“SYMPATHY UNITES, WHOM FATE DIVIDES”:
SCOTTISH-ENLIGHTENMENT DIALECTICS OF NATIONHOOD IN
THE POWER OF SYMPATHY’S REPUBLICAN PARABLE

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“Sympathy Unites, Whom Fate Divides”: Scottish-Enlightenment Dialectics of Nationhood in The Power of Sympathy’s Republican Parable

On a damp night in April, 1746, two men edged nervously down a narrow pathway in London’s back alleys. Hissing bonfires, the clatter of celebratory musketry, and the shrill ululations of working-class London had warped a somber – even grave – evening in Britain’s capital into Pandemonium. Snared unwittingly in the fervor following those first shouts of a decisive military victory in the Highlands, the two Lowlanders found their walk homewards unsettled by gin-sopped rioters and the glare of torch fire. Stuffing their wigs into their pockets, swords drawn, the two were relieved to fade into the protective darkness afforded by a “Narrow Entry” while the Hoard washed past. “‘The Mob were so Riotous and the Squibs so Numerous and Incessant,’” Alexander Carlyle wrote about his narrow escape with Tobias Smollett, that “Smollett advised him not to say a word ‘Lest the Mob should discover my Country’” (Simpson Ross 82). On the eve of Charles Edward Stuart’s folkloric defeat at Culloden, the identity of one’s “Country” was a deadly serious matter.

That same August, a twenty-three year old student of Balliol College left Oxford in hopes of attaining the late Francis Hutcheson’s vacated faculty position in Glasgow. Intentionally taking an easterly road, he carefully avoided encountering any clots of
desperate Jacobite refugees. But his aversion to the west coast was perhaps even more resultant from the threat of vengeful Hanoverian platoons, and it is entirely likely that the young scholar was forced to “guard his identity because of hostility to Scots as rebels” for “as a pamphlet entitled Old England” described it: “a Scot is a natural hereditary Jacobite, and incurable by acts of lenity, generosity, and friendly dealing” (81). Adam Smith recognized, like Carlyle and Smollett, that the gruesome conclusion to Charlie’s Year was the death rattle of an autonomous Scottish state, and that the future of Scots and the survival of their society lay in cultural “marriage of convenience” to English values. After all, Smith saw more companionability between the Lowland and English societies with their emphases on “agriculture, commerce, and industry” than with the Highland’s “pastoral stage and patriarch[y]” (87). And yet the union of Lowland and English interests would require an entirely different process than James VI and I’s ceremonial Union of the Crowns in 1603, or the nations’ constitutional merging via the 1707 Acts of Union. National cohesion after the perceived Scottish infidelity of the ’45 would require an intentional reinvention of the Anglo-Scottish rapport.

Political union could no longer prevent the English from seeing their northern cousin as a perfidious opportunist; it would require a union of sympathies and a psychosocial transformation via individual British sensibilities. Interpreting the importance of union, David Hume would describe this “ideal ‘Political Whig’” as a “Man of Sense and Moderation, a Lover of Laws and Liberty, whose [patriotism] is founded on a Regard to the publick Good” (Ross 84). As the Enlightenment continued its steady evolution within Scottish commercial, political, and intellectual circles, bifurcated Britain
began to see a transformation in the rhetoric of nationhood – as constructed and knowingly rearranged by Scottish philosophers, economists, and literati.

Exactly eighty years after the 1707 Acts of Union, an eleven year-old nation faced with vocal detractors weighed the costs of combining its confederation of autonomous states under a single, unifying constitution. As the United States sought to understand its evolving identity – not as Calvinist New Englanders, patrician Virginians, or German Pennsylvanians, but as Republican Americans – it returned to a familiar source of inspiration: the writings of the Scottish Enlightenment. The influence of Scotland’s “fierce individualism, which saw every man as the basic equal of every other, and defied authority of every kind” (Arthur Herman 232) undoubtedly contributed to the Revolution’s capitalistic, individualistic ethos – a movement about which one Hessian captain observed: “Call this war by whatever name you may, only call it not an American rebellion; it is nothing more or less than a Scotch Irish Presbyterian rebellion” (229). As the summer of 1787 hung over a humid Philadelphia, pregnant with factionalism, the influence of Scottish ethics and sensibility was indissoluble from the mash of German,

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1 “Federal Superstructure.” An anonymous cartoon published in the Massachusetts Centennial depicting a divine hand ushering Massachusetts into the sturdy pantheon of states which have already ratified the United States Constitution. [from the Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society]
Dutch, Swedish, Anglo, Ulsterite, Huguenot and Acadian culture that had been percolating in American pubs, chapels, and drawing rooms throughout two centuries of European settlement.

While Scottish influences were clearly not alone in their role in shaping the national identity of the United States—as Daniel Walker Howe writes “[a]ll Americans of the eighteenth century did not respond in the same ways to Scottish ideas, nor were all Scottish ideas alike” (573)—they were nonetheless incalculably influential and undeniably foundational in framing the burgeoning society’s sociopolitical ethos. The most credible reasons for the clear relationship between North Britain’s Enlightenment literature, and the American republic’s self-actualization are the two countries’ societal similarities: “the framers of the American Constitution found the thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment suited to their purposes because the social situation and goals of the two groups were remarkably similar” [emphasis mine] (Howe 574). Enlightenment-era Scotland and Revolutionary America each cultivated their societies in a crucible of collective cognitive dissonance between voracious personal self-determination and international self-consciousness. In each country’s case, sympathy was utilized as a mechanism of union, bridging the gap between what Claude Lévi-Strauss would later call *l'inné et l'acquis* – “the innate and the acquired” (32) – in his anthropologic surveys.

Lévi-Strauss argued that “the cultural forms adopted in various places by human beings, their past or present ways of life determine [their] rhythm and direction,” subverting the forces of “biological evolution” by employing a “determinism” which “very quickly [begins] to work in the opposite direction” of the cultural destiny
influenced by environment and resources (33). Lévi-Strauss would question the connections between evolutionarily developed traits and intentionally designed culture:

There are differences between cultures; and certain cultures, which differ from others more than they seem to differ among themselves (at least to the eye of the inexperienced outsider), are characteristic of populations whose physical appearance distinguishes them from other groups. Is there a conceivable tie between these [acquired and innate] differences? (6)

Lévi-Strauss calls attention to questions of agency in national and cultural formation: to what degree is it a result of geographic placement and genetic composition and to what degree is it self-determined? This question transcended the social politics of the British Isles as it entered into the vernacular of the Enlightenment itself. Innatism followed Cartesian principles which concluded that human beings begin life programmed with certain elements insolubly programmed into their essences (John Marshall 136). Across the English Channel, John Locke disputed this claim in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, charging that all persons were born *tabula rasa*, and that rather than being packaged into the fetal brain, all mental matter was acquired and accumulated after birth (346). Locke’s epistemological argument shook the English-speaking world and infused the British Enlightenment with a core value which was quickly and enthusiastically adopted by the Scots and Americans as they sought to reinvent their societies. For the Scots, this provided them with a profound metaphysical loophole: though they may be born north of the Tweed, their character was not inborn but developed – not innate but acquired. As the Scots recoiled from the fallout of the Jacobite insurrection, they found themselves caught between English prejudices towards their
perceived racial tendencies (e.g. perfidiousness, impulsiveness, and savagery) and their desire to be perceived as a noble, rational, cultivated partner in English civilization (Evan Gottlieb 19-20). Literature would provide them the avenue through which they could both argue and demonstrate the worth of their ethnic group to the Kingdom of Great Britain by identifying the shared virtues of England and Scotland.

Indeed, literature and language has been identified as a crucial component of national-formation by anthropologists and culture critics including Frantz Fanon, Mikhail Bakhtin, Antonio Gramsci, Edward Said, Benedict Anderson, Lévi-Strauss, and Adrian Hastings. Common literature between diverse social groups acts as a dissolving solution by wearing away at chauvinism developed by ignorance and prejudice, mingling the various parties’ goals while maintaining the voices of their cultural identities. Of nations and the literatures that form and reform them, Hastings has said that a nation is “a far more self-conscious community than an ethnicity. Formed from one or more ethnicities, and normally identified by a literature of its own, it possesses or claims the right to political identity and autonomy as a people” (3). In his estimation, literature presents the most vital bellwether of national development: “[f]or the development of nationhood from one or more ethnicities, by far the most important and widely present factor is that of an extensively used vernacular literature” [emphases mine] (2-3). In that the English had historically viewed themselves as profoundly autonomous from the Scots, it fell to the literati in favor of British union – primarily Scots themselves – to encourage a reading of the British Isles themselves as autonomous from the wide world, much in the same

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way that – as Smollett’s Bramble was well aware – Wales and England, while certain of their own idiosyncrasies, had long ago disbanded the sense of explicit division between their realms.

The Scottish Enlightenment’s intelligentsia refused to allow the seemingly insurmountable – believed to be innate (Juliet Shields 39) – differences between the Anglo-Saxon English and the Celt-descended Scots by working towards and acquiring the sympathy of their southern counterparts through cultural mimicry (Gottlieb 47) and promoting the bonds of self-interest uniting the two nations (Shields 11). When faced with the same problem – whether a country of socio-economically different individuals could rally around a common civic cause – American novelists like William Hill Brown asserted that not only should the innate be overridden by acquired fraternity, but that it should be avoided vehemently. Nepotism, to the early Republic, was as deadly a sin as incest, and the drive to reward family connections over qualified citizens haunted the American experiment from the very beginning (Gordon S. Wood 88). Beyond its superficial threat to the American free market, Americans, particularly in Bostonian Brown’s New England, viewed individualized self-interest (viz. egoism without conscience or sympathy for the common good) as a venomous European toxin which had infected the Catholic nations and even roamed among the popish English aristocracy (286).

When Brown penned his epistolary tragedy, *The Power of Sympathy* in 1789, the country was all of thirteen years old – its Constitution not yet two. The narrative of deception and familial liquefaction in a thriving New England community came at a time when the *Federalist Papers* were still fresh in the public dialog and the American sense
of national identity was tentative. While Scotland is never mentioned in Brown’s saccharine prose, and although its menacing Gothic atmosphere is unmistakably akin to the proto-Romanticism of Goethe and Laurence Sterne (both of whom are specifically referenced), its relationship with Scotland’s national literature is striking. The genetics of Anglo-Scottish unionism are deeply engrained within America’s tentative transition from a loose, commercial confederation to a constitutional republic, and can be traced in the social dialectics within Brown’s novel.

Sympathetic literature of the Scottish Enlightenment held a similarly crucial role in forming a Lowland-engineered reinvention of the Anglo-Scottish cultural, political, and commercial union. Smith’s psychological treatise, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), Smollett’s epistolary travelogue, *Travels Through France and Italy* (1766), his picaresque novel, *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771), and Alexander Mackenzie’s 1793 transcontinental travel narrative, *Voyages from Montreal* provide insight into the common mechanisms of national identification in popular Scottish literature, allowing counterpoint to Brown’s deconstruction of American public character. Throughout these narratives run themes of person versus polis, sense versus sympathy, and effectiveness versus affectation. During the decades following the Culloden butchery, Lowland intellectuals strove to reinitiate Scotland into the British dialectic. These themes recur throughout their popular literature: galvanizing a bifurcated nation through the stimulation of sympathy and civic humanism – overriding seemingly-innate isolation with acquired agency. These are the selfsame themes composing the ethic nucleus of Brown’s republican parable.
SENSE & SYMPATHY: ENLIGHTENMENT PSYCHOLOGY

*The Power of Sympathy* operates as a psycho-civic moral tale dictated to the as-yet unconsolidated American body politic. Brown paints in metaphors of incest, adultery, concealment, monomania, and hysterics to direct his middle-classed audience to the dangers of privatized ambitions and warped sympathies. Sympathy is the novel’s idée fixe, menancing its family skeletons with natural (rather than deductive) exposure, warning readers of the impossibility, and lethality of privacy in a republican society. The threat of sympathy – and its benefits – calls into accountability not only the individual actions of the citizenry, but their individual psyches as well. Sympathy emerges as an enlightened ideal from the works of Thomas Hobbes and Bernard Mandeville, finding stability in the Scottish canon by way of Hutcheson’s “…Common Systems of Morality” and most importantly Hume’s *Treatise on Human Nature*. When Adam Smith penned *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* in 1759 he drew attention away from the physics of sympathy, *à la* Hume, and towards their “inherently mental experience” (Gottlieb 33). While both Smith and Hume “agreed on sympathy’s centrality to the formation of both individual and national identities” (27-28), they describe different mechanics of sympathy, and it is Smith’s sympathy of conscience and agency which we will follow.

The sympathy to which Brown and Smith made reference exceeds Twenty-First Century definitions of “pity” or “compassion.” For eighteenth century Enlighteners, sympathy was a deeply imaginative process more akin to intense empathy, whereby it was possible, through intentional concentration, for a person to acutely feel another person’s situations; it was the “general human ability to share other people’s emotions, whatever their tenor” (Gottlieb 18). At the peak of the Enlightenment conceptual
sympathy was ubiquitous in polite and vulgar culture alike: sympathy “was everywhere in mid-eighteenth century Britain, making at least a titular appearance in everything from medical treatises to popular novels, to antislavery tracts” (49). It permeated Anglo-Scottish culture, and was felt deeply north of the Tweed, where “while Scottish writers did not create single-handedly the culture of feeling that … defined the long eighteenth century, they certainly played a disproportionately prominent role in exploring the moral workings of sensibility and sympathy” (Shields 2). And it certainly was a matter of “moral workings” for writers like Hume and Smith; rather than a passing pathos, to them sympathy was a personal act of psychological morality.

Brown’s allusions to voluntary empathy argue that it is a powerful civic engine which, when wielded with discreet intentionality can aid in society’s edification but when left unchecked and untempered, can just as easily become a subversive siege engine.

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3 Detail from Bostonian painter John Singleton Copley’s 1778 painting, Watson and the Shark. As Watson’s arm is torn from his body, a boat of rescuers arrives, stunned with sympathy for the naked man’s agony. Of particular interest is the figure in the upper left, whose face is painfully sad upon considering Watson’s own pain. [Museum of Fine Arts, Boston]
undermining the city walls. The ambiguous power of sympathy recurs throughout the novel, lurking in the uncultivated crannies of its characters’ motivations and desires. In Letter VII Eliza warns that “he who has no conception of the beauties of the mind will contemn a person awkward or illfavored” because without an intentional attentiveness to sympathy “we judge the happiness of others by the standard of our own conduct and prejudices” (17). Mrs. Holmes later warns Myra to “look into her own heart and compare the strictures on the conduct of others with her own feelings” (27), and before revealing the novel’s fatal secret she charges Myra that “it is the duty of friends to be interested in all the concerns of one another – to join in their joys and to avert the stroke of danger” (59).

Worthy confesses to having been drawn to his fiancée by the force of “a secret sympathy” (30), and his heart later freely shares “in the sorrows” of a poor man (52). Harriot, too, when relating the foreshadowing tale of the incestuous lover drawn to suicide, shudders with “feelings of sympathethick sorrow” (40), and the Wertheresque Harrington cries out to his Wilhelmesque Worthy: “may thy soul be ever disposed to SYMPATHIZE with thy children … Hail Sensibility! … FROM thee! Author of Nature … floweth this tide of affection and SYMPATHY” (62). All this occurs before the innate sympathy existing between Harriot and Young Harrington destroys them. Mrs. Holmes, being too late to avert disaster indicts the maelstrom into which the lovers have been pulled: “GREAT God! of what materials hast thou compounded the hearts of thy creatures! … the operation of NATURE – and the power of SYMPATHY!” (63). Like a sublime specter, sympathy inundates the novel, offering either to stabilize the characters with moral constancy or to (if unchecked) inflate their passions to deadly proportions.
Smith emphasized the crucial nature of sympathy in nation-formation, drawing attention to its ability to subvert prejudice and stress common experience and common aspirations. Smith was “convinced of sympathy’s importance for social and even national cohesion” (Gottlieb 33) asserting that “the propriety of generosity and public spirit is founded upon the same principle with that of justice…. The most humane actions require no self-denial, no self-command, no great exertion of the sense of propriety. They consist only in doing what this exquisite sympathy would of its own accord prompt us to do” (Smith 285). Smith argued that “the love of … country” required two prerequisite elements: “a certain respect and reverence for [the constitution] and … “an earnest desire to render the condition of our fellow-citizens as safe, respectable, and happy” (231). To those who promote an egoistic persona embedded in the cove of pure, unchecked self-interest, unaffected by the experiences of their compatriots, Smith has this somber indictment: “to seem to not be affected by the joy of our companions is but want of politeness; but to not wear a serious countenance when they tell us their afflictions, is real and gross inhumanity” (14). The duty of the truly effective citizen is to allow the experiences of those who share his public goals and comradeship to impact his emotions, choices, and actions.

Throughout its passionate prose, Theory calls into question the motives of the private citizen, drawing attention to the prerogative of self-preservation rather than allegiance:

[Such] is the same with the greater exertions of public spirit. When a young officer exposes his life to acquire some inconsiderable addition to the dominions of his sovereign, it is not because the acquisition of the territory is to himself, an
object more desirable than the preservation of his own life. To him his own life is of infinitely more value… [than] the state he serves. **But when he compares those two objects with one another,** he does not view them in the light in which they naturally appear to himself, but in that light in which they appear to the nation he fights for. To them the success of the war is of the highest importance. [emphases mine] (287)

It is by sympathy, Smith asserts, that the empire expands; and it is by sympathy that the superficial dislike between the polar kingdoms of Great Britain can overcome their quarrel for the sake of the united nation. Natural sensations and innate traits (e.g. the officer’s innate drive to preserve his life or the Scot’s ethnic distinction) are subject to being overridden by the concentrated imagination of the individual citizen – the compassion for the good of the nation acquired by their efforts to transcend nature and natural inclinations. In this manner Smith argues for an intellectual nation-state made effective by the individual responsibility of its citizens to remove themselves from the frantic “Riotous[ness]” of “the Mob,” and for cancelling out age-old traditions, beliefs, and impulses in favor of deep personal consideration and empathy. Personal investments must be jettisoned if they conflict with the preservation of homeland virtues.

Twenty years later, across the Atlantic, New England’s first novels reflected Smith’s psycho-social civics: “[sympathy] and self-conscious theatricality mark [American fiction] as essentially political, enacting important disruptive notions about the formation of individual and national identity … following the establishment of Federalism” (Julia A. Stern 2). American writers such as Brown were borrowing from Scottish notions of civic empathy by celebrating sympathy’s “constitutive power and
simultaneous unraveling” (cf. Worthy and Myra’s marriage and Harriot and Harrington’s destruction) by which “eighteenth-century American fiction figures problems of social and political cohesion” (3). A floundering fragmentation smote American society in the aftermath of the polarizing Constitutional Convention just as Hanoverian Britain had fractured in the aftermath of Prince Charlie.

Anglo-Scottish relations after 1745 demanded a means to transcend fraternal sympathy driven by common viewpoints in favor of unprejudiced, capitalistic sympathy driven by common-interest. The post-rebellion tension between London whiggery and Highland clannishness had left the Lowland bourgeoisie in a tenuous situation: they would have to wait decades to reestablish a relationship of trust between the two countries. After the Forty-five, no amount of “innate” consanguinity could alleviate the damage done to British union. The Lowlanders were faced with social extrication from their civil pact with the English, and while the political union stood reasonably firm, the gathering clouds of deep racism blackened the cobbled streets of Edinburgh and Glasgow as much as they did the crags of Great Glen and Ben Nevis (Shields 3-6). Scots and Englishmen were perceived to be members of discordant cultures: of rival ethnicities. Ethnicities, as described by Hastings, constitute “a group of people with shared cultural identity and spoken language” (3). Ethnicity created the “major distinguishing element” in societies of the pre-national peoples, but may just as easily thrive “as a strong subdivision with a loyalty of its own in established nations.” Such was the case for the

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4 Sympathy affects both romantic relationships, but with drastically different outcomes, remaining consistent with the dualistic sympathy in Stern’s description: Worthy and Myra are drawn into one another’s company by their common sympathies, and their untainted union is fused by sympathy’s “constitutive power”, while the selfsame elements in Harriot and Young Harrington’s noxious attraction ultimately “unravel[s]” them.
Scots who often spoke in a different language, dialect, or accent – their ethnicity signaled (or betrayed: as Carlyle so unhappily learned) in the very construction of their speech.

Innately Scottish, men like Smith, Smollett, Carlyle, and Hume were stigmatized in their acquired British culture. In *Life of Johnson*, Boswell describes the pariah-like experiences of Scotsmen in 1772, after listening to a conversation between Johnson and Sir Alexander Macdonald concerning his own Scottish-tinted accent:

“I have been correcting several Scotch accents in my friend Boswell. I doubt, Sir, if any Scotchman ever attains to a perfect English pronunciation” … Upon another occasion I talked to him on this subject, having myself taken some pains to improve my pronunciation… Johnson said to me, “Sir, your pronunciation is not offensive.” With this concession I was pretty well satisfied; and let me give my country-men of North-Britain an advice not to aim at absolute perfection.

(468-469)

Only through further acquiring currency in English esteem could Scotsmen restore their social standing without having to entirely renounce their culture. Smith’s civic sympathy proffered a means by which to induce the English back into partnership: by practicing Smith’s “internalizing panoptic discipline” of concentrated empathy, Scottish intellectuals accumulated the agency to maneuver their culture by “taking responsibility for [their] own remaking of society” into their own hands (Gottlieb 45). Individual agency supported the Enlightenment’s investment in achieving “national consensus and a shared national identity.”

To acquire English trust was to promote Anglo-Scottish relationships outside of the paradigms of history and politics. To receive the Scottish people back into his good
graces, the Englishman must meet the individual Scott – the synecdoche through which the broader culture of Scotland may be best understood, experienced, and tolerated. The responsibility of curing the disaffection between the two nations rested on the individual citizens of those nations developing sympathetic relationships to foster tolerance and cooperation. In The Expedition of Humphry Clinker, Smollett offers just that: a tenuous relationship between the bristly Welshman Bramble and the bellicose Scotsman Lismahago. Their microcosm of Anglo-Scottish relations provides an example of restorative sympathy for the rest of the nation’s citizens, “illustrat[ing] the challenges of forming the sentimental correspondences [necessary to generate] an Anglo-Scottish union of sympathies” (Shields 89). Despite the two characters’ occasional antipathy, the Welsh characters eventually realize that the reason for the Scotsman’s bilious temperament – with his “self-conceited, awkward, rude, and disputacious … Caledonian” (151) traits – has been years of jaundicing “anti-Scottish prejudice” (Shields 89). Jerry and Squire Bramble’s final integration with Lismahago can be seen as a “familial assimilation through sympathy” which is offered by Smollett as a “prescriptive model” for Anglo-Scottish “integration” within Great Britain.

Smollett’s microcosmic approach to national formation is strikingly similar to that which lays the foundation of Brown’s parable, a novel which “underscores the connection between personal sympathy and social imperative” (Stern 22). The undoing of the novel’s characters is housed in Mr. Harrington’s hidden past – an exclusivist deception which deprives the community of clear and truthful information for which to

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5 Bramble initially quips that “[Lismahago’s] manner is as harsh as his countenance” (162), citing his “pedantry and ungracious address,” comparing him to a “crab-apple in a hedge” and inferring that his accent conveys a “clownish air even to sentiments of the greatest dignity and decorum” (184).
build itself upon, denying the very possibility of sympathy by segregating his emotions and obscuring his regrets. The end result is, of course, Harriot and Thomas’ misinformed misalignment. Sympathy compels them towards one another through its potency—a power which, had it been fortified by Mr. Harrington’s voluntary self-exposure to the republican polis, would have been more usefully harnessed to stimulate socio-economic leveling. Thomas’ republican leanings are endowed with passion, and indicate a civic-minded spirit driven by sympathy to break down elitist barriers in favor of emotional egalitarianism between Yankee aristocrats, poor female illegitimates, and black slaves (26). It is in fact precisely that “the senior Harrington’s tyrannical exploits go unpublished, while his son’s more socially expansive instincts—and with them his future—are crushed peremptorily and buried beneath inception” (27) which provides the novel’s grim “progressive manifest narrative.” It bears mentioning, of course, that due to the mechanics of the epistolary novel (namely that only the letter-writers’ perspectives are represented, and that all others’ are merely inferred through their interpretations) both *The Power of Sympathy* and *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* are helmed by unreliable narrators. Outsiders, therefore, such as poor whites and black slaves (in New England) and quarrelsome Scots and capricious Methodists (in North Britain) must be recognized as being marginalized both in their political communities and in their literary representations. Through the medium of the narrators’ observational letters we are allowed a glancing comprehension of the feelings, experiences and opinions of supporting characters from the social periphery, but these inferences are based on reports of the narrators’ dictations of speech and inferences of meaning, leaving considerable
room for interpretation and narratorial inaccuracy. This creates, of course, a troubling and troublesome dynamic for casual reader and scholarly critic alike.

Sympathy draws the siblings into one another’s orbit, increasing in intensity and passion until the force rockets them into psycho-social collision, whereby their minds and standing are both ruptured by the revelation of their common origin. Sympathy derives its power from a willful indulgence of imagination: from the ability to consciously place oneself in parlance with the situation of another person. Harriot and Thomas are not at fault for their compassions – although we will address the dangers of indulgence later on – and their fateful impact can be seen as the tragic ruin of two heartily-suited republican spirits in the execution of what, with the appropriate integrity of their father, would have been their noble tendencies towards empathic, social passion. Mr. Harrington, who later bemoans his wretchedness (82-86), exhibits a profound deficit in sympathy, and an unwillingness to sacrifice the privacy of his indiscretions. As a result, the community is deprived of a republic unobstructed by deceit and fortified by communicative sympathies.

POLIS & PERSON: NATIONAL IDEATION AT HOME & ABROAD

While Thomas Harrington is travelling from the mercantile boroughs of New England to the rural empires of the Carolinas, his concepts of self and society are formed and fortified by his experiences with a plutocratic, slave-holding community. Driven by sympathy to psychically experience the trauma of the Carolinians’ chattels, young Thomas returns to the north with a developed sense of New Englishness and civic humanism. “INEQUALITY” he notes, “among mankind is a foe to our happiness … Such is the fate of the human race, one order of men lords it over another; but on what grounds its right is founded I could never yet be satisfied” (34). As if taking a Grand Tour across
the borders of various sovereign countries, Harrington remarks that “[in] my tour through the United States, I had an opportunity of examining and comparing the different manners and dispositions of the inhabitants of the several republicks [emphases mine],” describing his journey from New England into the Southern states with little less exoticism than Smollett would use to depict the ignorance of the European interior. He illustrates “those of the southern states” as being “accustomed to a habit of domineering over their slaves, [being] haughtier, more tenacious of honour, and [in possession of] more of an aristocratic temper than their sisters in the confederacy” (34). And as Harrington journeys “northward” he finds that “the nature of the constitution seems to operate on the minds of the people—slavery is abolished—all men are declared free and equal, and their tempers are open, generous and communicative.” The South is another world, and its temptations of wealth and power are tripwires for civic-minded, liberty-loving republicans in New England.

Defining societal character by its approximation to adjacent cultures has been a method of national ideation for all cultures but came into particular prominence in the travel narratives of Scots during the Enlightenment. Like Brown, in Travels through France and Italy, Smollett constructs concepts of cultural Otherness – a method Said termed “Orientalizing”, viz. “A distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts” (12) – in order to proactively work towards a definition of national Self. Smollett’s vaguely autobiographic narrative engages contemporary British prejudices towards Catholic continental Europe, and encourages a more cohesive envisioning of British civilization with French and Italian society in its murky peripheries. Gottlieb notes that “through the ‘bad’ examples
of France and Italy, *Travels* indirectly extends Smollet’s ongoing project of envisioning a mutually held national identity for the Scots and English” (80).

![Image](image-url)

*Figure 3.*

Religion offered a literature of its own to cure the Anglo-Scottish malaise: namely, in the narrative of Protestantism. While he features the formative affects of “an extensively used vernacular literature,” Hastings pauses to mention the impactful relationship between a diverse nation and its religion: “[r]eligion is an integral element of many cultures, most ethnicities and some states… Without [Christianity]… it is arguable that nations and nationalism, as we know them, could never have existed… Christianity both undergirds the cultural and political world out of which the phenomena of nationhood and nationalism as a whole developed” (4). Religion provides a pre-determined narrative from which unionists could siphon energy to instill their cases with credibility by inducting Scotland within the narrative of northern Protestantism in

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6 Detail from Plate Six of William Hogarth’s series *Industry and Idleness*. An able-bodied Frenchman holding a bass violin is forced out of a handout line by a brawny English butcher to make room for maimed navy and army veterans. In the background the London Monument still references “the treachery of the Popish Faction” [British Museum, London]
opposition to England’s oldest adversaries: those who adhered to the narrative of papal Rome. Catholic Europe presented a convenient means of centralizing Lowland culture around the Anglo-Saxon locus, away from the Catholic Highland through creative manufacturing of the innée and acquise: anthropological Highland/Lowland kinship versus reengineered anglophilic Lowland sensibilities.

Smollett’s rendering of the European continent offered an extreme borderland to redefine Anglo-Scottish relations. Richard J. Jones even argues that Travels “leaves the domain of the ‘travel book’ and becomes, instead, an encyclopedic work of a Scottish (and notably Glaswegian) Enlightenment” (10). That is to say that rather than simply collating his letters from the Grand Tour into a conventional travelogue, Smollett is developing a compendium detailing continental Europe’s otherness through a collection of “medicine, art criticism, the theatre, and history writing,” emphasizing the peripheral exoticism of France and Italy by documenting their lifestyles in an encyclopedic context.

In describing French living habits, Smollett glibly remarks that: “A Frenchman lays out his whole revenue upon tawdry suits of clothes, or in furnishing a magnificent repast of fifty or an hundred dishes, one half of which are not eatable, nor intended to be eaten. His wardrobe goes to the fripier; his dishes to the dogs, and himself to the devil, and, after his decease, no vestige of him remains” (248). Of a particular Italian public house, he complains that “We ascended by a dark, narrow, steep stair, into a kind of public room, with a long table and benches, so dirty and miserable, that it would disgrace the worst hedge ale-house in England” (242). France, not Scotland, is the great threat to the future of British virtue: Smollett notes that English girls sent to study in France return to their homeland “never fail to imbibe prejudices against the protestant
religion, and generally return enthusiastic converts to the religion of Rome” (48). It is also an unoriginal plagiarist of British technology and commerce, having “profited by the example of the English” with regard to “the point of agriculture,” and inflating the industry of British spirits by passing “new, fiery, and still-burnt Brandy” into England: the “trash which smugglers import into England … for about ten pence a gallon” (56). The French, he sourly concludes, “imitate the English, but only in such particulars as render them worthy of imitation” (79).

Franco-Italian culture in *Travels* is depicted as sluggish, corrupt, ignorant, and polluted; individualistic, chaotic, and irresolute – “ridiculous and insignificant” (90). Indeed, “vanity” he declares, “is the great and universal mover among all ranks and degrees of people in this nation.” The air itself in France is diseased – “subject to putrid vapors” contributing to the “prevailing diseases among the children” – and the water is “very hard and unwholesome,” contravening British values of health and hardihood (54). Led by miserly burghers, deceitful clergy, lecherous chevaliers, and an extravagant aristocracy, and populated by superstitious peasants, drunken vagabonds, craven servants, filthy beggars, and vicious bandits – the lower classes being “all diminutive, meagre, withered, dirty, and half-naked” (109) – the papal Continent differs wildly from English concepts of robust and courageous British-hood. Smollett bitterly regards the French noblesse as an “insignificant set of mortals,” (59) being “vain, proud, poor, and slothful” (58) and “helpless in themselves and useless to their community; without dignity, sense, or sentiment” [emphases mine] (59). Smollett blames the continentals (and the “perceived decline [in their] culture”) for “the lack of linguistic and cultural fit between rulers and
ruled” (Gottlieb 80): the peasants are “rendered savage and desperate by the misery they suffer from the oppression and tyranny of their landlords” (57).

When compared with stereotypes of French laziness and fraud, Scottish thrift and courage promoted their status as bona fide Britons. Jones remarks that “Smollett probably enjoyed (and had perhaps emphasized) his tendency to make comparisons to Scotland [in France and Italy]” (9). By drawing distinctions between North Britain and the European continent, travel writers could not help but encourage fellow-feeling amongst the British. In fact it is by the “sheer force of xenophobia” that many of “the English and Scottish learned to define themselves as similar primarily by virtue of not being French or Catholic” (Gottlieb 17). While relying on this theory alone “ignores several crucial historical complications” in the story of Anglo-Scottish unionization, the orientalization of the papist Continent cannot go unmentioned without severely ignoring the methods by which the Scottish reclaimed favor in England’s eyes. When Hume was deciding whether to reside in London or Paris (he eventually chose Edinburgh), Adam Smith wrote to “[confirm] Hume’s suspicion that France is overly exotic … maintaining that although the French are friendly and learned, their capacity for fellow feeling is too narrow to be dependable” (27). Remarkably, it is by hemming in the margins of his own sympathy that Smith is able to make this argument.

Jones promotes the interpretation of Smollett as a Scot employing Smithian sympathy to challenge popular perceptions of the “social converse” in eighteenth century Britain concerning Scotland and the wide world:

Smollett’s writing participated in a kind of “carnival” that destabilized generic categories and unitary interpretations. Put another way, Smollett presented a
version of the “social converse” that marked Enlightenment thought in Scotland (and which was encapsulated in Smith’s dynamic image of the “impartial spectator”)…. the image [of Smollett the travel writer is] of a divided (and dislocated) Scot, muttering to himself about being in Scotland. (13)

Smollett himself provides a microcosm for the fractured British nation, being “divided (and dislocated)” in a country that cannot provide him with peace of mind – neither socially nor through sensibility. France is an alien province to Smollett, and his homesickness encourages a personal reexamination of his place in the world, which might – through avenues of sympathy – cause his readership to reexamine the place of Scotland in the world, not as a Catholic satellite, but as an unequivocal son of Britain. It is by manufacturing the periphery of Catholic Europe that Smollett suggests a place of rest for the disjointed Scottish nation amongst Wales and England.

Alexander Mackenzie created a similar periphery in 1793 when he published *Voyages from Montreal through the Continent of North America to the Frozen and Pacific Oceans in 1789 and 1793.* Born Alasdair MacCoinnich in the Outer Hebrides in 1764, Mackenzie’s published accounts of his American expeditions into the Canadian interior cast the continent’s northern and western frontiers as exotic, wild, and lawless. Unlike Smollett whose treatment of Franco-Italian culture acted as a dark background against which to illuminate British values, Mackenzie’s American setting and his portrayal of the indigenous population was so unlike that of Britain’s European counterparts that the narrative acted more as an exemplar of British industry and courage than as a depiction of alternative cultures:
One of the hunters … was accompanied by three families of Indians, who left Athabasca the same day as himself; they did not bring me any fowl; and they pleaded in excuse, that they had travelled with so much expedition, as to prevent them from procuring sufficient provisions for themselves. By a meridian line, I found the variation of the compass to be about twenty degrees east (10).

Referred to as flippantly and inconsequentially as a group of tardy children, these three families (before Mackenzie’s seamless transition into a note on his coordinates) are granted very little indulgence and are seen as part of the landscape: a shifting, nomadic tribe of hungry creatures who inconvenience the expedition with their need to be fed without offering any gain to the main party – little less than dry cattle, barren hens, or emaciated swine.

Mackenzie’s Indians are uncultivated, expendable, interchangeable props in his American saga. Rather than bothering with their otherness, he casts the wild, uncultivated landscape as his story’s nation-defining “Orient”:

We passed through numerous islands, and had the ridge of snowy mountains always in sight. Our conductor informed us that great numbers of bears and small white buffaloes frequent those mountains, which are also inhabited by Indians [my emphases]… I attempted to ascend [a high rocky hill] … but before we had got half way to the summit, we were almost suffocated by clouds of musquitoes [sic], and were obliged to return. (38)

The Highlander’s expedition pits rugged terrain against British fortitude. As Britain leaves its history of interior conflict smoking on the marshy fields of Culloden, the object of desire shifts from the English throne to the global perimeters, and India, Jamaica,
Canada, the Pacific Islands, and Australia became proving grounds for British culture and national ideation. Mackenzie’s preface announces that his desire to “unfold countries hitherto unexplored, and which, I presume, may now be considered as a part of the British dominions, it will be received as a faithful tribute to the prosperity of my country [emphases mine]” (viii). Avoiding words like “brave,” “courage,” “wild,” and “rugged,” (even calling himself no “candidate for literary fame”) Mackenzie allowed the unornamented, scientific descriptions to talk for him. His expedition is not a Victorian romance; it is a moderate account of British hardihood in the face of impressive circumstances, and – even more importantly – an example of Scottish fidelity and contribution to the collective cause of British civilization. By expanding the British frontier, Mackenzie and explorers like him simultaneously diminished the borderlands between Edinburgh and London.

Mackenzie’s account of Canada offered to the national formation of Great Britain what Hastings lists as one of six elements crucial to the development of the modern nation-state⁷: nationalism. Hastings describes nationalism as “deriving from the belief that one’s own ethnic or national tradition is especially valuable and needs to be defended at almost any cost through creation or extension of the nation-state” (4). By constructing his encyclopedic catalog (which far exceeds the acerbic Smollett in its scientific impartiality) and emblazoning it with the dedlicative commitment to the “prosperity of [his] country” and the extension of British dominion, Mackenzie, the Hebridean who anglicized his name, offers his services to the furtherance of British nationalism. His

⁷ Besides a common, vernacular literature, Hastings includes ethnicity, nationalism, religion, and the transition from ethnicity to the nation, and thence to the nation-state as elements critical to formation of the modern nation (2-4).
compendium, like Smollett’s, contributed to an ever-developing cache of British literary narratives which inspired a sense of trans-Britain unification through the adhesive qualities of a common nationalistic myth. For Smollett this myth was that of Britain, the social, political, medical, and intellectual champion of the Europeans; for Mackenzie this myth was that of Britain, the champion of the unexplored world.

Brown’s Carolina provides his New English audience with just such a frontier; even as Smollett and Mackenzie incorporated the papist Continent and the vast American north into their narratives, Thomas’ sojourn into the American South provided the setting for the threatening Orient. Although Smollett’s French were England’s perennial enemy, in Travels they are more comical than threatening; and while Mackenzie’s Canada was a looming frontier, in Voyages it is nonetheless manageable and even sublime. This is not the case for Brown. His American South does not pose a political or physical threat; it provides an acute and deadly moral enemy to New England industry and republicanism. Here a world of clannish favoritism and plutocratic elitism continues to thrive in spite of the Revolution’s fiery crucible. Here a near-feudal society still exists where the divide between landed rich and poor white is still vast, where gentlemen collect exorbitant fortunes from their slaves’ industry rather than their own.

This threat to New English thrift and egalitarianism extends beyond abolitionist appeals, stabbing at the ethos of the Revolution: a credo of personal responsibility, sacrifice, and moderation in exchange for public welfare, security, and bounty (Wood 235, 252). True Republicans were expected to sacrifice personal interests for public prosperity: “republics were supposedly different [from monarchies]; they ideally embodied a distinct public interest to which people would willingly surrender some of
their private pecuniary interests” (252). The inné of aristocratic birth must be forfeited for the *acquis* of newfound republican egalitarianism – a sacrifice the chattel-holding South of patronage and entitlement hardly seemed to follow (186). Guided by his abiding sympathy, Thomas tests the validity of this brand of American republicanism by experiencing it through a female slave’s eyes and finds that it fails profoundly. Recalling the young Carolinian mother whose “air superior” had first drawn his attention, he shudders to recall her story: her ten year old boy having accidentally broken a tumbler, she shouldered a lashing in his stead (61). “Under every affliction … I rejoiced because I shielded with my body that lash from my child” (62). “HEROICALLY spoken!” is Thomas’ reply. She, the slave mother, is the true republican, sacrificing dignity, security, and comfort for the sake of the generation to follow. If New England is to meet the expectations of its republican civics, the American South provides a threatening Orient not only to its integrity, but also a counter by which to redefine, fortify, and validate its self-concept as a land of diligence and equality.

**Effectiveness & Affectation: The Civics of Emotion**

When writing his posthumously published *Essays on Philosophical Subjects*, Adam Smith strove to both summarize the arguments of great classical thinkers and to distill the chiefest of his own dicta. The sixth part of his compendium dissects his own “system of moral philosophy … [addressing] two fundamental questions likely to have been raised in his ethics class: ‘wherein does virtue consist?’ and ‘by what power or faculty of mind … is it recommended to us?’” (Ross 180). After combing through the organs of virtue, Smith concluded that “the nature of virtue … must be attributed to all our ‘affections’ when properly governed, thus making it consist in propriety; or in one or
other of the chief divisions of ‘affections’, the selfish or the benevolent, and thus consisting in either prudence or benevolence” (181). The man who wrote “[h]ow selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it” (Smith 1), was quick to qualify his praise of sympathy with dire caution to regulate it with the greatest care. In fact, as Shields underscores, “The Theory of Moral Sentiments is only one of many texts by Scottish writers that emphasizes self-control as a necessary complement to sensibility and as an essential element of sympathy” (10). Self-control was vital to the success of social sympathy and its role as an agent in sculpting national identity.

As has been noted, Thomas’ potent compassion was not without its faults (many of which were incidentally stereotypes of a fiery Scottish temperament); in fact his failure to deliberately channel his energies is as responsible for the fatal climax as is Mr. Harrington’s deceit. The Power of Sympathy is subtitled The Triumph of Nature. Emory Elliot remarks that the novel has “religious dictates and artistic passion as its central theme” (51). While we may argue that civic duty is more crucial here than religiosity, the thick tension between duty and whimsy is undeniable. Indeed, Harrington himself confesses to Worthy: “you may call me with some degree of truth, a strange medley of contradiction—the moralist and the amoroso—for these are interwoven into my constitution, so that nature and grace are at continual fisticuffs” (9). Elliot indicts – as the instigator of Thomas’ lethal mania – the “extreme psychological and social pressures that result from these conflicts between morality and feeling” (51). Vast, unleashed extremes
in temperament and reaction leave Young Harrington’s sensibilities as ungoverned and ungainly as a ship dismasted by violent winds.

Indeed, sympathy is not the only specter looming behind Brown’s text: the suffocating power of nature – the power of one’s own untamed, unkempt enthusiasm – is the surfaced leviathan that shows itself when Harriot’s body succumbs to her horror and when Thomas blows out his brains. Both are swamped with passions and inclinations, many of which stand to edify and purify the development of the young republic. According to Stern, “the privileged younger Harrington is a central figure in the Federalist circle whose social constitution—the nature limits of its polity—becomes a microcosm for questions of national identity formation” (26). Thomas stands out as a potential agent of progress and discipline in the young republic’s yet-unfinished genesis. The chief example of this may be, ironically, his ill-fated relationship with Harriot: “in determining to propose marriage rather than seduce and ruin this socially marginal woman, Harrington signals … the happy emergence of a nascent egalitarian sensibility.”

As enamored as the American revolutionaries were with the republicanizing magnetism of sympathy (cf. Harriot’s potential social mobility), they were equally obsessed with self-control and self-regulation, with “keeping to the just middle, without verging to one or another of the extremes” (Wood 152). A man’s passion, however virtuous, left unguarded by reason and discipline would almost certainly lead him to an infamous end, and English literature on both sides of the Atlantic emphasized this.

Such was not the case in the romantic schools arising from Germany and France, where the Counter-Enlightenment *Sturm und Drang* school had gained philosophical momentum under direction from J.G. Hamann, J.F. Herder, F.M. Klinger, and J.M.R.
Lenz. Prominent above all, however, was Goethe, whose sensational *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (1774) promoted an exalted, untamed sensibility which found energy from indulging the erotic and the whimsical (David Hill 309-312). Goethe’s self-indulgent, egoistic Werther promoted an untempered worldview that celebrated whim and impulse, rejecting the structured reason that the Enlightenment revered:

“Individuality clashes with the collective values expressed by state authority, class, and socialization. Many Sturm und Drang texts oscillate between the celebration of erotic love as utopian desire for an intensification of the self and a means of escaping the limits of one’s community” (225).

By the 1780s, romanticism swelled in Europe and had begun to find footholds in British writers like Sterne, whose *Sentimental Journey* and *Tristram Shandy* Brown references (28). Undeterred by the fashion, New English sensibilities were deeply disturbed by the threat of individualism, and although their appetites craved the gothic

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and the sublime (both of which saturate Mr. Harrington’s macabre dreamscape in Letter XLIX), their consciences were more than overwhelmed by a Calvinistic ethos that painted individualism as both sinful and unpatriotic (Wood 29, 32). When Thomas’ mangled corpse is discovered, “The Sorrows of Werter [sic]” is found “lying by his side” (100), a literal smoking gun indicting the violent sympathies of self-indulgence, for, as Stern remarks, “Werther functions as a virtual ‘how-to’ manual for the prospective romantic suicide” (13).

Sentiment was one thing – its empathic passions could be converted for the good of the republic – but without the guiding presence of an honest father, Mr. Harrington having shirked his responsibility to the community, Young Harrington and Miss Harriot are left untrained, incapable of reining in the runaway emotions that drive them to destruction. “Sensibility” it was believed “moderates the potentially offensive harshness of martial values,” but it was self-command which “in turn prevents the degeneration of ‘exquisite fellow-feeling’ into the emotional excess that would ‘destroy the masculine firmness of character’ [my emphases]” (Shields 30). Young Harrington’s potential as a nation-former has certainly been destroyed by his “exquisite fellow-feeling,” for, as one mourner lamented, he was “promising of genius, of violent passions, thou wast possessed of too nice sensibility, and a dread of shame” (Brown 102).

Discarding impulse for discipline was a priority for national reengineering in Britain as well. The stereotype of the Scotsman was a hard-fighting, hard-drinking, hysterical, pseudo-savage, Vulgar (Shields 55). His faults lay in overindulgence and irresolution which made him easily bribed by foreign potentates, and ineffective as an industrious member of the new British nation: essentially a treacherous beggar weighing
down English culture and designs, incapable of responsible self-determination. While the
cult of fellow-feeling was rampant in England, it required regulation, for “although the
Scottish man’s [sensibilities] suited him to participate in polite, civilized, English society,
his inability to control or regulate his feelings signaled his unfitness to govern others”
(Shields 59).

Figure 5.9

Smollett, Smith, and others worked to prove that if the break in inné culture was
insoluble, that at least the acquis connection between Scottish and English goals should
make their “marriage” companionable (Gottlieb 35). The English concern was that Scots’
un governable affections would hamstring their effectiveness as members of the British

9 “Scotch Cleanliness Ni Vide Cottagers of Glenburnie,” an 1810 etching made by Isaac Cruikshank
depicting the horror of an English couple being hosted by a Scottish family. The man is shocked by the
“dust & smoke” threatening to “suffocate” the household, while the woman is puzzled at the bonnet-
donning youth’s nonsensical tea habits. A dog urinates on the parlor floor while the family treads
indecently in bare feet and bare calves.
[British Museum, London, 1878,1012.5069]
union, for English culture was self-identified as being hardy, robust, hard-working, congenial, brave, and loyal, and Scottish culture seemed too much like the French in Smollett’s *Travels*: an unruly group of befouled, desperate peasants. Scots like Smollett and James Boswell (cf. his *London Journal* (1762-3)) recognized that “to achieve a moral and economic independence implicitly coded as British, Scots must learn to regulate carefully their supposed tendencies to excessive feeling” (Shields 18). Smith and Smollett repeatedly emphasize the crucial need for self-control.

*The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* was another of Smollett’s novels made to develop sympathy for the Scottish state through the experiences of its characters. Like *Travels*, where the Smollett narrator finds himself restless in the European mainland, Welshman Matthew Bramble travels North Britain with his family in tow, and is initially uncertain of his surroundings. Bramble, however, eventually finds peace amongst his new surroundings and begins to warm to the eccentricities and idiosyncrasies of the Scottish peoples. *Humphry Clinker* is inexorably tied to Smollett’s own experiences which inspired *Travels*, for even in France he found himself “travel[ling] back to Scotland” in his mind, reflecting seriously “on his recent visit to Glasgow and Edinburgh (remembering for example the windows of the inns near Doncaster that were ‘scrawled with doggerel rhimes in abuse of the Scotch nation’) (Jones 134). Unlike *Travels*’ disenchating experiences, Humphry Clinker develops a sympathy between the Welsh narrators and their Scottish companions. “Foul” was certainly cried by several commentators, including Horace Walpole who deemed it a “party novel written by that profligate hireling Smollett to vindicate the Scots.” Jones is quick to note that Walpole likely “missed a similar intention in the encyclopedic writings of the *Travels*” (135).
In *Humphry Clinker*, Bramble decries his own unfamiliarity with Scotland, noting that “it is a reproach upon me, as a British freeholder, to have lived so long without making an excursion to the other side of the Tweed” (53). His nephew, Jery later concludes that travel provides tourists with the opportunity to “[dispel] those shameful clouds that darken the faculties of the mind, preventing it from judging with candour and precision” (265). Smollett is not slow at developing a thesis of *understanding through sympathy*. In fact, as Jones vouches, the “most important image of *Humphry Clinker*, then, is the idea of ‘expedition.’ Smollett did not intend this simply in the sense of ‘journey’… The title … implies ‘energy’ or ‘effort’” (135). Effort is required to accomplish the expedition: the effort of fellow-feeling and sympathy. Self-control will heavily factor in Bramble’s experiences as he struggles to prevent himself from leaping to judgments about the Scots, particularly the demonstrative Methodist, Humphry Clinker, whom Bramble initially demands to depart his company, seeing that “such a filthy tatterdemalion … would soon fill the room full of vermin” (66). Setting out to better learn the customs and landscape of North Britain, the Smollettian Bramble finds much to critique as well as to praise. Bramble’s relationship with the swooning Clinker, is initially marred by the latter’s perceived effeminacy and ungovernable passions. Gottlieb insists that “Clinker’s Methodism threatens to undermine proper, hierarchical social relations; thus, it too must be controlled by Bramble’s patriarchal authority” (88). Unlike Lismahago, who “by asserting his status as an active agent [with Bramble], effectively alters the terms upon which sympathy can be utilized as a mode of social bonding” (91), Clinker immerses into his inné personality and refuses to *acquérir* a new temperament.
Lévi-Strauss, who argued that “culture is neither natural nor artificial [stemming] from neither genetic nor rational thought, for it is made up of rules of conduct, which were not invented” (34) sought to understand to what degree self-control was either innate or acquired. For Lismahago (who regulated not only himself, but also Bramble: “turn[ing] cool as [Bramble] turned hot” (226)), self-control appears\(^{10}\) to be a matter of rational intent, whereas Clinker’s emotionalism embodies the very fears that the English entertained about their relationship with Edinburgh. Of Clinker’s unrestricted sensibility wherewith he downplays “the light of reason” in favor of “the new light of God’s grace” [viz. Methodism], Bramble scolds, “you are either an hypocritical knave, or a wrongheaded enthusiast; and in either case, unfit for my service. If you are a quack in sanctity and devotion, you will find it an easy matter to impose on silly women and other of crazed understanding” (111). Emotionalism and the frenzy that may accompany it, Smollett was convinced, was not only an undesirable trait of the same “Mob” that threatened him in 1745, but conflicted with British patriotism which was stable, unbiased, and focused: “Smollett .. makes clear that his ideal citizen is motivated not by selfinterested identification with a particular segment of the population, but by a selfless embrace of the greater interests of Britons as a whole” (Gottlieb 76). By promoting his readership to “develop a correspondence of sentiments” with his self-governed characters, Smollett attempted “to contain their sensibility within a gendered hierarchy of political and moral authority, and to employ it in the work of British nation formation”

\(^{10}\) It certainly bears noting that neither Lismahago, nor Clinker, nor any other Scott has a represented voice amongst the travelers’ epistles, and that their actions and manners are entirely conveyed through secondhand, Welsh descriptions. What we gather from the Bramble party’s letters cannot be expected to depict unwaveringly reliable accounts of Lismahago’s interiority since their accounts are filtered through their personal perspectives.
(Shields 88). No union could be had, Smollett warns, if cooler heads demur, or if British citizens allow their judgment to be prejudiced and rendered ineffective by intemperance.

That Clinker is Bramble’s illegitimate son by a youthful indiscretion can be seen as an indictment of both Bramble’s failed self-regulation, and by extension, England’s inattentive fostering of Scotland. Bramble addresses this revelation with grim humor: “the quondam Clinker is metamorphosed into Matthew Lloyd; and claims the honour of being your carnal kinsman—in short the rogue proves to be a crab of my own planting in the days of hot blood and unrestrained libertinism” (254). As a crab of Bramble’s own planting, Clinker’s own hot blood can be plotted back to Bramble. Clinker’s excesses and femininity would have doubtlessly failed to develop had Bramble been responsible and disciplined in his younger days, and the boy’s demonstrative personality is as much a product of Bramble’s past self-indulgences as it is of Clinker’s present ones. Like Young Harrington, whose father’s behavior and unwillingness to be honest with his community led to his son’s peril, Clinker has developed awkwardly and unevenly from a lack of paternal attention and guidance. Both cases hold responsible the father who thought his actions could be contained without affecting him in the future. Behavior, it can be gleaned from both examples, is never insular, and indiscretions are very rarely contained episodes.

If the Bramble party is to be viewed as the microcosmic representation of the South “British freeholder” class, then it might be worth noting that the indiscretions of South British freeholders might be interpreted as being at least partially responsible for the faults they hold against Scottish character. After all, if Bramble had been present to set an example for his son, Clinker would most likely have developed to be a model of
British virtue and self-control. The metaphorical connection proffers a solution to the stereotype of Scotch intemperance: partnership and fraternity across Britain. The Scots cannot be accused of unsightly behavior without indicting the English for failing to execute their duties as kinsmen. Jery grumbles that: “South Britons in general are woefully ignorant… What, between want of curiosity and traditional sarcasms, the affect of ancient animosity, the people at the other end of the island know as little of Scotland as of Japan” [emphases mine] (249). Lack of sympathy has caused this fissure to grow between the two realms, Smollett may be suggesting. Referring to a “want of curiosity” (the sense that all to be seen can be seen where one lives) and “ancient animosity” (the unwillingness to reconsider prejudices) Jery promotes the belief that an insulated life is a danger to domestic relations.

Regulation was critical to British designs of success on both the European and world stages: regulation of affections, impulses, and lusts; finances, governments, and religion. Self-control stood to hone a citizen’s ability to affect his society for the better, and if inborn Scottishness was irreconcilable from the men who were now calling themselves North Britons, then mimicry of English values was necessary, for that which could be acquired might dilute that which was innate (Gottlieb 43-44). This saw a rejection of the hysterics of Calvinism in favor of Hume’s temperate humanism, a transition in power from the agrarian communes of Argyll to the miserly counting houses of Glasgow, and a martial shift from the Highland charge with its manic ululations to the unblinking advance of the immaculate Black Watch.

Like the wary English, New Englanders were concerned that a spirit of self-indulgence and emotional mania would render their project misdirected and unstable. The
rational Worthy peppers his final letters to the frenzied suicide with words encouraging responsibility and self-control – “prudence”, “fortitude”, “Reason”, “social duty” – warning against “too much sensibility,” “helpless, debilitated Nature,” “the power of imagination,” the “deceit of imagination” (96-97). Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments* thunders in his final words to the disillusioned Harrington:

> THE pensive and the melancholy will muse over the ordinary accidents of life, and swell them, by the power of imagination, to the heaviest calamities… Hence people in misfortune frequently construe the slightest inattention into neglect and insult, and deem their friends false and ungrateful. The sting of ingratitude deeply pierces the heart of sensibility. THE passions and affections which govern mankind are very inconsistent. (97)

Compare to Smith’s charge:

> The propriety of every passion excited by objects peculiarly related to ourselves, the pitch which the spectator can go along with, must lye, it is evident, in a certain mediocrity. If the passion is too high, or if it is too low, he cannot enter into it… We denominate the excess, weakness and fury; and we call the defect stupidity, insensibility, and want of spirit. (37)

Both writers condemn the extremes of feeling: the excess wherewith prejudice and self-service prevent clear perception, and the defect wherewith laziness and self-satisfaction prevent effective action. The “Middle Way” – the contentious, well-balanced, reflection mindset – proffers Smith and Brown the most productive means of inspiring and (at the same time) regulating the civic passions of their countries’ respective populations.
Worthy’s final advice commends agency and follows the deterministic path of the North Britons who transformed themselves into that which they desired: “determine to be happy, and you will be so” (98). This advice, pregnant with Enlightenment ethics, finds a defiant audience as Thomas turns to his pistols. Brown indicts Thomas’ over-affectation – his “Independency of spirit” (95) – as much as any villain, leaving the reader with Young Harrington’s own words calling attention to the flaw of his unguided sympathy, the power of which drove both he and his sister to combust in the fusion of their magnetic natures: “Who to one common father ow’d their birth; / Unknown to this union—Nature still presides, / And Sympathy unites, whom Fate divides. / They see—they love—but heav’n their passion tries” (103). Rendered useless and ineffectual by the unbridled sympathy maneuvering his passions, Thomas fails as a republican, and the atmosphere of the republic’s future in the hands of such a generation is pessimistically dire.

NORTH BRITAIN & NEW ENGLAND: THE PARADOX OF NATIONAL REINVENTION

William Hill Brown was born in Boston and died during a trip to North Carolina. He was ten years old when a potshot on a village commons seventeen miles away from his home ignited the American Revolution, and he was eighteen when the Treaty of Paris concluded the military elements of the same movement (Brown xl). But the American War of Independence did not conclude what had begun over a century before with the separatists’ Mayflower Compact. The motion to dissolve was deeply ingrained in American sensibilities. It was a motion to break from standard religion, to break from the towns into the frontier, to break from the empire into a sovereign state, and to prevent the necessity of breaking from that sovereign state by mandating the confederacy of the states in 1777 (Wood 329, 332). The United States was, in its first decade, a veritable
Holy Roman Empire made up of thirteen balkanized countries with disparate currencies, customs, tariffs, and laws (313). When Brown was twenty-three, he wrote the droll poem “Yankee Song,” a thirteen-stanzaed piece of doggerel written to commemorate Massachusetts’ ratification of the new, consolidating Constitution of the United States. His opinion was not unanimous, and it was not until 1790 that the New English state of Rhode Island ratified it, nor until 1791 when the Yankee Vermonters surrendered to unification. When *The Power of Sympathy* was written – less than a year after “Yankee Song” – Brown’s country was still teetering on the precipice of disunion, and New England was a breeding ground of anti-constitutionalism.

![Figure 5](image.png)

Unionists in the Scottish Enlightenment faced a similar problem after Charles Edward Stuart’s flight, but *their* deterrents were the English who deeply regretted becoming part of a constitutional alliance with Scotland (Gottlieb 61). Many wondered what good it brought to the English treasury if not what conspiracies were taking place during this time.

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11 An ngram showing the prevalence of the phrase “North Briton” in British literature 1740-1790. A profound spike occurs in 1760, peaking in 1770, and continuing to have a subtle presence throughout the century. From <books.google.ngrams>.
between continental Europe and their corruptible bedfellow, whom Samuel Johnson described as “a crafty, designing people, *eagerly attentive to their own interest*, and too apt to overlook the claims and pretensions of other people [emphasis mine].” Union was not threatened with political action, but it had been traumatized in the esteem of individual Englishmen many among who found the Scots to be childish savages if not decidedly sinister. North Britons, as many Scots preferred to be called during the peak of the Scottish Enlightenment, strove to distance themselves from their Jacobite neighbors. “North Britons” realigned themselves with the English center either by emphasizing commonalities north and south of the Tweed, as in *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*, or by expanding the reaches of the periphery by orientalizing the Highlands (97-98). The latter method of national identification is rife with contradiction and paradox, and it seems to have been the prime method of Scottish reinvention during the Enlightenment’s peak decades.

Smollett himself was party to a clash between two perspectives on how to legitimize Scotland in the eyes of the world. His unionist publication *The Briton* found itself under attack from John Wilkes’ *The North Briton*. *The North Briton* was conceived as a response to (or even “inspired by”) *The Briton* – providing precise counterpoints to Smollett’s pro-government rhetoric (Jones 127). The infamous issue number 45, a publication which openly criticized George III and accused a speech of his given after the 1763 Treaty of Paris of being dishonest, brought Smollett and Wilkes into extreme polarization. Smollett challenged Wilkes’ accusation, calling *The North Briton* “a false, scandalous, and seditious libel, containing expressions of the most unexampled insolence and contumely towards his majesty.” Yet both men had similar designs for Scotland – to
see it recast in a new, more validated fashion. Smollett and Wilkes had once been friends, and their papers began more as imitations of one another than as polar opposites. The line between their two agendas was, therefore, uncannily thin. While Smollett never would have admitted to the similarities, it is difficult to deny that both unionists and anti-unionists developed their sense of nationhood through similar means and rhetoric.

Smollett’s *The Briton* urges a reconsideration of the nomenclature of the Island, calling attention to the universal connectivity between the Welsh, English and Scots. Wilkes’ *The North Briton* reappropriates a unionist term to designate the singularity of Scottish values and culture; it is, he maintains, kin to the other ethnicities of Great Britain, and yet North Britain requires unique consideration from its southern brothers. Both men struggled to transform their national identity by using reformative rhetoric. Hastings defines the nation-state as “a state which identifies itself in terms of one specific nation whose people are not seen simply as ‘subjects of the sovereign but as a horizontally bonded society to whom the state in a sense belongs. There is thus an identity of character between state and people” (2). Smollett and Wilkes both strive to reappropriate the state of Great Britain and to return it to its people for them to reimagine and redefine it. By actively wielding national nomenclature, both parties take ownership of the nation-state and draw it further from medieval feudalism to modern self-definition.

Across the Atlantic, while Smollett was pleading the case to identify with England, Yankees west of the Hudson and south of the Saint Lawrence were emphasizing their separation from English society. “New England” had acquired its name from John Smith in his 1614 *Description of New England*, and the name was used throughout the seventeenth century to define itself in opposition to the smattering of Dutch settlements
to the east, New Amsterdam, and New France to the north. After New Amsterdam fell to England in 1674, and New France to Britain in 1763, the New England appellation may have fallen out of use, but the opposite was true: New Englishness became more important than before, and the phrase skyrocketed in American usage. Writers and thinkers in the northeastern states strove to reemphasize their freshness in relation to Old England – their restoration of long-corroded, virtuous English hardihood. Like North Britons who strove to rally their center by redefining the periphery (viz. asserting their Britishness by alienating the non-Britishness of either Highlanders or the Catholic French), the New English dressed their center by extending Old England to the margins, cultivating further cultural territory by fencing out Great Britain.

![Figure 6](image_url)

By the 1780s the “North Briton” demonym had fallen out of fashion, apparently having achieved its purpose. Perhaps a better explanation is the rallying power of a foreign threat – an even more dramatic Orient – which arose from Versailles. Usage of “North Briton” in British literature seems to plummet as tensions percolate in Boston.

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12 An ngram showing the prevalence of the phrase “New England” in American literature 1754-1789. A profound spike occurs in 1760, peaking in 1766, and continuing in fashionability throughout the next century until (Fig. 6) the American Civil War. From <books.google.ngrams>.
between 1770 and 1775, but they fall to their final, eighteenth century plateau in 1778 after the Saratoga campaigns and the subsequent Franco-American Alliance. No longer are domestic threats cause for discussion; the Jacobite cause for Stuart restoration appears dead, and the entire Island rallies to face European assaults to their blooming international empire. An examination of the usage of “New England” in American literature, however, will reveal that the demonym only increases in popularity, until 1865 when it dives for the first time since its most dramatic valley, in 1707 (incidentally the year of the Anglo-Scottish union). “New Englishness” was not merely a fortification against the British Orient: it denoted a self-proclaimed bastion of pure Americanness, of unpolluted republicanism, and its usefulness as a national identifier outlived North Briton by nearly a century, until the American Civil War decongested the cultural pressure between the North and South, decommissioning “New Englishness” for nearly a decade.

The great paradox in these two social-political restructurings is the suspended agency required to cultivate a new, self-directed national identity: namely, that North Britons and New Englanders both reengineered their placement in society by dressing to the center of mainstream English culture. The revamped, respectably companionable Enlightenment-era Scotland was manufactured in what is at once an act of independent agency and a retreat into parodic mimicry of English values (viz. self-control) (Shields 103). The regenerated, radically republican New English society was simultaneously an assertive reclamation of American virtue and a refurnished version of ancient English principles of independence and clannish community, further irrevocably tied to England by nominally inviting comparisons between Old and New England. Neither the North Britons nor the New English could claim to have independently recreated their societies,
for both were irrevocably linked – both in name and in cultural identity – to another country. Their methods of self-transformation included vilifying cultures they had orientalized (the Scots marginalizing the Catholic Highlands and France, and the Yankees Old England and the South).

Brown, like his Scottish counterparts, is active in restructuring his nation-state through the mode of literature. American society in large, particularly in Brown’s enthusiastically Separatist, ardently capitalistic New England, profited from the Scottish model of national self-construction. The transfer of inspiration from one source to the next is difficult to deny; Jones remarks that “we should note the importance of what [Benedict] Anderson calls ‘pirating’ – the taking over of an attractive model from one society to another, essentially in reality the passing across of an English model, first to Scotland, next to America” (28). Like the writers of the Scottish Enlightenment, Brown sought to wield the moral narrative of his country (in his case New England) in order to inspire union and collaboration against a threat common to all souls and states which recognized the narrative’s legitimacy – the “extensively used vernacular literature” (3) which rallied New English sensibility against the popish behavior of Southern Americans and the instability of a nation forfeiting sacrificial civic humanism in favor of individualistic Goethean libertinism with its emphasis on sensibility over sympathy.

Regarding the Highland periphery, North Britons openly suggested that “clan sympathy must be dismantled in order for the Highlands to be absorbed into the rest of Britain… demolishing the Highlander’s feudal lifestyle by introducing modern market practices” (Gottlieb 97). For the New English, where “by the mid-eighteenth century there was nobody left … who dared publicly and proudly to proclaim that he did not
work for a living” (Wood 277), the South with its “leisured aristocracy supported by slavery [seemed] even more anomalous … aggravating the growing sectional split in the country.” These refurbished nations depended on the margins against which they fortified themselves for their very cultural consistency and national identity.

Edward Said, in discussing the problems of cultural discourse, posed the following questions: “How does one represent other cultures? What is another culture? Is the notion of a distinct culture (or race, or religion, or civilization) a useful one, or does it always get involved either in self-congratulation (when one discusses one’s own) or hostility and aggression (when one discusses the 'other')?” (325). North Britons and New Englanders could certainly be accused of self-congratulatory, and sometimes aggressive rhetoric aimed at their peripheries. The Lowland expulsion of the Highland clans from British culture infamously impugned the credibility of their mission to recast their role in Great Britain. Regarding the political philosophies inherent in *Humphry Clinker*, Gottlieb remarks that:

The ideological price of … a united Britain is now clear: *Humphry Clinker* can conclude with an optimistic vision of Britons joined together by sympathetic familial bonds, only by proposing that the recalcitrant Highlands, the original site of such bonding, must be relegated to the status of something like an internal colony. (98)

There were moments of racism and inauthenticity in the creation of both of these self-designed cultures, and yet the very nature of acquiring a new society, of mindfully transforming their international image and governing their values, genders agency and independency of spirit and society. It is, however, impossible to celebrate these acts of
societal engineering without noting the cost paid by marginalized peoples and the devious mimicry required to achieve them.

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Claude Lévi-Strauss emphasized the structural mechanisms of cultural reimagination – calling attention to the ways by which cultures “converge recent[ly acquired] traits [with ancient traits] would combine to explain the diversity that can be noted today among human beings” (3). How, he questioned, have human cultures conglomerated the traits dictated by their environment and resources (e.g. Highland clannishness) with the traits they have selected (e.g. British self-control)? By producing a hybrid of innate and acquired traits, cultural engineers exerted a degree of personal
agency, civic humanism, and creativity unique to the world of literary anthropology.

“Sympathy unites, whom fate divides,” Brown wrote: sympathy ameliorates innate borderlands by providing the agency to acquire (103). Writers like Smith, Smollett, and Brown encouraged self-discipline, intentionality, virtue, effectiveness, and social sensitivity in their writings, employing the medium of sympathy – the act of intentionally imagining the circumstances and goals of others. These revolutionary men strove to encourage civic participation, microcosmic transformation, and assertive agency in the minds of individual citizens of their respective nations, with the goal in mind of expanding the horizons of their society, and engendering their citizenry with psycho-social sensitivities that would promote cohesion where there would otherwise be fragmentation, and sympathy where there would be prejudice.
Works Cited


