed on the inseparability of language analysis from the understanding of mind. Beattie's later *Theory of Language* asserts that 'the principles of grammar form an important, and very curious, part of the philosophy of the human mind.'³⁴ According to Dugald Stewart, Adam Smith's unpublished Glasgow lectures in moral philosophy taught that 'the best method of explaining and illustrating the various powers of the human mind' was 'an

examination of the several ways of communicating our thoughts by speech, and from an attention to the principles of . . . literary compositions.³⁵ Even more influential was Reid's axiom that 'the very language of mankind, with regard to the operations of our minds, is analogical.'³⁶ Although he perceived that within its own terms Hume's logic was unassailable, and that successful refutation could only lie in changing the premises of the argument, Reid attempted to reclaim some *a priori* ground for personal identity from what he took to be Hume's reductive phenomenalism (analysis from the point of view only of immediate objects of perception) by addressing his objections in the same linguistic framework. Discussing causal connection, for example, he asserts that

in many cases, the purposes of life do not make it necessary to give distinct names to the cause and the effect. Whence it happens, that being closely connected in the imagination, although very unlike to each other, one name serves for both; and, in common discourse, is most frequently applied to that which, of the two, is the most object of our attention. This occasions an ambiguity in many words, which having the same causes in all languages, is common to all and is apt to be overlooked even by philosophers. (*Common Sense*, 41)

He gives the example of magnetism, where with 'a little attention', we 'conceive a power of virtue in the magnet as the cause, and a motion in the iron as the effect; and although these are things quite unlike, they are so united in the imagination, that we give the common name of *magnetism* to both' (41–2). Normal use of language tends to join things which are in reality separate and separable, so that words which in fact signify a connection, or conjunction of different events or forces, compound them to unity or singularity in the imagination. The mind's tendency to unite cause and effect is, Reid implies, a condition of inadvertence: separation of sensation from source may be achieved by a conscious decision or action (42). Reid was convinced that these connections have a status, a 'reality' that Hume did not accord them. As Manfred Kuhn puts it, 'Reid, while admitting that he could not explain how exactly the principles of common sense brought about the "real connexion" between our perceptions, nevertheless argued that there was such a connection, and that it could only be brought about by what he called "the principles of common sense"'.³⁷

Common Sense locates the self in the 'flow' of experience from one sensation to another, so that identity is assured by a series of relationships between discrete memory-fragments, rather as objects have a kind of permanence even as they alter through time. His analysis transforms Hume's fleeting objects of perception into mental *actions*:

Sensation, imagination, memory, and judgment, have, by the vulgar, in all ages, been considered as acts of the mind. The manner in which they are expressed in all languages, shews this. (44)

The 'act of union' in Reid is, so to speak, a verb – the mind *acts* union, does not simply passively receive its impression, as in Hume's version.³⁸ Perception is an 'act' of the mind (168) which is conscious, and may be reflected upon, although it cannot be analysed into simpler fragmentary components. To have a mind is to perform mental acts. This passage also gives an early indication of the analogy between language and the structure of consciousness that Reid would explore at greater length in his *Intellectual Powers of Man* some twenty years later. Here, the subject-verb-predicate structure is taken to reflect our experience of agency and act.³⁹ It is, once again, the *syntax* of experience that underpins identity. The transitional areas of philosophic and psychological inquiry correspond conceptually to the 'unfixed' connective parts of a sentence: grammar and syntax provide the cement to make sentences cohere internally; style determines the nature of the connections across sentences, one with the next; philosophic argument describes the relationship between mind and world.

Between the *Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense* (1764) and his *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (1785), Reid turned, under the influence of new theories of 'Universal Grammar', away from his earlier Lockean approach, towards the relation between mind and language to elucidate the 'connexion':⁴⁰

Language is the express image and picture of human thoughts; and from the picture we may often draw very certain conclusions with regard to the original. We find in all languages the same parts of speech – nouns substantive and adjective, verbs active and passive, varied according to the tenses of past, present, and future; we find adverbs, prepositions, and conjunctions. There

are general rules of syntax common to all languages. This uniformity in the structure of language shows a certain degree of uniformity in those notions upon which the structure of language is grounded. (*Intellectual Powers*, 29)

These essays conduct a running dialogue between the structure of language and the principles of perception. Where Humean associationism, strictly pursued, implies a federative concept of (personal and national) identity, Reid's linguistic psychology inclines towards an incorporative model. 'The theory of ideas', he announces dramatically, 'like the Trojan horse, had a specious appearance both of innocence and beauty; but if those philosophers [Berkeley & Hume] had known that it carried in its belly death and destruction to all science and common sense, they would not have broken down their walls to give it admittance' (*Common Sense*, 75–6). To pursue this line of thought, in Reid's view, is to invite fragmentation of the hypotactic relations on which meaning itself depends:

The philosophers of the last age . . . did not attend to the preserving [*sic*] this union [between common sense and abstract reasoning] and subordination so carefully as the honour and interest of philosophy required: but those of the present have waged open war with Common Sense . . .' (19)

Only a dozen years later, Jefferson would declare that George III's behaviour towards his American subjects had 'waged cruel war against human nature itself', and so precipitated the dissolution of 'the political bands which have connected them' with Britain.⁴¹

The current unhappily divided state of philosophy exemplified by Hume's *Treatise*, Reid argues, is the consequence of an unnatural 'union', an 'inauspicious match of opinions, so unfriendly and discordant in their natures' that they had begotten 'monsters of paradox and scepticism' (92). Like 'the Marriage-Union betwixt *Fergusonia* and *Heptarchus*', this match had yoked two incompatible hypotheses concerning the 'intercourse that is carried on between the mind and the external world': firstly, 'that the mind, like a mirror, receives the images of things from without, by means of the sense', and secondly (the insight of modern empiricism), that sensations 'are not resemblances of any thing in bodies' (91–2). 'This opinion,' he continues,

surely looks with a very malign aspect upon the old hypothesis; yet that hypothesis hath still been retained, and conjoined with it. And what a brood of monsters hath this produced!

The first-born of this union . . . was, That the secondary qualities of body were mere sensations of the mind . . . The progeny that followed is still more frightful: . . . No causes nor effects; no substances, material or spiritual; no evidence even in mathematical demonstration; no liberty nor active power; nothing existing in nature, but impressions and ideas, following each other, without time, place, or subject. (94)

The product of an unnatural union, in other words (and as Fergusia had prophesied), is a universe reduced to a bundle of fragments. The 'true' union occurs at the level of first principles, prior to our capacity for separating analysis, and incorporates the relation of cause and effect into the very structure of the human mind.

When we consider the prevalent suspicion, in America as in Britain, of Humean epistemology, and its stealthy transmission in the verbal structures of Reid, Robertson and other safely 'incorporative' Scottish literati, the implications for how 'union' is conceived and written about in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century America are complex. Chapter 4 will pursue these through internal tensions in the structure of Jefferson's *Declaration of Independence*, and in my subsequent readings of American Romantic writing; before that, however, an additional context of availability presents itself in the unsettled and unsettling imaginative fiction in the Scottish Enlightenment. The final sections of Book I of Hume's *Treatise* pointed in what look like two radically different directions for fiction: firstly, radical subjectivity and the prison-house of language: 'this is the universe of the imagination, nor have we any idea but what is there produc'd' (68). This is the fragmenting perception, which gave rise to tales of psychic disintegration. The alternative, imperative succession to this, was the education of 'sentiments' as the cement of social relationship. An aesthetics of fragmentation is inherently Idealistic, embodying a yearning for lost wholeness which Chapter 6 will consider in relation to Emerson's engagement with his Scottish philosophical inheritance in *Nature* (1836). However, as I suggested above, Hume's next move made it clear that to see one's own existence

as an autonomous fragment is to neglect the union of society of which one is a fragment. The ties of sympathy preoccupied Enlightenment writers of fiction because they were only too aware of the fragmenting consequences of intense self-reflection.

A bizarre oriental tale by William Duff, an Aberdeenshire minister who is usually remembered as the author of *An Essay on Original Genius* (1767), gives a measure of just how interwoven the Union debate, sharpened by Hume's philosophical vocabulary of union and fragmentation, became with that of sympathy in Scottish fiction. *The History of Rhedi* (1773) is precipitated by the son of wise Amur being 'tor[n] . . . to pieces' by a wild boar as the family flees from tyranny. This tragedy of dismemberment brings them into contact with the hermit Rhedi, whose sympathy with their feelings takes the form of reciprocating their sad story with his own woeful tale of his quest for 'union' with Selima (the word is used many times, notably in connection with a prior 'treaty' of marriage claimed by Rhedi's rival, a politically motivated 'alliance which was equally creditable and advantageous to both parties, and which would unite their families in the bonds of consanguinity and friendship').⁴² From this, he urges, they should learn the Stoic lesson of

the instability of human happiness, which, though heedless mortals fancy to be solid and permanent as the strong based promontory of the Hellespont, . . . is tottering as the broken fragment of a tower which falls from the ruined domes of Palmyra on the head of the unhappy traveller, and instantly crushes him to pieces. (*Rhedi*, 66)

The prospect of eternal separation from his beloved by this threatening 'treaty of union', distracts Rhedi completely, and the political allegory relocates to the site of personal disunion in an intriguingly Humean fashion, as his composure fragments into a disconnected succession of emotional states:

all the passions which can agitate and tear the human heart arose in my mind at once.—Love, rage, jealousy, hatred, terror, and despair alternately reigned and mingled with each other in my soul, in their utmost fury, and produced a conflict, whose violence roused me to phrenzy, and almost terminated in my dissolution. (85)

Describing the form of Rhedi's 'dissolution', the prose itself fragments to paratactic listing of emotions abstracted from the self that feels them. Selima, Rhedi's beloved, escapes certain death at the Sophy's vengeful hand through his misunderstanding of the nature and source of her displayed emotions; from this point, 'sympathy' rather than fragmentation dominates the narrative, but it is unstable and liable to misinterpretation by onlookers. Rhedi, as the book's subtitle emphasises, is a hermit, able to sympathise precisely because he is 'inured to misfortune' (22). The sympathy which enables understanding may operate most effectively in separation: like the Humean philosopher in 'Of Essay Writing', Rhedi lives 'secluded from the World' (*Essays*, 534), but the encounter at his place of retreat with the distressed family engages his social sympathies. Hume's writing is consistent on the mutual advantages of social association: 'The Separation of the Learned from the conversible World' is detrimental to both (*Essays*, 534). Scottish Enlightenment fiction devotes considerable attention to articulating the distinction between disengagement and social alienation.

The 'History' of Rhedi's hermetic abstraction from social absorption represents one option for shaping the fragments of sensation into meaning. Duff's more famous contemporary Henry Mackenzie, even as a young man, found a path of greater immediacy in a habitual first-person assumption of the mantle of age and personal disconnectedness.⁴³ Following Hume's analysis, Mackenzie's narrators routinely invoke the conveniently imperfect unifying powers of memory. Its associative processes, which characteristically take fragmentary form, create a space that does not demand resolution into either union or absolute separateness. Like oriental tales, fragments are anti-historical; they evoke discontinuous states of experience, whether of self or of nation. In that sense, they represent the immediacy of consciousness: the unfinished present is full of potential, but unshaped; union or unity is the meaning created retrospectively by the arbiter we call history. As I have suggested, Hume the historian, like Robertson the historian, had a much surer vision of union than Hume the philosopher and essayist. Boswell, likewise, would debate with himself as to whether to write his narrative of self in the past ('as if I were writing the history of some distant period') or to sustain the incomplete fiction of a story-in-progress, the 'whims that may seize me and the sallies of my luxuriant imagination' (*London Journal*, 65, 39).

Posthumously, the figure of 'Hume' himself had his history reshaped into a different kind of story, one designed to unite his problematic legacy to a safer fideistic version of Enlightenment. Boswell's account of the visit he paid to Hume in hopes of finding the infidel philosopher reformed on his deathbed is notorious; thwarted of his pious (and self-serving) aim to rewrite the philosopher's life story in the light of his end, Boswell lost control of both his narrative and his personal behaviour.⁴⁴ Standing at the philosopher's as-yet unfilled grave, self-composure deserted him: 'my mind was not right'.⁴⁵ After Hume's death, Mackenzie more readily rewrote events in a periodical story of a philosopher who, driven abroad by

some disappointments in his native country, . . . was afterwards induced to remain there, from having found, in this retreat, where the connections even of nation and language were avoided, a perfect seclusion and retirement highly favourable to the development of abstract subjects, in which he excelled all the writers of his time. ('The Story of La Roche')⁴⁶

Reclaimed from his secession by the society of an old pastor whose 'religion was that of sentiment, not theory', and his gentle daughter, the philosopher relinquishes his isolation to celebrate the daughter's marriage. He arrives, however, in time to celebrate not Ma'moiselle's union, but her funeral. Monsieur La Roche delivers a sermon on the separation of death, and the philosopher, finally chastened, 'amidst all the pleasures of philosophical discovery, and the pride of literary fame . . . wished that he had never doubted.'⁴⁷ His philosophic disconnection is overcome, but at the cost of emotional independence.

Mackenzie's first and most celebrated fiction *The Man of Feeling* (1771) is structurally ruinous: fragmentary leaves rescued from the wadding of a fictional curate's gun evoke a staccato, disconnected succession of moments in the life of a man of sensibility. They are a series of sympathetic climaxes which record the protagonist Harley's emotional responses without the connective tissue, the cementing texture of continuous experience which might render these moments meaningful as part of a single life story. In the final episode, Harley's heart simply bursts on emotional overload. *The Man of Feeling*, as I shall indicate more fully in Chapter 4, implies a kind of pessimism about the 'social cement' of sympathy. Mackenzie would carry this

pessimism further into the realms of individual identity and integrity in *Julia de Roubigné* (1777), which enacts the fatal consequences of an ill-assorted union, locating the beginning of internal disintegration in the breakdown of the dialogic forms of epistolary fiction. Julia's 'Editor' refuses to link the surviving fragments of the now-irrecoverable complete story of the fatal union of Julia and Montauban into a syntactically unified story, because the private intensities of feeling are not accessible to connected exposition. In a thoroughly Humean and fragmenting *aperçu*, he insists that human nature is most accurately apprehended 'in her smallest character'.⁴⁸ 'The state of the mind', reflects the narrator, may be more readily apprehended 'from very trifling, than from very important circumstances' (5). An epistolary novel where the confidants never reply, *Julia* explores highly developed emotional relationships whose primary characteristic is failure of sympathetic communication. The fragmentary remains of their ill-assorted union reflect the breakdown of sociability which dictated a disastrous outcome for the liaison between the virtuous but self-isolating protagonists:

I am somehow afraid of writing to you, which is only another sort of thinking. Do not therefore expect to hear from me again until after Tuesday at soonest [the day of Julia's union with Montauban] . . . Set down Tuesday next for your Julia – but leave its property blank. – Fate will fill it up one day! (73)

Fragmenting the form occludes the relations between parts, and embodies a kind of negative resistance to the uniting features of communicable narrative, a 'blank' at the affective heart of the novel: 'It is not,' as the narrator says, 'so much on story, as sentiment, that their interest with the Reader must depend' (85). Once married, Julia and Montauban become increasingly remote from one another; their union is blighted by mutual suspicion and failures of communication, 'the delicate cords, which preserve the unity of the marriage-engagement' (82) untwisted by both characters' preference for the solitary consolations of writing over speaking. As the *dénouement* approaches, emotional disconnectedness is mirrored in the fragmentation of their syntax:

If I have recollection enough – Oh! my Maria – I will be calm – it was but a dream – will you blush for my weakness? Yet hear me – (154)

I thought I heard her maid upon the stairs – it is not yet the time. – Hark! it was not my wife’s bell – the clock stuck eleven – (156)

The break-up of narrative signifies more than the collapse of social exchange; it is an early image in Scottish fiction of imaginative integrity violated by the failure of sympathy to act as connective tissue between self and society.

Amid the richness and variety of Scottish writing in the second half of the eighteenth century, the genre of extended fiction is disappointingly thin, both in bulk and quality. The stories of the Scottish Enlightenment are more typically found embedded in the intensely social milieu of journals like Ruddiman’s *Weekly Magazine*, or Mackenzie’s own *The Mirror* (1779–80) and *Lounger* (1785–86), than as self-contained publications whose totality is predetermined by the author. It may have been suspicion of the engulfing, exchange-denying potential of ‘wholeness’ that dictated the aggregative nature of these brief tales, which frequently provoked continuation by correspondents in subsequent numbers of the periodical. Accretion and dialogue rather than completed form seem to have been the aims of contributor and editor alike. These episodic products of sociability replay Hume’s deliberate fragmentation of his epistemology and its subsequent semi-fictional reformulation in a ‘Union . . . betwixt the learned and conversible Worlds’ with himself as ambassador between the States, in an essay originally intended by Hume as the opening number of a periodical publication on the model of Addison’s *Spectator* (‘Of Essay Writing’, *Essays*, 537). It may be no coincidence that the short story develops as a form in the *Weekly Magazine*, or *Edinburgh Amusement* and *The Mirror* and *The Lounger*, and their influential descendant *Blackwood’s Magazine*, whose pages were avidly read and imitated by Edgar Allan Poe. Neither, then, would it be fortuitous that V. S. Pritchett’s *Oxford Book of English Short Stories* begins with a sequence of nine stories composed by either Scots or Americans.

However, it has to be conceded that the closest fictional cognate of Hume’s *Treatise* would be something like Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* (1760–67), or in another vein the introspective psychology of Samuel Richardson’s *Clarissa* (1748). Scottish Enlightenment fiction offers only a few pale imitations in the magazine journalism to compare with the range and suppleness of these empirical inquiries of the self.⁴⁹ So what, if anything, makes the preoccupation with

union and fragmentation I have described a feature of *Scottish* literature, rather than simply a product of its empirical era? At this point (and this is in no sense a complete answer), two observations suggest themselves. Firstly, the alliance of the political, the social and the personal exemplified in 'Fergusia and Heptarchus', and which characterises aspects of the Union debate and subsequently informs Hume's epistemology of union and fragmentation, remains active in Scottish and American fiction as it does not in English literature. Political and personal stay mutually present in the texture of the stories these pieces tell: the integrity of selfhood (or its disintegration) is mirrored by that of nation conceived as an association of different parts. Scottish Enlightenment fiction may not be aesthetically distinguished, but it is exemplary in its assimilation of structures of union and fragmentation; Mackenzie's work in particular received early and repeated American re-publication.⁵⁰ Similar forms in Scottish poetry (as I shall argue in Chapter 4 in relation to Macpherson's *Ossian*) supplied powerful models of separation and disunion, violated integrity and sympathetic bonding, to American Revolutionary rhetoric.

Secondly, self-consciousness about language *use* gave a particular urgency to Scottish and American attention to the syntactic and grammatical dimensions of union and fragmentation. It is at least arguable (and Chapter 6 will pursue this possibility) that Hume and his compatriots Reid, Boswell, Macpherson, Beattie and others regarded these issues of personal identity and the experience of consciousness as intimately connected to – and indeed only expressible in terms of – the structures of language, *because of* their experience of being linguistically marked in an increasingly anglophone post-Union Britain. These 'North Britons' were identifiable, and identified, by their distinctive non-English use of the language: in inflection, in Scotticisms or Scots-specific words, and in embedded syntactical differences. The pains they took to remove the evidence of their pre-Union national origins from the surface of their writing were a corollary of their commitment to Union, but there was always an awareness that traces of personal and national difference remained in their use of language to betray their conscious projects of national or individual self-construction. Peter Jones cites an early fragment of Adam Smith's writing which suggests that

language may be considered as a theory of nature, a popular system, which joins in 'the fancy' the multitude of unconnected

phenomena of this world, which are, strictly speaking, only objects of perception. The linguistic system-builders thus resemble philosophical system-builders, who endeavour 'to find out something which may fill up the gap, which, like a bridge, may so far at least unite those seemingly disjointed objects, as to render the passage of the thought betwixt them smooth, and natural, and easy.'⁵¹

In a political and conceptual world where the principles of connection were actively in question, where things might only be joined 'in the fancy', all forms of conjunction were slippery, evanescent, potentially treacherous. Phenomena alone were substantive, connectives merely transitive bridges between them; should the bridge break, the gap of epistemological uncertainty would as Emily Dickinson put it in the poem I quoted in the Introduction, 'yawn' alarmingly. Naturalness and ease, the hallmarks of style (which Gilles Deleuze has called 'the foreign language within language') eludes these Anglo-Scots.⁵²

Another way of describing this would be to say that in the main (the most notable exceptions being found in the prose of the philosophers themselves) the published stories of self and nation told by Scottish and American writing of the Enlightenment are so pre-occupied with integration and unity – with holding themselves together, as it were, keeping the bridges in place – that they tend to impose a coherence which does not articulate negative and disintegrative states. These do, however, mark their texts in gaps, expressive lacunae and fragmentary modes which qualify if they do not belie the more connected story. The persistent presence of such resistant modes will be the concern of later chapters. Even at its most 'integrated', Scottish Enlightenment writing (beginning with Hume's *Treatise*) preserves the register of resistance and discontinuity in vocabulary and syntactic forms which shape the distinctive character of Scottish and American Romanticisms.

In 1845 the American critic Charles Astor Bristed, grandson of John Jacob Astor, published an article which exemplifies the pervasiveness of these structures in the form of American Romantic literary debate. Bristed identified the characteristic 'analytic manner' of 'the Scotch School of Philosophy and Criticism', and its '(perhaps) consequent synthetic incapacity or indisposition.'⁵³ In particular, he lamented

the 'want of . . . constructiveness' in Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*: it lacked 'unity of plan', he said, a typical failing of the 'Scotch School' and 'the Scotch Intellect' (388). Notwithstanding this fault, he continued with some chutzpah, the book 'is after all what the ladies call "delightful reading"', its attractiveness to a female readership arising from its very deficiency in scientific and didactic integrity:

The reader is without preamble introduced to the most diminutive process of mechanical art – pin-making. He is led through the minute analysis of its unexpected complexity. He knows at no step of his progress whither or to what the next may bear him – conscious of motion, but ignorant of direction as well as of destination. But he is not, we may be sure, on this account the less, but much the more, delighted, on beholding the principle of the Division of Labour unfolding its multifarious branches from a source so despicable. (388)

Bristed concedes that Smith's fragmented exposition did conceal a larger unity, inherent but obscured from its reader in the process of the narrative. This principle of cohesion does not frame and guide the exposition of detail (which, for Bristed, makes it defective in construction as a 'Treatise') but the very disintegration of the subject is what keeps its (female) readers reading. The problem is essentially one of appropriateness, almost of social decorum:

If Dr Smith were writing an epic poem or a novel, where the reader, led through a winding path of agreeable amazement, was to be astonished by the final eduction of 'great things from small' . . . in such a case, he would have been quite right in his exclusive adoption of the analytic method of exposition; and would, indeed, have been signally commendable for the management of this pin-making plot . . . (388–9).

Smith's method, that is, itself embodies a kind of division of labour: to ladies, the fragmentary forms and novel-like structure befitting their lack of systematic education and (presumably) short attention spans; to gentlemen, the more sustained work of comprehending the 'unity of plan' of the philosophic whole.

Bristed's opposition (a standard one) of the 'analytic' and 'synthetic' methods in philosophy makes explicit the analogy between 'fragmenting' and 'uniting' tactics in literary construction; in both

cases, the nature of the '*connection* between principles and fact, particulars and universals, theory and practice' (390; my italics) is at the heart of the issue. *The Wealth of Nations*, he concludes, is 'but a collection of essays linked to one another by scarce any more unity than that of subject'; the work lacks, that is, organic wholeness (which Anglo-American Romantic writers had recently instituted as the defining quality of the highest forms of art). Bristed finds Smith's paratactic linking style typical of 'the Scotch writers' at large. 'The next in pretension', he goes on jocularly, 'is the maiden production of Hume, called, "The System of Nature". But this bad book has not much of the nature of system' (390-1).

Bristed's account of 'the Scotch School' as essentially 'essayist[s] muffled in the stole of . . . philosopher[s]' (391) – analytic rather than synthetic, writers of fragments rather than wholes – anticipates my reading of how Hume's narrative method directed the nature and the structure of his philosophical argument, and the formal characteristics of Scottish Enlightenment fiction. The principles of connection that structure the tension between 'fragments' (atomised perceptions, momentary states of mind, single ideas) and an impulse towards unification (wholeness, identity, systems) are aggregative rather than synthetic or hierarchical – hence Bristed's complaint about the lack of 'organic' unity. Bristed argues that the Scots' *penchant* for the fragmenting analytic method both results from and leads to undue reliance on reason over imagination: 'in matters of reason the imagination is allowed too little influence; in matters of taste the reason arrogates too much' (397). We should note that he writes in the shadow of Coleridge and Hazlitt, whose criticism associated the fragmenting impulse firmly with the mechanical operations of reason, as against the synthesizing power of imagination.⁵⁴ The opposition of reason and imagination is one outcome, arguably, of Hume's procedures, but as I have suggested (and contrary to Bristed's supposition), imagination proves even more central to Hume's map of the mind's world than to Coleridge's: it is the area of experience where the mind makes links, and coherence may be intuited. Most crucially, it is the conceptual space of resistance, as well as of affirmation.

Hume's 'conclusion' in the *Treatise* that matters of personal identity may only resolve themselves as questions of grammar, and that

identity itself is a grammatical fiction, offer the possibility, as I indicated in the Introduction, that he is the first deconstructionist. To read Hume through the post-modern keyhole is, as I suggested, to commit an anachronism; it is however perhaps not only an inevitable one, but a perspective that Hume's writing first made available. The fact that his own ethical and political writing did not follow the route glimpsed in that famous sceptical moment at the end of Book I of the *Treatise* does not negate the imaginative power of its evocation. Once sign-posted, it was a road that philosophy would inevitably travel. Though he would certainly never have gone as far as declaring that 'It is the world of words that creates the world of things', somewhat ironically, it was Reid, Hume's 'Common Sense' non-sceptical antagonist who pursued the analogy between mind and language, whose epistemology and psychology more explicitly adopts a proto-Lacanian stance.⁵⁵ The logic of Hume's epistemology suggests that narratives of origin, if systematically pursued, lead ineluctably not to primal unities, but to fractured components, to scepticism. Regression, that is, issues not in purity but in doubt, an insight which would have important bearing on both Scottish and American attempts to construct confirming fictions of national origins. One way to read the end of Book I of the *Treatise* would be as a kind of 'anti-linguistic turn' occurring as premonition and refusal of the celebrated Derridean and Lacanian gestures of deconstruction.

The important thing, as I have suggested, is that this was only the first move in Hume's chain of logic; it is worth remembering that the moment had come and gone by the end of the first Book of his first published work. Everything that followed concerned itself with how to live with this consciousness *as a social being* – that is, to re-establish the texture of sociality, that web of relatedness in which thought in practice takes place and where meaning is generated. In psychoanalytic terms, the school of object relations offers a better model than either Lacan or Deleuze for reading Hume, at least in part because its structures are derived from his writing. It is not the main purpose of this book to trace the intellectual inheritance of empiricism to British School psychoanalytic thinking, but some aspects of that story will emerge in the following chapters. Hume's philosophical stance is robustly inclusive: 'men of letters ought always to regard their sympathy of taste as a more powerful band of union, than any difference of party or opinion as a source of animosity.'⁵⁶ Between incorporation and separateness lies the transitional space of play, which bridges the gaps between self and other, inner and

outer reality. This is the area of sympathy, and more broadly writing ('literature' in the eighteenth-century sense), a provisional meeting point or area of union where subject and object find common ground. 'The place', as Donald Winnicott puts it, 'where it can be said that continuity is giving way to contiguity.' In psychoanalytic terms it is the space of attachment to transitional objects: 'The use of an object symbolises the union of two now separate things, baby and mother, at the point in time and space of the initiation of their state of separateness.'⁵⁷ This is the conceptual space between the individual's inner life and objective reality, the playground of integration. It depends, if it is to be more than dream or private delusion, on assumptions of mutual exchange, on a federative rather than an incorporative association. This is the realm where stories are told, and it is premised, as Hume shows, on forms of connection made in the imagination.⁵⁸

Repeatedly, Anglo-Scottish and American fiction during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries evokes the timeless (or anti-temporal) state of primary unintegration and its emergence into history through the coming-to-consciousness of separate powers, spheres, and faculties. Formless, infantile or primordial mass takes on definition and identity in these fables of personal and national becoming, which map the territory of the mind on to that of the land, as George Campbell would map the mind through language: his *Philosophy of Rhetoric* hoped 'to lead the mind . . . into this tract' of 'the intellect and imagination.' The connection of language use with the structure of the human mind 'may be said to bring us into a new country, of which, though there have been some successful incursions occasionally made upon its frontiers, we are not yet in full possession.'⁵⁹ Reid, however, was deeply sceptical of Hume's capacity to articulate a full topography of human nature:

There must surely be reason to apprehend, that many parts of human nature never came under [his] observation; and that others have been stretched and distorted, to fill up blanks, and complete the system. Christopher Columbus, or Sebastian Cabot, might almost as reasonably have undertaken to give us a complete map of America. (*Common Sense*, 21–2)

The topographical metaphor was an intelligent choice, as Chapter 2 will suggest. A Scottish Enlightenment model of stadialist history whereby all societies, like individuals, pass through identical stages

of developments between infancy and maturity, bestowed a narrative of chronological progression and a sequential, paratactic, continuity between the unintegrated and the divided states.⁶⁰ The 'case study', whether individual and medical as in George Cheyne's 'CASE of The Author', or national and political, like Adam Smith's analysis of pin-making, or of Dutch economic success, bring desire for integration into conjunction with the methods of empirical observation. Together they create the 'State of the Union' as an inevitability, at once a teleologically verified endpoint of development, and a scientific fact. Not, however (as Chapter 2 will also suggest) without resistance from the continuing imaginative vitality of the pre-integrative state, to any prospect of 'incorporation'. In these sophisticated fictions of development, the processes of personal consciousness and the aggregation of nationhood remain mutually in play.

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