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Abstract: This paper offers a re-evaluation of Hume's engagement with historical sources, arguing that Hume fundamentally valued original source material because it provided insight into motivations and character traits as causes of action. This is most apparent, and was perhaps most important to Hume, in his research on Mary Queen of Scots. Hume's critical treatment of Mary in the *History of England* involved him in what critics called the Marian Controversy, comprising literary debates between Jacobites who wished to exalt Mary as a patron saint for the House of Stuart, and non-Jacobites who argued for her failures as monarch. Determined to earn a reputation as an impartial historian, or at the very least, not a Jacobite, Hume was careful to present sound evidence for his argument. By considering Hume's access to collections and archives, his use of sources in the Tudor volumes, and the changes he implemented in subsequent editions, the paper illustrates how Hume relied on, and valued, original sources.

Keywords: Hume, David; Hume's History; Character; Character Sketch; Historiography, Hume; Historical Research; Archives and Sources; Mary Queen of Scots; Marian Controversy; Jacobitism.

Introduction

David Hume's *History of England* is not known for its rigorous source analysis. Until recently, there has been a general consensus that Hume did not directly engage with original papers and other primary source evidence, as was commonly practiced amongst his peers, but rather pulled primarily from existing secondary literature in an attempt to distil England's history into a more digestible form.[1] This paper argues otherwise. It considers the Tudor volumes in particular to show the productive nature of Hume's engagement with original sources. These volumes are revealing because they placed Hume in a literary controversy around the scandals of Scotland's sixteenth-century monarch, Mary Queen of Scots, in which his engagement with original sources is most evident.

I do not wish to argue, however, that this study is representative of Hume's overall source use. The circumstances within which Hume wrote his Tudor volumes, especially volume four covering Mary's scandals, suggest that his engagement with original sources in this instance was much greater than in other volumes. This is because Hume was reacting to and challenging Marianists who wished to prove her innocence in support of their ideological narratives promoting the divine right of the Stuarts.[2] What critics called the "Marian Controversy" comprised debates between, on the one hand, Mary's Jacobite adherents who wished to bolster

[1] Spencer (2019) surveys the different "connecting principles" attributed to Hume's works.
[2] On Marianism and the different aspects of Mary's historical memory, see Reid (2024). This project began under the title "Mary Queen of Scots Project" with a series of blog posts that can be found at https://mqs.glasgow.ac.uk/.

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Mary's reputation as a patron saint for the House of Stuart, and on the other hand, non-Jacobites like Hume who argued for Mary's probable guilt (Pittock 2013, 73; Kidd 1993, 96; 1998; Wormald 2017, 5; Lewis 1997; 1998, 125; 2005; Gallagher 2020). The central disputed evidence concerned the authenticity of the Casket Letters: love letters and sonnets allegedly written by Mary and used to implicate the queen in the murder of her second husband, Lord Darnley.[3] Jacobites reduced Mary's innocence to proving the letters were forgeries; Hume responded by analysing the letters for himself, in a footnote, showing that the long-winded Jacobite arguments could be disputed with minimal effort.

Hume's involvement in this controversy shows how his approach to history was not purely narrative. It did not just synthesize the works of others. Nor was it completely empirical in the sense of the Jacobite approach to analysing Mary's past. But it was philosophical. Hume used the historical record to examine and understand Mary's character. He approached the queen's history analytically by both considering the source evidence and considering what Mary's actions reveal about her passions and motivations, her virtues and vices. Through their different approaches Hume and the Jacobites agreed on one conclusion: that Mary's actions could be explained by her character (Yunger 2026). In one example, while the Jacobite Walter Goodall wrote two volumes examining Mary's letters to prove her innocence, he concluded that it was "absolutely impossible" that a woman with a "character so highly exalted" and with such a great "conscious sense of virtue and decorum," could have written such documents (Goodall 1754, 77). Hume's analysis of Mary's character also led to a conclusive yet converse interpretation: that "She was, undoubtedly, a violent woman at all times" (L1 162: 299).[4]

While this paper presents other instances where Hume relied on primary-source material outside the Tudor volumes, he was perhaps especially determined to present a thoroughly researched argument for Mary's probable guilt, as his stance on Mary presented higher stakes for his reputation. Hume's first volumes on the Stuarts received criticism for being far too sympathetic to the displaced dynasty (Towsey 2014). Despite asserting his history had "done both Parties Justice" (L1 102: 210), Hume lamented to Adam Smith the futility of his efforts, suggesting that "if my past writings do not sufficiently prove me to be no Jacobite, ten Volumes in folio never would (L1 169: 314)."[5] While Hume was friendly with several Jacobites, he was determined to avoid a reputation for Marianism, and its association with what Hume viewed as the fanatical ideology of Jacobitism, "the most terrible *ism* of them all" (L1 139: 264).

With this background, this paper turns to the role of historical inquiry in Hume's thought before considering the importance of original sources in Hume's analysis of the past. It presents evidence of Hume's source engagement by considering his access to documents and archives and their confirmed use in his research. It considers questions of Hume's motivations, how he navigated historical biases, which sources he decided to include, how he applied them to his analysis, and the value Hume placed on original sources for understanding and interpreting history. The answers paint a far different picture of Hume than has traditionally been told. They show that Hume extensively used and valued historical sources in his research—especially in his research on Mary, but throughout his history, if less rigorously—and believed they were necessary for the kind of historical investigation he wished to perform.

1. Hume's Historical Project

In turning to the *History*, Hume sought to further his philosophical investigations by historical

[3] Bongie (1963) sketches Hume's involvement in the debate around the Casket Letters and shows how his restrained treatment of Mary in the *History* contrasts with more hostile opinions found in his private correspondence, using as an example a previously unpublished letter from Hume to Alexander Dick (November 1, 1760).
[4] See the Bibliographical Note to this issue of *Hume Studies* for a key to references to Hume's works.
[5] Skjönsberg (2021, 38) has shown how Hume used the terms "Jacobite" and "Tory" interchangeably.

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means, but he also wanted to obviate and correct historical distortions made by Britain's lacklustre historians.[6] The project was concerned with both style and the quality of historical content: he lamented that "there is no post of honour in the English Parnassus more vacant than that of History" (L1 79: 170), and that "the History of England has never yet been written, not only for *style*, which is notorious to all the world; but also for *matter*; such is the ignorance and partiality of all our historians" (L1 86: 179, my emphasis). Consider that, he observed, "The original books, which instruct us in the reign of Q. Elizabeth alone, would require six months reading at the rate of ten hours a day; and most people, even after taking this pains, wou'd attain but a very confus'd idea of the transactions of that period" (L1 152: 285). Style alone could not write a good history. As Hume explained to William Robertson, although he greatly valued style, such histories that held this merit alone could only pass as "sufficient" to "superficial People" (NL 28: 47).

For Hume, historical content should be properly weighed against both experience and human testimony, which we can see in Hume's historical evaluation of character. Following the death of most monarchs, Hume devotes a section of his *History* to describing or evaluating the person's character. Tellingly, his approach differs from his volumes on England's earliest history to that of the early-modern period: in the former, character is passed down prepackaged by historians, while in the latter, Hume's evaluation is his own. One explanation for this difference is that Hume had access to original sources only for the later historical periods. Indeed, when Hume began writing his last volumes on England's earlier history, he grappled with the lack of primary sources to work with. Speaking of past historians of the classical period, Hume again wrote to Robertson "what can you do in most places with these authors but transcribe and translate them? No letters or State Papers from which you could correct their errors, or authenticate their narration, or supply their defects" (L1 170: 314).

We can further see Hume's frustration in the example of his character sketch of Alfred the Great, who was "the model of that perfect character, which, under the denomination of a sage or wise man, the philosophers have been fond of delineating, rather as a fiction of their imagination, than in hopes of ever seeing it really existing" (H 2: 74). Yet Hume regretted the lack of "worthy" historians contemporary to Alfred who could have properly conveyed the "small specks and blemishes, from which, as a man, it is impossible he could be entirely exempted" (H 2: 75). It is hard to believe Hume was being genuine when he lavished praise on Alfred the Great against the background of his "maxim" that "no testimony is sufficient to establish" such perfection "unless the testimony be of such a kind, that its falsehood would be more miraculous, than the fact, which it endeavours to establish" (E 10.13).[7] Hume was wary of trusting sources that did not convey the character flaws that human experience has taught us exist in every person.

Hume's epistemology of testimony corroborates the need for primary source analysis in addition to secondary narrative sources. "A wise man," he tells us, "proportions his belief to the evidence" (E 10.4). In some cases, our past experience serves as "a full *proof* of the future existence of that event. In other cases, he proceeds with more caution: He weighs the opposite experiments: He considers which side is supported by the greater number of experiments" (E 10.4). Our belief in testimony is determined by probability, where our past experiences or "experiments" are the variables. If past experience has taught us that all humans have character flaws, and that historians are often biased, then the probability that Alfred had a perfect

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[6] In his biography, James Harris tells us that Hume "wanted the *History of Great Britain* to be both philosophical and 'interesting'." (2015, 31) For Harris, "interesting" meant that his approach was concerned with a style that balanced impartiality with an attempt at provoking his readership's interest in their recent political past.

[7] I believe there is good reason to consider that Hume was ironic in his praise, but contrast Dees (1997, 62).

character (rather than that he had biased chroniclers) is nil.[8] But had there been several archival sources testifying to the fact claimed by historians, the probability of his perfect character would increase. For we must consider that past experience has *also* shown us that human testimony is more often truthful than not, that we are motivated toward honesty to avoid "shame, when detected in a falsehood" (U 10.5).[9] Thus, as a baseline of our probability formula, we should generally accept "the veracity of human testimony, and … the usual conformity of facts to the reports of witnesses" (U 10.5).

Determining Mary's character was an easier task for Hume due to his access to both original sources and authoritative histories. The result might have surprised his contemporaries, who had decisively labeled Hume anti-Marian. While Hume's Mary persistently makes mistakes, largely due to the malicious influence of "profligate men," another part of her character is formed by her "great accomplishments both of body and mind, natural as well as acquired …. The beauties of her person and graces of her air combined to make her the most amiable of women" (H 42: 251). Mary's character was here derived not from biased secondary testimony, but through Hume's reading of her letters and similar original sources, the evidence for which this paper elaborates on below. Considering Hume's *History*, and the centrality of the character sketch, in this light, it follows that a close reading of such sources was necessary for understanding Mary's character.

Mark G. Spencer, Roger L. Emerson, and Marc Hanvelt have recently reconsidered aspects of Hume's source use. In their investigations into Hume's plans to extend his *History* past 1689, Spencer and Hanvelt (2019) show that Hume regularly sought and procured access to historical sources from the most reputable extent collections. And in their work compiling a bibliography of Hume's *History*, Spencer and Emerson (2014, 59) concluded that Hume had a much "greater familiarity with historical sources than is often attributed" to him by both his contemporaries and modern scholars. They show how the opposite view festered in the nineteenth century when historians seeking to replace Hume's historical canon criticized it as "a vast mass of sophistry" (Macaulay 1873, 152–3) for what they believed was his biased selection of sources.

The critical view persisted throughout the twentieth century. In 1971 Constant Noble Stockton sympathized with the supposedly incontestable fact of Hume's lack of source engagement: "We cannot blame an eighteenth-century historian for failure to use manuscript sources, for these were virtually unavailable" (292). Yet, as I show below, these sources very much were available to Hume: in private libraries, royal collections, and in the very library he was employed at. Worse still are the assertions by John Cannon in his 1989 review of Nicholas Phillipson's *Hume*:

> Hume was an estimable character with sterling qualities, tolerant, kind, ironic and patient, but nobody has yet accused him of being exciting. Phillipson does his best for him: indeed, if anything he does a little too much, claiming that Hume was a revolutionary historian, the finest historian, and that 'no historian before or since has had so subtle and powerful a sense of the interests that shape the political behaviour of mankind.' One would like to be convinced, but these seem rather extravagant claims for a historian who made no pretense of consulting original sources. (926)

Cannon's estimation of Hume falls well off the mark. Even considering Phillipson's congratulatory reading, Hume's enormous success following the publication and the hundred or so posthumous editions of the *History* attest to its admiration by and attraction to readers. And

[8] If "the fact, which the testimony endeavours to establish, partakes of the extraordinary and the marvellous; in that case, the evidence, resulting from the testimony, admits of a diminution, greater or less, in proportion as the fact is more or less unusual" (E 10.8).

[9] But lest we forget, "the knavery and folly of men are such common phænomena, that I should rather believe the most extraordinary events to arise from their concurrence, than admit of so signal a violation of the laws of nature" (E 10.37).

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as to Hume making "no pretence of consulting original sources," a closer look will show otherwise.

2. The Marian Controversy

In 1767, while considering extending the *History of England* past 1689, Hume wrote to the Comtesse de Boufflers explaining that he was "almost universally exhorted" to do so. The "King himself," promised access to all "records and public offices," and even sent for a specific batch of papers he had in mind for Hume's *History* (L2 413: 171). This is one of several examples of Hume's privileged access to sources. In a 1759 letter to Patrick Murray Lord Elibank, Hume remarked that "several" people had offered their help in "procuring Papers & historical Documents" (NLE 8: 448). In 1765 Hume wrote to his publisher, Andrew Millar, declaring his intentions to write another volume since he was "now in a Situation to have Access to all the Families, which have Papers" related to this historical period (L1 267: 491). In 1766 he wrote to Adam Smith that he had access to the Marlborough Papers, and that "no body woud venture to refuse me," presumably to accessing other vital collections (L2 300: 6). Such examples suggest Hume was active in attempting to procure sources, even if he never committed to extending the history past 1689.[10] We also see that, by the time Hume's history reached public eminence, his access to sources was unbounded. But what of his earlier access? Hume's engagement in the Marian Controversy of the mid-eighteenth century reveals which sources and archives Hume had or sought access to before fame opened all doors, while also showing the nature of his engagement with such sources, and the value he placed on them for historical research.

On the eve of the Marian Controversy in 1759, Hume was working as keeper of the Advocates Library in Edinburgh when he happened upon his assistant, drunk and asleep on a desk of papers. With characteristic good humour, Hume allegedly bellowed: "Queen Mary was a whore and had murdered her husband!" (Mossner 1980, 251). The slumberer was Walter Goodall, fallen asleep while researching the controversial Casket Letters used to implicate Mary in her second husband's murder. Regardless of this anecdote's veracity, the example reveals Hume's access to the primary source material used in Goodall's research on Mary.[11] Both historians would have been familiar with the collections and presumably discussed them at length. At the very least, there were "three Folio Volumes of Manuscripts in the Advocates Library" related to Mary's trials.[12]

Hume did not necessarily need to cite many of these papers *directly*, however, as they were lately published in James Anderson's *Collections relating to the history of Mary Queen of Scotland* (1727). Anderson assembled all available sources surrounding Mary's trials, including state papers, letters, and accounts by Mary's contemporaries. His work was among the first to put into practice new ideals of objective empirical history, stating that his "intention in publishing these Collections" was not to enter into the "Argument of that Queen's Conduct…but merely for

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[10] One interpretation of these examples might suggest that Hume did not extend his *History* because there were *only* original sources, and no existing secondary literature to work from. I believe Hume's note to Andrew Millar in particular suggests otherwise; that Hume wrote his publisher and made a point to comment on finally having access to the necessary papers shows how he seriously contemplated utilizing them for the next volume of his *History*. An alternative, and I believe more plausible, argument for why Hume did not write this volume is made by Hanvelt and Spencer (2010, 388) who conclude that "Hume was extremely tempted to pursue a continuation of his *History*, but reticent to do so because he felt that party prejudices were still too extreme," (384) particularly within a rising "anti-Scottish sentiment in Britain.". It was not that Hume shied away from working with primary sources in general, but those which might throw him into the flames of political controversy and public disapprobation in particular.

[11] Goodall's *Examination of the Letters* was published five years earlier. His continued research might suggest that he planned to publish more, perhaps in rebuttal to Hume's recently published Tudor volumes, in which Hume attempts to refute Goodall's argument in a single footnote.

[12] Hume to Alexander Dick (November 1, 1760) in Bongie (1963, 252).

the sake of Truth, the Life and chief Ornament of History" (1727, 1:iii).[13] And indeed, this collection lacks subjective analysis, instead laying out all available sources for his readers to interpret for themselves. Shortly after, the Jacobite bishop Robert Keith published a similar collection, again with the intention of making historical documents publicly accessible, in the *History of the Affairs of Church and State in Scotland* (1734). Keith included copies of letters and state documents "Taken from the publick Records, and other Authentick Vouchers" (1734, subtitle) Other such collections cited by Hume include the state papers collected by Murdin (1759). While Hume's references to these sources might easily be mistakenly interpreted as his pulling from recent secondary work, the material he was citing was not their authors' analyses, but the original sources compiled within. Alongside the sixteenth-century sources such as Buchanan (1506-1582), Melville (1535-1617), and Camden (1551-1623) that Hume cited in his *History*, these secondary collections are the most cited sources throughout his sections on Mary, showing how nearly all Hume's source material—at least what he deemed citable—derived from original documents.

In 1754 Walter Goodall published a similar collection, albeit with plenty of biased analysis, with the telling title *An examination of the letters, said to be written by Mary Queen of Scots, to James Earl of Bothwell: shewing by intrinsick and extrinsick evidence, that they are forgeries*. Goodall was appointed assistant keeper of the Advocates Library in 1730 by the Jacobite printer Thomas Ruddiman, who printed both Goodall's (1754) and Keith's (1734) pieces, and who himself had a clear interest in Marian history. He also published James Anderson's posthumous work on Scottish coinage, *Selectus diplomatum & numismatum Scotiae thesaurus*. In his introduction to the work, Ruddiman commended Anderson's diligent hunt for sources "in the cabinets of private persons, at home and abroad," yet added, while acknowledging his digression, that "It is not our business, in this place, to speak of his collections which he made, to clear up the most intricate history of Mary queen of Scots" (Anderson 1782, 13; alluding to Anderson 1727). Ruddiman was also an admirer of the Latin works of Mary's contemporary adversary, George Buchanan, publishing several new editions of Buchanan while simultaneously deeming him a "wicked" man for his slander against Mary, which Ruddiman and many of his contemporaries saw as the cause of her ill reputation (Duncan 1965, 64; see also Ruddiman 1747, 68). With their shared interest in Mary's history, Ruddiman and Goodall would over their twenty years as colleagues, very likely have poured over the Marian manuscripts together, developing Goodall's argument in a Jacobite echo chamber until Hume replaced Ruddiman as keeper in 1752.

Goodall's project was to reconsider the Casket Letters used in the English government's trial against Mary. He claimed his work gave an even clearer view than previous histories, utilizing more sources than Anderson's "imperfectly and unfairly" treated history (Goodall 1754, ix). In his final assessment of the Casket Letters, Goodall concluded "upon my examination, to my great astonishment, I discovered in them more ample and palpable marks and evidences of forgery, than one could readily have imagined" (iv). He argued that the letters, copies of which only survived in the highly prejudiced work of Buchanan, were crafted by Mary's enemies to incriminate her in the murder of Lord Darnley. This line of argument was not new, but perpetuated, in part, by the sixteenth-century work of Pierre de Brantôme, who argued that the letters were "too coarse and poorly polished" to possibly come from such a refined queen (1665, 104). Goodall added to Brantôme's defence by arguing that the letters themselves clearly provide another case for their forgery. The proof lay in what Goodall saw as essentially botched translations. Through his analysis of the extant copies of the letters, notably Buchanan's French and Latin translations, Goodall concluded that they were clearly translated from Scots originals. What made this evidence incriminating, according to Goodall, was that Mary would have most

[13] Craig (2024) shows how Marian publications in the early eighteenth century, especially Anderson's, were at the heart of the development of empirically-based historical analysis.

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certainly written private letters in her first language of French.

Although Hume respected Goodall as a historian, and frequently cited his work for further reading, he dismissed Goodall's conclusions concerning the Casket Letters as Jacobite nonsense. Broaching the topic in his *History*, Hume first disappointed his readers by declaring he would "not enter into a long discussion concerning the authenticity of these letters" (H 39: 114nK: 390) before nonetheless writing a multi-page footnote on the matter. After examining the letters for himself, Hume concluded that Goodall's case was easily refuted. He laid out his observations in fifteen points, showing how it would have been impractical for Mary's enemies to forge the letters, arguing, for instance, that the letters were "much longer than they needed to have been," and although the letters appear "indiscreet" and "inelegant," they are in an informal style, having "a careless, natural air, like a letter hastily wrote between familiar friends." Hume conceded that Goodall's case for their translation is intriguing, yet ultimately concluded that a simple analysis of the letters proves them to be "clearly a translation from a French original" (H39: 114nK: 390-393). As Hume's popularity grew throughout the 1760s, his critical interpretation prevailed over Goodall's sympathetic view of Mary.

Hume's ally in debates around Mary was the Greyfriars minister and later Principal of Edinburgh University, William Robertson, whose *History of Scotland* was published the same year as Hume's Tudor volumes. Despite the potential for Robertson to "profit by the Applauses of my Enemies," Hume delighted in his friend's success, and graciously defended his *History* against critics (NL 27: 46).[14] Yet, among friends, Hume was more critical of Robertson's history, especially pertaining to the use and interpretation of sources. After receiving a copy of Robertson's manuscript from their mutual printer, William Strahan, Hume remarked on a passage that seemed to contradict his own interpretation completely. Fortuitously, Hume was then in London preparing his Tudor volumes for publication, and had access to the manuscript sources cited by Robertson. Hume trusted the soundness of his friend's research claims, but was disappointed following his thorough reading of the sources: "great was my surprise, when I found the contrary in every page" (L1 155: 288–9). Hume implored Robertson delay the printing of his *History of Scotland* until this mistake could be sorted, but to no avail.[15] Following its publication, Hume remarked to a friend on another issue: that Robertson's interpretation of the affair around the Casket Letters was much too forgiving, and that while reading the state papers in Murden's (1759) collection, Hume "found a remarkable Passage…which seems to put the Matter [of the letters' veracity] past Doubt. Surely," Hume remarked, "Robertson ought either to have condemnd her in this point or to have taken more Pains to clear her" (NLE 8: 449). These "Pains" Hume had in mind involved returning to the original sources for a deeper look.

3. Citation Practices

Comparing different volumes and editions, we can see a progression in Hume's citation practices for both primary and secondary sources. In his first two published volumes on the Stuarts, Hume included only a handful of citations, and those which he did include are meant to help the reader find more information rather than defend the veracity of any historical claim. After receiving several remarks from friends and critics on his Stuart volumes, Hume included in his 1759 Tudor volumes substantially more citations. When we consider the posthumous 1778 editions with Hume's final edits, we again see a significant increase in the number of citations, not only in the Tudor volumes but in the Stuart volumes as well. These new citations were not for new information, but for sections originally included in his first publications. This suggests

[14] Hume to Robertson (February 1759), Greig, *Letters* 1, 297-298. Hume praised Robertson's history in an anonymous review of his *History of Scotland* that Raynor (1987) identifies as Hume's.

[15] In this same letter, we learn that Robertson wrote to William Strahan to appeal to Hume for which sources should be added to the *History of Scotland*'s appendix.

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Hume was not adopting a new research strategy following criticism, but that he had actively sought and applied original sources all along, and only began to cite them once he received outside pressure to do so.

One source of pressure came from the English antiquarian and Prime Minister's son, Horace Walpole. In 1758 Hume received a letter from Walpole, who was recently informed by a mutual acquaintance that Hume had praised his published work (Lewis 1980, 40:135–9). Delighted by the celebrated historian's attention, Walpole seized the opportunity to respond to the man whom he "so long admired," apologizing for any impertinence in doing so while responding to some of Hume's comments.[16] Hoping Hume would forgive such directness, Walpole wondered why Hume did not cite his historical sources, as was then the new custom in historical writing. Hume, apparently conscious of this existing criticism, explained how although "such an exactness would have cost no trouble; and it wou'd have been easy…to write references on the margin," he was in fact "seduc'd by the example of all the best historians" of the past few centuries (L1 152: 284). He nonetheless conceded that "having been once introduc'd" to the practice of citing your sources, it "ought to be follow'd by every writer…though it be easy for the falsest and most partial historian to load his margin with quotations." Hume assured Walpole that he had "been very careful to obviate this objection" in his upcoming publications, which, indeed, included the additional citations (L 1 152: 284).[17]

From this interaction we might infer that Hume merely did not care to record all his sources, a practice he believed carried very little meaning considering this is easily done by the "falsest and most partial historian" (L1 152: 285). Perhaps inspired by the work of Voltaire, who "repeatedly made clear his distaste for scholarly details" (Grafton 1997, 94),[18] Hume saw the overuse of citations as disingenuous conformity to recent trends in historical writing. Yet he was very concerned with leaving only his best work to posterity. And so, in the 1770 edition of his history, for instance, all larger footnotes were moved to the end of each volume, clearing up the text's main pages otherwise filled with long explanatory notes, and creating what Hume and his publisher perhaps believed to be a much more elegantly formatted issue. Although several, but not all, of these volumes included the transplanted endnotes, Volume 5 on Elizabeth and Mary Stuart received the most, with thirty-six pages of notes.[19] This is, unsurprisingly, most comparable with twenty-nine notes in Volume 6 on James and Charles. Unsurprising, because these are the volumes for which Hume received the most criticism, and they mirror Hume's increased source engagement as he participated in corresponding historiographical debates. Tellingly, Volume 1 contains no endnotes, reflecting Hume's frustrations with the lack of historical sources available for researching England's earliest history.

It is in these endnotes where we find Hume uncharacteristically responding to his most

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[16] In a letter to Richard Bentley, Walpole praises Hume's work against English criticism: "his style, which is the best we have in history, and his manner, imitated from Voltaire, are very pleasing." As to the question of the *History*'s political bias, "It is called Jacobite, but in my opinion is only not George-abite; where others abuse the Stuarts, he laughs at them" (Lewis 1980, 35:214).

[17] This anecdote has been used by Jost (2014, 150) to support his claim that Hume wanted the *History* to be read "on the basis not of its use of evidence but rather of its ability to transmit a vivid, firm, lively impression." To this end, he argues that Hume deliberately "includes no references to his sources" in volumes one and two. However, this letter shows Hume's willingness and even wish to conform to modern historiographic practices. In fact, a look at the first two volumes of Hume's *History of Great Britain* shows that he included several source references. In H 2: 71nH: 492–3, for instance, Hume weighs the reliability of a certain source before directing his readers to where it can be found.

[18] Samuel Johnson called Hume an "echo of Voltaire": "Hume would never have written History, had not Voltaire written it before him" (Boswell 1791, 301). Although this was not meant as a compliment but a slight against Scottish pretensions, Hume's *History* does share similar stylistic choices with Voltaire's *History of Louis XIV*, including his use of character sketches. For recent scholarship on Voltaire and Hume's historical associations, see Hanvelt (2025).

[19] The number of endnote pages approximately reflect the relevance of each volume's subject matter to broader debates among Hume's peers, with the exception of Volume 8 covering the revolution of 1688. Endnote statistics are as follows: v1: 0 pages, v2: 4 pages, v3: 5 pages, v4: 3 pages, v5: 36 pages, v6: 29 pages, v7: 10 pages, v8: 0 pages.

vehement critic, William Tytler. Within the year Hume published his Tudor volumes, Tytler responded with his anonymous and contentiously titled *An Enquiry, historical and critical, into the evidence against Mary, Queen of Scots, and an examination of the histories of Dr Robertson and Mr Hume, with respect to that evidence.* Robertson's *History of Scotland* conveyed a tepid interpretation of Mary's history that was nonetheless in line with that of his close friend, Hume. Tytler, a Jacobite and friend of Robert Burns, opens his polemic with remarks on Mary's history lately becoming "a piece of fashionable entertainment" before moving on to his "design" in publishing such an inquiry, which is, "by tracing the history of those [Casket] letters from their very first appearance, to detach them from that confused heap of rubbish under which they have artfully been buried" by Hume and Robertson, and to "produce them into light, stript of their false colouring" (1759, 1–2). Hume's uncharacteristic response to Tytler's attack was placed in a new endnote to the 1770 edition of his *History*: "That whole Enquiry, from beginning to end, is composed of such scandalous artifices" (H1770 39: 115nM394).[20] These "artifices," Hume explains, are the particular result of Tytler's grossly inadequate use of source material. "[T]here is no reader of common sense," says Hume, "who peruses Anderson or Goodall's collections" and reaches such narrow-minded conclusions as Tytler's which, Hume criticizes, were based on a mere two original sources. "[F]rom this instance" Hume quipped, "the reader may judge of the candour, fair dealing, veracity, and good manners of the Enquirer." Hume's criticism of Tytler not only questioned his character concerning friendly debate, but suggested his research was not sound because of his lack of source engagement, suggesting Hume very much valued original source research in historians, and even judged the practice necessary for credibility.

Hume's engagement in the Marian Controversy also shows him actively weighing the reliability of sources. In one instance, Hume used a letter purportedly written by Mary to Bothwell to show her romantic commitment to the Lord, but then, in citing Melville as his source, went on to question whether this letter was a complete fiction (H 39: 96n*k*). In his polemic against those who would call the Casket Letters forgeries, Hume concluded by assuring his readers that his account was only from the most reliable sources: "It is proper to observe, that there is not one circumstance of the foregoing narrative, contained in the history, that is taken from Knox, Buchanan, or even Thuanus, or indeed, from any suspected authority" (H 39: 114nK: 393). In another instance, which seems central to his understanding of Mary's character, Hume was struck by Mary's lack of maternal affection toward her son, especially when she purportedly conspired to have James seized and delivered to "the pope or the king of Spain; whence he was never to be delivered but on condition of his becoming catholic" (H 42: 232-233). Hume found this "very consistent with Mary's character. Her maternal affection was too weak to oppose the gratification of her passions" (H 42: 233nU: 398). Still, Hume investigated and verified the veracity of such a claim by cross referencing sources. In "Dr. Forbes's manuscript collections," Hume finds testimonies which are then compared to corresponding letters found in Murdin which "proves [the conspiracy's] authenticity beyond question" (H 42: 233nU: 398). Writing to Robertson, Hume explained that after reading Murdin, he was "afraid, that you, as well as myself, have drawn Mary's character with too great softening. She was undoubtedly a violent woman at all times" (L1 162: 299). Hume once again beseeched Robertson edit his *History of Scotland* in light of these new sources.

In concluding, it is worth briefly comparing Hume and Robertson's source use. Hume's Tudor volumes and Robertson's *History* were published the same year and, conveniently, by the same publisher, Andrew Millar.[21] While Robertson was also criticized for his unsympathetic interpretation of Mary's history, he did not receive the same level of reproach as Hume.[22]

[20] In 1770 this is a note to what is there numbered chapter 49. The note is referenced by its source page (152) and occupies pages 533–4.

[21] Hume lamented that Robertson did not share his writings on Mary prior to publication, as they would have been able to compare sources and fix mistakes (L1 156: 292).

[22] Owing, of course, to Hume's reputation as both an "infidel" for his religious scepticism and a biased "Tory" for his

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Robertson opened his *History* with an explanation of his sources, first listing several "Collectors," such as James Anderson and others who had published compiled sources related to Mary over the past two centuries, before lamenting that "No History of Scotland that merits any degree of attention has appeared since these collections were published." But "By consulting them," Robertson was able to "correct the inaccuracies" made popular by historians whose motives were often shared by "political hatred" or "religious zeal."[23] Additional collections Robertson sought were "that Noble Collection" at the British Museum, referring to the Cotton papers, and collections held by the Advocates Library, both of which we know Hume also consulted.[24] In fact, comparing the list of sources and citations in Robertson's *History* with Hume's, both historians utilized the same sources to approximately the same extent, but whereas Robertson transcribed his sources in an Appendix, Hume generally placed them within the narrative of his earlier editions, thereby making them less apparent to readers. It is only when Hume conformed to new historiographical practices by including clear source references that we begin to discern the extent to which he engaged with such sources and archives.

Conclusion

As this paper has argued, original source material was important to Hume's practice as a historian, if especially pronounced in those parts of his *History* that contributed to popular historical debates. His research reflects his concerns with the reliability of testimony, first with his frustrations over the lack of source material available for a proper investigation into England's early history, and later with his close engagement with historical records in his analysis of modern history. Hume's interpretive obstacles further correspond with his citation practices: he not only cites many more sources in his later histories, but analyzes them. The change in Hume's citation practices over time implies changing attitudes from considering the act as a mere pretension to a necessary component of a historian's credibility.

Hume's source use and citation practices, as we have seen, are most abundant in his engagement with debates around Mary Queen of Scots, suggesting he was especially keen to provide credible and original research to defend his stance as an impartial historian. The example of Marian fanaticism gave Hume an opportunity to reevaluate a controversial figure without "the prejudices both of faction and bigotry" that shaped modern historiography (44: 352). The only way to counter such views, Hume's *History* demonstrates, was to return to the original source evidence.[25]

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sympathetic depiction of the Stuart kings in earlier volumes of his *History*.

[23] Even so, Hume could not help but comment on Robertson's prejudice toward John Knox. See Raynor (1987, 62) and Robertson (1759, 1:iii–v).

[24] In addition to his time in the Advocates Library, from which he cited several manuscripts, Hume purportedly travelled to London to view collections held by the newly opened British Museum. In a letter to his London publisher, Andrew Millar, Hume comments that although he found "the Advocates Library very well provided," he would soon "pass a considerable time in London, to peruse the Manuscripts in the Musæum" (L1 171: 317).

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