



Review of David Fate Norton, ed., *A Sketch of the Character of Mr. Hume and Diary of a Journey from Morpeth to Bath, 23 April-1 May 1776*, by John Hume

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A Sketch of the Character of Mr. Hume, and Diary of a Journey from Morpeth to Bath, 23 April - 1 May 1776,
by John Home. Edited by David Fate Norton.

Edinburgh: The Tragara Press, 1976. 29 pp. £6 or \$10.50.

In 1776 Hume set out, with mitigated scepticism, on his last journey in search of a cure for his mortal illness. He was intercepted and joined by John Home (1722-1808), the clerical cousin who had been dedicatee of the Four Dissertations and is best known to library cataloguers as the "author of Douglas". Home's short, untitled, journal of part of this journey forms the more interesting half of Professor Norton's little booklet. Home had wanted to publish the journal after the philosopher's death, but the nephew David Hume demurred. The veto was lifted in 1822, when the Scots author Henry Mackenzie published an edited text with his Life of Home. In the absence of the MS, Norton has copied Mackenzie's version carefully, except to omit an excerpt from a letter from Adam Ferguson which Home had prefixed to his account, and to which the opening sentence makes an otherwise puzzling reference. The MSS both of Ferguson's full letter (summoning Home back to Edinburgh because of Hume's condition) and of Home's reply of 2 May 1776 (a progress report on the journey with Hume) are in the National Library of Scotland; so it is a minor pity that Norton did not use up some of his spare space by including these in his notes. On p.15, line 19, read 'faculties'; p.20, line 19, add 'The' before 'Duke'.

The accompanying Sketch is now published for the first and perhaps last time. It is an extravagant encomium containing nothing of biographical consequence, and despite its title is less illuminating about Hume's character than the diary, or the pages of Hume's own correspondence. The MS in the National Library is mostly in the hand of a professional amanuensis, with autograph corrections by the author, who is not named but is referred to whimsically as

"an author of the nineteenth Century". Norton curiously never mentions this, yet must have used the information in dating the work to c.1802. But by that time Home's writing was decrepit. The fluent script of the MS suggests an earlier period closer to David Hume's death.

In securing an attractively hand-printed limited edition, Norton has found the most suitable format for this literary novelty. But it is a necessarily expensive format, and should have been subject to more meticulous editing at the price. The signs are that the work was meant for posthumous publication, so the editor is right to tidy up the orthographic eccentricities, at least to the minimum standards of late 18th-century printing practice. But he does not altogether do this. Alongside mainly archaic capitals and punctuation there are a few wilful modernizations (e.g. 'ancient', 'coeval', 'showed') and some gratuitous Americanisms ('defense', 'thru'). The substantive reading is wrong at a number of points. Page 7, line 7 of the narrative: for 'production' read 'productions' line 8, for 'any' read 'every'; line 22, for 'a' read 'an'. Page 9, line 11, for 'An admiration' read 'Admiration'; line 15, for 'Administration' read 'Admiration'; line 21, for 'head' read 'tread' and for 'became' read 'become'; line 30, for 'manner' read 'manners'. Page 10, line 24, delete 'is'. Page 11, line 2, for 'or' read 'as'; line 4, for '[thing] Fanciful' read 'Sacrifice' and for 'Fashion' read 'Faction'; line 11, for 'their' perhaps read 'these'; line 17, for 'doctrines' read 'doctrine.'. Page 12, lines 1-2, footnote marker should follow 'Countrymen' not 'merit'; line 16, for 'rises' read 'arises'. Page 27, n. 5 (cf. Introd., p. 4), for 'destination, hades' read 'destined abodes'; n. 9, after 'appear.' add 'He makes both parties speak.'. Page 28, n. 13, the second draft ending is an alternative to the last sentence of the first draft. The corruption of 'Impostors' on p.10 is not Home's.

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