ENGLISH HISTORY THROUGH THE HISTORIANS’ EYES:
REVISITING DAVID HUME AND
THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY

by

Daniel S. Brigman

An Abstract
of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
in the Department of History and Anthropology
University of Central Missouri

June, 2012
ABSTRACT

by

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The origins of modern English history have been shrouded in inaccuracies. David Hume attempted to clarify history in an effort to remove biases and Thomas Babington Macaulay endeavored to make history understandable. In their attempt to write modern English history, both historians have been inaccurately classified. Modern scholars have classified Hume as impartial, while Macaulay has been classified as a biased Whig historian. This thesis argues that neither classification is wholly accurate and that both historians deserve a reexamination of their efforts to clarify historical scholarship. The thesis examines two sets of evidence. First, modern scholarship, such as biographies and historical journals, about Hume and Macaulay are extensively examined. Second, their Histories, personal correspondence, essays, and other writings are studied to determine their own methods and reasons for writing English history. After inspecting the evidence, this thesis concludes that Hume and Macaulay have indeed been inaccurately classified.
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CHAPTER 1
THE ORIGINS OF MODERN ENGLISH HISTORY

A man acquainted with history may, in some respect, be said to have lived from the beginning of the world, and to have been making continual additions to his stock of knowledge in every century.

—David Hume, “Of the Study of History”

The perfect historian is he in whose work the character and spirit of the age is exhibited in miniature.

—Thomas Babington Macaulay, “On History”

Part I: Introduction

English history has long had the persistent idea of a Norman Yoke, based on the writings of Anglo-Norman ecclesiastical historians from the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The Normans’ influence had become so ingrained in English society that even by the time of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Normans were considered the rulers who put a yoke upon the Anglo-Saxons’ way of life. Thus, according to those medieval historians, 1215, or the year of Magna Carta, reestablished some liberties to the English. Magna Carta’s foundation is believed to come from Anglo-Saxon liberties which are recognized as unrecorded, yet tradition holds that the laws offered a means of justice to cover a vast array of topics, from physical assault to oath-taking. Furthermore, Magna Carta enforced the monarch’s own adherence to the law. Accordingly, because of the persistence of the idea of the Norman Yoke, some of the most famous English historians continued to view the Normans as tyrants.

To begin a study of the roots of modern English history, two major turning points of England’s history must be clarified, so as to assist in understanding David Hume’s The History of England: From the invasion of Julius Caesar to The Revolution in 1688 and Thomas Babington Macaulay’s The History of England, from the Accession of James II. Hume began his
narrative with a short description of the early Britons followed by Roman settlement of England. He moved steadily through English history up to the events directly following the Glorious Revolution in 1688. Macaulay, on the other hand, briefly discussed the early English history of the Anglo-Saxons while focusing most of the *History* on the events of the seventeenth century leading up to 1688. These two histories, in particular, are pivotal additions to English historiography, especially concerning the origins of modern English history.

The first turning point began with a conquest of unforeseen significance; on 14 October 1066, near the small village of Hastings on the southern coast, the last Anglo-Saxon king of England, Harold II, fell during a grueling one-day battle. This battle ushered a new people into Anglo-Saxon England: the Normans. The second turning point, one-and-a-half centuries later in 1215, was the advent of Magna Carta. This event signaled the end point of the Norman Yoke and the reestablishment of the English liberty, according to historians such as Macaulay. Nevertheless, eighteenth and nineteenth-century English historians did not view Magna Carta as the final step in the progress of liberty. Rather, some English historians, like Macaulay, viewed that specific Magna Carta as the beginning of the restoration of liberties lost through the influence of the Normans. In their view, the Glorious Revolution finalized the restoration of liberties; this was an event which ushered in a political party system tied to a new monarchy which was severely limited in comparison to previous ones. A brief synopsis of the Glorious Revolution is necessary to fully understand its implications upon English history.

This study of Hume’s and Macaulay’s *Histories*, in particular, offers the modern reader a deeper inspection of two of the most well-read English histories by two prominent British citizens. Hume’s best-selling *History* remained the English historical standard until Macaulay’s *History* overshadowed it in the 1850s. Throughout the years since the histories’ publications,
both authors have been inaccurately classified. Essentially, Hume’s classification is vast impartiality, and Macaulay’s classification is biased Whig historian. This thesis argues that neither classification is accurate. Finally, to fully understand Hume’s and Macaulay’s eventual desire to complete a history of England, one must have a grasp of their lives in general, as seen through the context of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, respectively.

Part II. A.: David Hume’s Biography

Hume went largely unrecognized until his *History of England* achieved popular success much later in life. When Hume was just two years old, his father died, and he grew up in a small family in Ninewells near Edinburgh. At age twelve, Hume attended the University of Edinburgh with the choice between pursuing a path in law or philosophy, and he eventually chose the latter since it interested him much more than the law. Despite Hume’s brilliance, his lack of a privileged life forced him to find regular work, which he did not find stimulating. For a time in his twenties, he worked as a clerk, as a governor to a noble family and as a tutor to the Marquis of Annandale in 1745.

None of these positions provided him with much wealth or intellectual stimulation, yet they at least allowed him to be self-sufficient. He worked on and published many philosophical essays throughout his early adulthood, but none of them garnered him the attention that he needed to take on roles that he desired. For example, one of his most celebrated philosophical essays called *A Treatise of Human Nature*, published in 1739, helped to solidify his position as an extreme skeptic since its premise was a discussion of reason and human nature. In the *Treatise*, Hume wrote, “In all demonstrative sciences the rules are certain and infallible; but when we apply them, our fallible said uncertain faculties are very apt to depart from them, and fall into error.”2 Basically, Hume was arguing that despite the immutable laws of nature, humans
are incapable of applying them without an error at some point. Hume applied for the Chair of Ethics and Pneumatical Philosophy at the University of Edinburgh in 1744, and, despite his distinguished background in philosophy, he did not receive the position. Thus, despite his relatively successful *Essays* and *Political Discourses* in the early 1750s, Hume’s lackluster professional performance prior to his *History* did not help refute his belief that his life been a disappointment to that point.³

Hume was a perceived atheist during his lifetime. While he never directly stated that he was indeed an atheist, Hume is never recorded to have denied the allegations. If anything, Hume became upset when the allegation barred him from positions he desired. For example, Hume applied for the previously mentioned position at the University of Edinburgh; however, he eventually was denied the position because of his previous philosophical publications, such as the *Treatise*. The hiring council, which included Professor Francis Hutcheson of Glasgow University, denied Hume because of the charges against him of being a skeptic and an atheist.⁴ Hume’s feelings about the denial were recorded in a letter written to Thomas Mure in 1745: “All of my Friends think that he [Hutcheson] has been rendering me bad Offices to the utmost of his Power….What can be the Meaning of this Conduct in that celebrated and benevolent Moralist, I cannot imagine.”⁵ In essence, Hume felt wronged and frustrated, yet he knew there was little he could do to offset the council’s decision.

**Part II. B. Hume – The Scholarly and Philosophical Background**

Not until Hume gained the position of the Secretary to Lord Hertford’s British Embassy in Paris did large-scale changes occur in his career. As the Secretary, Hume had access to a massive research library, and he did not waste the perfect opportunity. Essentially, the library and position gave him the ability to continue his interests and writing as he had long desired.
Moreover, Hume’s position also gave him a pension that afforded him the lifestyle he had pursued for decades. In fact, Hume had fretted about his poor life until he became a noted scholar; he did not feel self-pity for the period of relative poverty, but he did not want to be a burden on anyone. He even shared his elation through letters with close friends, such as Gilbert Minto. The two men corresponded to one another for many years, and on 3 July 1765 Hume wrote, “So that in spite of Atheism and Deism, of Whiggery & Toryism, of Scottism & Philosophy, I am possessed of an Office of Credit, and of 1200 pounds a Year.” Of course, the statement contains ironies that Minto would have easily noticed, as Hume’s critics placed all those labels upon Hume as his career progressed.

Hume attempted to avoid some of the labels in regard to his writings, such as “Scottism” and “Whiggism” throughout his life. For example, Scottism refers to his writings being tied to his supposed national affiliation and beliefs. Early in the eighteenth century, Scotland and England united under the Act of Union. While Hume grew up in Scotland, he wanted to weaken any ties to any particular nation, so as to not warrant such a label. Hume was not extremely loyal to Scotland. Before the Union, Hume believed that Scotland had actually suffered due to a lackluster series of kings and its relatively uncivilized society. Most scholars during the later years of the eighteenth century actually recognized that Scotland had gained much by the Union, as Hume had also realized. That relationship had not been one-sided though: England arguably gained as much from the Scots through scholars such as Hume and Adam Smith.

**Part II. C. Hume – The Origins and Effects of the History**

By Hume’s early adulthood, the Whigs had become the prevailing political party through governmental changes, such as the passage of the Septennial Act in 1716, which increased the length of Parliament from three to seven years. This political dominance which affected
seemingly innocuous subjects, such as English history, caused Hume to have a desire to write a history free of bias or partisanship. Moreover, throughout his correspondence with friends and colleagues, one can plainly witness his strong desire to write without sponsorship of an organization, least of all a political party.

Hume’s earliest ideas for writing the *History* came to him in the late 1740s during a brief time in Ireland when he was still a secretary for General James St. Clair. The possibility of Hume actually seeing combat in Flanders presented itself, and he wrote in 1747:

> Had I any fortune which could give me a prospect of leisure, and opportunity to prosecute my historical projects, nothing could be more useful to me; and I should pick up more military knowledge in one campaign, by living in the General’s family, and being introduced frequently to the Dukes, than most officers could do after many years’ service. But to what can all this serve? I am a philosopher, and so, I suppose, must continue.8

Hume had already begun thinking about the *History* and how *his* own possible experiences could help the project. Ironically, Hume had resigned himself to believing that the remainder of his life would consist of nothing more than philosophical treatises and essays.

Hume’s thoughts on beginning the *History* persisted seemingly without fail after the 1747 letter to Home. Another letter, written just a few short months later on 29 January 1748, portrays Hume’s deeper and more mature thinking about the historical process. He wrote:

> I have long had an intention, in my riper years, of composing some History; and I question not but some greater experience in the Operations of the Field, & the Intrigues of the Cabinet, will be requisite, in order to enable me to speak with judgment upon these subjects. But notwithstanding these flattering ideas of futurity, as well as the present charms of variety, I must confess, that I left home with infinite regret, where I had treasured up stores of study & plans of thinking for many years.9

Yet again, Hume considers beginning the *History* in his “riper years,” but he offers the reader no idea of the exact time frame. Perhaps, even *he* did not really know. Hume’s letter portrays himself as scholar preparing for and looking forward to a long project, either philosophical or
historical, yet pulled away by necessary duties. That said, by the early 1750s Hume began the
*History* with a vigor that would allow for four editions to be published by 1762.

Above all, Hume attempted to write an impartial history unclouded by his own judgments
or those of humanity. Indeed, modern scholars consider Hume’s history an impartial reaction to
then contemporary biased Whig histories of England, such as Rapin de Thoyras’ *History.*
Despite scholars’ nearly universal belief in Hume’s impartiality, their somewhat inaccurate
classification of Hume will later be clarified and presented.

**Part III. A.: Thomas Babington Macaulay’s Biography**

Macaulay, by all accounts, was a brilliant child. Born in 1800, Macaulay’s showed the
ability to read and memorize the classics as a young child that garnered him extra attention from
his family. Macaulay’s focus and ability to master such subjects did not, however, extend to
other historical courses of study. The Middle Ages and the Renaissance eluded him, according
to G. P. Gooch, except for Dante and Petrarch.10  Seemingly, even during Macaulay’s childhood,
he developed a self-confidence that became apparent to his acquaintances. Those same
acquaintances quickly gained a sense of his brilliance. His self-confidence blossomed further
because Macaulay’s family held notoriety in England. Even throughout his childhood Macaulay
realized his family’s significance. This familial significance was tied to his father’s place in
British politics and his desire to abolish slavery. Zachary Macaulay, Thomas’ father, worked
with William Wilberforce, who was well-known for leading the cause to abolish the slave trade
and slavery in Great Britain and its colonies throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth
centuries.

Macaulay’s father had high standards for his son, especially considering that he
recognized Macaulay’s great intelligence during childhood. In essence, the older Macaulay
would brook no excuses from his son, if he thought his son had not worked toward his full potential. Macaulay grew up in a home full of siblings whom he came to adore throughout the remainder of his life. Despite his father’s strict attitude, Macaulay also felt the perceived obligations of being a prized son and later had to fulfill his filial obligation to his father, who accumulated heavy debt through a series of bad business ventures. Later in life Macaulay decided to take a position on the Supreme Council of India, in part, because of his father’s mounting debt. By serving on the council for four years, Macaulay accumulated a large income which went to paying off his father’s debts.\textsuperscript{11}

\textbf{Part III. B. Macaulay – The Scholarly Background}

Before Macaulay’s long endeavor in India, he had already begun to make a name for himself. Macaulay attended Trinity College at Cambridge, where his writings brought him honors and awards. At Cambridge, he slowly took interest in a political career instead of becoming a lawyer, which displeased his father somewhat. A major part of Macaulay’s desire to shift to politics was a result of his knowledge of the classics and the confidence that he could make more lasting changes through politics. Despite Macaulay’s vast knowledge of the classics, he did not find the past important as a whole; to Macaulay the present and future held much greater significance.\textsuperscript{12} For example, he wrote, “What do we mean when we say that one past event is important, and another insignificant? No past event has intrinsic importance. The knowledge of it is valuable only as it leads us to form just calculations with respect to the future.”\textsuperscript{13} Ironically, though, despite figuratively devouring the classics as a child, he frowned upon the idea of other adults studying the classics to a great extent.

Macaulay questioned why children spent large amounts of time learning the classics, such as Herodotus, Tacitus, and Plato. He believed children should spend \textit{some} time learning the
ancient classics, but in his view modern prose held the true source of knowledge for the betterment of contemporary society.14 For example, in an October 1817 letter to his father, Macaulay wrote, “Perhaps the time approaches when a more important revolution shall break the fetters which have so long entangled the literature of Europe; when some original thinker shall ask, why we spend the ten most important years of our life to enable ourselves to read odes and plays, about a tenth part as good as those in our mother tongue.”15 His reasoning was straightforward: Macaulay considered the classics a good read, but thought that for real information, especially history, a reader should look elsewhere, since all ancient historians had an agenda, or simply fabricated information for their readers.16 While the reasoning was certainly straightforward, it was profoundly ironic in its implications, considering the route he took in his own writing and the scholars’ predominant categorization of him because of that particular route.

At university, and sometime after his twenty-second birthday, Macaulay became a Whig.17 His Whig political leanings became fully ingrained by the late 1820s, and Macaulay spent much of his time after university writing essays and historical reviews. He also worked as an itinerant barrister in the Northern Circuit Court, thus gaining experience in the court system. Yet, when Macaulay received the call to the bar, he turned it down since he wanted a political career. While the path of a recognized lawyer may have provided Macaulay with financial freedom much earlier in his career, Macaulay did not take that path, despite the fact that he still depended upon his father’s financial assistance. Macaulay’s ambitions led him toward the path of Parliament.18

Thus, in 1830, Macaulay realized his dream by becoming a Member of Parliament (MP) for the borough of the town Calne. Macaulay honed his oratory skills to near excellence,
according to those who heard him speak in Parliament on such issues as Jewish rights, the reform of Parliament, and voting rights. While Macaulay’s oratory abilities shone brightly when he gave a speech, his abilities during a debate greatly diminished. Considered as one of his weaknesses, even to himself, Macaulay avoided debates whenever possible throughout his career and private life. His speeches may have been excellent; nevertheless, they were not given in public without Macaulay investing great amounts of time memorizing them. Therein lay Macaulay’s weakness regarding debates: the inability to adapt to his opponent’s words. Macaulay had no difficulty whatsoever giving a monologue to a large crowd, but the introduction of a verbal opponent caused him to falter. Despite his vast intelligence and brilliance, Macaulay could not match wits quickly enough for open debate.

Macaulay saw that he could institute great change because of his place in Parliament. Change leading to progress held much sway in Macaulay’s political philosophy. He thought that one of the earliest times of progressive change in England was during the latter part of King John’s reign in 1215. While Magna Carta was actually meant as a peace treaty between the barons and King John, Macaulay saw much more in the document: he believed it was another stone on the path of progress. In a speech given to Parliament on 5 July 1831, Macaulay said, “The Great Charter, the assembling of the first House of Commons, the Petitions of Right, the Declaration of Right, the [Reform] Bill which is now on our table, what are they all but steps in one great progress?” Progress, especially English progress, became almost an obsession for him.

Macaulay devoted much of his early parliamentary career toward creating what he considered progressive change. One significant example of this type of change was extending voting rights to more citizens via the Reform Bill of 1832. Macaulay believed that as an MP he
had an obligation to do no less than move toward that goal, which was enacted in 1832. For example, on 19 March 1832 Macaulay spoke in the House of Commons: “When the Reform Bill was under discussion, all our miseries vanished at once, the sun broke out, the clouds cleared away, the sky was bright, and we were the happiest people on the face of the earth!”23 The Reform Act extended the franchise to more of Great Britain’s populace, which, to Macaulay, was just another step in the all-encompassing path of English progress.24 Ironically, his first stint as an MP ended shortly after the passage of the Reform Act in 1832. In 1833 Macaulay accepted an appointment to a position on the Supreme Council of India.

While in India, Macaulay wasted time no time in either his political or personal life. He became a proponent of the English language being taught to native Indians, so as to help further their education. More importantly, Macaulay greatly assisted in the development of a penal code that still influences the law codes of several countries, such as India and Pakistan. Also, over the course of the four years he wrote *The Lays of Ancient Rome* as something of an homage to Rome’s founding. As a collection of short stories mostly about the mythological roots of Rome, *The Lays* achieved great success in Great Britain, and adults and children regularly read and recited the stories into the early twentieth century.25 While *The Lays* are not regularly read today as they once were, they are still an excellent example of Macaulay’s style and his ability to tell a good story.

**Part III. C. Macaulay - The Origins and Effects of the History**

Upon Macaulay’s arrival back in Great Britain in 1838, he held several political and governmental positions over the next fifteen years. He became the MP for Edinburgh from 1838 to 1847, the Secretary of War in 1839, and the Rector for the University of Glasgow in the late 1840s. Eventually Macaulay moved on to the House of Lords after becoming a Baron in 1857.26
Despite his professional success throughout the 1840s and into the 1850s, Macaulay felt a higher duty: to write his version of English history.

Macaulay had many publications by the end of his life in 1859. He had been a regular contributor to the *Edinburgh Review* with articles ranging in subject matter from historiography to Frederick the Great. Macaulay’s colleagues thought highly of the articles he wrote for the *Review* on topics such as “Sir James Mackintosh’s History of the Revolution,” “William and Mary,” and “On History.” Another *Review* article on “Milton” even brought him fame shortly after its publication in 1825. Macaulay’s treatment of Milton brought Milton’s emphasis on the 1640s to nineteenth-century English readers. That decade, according to Macaulay, seemingly made the events of 1688 and 1689 small by comparison. For example, Macaulay writes in the essay on Milton, “The Long Parliament stands on still stronger ground than the Convention of 1688. No action of James [II] can be compared to the conduct of Charles [I] in respect to the Petition of Right.” Thus, the reader can witness one of the earliest points in Macaulay’s literary and political career, in which he began to attempt to link the past with the present.

Despite this desire to link the two time frames, Macaulay attempted the link only once with *The History of England, from the Accession of James II*.

Finally, Macaulay’s personality itself must be examined briefly to clarify his interaction in the polite society of nineteenth-century England. While he had very few friends throughout his life, he was constantly surrounded by family, which was usually by his own design. For example, when Macaulay began his plans to move to India for the indeterminate future, he convinced his sister, Hannah Macaulay, to join him there. Her love for Macaulay and financial dependence upon him were the greatest factors in her decision to move with him. Relatively soon after her arrival in India, she became engaged to another government employee who would
finally enable her to have independence from her brother. Margaret Macaulay, another of Macaulay’s sisters, gave Macaulay solace in the letters they exchanged while he lived in India. These letters show Macaulay’s usual consideration of his own feelings first and foremost.\textsuperscript{29} Thus, when Macaulay’s closest family members fled from his side, as he believed, he had periods of depression that slowly changed his demeanor over the course of his life. For example, Hannah Macaulay married and Margaret Macaulay died from illness while he lived in India. Yet, Macaulay’s dependence upon his family did not relent as he aged since he never married nor had any children.

As has been seen, Macaulay’s primary focus throughout life remained true to his self-designed path. After reaching the point in which he became financially self-sufficient, which occurred with his position in India, Macaulay became even more self-indulgent than during his childhood. In essence, Macaulay’s ego became inflated over the years through constant recognition of his genius and the focus on his abilities. Unfortunately, during his final years, Macaulay’s ego had not diminished in the least, thus leading to the expectation that family members would be with him in spite of their own desires, such as when his sister, Hannah, planned to move to Madras, Spain.\textsuperscript{30} Despite these apparent psychological factors, Macaulay wrote a \textit{History of England} that would shape the mindset of British citizens until the early twentieth century.

The ramifications of the Whigs’ and Tories’ interactions throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries played a large role in the making of Hume’s and Macaulay’s ideas of writing history. Hume’s goal was to attempt to create a history without bias, either political or otherwise. Macaulay’s goal was not as relatively simple: He wanted a readable history linking the past to the present which would show the English readers the path of supposedly unbroken
progress. The following chapters will provide deeper insight into two factors: the methodologies that Hume and Macaulay used in creating their respective histories and the analysis of the inaccurate categorizations placed upon the authors by scholars.

**Part IV: Historiographical Analysis of Macaulay and Hume**

The following analysis follows the same model for each historian: a detailed view of the context of the author’s century, historiographical views of each author, and the effect that Hume and Macaulay had on historical scholarship. This three-section model allows the analysis to focus narrowly on the era of the historians, which, in turn, assists in a greater understanding of their respective histories of England.

**Part IV. A. Eighteenth-Century Context**

To be sure, Macaulay had the benefit of being able to research history by studying his predecessors. Macaulay looked back at the eighteenth-century’s historians and decided he could write a better version. Nevertheless, much of the basis for Macaulay’s research came from Hume’s era: the eighteenth century, or the Age of Enlightenment. During the eighteenth century, Europeans concentrated more on the present, rather than remaining wholly focused on the past, as had been common throughout history. They also shifted their gaze to the future since progress gave them a sense of optimism.\(^{31}\) In effect, to the people of eighteenth-century Great Britain, progress began to quicken its pace. Thus, the effects of progress upon European society, in general, and Great Britain, in particular, began to have a great effect upon people in the eighteenth century.

Progress, as Hume’s era would have witnessed, allowed society to shift its gaze forward rather than continually focusing on the past. Society’s confidence in progress conjoined with the ideal form of humanity. This assurance helped people attempt innovative methods of progress,
such as the care of children outside the home and new farming techniques that increased output.\textsuperscript{32} Eighteenth-century Britain had been dominated primarily by the Whigs, who had underscored the influence of progress through their interpretation of history. Hume witnessed firsthand the Whigs’ view of progress: it was a centuries-long, unaltered process from Magna Carta to the Glorious Revolution, leading up to the greatest time in humanity’s history, the eighteenth century. Of course, this habit of expectation convinced people that progress would continue into the foreseeable future. Hume believed this habit to be not only be false, but misleading, to an entire society.

Once the Hanoverian dynasty took power in 1714, the Whigs moved into ascendancy for the next forty-five years. Those years proved to be extremely fruitful for the Whigs’ desires and belief in progress. Both George I and George II depended upon the Whigs for their political support structure. Fortunately for the Whigs, very few severe societal or legal problems occurred during the early Hanoverian years, which, in turn, meant little need for a change to their historical interpretation.\textsuperscript{33} Moreover, Rapin de Thoyras’ Whig-influenced interpretative History of England became the common historical account until Hume’s version. Obviously, Hume had a difference of opinion with the majority of Great Britain’s educated citizens, which would have included politicians such as the Whigs. Early on Hume recognized the Whigs’ influence and historical interpretation needed modification.

While English historical writing, as a whole, saw little change in Great Britain during the first half of the eighteenth century, other forms of writing entered the public discourse.\textsuperscript{34} For example, novels became extremely popular during the early decades, and by the end of the century they were commonplace. The modern English scholar Roy Porter portrays society’s frenzy for novels, writing, “Sensibility and individualism…fired each other up. The vicarious
experience offered by novels released and scripted the outpouring of feelings. The vicarious experience described by Porter easily fed into the nineteenth century as well.

Finally, the debate about God’s existence gripped the minds of philosophers throughout the eighteenth century. Increasing numbers of philosophers, such as Hume, exacerbated the debate. Modern scholars agree that not much had really changed in the philosophers’ manner of thinking when comparing the Middle Ages and the eighteenth century. For example, regardless of the Enlightenment’s skepticism and infatuation with science, the philosophers, writers, and historians were closer to the Middle Ages than they would have believed. The debate of God’s existence even gave Hume inspiration toward the later years of life. He wrote the *Dialogue Concerning Natural Religion* as an actual dialogue reminiscent of the ancient Greek philosophers, such as Plato. The *Dialogue* became one of Hume’s final efforts concerning the topic of God, and its posthumous publication indicated that Hume, despite his skepticism of God’s existence, was still fascinated by the idea of God and God’s effect upon society until the end of his life.

Finally, the Scottish Enlightenment produced an interesting milieu within which Hume worked. The Act of Union in 1707 initiated a great change for Scotland. Hume did not know a time of separation between England and Scotland, and he would not have been pleased had a separation occurred. Hume’s homeland was Scotland, yet he believed, “Scotland should not copy Sparta, nostalgia was wasted on that imagined community.” Hume realized that England and Scotland could benefit from one another, especially with Scottish thinkers like himself and Adam Smith altering methods of examining history and economic modalities, respectively. For example, Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations* has influenced the view of economics into modern
times. In fact, a large influx of English students studied at Edinburgh University after mid-century.

Both Hume and Smith spent many years of their professional lives outside Scotland.\textsuperscript{38} For example, Hume lived for many years in Paris, where he spent much time in its salons during the mid-eighteenth century. From the salons Hume’s ideas spread throughout Paris, which then circulated throughout Europe. Despite the greatness of the Enlightenment philosophers, society had changed very little for the remainder of the European population, who were primarily uneducated.

**Part IV. B. Historiographical Views – Hume**

Twentieth-century historiographical assessment of Hume’s *History* is overwhelmingly positive. Much of the scholars’ praise for Hume is tied to his philosophical skepticism. E. C. Mossner, Hume’s noted biographer, argued at mid-century Hume’s skepticism caused him to constantly reevaluate the *History*.\textsuperscript{39} Moreover, combined with skepticism is Hume’s use of citations to annotate the work he had researched. Several decades later S. K. Wertz, a Hume scholar, argued that Hume used his best judgment to establish how many citations were necessary and implemented as many as possible in such cases.\textsuperscript{40} Lastly, Natalie Zemon Davis, primarily a scholar of French history, argues that Hume’s skepticism forced him to search for proper evidence.\textsuperscript{41} Thus, Hume’s historical methodology is well regarded by modern scholars insofar that the scholars recognize his change upon historical scholarship and the profession of history.\textsuperscript{42}

By contrast, some modern historians are seemingly exasperated by the Whig historians’ blind belief in the so-called historical path of progress from Magna Carta to the present. Hume, on the other hand, did not attempt to judge the laws or societal traditions of another era by those
Victor Wexler, a scholar of Hume, argued that the Whigs’ primary flaw is tied to the idea of all-inclusive progress. Here again, liberty is addressed by modern scholarship. Liberty in conjunction with progress, as interpreted by the Whig faction, was an all-encompassing path for civilization leading up to the modern era. Hume, through his philosophical and historical writings, developed a specific plan for his History: to write an unbiased history not laden with misleading political leanings. In essence, Hume’s History helped to lessen the influence of the Whig party’s historical interpretation of history.

**Part IV. C. Hume’s History – Effect on Historical Scholarship**

Finally, one effect of Hume’s historical scholarship will be discussed: the views of posterity upon Hume’s historical methods. The history written during his era had no real methodological standards, yet Hume is recognized for citing materials exactly and formulating a chronological history, which gave him an edge over other historians’ work, because he attempted to portray history more objectively than his predecessors. His use of citations allowed modern scholars to evaluate what he used in the History, whereas even later historians, such as Macaulay, did not regularly cite researched works, which lowered those historians’ accountability according to modern scholarship.

The historical literature also portrays Hume not succeeding at first with what he had set out to do with the History. He, first and foremost, wanted the History to be as neutral as possible, while also offering his readers a more reliable version of historical events. This reliability would not be influenced by the imperfect views of politicians such as the Whigs. In fact, Wexler argues Hume failed in his attempt, at least in the short term, despite his initial success. For decades the History had strong sales across Great Britain throughout the late eighteenth century and first half of the nineteenth century.
Based on the evidence presented above, Hume’s *History* had two lasting effects upon historical scholarship and the intellectual society of Europe. First, Hume’s *History* influenced historical scholarship through his attempt at impartiality. The latter half of the eighteenth century saw the effects of his English historical scholarship, combined with the works of other authors such as Edward Gibbon.47 Second, scholars, such as Ernst Breisach and Mossner, recognize that Hume’s research process itself influenced historical scholarship. Combined, his efforts toward an impartial history and his historical methodology were the *History’s* enduring effects upon modern historical methods.

**Part IV. D. Nineteenth-Century Context**

Hume’s *History* remained popular into the nineteenth century, but its popularity fluctuated somewhat during that century because of Macaulay’s Whig progressive history published in 1848. Thus, the nineteenth-century’s context will be examined for further understanding of Macaulay’s *History*. The view of progress, as witnessed during the eighteenth century, became more focused in the nineteenth century because of major technological advances, such as the steamship and locomotive, which increased the rate of travel and communication by significant margins. Primarily in England, the powerful belief in the ancient constitution was further strengthened through the political motivations of factions such as the Whigs. They saw that the ancient constitution preceded the course to the modern era, which was blazed with the path of inevitable progress through the centuries. As in the Middle Ages, property was of significant importance to nineteenth-century Britons. Thus, the so-called constitutional liberties were a support structure for the propertied class and the crown. Magna Carta, or the starting point of English history and the reclamation of Anglo-Saxon liberties according to Macaulay, was proposed by upset barons seeking security for their landed interests.
Political speeches and essays on ancient freedoms helped to justify the supremacy of the country’s leadership.\textsuperscript{48} Property rights and liberty had, in effect, obtained an almost mythical status since 1688.

On the other hand, eighteenth-century views did not change completely as the next century’s populace tended to believe. Historians who distanced themselves from the grand political and historical agendas of the Whigs and narrowed their historical focus to the common person could realize not much had changed. Societal traditions, such as ancient pagan practices, continued undiminished despite the fact that the Whigs took for granted the ideal of progress in all respects. Moreover, Macaulay believed that all British people should believe in progress. Through his \textit{History}, Macaulay championed the idea that permanent progress should be a societal doctrine.\textsuperscript{49}

Unfortunately for Macaulay, progress was not as far along as he believed. During the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century transportation still consisted of horse-drawn wagons and sailing ships. Those sailing ships had the same difficulty that William I had in crossing the English Channel in 1066: contrary winds. Also, land ownership still determined a person’s social status. These are just two examples of the ways in which progress had, in effect, stood still. Moreover, the average person in the eighteenth century would have been familiar with the society of the thirteenth century.\textsuperscript{50} On the other hand, while some things seemed to be rooted in the past, many people witnessed new inventions that offered evidence for progress. Reliable mining pumps, steam engines, spinning jennies, and the advent of the railroad assisted in progressive technology so that people living throughout the century witnessed some change in their lives.
In terms of political reform, the people of the nineteenth century witnessed unprecedented political change in Great Britain. For example, in 1828 the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts allowed non-Anglicans, excepting Unitarians, to hold public office. Then, in the following year, the Catholic Emancipation Bill allowed Catholics to become Members of Parliament. The alteration of the Navigation Acts permitted more open shipping for the British. Next, a heated two-year debate over parliamentary restructuring led to the 1832 Reform Bill, which extended voting rights to more British citizens. The following year the Factory Act restricted the ages for child workers and the number of hours they could work. The 1834 Poor Law provided administrative oversight of the poor to a centralized commission. All these examples saw implementation within just ten years, which further demonstrates that Britons observed progress in terms of great freedoms.  

Lastly, the novel, as a new medium in the eighteenth century, became dominant by Macaulay’s time. It allowed readers to visit medieval England with stories such as _Ivanhoe_ by Sir Walter Scott. Those same readers could also read about more recent Scottish heroes, such as in the novel _Rob Roy_ also written by Scott. The publishing world itself became saturated with many other forms of writing, such as periodicals, pulp fiction, and newspapers. Unfortunately, with massive amounts of printed publications, feedback loops began appearing throughout society in either authentic or implicit form. Essentially, feedback loops meant that many writers commented on other writers’ works, and vice versa, which offered little chance for non-writers to offer their observations. Macaulay’s era witnessed this feedback loop phenomenon; his essays, for example, are essentially commentaries on other writers’ work, such as Hume’s and James Mackintosh’s histories.
Part IV. E. Historiographical View – Macaulay

Macaulay’s writing fit well within his society’s expectations. During the Victorian age historical writing became a way in which to argue one’s political view while telling a good story, rather than ensuring that the reader necessarily understood the events of history. According to Gertrude Himmelfarb, politics, for the Victorian historians, and particularly Whig historians, became the central focus of history. Macaulay’s History fits this description, as many scholars have stripped his version of English history down to nothing more than basic political maneuvering. According to modern scholars, Macaulay’s vision of history became one of readability; he had small concern for doing much else besides telling a story of progress throughout history. Essentially, the Whigs of the nineteenth century thrived on the idea of progress. Furthermore, Gooch argues that Macaulay ultimately focused on shallow descriptions of historical events, rather than deep explanations of the events. In other words, Macaulay tells us the history, but does not show us the history. While Gooch revealed no sympathy towards Macaulay’s style, most, if not all, modern historians criticize Macaulay’s supposed ability to argue and create the past as he envisioned it while tying it to the Whig interpretation of English history. For example, scholars portray Macaulay, the quintessential Whig historian, as someone who seemingly did nothing but flesh out details and events, so as to further the idea of progress.

Based on the preceding discussion, the historiographical views of Whig history are not sympathetic. While there is room in historical scholarship to understand the reasoning for the Whig interpretation, there is no room to justify the manner in which the Whigs, in general, devised the history of England as a path of inevitable progress. However, several world events in the first half of the twentieth century put a full stop to the belief in unending progress. The first event, which cost millions of lives, was World War I in which men slaughtered each other
by the tens of thousands over small parcels of land. That amount of destruction severely dampened any ideas of the progressive nature of Western Civilization. Events following World War I, such as the worldwide Great Depression of the 1930s and World War II, struck a seemingly fatal blow to the idea of inevitable progress.

Victorian historical writers, as mentioned above, held interest primarily in political history. Macaulay followed his own political motivations to fuel his *History of England*. For example, Macaulay’s belief in unending English progress came from his Whig background. Unfortunately for the Whigs, scholars recognize that the end of the Victorian era brought the end of the Whig era of interpretation, which, consequently, meant that fewer people read Macaulay’s history. Gooch argues Macaulay’s political views overshadowed his *History* so much that it became too narrow-minded due to Macaulay’s supposed tendency to accept any evidence that would support his view. Over time very few people, other than scholars, remember Macaulay’s contribution to historical scholarship because of his historical methodology.

**Part IV. F. Macaulay’s *History* – Effect on Historical Scholarship**

By the mid-1930s historians consigned Macaulay’s *History* to poor historical scholarship. Historians, such as Gooch, confirm the modern view of Macaulay: He is and will no longer be considered a great historian, and his *History* is one that has long since gone to the wayside because of its lack of neutrality. Scholars argue that Macaulay lacked neutrality because of Whig biases, which became one of the most powerful reasons for his *History* not persisting. For example, Gooch argues that Macaulay’s greatness stems from his party’s influence during the mid-nineteenth century. Essentially, Macaulay had already gained considerable notoriety prior to the *History* because of his duties as a Whig MP and writer for the *Edinburgh Review*. Moreover, English scholars, such as P. R. Ghosh, argue that the political nature of Macaulay’s
History caused him to focus too narrowly on a specific time period. In essence, Macaulay is not remembered by scholars as the glorious historical writer showing the true path of progress through English history.

Whig historians received little respect for most of the twentieth century. From Gooch to the most recent biography titled Macaulay: The Tragedy of Power by Robert Sullivan, Macaulay is portrayed as the greatest of Whig writers while not living up to the dreams his party had envisioned. Historians seemingly begrudge the fact that the Whig interpretation exists, almost as if the Whig histories are nothing more than a stain upon historical scholarship itself. As time has passed, the Whigs’ version of events has been described in different respects. First, the Whigs endeavored to legalize the reestablishment of ancient rights, and in doing so, scrutinized history to find evidence for that particular endeavor. Thus, the Whigs acted more like lawyers in that they mined history for evidence of their presuppositions. The historian’s profession is to recognize alterations, falsehoods, and misleading history. In other words, the historian is to clarify the past, not muddle it. Moreover, Melinda Zook, scholar of the Glorious Revolution, further indemnifies Macaulay by arguing that he used the History to muddle history by promoting Whig “martyrology.” The martyrologies, published by Whigs after the Revolution, attempted to elaborate upon the deeds of individuals who were executed during the Revolution. As Zook shows, the publishers went so far as to fabricate some of messages in the publications. Essentially, Whig writers are claimed to have created martyrs out of men and women involved in the Glorious Revolution.

Furthermore, recent scholars have claimed that Macaulay’s version of events would have been unrecognizable to the men within Macaulay’s History. The uninterrupted path of progress from Magna Carta to the 1832 Reform Act existed only for Macaulay and other Whigs.
Whigs of his era had come to believe in unending progress tied largely to the influx of new accomplishments in many areas of their livelihood, such as technology, science, and social reform. 67 Not only had the Whigs believed in unending progress, Zook argues that Whig historians, such as Macaulay, helped to circulate the ideas of progress, martyrology, and the Whigs’ primary role in the Glorious Revolution through a propaganda campaign of unknown proportions. 68

To state that British people enjoyed Macaulay’s History would be an understatement. Within twenty-five years after his death, his History had sold over 130,000 copies. Macaulay’s novelistic style of writing made the history of England a subject easily grasped by the general public. From the beginning Macaulay wanted his readers to absorb the History for two reasons: pure readability and the idea of progress. Macaulay’s narrative ability allowed him to become, during the 1850s, in particular, the man who attempted to ensure faith in never-ending progress for Great Britain. 69 His History also offered a vision of the summit of Victorian satisfaction in their society’s progress. 70 Several examples played into this society’s satisfaction and pride with itself: Great Britain being at forefront of the Industrial Revolution, the 1832 Reform Bill, and the inclusion of India in Great Britain’s empire. Macaulay played a significant role in two of the examples, thus his belief in progress should not be surprising.

Part V: Conclusion

Hume and Macaulay did not differ on their view of the Norman rulers, but they did differ on ideas and institutions of that particular time, such as the idea of progress in the light of liberty. Scholars, such as Macaulay, have interpreted Magna Carta as having restored some ancient liberties for the Anglo-Norman English. Macaulay believed the Glorious Revolution finally restored all of the liberties that had been lost with the invasion of the Normans in 1066 and only
partially restored in 1215. To be sure, Whig historians have looked upon the two events in 1215 and 1688 as the respective start and end points of the restoration of liberty in England.

This thesis, however, will argue that Hume and Macaulay’s respective histories have been inaccurately labeled and categorized by scholars since the late-eighteenth century. In most cases, the stereotypes are nothing more than simplistic or confused views that detract from the core importance of these two historians. Moreover, the importance of the two historians in their own times is plain, but they have been slowly relegated to relative non-importance due largely to either their detractors or defenders.71 Thus, Hume’s *History* and Macaulay’s *History* will be examined to portray the necessity of taking their work seriously for modern historical scholarship. Specifically, the Glorious Revolution will be examined through the lens of these two works. Consequently, in light of this argument, the next chapter begins with an examination of the origins of the Tory and Whig political parties, so as to further emphasize their importance to the Glorious Revolution. Following the origins of the two parties will be a succinct examination of the Glorious Revolution itself.
CHAPTER 2
POLITICAL ACTIVITY

Every historian has an agenda while writing history, and neither Hume nor Macaulay is an exception. Hume attempted to write an objective history without the interference of a political organization or personal feelings. He pursued this path because of two simple reasons: his objection to political partisanship and his great interest in history. Despite Hume’s efforts to remain unaffiliated to any particular party, representatives of the Whig political party criticized his History as a Tory “version.” As noted, Macaulay used history as means of reaching the general population through easily readable history while also placing English history along a path of Whig progress. First, a brief discussion of the origins of the alternating Whig and Tory political control must be addressed, so as to provide an idea of the political and social context of England during Hume’s and Macaulay’s eras.

Part I: The Introduction of the Party System in England

The Tory and Whig parties formed during the 1670s through the policy of supporting or not supporting the king’s decisions, respectively. Moreover, even before James, Duke of York, became king, the Whigs had fought against his succession to the throne through two consecutive Exclusion Bills. Through the Exclusion Crisis, as this short period was called, the Tories also further separated themselves from the Whigs by not supporting the bills. The two parties slowly gained a larger following through the 1680s, and through their mutual cooperation the Glorious Revolution of 1688 reached fruition. The years 1688 and 1689 witnessed the revolution, and the English people saw a drastic change in their monarchy: James II, King of England, fled voluntarily after losing support throughout the country. Essentially, James II had instituted many religious changes throughout the country from 1685 to 1688, with Catholicism becoming the
new centerpiece of his reign. Finally, on 10 June 1688, James’ wife Mary gave birth to a son, which naturally led many citizens to believe a new Catholic legacy had begun.

With William’s invasion later in 1688, James realized his tenuous position and fled the country in December 1688. Through the political upheaval, the Tories and Whigs worked in concert. The Tories wrestled with their pledge to James II as king. Consequently, they saw the idea of a regency as a possible method to safeguard the structure of the law. However, the Whigs, having a more solid consensus in regard to parliamentary autonomy, had less of a problem in accepting that the succession could be resolved in a different manner. Before William and Mary could accept the titles of king and queen, they had to accept the Declaration of Right, which had been formulated by both Whigs and Tories. Indeed, the Declaration had been designed to significantly reduce the power of the throne through several measures, such as ensuring the crown’s power was sufficiently limited by not being higher than the common law. William and Mary accepted the Declaration, and through choices made by William, the Whigs gained the superior political position in England by 1694. For example, William III chose to rely upon the Whigs’ strategy of land support during the war in Flanders, rather than take the Tories’ option of using the navy. The Glorious Revolution’s resolution helped the Whigs rise to power, despite their cooperation with the Tories during the Revolution. The differences between the parties’ members, such as basic disagreements with the other party’s beliefs, fueled a general lack of cooperation.

England and later the United Kingdom of Great Britain witnessed over the following two hundred years the continuous shifting of political power between the two parties. The shifts were not quick, however, to the chagrin of both parties’ members. For example, the Whigs controlled power from approximately 1695 to 1760, and again from 1830 to 1841, with the
Tories filling in the gaps. Despite their efforts to smooth the transition period during the resolution of the Glorious Revolution, the parties’ cooperation did not amount to a long-lasting common effort. As stated, religious differences are what fueled the division. The 1661 Corporation Act denied non-Anglicans from holding office, especially Catholics. Accordingly, with the attempt to exclude James, Duke of York, from the crown primarily because of his faith, the Whigs showed their belief that James’ Catholicism would not be compatible with British society. The Tories, on the other hand, held close ties with the Church of England and became known as the “church party.” At last, during the third exclusion attempt, Charles II had moved Parliament to Oxford where he believed the Tories combined with the conventional church attitude would lessen the feelings towards exclusion.76

By 1714, with the Hanoverian succession completed with significant Whig support, a German, George I, took the throne. Moreover, the 1715 Jacobite revolt became a significant factor in the removal of the Tories’ as a party of influence. Essentially, extremist Tories had supported the idea of restoring the Stuart pretender to the throne.77 The Whigs’ support during this time helped the party to be in near de facto control of England until 1760. George I and II were not natives of the country, and the two monarchs’ unfamiliarity with British politics and their dependence on the Whigs overshadowed all other factions, including the Tories. Primarily, the first two Hanover monarchs believed that the Whigs provided security against Jacobite revolts or other conspiracies.78

The Whigs believed they were satisfying the obligatory sense of duty that their prosperity, class, and political philosophy placed upon them. The philosophy itself held a simple, yet effective belief for the Whigs to follow: no matter the circumstances, they placed themselves after the common good and benefit of an enhanced and constant liberty.79 In many
ways the Whigs had a sense of *noblesse oblige*. Being generally wealthy aristocrats who believed they knew what was in the public’s best interest, Whigs tried to sway the very livelihood of all English citizenry throughout most of the eighteenth century. Not until George III, an English-born monarch, brought Tories back to power in the early 1760s, did the English see much change in ideology.

David Hume, born in 1711, grew up and matured into adulthood during arguably the greatest period of Whig ascendancy in England. The party began its attempt, through historical writings in particular, to convince the English citizenry of the belief in an inevitable path of English progress throughout the centuries. While the Whig Party slowly became part of the Liberal Party in the latter half of the nineteenth century, the ideology of progress that the Whigs of Macaulay’s era presented did not reach its end until the early twentieth century with the horrors of World War I.80

**Part II: The Glorious Revolution**

The early to mid-1680s, which were the final years of Charles II’s reign, became fraught with turmoil and political repercussions which stretched into modern times. Two factors became the primary motivators of the Whigs’ and Tories political movements: the uncertainty of Charles’ successor to the throne and the fear of a Catholic heir. The February 1679 parliamentary election witnessed the new parties’ contest over an event of supreme significance: the attempt to exclude James, the Catholic Duke of York, from the throne.81 The Whigs were primarily exclusionists who sought parliamentary constraints on the monarchy and acceptance of only a Protestant as their ruler. Meanwhile, the Tories believed in inherited succession and the power of the Crown.82
By late 1680, the exclusion movement had grown enough for more drastic measures by the two parties. In October 1680 the Whig party introduced a second exclusion bill into the Commons. The bill proposed two possibilities for James: denial of his succession to the throne and a charge of high treason upon his arrival in England. This exclusion bill prompted Charles to dissolve Parliament in January 1681. Unhindered by the dissolution, Parliament made a third attempt to exclude James from the crown in March 1681. When no compromise could be had between Charles and Parliament, the king dissolved Parliament for the final time during his reign.\textsuperscript{83} The dissolution did nothing to diminish the two relatively new parties; rather their political maneuverings were merely limited.

In February 1685, Charles died heirless, which brought his brother to be crowned James II. The succession was not without a struggle: the Earl of Argyle and the Duke of Monmouth, who was the Protestant illegitimate child of Charles II and backed by the Whig leaders, both led separate invasions to oust James in mid-1685.\textsuperscript{84} While James destroyed both attempts rather easily because of their poor execution, their final outcome proved that he would not tolerate rebellions: the victors treated the rebels cruelly and without compassion.\textsuperscript{85} In addition to the vicious example of the rebels’ defeat, James II exerted his power in other methods that would eventually cripple his position.

First, James II avowed the necessity of extra income to the crown to pay the debts of Charles and to execute the duties of his position. Convinced by his words, Parliament voted for the additional funds that dwarfed the amount Charles had received at the beginning of his reign. Second, and more importantly, James’ Catholicism became all-inclusive in England by 1688. Essentially, he did not hesitate in placing Roman Catholics in positions of trust and importance in three vital components of English life: the army, the ministry, and the church.\textsuperscript{86} James’
imperious style of rule and his controversial changes over three years led to the eventual Glorious Revolution.

The effects of James’ Catholicism upon the populace were tied to his requirement of the second Declaration of Indulgence to be read by all clergy in April 1688. The Declaration’s design had an over-arching goal: to discontinue penal laws against nonconformists and Catholics. The clergy’s refusal to read it sparked James’ arrest of the bishops. Unfortunately for James, the trial’s jury acquitted the bishops of the charges, which helped to erode the already diminishing support for the monarch. The Declaration’s failure and later the birth of a male heir helped to bring forth the Revolution in late 1688. The latter event convinced many people that Catholicism would not go away. James finally realized that changes needed to be made, but proposed changes, such as the attempt to restore the natural leaders of local governments, did not work as planned. The deposed leaders, for example, did not accept the proposal, which, in turn, hampered James’ governing ability. In essence, James had successfully divided his people in just over three years.

In early November 1688, and to James’ dismay, the man who would succeed him landed at Torbay without any interference from James’ navy. Through an invitation from members of the aristocracy and gentry who wanted the constitution restored to its established boundaries, William, the Prince of Orange and James’ son-in-law, invaded England. Accordingly, for years prior to his invasion, William had kept close watch on England’s activities. Furthermore, the revolution’s leaders did not want England controlled through religious measures, such as the Declaration of Indulgence. To be sure, William knew he had to prepare the English people by issuing an official Declaration in October 1688. The Declaration clearly stated, “It is both certain and evident to all men that the public peace and happiness of any state of kingdom cannot
be preserved where the laws, liberties, and customs established, by the lawful authority in it, are openly transgressed and annulled.”⁹¹ Through the Declaration, William presented his belief that James’ offenses required the monarch’s removal.

The Glorious Revolution’s resolution became a relatively quick endeavor for William and his wife, Mary. By the end of December 1688, James realized his position had been compromised and he attempted to leave the country; however, he was captured and returned to London. William, in turn, permitted James to leave, which left the throne vacant.⁹² Early in 1689, William wasted no time in establishing his power. Meanwhile, the still-new Tories and Whigs debated about who would occupy the throne. The Tories favored a regency since it would offer a semblance of constitutional action and honor their oaths to James. Yet, of the Tories, only the most conservative favored James II. The Whigs, on the other hand, had no difficulty with parliamentary sovereignty since they interpreted the hereditary succession as having been broken with James’ departure.⁹³ Regardless, the final decision was based on a single document which offered the essence of the Revolution: the Declaration of Right. The rights of the monarch became something much different with the Declaration. Just a sample of the changes is necessary to understand the document’s impact: the monarch must follow common law, prerogative courts were declared illegal, and the king could no longer impose taxes without parliamentary consent.⁹⁴ Despite Mary’s closer tie to throne because of her father James II, she and William ruled England together as co-sovereigns with William holding primary administrative power due to his unwillingness for any other option.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, the Protestants William and Mary took positions of power weakened by their predecessors.

The monarchical transition did not come without bloodshed. Ironically, the Glorious Revolution is remembered as one that was “bloodless.” Faithful followers of James, otherwise
known as Jacobites, held out in Scotland and Ireland. Unfortunately for James, Scotland’s Jacobite leaders were either killed soon after the Revolution’s onset or were inept. Thus, on 11 April 1689, the Scottish crown went to William, and by the end of summer, the remaining Jacobites surrendered. William used his Dutch troops to put military pressure on Scotland, and the Scottish supporters of William allowed for a relatively easy transition. Ireland was not as easy because the Jacobites refused to submit as quickly.

The Roman Catholic Lord Lt. Tyrconnel, of Ireland, had been one of James’ staunchest supporters, and William’s diplomatic attempts did not work with Tyrconnel. In essence, Tyrconnel held Ireland for James. By the spring of 1689, James had arrived in Ireland to use it as a base of operations. Unfortunately for James, his plans failed over the next year, as the Jacobite revolt in Ireland slowly dissolved through William’s arrival in Ireland and James’ rout at the River Boyne in 1690. Finally, the Jacobite surrender at Limerick allowed for drastic changes: a set of military and civil articles. These articles altered the lives of the Irish for many years following the Revolution since Irish Catholics could not vote, hold a seat in Parliament, or own or inherit land.

The Revolution’s historiography led to many different views of its long-lasting consequences, yet modern scholars view the event through a conservative mindset. The revolutionaries wanted something familiar and easily attainable, not something radical and unknown. Scholars, such as G. N. Clark, argued that in the revolutionaries’ conservative methods of king-making, they created a new version of the monarchy: a paid executive officer. Furthermore, Steven C. A. Pincus portrays the Revolution as changing important factors of the country’s policy regarding foreign and economic relations: William III’s larger goals have
always been recognized as external to England, due largely to his view of England, or a country to be used for its resources.\textsuperscript{101}

The Revolution’s changes, no matter how conservative, still affected English beliefs as little as a hundred years after its conclusion. Politician and writer Edmund Burke’s words provide an excellent view of the beliefs: “The Revolution was made to preserve our ancient indisputable laws and liberties, and that ancient constitution of government which is our only security for laws and liberty.”\textsuperscript{102} Of course, Burke referred to the ancient constitution and its restoration with Magna Carta. Thus, in Burke’s and the Whigs’ opinion, the Revolution helped to rekindle and confirm the ideal of progress away from the Norman Yoke initiated by Magna Carta.

In brief, the historical scholarship of Hume and Macaulay, in particular, led to a massive influx of conjecture tied to the lasting effects of the Glorious Revolution upon the history of England. Unfortunately for modern historical scholarship, scholars have consigned Hume’s and Macaulay’s views of the Glorious Revolution’s implications to a simplified view and less than significant scholarship, respectively.\textsuperscript{103} This is due, in part, to their not being taken seriously because of the way their works have been interpreted by their critics and supporters. Hume has been inaccurately portrayed as an impartial historian and Macaulay as a biased Whig scholar. These inaccuracies have clouded the significance of their respective works. The next section will clarify their respective works and highlight some of those particular instances.
CHAPTER 3
HISTORIANS’ METHODOLOGY:
HUME AND MACAULAY

Many scholars have examined David Hume’s and Thomas Babington Macaulay’s historical methodologies since their respective histories were published. ¹⁰⁴ This chapter will assist the reader’s understanding of the path that both authors took when writing their histories of England. Of course, with the varied examinations of their histories, scholars have, through criticism and relative over-generalizations, slowly diminished Hume’s and Macaulay’s scholarship.

History, by the early 1750s, became Hume’s ultimate focus. He seemingly wanted to do something new in regard to published history. Hume desired a history that would speak to all people and not cater to one specific audience. On the other hand, Macaulay desired a readable history that would not stray far from the Whig interpretation, which is the idea that humans have unerringly progressed throughout history. Progress in this context simply refers to all facets of life, from better government to more efficient and productive science.

Part I: Introduction to Hume’s Historical Methodology

Arguably, the turning point in Hume’s career as a philosopher came with the disappointing result of A Treatise of Human Nature. Simply, the educated readers of Great Britain did not react to the Treatise in any meaningful way, which, in turn, caused Hume to rethink his plan as a scholar. Once the Treatise “fell dead-born from the press,” Hume committed himself to publishing history and essays. ¹⁰⁵ He did not feel that he neglected the subject of philosophy; rather, Hume believed that history was the superior method of communication to contemporary readers. ¹⁰⁶
Hume did not begin the *History* until the 1750s, over a decade later. Thus, until he took on his appointment as Secretary of the Embassy, he wrote philosophical and other miscellaneous essays to fill his time. E. C. Mossner, Hume’s most recent biographer, writes that Hume’s study of England was one of the “science of man.” This belief in writing history to portray the science of man was apparent in a letter written by Hume to James Dunniker on 28 June 1753, which was not long after Hume began his historical pursuit: “The more I advance in my undertaking, the more I am convinced that the history of England has never been written, not only for style, which is notorious around the world, but also for matter; such is the ignorance and partiality of all our historians.” Above all, scholars view Hume as an Enlightenment-based philosopher and historian who wanted to write an impartial history unclouded by the judgments of humanity. Yet, unlike the larger number of Enlightenment philosophes, Hume was not a proponent of progress.

Much of the “ignorance and partiality” stemmed from the Whig faction which had come to dominate English politics throughout Hume’s life. The Whigs’ vision of history, in particular, and English historians, in general, seemed to Hume to overshadow the impartiality that history should contain. Hume wrote to a friend on 15 May 1761:

> And, perhaps, your esteem for the entire impartiality which I aim at, and which, to tell the truth, is so unusual in English historians….The spirit of faction, which prevails in this country, and which is a natural attendant on civil liberty, carries every thing to extremes on the one side, as well as on the other; and I have the satisfaction to find, that my performance has alternately given displeasure to both parties….I shall always regard the anger of both [factions] as the surest warrant of my impartiality.

For example, Whig historians show that the kings’ struggle with Parliament was one of the monarchy abrogating established liberties, as opposed to lawful, legislative resistance. Hume’s reaction enabled him to attempt what he believed was the first fair and unbiased treatment of English history. Charles I’s disagreement with Parliament stemmed from Charles’ belief in
the divine right of kings. After the civil war and a failed trial for the defense of Charles I’s life, his execution followed. The ancient liberties simply refer to the liberties held by the Anglo-Saxons prior to the Norman Conquest by William the Conqueror. Thus, the view that the Anglo-Saxons had great liberties, lost to the Conquest, carried significant weight for over six hundred years.

Part I. A. The Whig Influence upon Historical Scholarship

The supposed ancient constitution formed by the Anglo-Saxons is tied to the idea of ancient liberties, and in 1066 the Normans purportedly disrupted that constitution. The ancient constitution, while believed in by many Whigs, held no historical foundation for Hume. Moreover, the Whigs believed that the constitution had actually been destroyed by the Normans. Hume simply scoffed at the idea that an “ancient constitution” had been destroyed. Hume realized that the Whig idea of an ancient constitution could be misused because of its unclear historical basis. To Hume the ancient constitution hearkened back to a fabled historical setting in which the constitution helped to build a path to more rights for citizens. Of course, the Whigs, as a whole, believed this path to be unwavering throughout the intervening centuries since 1215. Hume, of course, believed this perception to be false, and, based on his own philosophical writings, to be irrational due largely to humanity itself. For example, Hume wrote of this irrationality: “When we say…that one object is connected with another, we mean only that they have acquired a connection in our thought….No conclusions can be more agreeable to skepticism than such as make discoveries concerning the weakness and narrow limits of human reason and capacity.” By extension, Hume could not believe in an ancient English constitution.
To Hume, there had been no evidence during his era for an ancient constitution written by the Anglo-Saxons, especially in the fashion that the Whigs believed it to have been created. The Whigs’ belief about its creation consisted of a progressive series of political and/or governmental actions through peaceful coordination. Hume never accepted this belief: his research determined that the Middle Ages consisted of little more than a time of war and bickering between those in leadership roles. About the English people during the later years of the Norman rulers, Hume wrote: “The English of that age [the twelfth century] were still a rude and barbarous people even compared to the Normans, and impress us with no favorable idea of the Anglo-Saxon manners.”

During Hume’s time the Whig party remained the dominant political faction, and even Hume became frustrated with the political manipulation of history. The Whigs’ version of history, as initially written by Paul Rapin de Thoyras, had become the most read version during the early to mid-eighteenth century. Rapin’s history of England is considered the origin of Whig historiography after its publication in 1723. His history, first and foremost, promoted the idea that England had stood alone throughout European history in maintaining its ancient laws, such as Magna Carta. When Hume’s *History* slowly became more popular than Rapin de Thoyras’ version, the Whigs reacted against Hume. As Mossner writes, “The age of Whig supremacy insisted that he was, at least, a Tory.” So, the Whigs believed that if Hume was not for them, then he was against them. Of course, this was a simple belief for the Whigs, who thought of Hume’s version of history as an attempt to overshadow their version. Furthermore, Hume, through the Whig lens, had sympathy for the Stuarts which, in turn, meant he had a Tory bias.
Part I. B. Hume and the Religious Factor

Scholars recognized Hume’s History as one of the first histories of England to mention a religious deity only when necessary to clarify a person’s religious belief, as opposed to previous scholars who recognized prime mover of human events. Hume helped to set the stage for future historians to write history without feeling the need to mention a divine being out of context. The Age of Enlightenment witnessed several individuals of importance who were either self-professed atheists or had the label placed upon them. Hume, through his philosophical and historical writings, fell into the latter category. Hume’s contemporary Baron D’Holbach, a famous eighteenth-century philosopher of skepticism, had proclaimed his atheism and invited other scholars to discuss their religious leanings. D’Holbach’s salons drew in individuals, such as Denis Diderot, who also shared D’Holbach’s views on religion. While the Enlightenment did not necessarily allow individuals to flaunt their atheism, the period allowed some freedom of thought. A greater toleration of independent religious thought began in the centuries prior to the Enlightenment. Furthermore, scholars have even placed the beginning of the Enlightenment with the Glorious Revolution itself.

Scholars indicate that one point of objectivity caused Hume to stand out among his peers: the absence of God throughout his History as a prime mover in the lives of people Hume studied. Through the History, Hume reduces God to a simple figure of worship by the subjects in his writing. Essentially, Hume rarely mentions God because that subject is not part of his vision of English history. God, as usually mentioned in histories prior to Hume’s time, such as the histories of the displaced Anglo-Saxon historians, was a being who should have been venerated and worshipped even by those reading the history. Rather, Hume points out the belief in a supreme being only when it is necessary. As David Wexler argues, Hume “was able to help
secularize the history of the Middle Ages.” In essence, Hume’s secularizes medieval history through his own History in which God is mentioned only as an object of worship. In secularizing the history of the Middle Ages, Hume was, by extension, able to begin secularizing the remainder of English history.

**Part I. C. Hume and Objectivity**

Hume’s colleagues looked upon his manner of writing history objectively with suspicion. Hume’s pursuit of objectivity requires further investigation. He began his career as a philosopher, but he felt that history proved to be more stimulating, in that it could reach a larger number of individuals. Even though Hume stopped writing philosophical works, once he set his mind to writing the History of England, he used his strong philosophical foundation to complement his writing and research. By using the philosophical teachings of his youth, Hume attempted to reach an objective history by eliminating conscious biases or prejudices toward the subject matter. His belief in strong historical data can be seen in the chapter titled “Of Liberty and Necessity” in An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding. Hume wrote:

> Mankind are so much the same, in all times and places, that history informs us of nothing new or strange in that particular. Its chief use is only to discover the constant and universal of human nature, by showing men in all varieties of circumstances and situations, and furnishing us with materials, from which we may form our observations, and become acquainted with the regular springs of human action and behavior.

The Enquiry was published in 1748, many years prior to the History, yet one can see that Hume’s philosophical reasoning had already taken to the path of historical reasoning.

Hume, as a scholar and a historian, wanted his own History not to be fraught with mere opinions, prejudices, and baseless statements. As mentioned above, Hume wanted evidence for his writings, yet in some readers’ minds Hume used questionable evidence. In fact, Hume did not intend or desire the inclusion of any one political agenda in his History; nevertheless, he
claimed to be writing for both sides of the political rivalry: Whigs and Tories. Hume revealed in the above statement that he wrote for all people, regardless of status. Hume, who greatly appreciated irony, realized the irony of his unbiased efforts shortly after publishing the history of the reigns of James and Charles. On 25 February 1754, Hume wrote, “I have the impudence to pretend that I am of no party, and have no bias. Lord Elibank says, that I am a moderate Whig, and Mr. Wallace that I am a candid Tory.” Thus, despite Hume’s best efforts to remain without bias, the politicians placed him under their opponent’s label.

Another point of Hume’s objectivity is simply tied to his method of writing. As Secretary of the Embassy, Hume had gained a large library in which to do research, and he took full advantage of it. While the importance of research in and of itself is worth stressing, the fact that Hume cited the sources he had researched for the History is of importance. Essentially, Hume realized that the path to objectivity lay within proper research methods, so as to ensure that readers would understand how he devised his History. While Hume did not directly mention his citation methods, scholars have recognized Hume through his correspondence for the methodical manner he took while taking notes for the History. For example, Hume wrote on 8 April 1762, “I assure you there is not a Quotation that I did not see with mine own Eyes, except two or three at most, which I took from Tyrrel or Brady because I had not the books referred to.” Finally, Hume wanted his work to be read and used by future generations. With Hume inclusion of the citations in the work itself, future historians and readers alike could follow the path he took.

Despite Hume’s objective methodology and attempt to move away from what he considered to be biased or prejudicial history, he agreed with other contemporary historians on some historical accounts. For example, like many English historians writing a comprehensive
view of history, Hume included a large section on William the Conqueror and the effects of his invasion of Anglo-Saxon England. In this discussion, Hume agreed with other English historians that the conquering Normans placed a “yoke” upon the Anglo-Saxons. Yet, Hume’s view of the Normans is clear, which corresponds to the common view throughout English historical writing: i.e., the Normans permanently disrupted the Anglo-Saxons’ entire society. For example, in the *History*, Hume wrote, “The introduction of feudal law into England by William the Conqueror had much infringed the liberties, however imperfect, enjoyed by the Anglo-Saxons in their ancient government, and had reduced the whole people to a state of vassalage under the king or barons, and even the greater part of them to a state of real slavery.”

Later twentieth-century historians maintain the neutrality of Hume’s work in almost all of its narrative. Parts of the *History* portraying some bias are those pertaining to later monarchs, such as the Stuarts; nevertheless, the bias appears unintentional on Hume’s part, despite his best efforts to remove it. Hume’s attempt at objectivity is seen plainly in his focus on the early reign of certain monarchs, such as William I and Henry I. While most historians decry those monarchs as either completely disruptive or lackluster in their performance, Hume wrote with his noted measure of objectivity by presenting positive and negative traits for each king. Instead of the typical contemporary account of William I hindering the livelihood of the English people, Hume gave the ruler credit for establishing writing and reading on a larger scale. For example, Hume wrote:

With regard to the manners of the Anglo-Saxons we can say little, but that they were in general a rude, uncultivated people, ignorant of letters, unskilled in the mechanical arts, untamed to submission under law and government, addicted to intemperance, riot, and disorder….Even the Norman historians, notwithstanding the low state of the arts in their own country, speak of them as barbarians, when they mention the invasion made upon them by the duke of Normandy. The conquest put the people in a situation of receiving slowly, from abroad, the rudiments of science and cultivation, and of correcting their rough and licentious manners.
Thus, according to Hume, the Norman Conquest affected not only writing, but reading, in a positive manner.

**Part I. D. Hume and the Idea of Progress**

Hume’s *History* portrayed a much different view of the ancients, such as the Anglo-Saxons and Romans, than that of his contemporaries. The Whigs, in particular, painted the Anglo-Saxons in a positive light that Hume’s objectivity would not allow. Basically, Hume did not respect the Anglo-Saxon or Roman histories. Whig politicians and historians of the late seventeenth century, eighteenth century, and into the nineteenth century believed that their ancestors, such as the Anglo-Saxons, had fueled the fire of progress from which contemporary peoples, such as themselves, reaped the benefits.\(^{129}\) The idea of a centuries-long unbroken path of progress did not sit well with Hume, as will be discussed later. In the next century, Macaulay wrote:

> Hume reacted strongly to those who eulogized the ancient past and argued that the ancients, for all their dramatic and representational art and architecture, were little more than barbarians, whose cities were commonly at war with one another, dependent upon a slave economy and the acquisition and maintenance of empires, and whose violence far from being directed towards others was more often than not also towards their own kinsmen and women.\(^{130}\)

In Hume’s view, the ancient past did not hold the link or key to progress as reported by Whig historians, in particular. In fact, Hume’s philosophical convictions became apparent when he attacked the commonplace assumption that progress had been on a centuries-long path of unbroken successes.

Hume’s philosophical convictions, as seen through his writings, ensure that his view of progress was obvious to the reader. Yet, to understand Hume’s position against the idea of progress, his position must be briefly summarized. His first philosophical work was *A Treatise*
of Human Nature. In spite of its disappointing results, Hume took the criticism and his own post-publishing evaluation of the work to reformulate the book into a newer and shorter volume titled An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding. This work included a lengthy explanation of necessity and causation, which would come indirectly to fruition later in his History. To examine this point more closely, then, the original source provides an example. Hume wrote in the Enquiry:

> It appears, then, that this idea of a necessary connection among events arises from a number of similar instances which occur of the constant conjunction of these events; nor can that idea ever be suggested by any one of these instances, surveyed in all possible lights and positions. But there is nothing in a number of instances, different from every single instance, which is supposed to be exactly similar; except only, that after a repetition of similar instances, the mind is carried by habit, upon the appearance of one event, to expect its usual attendant, and to believe that it will exist.\(^{131}\)

Thus, there was no physical connection between any causes and their respective effects. Any connection that existed between the two phenomena was merely in the mind of the beholder.

To Hume the connection was simply a habit of the mind. A simple example follows: A researcher attempts to disprove Hume’s hypothesis. The researcher releases a rock from a ten-story building. The rock falls to the ground each and every time. The researcher drops the rock thousands of times, and every time it is has never strayed from the path downward to the ground, so, the researcher now believes that the rock will always fall to the ground in the future because of the formulation of the habit of the falling rock. Yet, no matter how firmly the researcher believes that rock will always fall to the ground, he or she can never be absolutely certain that the rock will fall to the ground each successive time the rock is dropped.\(^{132}\)

Hume’s philosophy-oriented side never hesitated in pointing out flaws in reasoning, such as the idea of a necessary connection between cause and effect. His reasoning ability extended not just from minutely important events but to all events that occurred in the universe.
Accordingly, progress falls under that same rubric. Hume thought the idea of humanity progressing according to some grand scheme to be nothing more than a habit of the mind that his contemporaries took for granted to be true. Moreover, Hume had no belief that progress in any form had been an inevitable condition of humanity. For example, Hume wrote in the essay “Of the Populousness of the Ancient Nations”:

There is very little ground, either from reason or observation, to conclude the world eternal or incorruptible. The continual and rapid motion of matter, the violent revolutions with which every part is agitated, the changes remarked in the heavens, the plain traces as well as tradition of an universal deluge, or general convulsion of the elements; all these prove strongly the mortality of this fabric of the world, and its passage, by corruption or dissolution, from one state or order to another.\(^{133}\)

By holding onto that belief, Hume was enabled to view human history without a bias toward a specific time period. He believed that no time period held inherently more value than any other, which allowed him to examine critically his subject without thinking that any era, and his time in particular, was the pinnacle of human history.

Scholars have studied Hume’s philosophical theory about the absence of necessary connections between cause and effect since the publication of his writings. His belief in empiricism and the lack of a system of historical cause and effect also brought him recognition. Hume believed historians should be focused in empirical research while he also believed in the fixed nature of humanity, as is seen in his philosophical treatises. Hume thought there was no grand idea of human progress because there is no plan in addition to unforeseen circumstances.\(^{134}\) In this belief, Hume saw that too many historians believed that humans themselves had progressed along with the events of history. Thus, Hume, who lived during an era whose people had just begun to really hold fast to the idea of nearly inevitable human progress through the centuries, essentially contradicted that belief system with just two of his published works.
Yet, in following the belief that humans, in general, followed no plan or path, Hume was better able to view history through an objective lens despite his own partiality, which has been downplayed by historical scholarship. In some respects, Hume’s *Enquiry* could be considered a preview to the way in which he would later write the *History*. Hume’s ideas concerning human history certainly became clear later in the *Enquiry*. In the chapter “Of Liberty and Necessity” he wrote, “It is universally acknowledged that there is a great uniformity among the actions of men, in all nations and ages, and that human nature remains still the same, in its principles and operations.” True to his thinking and writing, Hume wrote his history with the following in mind: there is no greater path of humanity, such as the inevitable path of human progress, and human biases can cloud the judgment of any person including those individuals who write history, including himself.

**Part I. E. Final Thoughts**

Hume’s view of his *History* can be scrutinized more closely now that a general discussion of his views has been presented. Those views include the following: historical objectivity, philosophical theories rejecting cause and effect, and the rejection of human progress. An examination of his writings, journals, and letters reveals that Hume would have been the first to agree that even he had a bias. Yet it is his own recognition of that bias which allowed him to make an effort to remove it from his works. By the early 1760s the *History* had been published four times; nonetheless, he continued to search for errors of judgment or hasty conclusions. For example, on 3 July 1765, Hume wrote to Gilbert Elliot of Minto:

> As I began the History with these two reigns, I now find that they, above all the rest, have been corrupted with Whig Rancour, & that I really deserved the name of a Party Writer, and boasted without any Foundation of my Impartiality: But if you now do me the Honour to give this part of the Work a second Perusal, I am persuaded that you will no longer throw upon me this reproachful Epithet, and will acquit me of all Propensity of Whiggism.
By 1765 Elliot had been a long time friend of Hume, as they had met at the University of Edinburgh. Unfortunately, no letters from Elliot himself directly stating his opinions of Hume have reached publication. Nevertheless, one can discern indirectly that Elliot’s opinions of the History obviously helped Hume to realize that he needed to address some problems.

Instead of Hume contradicting Elliot’s opinion, Hume seemingly used the comments to help make the work more objective.\textsuperscript{138} The above excerpt also portrays the self-scrutiny that Hume constantly used throughout his writing process. He had no compunction about revising a previously written manuscript, especially the History, which he considered to be one of his best works, if not the best work. The consideration is not surprising in that Hume believed he had written the first impartial history of England. Later, in 1770, Hume again wrote to Elliot, who by this time had been knighted: “I am running over again the last Edition of my History in order to correct it further. I either soften or expunge many villainous seditious Whig Strokes, which had crept into it.”\textsuperscript{139} Hume did not elaborate on which “Whig Strokes” had crept into the work since there are no direct records of any particular examples, which could mean that “strokes” were nothing more than the readers’ interpretation. Also, while the final volume of the History had been published in 1762, Hume had continued to edit the work even after several publications and much acclaim. Essentially, Hume’s belief was that appropriate historical scholarship did not allow him to settle for less in spite of the popular interpretations of his History.

Finally, a brief discussion of Hume’s seemingly reverse path through history must be addressed to assist one in understanding his desire for more historical objectivity. This reverse path is simply as follows: In writing the History, Hume started with the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and ended with the beginning of English history in the Middle Ages. Originally, his first volume discusses the then most recent activity. While this may seem confusing, Hume had
never planned on writing about England’s more distant past. His reason for continuing
backwards was relatively straightforward. He simply did not want to use the Whig historians,
such as Rapin de Thoyras, who had dominated English history, for his research. Through
Hume’s extensive research of English history, he realized that the Whigs used the Anglo-Saxon
constitution as the basis for their version of history. Hume’s realization actually gave him a
position to confront the Whig version of history through the use of medieval history.140 In his
research Hume decoded some of the history that the Whigs believed to be true. Ironically, in the
process of researching history as the Secretary of the Embassy, Hume also became a medievalist.

Part II: Introduction to Macaulay’s Methodology

Scholars show that Macaulay's historical methodology developed over time.141 This idea
requires a brief, explanation. Basically, not until Macaulay reached adulthood did he believe in
the Whig view of history. During his childhood, Macaulay adored the classical authors, such as
Demosthenes and Tacitus. While the adoration did not fade as Macaulay reached adulthood, the
respect he had for the classical authors diminished considerably as time passed.

For Macaulay the classical historians, in particular, became something less than a serious
source of historical knowledge. Historians, such as Herodotus and Tacitus, held Macaulay’s
attention for various reasons, such as their ability to tell to a good story; nevertheless, their
accuracy left much to be desired. In his essays, he openly scoffed at the ancients and the
moderns. The ancients, Macaulay believed, could tell a good story, but some of them, such as
Tacitus, openly admitted to falsifying information in some cases. Ancient speeches by the
classical authors had been filled with potentially false information. For example, the ancient
author included phrases he believed the orator had spoken. On the other hand, the moderns were
considerably better about reporting history, but the story usually lacked a good narrative flow,
which did not meet Macaulay’s standards of a good history. Simply put, Macaulay desired, first and foremost, a readable history for everyone, not a book to sit upon a scholar’s shelf. Macaulay enjoyed reading the ancients’ works, but worried about their accuracy, writing: “Tacitus was the greatest portrait-painter and the greatest dramatist of antiquity, but he could not be trusted.”

Part II. A. Macaulay’s Review of His Colleagues

Macaulay’s essays in the *Edinburgh Review* constantly evaluated the work of his colleagues. For example, Macaulay wrote, “We are acquainted with no history which approaches to our notion of what a history ought to be – with no history which does not widely depart, either on the right hand or on the left, from the exact line.” In fact, this view carefully summarizes what Macaulay believed about historians. Of course, the key point in the phrase is one simple word: no. He wrote, “We are acquainted with no history…” Macaulay, well-known to be careful with his words, literally meant no historian had reached the threshold that Macaulay sought.

Born long after Hume’s death, Macaulay was able to evaluate Hume’s famous *History* without the worry of retaliation. In his own writings, Macaulay accused Hume of falling short of Macaulay’s expectations, but he failed to offer a clear example; instead, Macaulay offered only his opinions of Hume’s writings, such as this slight condemnation: “He [Hume] gives prominence to all the circumstances which support his case.” Ironically, Macaulay would have balked if he knew that many recent historians would label him with nearly the same description as he used for Hume.

Macaulay’s *History* included few citations of the works he researched. Indeed, very few historians actually met the high standards that Macaulay required, which included a readable narrative and not over-generalizing the facts. According to his words, Macaulay seemingly
trusted few other historians’ works enough to reference them. For example, in an essay titled “On History” published in an 1828 volume of the *Edinburgh Review*, Macaulay wrote, “They far excel their predecessors in the art of deducing general principles from facts. But unhappily they have fallen into the error of distorting facts to suit general principles. They arrive at a theory from looking at some of the phenomena; and the remaining phenomena they strain or curtail to suit the theory.” Ironically, Macaulay scholars claim that his style of writing history was just as guilty. Yet, during the Victorian era, citing researched works had not become a legitimate method of scholarly activity. Moreover, no official copyright laws existed in most of Europe, which led many scholars literally not to bother with citations.

Political historians, such as Macaulay, benefitted from the relative ease in examining their predecessors’ work. Macaulay realized that while Hume attempted not to include party bias, Hume did include information on the bickering between political parties, such as what was witnessed in regard to the Glorious Revolution of 1688. Macaulay noticed Hume’s mention of the Whigs and Tories and discussed it in an essay long before he decided to write his own history of England. In the essay titled, “Sir James Mackintosh’s History of the English Revolution,” published in the July 1835 *Edinburgh Review*, Macaulay wrote of Hume’s technique:

> If they [political factions] reposed for a moment from the work of agitation, if they suffered the public excitement to flag, they were lost men. Hume, in describing this state of things, had employed an image which seems hardly to suit the general simplicity of his style, but which is by no means too strong for the occasion. ‘Thus,’ says he [Hume], ‘the two parties [Whigs and Tories] actuated by mutual rage, but cooped up within the narrow limits of the law, leveled with poisoned daggers the most deadly blows against each other’s breast, and buried in their factious divisions all regard to truth, honour, and humanity.”

Macaulay’s view of Hume was apparent in the short commentary. First, Macaulay believed that Hume’s style was generally simple or, in other words, Hume’s narrative was not colorful enough for Macaulay’s taste. Second, Macaulay recognized Hume’s lack of party bias in which Hume
seemingly berated both political parties and their respective politicians for their behavior up to, and after, 1688.

Macaulay, on the other hand, had become a devoted party politician by the time he wrote the essay in 1835. He had already helped to push through the Reform Bill, and he had taken on a significant role in the new English government in India. To say the least, Macaulay’s comments defended the actions of his party’s political predecessors and contemporaries.

Without writers, such as Macaulay, defending the nineteenth-century Whigs’ actions and ideals, then the Whigs’ progressive view could have been considerably tarnished by Hume’s words on their interpretation: “buried in their [Whigs’ and Tories’] factious divisions all regard to truth, honour, and humanity.”¹⁵⁰ If Hume’s words held any truth for the Whigs or Macaulay, then his work and beliefs became insignificant because of the following concerns. If the Whigs had no regard for truth, honor, or humanity, then their progressive ideals would mean little in the grand scheme of English history, which, in turn, meant that the Whigs’ objectives became useless. Without regard for truth, honor, or humanity, what progress could English civilization have truly witnessed since the onset of the Revolution? Macaulay’s examination of Hume’s History could possibly help to alleviate any harm Hume might have caused to the Whigs’ ideals.

Macaulay continued writing essays for the Edinburgh Review throughout adulthood, yet most of them reached publication prior to his work on the History. Unfortunately, Macaulay’s thoughts on contemporary historians were not as plain during the years following the History’s publication, which was partly attributed to his failing health upon reaching middle age. His health began to decline during the early 1850s, and he was unable to finish the History prior to his death. Macaulay’s early essays and personal journals from his youth are rife with his opinions of other historians and their effect upon Great Britain.
In 1825, after his years at Cambridge and during the years prior to becoming an MP, Macaulay wrote an essay for the *Edinburgh Review* extensively addressing the histories of two English historians. He wrote:

On the other side are the most authoritative and the most popular historical works in our language, that of [the Earl of] Clarendon and that of Hume. The former is not only ably written and full of valuable information, but has also an air of dignity and sincerity which makes even the prejudices and errors with which it abounds respectable. Hume, from whose fascinating narrative the great mass of the reading public are still contented to take their opinions, hated religion so much that he hated liberty for having been allied with religion, and has pleaded the case of tyranny with the dexterity of an advocate, while affecting the impartiality of a judge.\textsuperscript{151}

Macaulay never did address which “prejudices and errors” abounded in Clarendon’s history, and, ironically, Macaulay was praising Clarendon’s work as being respectable despite those same prejudices and errors. On the other hand, Macaulay admitted that the English citizenry were “still” reading Hume’s history. Yet, it is not surprising considering that Hume’s history had been in publication for nearly seventy-five years with multiple revised editions.

Macaulay’s claim that Hume hated religion was a half-truth at best. Hume himself never claimed to hate religion; he actually never directly or publicly addressed his lack of faith in God. Hume’s lack of belief did not cause him to be affected negatively in a world which was dominated by people who believed in a divine being. Ironically, as Robert Sullivan and John Clive portrayed throughout their respective biographies, Macaulay did not exactly hold true to any religious beliefs throughout his own life either. In fact, the most recent biography by Sullivan, to a large extent, portrayed Macaulay as a man who publicly worshipped God and found no time for that same God in his private life.\textsuperscript{152} For example, in 1857 Macaulay wrote to Thomas Ellis, “I went to Church yesterday to please my sisters: but I had better have stayed away.”\textsuperscript{153} Essentially, from an early age Macaulay understood the benefits of public worship and used it to his advantage.\textsuperscript{154} Furthermore, the attack on Hume’s atheism was an old one, even by...
Macaulay’s time. Hume had felt the effects of those criticisms during his own life and merely shrugged off the attacks. Furthermore, Macaulay knew enough about Hume to know that Hume wanted to be known as an impartial historian. Thus, from the earliest publication of Hume’s work, scholars and politicians, such as Adam Smith and William Mure of Caldwell, had recognized his attempt at impartiality. Obviously, some historians, such as Macaulay, did not agree that Hume’s attempt was successful.

Throughout the 1820s, Macaulay continued scrutinizing his contemporaries. Seemingly, throughout this time period and up to the 1840s, Macaulay examined historians, in general, and English historians, specifically to help him discern the best course of historical scholarship. Macaulay rarely included details, only referring to the information that those historians presented as strained or distorted. Later in the essay “On History” Macaulay continued the criticisms. Instead of just stating generalities as to what he considered historical blunders, Macaulay narrowed the focus back to David Hume. Hume had been a source of Macaulay’s focus for several years at that point, and with that more recent essay, Hume became even more of a target for Macaulay. While Macaulay’s view was briefly mentioned before, the following passage fully elaborates his thoughts. He wrote:

> Hume is an accomplished advocate. Without positively asserting much more than he can prove, he gives prominence to all the circumstances which support his case; he glides lightly over those which are unfavorable to it; his own witnesses are applauded and encouraged: the statements which seem to throw discredit on them are controverted; the contradictions into which they fall are explained away; a clear and connected abstract of their evidence is given.  

**Part II. B. Macaulay’s Writing and Resource Methods**

In light of this discussion, Macaulay’s highly critical view of other historians permitted him to believe that he should write The History of England in a different manner. Macaulay believed that his History would supersede those of all of his predecessors and contemporaries,
while attempting to highlight significantly the supposed progressive nature of English history. Macaulay believed that he lived during the greatest time in human history because of the progress of humanity from pre-history through the Romans to his time period: Victorian Britain. Macaulay’s great love for the classical authors, despite his perception of all of their faults, eventually helped to shape the way in which he wrote his history. History, according to Macaulay, should include “flowery” writing, such as poetry, so that the reader enjoys reading about the past. For example, Macaulay wrote about contemporary historians: “They miserably neglect the art of narration, the art of interesting the affections and presenting pictures to the imagination.” The narrative account of English history with the overlying theme of progress would then become Macaulay’s central method of historical writing.

Macaulay’s focus on the narrative approach was paramount to nearly all other concerns. He admitted that facts themselves border on tedium. For example, Macaulay wrote, “Their [modern historians’] bias led them to distort facts. Hume was a vast mass of sophistry….While they were busy with controversy, they neglected the arts of narration. Facts were the mere dross of history. The ideal historian must know how to paint as well as draw, and must embrace the culture as well as the actions of mankind.” Living in an age of romantic authors, such as Sir Walter Scott, Macaulay also realized their impact upon English readership. For example, Scott’s romantic medieval novel Ivanhoe recounted the impact of the Normans upon the Anglo-Saxons in a sweeping drama that is still popular today. Macaulay, in essence, consistently focused on ensuring that his readers enjoyed his writings, whether through detailed narrative accounts of specific events or through generalizations of certain time frames.

Scholars have pondered several reasons for Macaulay’s desire for readers to enjoy his writing first and foremost. Yet, only one reason becomes apparent when one inspects his
writings and personality. Macaulay’s towering intellect and ego combined to formulate the basis for his desire solely for enjoyment of the History. Perhaps he did not believe that most of his readers would fail to understand the historical implications he perceived to be within English history, such as the idea of inevitable progress. Minimally, Macaulay wanted the reader to grasp the idea of progress. Macaulay’s condescending personality becomes apparent since he was noted to look down upon most people, especially those he deemed to be lacking in intelligence.161 Ironically, he wanted the History readable no matter the intelligence level of the readers. He read and studied Sir Walter Scott’s writings for a “readable” version of history. Macaulay’s own words further clarified his beliefs. He wrote, “A perfect historian must possess an imagination sufficiently powerful to make his narrative affecting and picturesque.”162 By studying multiple historians, ancient and contemporary, Macaulay eventually believed that he knew exactly what the “perfect” historian required, so as to write an effective history.

Part II. C. Politics Enter the Fray

Despite Macaulay’s desire for readability and his mention of historians’ distorting facts, Macaulay’s own political biases crept into the History. This, in turn, made for some distortion of facts to suit the political biases. According to most, if not all, modern historical scholars, Macaulay presented his History through the Whig interpretation of English history. Whig history presented the following path of progress: independence through the abolition of slavery, more religious freedom, and more political reform with legislation, such as the Reform Bill.163 Thus, the goal of the eighteenth and nineteenth-century Whig historian was to report the supposed inevitability of English progress throughout the centuries. Furthermore, Macaulay worked toward that goal by describing an event he considered the beginning of English history:
the advent of Magna Carta in June 1215. All history prior to that event became relegated chronologically to Anglo-Norman history and then to the preceding Anglo-Saxon history.

Part II. D. English Historical Origins to Modernity

Macaulay referred to Magna Carta in 1215 as the beginning of English history. His rationale for this reference was simple: Magna Carta reasserted the liberties lost by the Anglo-Saxons upon the arrival of the Normans in 1066. The Normans’ arrival, according to most historians including Macaulay and Hume, supplanted the natives’ customs, government, and livelihood, only to see a large-scale semblance of their reestablishment in 1215. Ironically, Macaulay assumed that Magna Carta was a document requiring total adherence by each monarch. Not until a later version of Magna Carta in 1225, which was long after King John’s death, did the document actually reach an official status. One must assume Macaulay recognized the 1215 document as a symbol of liberty, if not an actual facilitator of liberty, in which case, Macaulay used Magna Carta as a means to an end. For Macaulay, the ancient constitution became a device for appealing to the principles of ancient republics. This illustration of Macaulay’s thinking was apparent when considering his love of the classics and the ancient republics, such as Rome. To Macaulay, Magna Carta was simply one larger step in the path of progress to the Glorious Revolution and beyond.

The steps of progress were plain for Macaulay. The reader can realize the point which Macaulay had attempted to make with his History upon a thorough inspection of his writing. For example, Macaulay examined the effects of Magna Carta in the History and he became absolutely certain of the document’s effect upon the English population. However, he was not referring to the importance of the document to the people of 1215. Rather, Macaulay believed that its clauses still held great importance to the people of the 1850s. He wrote, “There can be no
doubt, when these two great revolutions had been effected, our forefathers were by far the best
governed in Europe.” The first revolution was the 1215 Magna Carta and the second
revolution was the Glorious Revolution of 1688. Regrettably, Macaulay had an unsupported
belief in the vast importance of Magna Carta. Essentially, the document held little to no long-
lasting authority, as it was quickly renounced by King John and denounced by Pope Innocent III.
Unsurprisingly, Macaulay’s second choice of important revolutions fell in line with the
recognized beginnings of the Whig party’s rise to power.

Accordingly, Macaulay’s historical interpretation showed his belief that history moved
along a path of inevitable progress. His History’s purpose was to present that interpretation in a
readable manner; nonetheless, the History’s background requires a fuller understanding. First, as
a baseline, Macaulay’s beliefs about the Whig and Tory political parties require examination. In
1844, long after Macaulay had taken up the pursuit of the History, he wrote an essay for the
Edinburgh Review. Titled “The Earl of Chatham,” it portrayed Macaulay’s view of the two
parties, which left no room for any error in understanding his view. He wrote:

If…we look at the essential characteristics of the Whig and Tory, we may consider each
of them as representative of a great principle, essential to the welfare of nations. One [the
Whigs] is, in an especial manner, the guardian of liberty, and the other [the Tories], of
order. One is the moving power of state. One is the sail, without which society would
make no progress; the other the ballast, without which there would be small safety in a
tempest.

Macaulay’s views are obvious to modern readers: Whigs guarded English liberty, provided
power for the state, while also directing the state toward progress. Meanwhile, the Tories offered
a safe environment for the state’s smooth operation.

According to Macaulay, the Whigs were the forerunners of progress, while the Tories
offered a position of stability to the people of England. Consequently, Macaulay believed that
the Whigs had the principal power to move society forward, whereas the Tories offered society a
comforting respite. Macaulay believed in that generalization despite his recognition that if anything could go wrong, then the Tories gave the citizens a feeling of stability. Macaulay’s view of political parties was very much consistent with his era: the period of Victorian England.

Up to this time, the view of progress had become something idolized and taken for granted through advances in technology and thinking. The British Enlightenment had begun during the eighteenth century, which had spawned massive movements in the pace of philosophical and historiographical scholarship due to thinkers such as Hume, Smith, and Rapin. Vast increases in printing allowed the passage of ideas to spread through society at a much quicker pace during the eighteenth century. By Macaulay’s era, Great Britain was considered one of the greatest powers on the planet. Historians of the Victorian era, in general, believed that history was inherently political, which allowed them to maintain the idea of the permanence of history’s political path. Obviously, Macaulay’s view of history fell within this rubric, in that he assumed that English history would witness progress successively through each generation. Macaulay’s belief in this phenomenon allowed him to believe English history began with the advent of the republic in Ancient Greece. Essentially, progress allowed civilizations to become more affluent, efficient, and beneficial to their citizenry.

Finally, while Hume was considered one of the best historians in Macaulay’s mind, he still fell short of Macaulay’s expectations. According to Macaulay, Hume’s manner of writing attempted to prove something while glossing over subjects that may have detracted from his points. Yet, Hume’s letters, for example, provide documentation that he did not consciously write his History for any agenda or to prove an argument, but rather to create an objective history of England. Nevertheless, Macaulay has one essential commonality with Hume: They both wanted a history to stand the test of time.
CHAPTER 4
THE TWO HISTORIANS:
HUME AND MACAULAY

Up to this point in the study, Hume’s and Macaulay’s histories have been introduced and reviewed at length. This final chapter will compare the historians’ treatment of five historical episodes: the 1215 Magna Carta, the Exclusion Crisis during Charles II’s reign, James II’s religious actions up to and during the Glorious Revolution, the intervention of William III, and the resolution process of the Glorious Revolution. These comparisons will highlight the inaccurate labels placed on the two authors so as to begin revisiting Hume’s and Macaulay’s works. As part of each episode, a concise introduction of its relevance to this analysis will be provided. Following the introduction will be a detailed examination of the subject as seen through each respective author’s History, letters, and other correspondence. Through this analysis two points will be argued. First, concerning David Hume’s writing and revision of History, he is not as unbiased as he claimed to be or as he is claimed to be by past and current scholars. Second, Macaulay is not as biased as many scholars have portrayed him to be in his History; Macaulay was a man of his times, in that he wrote English history to assist his readers’ understanding of their past. Thus, this thesis argues that two prominent English historians have been inaccurately classified and interpreted in the years since the publication of their histories.

Part I: The Origins of Modern English History: The 1215 Magna Carta

Initially, the inclusion of the 1215 Magna Carta may seem to be irrelevant to the four other subjects, which discuss events leading to or during the Glorious Revolution. Magna Carta is viewed by some historians, such as Macaulay, as the starting point of the restoration of the Anglo-Saxon liberties that eventually culminated in 1688 with the Glorious Revolution. Magna Carta’s origins must be briefly explained to provide the necessary context. William the
Conqueror’s invasion of England in 1066 had upset the balance of power through the introduction of feudalism. The Normans and the following Angevin rulers supplanted the so-called Anglo-Saxon liberties until King John signed Magna Carta in 1215.

Even before John became king he displayed what many historians consider to be his scheming personality. This side of John helped provide more evidence for the idea of the loss of Anglo-Saxon liberties to the Normans. For example, John’s interaction with Pope Innocent III showed John’s questionable ability as king. The Archbishop of Canterbury had died several years into John’s reign, and John wanted to institute his “right” to influence the decision of who would fill the role. John wanted someone who already had ties in England. Innocent III, however, had a growing desire that the church’s decisions should not be influenced by worldly leaders, such as the king of England. Thus, when Innocent III chose a candidate who was not John’s preference, John disallowed entry of the newly appointed archbishop. John’s choice brought England under interdict and he was excommunicated. For six years of John’s reign, the country remained excluded from the church.173

The severe disagreement with church authority was only one of the major sources of turmoil for John throughout his reign. The loss of Normandy, Anjou, and Poitou to Philip Augustus brought an end to these lands being part of the Angevin Empire. The effort to reclaim Normandy itself consumed much of John’s reign, which, in effect, was a direct cause for the document known as Magna Carta. While John fought for the reclamation of the French lands, he compelled many English barons to assist him in the cause. The barons brought their grievances before the king because of the following reasons: they had little interest in French lands, the failure to reclaim Normandy in 1214, and their belief in certain lost liberties, such as property rights.174
Therefore, in June 1215, the barons and John met at Runnymede, where the king provided his royal seal to the Great Charter or Magna Carta. The charter was the first in a long series of English governmental charters, yet this one charter remains the most memorable, despite its lack of implementation. For John, the charter severely undermined his authority as one of its major clauses allowed for a group of twenty-five barons to ensure the monarch’s adherence to its wording. In essence, the charter strictly limited the power of the English monarchy, although the barons designed the clauses to put a boundary on the arbitrary choices of the monarchy. The charter is remembered primarily for its ability to limit the actions the monarch could take against a free man.  

**Part I.A. David Hume’s Account of Magna Carta**

First and foremost, William the Conqueror introduced feudalism into the governance of England’s people. Historians agree that any liberties, such as property rights, enjoyed by the Anglo-Saxons became stifled by the new rulers. As seen previously, David Hume described the situation in which the Anglo-Saxons found themselves in 1067 and beyond. The introduction of feudalism exacerbated the vast losses of Anglo-Saxon nobles during the Conquest. In addition to the losses of nobles is William’s toleration of very few native Anglo-Saxons in leadership roles. Essentially, according to Hume, the Anglo-Saxon ruling class had been decimated by the Conquest, which led to resentment by the following generations. Unfortunately, Hume never defines clearly the liberties that were being infringed during the events he described above.

To be sure, Hume’s attempt at an unbiased history is noteworthy and well-documented. Nevertheless, the attempt is tested easily by the description of John. Hume wrote:

Nothing was more likely than the character, conduct, and fortunes of the reigning prince to produce such a general combination against him. Equally odious and contemptible, both in public and private life, he [John] affronted the barons by his insolence,
dishonoured their families by his gallantries, enraged them by his tyranny, and gave
discontent to all ranks of men by his endless exactions and impositions. This singular and particularly definitive description of John does not bring to mind impartiality.
While the description of John’s character may seem to be justified based on the king’s specific actions, the description is not one that an impartial historian would write about a specific person or event. The subject of King John is especially fraught with charged feelings of distaste. The feeling has stemmed from centuries of negativity in regard to John’s abilities as the king. To remain impartial, Hume could have easily excluded or altered the above section and merely allowed the reader to interpret John’s actions through Hume’s narrative.

Also tied to the 1215 Magna Carta is the belief in an ancient Anglo-Saxon constitution, which was disrupted with the Norman Conquest. Moreover, the constitution supposedly laid out definite liberties for the Anglo-Saxons. Despite his lack of belief in the ancient constitution, Hume wrote a considerable amount about the advent of Magna Carta. Hume went as far as to mention all twenty-five of the barons’ names who were on the council to watch the monarch’s actions. Many pages of his narrative included extensive detail about the events preceding, during, and following the episode of 1215. For example, after a lengthy discussion about Magna Carta’s details, Hume wrote:

But what we [the readers] are most to admire, is the prudence and moderation of those haughty nobles themselves, who were enraged by injuries, inflamed by opposition, and elated by a total victory over their sovereign. They were content, even in this plenitude of power, to depart from some of Henry I’s charter, which they made the foundation of their demands…and they seem to have been sufficiently careful not to diminish too far the power and revenue of the crown.

Hume realized apparently that the nobles had accomplished something great with the idea of Magna Carta, but the Anglo-Norman barons were not necessarily trying to reestablish liberties held by the Anglo-Saxons. The barons attempted to stifle the excesses that John had taken
during his reign. If anything, Hume saw that the barons tried to soften their harshness against John. They simply wanted John to realize their grievances and restore their positions as they had been during Richard’s reign. Hume never believed that Magna Carta redressed anything since its clauses did not go into any long-term effect, due to John’s immediate disavowal of the document and Pope Innocent III’s support for John’s position.

Once more, Hume placed an emotional condition upon the reader’s interpretation. Hume literally informed the reader of what is the most important concept to admire, which is based on nothing more than his opinion. He offers no citations that can provide justification for his belief that we should admire the barons’ actions. Furthermore, the word “seem” offers another glimpse into impartiality, albeit probably unintentional. “Seem” is not a condition that provides the necessary justification for Hume’s writings. He could have easily removed the admonition and the vagueness of the word “seem” to maintain impartiality.

**Part I. B. Macaulay’s Account of Magna Carta**

Macaulay’s scholarship concerning Magna Carta is much shorter than Hume’s, as Macaulay used English history prior to the Glorious Revolution as nothing more than preparatory narrative material. Macaulay provided only fourteen pages of background material in a total of five volumes of his *History*, and he used these few initial pages to ensure that the reader understood from the outset what he considered to be the start of English history. William the Conqueror’s coronation on Christmas Day 1066 began the reign of a long series of Normans which inspired Macaulay to pronounce centuries later: “During the century and a half which followed the Conquest, there is, to speak strictly, no English history.” Again, the idea that the Norman Conquest had eradicated the liberties and nation of England became plain to the nineteenth-century readers of Macaulay’s history.
The *History* continues with a brief summary of the Norman and Angevin influence upon England. Finally, Macaulay explained the effect of Magna Carta:

The two races [English and French], so long hostile, soon found that they had common interests and common enemies….The greatgrandsons of those who had fought under William and the greatgrandsons of those who had fought under Harold began to draw near to each other in friendship; and the first pledge of their reconciliation was the Great Charter [Magna Carta], won by their united exertions, and framed for their common benefit. *Here commences the history of the English nation*.179

Macaulay does not allow the reader to second-guess his belief that Magna Carta finally integrated society between the Anglo-Saxons and French. Essentially, he is ensuring that the reader fully appreciate the consequences of Magna Carta.

Macaulay does not cite, even once, a fact or observation concerning Magna Carta. Fortunately for him, Macaulay was following the conventions of his time. He was no different than other Victorian authors by choosing when to use citations; the standard had not yet been determined by scholars, as no official copyright laws existed in Europe. He even recorded in a footnote why he, in particular, preferred not to include citations:

Here, and in many other places, I abstain from citing authorities, because my authorities are too numerous to cite. My notions of the temper and relative position of political and religious parties in the reign of William the Third, have derived, not from any single work, but thousands of forgotten tracts, sermons, and satires: in fact from a whole literature which is mouldering in old libraries.180

There is no doubt that Macaulay believed this statement since he realized, from an early age, that his memory was excellent; yet, it does not help to clarify exactly where he found the information for the *History*.

As seen in earlier chapters, the lack of citations throughout the *History* has haunted Macaulay’s credibility into modern times. Nevertheless, blame cannot be laid on Macaulay for not following the standard citation systems of modern scholarship. From Hume’s time and through the Victorian Era, citing one's work had not “caught” on as a legitimate method of
scholarly activity. While this does not necessarily excuse Macaulay for not citing all of his works, the lack of citations can no longer be considered a valid argument against his scholarship, as it is an anachronism. If anything, for both Hume and Macaulay, their use of citations was an abnormal choice for historical writing.

**Part II. The Exclusion Crisis**

The Exclusion Crisis provides the second example of the inaccurate classification of Hume and Macaulay. To briefly review the crisis, Charles II’s government witnessed three attempts by the Whig party to pass an Exclusion Bill in 1679, 1680, and 1681, which would have severed James’ possibility of becoming the successor to the crown upon Charles’ death. James’ Catholicism fueled these attempts; all attempts failed.

**Part II. A. Hume’s Account of the Crisis**

Hume introduced the crisis by describing James’ and Charles’ thoughts and beliefs regarding the limitations devised by the Whigs through the Exclusion bills. Yet, as will be shown, Hume offered speculation and no citations to the following work which is strange considering the importance of the matter being discussed. He wrote:

> It is certain, that the duke [James] was extremely alarmed when he heard of this step being taken by the king [Charles II], and that he was better pleased even with the bill of exclusion itself, which, he thought, by reason of its violence and injustice, could never possibly be carried into execution. There is also reason to believe, that the king would not have gone so far, had he not expected, from the extreme fury of the commons, that his concessions would be rejected, and that the blame of not forming a reasonable accommodation would by that means lies entirely at their door.\(^{182}\)

There is one point of contention in this short commentary on James’ and Charles’ certainties. Essentially, Hume’s speculation in the above statements forms a skepticism that is difficult to reconcile. He states “there is reason to believe” that Charles would not have gone so far; yet there is a distinct problem with this assertion. Simply, it is conjecture based on his assumptions
of what he may have researched, and the statement contradicts Hume’s own philosophical writings on cause and effect. The phrase “there is reason to believe” can only be written if Hume believed Charles II would behave in a specific manner based on previous actions. Unfortunately for Hume, he had already written at great length that no one can predict future actions. Hume’s conjectures and beliefs help to erode his noted impartiality.

To Hume’s favor and attempt at impartiality, he later provided the Whig and Tory argument for both sides of the exclusion debate. His inclusion of this information does provide evidence that Hume strove for impartiality. For the Whigs, Hume wrote:

The more absurdity and incredibility of the popish plot are insisted on, the stronger reason it affords for the exclusion of the duke [James]; since the universal belief of it discovers the extreme antipathy of the nation to his religion, and the utter impossibility of ever bringing them to acquiesce peaceably under the dominion of such a sovereign….Whatever share of authority is left in the duke’s hands, will be employed to the destruction of the nation; and even the additional restraints, by discovering the public diffidence and aversion, will serve him as incitements to put himself in a condition entirely superior and independent.183

Thus, after Hume provides a comprehensive view of the Whigs’ view he follows with the Tories’ view. He wrote:

If the ancient barriers against regal authority have been able, during so many ages, to remain impregnable; how much more, those additional ones, which, by depriving the monarch of power, tend so far to their own security? The same jealously too of religion, which has engaged the people to lay these constraints upon the successor, will extremely lessen the number of his partisans, and make it utterly impracticable for him, either by force or artifice, to break the fetters, imposed on him. 184

Thus, Hume provided a contrasting set of views, so that the reader could grasp the enormity of the debate that had befallen the people of England. In spite of his comprehensiveness, Hume does not notate where exactly this information is contained. On such important, fundamental arguments he cites no authority.
Continuing with Hume’s brief discussion of the exclusion bill’s failure there is not only the lack of notation, but again, the insertion of his belief for what is occurring rather than solid scholarship. For example, Hume wrote, “The [exclusion] bill was thrown out by a considerable majority. All the bishops, except three, voted against it. Besides the influence of the court over them; the church of England, they imagined or pretended, was in great danger from the prevalence of Presbyterianism than of popery.” Unfortunately for Hume, this brief conclusion about the bill lacks the impartiality he desired for two reasons. First, throughout his History, Hume lists the names of individuals who interacted in such situations. For example, he listed all of the barons who signed Magna Carta, yet he did not list even one of the three bishops who did not vote against the bill. Second, Hume wrote that the bishops imagined or pretended that the Church was in great danger. He offered no further explanation of how he understood the bishops’ state of mind. Hume’s unsubstantiated beliefs and the arbitrary inclusion and lack of references do not bolster the evidence in favor of his impartiality.

Part II. B. Macaulay’s Account of the Crisis

Macaulay offered a much more extensive and comprehensive view of the Exclusion Crisis than did Hume. That statement must be qualified with the fact that Macaulay’s History covered a much more defined timeline. He spent several volumes discussing the events prior to and during the Glorious Revolution.

Hume, on the other hand, allowed only half of his last volume for revolutionary matters. While Hume did not provide a citation for any of the Exclusion Crisis matter, Macaulay, ironically, provided evidence to support his History. The following section describes the exclusion bill’s failure:

The whole nation now looked with breathless anxiety to the House of Lords. The assemblage of peers was large. The King [Charles II] himself was present. The debate
was long, earnest, and occasionally furious. Some hands were laid on pommels of swords in a manner which revived the recollection of the stormy Parliaments of Edward the Third and Richard the Second….But the genius of Halifax bore down all opposition. Deserted by his most important colleagues, and opposed to a crowd of able antagonists, he defended the cause of the Duke of York, in a succession of speeches which, many years later, were remembered as masterpieces of reasoning, of wit, and of eloquence.186

Not only was this passage cited, but in the footnote Macaulay provided even more explanation of Halifax’s words. He wrote, “A peer who was present has described the effect of Halifax’s oratory in words which I will quote, because, though they have been long in print, they are probably known to few even of the most curious and diligent readers of history.”187 Macaulay continued to explain that he found the information in a rare and forgotten tome that had a print run of only twenty-four copies.188

In addition, the method in which Macaulay composed his History is exemplified here. Before beginning the History Macaulay had become famous through his contributions to the Edinburgh Review and the publication of The Lays of Ancient Rome. By the early 1840s, when Macaulay began the History, he had been thoroughly exposed to the growing popularity of the novel. He read the novels of Charles Dickens, Jane Austen, and Sir Walter Scott with a voracious appetite.189 Even toward the end of his life, Macaulay wrote to his mother, proclaiming the quality of Austen’s works: “She [Austen] was an excellent writer from the very first. But her manner became better and better, till, just before her death, she produced Persuasion, beyond which it is impossible to go.”190 Macaulay had realized fifteen years prior in 1841 that he wanted to publish an English history that would supplant the newest novels, at least for a time. He wrote:

I have at last begun my historical labours. I can hardly say with how much interest and delight. I really do not think there is in our literature so great a void as that which I am trying to supply. English history from 1688 to the French Revolution is even to educated people almost a terra incognita…The materials for an amusing narrative are immense. I
shall not be satisfied unless I produce something which shall for a few days supersede the last fashionable novel on the tables of young ladies.\textsuperscript{191}

Thus, while Macaulay did not reach his original goal with the French Revolution, he did eventually surpass his goal of superseding the latest fashionable novel. Within ten years after beginning his *History* it was selling better than even Sir Walter Scott’s novels.\textsuperscript{192}

Macaulay’s personal correspondence also provides insight into his own view of the Exclusion Crisis. On 3 January 1849 Macaulay wrote to Lord Russell:

> Ought the Exclusion Bill to have passed? – I should without hesitation answer in the affirmative. But the question is whether, when it was clear that the exclusion bill would not pass, it was wise to reject all compromise, and, instead of framing laws which might have secured the liberties and religion of the nation, to proceed to excesses which produced a violent reaction in the public mind.\textsuperscript{193}

Above, Macaulay referred to the Whig excesses which Charles II felt the need to protect himself from by taking extra measures to prevent a possible attack.\textsuperscript{194} In addition, the above correspondence unequivocally portrays Macaulay’s belief in the necessity of the exclusion bill. While the exclusion bill was a Whig development and Macaulay thought it should have passed, he argued that the Whigs of that era had gone too far in their pursuit of the bill. This example is contrary to Macaulay’s well-known leanings toward the Whig party, and it provides just one example against the stereotype of Macaulay’s unfailing party bias.

**Part III. James II**

James II’s impact upon England during the 1680s is legendary in the annals of English history. From the Exclusion Crisis, prior to James’ coronation, to the eventual Glorious Revolution, James’ ability as king was scrutinized closely by his contemporaries and is continually scrutinized by modern historians. Hume and Macaulay were no different in their analyses, and the issue of religion in England during this timeframe asserts itself as the dominant issue in their respective histories. Religion was arguably the most difficult issue on which
Hume, as a perceived atheist, could remain impartial about and for Macaulay, as a non-practicing Christian, to remain cognizant of the original goal, which was for Macaulay to offer a readable history of England.

Hume’s struggle with religion simply came from his own skepticism, and by not including his personal judgments of faith his readers could think he was biased against religion as a whole. Thus, Hume took the middle-path by mentioning religious matters to define a person’s religious belief or to elaborate on how a religious debate or topic affecting a historical event, such as the Glorious Revolution. Macaulay, on the other hand, had a weak faith in Christianity, yet he recognized the importance of the belief to the people of Great Britain.195 By realizing the importance of religion to the citizenry and its impact on English history, Macaulay ensured that he discussed religious matters at length. For example, most of his History concerns the Glorious Revolution which is a historical event of vast religious implications.

Religious volatility has been a hallmark of English history for centuries. Then, the addition of high politics with the Whigs and Tories prior to James’ reign created a much more difficult environment in which to write impartial history. By the time Hume had written his History, individuals in power took advantage of the political parties’ influence. By Macaulay’s time, his party, the Whigs, had assumed power for a second time, albeit, for a much shorter period. To say the least, the two historians, still relatively close in time to the events they studied and wrote about, wrote in a religiously and politically charged country, thus making their jobs more difficult.

**Part III. A. Hume’s Account of James II**

Hume’s attempt at impartiality can be witnessed by examining the History and his correspondence. Hume was widely recognized as having edited his work multiple times for
newer editions, as well as to correct mistakes. For example, as late as 20 March 1773 he wrote
to one of his publishers, “It gives me great Satisfaction to find that there is not one single
Mistake in my History, either great or small, which it gives me occasion to correct.”196 Yet long
sections of his later volumes are printed with his opinions and without evidence. While the lack
of evidence does not necessarily equate to a mistake based on Hume’s words, the lack of
evidence is not as surprising as his obvious opinions, considering the lengths Hume recorded he
went to in order to ensure that his History would be as impartial as possible.

The final section of Hume’s last volume of the History, which focused completely on the
reign of James II and the Glorious Revolution, is no different than the previous volumes. His
opinions and arbitrary use of citations offers no corroboration for the common belief that Hume’s
impartiality knew no bounds. For such an intense subject matter, fewer opinions would have
certainly increased the stability of Hume’s own claim at his impartiality. Concerning his claims
about James’ ability to manage his kingdoms in light of his religious fervor, Hume offered his
unsupported opinion as evidence. Hume wrote, “James…deemed himself superior in vigour and
activity to his brother, and who probably thought, that his people enjoyed no liberties, but by his
royal concession and indulgence.”197 Hume offered no evidence for this insight into James’
thoughts concerning the English people except his opinion of James’ mindset. The word
“probably” is a word which should not be used by a historian attempting to write an impartial
history. It is a loaded term which offers no substance, except for the author’s own assumption.
True and impartial history is never based on the author’s assumptions.

Concerning the remainder of Hume’s address on religion during James’ reign, much of
the same treatment is seen throughout that particularly brief section. Hume continued to use
generalizations, assumptions, and inferences based on what information he may have researched.

He wrote:

Almost the whole of this short reign consists of attempts always imprudent, often illegal, sometimes both, against whatever was most loved and revered by the nation: even such schemes of the king’s [James’] as might be laudable in themselves, were so disgraced by his intentions, that they serve to only aggravate the charge against him. James was become a great patron of toleration, and an enemy to all those persecuting laws, which from the influence of the church, had been enacted both against the dissenters and Catholics. Not content with granting dispensations to particular persons, he assumed at power of issuing a declaration of general indulgence….198

This passage appears, at first glance, to offer simply a pointed statement of James’ ability to rule the country. Nevertheless, Hume generalized James’ actions against his country in such a way that is not impartial. Essentially, the above example provided two substantial problems to his readers. First, Hume claimed that James “always” acted against the citizenry. The word always is all-encompassing and shows Hume’s bias against James II. Hume could have easily offered a less-inclusive word or description, such as mostly or generally. Second, Hume offered no guidance to the reader of “whatever was most loved and revered” by the English citizenry. Again, Hume’s all-inclusive wording of “whatever was most loved and revered” is vague and all-inclusive of the citizenry’s beliefs. Thus, based on Hume’s writings alone, the reader would conclude that James always acted against the people of England in the worst possible manner without any evidence from Hume to support the claim.

Part III. B. Macaulay’s Account of James II

Macaulay’s History is much more detailed and lengthy than Hume’s version concerning James II. Ironically, while Hume attempted impartiality, he did not include nearly as many specific pieces of evidence as Macaulay. Macaulay, of course, did not blatantly state that his writing would be biased by party ideals. Yet, according to his critics, as has been documented previously, Macaulay’s bias ensured that his History was not worth reading, let alone studying.
Fortunately for posterity’s sake, throughout his *History* Macaulay provided more documented evidence of his research than Hume. This occurrence can help to offset the critics’ generalized remarks about Macaulay’s supposed lackluster ability to write unbiased history. A prime example of Macaulay’s evidence concerns the passage of the second Declaration of Indulgence. Macaulay wrote:

This Declaration at first produced little sensation. It contained nothing new; and men wondered that the King [James II] should think it worth while to publish a solemn manifesto merely for the purpose of telling them that he had not changed his mind….On the fourth of May, accordingly, he made an Order in Council that his Declaration of the preceding week should be read on two successive Sundays, at the time of divine service, by the officiating ministers of all the churches and chapels of the kingdom.¹⁹⁹

At first glance, this passage could appear to be unsupported based on Macaulay’s supposed biases. The evidence for bias is Macaulay’s statement that the Declaration “produced little sensation.” Rather, Macaulay included two citations, so as to clarify the passage’s origins, which included the *London Gazette* of 7 May 1688. The periodical offered Macaulay’s primary source material for the reaction to the Declaration.

Macaulay’s *History* has the influence of a novelistic writing style, and the topic of religion offers no different circumstance. The following passage gives insight into Macaulay’s literary aspirations while also providing evidence for his continued focus on religion, which became the primary reason for James’ downfall in 1688. Macaulay wrote:

Several Roman Catholics were sworn of the Privy Council; and orders were sent to corporations to admit Roman Catholics to municipal advantages. Many officers of the army were arbitrarily deprived of their commissions and of their bread. It was to no purpose that the Lord Lieutenant pleaded the cause of some whom he knew to be good soldiers and loyal subjects. Among them were old Cavaliers, who had fought bravely for monarchy, and who bore the marks of honourable wounds. Their places were supplied by men who had no recommendation but their religion….Not a few of the officers who were discarded took refuge in the Dutch service, and enjoyed, four years later, the pleasure of driving their successors before them in ignominious rout from the margin of the Boyne.”²⁰⁰
Based on the generalizations that have been placed upon Macaulay, we might expect the passage to have been filled with Whig biases and opinions of the obviously unjust displacement of army officers. Yet, Macaulay defies those negative expectations by again offering several pieces of evidence from letters of officers written in May and June 1686. The romantic phrasing “bore marks of honourable wounds” further exemplifies Macaulay’s style.

A final and noteworthy account of James’ reign is the repeal of the Habeas Corpus Act. The following passage assists in the understanding that, despite the generalizations that Macaulay was nothing more than a Whig historian, he did not take the opportunity to fill his *History* with so-called biases. He wrote:

> One of his [James II’s] objects was to obtain a repeal of the Habeas Corpus Act, which he hated, as it was natural that a tyrant should hate the most stringent curb that ever legislation posed on tyranny. This feeling remained deeply fixed in his mind to the last, and appears in the instructions which he drew up, in exile, for the guidance of his son. But the Habeas Corpus Act….was not more dear to the Whigs than to the Tories. It is indeed now wonderful that this great law should be highly prized by all Englishmen without distinction of party.201

Again, this passage portrays Macaulay’s attempt to show both sides of the English political framework. He purposely chose to mention that anyone could be satisfied with the Act when he could have easily mentioned that just Whigs were satisfied. Macaulay even went as far as citing the words of a Tory statesman who had commented on this particular subject.

**Part IV. William III**

William, initially the Prince of Orange and a potential heir to the throne, came to England in 1688 through the support and invitation of both the Whigs and Tories. After the religious disruption through James II’s actions against the established religion of England, the English citizenry had grown very dissatisfied with their restricted liberties. William actually had two claims to the throne. His first claim came through natural succession, as he was the son of Mary,
Charles I’s daughter and nephew to Charles II and James II. William’s second claim came through marriage, as he was married to James II’s Protestant daughter Mary. Even though William held claims to the throne, the birth of James’ Catholic son in mid-1688 disrupted Mary’s succession. James’ son immediately became next in line, much to the chagrin of the English citizenry, who now believed that Catholicism would be further solidified. The following discussion will further underscore the discrepancies in the generalizations placed on Hume and Macaulay.

**Part IV. A. Hume’s Account of William III**

Hume’s account of William’s entrance into England in 1688 provides a brief overview of the Glorious Revolution. To be clear, only thirty pages of Hume’s six-volume *History* are devoted to the event. In addition, most of the *History* offered the same treatment in terms of page length, whether Hume discussed the Romans or any of the Anglo-Norman rulers. Perhaps his overarching approach to English history was evidence of his attempt at impartiality. That does not reduce the nagging question: If Hume had provided fewer assumptions and opinions, then would his *History* have been the first impartial, modern history of Europe? The generous inclusion of his assumptions and opinions without attribution weakens the claim of impartiality.

Granted, Hume offered a total of eight citations in the pages devoted to William and the Glorious Revolution. Unfortunately for Hume, many of the ideas that he posits are nothing more than conjecture based on his understanding of the events. There is no doubt that Hume spent a great deal of time correcting his work for mistakes and partiality, but in reviewing his work he apparently neglected to remove opinions, which may have seemed minor and correct to him. Also, as has been discussed, Hume’s personal correspondence clarifies his efforts at impartiality. For the sake of historiography, those opinions have become glaringly obvious in
spite of Hume’s efforts. For example, in a section written about William’s supposed hesitance in coming to England, Hume offered his opinion of William’s feelings:

The prince [William III], on the one hand, was afraid of hazarding, by violent measures, an inheritance, which the laws ensured to the princess; and the English protestants, on the other, from the prospect of her [Mary’s] succession, still entertained hopes of obtaining at last a peaceable and safe redress of all their grievances. But when a son was born to the king, both the prince and the English nation were reduced to despair, and saw no resource but in a confederacy for their mutual interests.\(^{205}\)

While the above passage holds generalized ideas about William’s state of mind concerning the then possible revolution, Hume offered nothing more than his belief that William was “afraid” of usurping Mary’s lawful inheritance. Also, Hume offers his opinion that “despair” afflicted the entire nation of England. How could he have known that the entire nation felt despair because of the birth of James’ son? While these opinions may have seemed rational to Hume, his lack of clarification on how he came to these conclusions helps to further diminish his noted impartiality.

The final dimension of William’s invasion of England in 1688 can actually be seen through an observation of James’ response. In the following passage, Hume offered a glimpse of James’ utter shock as he received news of the impending invasion in the form of a letter from his minister at The Hague. Hume wrote:

Though James could reasonably expect no other intelligence, he was astonished at the news: He grew pale, and the letter dropped from his hand: His eyes were now opened, and he found himself on the brink of a frightful precipice, which his delusions had hitherto concealed from him. His ministers and counselors, equally astonished, saw no resource but in a sudden and precipitate retraction of all those fatal measures, by which he had created to himself so many enemies, foreign and domestic.\(^{206}\)

This passage begs two questions. First, how did Hume know about James’ physical response to the news that his kingdom was going to be invaded by someone intending to remove him from the throne? Second, how did Hume know what James thought about the invasion? The
questions can never really be answered. While Hume’s description was rational based on the circumstances in which James found himself, the description was seemingly nothing more than an educated guess of the situation with a touch of Macaulay’s novelistic flair. Rather, the speculation within the unanswered questions, combined with his failure to cite, undermined his venerated impartiality.

**Part IV. B. Macaulay’s Account of William III**

While modern scholars recognize Macaulay as an extremely biased Whig historian, further examination of Macaulay’s *History* weakens the accusation of his untiring bias. For example, the following passage offers Macaulay’s insight into the treatment of one of his political enemies while also addressing William’s considerable leniency. Macaulay wrote:

Caermarthen, a Tory, and a Tory who had been mercilessly persecuted by the Whigs, was disposed to make the most of this idle hearsay….The King [William III] stood behind the Lord President’s chair and listened gravely while Clarendon, Dartmouth, Turner, and Penn were named [Jacobites]. But as soon as the prisoner, passing from what he could himself testify began to repeat the stories which Penn had told him, William touched Caermarthen on the shoulder, and said, “My Lord, we have had too much of this.” The King’s judicious magnanimity had its proper reward.207

A Jacobite is simply a person who believed that James II should be restored to power. Placing the label of Jacobitism upon a political enemy became relatively common after James’ fall. Macaulay continued the passage by portraying more of William’s leniency and political support because of it. Again, Macaulay cited evidence for these statements, which included the first-hand accounts of those individuals present at the scene.

More importantly, Macaulay’s specific mention of Caermarthen’s status as a Tory who had been “mercilessly persecuted by the Whigs” reinforces the argument that Macaulay has been inaccurately classified as an unfailingly biased Whig historian. This simple, yet effective statement offers the realization that even Macaulay, in an effort to be balanced, pointed out when
Tories of any era had been mistreated. Macaulay could have easily failed to mention the mistreatment of the Tory, or he could have easily held that the Whigs’ treatment of Caermarthen, while overbearing, was justified.

Macaulay describes the news of the imminent invasion in a very similar manner to Hume’s version of James’ reaction. Macaulay wrote:

While these things were passing in Holland, James had at length become sensible of his danger. Intelligence which could not be disregarded came pouring in from various quarters. At length a dispatch from Albeville removed all doubts. It is said that, when the King had read it, the blood left his cheeks and he remained sometimes speechless. He might, indeed, well be appalled. The first easterly wind would bring a hostile armament to the shore of his realm.208

Ironically, this pivotal moment in English history, i.e. James II’s realization that his realm would be invaded at any moment, received more credibility through Macaulay’s version than through Hume’s version. Immediately following the description of James’ reaction, Macaulay notates exactly where he found it.209 The reader does not need to wonder how Macaulay knew exactly how James reacted to the news. Moreover, this passage assists in strengthening the vision of Macaulay as having been inaccurately classified.

Finally, an anecdotal account of William’s reign, as seen through Macaulay’s novelistic style of writing, provided insight into Macaulay’s view of Christmas. He wrote, “As soon as William had prorogued the Houses, he was impatient to be again in his native land. He felt all the glee of a schoolboy who is leaving harsh masters and quarrelsome comrades to pass the Christmas holidays at a happy home.”210 This is just one example of Macaulay’s flowing narrative witnessed throughout the entire History. Macaulay formulated his historical methodological style to be ultimately readable, which, in turn, would allow the average British reader an understanding of the work. His narrative style, then, allowed the reader to realize and appreciate his History of England as the history of a nation that surpassed all other nations
throughout world history, according to Macaulay. He effectively used the *History* as way to disseminate his nationalistic pride of Great Britain.211

Interestingly, Charles Dickens helped to restore Christmas to a jovial occasion of celebration, through his famous story *A Christmas Carol*.212 The story, published in 1843, became an instant success in England. In several letters to family and friends, Macaulay mentioned Dickens’ books and the fact that he had met Dickens.213 Macaulay, again, realized the significance of style: the above description of William’s feelings about returning home for Christmas would have provided Macaulay’s readers with an instant understanding of William’s desire to see his home. Again, Macaulay, through the flow of his narrative, is purposely connecting to his intended readers: British citizens. This one connection offers an ideal example of Macaulay’s attempt to highlight what he considered to be the greatness of Great Britain.

**Part V. The Resolution of the Glorious Revolution**

The Glorious Revolution has been referred to as one of the few “bloodless revolutions” in modern history. Indeed, the revolution did not claim tens of thousands of lives; yet, many men lost their lives in the struggle following William’s invasion of Ireland in 1689. For example, James’ followers in Ireland continued the struggle after William’s initial entrance. Hume and Macaulay each painted a much different picture of the revolution’s effect upon England. Hume’s *History* ended with the settlement of the crown in 1689, whereas Macaulay’s *History* ended with the death of William in 1702. Thus, the time frame covered by both historians varied greatly. Despite the variance, this final examination of their respective histories further supports the view of their inaccurate classifications.
Part V. A. Hume’s Account of the Resolution

Hume’s account barely touched the surface of the resolution for the Glorious Revolution, yet his initial correspondence revealed his desire to eventually write past the revolution. On 25 May 1757, Hume wrote, “I do not…preclude myself from the Purpose of writing the Period after the Revolution.”214 Several years later in 1762, Hume commented that he planned on continuing the History.215 For approximately seven years Hume continued revising the published volumes while also thinking about continuing the process. However, by 8 August 1764, Hume had reached his toleration point in terms of criticism and judgments against him. He wrote, “I am so sick of all those Disputes and so full of Contempt towards all factious Judgments and indeed towards the Prejudices of what is called the Public, that I repent heartily my ever having committed anything to Print.”216 Late in life, Hume received a letter from his publisher requesting news of the possible continuance of the History. Hume, obviously exasperated, wrote back in 1773, “You told me in a Letter that you heard I was continuing my History: I beg of you to believe that such an extravagant and absurd Idea never once entered my head.”217 Hence, Hume’s best efforts to offer an impartial version of English history mattered little to his critics: Hume’s aggravation obviously increased over the years, which eventually overwhelmed his original desire to continue the history.

Hume’s final volume of the History contains only approximately ten pages concerning the resolution. To his credit, Hume did offer brief views of the Whigs and Tories in regard to the final decision of how to fill the throne after James’ departure from England. He continued by discussing the debate in the House of Lords. Hume wrote:

The managers for the lords next insisted, that, even allowing the king’s [James II’s] abuse of power to be equivalent to an abdication, or, in other words, to a civil death, it could operate no otherwise than his voluntary resignation, or his natural death; and could only
make way for the next successor. It was a maxim of English law, *that the throne was never vacant.*218

There is one problem with this short passage. Hume offered no idea of when this debate took place or how he knew that the lords “insisted” on their ideas. Hume provided no further explanation of how he came to these ideas, which further weakens the claim that the *History* is as impartial as possible.

Finally, Hume comments on the effects that the Glorious Revolution had on the people of England. His writing included the vagueness seen in previous passages. For example, he wrote:

> The revolution forms a new epoch in the constitution; and was *probably* attended with consequences more advantageous to the people, than barely freeing them from an exceptionable administration….And it may justly be affirmed, without any danger of exaggeration, that we, in this island, have ever since enjoyed, if not the best system of government, at least the most entire system of liberty, that ever was known amongst mankind.219

There are two problems with Hume’s statement. First, his use of the word “probably” undermines everything following it. There is a sense of uncertainty in the claim that England benefitted from the revolution. Second, and more significantly, Hume’s argument that England has “the most entire system of liberty, that ever was known amongst mankind” is rife with bias. He did not offer any commentary following this statement to persuade the reader that it is true. Instead, Hume spent several lengthy passages offering a negative list of actions committed by Whigs. For example, Hume began the list with writing, “It is no wonder, that these events have long, by the representations of faction, have been extremely clouded and obscured.”220

Unfortunately for Hume, the claim of his impartiality is even further lessened by the *History’s* last few pages.
Part V. B. Macaulay’s Account of the Resolution

In great contrast to Hume’s History, Macaulay wrote literally hundreds of pages about the resolution of the Glorious Revolution and concluded his History with the death of William in 1702. Consequently, Macaulay’s version offered a much deeper look at the effects of the events following the revolution. To satisfactorily address Macaulay’s thoughts in light of the quantity of information on the resolution process, only two passages will be presented and examined. These passages further defend the argument that generalizations and stereotypes against Macaulay should be reexamined and stripped away to fully understand and appreciate his work. The passages address two factors that usually provide evidence in favor of the belief in Macaulay’s supposedly unfailing bias: the English constitution and the Whig party.

The English constitution, as has been discussed, was something that Macaulay believed in completely. He believed that an ancient constitution had existed prior to the Norman Conquest. His critics portrayed Macaulay as a man who believed in unfailing progress throughout England’s history. Yet the following passage illuminates an overlooked observation of Macaulay’s view of the constitution shortly after William and Mary became king and queen. Macaulay wrote:

Though a new constitution was not needed, it was plain that changes were required. The misgovernment of the Stuarts, and the troubles which that misgovernment had produced, sufficiently proved that there was somewhere a defect in our polity; and that defect it was the duty of the Convention to discover and supply….Our constitution had begun to exist in times when statesmen were not much accustomed to frame exact definitions. Anomalies, therefore, inconsistent with its principles and dangerous to its very existence, had sprung up almost imperceptibly.221

Macaulay touched upon issues that his critics have used to denounce him over the decades. In the above passage, Macaulay’s ideas about the constitution are plain: It is not infallible and despite the centuries of its existence and lack of “exact definitions,” it still had significant
enough problems in the seventeenth century to require alteration. This passage also diminishes
the belief in Macaulay’s certainty in progress. Macaulay’s words, if anything, show that the
progress had come to a sudden halt during the Stuart era and the resolution would help to correct
some of these issues.

Macaulay had been a faithful Whig since his early twenties, and his political career
continually built upon that faith. To remain completely unbiased is impossible, yet his critics
claimed his total devotion to the Whigs caused him to portray English history through his party’s
interpretation. The following passage presents another overlooked detail. He wrote:

Smarting from old sufferings, drunk with recent prosperity, burning with implacable
resentments, confident of irresistible strength, they [the Whigs] were not less rash and
headstrong than in the days of the Exclusion Bill. Sixteen hundred and eighty was come
again. Again all compromise was rejected. Again the voices of the wisest and most
upright friends of liberty were drowned by the clamour of hotheaded and designing
agitators.222

This short commentary concerns the political ramifications of the debates in Parliament during
the resolution process. Macaulay made no effort to hide the Whigs’ effects upon the political
process. Instead, he painted the Whigs as quibbling and irrational in a time when Macaulay
believed they should have set aside their differences and worked for a cause he believed in
deeply: liberty. Macaulay also indicated that the Whigs were not cooperative in the days long
before James became king. Essentially, the previous passage strengthens the argument that
Macaulay’s supposedly unfailing belief in the Whig party’s ability to operate effectively and
without error throughout time is not accurate.

**Part VI: Conclusion**

This thesis argues that both Hume and Macaulay have been inaccurately classified
throughout the years since their history’s publication as an “impartial historian” and “biased
Whig historian,” respectively. These labels have arisen from many studies of their works, which
have developed into something of a historical construct. At first glance, Hume appears impartial and Macaulay appears to be full of bias. Upon a much lengthier analysis, Hume and Macaulay are complex historians who require future study, as the labels placed upon them are not wholly accurate.

Regarding these two particular historians, a question arises for modern scholars. Why have Hume and Macaulay been continually interpreted as impartial and biased by their contemporaries and modern scholars, respectively? Concerning Hume, two reasons are clear. First, Hume is well-documented as having revised his work as his publishers planned newer editions of the *History*. Second, he is recognized as one of the first historians to regularly use citations as evidence for his ideas and conclusions. Despite those two factors, the analysis of Hume’s unexamined opinions, biases, and arbitrary use of citations offers little justification in terms of the praise heaped upon him over the years since his *History’s* publication. Throughout the *History*, there are entire sections that begin with an opinion which is not supported with any explanation or evidence. Some of those particular sections have been examined in the preceding analysis. There is no doubt that Hume worked towards an impartial history, but the belief in his overall impartiality is misguided at best.

Fortunately, this situation does not degrade, in any way, Hume’s significance in the field of history and particularly English history. Hume wrote six volumes examining the English peoples from the time of the Romans to the Glorious Revolution. The breadth of his history and the attention to detailed accumulation of evidence offer a modern historian a view of how the craft of history began to change in a positive way during the eighteenth century. Yet, a scholar reviewing the many studies of Hume’s work must not be led astray. A careful examination of
Hume’s own words through his correspondence, the *History*, and the context of his own time can assist scholars in a deeper understanding of Hume’s attempt at an impartial history.

Concerning the continual interpretation of Macaulay as biased, two reasons are clear. First, since the early twentieth century, Macaulay’s *History* has seen few studies, largely due to the labels placed upon him, such as “biased” and “Whig historian.” Those stereotypes have caused his *History* not to be taken seriously in the past century. Second, Macaulay’s deep belief in progress throughout the centuries, especially since the advent of Magna Carta, can be plainly seen in the *History*. He and his readers were first-hand witnesses of the progress that was indeed becoming expected during the nineteenth century. Yet the deep belief in progress’ unyielding pace came to a halt during the second decade of the twentieth century: World War I put the most realistic limitations on progress due to the massive destruction and loss of life.

These factors should not halt a modern scholar’s close examination of a historian who attempted to meld the typical English history into a readable version for the masses. Macaulay wrote for a different audience than his predecessors, such as Hume. Macaulay’s intended audience was the general public of England. His goal was to provide a more literate citizenry of England with a readable version of their history, in essence, a history of England written in the style of a novel like those his literary heroes.

To be sure, both Hume and Macaulay are historians who require a reexamination for modern times. While mostly mislabeled or quickly stereotyped based on somewhat faulty analyses, both made a dramatic impact upon historiography, in general, and the methods of writing history itself, in particular. From Hume, historians can learn how to strive for accuracy and impartiality, and from Macaulay, historians can learn how to write history in a manner understandable and enjoyable for everyone. In modern days, where the average person has
hundreds of other distractions, a historian can combine the methodology of Hume and the style of Macaulay to create a readable and impartial history that will inform and entertain the reader.
REFERENCES


16 Clive, *Macaulay*, 120.

17 The exact year that Macaulay pledged himself to the Whig party is not known. Scholars have stated that age twenty-two was probably the most reasonable time, as that was when he finished his education at university.


20 Sullivan, Tragedy, 86-87, 233.


22 Sullivan, Tragedy, 84.

23 Hansard Parliamentary Debates, 3rd ser., vol. 11 (1832), col. 454.

24 The Bill created boroughs in Scotland, more MPS in Wales, and “every adult male who occupied a house worth £10 per annum or more now had the vote, providing that he was registered with the authorities.” Colley, Forging, 347.

25 Sullivan, Tragedy, 258.

26 These positions and their date(s) can found in the biographies by Sullivan and Clive.

27 Sullivan, Tragedy, 58.


29 Sullivan, Tragedy, 25, 449.

30 Ibid., 468.


32 Ibid.


34 To be sure, Hume’s History impacted historical scholarship throughout the remainder of the eighteenth century.

35 Porter, Creation, 293.


38 Porter, Creation, 243.
Ernest Campbell Mossner, “Was Hume a Tory Historian? Facts and Reconsiderations,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 2, no. 2 (Apr. 1941): 233. To elaborate: Mossner wrote that Hume had “a willingness to correct which is the attitude of a skeptic and the opposite of a dogmatist. It is decidedly not the attitude of a party historian whose mind is made up at the outset once and for all.” Ibid.


Breisach, *Historiography*, 216. Hume scholars recognize his impact upon the historical profession. Breisach, Davis, and Wertz are just a few examples.


Gertrude Himmelfarb, in particular, writes scathing remarks about Macaulay’s ability to write history. Her essay “Who Reads Macaulay?” is one example of her scholarship.


Porter, *18th Century*, 275, 276. Some of the pagan practices mentioned by Porter are as follows: “Suicides continued to be buried at crossroads, stakes driven through their heart….Babies’ caulds, used as protective charms, fetched high prices.” Ibid.


Porter, *Creation*, 479.

Mackintosh wrote an unfinished history of England titled *History of the Revolution in England in 1688*. Macaulay used some of Mackintosh’s notes for his own *History*, which was written after the essays.


Himmelfarb, *Marriage*, 166.

59 Himmelfarb, *Marriage*, 163. Macaulay’s methodology is generally considered to be novelistic. His lack of many citations is also addressed by scholars, such as Himmelfarb.

60 Gooch, in particular, writes, “To the end of his [Macaulay’s] days he was a man of 1832. Thus the most brilliant of English historians is one of those who possess the least weight.” Gooch, *History*, 299.

61 Ibid.


63 Gooch’s work has been mentioned, as well as Robert Sullivan’s. John Clive’s *Macaulay: The Shaping of the Historian* is also relevant here.


70 Breisach, *Historiography*, 250.

71 One detractor’s work: Gertrude Himmelfarb’s scholarship heavily criticizes Macaulay’s work. One defender’s work: E. C. Mossner’s scholarship lauds Hume’s historical methods.


74 Ibid., 176.

75 Keir, *Constitutional History*, 267.


79 Ibid., 345.

Ibid., 161.


Youngs writes that Monmouth “was the hero of the Whigs and the pawn of Shaftesbury.” The Earl of Shaftesbury had become the leader of the Whigs in 1679. Youngs, *Heritage*, 163.

Ibid., 165.

Ibid., 165, 166.


Ashley, *Great Britain*, 418.

Clark, *Stuarts*, 137-140.

Ashley, *Great Britain*, 419.

Youngs writes, “The question of the legal basis for this exercise was resolved by Mary’s refusal to act as queen regnant and by William’s equally positive assertion that he would not remain in England unless all executive authority was awarded to him for life.” Youngs, *Heritage*, 172.

Clark, *Stuarts*, 266.

Youngs, *Heritage*, 175.


Two sources, in particular, go into great detail on this subject: Blanning’s *Pursuit*, 261 and Clark’s *Stuarts*, 141.


To look for scathing historical scholarship concerning Macaulay, then Gertrude Himmelfarb provides a piercing view. As for Hume, E. C. Mossner’s biography, as well as Ernst Breisach’s *Historiography*, paints Hume in a positive light.


Porter, *Creation*, 90.

Mossner, *Life*, 301.

Hume to Dunnker, Jack’s Land, June 28, 1753, in *Letters*, 1: 179.

Hume to the Comtesse de Boufflers, Edinburgh, May 15, 1761, in *Letters*, 1: 344. In regard to the factions, Hume is referring to the Whigs and Tories.


Ibid., 87.

David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* 1993 http://18th.eserver.org/hume-enquiry.html#7 (accessed August 31, 2011); emphasis mine. Basically, human beings develop a necessary connection between two events only in their minds. There is no physical, metaphysical, etc. connection between the two events.


Essentially, Hume is straying far from his predecessors, such as the medieval historians, who believed God was the being in control of human events.

Porter, *Creation*, 30. Porter also mentions Margaret C. Jacob who wrote, *The Cultural Meaning of the Scientific Revolution and The Radical Enlightenment*. Finally, Porter mentions P. G. M. C. Hazard’s *The European Mind*, 1680-1715. Porter uses these two scholars’ works to further highlight when the Enlightenment began.


Wexler, *Hume*, 89.


123 Hume to Andrew Millar, Edinburgh, April 8, 1762, in Letters, 1: 355. Tyrell and Brady both published their own History of England.

124 Breisach, Historiography, 215-216

125 Hume never mentioned a metaphorical “yoke,” yet his description of the Normans’ influence can fit the description of the “yoke.”

126 Hume, History, 1: 437.

127 Historians from the Middle Ages to modern times can be placed in this category. Examples of medieval scholars are Eadmer and Henry of Huntingdon who wrote History of Recent Events in England and The History of the English People 1000-1154, respectively. Examples of modern scholars are R. H. C. Davis and Edward Freeman who wrote The Normans and their Myth and History of the Norman Conquest in England, respectively.


129 Breisach, Historiography, 250.


132 This example is one provided by the author.


134 Breisach, Historiography, 210, 215.


136 Hume’s History was published was initially published in 1754. Thereafter, subsequent editions came in 1756, 1759, and 1762.

137 Hume to Gilbert Elliot of Minto, Edinburgh, March 12, 1763, in Letters, 1: 379.

138 As stated in the previous paragraph, there is no way to determine Elliot’s original statements on Hume; however, Hume’s comments allow for an inference that Elliot did indeed label Hume with a “reproachful Ephitet.”

139 Hume to Sir Gilbert Elliot of Minto, Edinburgh, February 21, 1770, in Letters, 2: 216.
140 Wexler, Hume, 68-70.

141 Both John Clive’s and Robert Sullivan’s biographies portray Macaulay this way.

142 Gooch, History, 295.


145 Gertrude Himmelfarb’s essay “Who Now Reads Macaulay?” is pertinent here. Also, Macaulay’s most recent biographers, Sullivan and Clive, agree on the label of “giving prominence to all the circumstances which support his case.”


147 Sullivan, Tragedy, 387. Sullivan writes, “Writing with an abridged imagination and a distorted voice, Macaulay avoided the heights and depths of human experience. The result is a History with too much rah-rah and too little irony, pity, and awe.”

148 Breisach, Historiography, 251.


150 Ibid. As quoted above.


152 Sullivan, Tragedy, 350-352.


154 Macaulay, in 1832, showed his understanding of the importance of religion to the people of England by stating to a crowd that he was indeed a Christian. Sullivan, Tragedy, 105-106.

155 In late 1754 Hume wrote letters to both Smith and Mure. The letters contained Hume’s desire to remain impartial. To Smith, Hume asked for assistance in correcting any errors of partiality. Hume to William Mure of Caldwell, October, 1754, in Letters, 1: 210. Hume to Adam Smith, Edinburgh, December 17, 1754, in Letters, 1: 213.

156 Sullivan, Tragedy, 209.

157 Clive, Macaulay, 481.

158 Sullivan, Tragedy, 277-278.


167 As was seen in Chapter 2, Macaulay did believe the events of the English Civil War held great importance, yet the events of 1215 and 1688 held even greater importance.


172 Hume’s letters and journals also provide ample evidence of his attempt at impartiality.


176 Ibid., 1: 437-438.

177 Ibid., 1: 446; emphasis added.


179 Ibid., 26; emphasis added.


Macaulay was a voracious reader. From the classics to modern novels, he enjoyed a good story.

Macaulay to Selina Macaulay, London, April 7, 1855, in *Letters*, 5: 451. Interestingly, when Jane Austen was sixteen years old she wrote her own satirical and lighthearted *The History of England*. There is no published record of Macaulay having read Austen’s *History*.


Hume, *History*, 6: 482; emphasis added.

Ibid., 6: 481; emphasis added.


Ibid., 2: 135.

Ibid., 2: 15.

Youngs, *Heritage*, 1: 160, 167. The authors write, “With the prospect of a Catholic succession even the most loyal Anglicans now realized that the threat to the liberties of the church could allow for further delay.”

For this section Hume cited works from only two writers: the French ambassador D’Avaux and the Scottish historian Gilbert Burnett who wrote *History of My Own Time*.

Scholars, such as Ernst Breisach and E. C. Mossner, have been addressed in previous chapters who argue in Hume’s favor.


Ibid., 6: 508.

Ibid., 2: 415-416.

Macaulay noted that he found the information in Laurence Eachard’s *History of the Revolution*. Eachard was an eighteenth-century historian.

Ibid., 5: 349:


Macaulay wrote, in a letter to Macvey Napier, “I will not praise it. Neither will I attack it, first because I have eaten salt with Dickens; secondly because he is a man and a man of real talent.” Macaulay to Macvey Napier, Albany, October 19, 1842, in *The Selected Letters of Thomas Babington Macaulay*, ed. Thomas Pinney (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 191.


Hume to Strahan, March, 1762, in *Letters*, 1: 353.

Hume to the Earl of Hardwicke, Compiegne, August 8, 1764, in *Letters*, 1: 461.


Hume, *History*, 6: 527; Hume’s emphasis.

Ibid., 6: 531; emphasis added.

Ibid., 6: 532. While Hume mentions faction without an initial label of Whig, he goes to great length describing the Whigs with nothing about the Tories.


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