SPARTACO PUPO

POLITICAL CONNECTIONS (AND DISCONNECTIONS) BETWEEN BRITISH INTELLECTUALS IN THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT: HUME, STERNE, AND WILKES IN PARIS (1764)

1. *The clergyman, the diplomatist, and the politician*

In April 1764, Laurence Sterne, the famous Irish novelist and Anglican clergyman, is passing a sociable and supposedly curative time in France, where he arrived in August 1762. He stays at M. Tollot's Hôtel, in the quartier St. Honore, where he finds «good and generous souls» (Sterne 1808: 265).

Paris is delightful to Sterne's eyes. He enters upon the life of «a French gentleman, at the small expense», as his wife estimates, «of two hundred and fifty pounds a year» (Cross 1909, 309); he works intermittently at *Tristram Shandy*, the work destined to make him world-famous, and revises more of his old sermons; but his progress in new works is very slow because of his «double bankruptcy, financial and intellectual», but mostly for «the wretched state of his health» (Cross 1909: 313). Sterne presumably renews his intimacy with French literary society, although the scant correspondence we have from this phase of his life is silent or refers only to family matters.

In these months there are scarcely any English gentlemen in Paris. The Treaty of Paris, signed on 10 February 1763 by the kingdoms of Great Britain, France, and Spain, with the consent of Portugal, after the victory of Great Britain over France and Spain in the Seven Years' War (1756-63), marks the beginning of an era of British dominance outside Europe. Since that moment, the road to Paris – in the ironical words of Horace Walpole – has become «like the description of the grave, the way of all flesh» (Walpole 1857: 95). There are many English, and many Irish and Scots.

The true «lion of the hour» in Paris at this time is David Hume, the skilled diplomatist, to the astonishment of his friends at home, who know him only as a keen philosopher and

an excellent historian, thanks to the success of such works as *Political Discourses* (1752) and *The History of England* (1754-62). Hume received a prestigious diplomatic office in August 1763 from the new British ambassador at Paris, the Scot Francis Seymour-Conway, 1st Marquis of Hertford. «My Lord – Hume announces on April 1764, referring to Lord Hertford himself, in a letter to a friend – is very impatient to have me Secretary to the Embassy; and writes very earnest letters to that purpose to the ministers, and, among the rest, to Lord Bute» (Hume 2011, 1: 440).

The latter is the Scot John Stuart, 3rd Earl of Bute (1713-92), who served as Prime Minister of Great Britain from May 1762 to April 1763. The ambassador engaged Hume as his private secretary after refusing this role to Charles Bunbury, politician who sits in the House of Commons since 1761. After the end of the Seven Years' War and the resumption of diplomatic relations with France, the Scotsman, who was at the height of his literary fame, readily accepted the appointment.

Lord Hertford resides with his son Lord Beauchamp at the Hotel de Lauragnais, a luxurious mansion near the Louvre, and there still hovered Francis Russell, Marquis of Tavistock, son of John Russell, 4th Duke of Bedford, British peace negotiator who travelled to France in September 1762 to negotiate and sign the peace. Referring again to Lord Hertford, described as «a man of strict honour» and «of no party», Hume claims in December 1763: «He has got an Opinion, very well founded, that the more Acquaintance I make, & the greater Intimacies I form with the French, the more I am enabled to be of Service to him: So he exacts no Attendance from me; and is well pleasd to find me carryd into all kinds of Company. He tells me, that if he did not meet me by Chance in third Places, we shoud go out of Acquaintance» (Hume 2011, 1: 420).

Hume moves to Paris in October 1763 and enters «on a new scene of life» (Hume 2011: 422), demonstrating at once, as Baron Brougham points out, «a perfect familiarity with diplomatic modes and habits», as shown by the «clearly and ably written» dispatches of this period, which «appears to have been marked by firmness and temper, as well as by quickness and sagacity» (Brougham 1855-61: 193-4).

During this period Hume writes little about private matters and everything in a hurry except about public matters, which are the only serious matters for which he has leisure. He is hailed by the French as a very important man of letters, and is clearly the celebrity of the season. His letters show an understandable surprise in this reception, far beyond any attention he has ever received at home. The «*petit ministre*», as Madame de Boufflers calls him (Hume 2011, 1: 441), is a statesman qualified «to heal the diplomatic wounds occasioned by the recent war» (Mossner 2001: 489).

The official dispatches describe a diplomat very much absorbed in the performance of his work, who has not lost his sense of humour, amid «connexions» and «transactions» with princes and princesses, ambassadors, travellers, officers, men of culture and business, builders, bankers, masters and students, clergy and laymen, lords, counts, marquises and dukes. He works in the service of his countrymen, mainly focused on defending the authority of the British Crown, with obvious weakness in France. In brief, Hume feels at home in the cultural climate of Paris, the centre of letters and good society: if all places were not almost alike for happiness and pleasure, «I shoud say that I pass my time better here than I have done anywhere else» (Hume 2011, 1: 431).

Hume visits and converses at the leading Parisian salons, where he forms fruitful relationships with the most influential men and women of the «Republic of Letters»: «Those whose Persons & Conversation I like best are d'Alembert, Buffon, Marmontel, Diderot, Duclos, Helvetius, and old President Hénault […]. I must confess, that I am more carryed away from their Society than I shoud be, by the great Ladies, with whom I became acquainted at my first Introduction to Court, and whom my Connexions with the English Ambassador will not allow me entirely to drop» (Hume 2011: 419-420).

The access to «high offices» leads Hume «to a scene so different from that to which I had so long been accustomed» (Hume 2011: 414). He distinguishes himself chiefly by solving problems left unsolved by the Treaty of Paris.

Around these men centres the most distinguished English society, and every English gentleman who comes to Paris seeks

out the embassy, and Lord Hertford returns the call with invitations to dinners and receptions and to his chapel at the Hotel de Lauragnais. Sterne is «an especial favourite», who dines «almost every week with the Ambassador or Lord Beauchamp or Lord Tavistock» (Cross 1909: 325). Among the most influential and charismatic figures to visit the embassy is John Wilkes, the political agitator and journalist, leader of British political radicalism (Gossman 1975: 19-23), who stays across the Seine, in the Rue St. Nicase, at the Hôtel de Saxe (Cross 1909: 323) and is regarded as «a martyr to free speech» (Cross 1909: 324), the «scandalous father of civil liberty» (Cash 2206), very important to British press freedom.

Wilkes, «a jovial adventurer who did not pretend that his derisive defiance of the ruling order was intended to much more than win him a place within it» (Pocock 1993: 254), nervously awaits the verdict of expulsion from the House of Commons, which comes later. Britain has ended the war victoriously, and new strains are entering politics, including an increase in extra-parliamentary agitation. The Duke of Newcastle and some of the old Whig families who dominated government for forty years find themselves in opposition and begin to claim that Scottish and Tory advisers are steering and misleading the King. A storm erupted when the government began to prosecute Wilkes for publishing a seditious libel attacking King George's speech III in which he supported the Treaty of 1763 at the opening of Parliament on 23 April 1763. Wilkes attacked the government. He considered the liberty of the press as «the birth-right of a Briton, and is justly esteemed the firmest bulwark of the liberties of this country» (Wilkes 1762). The following year he said the king's speech at the opening of Parliament gave «his sacred name to the most odious measures and the most unjustifiable public declarations from a throne ever renowned for truth, honour and the unsullied virtue», and added that the «spirit of discord» will «never be extinguished, but by the extinction of their power» (Wilkes 1763).

Wilkes was highly critical of the king's speech, which was acknowledged to have been written by Lord Bute who had been his mentor as prime minister. Wilkes also made slanderous insinuations about the relationship between Bute and the

King's mother. The popular protest in support of the journalist-politician also championed the cause of the American colonists, who complained about the heavy handed attempt to tax them. The ministry, seeing a chance to silence him, arrested Wilkes, but the Lord Chief Justice ordered his release, invoking parliamentary privilege. He sued for damages and won. The ministers decided to revoke his privilege by excluding him from the House of Commons in 1764. They came into possession of the galley proofs of an obscene parody, *Essay on Woman*, written by Wilkes and Thomas Potter years earlier, which Lord Sandwich, secretary of state, read to the House of Lords. The Lords and Commons condemned it as seditious, and in January the House of Commons passed a government motion to expel Wilkes from Parliament. During the Christmas holidays of 1763, Wilkes left for Paris to visit his daughter and decided not to return to face prosecution (Rudé 1962; Christie 1962; Thomas 1996).

In Paris, Sterne often meets Wilkes. On one occasion they form «an odd party» with the «goddesses of the theatre», at the house of one Hope, whom the politician defined as «a Dutchman metamorphosed into an Italian» (Wilkes 1954: 81) by long residence in Venice and Rome. Probably Sterne and Wilkes meet in the Hertford dinners. They are introduced to one another by the English actor and playwright David Garrick, live «in worlds that overlapped, both socially and politically», and «both were close to John Hall Stevenson, founder of the Demoniacs group, who was, like Wilkes, a member of Sir Francis Dashwood's Hell Fire Club» (During 2004: 21). Apparently, Sterne presented Wilkes with a copy of the poems of Catullus, Tibullus and Propertius, and, late, Wilkes edited a volume of Catullus himself (During 2004: 21). Moreover, there, both Wilkes and Sterne frequented the «free-thinking circle of *philosophes* around Baron d'Holbach» (During 2004: 21).

Though Wilkes is declared an outlaw in England, an enemy to king, country, and all good men, he is a guest in the embassy like all other English gentlemen in Enlightenment Paris. Such happy toleration at a time when the bitterness of domestic politics is extreme is extraordinary. None is ostracised on account of political opinions, and even the most radical politi-

cians are «tolerated, though with maimed rites» (Cross 1909: 325). There are also many Jacobites in the capital who are connected with the English travelling Whigs in the most extraordinary harmony; there is the uncle of the Lord of Crazy Castle; there is Laurence Trotter, who left Skelton Castle in the troubles of 1745, and was compelled, like many other adherents of the fallen cause, to flutter about in foreign courts.

It is difficult to imagine what these three gentlemen have to say to each other at their encounters: Wilkes comes to embody freedom because he renovated older rhetoric of constitutionalism «in the absence of radical principles and policies» expressed by oppositional institutions; Sterne represents a key moment in the development of «literature as an autonomous space», that is «independent of polished civility, classical learning, moral regulation or political participation» (During 2004: 21). Perhaps they shared a certain approach to things and manners that were not prone to mediation and political compromise. Sterne, after all, is a passionate revolutionary in literary form, not political activity.

But Sterne also comes to know Hume, whom he sees as «a man morally sounds to the heart, of great and commanding intellect, and in disposition as genial and pliable as the author of *Tristram Shandy*» (Cross 1909: 325). When Sterne reached Paris, not so coincidentally, «Hume was feeding upon the same ambrosia he himself had grown sick two years before» (Cross 1909: 325).

2. A sermon as central feature in Anglo-French relations

On a Saturday afternoon in April, the ambassador's messenger appears at Sterne's with a request to preach a sermon in the chapel of the new British Embassy at the Hôtel de Brancas, in place of the boring chaplain James Trail. Despite a weakness of voice caused by his chronic lung disease, Sterne agrees; and although he resolved never to preach again, he cannot refuse the invitation.

The next morning, precisely Sunday 25 March 1764, the embassy chapel fills with an audience of all nations, diplomats,

and officials from various embassies, English, religious or not, but also French, Roman Catholics, atheists, deists, agnostics, and intellectuals not really interested in any form of religion. Sterne's friends, the philosophers Baron d'Holbach, d'Alembert, Diderot, and Grimm have been invited by Lord Hertford to dinner after the sermon (Hamilton 1984: 322). Wilkes, encouraging a friend, the journalist Jean-Baptiste-Antoine Suard, to attend the sermon, writes about Sterne: «Tho' you may not catch every word of *Tristram*, his action will divert you, and you know that action is the first, second, third, &c parts of a great orator» (Cash 1992: 184-7, 185).

With these words Sterne is portrayed as an effective preacher with the ability to captivate an audience, not through verbal fluency, but through the eloquent movement of his body. As an experienced orator, Wilkes presents public speaking as a primarily somatic skill, and in keeping with the reorganisation of the Ciceronian parts of oratory that we have seen in the works of contemporary rhetoricians, he foregrounds the art of action and presents Sterne as a gifted exponent of this art. With his physical eloquence and play on the emotions of congregations, Sterne has something of an exemplary sentimental preacher when measured against the priorities of mid-century rhetoricians. With the inquisitive Wilkes, Hume, who is also a member of the ambassador's household as his son's tutor, and who finds the Hertford family amiable and the social life of Paris even more congenial, to the point of seriously considering making Paris his permanent residence, is present in the chapel (Hamilton 1984: 322).

A letter from Lord Hertford to his cousin Horace Walpole confirms that Sterne's sermon is «a central feature of a year-long drama in Anglo-French relations, attracting great attention in both countries» (Hamilton 1984: 316). Sterne spontaneously chooses a text that is not really suitable for anyone but a court jester. Its subject is the rebuke Isaiah gave Hezekiah for showing the treasures of the royal palace to the Babylonian ambassadors, and the subsequent prophecy that these treasures would one day be carried off to Babylon: «Nothing shall be left, saith the Lord». Sterne approaches the pulpit and reads in a brittle voice and dramatic gestures his text, which consists of a

paraphrased and condensed version: «And Hezekiah said unto the Prophet, I have shown them my vessels of gold, and my vessels of silver, and my wives and my concubines, and my boxes of ointment, and whatever I have in my house, have I shown unto them: and the Prophet said unto Hezekiah, thou hast done very foolishly» (2 Kings: XX, 13, 15, 17).

Instead of taking *Scripture* alone, Sterne supposes a hidden reason for the congratulations of the prince of Babylon, who sent messengers and presents to Hezekiah for a generous act of courtesy.

Sterne's words are perceived as a shocking discourtesy to the diplomatic and political authorities, and especially to Lord Hertford, who has generously opened the embassy to a very large audience. On 26 March 1764, Lord Hertford will write to Walpole: «My chappel was crowded yesterday to hear Doctor Sterne preach» (*Conway Papers*). But to his Paris audience, discourtesy would be more offensive than sacrilege. Sterne wishes it known that Lord Hertford, «far from being offended», has thanked him «again and again for his sermon» and that Hume «favoured it with his grace and approbation» (Hamilton 1984: 322). Sterne will explain the incident four months later, when he writes a long letter, probably addressed to William Combe, in which he emphatically rejects the offending sermon in these words:

> Now it fell to my lot, that is to say, I was requested to preach, the first day service was per- formed in the chapel of this new hotel. The message was brought me when I was playing a sober game of Whist with the *Thornhills*, and whether it was that I was called rather abruptly from my afternoon's amusement to prepare my- self for this business, for it was to be on the next day; or from what other cause I do not pretend to determine, but that unlucky kind of fit seized me, which you know I can never resist, and a very unlucky text did come into my head, and you will say so when you read it» (Sterne 1935: 218-219; Hamilton 1967: 420-29).

3. *An enlightened dinner party with a few misunderstandings*

Sterne's fee consists of a dinner on Sunday evening at the English Embassy, to which the noblest of the community are invited. It is the occasion of a singular meeting between three of the best-known figures of the intellectual world of eighteenth-century England: Sterne, the clergyman-novelist who some years before wrote *A Political Romance* (1759); Hume, the diplomatist-historian, much admired in the cultured Paris; and Wilkes, the politician-fugitive, author of polemical invective against established power. On the one side is the great Irish writer and orator, on the other the supreme Scottish historian and political essayist, and the English martyr of free speech.
Someone will probably speak of a quarrel between Sterne and Hume, for in a letter Sterne is just reassuring a friend of the falsity of the news of any disagreement between the two writers, in these words:

> The story, my dear friend, which you heard related, with such an air of authority, is like many other true stories, absolutely false. Mr. Hume and I never had a dispute – I mean a serious, angry or petulant dispute, in our lives: – indeed I should be most exceedingly surprised to hear that *David* ever had an unpleasant contention with any man; – and if I should be made to believe that such an event had happened, nothing would persuade me that his opponent was not in the wrong: for, in my life, did I never meet with a being of a more placid and gentle nature; and it is this amiable turn of his character, that has given more consequence and force to his scepticism, than all the arguments of his sophistry. – You may depend on this as a truth. We had, I remember well, a little pleasant sparring at Lord Hertford's table at Paris; but there was nothing in it that did not bear the marks of good-will and urbanity on both sides. I had preached that very day at the Ambassador's chapel, and David was disposed to make a little merry with the Parson; and, in return, the Parson was equally disposed to make a little mirth with the Infidel; we laughed at one another, and the company laughed with us both-and, whatever your informer might pretend, he certainly was not one of that company (Sterne 1935: 346; Bandry-Scubbi and Descargues-Grant 2006: 91-93).

In brief, this is a playful exchange of jokes or banter about the content of the sermon, since, as Sterne rightly notes, Hume

is absolutely incapable of arguing with anyone. Throughout his life, he never responded to attacks or negative reviews of his works. In *My Own Life*, the short autobiography he wrote in 1776, four months before his death, he will emphasise his happiness in the mildness of his temperament and the moderation of his passions (Hume 1987: xl). His mildness must also have appeared to Sterne, who pays a most just tribute to the gentle temper of his friendly antagonist, who is called in the French salons with the name of «*le bon David*» (Mossner 2001: 5), in tribute to his mild character.

It may be that Lord Hertford's table, Sterne accepts the challenge of Hume, who begins to tease him about Hezekiah and the «astronomical miracle». It would have been fascinating to watch the clash between the famous unbeliever and denier of the existence of miracles and the preacher and believer in miracles. But this is no more than conjecture. What is certainly true is that during the dinner «a prompt French Marquis» – as noticed by Sterne in *Sentimental Journey* (1768) – mistakes Hume for John Home (David Hume and John Home, Scottish minister, soldier, and author, pronounce their names exactly alike), author of the famous tragedy of *Douglas* (1756). Sitting next to the ambassador's secretary, the marquis turns to him and asks if he is Home the poet. «No, said Hume – mildly – *Tant pis*, replied the Marquis. It is Hume the historian, said another – *Tant mieux*, said the Marquis. And Mr. Hume, who is a man of an excellent heart, return'd thanks for both» (Sterne 2006: 43).

It is also certain that Hume has an intellectual appreciation of Sterne. Hume, who generally read directly in Greek and Latin, left few references to works of fiction in his works and letters. One of his biographers wrote: «There is no evidence that he ever read, for example, Richardon's *Clarissa*, Fielding's *Tom Jones*, Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*, or even Smollett's *Expedition of Humphry Clinker*» (Harris 2015: 495). But he securely read Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Nouvelle Héloise*, that was judged as the Genevan's master-piece (Hume 2011, 2: 28), and Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, that appears at intervals between 1759 and 1767. In a letter to William Strahan, dated 30 January 1773, Hume will write that «the best book that has been writ by any Englishman these thirty Years (for Dr. Franklyn is an Ameri-

can) is *Tristram Shandy*, bad as it is. A Remark which may astonish you, but which you will find true on reflection» (Hume 2011, 2: 269).

Moreover, in James Boswell's report of Hume's comments on *Tristram Shandy*, dated 4 November 1762, there is written: «*Tristram Shandy* may perhaps go on a little longer; but we will not follow him. With all his drollery there is a sameness of extravagance which tires us. We have just a succession of Surprise, surprise, surprise» (Scott and Pottle 1928: 127).

«The parson and the infidel» (Mossner 2001: 504) will continue their good relationships. A year later, when he is about to publish the third volume of *The Sermons of Mr. Yorick*, Sterne writes to a friend regarding possible subscribers: «As so many men of genius favour me with their names also, I will quarrel with Mr. Hume, and call him deist, and what not, unless I have his name too» (Mossner 2001: 504). Hume's name does not appear in the lists; however, in 1768, after Sterne's death, Hume will contribute «five guineas to the fund for Mrs Sterne and Lydia» (Mossner 2001: 504).

Unfortunately, nothing survives of a discussion in which Wilkes participated during the dinner, but it is safe to assume that he was among the guests of Lord Hertford, if only because he was one of the preacher's greatest supporters, and also because the meeting of the three compatriots in the peaceful atmosphere of Paris, one year after the treaty of 1763, is the occasion for an exchange of opinions that will not coincidentally continue in the following years.

4. *Political connections (and disconnections)*

It is difficult to conjecture about possible political disquisitions at this table and in this setting. Someone spoke of a letter from Wilkes published in the *London Evening Post* of 13-15 March 1764, in which Hume's role as secretary to the French ambassador is pointed out, «but although disparaging comments are made about other (Scottish) embassy staff, Hume escapes any direct criticism» (Dew 2009: 237). In the absence of certainties about a dislike of Wilkes for Hume's character, how-

ever, it is possible that he, like many of his contemporaries, radical or otherwise, had anti-Scottish sentiments.

The early 1760s were marked by great political instability. Following the resignations of William Pitt and then the Duke of Newcastle, Lord Bute, a Scottish peer, was appointed Prime Minister in May 1762 but was forced to resign eleven months later. Bute had to make some difficult decisions. The signing of the Treaty of Paris was seen as unfavourable to Britain: Bute was accused of cowardice and perfidy. In addition, he decided to impose a tax on cider to finance the expenses caused by the war, which led to an anti-Scottish uproar. Some scholars do not hesitate to write of anti-Scottish sentiment in eighteenth-century England as the equivalent of contemporary anti-Semitism (Namier and Brooke 1964: 168).

That was the era of the «anti-Scots propaganda» of the 1760s which had become popular in the period between the Jacobite revolt of 1745 and Lord Bute's administration (Rothstein 1982: 63-78). The chief organizer of the anti-Scottish campaigns was Wilkes. In 1762 he founded the newspaper *The North Briton*, the title of which indicates satirical intentions towards the Scots. One title of the newspaper was very satirical towards the Scottish character: «The restless and turbulent disposition of the Scottish nation before the union, with their constant attachment to France and declared enmity to England, their repeated perfidies and rebellions since that period, with their servile behaviour in times of need, and overbearing insolence in power, have justly rendered the very name of Scot hateful to every true Englishman» (Wilkes 1763).

Of all the *moderates*, the one who is particularly unworthy of this agitation was undoubtedly Hume. From the early 1760s, Hume's correspondence abounds in raging comments on the «factious barbarians of London» (Hume 2011, 1: 417, 517).

Such comments come very close to those of the pamphlet entitled *The History of the Proceedings in the Case of Margaret, commonly called Peg, only lawful sister of John Bull*, which was anonymously published by Hume just before Christmas 1760 (Hume 1760) and written against William Pitt the Elder, the political leader of the Whigs, who with his forty years of political activity transformed Britain into an imperial power thanks to

the conquest of India and Canada. *Sister Peg*, as it is most often called, was composed as a sequel in the style of John Arbuthnot's *History of John Bull* (1712), which told the political relations between England (John Bull by Bull-hall) and Scotland (Sister Peg by Thistledown). There is much more than the possibility that Hume actually wrote this allegory, which deals with the failure of the British Parliament to create a Scottish militia in 1760. David Raynor's thesis about Hume's authorship (Raynor: 1-40), although it did not convince some scholars (Ramsay by Ochtertyre 1888: 334; Emerson 1983: 74; Sher 1983: 88-89), remains the most widely accepted to this day, as it refers to the words written by Hume in his own handwriting. In a letter to Alexander Carlyle, on 3 February 1761, Hume labelled the «frivolous Composition» as his own (Hume 2011, 1: 341-2).

Hume's satirical allegory operated on two levels, the folksy surface level, then the historical level below, through pamphlet form. The pamphlet as a literary genre was a more manageable version of the philosophical essay, which was quite widespread in the eighteenth century, could reach a wide audience alongside salons and cultural circles, and was usually written by prominent personalities inspired by resonant contingent events (Angenot 1982). Hume's pamphlets, as occasional tracts, are among the conveniences of coffeehouses and reach a wider audience. As in the general characteristics of the pamphlet literature described by Johnson, it is «polemical and anonymous», written by an «important and well-informed figure», beneficial for «posterity» and denoting a tone of «rational indignation tempered by humanity and humour», that «is not an easy mix to achieve» (Box, Harvey, and Silverthorne 2003: 228).

Returning to the theme of the division between barbarians and civilised people, Hume also declares in his writings that the English are far less civilized than the Scots or even the French. He is proud to note that the Scots are «the people most distinguish'd for literature in Europe» (Hume 2011, 1: 255) and that the «civilized European monarchy», doomed by the «Religious Whigs», does not seem so reprehensible to him (Hume 1987: 87-97).

Hume's reactions to the English chauvinism fomented by Wilkes are all the more remarkable because Hume maintained cordial relations with the journalist, who made an extended visit to Scotland in 1754. Hume was not himself the target of Wilkes's attacks in *The North Briton*: in issue No. 12, dated 12 August 1762, Wilkes welcomes the fact that Hume had received a royal pension: «There is one Scottish Pension I have been told of, which afforded me real pleasure. It is Mr. Hume's; for I am satisfied that it must be given to Mr. David Hume, whose writings have been justly admired both abroad and at home, and not to Mr. John Hume, who has endeavoured to bring the name into contempt, by putting it to two insipid tragedies, and other trash in Scottish miscellanies» (Wilkes 1762).

Wilkes here confuses, probably with irony, the playwright John Home, who worked as a secretary for Bute and received a rich pension, with Hume. Or, rather than a mistaken identity, Wilkes makes a mistake in the surname, which was common at the time, with "John Home" becoming "John Hume".

This, however, does not exclude or mitigate Hume's dislike of Wilkes and all politicians of a radical bent.

In 1768, during the violent clashes and riots in London triggered by *Wilkes and Liberty!*, Hume expresses at Under-Secretary of State, Northern Department, all his disappointment at the frequent «riots of the populace» and the «mutinies» that are «founded on nothing, and had no connexion with any higher order of the state»; Wilkes's supporters, «the rascally mob», provide «a vent for a wide range of grievances concerning pay and working conditions among London tradesmen, but, so far as we know, Hume never expressed sympathy for any of these causes» (Harris 2015: 421).

Indeed, he writes in the *Correspondence of an Under-Secretary of State*, a selection of letters Hume wrote in London and sent to some of his most influential friends from March 1767 to December 1768: «Here is a people thrown into disorders (not dangerous ones, I hope) merely from the abuse of liberty, chiefly the liberty of the press; without any grievance, I do not only say, real, but even imaginary; and without any of them being able to tell one circumstance of government which they wish to have corrected: they roar liberty, though they have ap-

parently more liberty than any people in the world, a great deal more than they deserve; and perhaps more than any men ought to have» (Hume 2019: 199).

As a friend of the king's friends, as a moderate thinker, always proposing in his works a final political check against the violent passions, Hume also declares: «Licentiousness, or rather the frenzy of liberty, has taken possession of us, and is throwing everything into confusion. How happy do I esteem it, that in all my writings I have always kept at a proper distance from that tempting extreme, and have maintained a due regard to magistracy and established government, suitably to the character of an historian and a philosopher!» (Hume 2019: 199).

In a letter from the late 1760s, d'Alembert writes to Hume introducing his neighbour, the Abbé de Vauxcelles, who is to make a trip to England. This letter announces, seemingly without irony, that Vauxcelles «goes to England to have the pleasure of crying with you *Wilkes and Liberty*» (Burton 1849, 214). These words prompted an interpreter, who has used a considerable number of historical sources to demonstrate the extent of Hume's actual influence on many French anti-revolutionary writers, to conclude «Hume, it need hardly be said, never waved a *mouchoir à la Wilkes*!» (Bongie 2000: 35).

Hume's correspondence, dating back to the late 1960s, attests to his indignation at the turmoil of the times, and as some studies have shown (Forbes 1975: 187-92; Miller 1981: 182-4; Stewart 1992: 269-71; Livingston 1998: 256-89), Hume's thinking was based, though not as thoroughly, on an antithetical analysis of the popular controversy in Wilkes's paper. As for Wilkes's attention to Hume, it seems that *The North Briton* and the radical press in general «were often sympathetic towards Hume, frequently employing ideas and quotations from his work» (Dew 2009: 236.).

As for Sterne, apart from the question of the contrast between the national political arena and the «intimate publics» he cultivates in his fiction (Berlant 2008), it is difficult to identify his political orientation and his contribution to the political campaign at this time. As a young man he was not averse to politics, if only for a short time. In August 1741 the newly elected Viscount Morpeth died, triggering a by-election to re-

turn a single knight of the county for Yorkshire to Parliament. Robert Walpole's government had led the nation into two unpopular conflicts and was losing support. Both Walpole's supporters and opponents were feverishly busy nominating new candidates and campaigning for a second ballot. There was still time to buy, sell and influence votes. Jacques Sterne, Laurence's uncle, ran the Whig campaign in York and used *The York Gazetteer* as the party's main mouthpiece. Sterne wrote political articles supporting Walpole's government, but he publicly renounced his involvement in the political campaign in July 1742 and retired from politics in disgust.

His political activity has been viewed as incidental to his subsequent career as a writer, «but as with overstated claims about Sterne's single *leap* onto the national stage, a clean break between these phases of his life as a writer proves impossible to sustain» (Havard 2014b: 268). Perhaps Sterne continued to be beset by the demands of competing scales and places, even as his fiction suggested alternative ways of living collectively. Probably the fiction creatively «engages the breakdown and transformation of established social and political models», and «whether the unruly proceedings of *Tristram Shandy* have more to do with making connections, or with missing them, must remain for the time being an open question» (Havard 2014b: 269).

A study focusing on the three eighteenth-century English authors Defoe, Richardson, and Sterne and the connections between institutional politics, political philosophy, and fiction has shown that the fictional in the works of these authors helped make England the prototype of the settled state, the country that had no modern revolution (Kay 1988). In particular, according to this study, some influences can be seen between Sterne and Hume. For example, Hume, as a critic of the original contract, argues for a gradual process of socialization and a constant awareness of the benefits of social habits in the family: «Where the parents – Hume stated in the *Treatise* – govern by the advantage of their superior strength and wisdom, and at the same time are restrain'd in the exercise of their authority by that natural affection, which they bear their children. In a little time, custom and habit operating on the tender minds of the

children, makes them sensible of the advantages, which they may reap from society, as well as fashions them by degrees for it, by rubbing off those rough corners and untoward affections, which prevent their coalition» (Hume 2007: 312).

Similarly, in his account of the origin of property, Hume rejects the necessity of «promise» as a legitimation of power. He admits the existence of a general sense of common interest in the observance of the rule of property, «since the actions of each of us have a reference to those of the other, and are perform'd upon the supposition, that something is to be perform'd on the other part. Two men, who pull the oars of a boat, do it by an agreement or convention, tho' they have never given promises to each other» (Hume 2007: 315).

This portrait of Hume's of a conventional rule is very similar to Sterne's, who wishes to show that beliefs expressed as habit or custom, rather than as conclusions of reason, nevertheless serve life. In Sterne, the false judgments of conscience are fostered by «long habits of sin», which, as he states in the sermon *The Abuses of Conscience Considered*, in *Tristram Shandy*, cause the conscience to become «hard» and, «like some tender parts of his body, by much stress and continual hard usage, to lose, by degrees, that nice sense and perception with which God and nature endowed it» (Sterne 1967: 142).

According to Sterne, a temperament fixed by habit is one of the three basic elements of human personality, the others being a set of natural passions and reason, although he frequently attacks «uncontrolled custom» leading to sinfulness (Kay 1988: 228-230; Cash 1964: 395-417).

One kinship between Sterne and Hume is undoubtedly in making political contingency the subject of literary satire. Sterne published in 1759 *A Political Romance*, a satirical pamphlet relating to an indecent dispute over an office in the diocese of York, commissioned by a lawyer and involving the archbishop, the dean, and Sterne himself. The work drew on the tradition of the heroic comedy, in which Sterne parodied the story taken from the contingency of ecclesiastical politics by highlighting the pettiest and ridiculous aspects and degrading the actual protagonists and subject matter of the dispute: the archbishop became the parish priest and ecclesiastical offices

became a coat of arms eaten by woodworms and a pair of worn-out trousers. This first effort by Sterne is already teeming with allegories, such as the depiction of Gibraltar, the King of France, George III, and other national leaders. In the spirit of Shandean, the satire is directed at those overzealous readers who misinterpret the novel in light of their hobbyist and cavalier concerns. The same may be said for the above *Sister Peg*, and also for Hume's other earlier pamphlets, especially *The Petition of the Patients of Westminster against James Fraser, Apothecary* (1750) (Hume 2011, 2: 340-342), written against James Fraser, a good Jacobite apothecary, whose practice of medicine had cured many sick people, and *The Petition of the Grave and Venerable Bellmen (or Sextons) of the Church of Scotland, to the Hon. House of Commons* (1750) (Hume 1822: 187-191), against the effort of the Church of Scotland to have the small salaries of its clergy increased. The initiative was opposed by the landed gentry, who would have been responsible for much of the cost.

Those works of satire written as denunciations of the deterioration of the political climate clearly place Hume in this tradition. They are the writings in which, following Sterne's model, he succeeds in blending the tone of rational indignation at terrible events, or at least at what people particularly perceive as such, with irony, the sarcastic way of looking at political contingencies.

Hume's taste for irony is tangible in a not insignificant part of his intellectual production, although in anthologies and critical studies of eighteenth-century literature Hume is generally either ignored or displayed in a short essay. Many scholars have acknowledged the excellence of his prose, but no one has attempted a systematic evaluation of his literary style, with the exception of John V. Price, who in 1956 published an inspiring study on Hume as a literary figure, in which he considered various manifestations of an «ironic mode» of expression, which finds its most brilliant form in the *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* but which characterizes mainly his pamphlets (Price 1965). Also Hume's friends learned that irony was a constant mode of expression in his life. In a letter to his friend Michael Ramsay, dated 4 July 1727, Hume wrote ironically: «I receivd

all the Books you writ of & your Milton among the rest; when I saw it I perceivd there was a difference betwixt preaching & practizing; You accuse me of niceness & yet practize it most egregiously your self; What was the Necessity of sending your Milton wich I knew you were so fond of? Why! I lent yours & can't get it. But would you not in the same manner have lent your own? Yes. Then Why this Ceremony & Goodbreeding?» (Hume 2011, 1: 9).

This passage is typical of one of the many forms that Hume's ironic mode takes. In this case, it is humorous, but hints at an enigmatic or strange mismatch between ideal and reality or what *is* and what *was*. This letter represents Hume's early awareness of the duality of human nature, even if it is not Cartesian. The rhetorical consequences of applying reason to this duality create Hume's irony.

In Hume, irony was a rhetorical expression that arose from an awareness of the mismatch between people's hopes and their achievements, from the application of reason to the duality of nature, from an awareness of the discrepancy between sometimes pure and clean ideals and concrete actions, between theory and practice, dream and reality. Hume's appeal to irony – always gifted and good-natured – was one of the most characteristic traits, expressing, to a greater extent than others, his «political scepticism», which is characterized by harmful diatribes between hostile gangs of fanatics, be they political, religious or political and religious together (Pupo 2020).

If one looks closely at the hybridized mode Sterne developed while writing *Tristram Shandy*, it becomes clear that he modulates his satirical purposes to a broader range of political ends. In his work, Sterne illustrates the gaps between existing and emerging models of political understanding while undermining the uninterrupted transmission of property and common customs and opinions through time to which Edmund Burke, «the first conservative» (Norman 2013), will successively «base his vindication of the established constitution» (Havard 2014a: 586-88).

The fact that he even historically anticipated the analyses proposed by Burke in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), along with some of his critical statements about the

stability of government and political factionalism, brings Sterne closer to Hume than to Wilkes. Hume is the interpreter of a political scepticism tend to maintain stability and reject sectarianism.

But in the ability to read the scenarios of politics in subsequent decades, when the seemingly secure constitutional edifice is subsumed under volatile debate and events in France give rise to revolutionary challenges to the established order, Sterne seems to have something in common with Wilkes. Some critics find further grounds for suspicion in the evidence of Sterne's occasional heterodoxy as a clergyman, his sexual infidelities, and his willingness to keep company with well-known atheist like Wilkes and Baron d'Holbach in Paris; unsurprisingly, Sterne's orthodoxy in no way proves faith (Ross 2000: 227-45). But in Sterne's works we can see the first elements of these later debates of the libertarian Enlightenment, developed by English dissidents whose libertinage helps to fan the flames of their celebrity in a public sphere. After Trim's dramatic reaction to the sudden death of Bobby Shandy, Tristram states: «I perceive plainly, that the preservation of our constitution in church and state, – and possibly the preservation of the whole world – or what is the same thing, the distribution and balance of its property and power, may in time to come depend greatly upon the right understanding of this stroke of the corporal's eloquence» (Sterne 1967: 356).

The implications of such a breakdown of the existing political and social order would be radical indeed. And Wilkes is among the first politicians to believe in freedom of speech and action. He is an enthusiastic member of the Hell-Fire club, which meets dressed as monks to parody Roman Catholic rites and enjoy women dressed as nuns. His reply to the Earl of Sandwich, who told him he would either die on the gallows or of smallpox, is almost a classic: «That must depend on whether I embrace your lordship's principles or your mistress» (German and Rees 2012: 81).

5. *The scepticism of Hume's "Sister Peg" and Sterne's "A Political Romance"*

Fred Parker dealt with the unresolved tensions of sceptical authors, in whose ranks he includes not only Hume, but also Sterne, Pope, and Johnson. In the scepticism, Parker identifies the meeting point of the literary style of Sterne and Hume, and in the «negativity» of their works he sees a persuasive power that would be «disillusioning and destabilizing» (Parker 2003: 14) if it were not tempered by humour, and this is particularly true in the case of both Sterne and Hume.

The irony of these two sceptical writers stems from the oddity that scepticism causes, in that it does not put heroism over doubt, but rather cheerfulness and a healthy laugh among friends. On the other hand, for Parker, Hume describes the sceptic as one who mocks himself and others for «the whimsical condition of mankind, who must act and reason and believe; though they are not able, by their most diligent enquiry, to satisfy themselves concerning the foundation of these operations, or to remove the objections, which may be raised against them» (Hume 2007: *117*). Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* is a speaking picture of a ridiculously capricious human condition, a celebration of the triumph of spontaneity and «sentiment» over reflection, Sterne's fiction shows the natural relation to scepticism.

The convergence of Hume and Sterne can also be seen by comparing the content, style, and purpose of their works.

Not coincidentally only a year before Hume writes *Sister Peg*, Sterne has published the aforementioned *A Political Romance*, a work based on the heroic-comic tradition, particularly in Swift-Rabelais's style. In Hume's correspondence we have no evidence that he is familiar with this work but certainly, as we have already said, he knows and appreciates Sterne's literary style.

In *A Political Romance* Stern tests a «double layer», as Jonathan Lamb calls it, «from the public standards of satire to the privacies of unparalleled minds, and then back from these private particulars to their recognizably public value» (Lamb 1996: 156). This double shift is achieved through a narrative practice and a convincing force of political eloquence that was exploited

to overwhelming effect by William Pitt, the head of the War Department, when Sterne began writing *Tristram Shandy* (1760-67), and is a privileged target of Hume's satire.

The first part of *A Political Romance* tells the story of Trim and the Watch Coat, which runs parallel to the line between John Fountayne and Francis Topham for the control of the smaller offices in Yorkshire. The second part provides the "key" in which the satirical allegory is interpreted differently by a club. The crucial point of the narrative ceases to be the real event represented by the allegory, as «a good warm guard» stands for the controversial ministries of the Church and becomes an element of the inconsistency of its interpretations: «Thus every Man turn'd the Story to what was swimming uppermost in his own Brain; so that, before all was over, there were full as many Satyres spun out of it, and as great a Variety of Personages, Opinions, Transactions, and Truths, found to lay hid under the dark Veil of its Allegory, as ever were discovered in the thrice-renowned History of the Acts of *Gargantua and Pantagruel*» (Sterne 1971: 45).

The narrative of *A Political Romance* tends to present a series of scenes that dramatize the real comic futility. Considering the ridiculousness of the search for meaning in court, Sterne's attack on the *a priori* falls not on the fantastic claims of church lawyers (the apparent aim of the exercise), but on the reader who claims to understand it as such. The *a priori* is now the assumption behind the act of reading and interpreting, and no longer the government's assumptions behind what you read about; and this strategy leaves the field of narrative detail free from any normalization of the interventions: the story is what it is, not something else, and all its aims have served to reveal triumphantly to the reader that it has no one.

Lamb draws a parallel between this strategy of Sterne and Hume's interpretation in his essay *Of Eloquence* (1742), according to which the greatest achievements of eloquence go hand in hand with the worst kinds of disorder and violence. In fact, Hume writes: «It may be pretended, that the disorders of the ancient governments, and the enormous crimes, of which the citizens were often guilty, afforded much ampler matter for eloquence that can be met with among the moderns. [...] The mul-

tiplicity and intricacy of laws is a discouragement to eloquence in modern times» (Hume 1987: 106).

Thus Sterne shared this kind of communication medium with Hume. The satirical techniques were an expedient as practical narrative, like the politician's speeches rather than as the narrative form of an interpretable meaning. Yet this does not seem to be the only parallel with Hume.

As for the comic depiction of social reality, whether ecclesiastical or political, Hume might also share with Sterne the conviction that «if we copy low life, the strokes must be strong and remarkable» (Hume 1987: 192), so that the process of realization can be adequately achieved by reducing reality in grotesque or ugly ways and elevating it to nobility.

In a glittery spirit, the cloak is read as an allegorical representation of Gibraltar, while the respective figures represent the King of France, the King of England, and other national leaders. The Sternean satire is aimed at those overzealous readers who misinterpret the novel in the light of their hobby and chivalrous concerns. The same goes for Humean *Sister Peg*, which, in its praise of the use of metaphor, refers to the contemporary significance of the various episodes of fiction.

A Political Romance and *Sister Peg* are both literary types of *cronique scandaleuse* that were popular in the early eighteenth century. They can both be regarded as mocking allegories that overlap with the narrative scheme of the romance. In both cases, the story of bickering is only half the story. The other half is a submissive key to the allegory. The subset of a key represents, literally speaking, a scandal as shameful as the misdeeds of the times that are told. Inevitably, the focus of the scandal shifts from the allegorical history of facts to the allegorical romanticism of its reading.

Yet although both works comically demonstrate the limits and pitfalls of reading for political significance, their effects are ultimately different. Sterne's satire was transferred to a small political club in York City, where it was publicly read to the members of parliament, who agreed by a large majority that it was *A Political Romance*; but as far as the state or power is concerned, it could not easily be determined between them. Although the members of the club misjudged the extent of the al-

legory by taking figures and events with local speakers for national leaders and major geopolitical events, they were not deceived about the original political purpose of Sterne's satire, even though the ecclesiastical corruption and factionalism that are its true goals were completely absent. On the contrary, *Sister Peg* is an allegory in which some influential personalities from literary societies are included in the story characters known under false names. Behind the protagonists of fiction, Hume's satirical allegory portrays, in a harmonious fusion of literary and philosophical-political method and style, real characters known to the public, and through their disguise the reader can judge the real world.

6. *Slavery: abolitionists and neutrals*

One issue that begins to be debated in the eighteenth century, and which may prove to be a central topic of discussion between the three authors, is slavery.

Sterne is a staunch abolitionist. He uses his writing to make his views known on the sensitive subject and maintains friendly relations with other well-known authors, including Ignatius Sancho, who openly condemns slavery. Sancho appreciates Sterne for his writing, and when his *Letters* are published (1784), Sterne's position on the issue becomes even better known (Sandhu 1998). Sterne's intellectual output is known to contain quite considerable material in support of the abolitionist cause against the institution of slavery and its products. Sterne's sentimentalism enters anti-slavery discourse by suggesting that affective and divinely inspired recognitions of ethical bonds expose all intellectualized justifications of inhumanity as impositions on others and ourselves (Wehrs 2009: 174-189; Gerard, 2011:181-207).

Wilkes, like other British radicals, such as John Horne-Took, plays «no significant role in the early stages of British antislavery», and apparently some of the most influential exponents of radicalism are «even directly implicated in the slave-trade: William Beckford came from a prosperous family of Ja-

maican slave-owners, yet was one of the most vociferous opponents to the administration in this day» (Hudson 2001: 560).

As for Hume, in *Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations* (1752) he compares the political and moral differences between the ancient and modern worlds. Hume accuses the advocates of the so-called «republican novel» of underestimating a fundamental datum in the analysis of the social and political institutions of the ancients: the existence of slavery, which is the ultimate divide between the ancient and modern economies. It is possible to grasp «Hume's ability to immerse himself in the study of the ancient world without succumbing to nostalgia for its values and institutions» (Harris 2015: 285). In regard to politics, and not to literature, classical Athens and Rome have no attraction for Hume, precisely because of their perpetual wars, the underdeveloped state of their commerce, and their dependence on slavery, which was the most sinister institution that human history has ever known. This is an unequivocal rejection of the idea that modern politics could be improved by a return to the political ideals of ancient times. Hume states that in ancient world «domestic slavery» was «more cruel and oppressive than any civil subjection whatsoever» (Hume 1987: 383), and how, in the ancient world, the slaves were treated, meant that «to one, who considers coolly of the subject, it will appear, that human nature, in general, really enjoys more liberty at present, in the most arbitrary government of Europe, than it ever did during the most flourishing period of the antient times» (Hume 1987: 383).

Moreover, Hume considers domestic slavery to be more oppressive than any kind of civil subjection, because the farther the chief is from us by residence and rank, the greater the freedom we enjoy, and the less control our actions are subject to, and the less the weight of the confrontation between our subjection and the freedom and arbitrariness enjoyed by our fellow men.

According to Hume, ultimately, slavery is not only a cruel institution, morally and culturally. When compared with free wage labour, it is also «disadvantageous both to the happiness and populousness of mankind» (Hume 1987: 396). Hume warns against the veneration of either ancient systems or modern pro-

gress, which correspond to two forms of factionalism that threaten to impair both our moral sense and our rational judgment. For this reason, Hume's critique of slavery, despite its influence on the antislavery movement British Enlightenment (Brown 2006; Richardson 2007; Whyte 2006; Drescher 2010), is not truly abolitionist in nature, unlike Sterne's approach. Hume's aim is not to put an end to contemporary slave practices, and his argumentations reflect «little concern about the resurgence of slavery» and «serve a merely demographic purpose: to show that ancient nations could not have been as populous as some thought» (*Watkins* 2013: 113).

7. *Paris goodbye*

The clergyman-writer, the statesman-philosopher, and the politician-journalist drink the king's health «with great loyalty and alacrity» (Hamilton 1967: 324). Probably after the chapel dedicating the Embassy at the Hotel de Brancas, no public event will attract so much attention there.

Lord Hertford remains in Paris less than two years before leaving on 22 September 1765 to become Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, where one of his first acts is to relieve Charles Bunbury of his duties as secretary.

Hume remains in Paris as *chargé d'affaires* (senior-most official) and serves for four months, from 21 July to 17 November 1765, between Hertford's departure and the arrival of the Duke of Richmond. In January 1766 he leaves Paris and moves to London. Sterne sets out for home from Paris on 24 May 1764. The new of his arrival in London is an announcement in the postscript to *Lloyd's Evening Post*: «The Rev. Mr. Sterne, the celebrated author of *Tristram Shandy*, is arrived from Paris, where he has long resided for his health» (Cross 1909: 330).

Wilkes is busy from December 1764 to September 1765 visiting Lyons, Turin, Parma, Florence, Rome, Naples, Marseilles, and Geneva. His return to England is probably dated October 1765.

Bibliography

ANGENOT MARC, 1982, *La parole pamphlétaire. Typologie des discours modernes,* Paris: Payot.
BANDRY-SCUBBI, ANNE AND MADELEINE DESCARGUES-GRANT, 2006, *"Tristram Shandy", Laurence Sterne,* Paris: Colin.
BERLANT LAUREN, 2008, *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture.* Durham: Duke University Press.
BONGIE LAURENCE L., 2000, *David Hume: Prophet of the Counter-Revolution*, Indianapolis: Liberty Fund.
BOX MARC, DAVID HARVEY, AND MICHAEL SILVERTHORNE, 2003, "A Diplomatic Transcription of Hume's volunteer pamphlet for Archibald Stewart: Political Whigs, Religious Whigs, and Jacobites", *Hume Studies* 2: 223-66.
BROUGHAM HENRY P., 1855-61, *Collected Works,* Vol. 2. London and Glasgow: R. Griffin & Co.
BROWN CHRISTOPHER L., 2006, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
BURTON JOHN H., 1849, *Letters of Eminent Persons addressed to David Hume*. Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Soons.
CASH ARTHUR H., 1964, "The Sermon in *Tristram Shandy*", *ELH* 4 December: 395-417.
_____, 1992, *Laurence Sterne: The Later Years*, London-New York: Routledge.
_____, 2006, *John Wilkes: The Scandalous Father of Civil Liberty*, New Haven: Yale University Press.
COLLEY LINDA, 1992, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*, New Haven: Yale University Press.
CROSS WILBUR L., 1909, *The Life and Times of Laurence Sterne*, New York: Macmillan.
DEW BEN, 2009, "Waving a *mouchoir à la Wilkes*: Hume, Radicalism and the *North Briton*", *Modern Intellectual History* 2: 235-260.
DRESCHER SEYMOUR, 2010, *Econocide: British Slavery in the Era of Abolition*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
DURING SIMON, 2004, *Taking Liberties: Sterne, Wilkes and Warburton*, in Cryle, Peter and Lisa O'Connell, *Libertine Enlightenment: Sex, Liberty and Licence in the Eighteenth Century*, 15-33. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
EMERSON ROGER L., 1983, "Review of *Sister Peg: A Pamphlet Hitherto Unknown by David Hume*," *Hume Studies* 1: 74-81.
FITZGERALD PERCY, 1864, *The Life of Laurence Sterne*. Vol. 2. London: Chapman & Hall.
FORBES DUNCAN, 1975, *Hume's Philosophical Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

GERARD WILLIAM B., 2011, *Laurence Sterne, The Apostrophe, and American Abolitionism, 1788 -1831*, in Gerard, William B., Derek E. Taylor, and Robert G. Walker Robert, *Swiftly Sterneward: Essays on Laurence Sterne in His Times in Honor of Melvyn New*, 181-207. Newark: University of Delaware Press.
GERMAN LINDSEY AND JOHN REES, 2012, *A People's History of London*, London: Verso.
GOSSMAN NORBERT J., 1975, "The Origins of Modern British Radicalism: The Case for the Eighteenth Century", *Newsletter: European Labor and Working Class History* 7: 19-23.
HAMILTON HARLAN W., 1967, "William Combe and the Original Letters of the late Reverend Mr. Laurence Sterne (1788)", *PMLA*, 5: 412-422.
_____, 1984, "Sterne's Sermon in Paris and Its Background", *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 4: 316-325.
HARRIS JAMES A., 2015, *Hume. An Intellectual Biography,* New York: Cambridge University Press.
HAVARD JOHN O., 2014a, *Arbitrary Government: Tristram Shandy and the Crisis of Whig History*. *ELH* 2: 585-613.
_____, 2014b, *Only Disconnect? Laurence Sterne, Politics, and the Public*, in Baird Ileana, *Social Networks of the Long Eighteenth Century*, Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 267-298.
HUDSON NICHOLAS, 2011, "*Britons Never Will Be Slaves*: National Myth, Conservatism, and the Beginnings of British Antislavery." *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 4: 559-76.
HUME DAVID, 1822, *The Petition of the Grave and Venerable Bellmen (or Sextons) of the Church of Scotland, to the Hon. House of Commons*, in *The Scotch Haggis: Consisting of Anecdotes, Jests, Curious and Rare Articles of Literature: with a Collection of Epitaphs and Inscriptions, Original and Selected*, Edinburgh: David Webster, 187-191.
_____, 1982, *The History of the Proceedings in the Case of Margaret, commonly called Peg, only lawful sister of John Bull* (1760), London: Printed by William Strahan for William Owen, Near Temple Bar 1760, in *Sister Peg: A Pamphlet Hitherto Unknown by David Hume*, Edited by David R. Raynor, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 41-123.
_____, 1987, *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*, Edited by Eugene F. Miller, Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, xxxi-xli.
_____, 2007, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40), Vol. 1, Edited by David F. Norton and Mary J. Norton. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
_____, 2007, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. Edited by Peter Millican, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
_____, 2011, *The Letters of David Hume*, 2 vols. Edited by John Y. T. Greig. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
_____, 2019, *Correspondence of an Under-Secretary of State*

(1767-68), in *A Petty Statesman.* Writings on War and International Affairs, edited by Spartaco Pupo, Milan: Mimesis International, 175-207.
_____, *The Petition of the Patients of Westminster against James Fraser, Apothecary* (1750), in *The Letters of David Hume* 2: 340-342.
_____, 1754-1762, *The History of England*, 6 vols, Edinburgh: Hamilton, Balfour and Neil; London: Millar.
IAN R. CHRISTIE, IAN R., 1962, *Wilkes*, *Wyvill and Reform: The Parliamentary Reform Movement in British Politics*, *1760-1785,* New York: St Martin's Press.
KAY CAROL, 1988, *Political Constructions: Defoe, Richardson and Sterne in Relation to Hobbes, Hume, and Burke*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
LAMB JONATHAN, 1996, *Sterne and Irregular Oratory*, in Richetti, *John J. The Cambridge Companion to the Eighteenth-Century Novel*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 153-73.
LIVINGSTON DONALD W., 1998, *Philosophical Melancholy and Delirium: Hume's Pathology of Philosophy,* Chicago and London: University of *Chicago* Press.
Manuscript in the British Library. Conway Papers, Add. MS. 23, 218, fols. 137-39.
MILLER DAVID, 1981, *Philosophy and Ideology in Hume's Political Thought,* Oxford: Clarendon Press.
MOSSNER ERNEST C., 2001, *The Life of David Hume.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
NAMIER LEWIS AND BROOKE JOHN, 1964, *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons, 1754-1790*, vol. 1, London: The History of Parliament Trust.
NORMAN JESSE, 2013, *Edmund Burke: The First Conservative*, New York: Basic Books.
PARKER FRED, 2003, *Scepticism and Literature: An Essay on Pope, Hume, Sterne, and Johnson*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
POCOCK JOHN G. A., 1993, *Political Thought in the English-Speaking Atlantic, 1760-1790: The Imperial Crisis*, in Pocock, John G. A., *The Varieties of British Political Thought, 1500-1800*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 246-282.
PRICE VLADIMIR J., 1965, *The Ironic Hume.* Austin: University of Texas Press.
PUPO SPARTACO, 2020, *David Hume. The Sceptical Conservative.* Milan: Mimesis International.
RAMSAY JOHN OF OCHTERTYRE, 1888, *Scotland and Scotsmen in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. 1, edited by Alexander Allardyce, Edinburgh-London: W. Blackwood and sons.

RAYNOR DAVID R., 1982, Introduction, in *Sister Peg: A Pamphlet Hitherto Unknown by David Hume*, Edited by David R. Raynor, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1-40.
RICHARDSON DAVID, 2007, "Agency, Ideology, and Violence in the History of Transatlantic Slavery." *The Historical Journal* 50: 971-989.
ROSS IAN C., 2000, *Laurence Sterne: A Life*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
ROTHSTEIN ERIC, 1982, "Scotophilia and *Humphry Clinker*: The Politics of Beggary, Bugs, and Buttocks", *University of Toronto Quarterly* 1: 63-78.
RUDÉ GEORGE, 1962, *Wilkes and Liberty. A Social Study of 1763 to 1774*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
SANCHO IGNATIUS, 1784, *Letters of the Late Ignatius Sancho, an African. To Which are Prefixed, Memoirs of his Life*, London: Printed by J. Nichols, and Sold by C. Dilly.
SANDHU, SUKHDEV S., 1998, "Ignatius Sancho and Laurence Sterne", *Research in African Literatures* 4: 88-105.
SCOTT GEOFFREY AND FREDERICK A POTTLE, 1928, *Private Papers of James Boswell from Malahide Castle*, New York: privately printed.
SHER RICHARD B., 1983, *"Sister Peg, edited by David Raynor," Philosophical Books* 24: 85-91.
_____, 1985, *Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment: The Moderate Literati of Edinburgh.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
STERNE LAURENCE, 1788, *Original Letters of the late Reverend Mr. Laurence Sterne*, *London*: printed at the Logographic Press, and sold by T. Longman; J. Robson, and W. Clarke; and W. Richardson.
_____, 1808, *The Works of Laurence Sterne*1808, vol. 4, London: Printed for J. Johnson and 21 others.
_____, 1935, *Letters of Laurence Sterne,* Edited by Lewis Perry Curtis, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
_____,1967, *The Life & Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759-1767), edited by Graham Petrie. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
_____, 1971, *A Political Romance*. Edited by Kenneth Monkman, Menston: Scolar.
_____, 2006, *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy and Continuation of the Bramine's Journal: with Related Texts* (1768), edited by M. New and W. G. Day, Indianapolis-Cambridge: Hackett.
STEWART JOHN B., 1992, *Opinion and Reform in Hume's Political Philosophy,* Princeton: Princeton University Press.
THOMAS, PETER D. G., 1996, *John Wilkes. A Friend to Liberty,* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

WALPOLE HORACE, 1857, *The Letters of Horace Walpole, Earl of Orford*, vol. 4, Edited by Peter Cunningham, London: Henry G. Bohn.
WATKINS MARGARET, 2013, "A Cruel but Ancient Subjugation? Understanding Hume's Attack on Slavery", *Hume Studies* 1: 103-121.
WEHRS DONALD R., 2009, *Postcolonial Sterne*, in Keymer, Thomas, *The Cambridge Companion to Laurence Sterne*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 174-189.
WHYTE IAIN, 2006, *Scotland and the Abolition of Black Slavery, 1756-1838*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
WILKES JOHN, 1762, *The North Briton,* June 5.
_____, 1763, *The North Briton*, April 2.
_____, 1954, *The Correspondence of John Wilkes and Charles Churchill*, Edited by Edward H. Weatherly, New York: Columbia University Press.

Abstract

POLITICAL CONNECTIONS (AND DISCONNECTIONS) BETWEEN BRITISH INTELLECTUALS IN THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT: HUME, STERNE, AND WILKES IN PARIS (1764)

Keywords: Hume, Wilkes, Sterne, Political Scepticism, Radicalism.

In April 1764, Laurence Sterne, who is in France for a cure, is invited by Lord Hertford, the new English ambassador to France, to preach a sermon at the opening of the new embassy in Paris. Sterne accepts the invitation and chooses a text that is perceived as a shocking discourtesy to the diplomatic and political authorities. The dinner that follows, to which the most distinguished members of the British society are invited, is the occasion of a unique encounter between three of the most famous figures of the cultural and political world of the Great Britain eighteenth century: Laurence Sterne, the Irish clergyman and novelist, David Hume, the Scottish diplomatist and historian, and John Wilkes, the English radical politician and journalist. This essay focuses both on the encounter between the three compatriots of Great Britain in the peaceful atmosphere of Paris one year after the Treaty of 1763 and on the ideological and political implications, between liberal, sceptical, and radical perspectives. It aims to demonstrate that this affair, although not yet sufficiently researched, shows aspects of great cultural and historical-political interest.

SPARTACO PUPO
Università della Calabria
Dipartimento di Scienze Politiche e Sociali
spartaco.pupo@unical.it

EISSN 2037-0520