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> Every movement of the theater, by a skillful poet, is communicated, as it were by magic, to the spectators; who weep, tremble, resent, rejoice, and are inflamed with all the variety of passions, which actuate the several personages of the drama. (EPM 5.2.26; SBN 221–2)

Much has been written recently about the role of sympathy in Hume's moral theory. That may indeed be its most important use. But it seems from a number of illustrations he uses that it has broader applications, in particular, application to a spectator's appreciation of drama. The problem some see with this broader application is that it conflicts with the basic definition of sympathy as a process by means of which impressions are shared. The actors on the stage would not seem to have the same passions which "inflame" the spectators. Worse, the spectators do not believe in their hearts that the passions which inflame them have real correlates.

At first blush, "sympathy" might mean any one of several things. In "The Conscience of Huckleberry Finn," for example, Jonathan Bennett says, "As for 'sympathy': I use this term to cover every sort of fellow-feeling, as when one feels pity over someone's loneliness, or horrified compassion over his pain, and when one feels a shrinking reluctance to act in a way which will bring misfortune to someone else."[1] However, fellow-feeling is not a sharing of feelings in Hume's sense. Alvin I. Goldman comes closer to Hume's meaning in a narrow description of empathy: "To empathize with someone, in its

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most frequent sense, is to sympathize or commiserate, which involves shared attitudes, sentiments, or emotions."[2] Still, Hume's sympathy is not the commiseration but rather what is involved in the commiseration, the shared attitudes, sentiments, and emotions. "No quality of human nature," says Hume, "is more remarkable, both in itself and in its consequences, than that propensity we have to sympathize with others, and to receive by communication their inclinations and sentiments, however different from, or even contrary to our own" (T 2.1.11.2; SBN 316). The principle of sympathy as he describes it in his technical sense is as follows:

> When any affection is infus'd by sympathy, it is at first known only by its effects, and by those external signs in the countenance and conversation, which convey an idea of it. This idea is presently converted into an impression, and acquires such a degree of force and vivacity, as to become the very passion itself, and produce an equal emotion, as any original affection. However instantaneous this change of the idea into an impression may be, it proceeds from certain views and reflections, which will not escape the strict scrutiny of a philosopher, tho' they may the person himself, who makes them. (T 2.1.11.3; SBN 317)

If sympathy has to do with the sharing of impressions, what can one say about possible broader applications in which the correlate impression is absent? One tack to take is to dismiss the illustrative examples as aberrations or at least minor inconsistencies on Hume's part. A second is to argue that the broader applications follow reasonably, given Hume's description of the mechanism of sympathy. I propose, in this paper, to take the second tack. The above description characterizes what one might call sympathy in its normal social context in which the feelings of another are identifiable from his verbal and bodily behavior. Of course, the identification is not infallible. The other person may intend to deceive by lying or mimicking the behavior associated with a feeling. But such occasions are parasitic on normal contexts.

But beyond the normal social context, there are other occasions which elicit sympathy, situations in which passions are aroused in the sympathizers for good cause, but which have no correspondent in the objects of sympathy. The case with which I am most concerned is Hume's example of sympathy in the theater.

In section one, I elaborate on Humean sympathy in a normal social context. Section two develops an argument for the consistency of several examples that appear on their face to conflict with this. Section three argues for the

reasonableness of the theatrical illustrations. And in section four, I draw some general conclusions from this expanded view of the principle of sympathy.

I

The general context within which Hume discusses sympathy is clearly a context in which the real existence and inner lives of others is taken for granted. Hume would have no truck with the familiar Cartesian rumination:

> But then if I look out of the window and see men crossing the square, as I just happen to have done, I normally say that I see the men themselves, just as I say that I see the wax. Yet do I see any more than hats and coats that could conceal automatons? I *judge* that they are men. And so something which I thought I was seeing with my eyes is in fact grasped solely by the faculty of judgment which is in my mind.[3]

It is, rather, for Hume a brute fact that we are social creatures. Nevertheless, although the recognition of others may be a natural capacity not requiring inference, our access to the inner lives of others is not immediate. "Now 'tis obvious, that nature has preserv'd a great resemblance among all human creatures, and that we never remark any passion or principle in others, of which, in some degree or other, we may not find a parallel in ourselves" (T 2.1.11.5; SBN 318). If we are to share the feelings of others, we must have had like feelings ourselves. As Hume notes in the *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, "A man of mild manners can form no idea of inveterate revenge or cruelty; nor can a selfish heart easily conceive the heights of friendship and generosity" (EHU 2.7; SBN 20). Having had no experience or impression of being cruel ourselves, we cannot form the idea of cruelty. To borrow Thomas Nagel's distinction, we may observe the behavioral signs of cruelty in others and thus have an "objective" idea of cruelty, but, lacking the "subjective" experience ourselves, we would not know what it is like to be cruel.[4] Thus, since there is no "parallel in ourselves," we could not share the feeling of cruelty; it could not be communicated to us as sympathizers. Much depends, then, on the range of the sympathizer's own experiences. To read Hume's remark about the resemblance among humans as a claim that feelings and passions can be communicated to us simply as humans without our having had any prior experience of them would be to violate the fundamental Humean principle that all ideas are copies of prior impressions.

In a further elaboration of the principle of sympathy, Hume says,

> When I see the *effects* of passion in the voice and gesture of any person, my mind immediately passes from these effects to their causes, and forms such a lively idea of the passion as is presently converted into the passion itself. In like manner, when I perceive the causes of any emotion, my mind is convey'd to the effects and is actuated with a like emotion. Were I present at any of the more terrible operations of surgery, 'tis certain, that even before it begun, the preparation of the instruments, the laying of the bandages in order, the heating of the irons, with all the signs of anxiety and concern in the patient and assistants, wou'd have a great effect upon my mind, and excite the strongest sentiments of pity and terror. No passion of another discovers itself immediately to the mind. We are only sensible of its causes or effects. From *these* we infer the passion: And consequently *these* give rise to sympathy. (T 3.3.1.7; SBN 576)

Hume is quite self-conscious here about the mechanism through which sympathy operates. An ordinary person might not recognize the inferences he makes when he sympathizes, but these do "not escape the strict scrutiny of a philosopher." We observe the gestures and verbal behavior of another. Given our own parallel experiences, we are aware of the causal connections between the overt behavior and the mental state. So we have an idea of the mental state of the other. The context is sufficiently dramatic for the idea to increase in vividness or vivacity to the point at which it becomes an impression that is the same as the mental state of the other.

Barry Stroud finds the above analysis implausible on somewhat Wittgensteinian grounds. It does not give a reasonable explanation of our normal sympathetic responses to pain in others. "For one thing, if another person feels pain and I consequently feel that special feeling that is sympathy, then I do not feel what he feels after all—his feeling is not being transmitted to me. He feels pain, but I feel sympathy."[5] There seems to be something right about this point. Suppose someone to have just finished a large dinner and to run across a starving and emaciated beggar as he leaves the restaurant. However sympathetic he might be, it is hard to imagine his feeling hungry. Physiology rules against it. Only on *Star Trek* can there be such physiological empathizers. As a result, Stroud says, "So it cannot be that sympathy is a particular feeling." Now, there seems something wrong about this point. Sympathy is a principle, and, as Árdal notes, "It is clear that a principle is not a special passion, although Hume, never very careful to remain consistent in his terminology, refers at least once to 'the communicated passion of sympathy.'"[6] Still, the problem persists. Pain is, after all, a sensation and occurrent sensations are impressions.

Jonathan Harrison reads Hume's principle, too, as a principle that allows the communication of pain. In explaining the mechanism, he says, "Thus we feel sympathetic pain when we tread on another's gouty foot, and sympathetic pleasure from the enjoyment another derives from his wife, his family, and his possessions." And later, "Seeing someone being injured (a cause of pain) or groaning (an effect of pain) brings to mind an idea of pain, which idea, of course, is a faint copy of an actual impression of pain. This idea of pain is converted into an impression of pain, because it is related to my impression of myself by such relations as resemblance, contiguity, and causation."[7] Harrison rightly emphasizes the importance of causal connections and the role that resemblance and contiguity play. But pain is not one of Hume's exemplars for sympathy. It is true that Hume suggests we can move from an idea of pain in some cases. "The lively idea of any object always approaches its impression; and 'tis certain we may feel sickness and pain from the mere force of imagination, and make a malady real by often thinking of it" (T 2.1.11.7; SBN 319). This is, indeed, a peculiar remark. Perhaps Hume was thinking of the depression and physical ailments he suffered for several years as he tried to begin the *Treatise*. He seems then to have thought there was some psychosomatic connection. In "A Letter to a Physician," he writes: "I was continually fortifying myself with reflections against death, and poverty, and shame, and pain, and all the other calamities of life. These no doubt are exceeding useful, when joined with an active life, because the occasion being present along with the reflection, works it into the soul, and makes it take a deep impression; but in solitude they serve to little other purpose, than to waste the spirits, the force of the mind meeting with no resistance, but wasting itself in the air, like our arm when it misses its aim. This, however, I did not learn but by experience, and till I had already ruined my health, though I was not sensible of it."[8] Whether the early depression and ailments were the genesis of this reference to pain or not, it is still fairly clear from the context that it is not intended as an example of sympathy.

The resolution to the problem is, I think, fairly simple, although not unproblematic in itself. Recalling the original distinction between impressions of sensation and impressions of reflection, pain falls into the first category as does hunger. But, "This idea of pleasure or pain, when it returns upon the soul, produces the new impressions of desire and aversion, hope and fear, which may properly be called impressions of reflexion, because derived from it" (T 1.1.2.; SBN 8). These impressions of reflection are passions, desires, and emotions. In a pre-Wittgensteinian world in which pain is not the predominant issue in the philosophy of mind, it is reasonable to suggest that sympathy is a principle having to do with the passions, emotions, and

desires of others rather than the sensations which bring them about. When Stroud says, "Although I sympathize with the child with a bad toothache—her suffering is unpleasant or perhaps unbearable to me—it can hardly be said that in doing so I actually have a toothache myself," he is right.[9] But the shared feeling would not be the sensation of toothache, but rather the desire for relief, surcease. As I suggested above, I think this explanation is somewhat problematic. It is hard to understand how one could have the desire of relief without the pain. One would need to appeal to the principle of independence of impressions as a first step. But Hume seems fairly clearly to conceive of the principle of sympathy as a principle restricted to impressions of reflection. He does not say that the idea of a sensation becomes the very sensation itself; he says that the idea becomes so vivid "as to become the very passion itself." In the surgery, it is not the idea of pain that is communicated; it is the feeling of terror.

The principle of sympathy works through causal inference. "No passion of another discovers itself immediately to the mind. We are only sensible of its causes and effects. From *these* we infer the passion: And consequently *these* give rise to our sympathy" (T 3.3.1.7; SBN 576). There seems some conflation here of two stages of a sympathizer's response. The first stage is the identification of the passion through causes or effects, and the second is the sympathizer's elevation of the idea of the passion into the passion itself. The first stage is a discriminatory activity, although one which may be tacit, clear only to "the strict scrutiny of the philosopher." The second stage is more an involuntary effect of the inference under the circumstances of the context in which it takes place. I take it that the process by which one's idea achieves greater vivacity is not a voluntary process, but rather a suffering due to our passional nature. Given one's recognition of the anxieties of the patient, one's emotional state is heightened by the sight of the surgical equipment laid out on the table. Having made an inference to the emotion of another, our emotions carry us on to "identify" with the other's feelings.

The inference and its affective associations are largely a function of the imagination. In Book I of the *Treatise*, Hume says, "Our judgments concerning cause and effect are deriv'd from habit and experience; and when we have been accustom'd to see one object united to another, our imagination passes from the first to the second, by a natural transition, which precedes reflection, and which cannot be prevented by it" (T 1.3.13.8; SBN 147). It is this mechanism which operates in the case of sympathy in Book 2: "We find from experience, that such a degree of passion is usually connected with such a misfortune; and . . . the imagination is affected by the *general rule*, and makes us conceive a lively idea of the passion, or rather feel the passion itself, in the

same manner, as if the person were really actuated by it" (T 2.2.7.5; SBN 370–371). Much has been written about Hume's doctrine of general rules and the variety of functions they perform. For the moment, it is sufficient to note that they have their source in custom or habit which itself is the result of repetitions of various kinds in experience. The particular function they serve in the case of sympathy is to provide a connection between observed circumstances, speech, and gesture on the one hand and inner feelings on the other. Given the customary connection codified in a general rule between external causes and effects and inner feelings, the imagination is carried from the external observation to the idea of inner feelings. It may not be unreasonable to suppose that there is a general rule applied when Hume notes, "if we think of a wound, we can scarcely forbear reflecting on the pain which follows it" (EHU 3.3; SBN 24). In respect to everyday life, general rules would seem to serve the same function that folk psychology serves in contemporary philosophy of mind, relating circumstances, beliefs, desires, and actions.

In summary, the principle of sympathy in its normal social context has the following outlines: One observes another in some circumstance, speaking and behaving in a manner appropriate to that circumstance. One knows from prior experience what it is like to be so situated. And one has absorbed general rules governing the connection between that situation and inner passions, desires, and sentiments. The rules carry one's imagination to the ideas of those passions, desires, and sentiments, and the emotional context increases the vivacity of the ideas to the point at which they become qualitatively identical with the other person's feelings.

II

In the normal application of the principle of sympathy there are feelings to be communicated. Annette Baier notes, for example, that in sympathy, "[m]ore than mere beliefs about others' passions are involved—we actually feel with others."[10] However several of Hume's examples of sympathy extend the principle beyond this requirement of sharing. The first example that comes to mind is a case in which the mechanism of sympathy is shown to be fallible and corrigible, the example of the great-minded individual who is not distressed by his misfortune.

> When a person of merit falls into what is vulgarly esteem'd a great misfortune, we form a notion of his condition; and carrying our fancy from the cause to the usual effect, first conceive a lively idea of his sorrow, and then feel an impression of it, entirely over-looking that

> greatness of mind, which elevates him above such emotions, or only considering it so far as to encrease our admiration, love and tenderness for him. We find from experience, that such a degree of passion is usually connected with such a misfortune; and tho' there be an exception in the present case, yet the imagination is affected by *the general rule*, and makes us conceive a lively idea of the passion, or rather feel the passion itself, in the same manner, as if the person were really actuated by it. (T 2.2.7.5; SBN 370–371)

One has a passion through sympathy because one mistakenly believes another to have it. "All this," Hume continues, "proceeds from sympathy; but 'tis of a partial kind, and views its objects only on one side, without considering the other, which has a contrary effect, and wou'd entirely destroy that emotion, which arises from the first appearance." It is clear that in one sense, objects can only be viewed from one side. "No passion of another discovers itself immediately to the mind. We are only sensible of its causes or effects." To say, then, that one has not considered the other side must mean that one has not surveyed the whole context of causes and effects. Circumstance alone entered into the causal inference. Had one taken into account conversation and gesture, it would have been clear that there was no feeling of sorrow in the mind of our high minded individual. Had the very idea of sorrow arisen in the sympathizer, it would immediately be destroyed. One might plausibly explain this by appealing to a distinction between higher and lower level general rules. In a different but related context, Marie Martin says, "How do we avoid this sort of mistake? Only by developing another, even *higher*-order, set of rules to guide our application of the first general rules."[11] Such an appeal to corrective rules is clearly illustrated in Hume's reasoning concerning charity to beggars: "Giving alms to common beggars is naturally praised; because it seems to carry relief to the distressed and indigent: but when we observe the encouragement thence arising to idleness and debauchery, we regard that species of charity rather as a weakness than a virtue" (EPM 2.2.18; SBN 180). It may be that in moral considerations, there is some epistemic norm, some requirement that in moral judgments one is obliged to engage in as broad a survey as possible of the relevant factors. But I do not see any such requirement in the principle of sympathy. Sympathy is a natural tendency which will be successful or not depending on the breadth of one's recognition of the appropriate factors. To say that it is corrigible is simply to remark that one may find one's sympathetic passion eliminated by further observations and inferences based on more extensive general rules.

Whereas the first example illustrated the fallibility of sympathy, the second raises rather different issues.

> 'Tis certain, that sympathy is not always limited to the present moment, but that we often feel by communication the pains and pleasures of others, which are not in being, and which we only anticipate by the force of imagination. For supposing I saw a person perfectly unknown to me, who, while asleep in the fields, was in danger of being trod under foot by horses, I shou'd immediately run to his assistance; and in this I shou'd be actuated by the same principle of sympathy, which makes me concern'd for the present sorrows of a stranger. The bare mention of this is sufficient. Sympathy being nothing but a lively idea converted into an impression, 'tis evident, that, in considering the future possible or probable condition of any person, we may enter into it with so vivid a conception as to make it our own concern; and by that means be sensible of pains and pleasures which neither belong to ourselves, nor at the present instant have any real existence. (T 2.2.9.13; SBN 385)

Unlike the first example in which sympathy is misguided, Hume takes this as the real thing. There is a counterfactual element. Were the individual in the field awake to his situation, he would have the same feeling of danger the sympathizer has. And there is an element of projection into the future: the danger is a danger of future harm. As Jane McIntyre notes, "This extension of sympathy requires a connection between the idea of the person in the future and some enlivening feature of the present: the degree of sympathetic concern with the future varies according to the vivacity of that present impression."[12] One could read a counterfactual element into the first case, too. Were the high minded individual a normal sort of person, then he would have been miserable in his misfortune and the sympathy would have been appropriate. And if general rules are causal regularities, they do need counterfactual support. However, Hume, although insisting that all general rules are the result of habit or custom, does distinguish between levels of general rules. Some, attributed to judgment, are rules that locate essential causes of things, while others, attributed to imagination, deal with accidental features. In the case of the misguided sympathizer, one is led to suggest that the circumstance that leads to the sympathetic response is, in this instance, accidental. The enduring character of the object of sympathy is the essential cause of the absence of sorrow and the source of the error.

In the second case, there is, presumably, no room for error. Were the individual in the field awake to his situation, he *would* feel the threat of the oncoming horses. No quality of character could bar him from such feelings. The general rule here in its counterfactual form gets at essential causes. Not only is the sympathy not misguided, it also provides grounds for action on the part of the sympathizer.

In describing the features that operate in the principle of sympathy, Páll Árdal finds the following to be important, indeed, to be stressed: "To sympathize with x is to have x's 'opinions and sentiments' communicated to us. It is to have x's opinions or sentiments because of a communication according to the principles of operation laid down."[13] He then goes on to note that "[t]he model of communication does not appear to fit all the phenomena where sympathy seems to be involved. In order to account for facts that seem to conflict with his theory Hume appeals to general rules and a principle of contrast or comparison."[14] I have begun to argue that the model of communication is not the best model for Hume's concept of sympathy. At best, communication is a goal of sympathy; it is not constitutive. The principles of operation do not entail successful communication of feelings since they involve causal inferences which are fallible and which may, even when well founded, involve projections into the future. To infer that another has or would have a particular feeling or sentiment one must rely on the behavioral or circumstantial evidence given to one's senses. And this requires that one rely on regular connections in one's experience, which amounts to having formulated the principles of regularity that make up a theory of folk psychology. These, I take it, would be a set of general rules we use to guide our lives and understand the inner lives of others. The mechanism of sympathy requires that we draw an inference from circumstances or behavior on the basis of general rules of human psychology. This is our way of corrigibly identifying a feeling in another. The immediacy of the situation and often familial closeness to the other heighten the vividness of the idea we have identified. Hume's argument that we are all so much alike in our affections supports the point that our eventual impression will be the same as the feeling of the other but does not guarantee successful communication. We may be embarrassed for another who acts foolishly even though the other does not recognize his or her foolishness and feel embarrassed. This is a commonplace of experience. I do not see that the appeal to general rules is at all a departure from the principles of operation that Hume lays down. It seems rather to be essential to the operation.

If I may say that the principle of sympathy employed in ordinary intercourse stresses communication of feeling or sentiment as essential, I would

suggest that, in a broader view, Hume's principle points out that identification of a feeling or sentiment through causal inference from circumstances and behavior by way of general rules of folk psychology is at the core of the mechanism of sympathy. The upshot of the broader view so far is that sympathy is the acquisition of a feeling or sentiment that may or may not represent a correlative feeling in another person. To be sure, the normal goal of the "propensity" of sympathy is to capture the feeling that another has. But given levels of general rules, the inference may be capricious and misguided or well-founded and firmly rooted in causal foundations. And given well-founded generalizations about human nature, appropriate sympathetic responses may arise in counterfactual cases.

III

Early in his essay, "Of Tragedy," Hume notes a paradox of tragic drama: "The whole art of the poet is employed in rousing and supporting the compassion and indignation, the anxiety and resentment, of his audience. They are pleased in proportion as they are afflicted, and never are so happy as when they employ tears, sobs, and cries, to give vent to their sorrow, and relieve their heart, swoln with the tenderest sympathy and compassion." (OT 29) How and why one derives pleasure from the sympathetic response to feigned suffering are interesting and difficult questions. Although the focus of this paper is on the question of sympathetic response rather than pleasure, some comment is in order. Aristotle, otherwise the master of distinctions, says rather cryptically, "The tragic pleasure is that of pity and fear, and the poet has to produce it by a work of imitation."[15] Some commentators on Hume have found a modified form of this in Hume's resolution to the problem, suggesting that Hume holds that the pity and fear are converted into pleasure. However, Hume clearly argues that it is the eloquence of the poet or dramatist that provides the pleasure derived from tragedy. Without further argument, I would accept Robert Yanal's analysis of Hume's view.

> Hume's view is rather that our experience of tragedy and kindred depictions is made pleasurable *overall* through the infusion of pleasure from the aesthetic qualities of the work, even though some portions of the overall experience may be painful. The *sorrow* is not made pleasant, though our overall experience of the tragedy may well be. While we may be tempted to *describe* our sorrow as pleasant, this would be an error, though an easy one to make, given that it is hard to disentangle the various strands of our complex experience of a work of art.[16]

I would conjecture that some of the problems in disentangling aesthetic experiences might be resolved by reference to Hume's distinction between delicacy of passion and delicacy of taste. "Some people are subject to a certain *delicacy* of *passion*, which makes them extremely sensible to all the accidents of life, and gives them a lively joy upon every prosperous event, as well as a piercing grief when they meet with misfortune and adversity" (ODTP 25). Given the propensity for sympathy in people, a delicacy of passion would move them readily to share the joys and sorrows of others. A delicacy of taste, although yielding pleasurable and painful sentiments too, is an aesthetic capacity. "When you present a poem or a picture to a man possessed of this talent, the delicacy of his feeling makes him be sensibly touched with every part of it; nor are the masterly strokes perceived with more exquisite relish and satisfaction, than the negligences or absurdities with disgust and uneasiness" (ODTP 25–6). Thus the pleasure one takes in a well written and well performed tragedy would be the result of one's aesthetic sense, one's taste, whereas the sorrow or grief in which one engages would be the result of one's passional and sympathetic nature. In "Of Tragedy," Hume uses Shakespeare's "Othello" to illustrate the art of the playwright and the taste of the spectator.

> Had you any intention to move a person extremely by the narration of any event, the best method of increasing its effect would be artfully to delay informing him of it, and first to excite his curiosity and impatience before you let him into the secret. This is the artifice practiced by Iago in the famous scene of Shakespeare; and every spectator is sensible, that Othello's jealousy acquires additional force from his preceding impatience, and that the subordinate passion is here readily transformed into the predominant one. (OT 33)

One must assume that the spectator takes sides, knows more about the situation than Othello does, and is not in sympathy with Iago and his plotting. The spectator may not share Othello's impatience when he says,

> Think, my lord! By heaven, he echoes me, as if there were some monster in his thought too hideous to be shown. Thou dost mean something: I heard thee say but now thou lik'st not that, when Cassio left my wife. What didst not like? And when I told thee he was of my counsel in my whole course of wooing, thou criedst "Indeed!" and didst contract and purse thy brow together, as if thou then hadst shut up in thy brain some horrible conceit. If thou dost love me, show me thy thought.[17]

But he appreciates the psychological move the playwright makes due to his delicacy of taste and, on that account, is pleased.

Whether or not the above suggestion moves toward a resolution of the problem of pleasure, the problem of sympathetic response to fiction remains. "A spectator of a tragedy," Hume says, "passes thro' a long train of grief, terror, indignation, and other affections, which the poet represents in the persons he introduces" (T 2.2.7.3; SBN 369). Of course, the spectator knows that what he sees is an imitation of real life. And in as much as it is a good imitation, Hume claims, it gives pleasure. But it is the representation itself of real life that causes the passions in the spectator. And here the "genius" of the poet is all important. "The persons introduced in tragedy and epic poetry must be represented as reasoning, and thinking, and concluding, and acting, suitably to their character and circumstances; and without judgment, as well as taste and invention, a poet can never hope to succeed in so delicate an undertaking" (OST 16).

It is indeed difficult to "disentangle the various strands of our complex experience of a work of art" in part because in the case of fiction we seem to have a seamless experience while we take two attitudes. We know it is imitation, yet we suspend disbelief, and it is in the suspension of disbelief that our passional responses are set free. Hume describes this complex experience:

> It is certain, that, on the theatre, the representation has almost the effect of reality; yet it has not altogether that effect. However we may be hurried away by the spectacle, whatever dominion the senses and imagination may usurp over reason, there still lurks at the bottom a certain idea of falsehood in the whole of what we see. This idea, though weak and disguised, suffices to diminish the pain which we suffer from the misfortunes of those whom we love, and to reduce that affliction to such a pitch as converts it into a pleasure. (OT 31)

Setting aside the problem of the suspension of disbelief for the moment, one can give a reasonable explanation of the sympathetic response of spectators. The scene they witness becomes a scene that gives them direct impressions of circumstance, speech, and gesture. The artful dramatist has as his stock in trade a knowledge of the general rules that govern folk psychology, and the circumstances, speech, and gestures of the actors are constructed according to these rules. The actors themselves presumably share some knowledge of these rules, of the gestures and quality of speech appropriate to various emotions. Margaret Woffington, a contemporary of Hume, played Jocasta so well, it seems, that John Doran reports of a fellow actress: "Mrs. Bellamy was so

overcome by her acting Jocasta in that awful drama of 'Oedipus' that she fainted on the stage, when playing Eurydice to her. Some persons set this down to affectation; but George Anne was not a lady likely to affect a swoon for the sake of complimenting a rival actress."[18] The story makes the point, although it is not clear how Doran got Jocasta and Eurydice in the same play. So the spectators are drawn to form ideas of particular feelings and sentiments from the normal causes and effects of the spectacle. The heightened emotions represented in the speech and gestures cause the ideas of the passions in the spectators' minds to increase in vivacity to the point that they become the passions themselves.

It is not clear how far Hume thought the actors might have gone in achieving, themselves, the feelings portrayed in their roles. Hume remarks at one point that, "A man who enters the theatre . . . observes the actors to be animated by the appearance of a full audience, and raised to a degree of enthusiasm, which they cannot command in any solitary or calm moment" (EPM 5.2.24–25; SBN 221). Adam Potkay notes that in "Of Eloquence," Hume would have orators actually take on the passions they hoped to instill in their audiences. He quotes Hume: "The orator, by the force of his own genius and eloquence, first inflamed himself with anger, indignation, pity, sorrow; and then communicated those impetuous movements to his audience" (OE 66). He continues, "In the ancient assembly as in the modern theater, the success of the orator or actor depends chiefly on the sympathetic exchange of passions with the audience: action, along with boldly figurative speech, serves to initiate as well as indicate this circuit."[19] One imagines, then, the better actors, in their enthusiasm, achieving the very passions the playwright has written into his characters' parts, still knowing, somehow, that their passions have fictional origins or whatever origins method actors employ.

If an actor does, in fact, achieve the passion written into his role, the sympathetic transactions become rather complicated. The Oedipus actor might have worked himself into a happy frame of mind befitting a bridegroom as the play progresses to the character's marriage. The audience, on the other hand, is thinking, "My God, he's marrying his mother. Oh, the horror of it!" Further, in some scenes, the spectators would be responding with an emotion that had a correlate in the method actor, an emotion 'properly' caused because communicated to the sympathizer by someone who really had the emotion, but who achieved it based on a peculiar causal process of identification with a fiction.

Hume, himself, was quite taken with a play: "Douglas: A Tragedy," written by a young friend, John Home. In fact, Hume participated in an early reading or first rehearsal of the play along with other friends of Home before

it was first performed at the Canongate Theater in Edinburgh. Hume read the part of Glenavlon.[20] The play itself is a gothic tragedy awash in sentiment. Set in Scotland at a time of clan conflict and Danish incursions, it appeals to patriotic feelings and the love between mother and son. A young woman of noble family falls in love with and marries a son of an opposing clan, Douglas, unbeknownst to her own family. The husband is killed in tribal conflict shortly after. A son is born and sent off with a nurse. Both are presumed killed in a flooding stream, but the son is found and brought up by a shepherd. The woman marries a second time. When the play begins, her second husband, Lord Randolph, has just been rescued from an ambush by the long lost son, and he is brought home as a hero. Lady Randolph eventually discovers that the young man who rescued her husband is her own son. The villain in the play, Glenavlon, wants Lord Randolph's estate and his wife and plans to kill both Randolph and young Douglas. To incite jealousy (shades of Othello), he suggests to Lord Randolph that the young man and Lady Randolph are lovers since they do meet in private and are quite fond of one another. He brings Randolph to a place where the son, Douglas, and Lady Randolph are meeting. To make a long story a little shorter, Douglas kills Glenavlon, but is fatally wounded and dies in his mother's arms. His mother, distraught, throws herself off a cliff. Lord Randolph, feeling guilty, goes off to fight the Danes, hoping to die in battle.[21]

The scene in which Lady Randolph reveals to Norval (young Douglas) that she is his mother is one of the few relatively happy episodes in the play. She begins by telling him that he is the son of Douglas and that, although his father is dead, his mother lives.

> *Norval*.
> O! tell me who, and where my mother is! Opprest by a base world, perhaps she bends beneath the weight of other ills than grief; and desolate, implores of heav'n, the aid her son should give. It is, it must be so—your countenance confesses that she's wretched. O! tell me her condition! Can the sword—Who shall resist me in a parent's cause?
>
> *Lady Randolph*.
> Thy virtue ends her woe.—My son, my son! I am thy mother and the wife of Douglas! [Falls upon his neck]
>
> *Norval*.
> O heav'n and earth, how wond'rous is my fate! Art thou my mother? Ever let me kneel![22]

As the audience sees Norval learn piece by piece the history of his own origins, Hume would suppose their excitement rising to a high pitch, and when Lady Randolph says, "My son, my son!" the joy of revelation for both mother and son would, on the Humean analysis, be communicated to the crowd. The same joy would fill their hearts as impressions of reflection.

Much of the sympathetic response in the theater would seem to involve counterfactual situations. Hume's example of the individual in the field unaware of his danger is an example of the sort of circumstance that seems characteristic of tragedy as well as much comedy. As often as not, the spectator sympathizes with a protagonist, having feelings the protagonist would have were he or she aware of his or her situation. Early in the reunion scene, the audience knows young Douglas's true identity, although he does not yet know it. As well as the sheer excitement of anticipation, they may, on a Humean analysis, be supposed to have some anticipatory feelings of joy in their knowledge that he is Lady Randolph's son, knowing how he would feel were he aware of this fact.

As Hume suggests, the spectator watches a play with a divided mind, knowing that it is fiction and yet suspending disbelief. The knowledge that it is imitation allows for the operation of taste and critical discernment, the appreciation of structure and characterization in which one finds pleasure. At the same time, the power of one's imagination allows one to enter, as passionally receptive, into the events that unfold. I find difficulties on this score that lead me to conjecture that Hume probably was not "inflamed with all the variety of passions, which actuate the several personages of the drama." He saw "Douglas" performed and, as an acute observer, surely paid attention to the reaction of the audience. And very likely, the audience did "weep, tremble, resent, rejoice," as the plot developed. Yet Hume much preferred delicacy of taste to delicacy of passion. I am inclined to suggest that he thought of those spectators as having a "delicacy of passion [which] is to be lamented, and to be remedied, if possible" (ODTP 26).

It is clear that disbelief is not entirely suspended. One knows that what one sees is imitation. And in Hume's rather complex theory of pleasure in the theater, two developments are possible. Hume remarks that "imitation is always of itself agreeable" (OT 32). Were this true, the spectators would naturally receive some pleasure from their divided attention to the drama. The critic of taste, focussing more on the structure and eloquence of the piece, would derive pleasure rather from the artistic merit of the drama. Nevertheless, to the extent that critic and passionate playgoer suspend disbelief at all, and enter imaginatively into the proceedings, Hume's distinction between belief and one sense of imagination seems to eliminate this possibility. In the section, "Of the Will and Direct Passions," in Book 2 of the *Treatise*, he says,

> I have already observ'd that belief is nothing but a lively idea related to a present impression. This vivacity is a requisite circumstance to the exciting all our passions, the calm as well as the violent; nor has a mere fiction of the imagination any considerable influence upon either of them. 'Tis too weak to take any hold of the mind, or to be attended with emotion. (T 2.3.6.10; SBN 427)

It would be hazardous to argue that Hume uses the word "imagination" in several senses. But it does seem to have narrower and broader applications. Jan Wilbanks seems to take a narrower view as definitive: "My hypothesis is the following: imagination, in Hume's view, is the faculty of forming, uniting, and separating ideas."[23] This would seem to be the sense in which one can entertain the complex ideas of streets paved with gold or virtuous horses. And surely these idle imaginings have no serious hold on the mind. But imagination in a broader sense is more powerful. Wayne Waxman, for example, notes, "Imagination is the bridge which alone enables us to pass from the self-less, object-less flux of disjointed perceptions and unvivified ideas of the senses (immediate consciousness) to the world of objective order and regularity, minds and bodies, and well-founded belief and inference."[24] In a larger sense, the imaginative capacity is the capacity of reason and understanding and judgement. It is the source of general rules that carry us from belief to belief. There are, Hume allows, "flights of the imagination," but he also describes understanding as "the general and more establish'd properties of the imagination" (T 1.4.7.6–7; SBN 267), and they are the latter properties of imagination which operate in a spectator's mind as he draws an inference from the scene he sees to the passions it represents.

I have used the expression, "suspension of disbelief," to indicate the attitude or frame of mind that allows the principle of sympathy to work in fiction. But it may be ill chosen. It may prejudge the question whether the receptivity to the events on stage is voluntary or not. Clearly, suspension of disbelief has an effect. Knowing that the scenes depicted in a tragedy *are* depictions relieves one of enduring distress at the thought of what took place on stage. But does one will to accept the scenes as real in order to be moved by them, or is one's response involuntary, something one cannot help? My inclination is to think Hume would take the response to be involuntary.

> Nothing is more capable of infusing any passion into the mind, than eloquence, by which objects are represented in their strongest and most lively colours. We may of ourselves acknowledge, that such an object is valuable, and such another odious; but 'till an orator

> excites the imagination, and gives force to these ideas, they may have but a feeble influence either on the will or the affections. (T 2.3.6.7; SBN 426)

Similarly, the dramatist's art and the actor's talent "infuse" the passions through the creation of situation and language and the manner of presentation. The spectator is, willy-nilly, subjected to these impressions and caused to have ideas of the passions which ideas are raised to the level of impressions. The imaginative constructs of idle daydreaming are impotent to act on one's feelings, but those external representations do have a power to move one's imaginative capacities and excite the passions.

The argument for a broader conception of the principle of sympathy as integral to one's appreciation of drama, then, is that the imitation of reality gives the spectator the impressions of circumstance, gesture, and speech from which he forms ideas of passions. As in some actual cases, the passions of which he forms ideas do not have real correlates. He may form the ideas from the speech and gestures given, or he may form them counterfactually on the basis of general rules about how a person would feel were he aware of his situation. The impressions on the basis of which he infers the passions are vivid and dramatic, artfully and eloquently crafted, adding vividness to the ideas to the point at which they become real impressions. It may be worth repeating the point that the impressions that lead to an idea of the passions are impressions of sensation; the resulting passional impression is an impression of reflection. The spectator knows that what he sees is imitation, but is moved by the impressions he has of the scene which *are* real.

IV

"No quality of human nature is more remarkable, both in itself and in its consequences, than the propensity we have to sympathize with others, and to receive by communication their inclinations and sentiments, however different from, or even contrary to our own" (T 2.1.11.2; SBN 316). The presupposition of this propensity is that we are social creatures recognizing others of our species as fellow creatures. The prerequisites for the operation of the principle of sympathy are that we have had the experiences of our kind. We cannot have communicated to us feelings we have never had ourselves. Surely this sharing or communication of feeling is the primary goal of Hume's principle of sympathy. But when Hume comes to analyze the mechanics of the procedure, communication is not a constitutive aspect of the anatomy of sympathy. We work by inference from impressions of the circumstance, behavior and speech

of others. And our inferences depend on causal generalizations we have gathered in the course of acquiring our theory of folk psychology. Book II, Of the Passions, in the *Treatise*, is an elaboration of such a theory. Hume shows us how we are drawn to have the passions we have, calm and violent, strong and weak, as a result of the sensations we have. Recognizing other, we still have no access to their inner lives except by way of inferences drawn from impressions of sensation and the general rules we have acquired that connect behavior and circumstances with feeling. Since our access to other minds is so limited, we are, paradoxically, open to passions based on our own mental constructs or models of social life. It is not too far-fetched, I think, to suggest that Hume would have us live in what Daniel Dennett has called "notional worlds."

The idea of a notional world, then, is the idea of a model—but not necessarily the actual, real, true model—of one's internal representations. *It does not consist itself of representations but of representeds.* It is the world 'I live in', not the world of representations in me.[25]

The match between one's notional world and the real world depends on the well-foundedness of one's causal inferences. Thus, if one finds a passion represented in another in one's notional world, the mechanism of sympathy would lead one to have the passion oneself. But a work of fiction may also be thought of as a notional world, constructed by a poet, into which one enters. And within that world, the same mechanism may be effective. Rephrasing my argument, our notional models may be inadequate to what is happening in the real world, or the real world may be irrelevant to our models at the moment, as in fiction. It seems to me that the latter is sometimes the case in Hume's principle of sympathy, and so one must move beyond the normal context of the communication of sentiments to a rather deeper understanding of Humean sympathy.

NOTES

The introductory quotation is from *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*. The first citation, EPM 5.2.26, is from the Critical Edition, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998). The second citation, SBN 221–222, is from *Enquiries concerning Understanding and concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, 3rd ed., revised by P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975). Other texts cited are *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, Critical Edition, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), indicated by EHU, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), indicated by T, and *A Treatise of Human Nature,*

ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, 2nd ed., revised by P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978) indicated by SBN. The essays, "Of the Standard of Taste," "Of the Delicacy of Taste and Passion," "Of Tragedy," and "Of Eloquence," are from *Of the Standard of Taste and Other Essays*, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1961). These will be indicated in the text by OST, ODTP, OT, and OE, respectively, followed by the page number.

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2 Alvin I. Goldman, "Empathy, Mind, and Morals," in *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 66 (1992): 29.

3 *Meditations on First Philosophy* in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, Vol. II, trans. J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, D. Murdoch, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 21.

4 Thomas Nagel, "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?" *The Philosophical Review* 83 (1974): 435–50

5 Barry Stroud, *Hume*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), 197.

6 Páll S. Árdal, *Passion and Value in Hume's Treatise*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1989), 42

7 Jonathan Harrison, *Hume's Moral Epistemology*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1976), 104.

8 John Hill Burton, *Live and Correspondence of David Hume*, 2 vols. (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1983), 1: 32.

9 Stroud, *Hume*, 197.

10 Annette Baier, *A Progress of Sentiments: Reflections on Hume's Treatise*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), 149.

11 Marie A. Martin, "The Rational Warrant for Hume's General Rules," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 31 (1993): 245–57, 250.

12 Jane L. McIntyre, "Personal Identity and the Passions," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 27 (1989): 545–57, 555–6.

13 Árdal, *Passion and Value*, 46.

14 Ibid. 54.

15 Aristotle, *De Poetica*, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), 1468.

16 Robert J. Yanal, "Hume and Others on the Paradox of Tragedy," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 49 (1991): 75–6, 76.

17 William Shakespeare, *Othello,* in *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* (London: Collins, 1951), 1132.

18 John Doran, *Annals of the English Stage*, vol. 2, (New York: Bigelow, Brown, and Co.), 184.

19 Adam Potkay, *The Fate of Eloquence in the Age of Hume* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 48. I am indebted to a reader for directing me to Potkay's discussion of an orator's passion.

20 Burton, *Life and Correspondence*, 1: 420

21 *British Plays from the Restoration to 1820*, ed. Montrose J. Moses, vol. 2 (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1929), 629–58.

22 Ibid., 648.

23 Jan Wilbanks, *Hume's Theory of Imagination* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1986), 72.

24 Wayne Waxman, *Hume's Theory of Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 58.

25 Daniel Dennett, "Beyond Belief," in *Thought and Object: Essays on Intentionality*, ed. Andrew Woodfield (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 40.