

STUDIES IN

Burke
AND HIS TIME

MATT SALYER

*'A Little False Geography':
Edmund Burke as Edward Waverley*

MICHAEL BROWN

The English Identity of Edmund Burke

IAN CROWE

*Echoes from Mulla's Shore:
Spenserian Currents and Edmund Burke's
Early Literary Career in London*

REVIEWS OF

DAVID BROMWICH, *The Intellectual Life of Edmund Burke:
From the Sublime and Beautiful to American Independence;*

IAIN HAMPSHER-MONK, *Edmund Burke: Revolutionary Writings;*

YUVAL LEVIN, *The Great Debate: Edmund Burke, Thomas Paine
and the Birth of Right and Left.*

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Editor's Introduction



WHERE DOES EDMUND BURKE BELONG? This is a hydra-headed question that provokes debate in just about every area and subdiscipline of Burke's thought. It is both a more and a less complex question to ask today than it was in Burke's own time, as certain forms of identity have become more fluid and others more fixed; but its very persistence signals one of the reasons why Burke retains his fascination and richness in commentaries across the political and academic spectrums.

That richness is well represented in the articles and reviews contained in this issue of *Studies in Burke and His Time*. No analysis of Burke's identity, self-constructed or imposed, can now avoid the centrality of his birth and upbringing in Ireland. The nature and impact of that upbringing, however, remains more open to interpretation than is sometimes assumed, and two of our articles examine the possibilities and the potential limitations of the subject in ways that draw heavily on leitmotifs associated with Burke's background and career. Matt Salyer applies literary parallels from *Waverley*, Sir Walter Scott's novel of identity in "lost causes," to highlight important aspects of Burke's relationship to the Catholic, Nagle environment of his early years. Ian Crowe's contextualizing of Burke within the milieu of the midcentury Republic of Letters in London attempts to shed a supplementary light on the echoes of Burke's associations with the Blackwater Valley through the complex figure of Edmund Spenser and his poetic Fairy Land. Without in any way turning his back on Ireland, Michael Brown presents a fascinating interpretation of Burke's national affections from a different perspective: through an examination of varieties of "Englishness"

in the eighteenth century, we are led to appreciate in a fresh way how the “English” facets of Burke’s constructed identity may be seen to have pried open the space for him to engage his powerful critical rhetoric against “British” failings.

Most such discussions of identity will impinge at some point on the concept of patriotism. Indeed, from early in the eighteenth century, it is generally agreed, expressions of national identity were increasingly entwined with the variant programs of political patriotism, from “Hibernian” to “British.” Pressures to reconfigure identity as citizens in a political body where authority had shifted radically brought even more variants to the tight coupling of national identity and patriotism. Such movements formed the focus of the Edmund Burke Society’s third international conference, held at Villanova University in Pennsylvania in February of 2015. Attendees were privileged in the quality of addresses from key speakers and two panels, in the exceptional hospitality of the Department of Irish Studies at Villanova, and in the delightful environment of the Radnor Hotel on the edge of campus. A short report on the conference follows this editorial, and it is hoped that several papers from the event will appear in future issues of this journal.

The conference met at a particularly fertile period in Burke studies. Reviewing a recent publication on Burke in *Standpoint* magazine last summer, David Womersley commented that “Of all the great British political thinkers, only Burke has any present currency,” and wondered “what ... that enduring power tell[s] us about the nature and scope of Burke’s achievement.” Fortunately, we are unlikely to get a definitive answer anytime soon, as the question continues to stimulate provocative and clarifying responses from scholars in all disciplines: this vibrant situation is reflected, also, in the reviews that appear in this volume.

IAN CROWE

Notes on Contributors



MICHAEL BROWN is Professor of Irish, Scottish and Enlightenment History and Acting Director of the Research Institute of Irish and Scottish Studies at the University of Aberdeen. His extensive list of publications includes *Francis Hutcheson in Dublin, 1719–30*, *The Crucible of His Thought*, and *A Political Biography of John Toland*, and he is presently completing a book on “The Irish Enlightenment,” which is scheduled for publication by Harvard University Press in Spring 2016.

IAN CROWE is a research fellow at the Institute for Religion, Politics and Culture, Washington College, Chestertown, MD, a senior fellow at the Russell Kirk Center, Mecosta, and director of the Edmund Burke Society. His book *Patriotism and Public Spirit: Edmund Burke and the Role of the Critic in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Britain* was published by Stanford University Press in 2012. He is presently teaching part-time in the department of History at Belmont Abbey College, Belmont, NC.

MATT SALYER is Assistant Professor of English at the United States Military Academy, West Point. His critical work has appeared (or is forthcoming) in *Renascence*, *Mississippi Quarterly*, *Nineteenth-Century Studies*, and the *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*. His stories and poems have appeared in numerous journals. Last year, he was nominated for a Pushcart Prize by *Beloit Poetry Journal*. He is presently working on his first book, a cultural history of the Great Game.

Conference Report



“Edmund Burke and Patriotism” Third Conference of the Edmund Burke Society

The Edmund Burke Society’s conference on “Edmund Burke and Patriotism” was held on 27–28 February 2015 at the St. Augustine Center, the University of Villanova, and the Radnor Hotel in Philadelphia. Supported by the Russell Kirk Center, the Irish Studies Program at Villanova, and the Research Institute of Irish and Scottish Studies at the University of Aberdeen, the program attracted a range of scholars from different disciplines, exploring the concept of patriotic affinities in the life and thought of Edmund Burke.

The conference traced the development in the relationship between patriotism, liberty, and duty through reference to Burke’s understanding of the political and constitutional issues at stake in Ireland, the American colonies, and France during his lifetime, raising in the process the question of how Burke’s response to each of those events might help us to reassess the concept of patriotism and rescue it from misunderstandings or misappropriations in recent decades.

Participants from the United States, South America, and Great Britain heard stimulating and absorbing addresses from three keynote speakers: Dr. David Bromwich (Yale University), Dr. Michael Brown (University of Aberdeen), and Dr. Regina Janes (Skidmore College). In addition, two panel sessions produced six excellent papers from Burke

scholars working in a range of disciplines from history and English literature to philosophy and government and political science.

The occasion opened with a reception and dinner, after which Dr. Regina Janes delivered the opening address, exploring, in a text rich with Burkean literary echoes, the tensions of a man “with too many countries.” Dr. Janes untangled the various threads of meaning in eighteenth-century patriotism, recovered, as far as possible, from twenty-first-century assumptions, and offered a thinker in Burke who arrived at a patriotism “not confined to national interest or national identity” but capable of rousing an “excitement over law and justice” and fueling thereby his challenges to injustice in India, Ireland, and the American colonies. A version of this address will appear in the next issue of our journal.

The Saturday morning program opened with David Bromwich’s presentation, “National Identity and Local Patriotism in Time of War.” The speaker drew primarily and engrossingly on Burke’s writings on the “Regicide Peace” to explore the pressures exerted upon the concept of patriotism by shifting concepts of “the people” and of the “appetite for war” in democracies. In the afternoon, Michael Brown wove a most imaginative approach to the conference theme, considering the options Burke had for assuming an English (as opposed to a British) identity, deployed as a tool by which an Irish critic might best launch a patriotic critique of the British imperial experiment. Professor Brown delivered his paper over Skype from the University of Aberdeen, and a copy is included below in this issue of *Studies in Burke and His Time*.

Two panel sessions provided a stage for six presentations. In the first of the two, topics were drawn from eighteenth-century historical contexts in Germany, the new United States of America, and Ireland. Jonathan Green examined the concept of ordered liberty in Friedrich Gentz’s translation of Burke’s *Reflections*; Robert Heineman addressed Burke’s understanding of national identity through his writings on the French Revolution, discussing, with reference to Philip Howard’s study *The Rule of Nobody*, the problem of how realistically Burke’s English or British patriotism could be transplanted to a colonial context; Timothy Madigan placed Burke’s thinking on patriotism within a broader discussion of Irish philosophy enunciated in William Desmond’s *Being and the Between* and Thomas Duddy’s *A History of Irish Thought*, raising

CONFERENCE REPORT

the question of whether one could be both an Irish and an English patriot. A copy of Dr. Heineman's paper can now be found online at commongood.org/page/-/Robert%20Heineman%20Address.pdf.

The three papers in our second panel, on Saturday afternoon, were focused more on contemporary appropriations of "patriotism," critiqued through a recovery and reconsideration of Burke's thought. William Byrne addressed the problem of evaluating the patriotism of Edmund Burke without reconsidering the nature of the relationship between the universal and the particular in Burke's thought; Jack Kerwick re-emphasized the gulf that exists between Burke's patriotic thought and the modern-day patriotism of American exceptionalism; and Mark Signorelli warned against the simplistic transference of Burkean ideas to modern day issues of patriotism by probing the importance of recapturing the particular context in which Burke spoke of the specific affections and "pities" that he wished to conserve.

The very conducive atmosphere of the Villanova campus and the Radnor Hotel ensured continuing conversation and informal discussion between participants throughout the program. The Edmund Burke Society is particularly grateful to the Russell Kirk Center for hosting a dinner for all conference attendees on the closing evening of the conference, where growing concerns about the approaching inclement weather were put aside in convivial conversation.

At the closing session of the program, it was also fitting to be able to announce the publication of an e-book, *The University Bookman on Edmund Burke* (amazon.com/dp/BooUo5tUR2). This collection is one more representation of the continuing legacy of Russell Kirk in promoting Burke scholarship over the years.

IAN CROWE

'A Little False Geography'

EDMUND BURKE AS EDWARD WAVERLEY



MATT SALYER

United States Military Academy

As George Dekker remarks, *Waverley's* “contest between the principles of reaction and progress assumes the shape of an imperialistic conflict between Gaelic-speaking Roman-Catholic feudalists ... and an English-speaking Anglo-Saxon Protestant army, professionally trained and equipped to defend an advanced agrarian and mercantilist state.”¹ But when Edward Waverley finally meets Bonnie Prince Charlie, the real “state of the Chevalier’s Court,” which contains, like “an acorn of the future oak, as many seeds of *tracasserie* and intrigue, as might have done honour to the Court of a large empire,” shocks the naïve hero.² One of Walter Scott’s subtler historical insights in *Waverley* is this recognition that Jacobite political cultures often produced a jarring telescopic effect between small-scale feudal interests and large-scale cosmopolitan networks with imperialistic ambitions. The tendency of Scott’s critics to emphasize an element of Romantic nationalism in *Waverley*³ obscures

1 George Dekker, *The American Historical Romance* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987), 39.

2 Walter Scott, *Waverley; or, 'Tis Sixty Years Since*, ed. Claire Lamont (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1986), 250.

3 See, among others, Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, tr. Hannah Mitchell and Stanley Mitchell (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1983); Stuart Ferguson, “At the Grave

the tendency of his novel to argue that “‘progressive’ history is not the story of humanity, but the story humanity tells itself in order to conceal the deeper reality which is the business of the world, as a counter-history to tell.”⁴ In fact, none of Scott’s Jacobites—Edward Waverley included—really care one way or the other about British national-historical ideologies. Instead, “every person of consequence” surrounding Charles Stuart pursues “some separate object . . . with a fury” in a counterfactual miniature of unrealized empire. The scene leaves Waverley with the impression that personal or familial interests are “altogether disproportioned to [their] importance” at the Chevalier’s Court,⁵ but by the end of the novel, even Edward follows suit. He worries about the “[p]rosperity of the united Houses of Waverley-Honour and Bradwardine,” and ensures that his father-in-law’s manor, Tully-Veolan, has “been disposed as much as possible according to the old arrangement; and [that] the new moveables . . . [have] been selected in the same character with the old furniture.”⁶ The decorators hang a “large and spirited painting, representing Fergus Mac-Ivor and Waverley in their Highland dress,” on the wall, alongside “the arms which Waverley had borne in the unfortunate civil war.”⁷ The final disposition of Tully-Veolan, which ought to embody Scott’s nineteenth-century observations about the “total eradication of the Jacobite party,” the “gradual influx of wealth, and extension of commerce” after 1745, is thus what secures the Jacobite ethos as an evolving, historically responsive understanding of familial identity for the Waverley-Bradwardine family.⁸

In practical terms, Edward’s conflation of literary romance with real life—the basic catalyst for *Waverley*’s plot—pays dividends. It is true that at the end of the novel he must compromise the nostalgic Jacobitism of the MacIvor clan to accommodate post-1745 political realities,

of the Gentile Constitution: Walter Scott, Georg Lukács and Romanticism,” *Studies in Romanticism* 44, no. 3 (2005): 423–437; Katie Trumpener, “National Character, Nationalist Plot, National Tale and Historical Novel in the Age of *Waverley*, 1806–1830,” *ELH* 60, no. 3 (1993): 685–731.

4 Cairns Craig, *Out of History: Narrative Paradigms in Scottish and English Culture* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1996), 72.

5 Scott, *Waverley*, 250.

6 *Ibid.*, 336–337.

7 *Ibid.*, 336–338.

8 *Ibid.*, 338.

but he does so as the new patriarch of the Waverley-Bradwardines. The fact that Edward gains a paterfamilias worth making compromises for suggests that he was essentially correct in deciding to stake his fortunes on an unreasonable conflation of chivalric romance and the real world of politics, executions, rebellions, and land titles; in effect, Waverley-Honor's dusty library prepared its latch-key ward, Edward, quite well for success. But the practical triumph of romance in *Waverley* is not Edward's acquisition of Tully-Veolan, per se. While this accomplishes the work of resolving heroic registers into domestic ones, a characteristic maneuver of Walter Scott's plots, it also gives Edward and the Bradwardines an increased scope of moral action. In becoming heir to the Bradwardines, title-holder to their estates, and interlocutor between the treasonable paterfamilias and Britain proper, Edward is able to save his new wife, father-in-law, and dependent tenants from humiliation and dispossession.

I would like to assume some of Edward Waverley's risk by suggesting that the *interpreted* life of Scott's fictional romance-hero lets us infer a useful biographical context for drawing the cultural paradoxes of Edmund Burke into sharper focus. Scott's interest in Burke extended beyond their mutual affinities for the traditional. Scott corresponded with Burke acquaintances such as Mary Leadbeater; he drew on anecdotal accounts of Burke's involvement with Dr. Johnson's circle; he was certainly versed in the details of Burke's upbringing and private life from his readings of James Prior's popular *Life of Burke*.⁹ However, it would be specious to conclude from this that Burke provided Scott with a model for aspects of the poetically-minded adventurer, Edward Waverley. In reconsidering Edmund Burke through the lens of "kinship" to Edward, my intent is to weave the various strands of Burke's legacy—the "American" Burke, the "Indian" Burke, the "Irish" Burke, the "French" Burke—back to a single source paradox. Burke's was one of the first real public lives of the British Empire; with the publication

9 James Prior, *Memoir of the Life and Character of the Rt. Hon. Edmund Burke; with Specimens of his Poetry and Letters, and an Estimate of his Genius and Talents, Compared with those of his Contemporaries* (London, 1826); for Scott's knowledge of Burke, see, for example, vol. 1 of *Biographical Memoirs of Eminent Novelists, and Other Distinguished Persons* (Edinburgh, 1834), 243–244.

of *Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents* in 1770,¹⁰ he seems to have sprung from the floor of Parliament with what William Hazlitt called his “profound and restless imagination” violent and fully formed.¹¹ Because of his instinct for “knit[ing] ... two ideas together ... so that no man can put them asunder,”¹² his were the first mature treatments of the British Empire in eighteenth-century politics; he was also the first eighteenth-century Briton of standing to articulate political issues from a British imperial *stance*. But what a curious thing: it was not the fortunate sons of the Great Whig Families who were best prepared to take the long view of Britain’s global role during and after the Seven Years’ War; it was the Irish Edmund Burke, who had spent much of his youth in the Blackwater region of Western Ireland, surrounded by Jacobite relations, valorized political criminals, and a literate folk culture of politicized romance. The great historical intuition of Scott’s characterization of Edward Waverley foregrounds Burke’s Blackwater youth as a kind of “garden” that bore fruit—the “acorn of the future oak” of Burke’s mature thought on the British Empire, its structure, meaning, and potential. The romanticized “state of the Chevalier’s Court” in Burke’s youth echoed in his adult conception of “the Court of a large empire,” due in part to the same habit of “knit[ing] ... two ideas together” that established Edward Waverley in the practical affairs of the world.

In Scott’s day, it became increasingly possible to identify Burke as part of the intellectual lineage of Tory Romanticism, a precursor of the *Blackwood’s* circle that idolized Scott or a contrarian translator of nostalgic “Bolingbroke” Jacobitism into the Romantic political imperialism of Benjamin Disraeli’s “Young England” novels.¹³ Similarly, many contemporary postcolonial critiques of Burke’s Irish identities tend to read him through echoes of Scott’s fiction, portraying him as a crypto-Catholic, a crypto-Jacobite, an exotic Other whose static identity becomes visible

10 Edmund Burke, *Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents* (London, 1770).

11 William Hazlitt “Character of Mr. Burke,” in *Edmund Burke: Appraisals and Applications*, ed. Daniel E. Ritchie (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1990), 15.

12 *Ibid.*

13 For Romantic uses of Burke’s legacy in *Blackwood’s*, see Matt Salyer, “‘Nae mortal man should be entrusted wi’ sic an ingine’: *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* and the Tory Problem of Romantic Genius,” *Victorian Periodicals Review* 46, no. 1 (2013), 92–115.

and must be recovered by scratching the surface of his parliamentary career. This is often at the expense of Burke's own self-identification as a British subject and his professional practice of Whig politics. However, as Linda Colley remarks, eighteenth-century "Britishness" is best understood as "the interaction of several peoples and several histories," extending beyond even the British Isles to "North America and the rest of Britain's 'white' empire" (and, for Burke, particularly during the 1780s, even the notion of a "white" Britishness is tenuous at most).¹⁴ While Burke—and, for that matter, Scott—can be appropriated by a number of later cultural discourses and intellectual traditions, this is because Burke, like *Waverley*, practiced political life as a kind of *productive* poetic "waving." As F. P. Lock observes, he had a tendency to imaginatively combine "the sublime and minute," often to seemingly disproportionate effect;¹⁵ to put it another way, the through-line of his long career was the discovery, production, and representation of paradoxical conditions in the moral constitution of Britishness and the British Empire. In one sense, Burke's rhetorical maneuvers thus foreshadow what Keats termed "Negative Capability, that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason."¹⁶ But whereas one is hard-pressed to find another eighteenth-century Whig so comfortable with "being in uncertainties," Scott's conclusion to *Waverley* provides Edward with a place and a future in Whig England by providing him (and his recalcitrant Jacobite in-laws) with title to Tully-Veolan, in essence establishing a political space, both provincial and patriotic, for Jacobite or pseudo-Jacobite "Negative Capability" by force of writ. Edward thrives post-1745 because he can thus define his own Britishness on his own terms; Burke can both love and leave his own Irish "Tully-Veolan" for much the same reason. Moreover, he can with great ease make intellectual leaps in imagining the correlative Britishness of others on a much larger imperial and global scale.

¹⁴ Linda Colley, "Britishness and Otherness: An Argument," *The Journal of British Studies* 31, no. 4 (1992): 312.

¹⁵ F. P. Lock, *Edmund Burke: Volume II: 1784–1797* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006), 547–48.

¹⁶ John Keats, letter to George and Thomas Keats, 21 December 1817, in Grant F. Scott, *Selected Letters of John Keats: Revised Edition* (Cambridge MA: Harvard UP, 2002), 60.

To eighteenth-century metropolitans who *were* invested in the success of Whig ideologies, the sense of political disproportion that Scott would later portray as Edward's psycho-historical drama made both the Jacobite specters of British history and the unfolding history of the British Empire seem like jarring fictions brought to life. In 1755, for example, Horace Walpole asked Richard Bentley to imagine a "great sea-victory, or defeat; or that the French are landed in Ireland, and have taken and fortified Cork; that they have been joined by all the wild Irish, who have proclaimed the Pretender."¹⁷ It was as likely, Walpole explained, as "thirteen gold-fish, caparisoned in coats of mail, as rich as if [the French romancer] Madame Scuderi had invented them," embarking "on a secret expedition."¹⁸ Six years later, Walpole similarly remarked that dispatches from the Seven Years' War "come tumbling so over one another from different parts of the globe, that [they] look just like the handywork of a lady romance writer, whom it costs nothing but a little false geography to make the Great Moghul in love with a Princess of Mecklenburgh, and defeat two marshals of France as he rides on an elephant to his nuptials."¹⁹ Walpole, a scion of one of the Great Whig Families, had never been particularly concerned that the "Pretender's boy" could give the "comfortable [Walpole] apartments in the Exchequer and Custom-house to some forlorn Irish peer, who [chooses] to remove his pride and poverty to some large unfurnished gallery."²⁰ But what would the disproportions of the Seven Years' War have looked like to someone who *had* been "charmed by the prospect of being governed by a true descendent of the Mac-na-O's?"²¹ After his adventures at the Chevalier's Court, how would Edward Waverley, happily retired to Tully-Veolan, have understood the subsequent growth of Britain's imperium?

Given Edward Waverley's bookish inclinations, he probably would have reencountered the Court's dissonance a decade later through

¹⁷ Horace Walpole, letter to Richard Bentley, 24 April 1755, in *The Yale Editions of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, ed. W. S. Lewis (New Haven: Yale UP, 1937–83), 35:221.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Walpole, *Correspondence* 9:378.

²⁰ Walpole, *Correspondence* 1:380.

²¹ Walpole, *Correspondence* 35:221.

Edmund Burke's 1757 treatise, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, where proportion—acorn and oak and all—appeared as a matter of teleology and natural law. “To judge of proportion,” Burke writes, “we must know the end for which any work is designed. According to the end the proportion varies.”²² In 1758, Edward Waverley would just as likely have read about the byzantine policy entanglements of the Seven Years' War—the cognitive disproportions of Walpole's romance-written British Empire—in Burke's essay, “History of the Present War,” published serially in *The Annual Register* until 1763. In the *Register*, Waverley would have encountered news of familiar characters from the Chevalier's Court such as Thomas Arthur Dillon, Count Lally Tollendal, who ended his long military career withstanding a British siege at Pondicherry, the last French stronghold in India, on “but a half pound of rice a day ... without any wet provisions.”²³ Waverley probably would have found an echo of his own experience in the *Register's* editorial voice, as well. After meeting Edmund Burke in 1761, Horace Walpole described the future politician, who had recently written “a book in the style of [the Jacobite exile] Lord Bolingbroke,”²⁴ as a “sensible man, but [one who had] not worn off his authorism yet, and thinks there is nothing so charming as writers, and to be one.”²⁵ Like Edward Waverley, whose historical agency was the product of reading “an exhaustless collection of memoirs, scarcely more faithful than romances, and of romances so well written as hardly to be distinguished from memoirs,”²⁶ Burke romanced politics. And as recent critical attention to the “Irish” or “postcolonial” element of Burke's thought suggests, his emergence on the public stage of the 1750s

22 Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, vol. 1, ed. T. O. McLoughlin and James T. Boulton (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997), 269.

23 Thomas Arthur Dillon, Count Lally Tollendal, *Memoirs of Count Lally, from his Embarking for the East Indies, as Commander in Chief of the French Forces in That Country ... to Illustrate his Civil and Military Character* (London, 1766), 93–4.

24 Walpole refers to Burke's *A Vindication of Natural Society: or, A View of the Miseries and Evils arising to Mankind from every Species of Artificial Society* (London, 1756)

25 Walpole, *Correspondence* 9:378.

26 Scott, *Waverley*, 14.

was marked by negotiations of a distinct Jacobite cultural inheritance.²⁷ For Burke, the act of writing performed the personal and historical transformations of *Waverley's* Court; it reframed his youthful flirtations with Jacobite disreputability as a historiographical approach to central definitional questions about the meaning of the British Empire. And if Burke's historical consciousness during the 1750s is any measure, Edward Waverley's immersion in a treasonous Jacobite counterculture of the 1740s would have left the retired rebel better prepared to understand the "future oak" of British imperium than the Great Whigs who retained their apartments at the Exchequer.

"Political and religious ballads of the vilest doggerel":

Edmund Burke at Waverley Hall

Scott's portrait of Richard Waverley, Edward's pragmatic father, is a particularly insightful characterization of eighteenth-century men like Richard Burke, Edmund's ambitious father, who had little interest in the more "controverted parts of religion; [and] therefore brought up his sons in the profession of what he thought the most public road to preferment—the religion of the country, established by law."²⁸ While Richard Waverley's older brother, Sir Everard, inherits "from his sires the whole train of Tory or High-Church predilections and prejudices which had distinguished the house of Waverley since the Great Civil War," Richard sees "no practical road to independence save that of relying on his own exertions," and thus adopts "a political creed more consonant to both reason and his own interest" than his family's Jacobitism.²⁹ Scott's

27 See, for example, the recent work of Katherine O'Donnell, including "The Image of a Relationship in Blood: *Párlíament na mBan* and Burke's Jacobite Politics," *Eighteenth-Century Ireland* 1, no. 1 (2000): 98–119, and "Burke and the *Aisling*: 'Homage of a Nation,'" *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 30, no. 3 (2007): 405–422; see, also, Sean Patrick Donlan, ed., *Edmund Burke's Irish Identities* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2007); Luke Gibbons, *Edmund Burke and Ireland: Aesthetics, Politics and the Colonial Sublime* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003).

28 Richard Shackleton, qtd. in *The Leadbeater Papers; A Selection from the Mss. And Correspondence of Mary Leadbeater. Vol. 2. Unpublished Letters of Edmund Burke. And the Correspondence of Mrs. Richard Trench and Rev. George Crabbe* (London, 1862), 113.

29 Scott, *Waverley*, 4.

narrator in *Waverley*—it is always a tricky matter to identify Scott with his speakers—reserves judgment on this Hanoverian conformer, noting that the “mixed motives which unite to form the motives of our actions” are often as difficult to unravel as artists’ depictions of “compound passions in the same features at the same moment.”³⁰ Edmund Burke, on the other hand, tended to define personal identities in terms of familial connection and, by extension, their inherited traditions. He thus came to view recantation, at least by 1795, as a primal violation of human dignity. “Let three million of people,” he reflected, “but abandon all that they and their ancestors have been taught to believe sacred, and to forswear it publicly in terms the most degrading, scurrilous, and indecent ... and to abuse the whole of their former lives, and to slander the education they have received, and nothing more is required of them.”³¹ The ailing, intellectually violent Burke of the 1790s, who imagined the peeled skin of his corpse “made into a drum, to animate Europe to eternal battle,” is thus a striking counterpoint to the central historiographical fiction in *Waverley*, the idea that a generational remove from the site of trauma ameliorates its effects.³² At the approximate remove of *Waverley*’s “sixty years since,” the inverse seems to have been true for Burke, who wrote that he could “hardly overrate the malignity of the principles of Protestant ascendancy ... or of Indianism ... or of Jacobinism ... The last is the greatest evil. But it readily combines with the others, and flows from them.”³³ Had he lived a little longer, a post-Terror, post-Napoleonic Edmund Burke would likely have been a particularly unsympathetic reader of Richard Waverley’s life—and probably that of Richard Burke.

Edmund Burke was fully aware of the extent to which he and his brothers had benefited from their father’s decision to conform to the Established Church, and it was unquestionably advantageous, once Edmund became a public figure, to bury the Irish or Catholic “layer”

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Edmund Burke, letter to Richard Burke, 19 February 1792, in *Writings and Speeches* 9:646.

³² Edmund Burke, *A Letter from the Right Honourable Edmund Burke to a Noble Lord, on the Attacks Made upon Him and his Pension, in the House of Lords, by the Duke of Bedford and the Earl of Lauderdale, Early in the Present Sessions of Parliament* (London, 1796), in *Writings and Speeches* 9:147.

³³ Edmund Burke, *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke*, ed. Thomas W. Copeland, et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1958–1978), 8:254.

of his psyche in the oblivion that scions of the Great Whig Families imagined was Irish history.³⁴ As it was, caricaturists such as James Gilray portrayed Burke accepting rosaries and whips from a black Satan, “Old-Orthodox,”³⁵ and writers like John Courtney pointed out the Irish orator’s “panegyric on the service of High Mass [in the *Reflections*], where the State is offered up as a propitiatory oblation to the Church.”³⁶ But while fear of political implications partly accounts for the fact that an “elemental part of [Burke’s] psychological makeup was the need for personal privacy,” his passionate figuration of the conformer—the prodigal heir reduced to the “most degrading, scurrilous, and indecent” public performances—hints at a deeper and more proto-Romantic psychological element. Burke’s “abuse[rs of] the whole of their former lives” were figures drawn from a standard trope in Jacobite folk cultures, particularly in the immediate aftermath of failed rebellions and public political trials. As negative tropes, Jacobite portrayals of men who abandoned their natural allegiances to kith, kin, and king simply inverted the community values embodied by heroic figures. Whereas Burke’s conformer commits a kind of social suicide by betraying his inheritance, Jacobite lyricists of Burke’s youth celebrated doomed Stuart loyalists as martyrs, Catholic figurations of the “Great Good Man, whom Fortune does Displace,” or the “Sacred Person” who, “Prostrate, Seems as Great, as when he Stood.”³⁷ Suggestions that Richard’s conversion inscribed a guilty debt on his son’s psyche tend to miss this point: Jacobitism was not an ideology; it was a range of communal, feudal identities expressed through political hero-worship with mythic undertones.³⁸ Burke could

34 As George Montagu remarked to Horace Walpole in 1761, “Mr. Bourke that you saw at Mr. Hamilton’s at Hampton Court is going to write an history of Ireland, and then you will know what little there is to be known of this kingdom.” Walpole, *Correspondence* 9:405.

35 James Gilray, *Crumbs of Comfort* (1782). BM 6027; British Museum, London.

36 John Courtney, *A Poetical and Philosophical Essay on the French Revolution. In a Letter Addressed to the Right Hon. Edmund Burke* (London, 1793), 31.

37 Alexander Balloch Grosart, ed., “On the Departure of King James yc 2d 1688,” *English Jacobite Ballads, Songs & Satires, etc. From the MSS. At Towneley Hall, Lancashire* (Manchester, 1877), 86.

38 Convert’s guilt is a foundational part of Connor Cruise O’Brien’s psychological interpretation of the Burkes in *The Great Melody: A Thematic Biography and Commented Anthology of Edmund Burke* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1992); see, also, Michael Brown, Charles Ivar McGrath, and Thomas Power, eds., *Converts and Conversion*

not have responded to the paternal weight of conformism with such a tone of tragic nostalgia unless he intimately understood what it meant to admire men who refused compromise with the Whig Ascendancy. And by 1795, Burke's long engagement with British affairs in Ireland, India, and America—reflected through the violent theater of French politics during the 1790s—illustrated the persistence of a tonally Irish iteration of Jacobite hero-worship, one in which history was not imagined as the repetitious story of good men ruined, but as the grinding, unfolding process of their murder.

Although unrepentant English Jacobites of the Sir Everard Waverley type faced recriminations that typically included the forfeiture of titles and estates, the execution of James Cotter of Anngrove in 1720 suggested to members of Ireland's Catholic gentry that Jacobite Gaels were liable to become the objects of judicial murder as well.³⁹ In Jacobite circles, the Cotter trial was probably "the most important political event in Ireland during the first half of the eighteenth century, for it reduced the supporters of the Stuarts to subservient meekness."⁴⁰ Cotter, a notorious rake and Tory sympathizer, had assumed mastership of one of the few remaining Catholic estates in Ireland after the death of his father, Sir James Fitz Edmund Cotter, a prominent cavalier who commanded James II's Irish armies after the Battle of the Boyne.⁴¹

in Ireland: 1650–1850 (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004); for the culture(s) of eighteenth-century Jacobitism, see James J. Sack, *From Jacobite to Conservative: Reaction and Orthodoxy in Britain, c. 1760–1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993); Peter Kleber Monod, *Jacobitism and the English People, 1688–1788* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993).

39 For the effects of the Williamite Confiscation and the land settlement of the early eighteenth century, see, especially J. G. Simms, *The Williamite Confiscation in Ireland, 1690–1703* (London: Greenwood Press, 1956); David Hayton and Gerard O'Brien, eds., *War and Politics in Ireland, 1649–1730* (London: Hambledon Press, 1986); D. W. Hayton, *Ruling Ireland, 1685–1742: Politics, Politicians and Parties* (Suffolk, Boydell Press, 2004); for contemporary attitudes toward the Cotter estates during the Confiscation, see Anonymous, *Proposals for Raising a Million of Money out of the Forfeited Estates of Ireland: Together, with the Answer of the Irish to the same, and a Reply thereto* (London, 1694).

40 Basil O'Connell, "Richard Burke and James Cotter, Jr.," *The Burke Newsletter* 6, no. 1 (1964): 361.

41 For James Cotter of Anngrove, see William Logan and Liam O'Buachalla, eds., "The letters and papers of James Cotter junior, 1689–1720," *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society* 68 (1963): 66–95; see, also, "A collection of transcripts

Beginning in 1711, the validity of Cotter's extensive lease was repeatedly challenged in court,⁴² and when the former Lord Chancellor of Ireland, Alan Brodrick, accused Cotter of raping a young Quaker woman, Elizabeth Squibb, many Catholics were of the opinion that the charge against Cotter had been fabricated by his numerous enemies among the Protestant Ascendancy.⁴³ Despite the fact that a number of prominent Whigs involved in the proceedings pressed for clemency, it seemed to observers that the actual merits of the case had been subsumed by 1720 into a pure political drama performed by the Lord Justice, William Conolly, and others "to win favour in court circles in London where there were private grudges against the Cotter family."⁴⁴ Conversely, any "nuances [in the case or its handling] were lost in the [Jacobite] literary rhetoric of lament."⁴⁵

Richard Burke seems to have acted as Cotter's attorney for at least some portion of the famous trial and likely continued to assist Cotter's executor and brother-in-law, Garrett Nagle, long after the case ended.⁴⁶ In fact, the outcry about Cotter's execution, which resulted in widespread rioting and sporadic attacks on Quakers, may have influenced Richard Burke's decision to recant Catholicism and conform to the

of deeds, letters and other documents (some in Irish) relating to members of the Cotter family, from the 17th to 19th century, compiled by the Rev. George E. Cotter, c. 1878," MS 711, National Library of Ireland, Dublin. His father, Sir James, was widely hated in Whig circles for carrying out the assassination of John Lisle, Charles I's regicide, in 1664; for the plot to assassinate Lisle, see Alan Marshall, *Intelligence and Espionage in the Reign of Charles II, 1660–1685* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), 291–300; for Sir James Fitz Edmund Cotter, see B. Ó Cuív, "James Cotter, a Seventeenth-Century Agent of the Crown," *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 89, no. 2 (1959): 135–159.

42 Josiah Brown, *Reports of Cases, upon and Writs of Error, in the High Court of Parliament from the Year 1701, to the Year 1779. With Tables, Notes and References* (London: P. Uriel, 1779), 4:81.

43 For the Cotter trial, see Neal Garnham, "The Trials of James Cotter and Henry, Baron Barry of Santry: Two Case Studies in the Administration of Criminal Justice in Early Eighteenth-Century Ireland," *Irish Historical Studies* 31, no. 123 (1999): 328–342; James Kelly, "'A Most Inhuman and Barbarous Piece of Villainy': An Exploration of the Crime of Rape in Eighteenth-Century Ireland," *Eighteenth-Century Ireland* 10 (1995): 78–107.

44 David Dickson, *Old World Colony: Cork and South Munster, 1630–1830* (Cork: Cork UP, 2005), 270

45 Ibid.

46 Logan, "Letters and Papers," 135.

Established Church in 1722, shortly before his marriage to Mary Nagle. As Breandán Ó Buachalla observes, the Nagle circle of influence in the Blackwater Valley was “an island of Catholic hegemony in a sea of Protestant ascendancy,”⁴⁷ and the Cotter trial, if nothing else, illustrated what a dangerous liability a famous Catholic name could be in Ireland. For the better part of a century, the Nagle family figured prominently in British fears about Irish insurrection. In the 1690s, Sir Richard Nagle served as James II’s Secretary of State at the Court of Saint-Germain;⁴⁸ in the 1720s, Joseph Nagle, the attorney “most disliked by the Protestants of any Catholic in the kingdom,” was accused of recruiting Irish soldiers for the King of Spain;⁴⁹ in the 1730s, Joseph Nagle and Garrett Nagle were investigated on suspicion of being Jacobite agents; in the 1760s, Garrett Nagle was arrested during the Whiteboy riots, along with Edmund Burke’s distant cousin, Father Nicholas Sheehy, who was executed in 1766.⁵⁰ While “conformity for the sake of securing family lands was a way of life in eighteenth-century Ireland,”⁵¹ Richard Burke’s conversion allowed him to establish himself professionally and socially apart from the Nagle world.⁵² It also secured prospects for his three sons—Garret, Edmund, and Richard—in spite of the tainted family politics of the Cotter era.

However, poetic recollections of Cotter and other celebrated Jacobites, whose exploits inspired a voluminous oral and written literature, may have had a very different effect on Edmund, who spent much of his childhood in the care of Patrick Nagle and other maternal relatives

47 Breandán Ó Buachalla, “The Making of a Cork Jacobite,” in P. O’Flannagan and C. G. Buttimer, *Cork: History and Society: Interdisciplinary Studies on the History of an Irish County* (Dublin: Geography Publications, 1993), 472.

48 Edward T. Corp, *A Court in Exile: The Stuarts in France, 1689–1718* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), 116–120; see, also, T. C. Barnard, “Lawyers and the Law in Later Seventeenth-Century Ireland,” *Eighteenth-Century Ireland* 24 (2009): 11–35.

49 “The Life of Miss Nano Nagle: Foundress of the Presentation Order,” *The Bengal Catholic Herald* 7 (1844), 97.

50 Gibbons, *Colonial Sublime*, 21–24.

51 Elizabeth Lambert, *Edmund Burke of Beaconsfield* (Newark: U of Delaware P, 2003), 23.

52 O’Brien, *Melody*, 3–11; see, also, Louis Cullen, “Catholics under the Penal Laws,” *Eighteenth-Century Ireland* 1 (1986): 22–36; S. J. Connolly, *Religion, Law and Power: The Making of Protestant Ireland, 1660–1760* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002).

around Castletownroche.⁵³ As Breandán Ó Bauchalla remarks, “Irish political poetry for most of the eighteenth century is essentially Jacobite ... its underlying values, its rhetoric, its ideology can be readily classified” as such.⁵⁴ A number of Jacobite poets found their muse in Cotter of Ann Grove, including Domhnall Ó Colmáin, whose radical tract, *Párlíamant na mBan*, was dedicated to the Tory heir,⁵⁵ but for the Blackwater gentry, Jacobite folk literature tended to have a distinct personal or genealogical element. The numerous lyrics composed by Edward Nagle, for example, on the popular subject of Cotter’s “Unfortunate tho’ much Lamented Death,” are not reducible to a series of ideological tropes; they bemoan the real loss of kith and kin.⁵⁶ While it is impossible to know exactly what books, tales, anecdotes, and poems circulated in the Nagle household, the connection between literary production, Jacobitism, and family identity in Burke’s childhood landscape is undeniable, as is the influence of that landscape on Burke’s intellectual development. His abiding love of Edmund Spenser’s “extremely fine and poetical” language, for example, was sparked playing in the ruins of Kilcolman Castle, where “that excellent writer” had composed parts of *The Faerie Queen*.⁵⁷ Like James Cotter, Edmund Spenser was related to the Nagle family through marriage; like Edward Nagle’s elegies for Cotter, Burke’s 1747 nostalgic pastoral poem, “The Blackwater,” framed personal longing in terms of the public inheritance of his famous relation, populating childhood haunts with Spenser’s river nymphs from

53 Arthur P. J. Samuels, ed., *The Early Life Correspondence and Writings of The Rt. Hon. Edmund Burke: With a Transcript of the Minute Book of the Debating “Club” Founded by Him in Trinity College Dublin* (Dublin: University Press, 1923), 8.

54 Breandán Ó Bauchalla, “Irish Jacobite Poetry,” *The Irish Review* 12 (1992), 40.

55 Domhnall Ó Colmáin, *Párlíamant na mBan*, ed. Brian Ó Cuiv (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1952). Ó Colmáin, a Munster priest, addressed this discourse on the importance of women’s education to his student, Cotter, and used the names of prominent Munster families for his characters. Some sense of the importance and popularity of the text can be gleaned from the fact that, although unpublished, over forty manuscript copies exist.

56 Unsigned, *Elegy on the Unfortunate tho’ much Lamented Death of James Cotter, Esq., who was executed at Cork on the 7th May, 1720, for Ravishing Elizabeth Squibb, a Quaker. A Broadside* (n.p, 1720).

57 Burke, *Enquiry*, 316; for Burke’s habit of quoting Spenser, see *Enquiry*, 251, and *The Reformer* in *Writings and Speeches*, 1:91.

Book VII of *The Faerie Queene*.⁵⁸ As James Prior remarks, the “partiality which [Burke] always entertained for the spot, in addition to his long residence in it, and familiarity with the neighboring objects, gave rise to the belief of his having been born there.”⁵⁹ Burke very well may have wished that this had been the case. As his friend William Dennis remarked in 1747, Edmund led “a very unhappy life from his Father’s temper,” and often formed “desperate resolutions” because of it.⁶⁰ Conversely, Burke remembered his uncle, Patrick Nagle, as a beneficent surrogate father. “For of all the men I have seen in any Situation,” Burke reflected, “I really think, he is the person I should wish myself, or any one I dearly loved, the most to resemble.”⁶¹

Richard Burke lost or discarded his son’s final draft of “The Blackwater,” but surviving fragments suggest an important aspect of Edmund’s psyche.⁶² It was the imaginative work of writing that afforded him the opportunity to cast a private counter-history against the scripted respectability that Richard imposed on him; it was through the assumption of lyrical and rhetorical identities that Edmund was able “to most resemble” an idolized Patrick Nagle and his Catholic, Jacobite family. In *Waverley*, this is also the crux of Edward’s transformation from sentimental reader to political adventurer. Like Richard Burke, who sent Edmund to the Blackwater after extended health complications in 1735, Richard Waverley sends his ill son to recover at Waverley Hall while he pursues his own “official duties ... [and] the prosecution of ... his plans of interest or ambition” elsewhere.⁶³ Thus, despite Richard’s fear of maintaining an “intimate commerce with a man of Sir Everard’s habits and opinions,” Edward grows up with “the same intimate relation to both families.”⁶⁴ But “the library at Waverley-Honour, a large Gothic room, with double arches and a gallery, contained such a miscellaneous collection of volumes as had been assembled, during the course of two hundred years, by [the] family,” and it is “throughout this ample realm

58 Edmund Burke, “The Blackwater,” in Samuels, *Early Life*, 9.

59 Prior, *Memoir*, 10.

60 William Dennis, qtd. in Samuels, *Early Life*, 96.

61 Burke, *Correspondence* 1:346.

62 Samuels, *Early Life*, 10.

63 Scott, *Waverley*, 11.

64 *Ibid.*

[that] Edward was permitted to roam at large ... through a sea of books, like a vessel without a rudder."⁶⁵ Waverley-Honour's library does, in fact, provide one important parameter for the intellectual formation of its heir: it projects Sir Everard's historical paterfamilias onto the imagined literary domain of Shakespeare, Milton, Spenser, Drayton, Classical writers, Continental chivalric tales, "picturesque and interesting passages from our old historical chronicles ... and poets who have exercised themselves on romantic fiction."⁶⁶ While this ruins Richard Waverley's plan for his son by rendering him "intellectually undisciplined as well as something of a social misfit," Edward's "enthusiasm for romance," fostered at Waverley-Honour, is ultimately what "exposes Waverley personally to the Cause his family reveres."⁶⁷

Curiously, Edward Waverley's undirected and "somewhat desultory" meanderings in Sir Everard's family library probably resemble aspects of the formal education that Burke would have received during the Blackwater years. As the ward of Catholic gentry, Edmund attended illegal "hedge schools" until his father sent him to Abraham Shackleton's Quaker school at Ballitore in 1741.⁶⁸ Hedge-school curricula varied with the schoolmaster, but most ensured that students received at least a basic education in literature, mathematics, bookkeeping, and catechism. Wealthier students who showed promise, such as Edmund's cousin, Honora Nagle, were often sent abroad to further their Catholic education on the Continent, and it is certainly possible that Patrick Nagle entertained such plans for his bookish nephew at some point.⁶⁹ Echoes

65 Ibid, 11–13.

66 Ibid, 14.

67 Marjorie Garson, *Moral Taste: Aesthetics, Subjectivity, and Social Power in the Nineteenth-Century Novel* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2007), 41.

68 Mary Leadbeater's comment that Edmund already possessed an "uncommon genius" when he enrolled at Ballitore, with a mind "strongly bent to literary acquirements" and "classical taste," suggests much about the quality of Edmund's intellectual formation in the Blackwater; see Mary Leadbeater, ed., *Memoirs and Letters of Richard and Elizabeth Shackleton ... Including a Concise Biographical Sketch, and Some Letters, of her Grandfather, Abraham Shackleton* (London, 1822), 4.

69 For Honora Nagle, founder of the Presentation Sisters, see Mary Pekham Magray, *The Transforming Power of Nuns: Women, Power, and Cultural Change, 1750–1900* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998), 14–32; Elizabeth Lambert, "The Law, The Nun, and Edmund Burke," in *An Imaginative Whig: Reassessing the Life and Thought of Edmund Burke*, ed. Ian Crowe (Columbia: U of Missouri P, 2002), 158–174.

of the Vulgate, the Ordo Missae, and Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* in Burke's mature writing lend credence to claims that a Blackwater schoolmaster "first put a Latin grammar into the hands of Edmund Burke."⁷⁰ They also resonate with modes of catechetical instruction described by Nano Nagle, who was likely educated at the same hedge school as her cousin.⁷¹ But even at its most cosmopolitan, the hedge-school system was primarily oriented toward the continuation of local communities and their traditions. Indeed, its prevalence in recusant areas illustrates a broader shift in Jacobite political cultures away from the unviable royalism of seventeenth-century partisans and toward the paternalistic populism of eighteenth-century movements such as Lord Bolingbroke's Country Party.⁷² While most pupils came from relatively modest backgrounds, their instruction often included promiscuous samplings of Latin, Greek, Irish, and English texts, and it was not uncommon to find "a classic work of history or literature ... in a laborer's shelf in the townland cabins" alongside "cheap reprints from the publishers of 'sixpenny books' in Dublin, Cork, and Limerick."⁷³ Like the "bold and decisive activity" of Fergus Mac-Ivor's political intellect in *Waverley*, the social imaginations of hedge-school pupils were thus "sharpened by the habit of acting on a preconceived and regular system, as well as by extensive knowledge of the world."⁷⁴

Perhaps the most surprising aspect of the hedge-school curriculum is the extent to which pupils "exercised themselves on romantic fiction" as part of a markedly Jacobite social pedagogy. Quite understandably, children who were expected to "hear Mass every day, say their morning and night prayers, [and] say the Catechism ... by question and answer" also read popular hagiographical romances such as "the Lives of the Saints, of St. Patrick, of St. Columbkil, of St. Teresa, St. Francis Xavier, [and] the Holy Scapular."⁷⁵ Partly as a result, educational reformers reg-

70 See, for example, *Hansard* 21:720; Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, 3:166.

71 Lambert, "The Law, the Nun," 160.

72 See J. A. W. Gunn, *Beyond Liberty and Property: The Process of Self-Recognition in Eighteenth-Century Political Thought* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 1983), 120-194.

73 Robert James Scally, *The End of Hidden Ireland: Rebellion, Famine, & Emigration* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995), 142.

74 Scott, *Waverley*, 124.

75 William Carleton, "The Hedge School," in vol. 2 of *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* (Dublin, 1830), 187.

ularly complained that “disloyal principles were insinuated into [pupils’] minds by [hedge-school] teachers, every one of whom was a leader of some illegal association.”⁷⁶ At least in some instances, this was certainly true. A popular Castletownroche schoolmaster named Liam Inglis, for example, who appears to have worked for some time as Edmund’s tutor, was also a Jacobite poet of some note who eventually became an Augustinian priest in 1749.⁷⁷ Ironically, Protestants also criticized what they imagined was the “total [moral] neglect of the Roman Catholic clergy” when it came to the type of secular literature used in hedge schools. As Antonia McManus observes, the “diversity of the reading material read ... [spanned] the pious polemical romance fiction of Penelope Aubin, namely *The Noble Slaves* (1722) and *Adventures of Lady Lucy* (1726) to the novels, *Clarissa* (1747–48) by Richardson,” Defoe’s *Moll Flanders*, and popular retellings of *The Story of Guy, Earl of Warwick*.⁷⁸ William Carleton lists “the history of Reynard the Fox, the Chevalier Faublax ... the Battle of Aughrim, Siege of Londonderry, History of the Young Ascanius, a name by which the Pretender was designated and a Renowned History of the Siege of Troy; the Forty Thieves, [and] Robin Hood’s Garland;”⁷⁹ P. J. Dowling finds evidence of *Don Quixote*.⁸⁰ In 1808, Hely Dutton compiled a list of longstanding “cottage classics” that included tales about “Montelion, Knight of the Oracle, Parismus and Parismenes, Irish Rogues and Rapaparees, Freney, a notorious robber ... the celebrated pirates, Jack the Bachelor, a noted smuggler, History of Rosamund and Jane Shore, two prostitutes, Dona Rosina, a Spanish Cour-

76 Ibid, 186.

77 O’Brien, *Melody*, 22. For Inglis [English], see Éamonn Ó Ciardha, “A Voice from the Jacobite Underground: Liam Inglis (1709–78),” in *Radical Irish Priests, 1690–1970*, ed. Gerard Moran (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1998): 16–38, and *Ireland and the Jacobite Cause: A Fatal Attachment* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), 285–286, 338–345. Inglis was one of a number of political priest-poets connected to the literary/familial circles of James Cotter and the Nagles; see for example, poetic dialogues between Edmund Nagle and Inglis in “Collection of historical and other poems, in Irish,” Additional MSS. 33,567, f.49, 51, 53, 55, Department of Manuscripts, British Museum, London.

78 Antonia McManus, *The Irish Hedge School and its Books, 1695–1831* (Portland: International Specialized Book Service, 2004), 182.

79 Carleton, *Peasantry*, 188.

80 P. J. Dowling, *The Hedge Schools of Ireland* (Cork: Mercier, 1968), 33.

tezan, Ovid's Art of Love, History of Witches and Apparitions, [and] The Devil and Dr. Faustus."⁸¹

Critics of the educational system that formed Burke in the Blackwater had deep reservations about a system oriented toward the kind of Jacobite bildungsroman that Scott would later enact as *Waverley*. They viewed the romance of treason as an effect of reading countercultural stories that regularly celebrated saints and martyrs alongside the "lives of pirates, dexterous thieves, witches, smugglers, and illustrious prostitutes"—altogether a mix of "political and religious ballads of the vilest doggerel, miraculous legends of holy friars persecuted by Protestants, and of signal vengeance inflicted by the divine power on those who persecuted them."⁸² There is no record of what romances Burke's teachers may have used during his Blackwater years, or if they used them at all. However, it would have been unusual for Edmund's education to have excluded Jacobite folk stories and poetic romances, particularly given Nagle connections to rebel literary circles. Jacobite popular culture of the eighteenth century, much of it oral, was marked by a deeply-ingrained secretiveness; it left deliberately few records for outsiders to examine—and prosecute.⁸³ Finding a record is thus often a question of finding echoes in a communal vernacular of memory, gesture, and personal association.

In 1792, Edmund acknowledged as much to his son, Richard Jr., then on business in Ireland for the Catholic Committee.⁸⁴ "When you go to the Blackwater," Edmund advised Richard, Jr., "if we have got any friends alive, and not quite ruined there, hinder them from shewing you honours in the way which in old times was not unusual with them, but which since are passed away, for in the present age and reign of newspa-

81 Hely Dutton, *Statistical Survey of the County of Clare, with Observations on the Means of Improvement; Drawn up for Consideration, and by Direction of the Dublin Society* (Dublin, 1808), 236–237.

82 Carleton, *Peasantry*, 187.

83 For context, see, for example, Murray G. H. Pittock, *Material Culture and Sedition, 1688–1760: Treacherous Objects, Secret Places* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), and *Poetry and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994).

84 See Eamon O'Flaherty, "The Catholic Convention and Anglo-Irish Politics, 1791–3," *Archivum Hibernicum* 40 (1985): 14–34.

pers they would be very mischievous."⁸⁵ Circumspect as he was, Burke nurtured a remarkable private knowledge of the "old times." He asked Richard Jr. to track the provenance of a collection of "many curious letters, manuscripts of all sorts, and printed books" that he remembered encountering in 1764; he maintained a polemical interest in obtaining "a volume of journals of the confederate Catholics in Kilkenny" and "a short printed manifesto of [Jacobite folk hero] Phelim O'Neil, on his taking arms in 1641."⁸⁶ Burke had a special interest in refuting Protestant histories of Ireland, particularly with respect to O'Neill and "the pretended massacre[s of English settlers] of 1641."⁸⁷ In the early 1760s, he planned his own historical work on the subject, but never completed this project, probably because his nostalgic, partisan interpretation of Ireland's past threatened the careful personal reserve that secured his political future.⁸⁸ Moreover, Burke did not have recourse to the genre distinctions that allowed historical romancers of the early nineteenth century to portray Jacobites, High Tories, and other political undesirables as sympathetic historical actors with human motivations for mainstream British audiences. While the prose accounts that comprised Burke's "manuscripts of all kinds" had distinct polemical and literary elements, they also tended to claim a high degree of historic verisimilitude. Had he lived at a later date, though, it is not hard to imagine Burke as a historical novelist, rendering the story of James O'Neill through an Irish *Waverley* or James Cotter's trial in a Blackwater version of *The Heart of Mid-Lothian*.

85 Burke, *Correspondence* 7:105.

86 Ibid.

87 Ibid.

88 See John C. Weston, Jr., "Edmund Burke's Irish History: A Hypothesis," *PMLA* 77, no. 4 (1962): 397–403; see also, Richard Bourke, "Party, Parliament, and Conquest in Newly Ascribed Burke Manuscripts," *The Historical Review* 55, no. 3 (2012): 619–652; T. O. McLoughlin, "Edmund Burke's 'Abridgement of English History,'" *Eighteenth-Century Ireland* 5 (1990): 49–59.

I am a runaway son from a father, as you are':

Burke and the Reactionary Adventure of Empire

Before 1757, the literary possibilities of Jacobite personae offered Burke a means of negotiating his public-private matrices of communal sympathy, personal frustration, and filial guilt. A letter written shortly after Culloden describes his "general compassion" toward the Chevalier's followers, his wish that the whole affair might be "terminated without bloodshed," and his "melancholy" reflections on "the state of those unhappy gentlemen who engaged in this affair (as for the rest they lose but their lives) who have thrown away their lives and fortunes, and destroyed their families forever, in what ... they thought was a just cause."⁸⁹ The letter is cryptically and deliberately misdated as "April 26, for fear I should forget 1745."⁹⁰ Clearly, though, Burke did not forget the public drama of *Waverley's* Court, and the celebrated public trials of the Chevalier's "unhappy gentlemen" likely inspired the *Enquiry's* key description of "a State criminal of high rank ... on the point of being executed in the adjoining square."⁹¹ Although Burke distrusted the way "[l]urid displays of violence facilitated a kind of aesthetic detachment,"⁹² his "literal-minded theory of tragedy," which effaced "the distinction between tragic events in real life and dramatic tragedy as an imitation of reality,"⁹³ celebrated the power of tragic catharsis to expose the "weakness of the imitative arts, and proclaim the triumph of real sympathy."⁹⁴ In the *Enquiry*, representations of the tragic sublime thus attain their full meaning through the audience's recognition of the limit of aesthetic experience and the auto-destruction of fictive distance between real and unreal, viewer and victim. As a theory of the tragic process, Burke's description of the State criminal celebrates the promiscuous reading

89 Burke, *Correspondence* 1:63.

90 Ibid.

91 Burke, *Enquiry*, 223.

92 Gibbons, *Colonial Sublime*, 25.

93 Frans De Bruyn, *The Literary Genres of Edmund Burke: The Political Uses of Literary Form* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 201. Gibbons makes use of De Bruyn's observation in *Colonial Sublime*, 25, but De Bruyn is quick to point out that "for Burke, 'Art is man's nature,' precisely because human nature requires the external monitorial check of society" (201).

94 Burke, *Enquiry*, 223.

program of Edward Waverley, the blurring of romance and literality; it posits that mimesis is less a copy than a skin which must be lived through and shed through experience. In the case of *Waverley*, the real failures of the Chevalier's Court allow Edward Waverley to judge the limits of Sir Everard's political romance, but the adventure stories of Waverley-Honour also allow Edward to rehearse the proper sympathetic response to the actual tragedy of Fergus Mac-Ivor's execution at the novel's end.

Although the *Enquiry* was not published until 1757, Burke composed much of its basic argument in the late 1740s while still a student at Trinity College.⁹⁵ And just as the *Enquiry*'s "aesthetic categories [outline] a unifying element of [his mature] social and political outlook," the *Enquiry* itself emerges from a context of Burke's early literary experiments which, like Waverley's romances, rehearse the potential application of Jacobite personae to Hanoverian politics.⁹⁶ At Trinity, for example, Burke actively participated in debates about the fate of Simon Fraser, a controversial Highland chieftain whose scandalous life, widely-reported treason trial, and dramatic beheading provided British audiences with a spectacle akin to the one described in the *Enquiry*.⁹⁷ He also followed the political trials of Jacobite lords such as George Mackenzie, William Boyd, and Arthur Elphinstone, all of whom were executed with bloody fanfare in 1746.⁹⁸ In later years, the tragic Jacobite celebrities of the 1740s provided Burke with analogues for emergent political crises in the British Empire: Fraser's trial gave precedent to the impeachment charges brought against Warren Hastings in the 1780s;⁹⁹ and recollections of "that great, but unhappy man," Elphinstone,

95 Ian Crowe, *Patriotism and Public Spirit: Edmund Burke and the Role of the Critic in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2012), 149.

96 Neal Wood, "The Aesthetic Dimension of Burke's Political Thought," *Journal of British Studies* 4 (1964), 42.

97 Gibbons, *Colonial Sublime*, 25.

98 See "The whole Proceedings in the House of Peers, upon the Indictments against William Earl of Kilmarnock, George Earl of Cromertie, and Arthur Lord Balmerino, for High Treason, in levying War against his Majesty, A.D. 1746," in vol. 18 of T. B. Howell, ed., *A Complete Collection of State Trials and Proceedings for High Treason and Other High Crimes and Misdemeanors from the Earliest Period to the Present Time* (London, 1813), 442–530.

99 Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, 12:200; see also, F. P. Lock, *Edmund Burke: Volume II: 1784–1797* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006), 70–71; for Lord Lovat, see Duncan Forbes,

spoke to the honor of treasonous American sailors in the 1770s.¹⁰⁰ To the extent that it inherited the *Enquiry's* rhetoric of mimetic tragedy, Burke's political writing resonated with Jacobite mythmaking about the Forty-Five and the suffering bodies of actual State criminals. But the political lives of such "unhappy gentlemen" also presented the young Burke with an expressive personal vernacular, a lyrical counterpoint to Richard Burke's conformism and stifling ambitions. One of Burke's early literary sketches, for example, describes a model Irishman in hell as a "fellow that made his way to this world through the Gallows, and lived by his gallantrys in the other," where "the women ... were so solicitous to save him that their husbands resolved to hang him."¹⁰¹ If there is a ghost in the piece, it is that of James Cotter, who lends Burke his volatile, cavalier, and self-consciously Irish sexual persona. Similarly, Burke may have borrowed Nagle airs on a 1752 trip through Monmouth with William Burke, during which many "of the lower sort apprehended ... that we were spies, from Spain" or France, plying "their trade."¹⁰² Burke did nothing to dissuade them. Instead, he reveled in the "very mysterious" figure that he cast in the mercantile town and relished the company of Monmouth's "hearty Jacobites, that is, a sort of people, whose politics consist in wishing that right may take place; and their religion, in heartily hating Presbyterians."¹⁰³

Burke's "adventures at Monmouth" produced—at least in their hero's mind—a *Waverley*-style bildungsroman in germinal form; as Burke later told Shackleton, they "would almost compose a novel, and that of a more curious and entertaining kind, than some of those we are enter-

Memoirs of the Life of Lord Lovat (London, 1746); Simon Fraser, *A Candid and Impartial Account of the Behavior of Simon Lord Lovat ... By a Gentleman who attended his Lordship in his last Moments* (London, 1747).

¹⁰⁰ Britannicus, *Seasonable Reflections, on the Dying-Words, and Deportment, Of that Great, but Unhappy Man, Arthur, late Lord Balmerino, Who was Beheaded ... Published by the Authority of the Sheriffs* (London, 1746), t.p.; Edmund Burke, *A Letter from Edmund Burke, Esq; One of the Representatives in Parliament for the City of Bristol, to John Farr and John Harris, Esqrs. Sheriffs of that City, On the Affairs of America* (London, 1777), 6.

¹⁰¹ Edmund Burke, "A Dialogue," in H. V. F. Somerset, ed., *A Note-Book of Edmund Burke* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1957), 76.

¹⁰² Edmund Burke, Letter to Richard Shackleton, 28 September 1752, Sheffield City Archives, Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments, Ref: WMM/BK P/1/10P.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

tained with from the press."¹⁰⁴ To the extent that they do, they touch on the crux of Burke's first published work, *A Vindication of Natural Society*, in which he chose to frame his unrelenting assault on "the evils of the existing political institutions," presented "with incomparable force of reasoning and lustre of eloquence,"¹⁰⁵ as an epistolary fiction, "not so much because he wish[ed] to conceal his thought, or merely to ridicule that of another, but because he [found] fiction to be the best form by which to convey his ideas about politics."¹⁰⁶ The *Vindication* is less about political ideologies—whether presented seriously or satirically—than about the relationship among three figures: a disillusioned Noble who, near death, surveys the failures of political history and doubts "whether or not the Creator did ever really intend Man for a State of Happiness;"¹⁰⁷ a young Lord at the beginning of his political career who is the recipient of the Noble's "general melancholy" about the state of "political Societies, their Origin, their Constitution, and their Effects;"¹⁰⁸ and an Editor who has managed to acquire and publish their private correspondence, but who will not reveal "by what Means it came into [his] Hands."¹⁰⁹ Burke's choice of a date—the "following Letter," the Editor notes, "appears to have been written about the Year 1748"¹¹⁰—establishes these relationships in terms of a historical proto-novel, an "Under-plot," which aligns the *Vindication's* attack on political society with Culloden, the trials of the Chevalier's "unhappy gentlemen," Burke's own youthful flirtation with the romance of playing the Jacobite "spy," and the *Enquiry's* initial development. This specific historical setting also accounts for the tenor of despair and secrecy that runs throughout the Noble's last testament and the fictional circumstances of its publication. Admittedly, no single character in the *Vindication* neatly corresponds to Burke's

104 Ibid.

105 William Godwin, *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and Its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness* (London, 1793), 10.

106 Frank N. Pagano, "Burke's Views of the Evils of Political Theory; Or, *A Vindication of Natural Society*," *Polity* 17, no. 3 (1985): 447.

107 Edmund Burke, *A Vindication of Natural Society: or, A View of the Miseries and Evils arising to Mankind from every Species of Artificial Society. In a Letter to Lord **** By a late Noble Writer* (London, 1756), in *Writings and Speeches* 1: 137.

108 Ibid.

109 Ibid, 132.

110 Ibid.

political thought, but the imagined community of the whole text serves as an image of his mind in the 1750s: nostalgic, secretive, inquisitive, both drawn to and repelled by blood, rebellious and deferential, religious at turns, despairing at others, distrustful of respectability. Burke, in effect, transitions from Blackwater romance to Whig opposition politics through a pitch-perfect impersonation of the most politically successful ex-Jacobite and populist Tory, Bolingbroke.

Because the *Vindication* was, in many ways, a later project than the *Enquiry*, Burke's choice of persona and the political cynicism in the work are hard to parse from the historiographical approach that he assumed quickly thereafter in "The History of the Present [Seven Years'] War," published serially, as indicated earlier, as part of the *Annual Register* starting in 1758.¹¹¹ Like *Waverley*, the *Vindication*, with its parting nod to Jacobite disappointment, contained an "acorn" of the British Imperial landscape that confounded the great Whig, Walpole, but provided Burke with the recurrent theme of his political career. As the *Vindication's* Noble remarks, "history is dark and uncertain" apart from the knowledge that "there were Conquerors, and Conquests ... and consequently, all that Devastation, by which they are formed, and all that Oppression by which they are maintained."¹¹² In the *Register*, Burke frames his evolving, annual, narrative history of the War this way from the outset. "It would be difficult," he remarks, "to perfectly understand the operations of the several powers at war, during the last year [1757], without ... examining the causes which more nearly or remotely operated to produce those troubles that have involved so many parts of the world in one common distraction."¹¹³ But in the *Register*, the meaning of that "common distraction" remains lost in the *Vindication's* obscure past, and the "war in which all parties and interests seem now to be so perfectly blended, arose from causes which originally had not the least connection."¹¹⁴ Notably, Burke's "History" does not "pretend to decide concerning the right of either nation in [the] contest," finding

111 See Thomas W. Copeland, "Burke and Dodsley's *Annual Register*," *PMLA* 54, no. 1 (1939): 223–245.

112 *Ibid.*, 14.

113 Edmund Burke, "The History of the Present War," *The Annual Register, for the Year 1758* 1 (London, 1758), 1–2.

114 *Ibid.*, 2.

it “evident enough that right had much less influence on both parties than the consideration of conveniency,” and probable enough that “the ruling men [who] influence all public interests and concerns as much as the public interests themselves ... [had] other causes to hasten this breach.”¹¹⁵ If there is a genuine thesis in the midst of the *Vindication*'s general despair, it is simply that “all Empires have been cemented in Blood.”¹¹⁶ Throughout his evolving narrative of the Seven Years' War, Burke treats British foreign affairs as the evidence.

Burke's “History of the Present War” is not ultimately about the progress of a war; like the *Vindication*, it is about the imperial landscape as a political mimesis for the multivalent possibilities of natural law and the human condition. Thus, while the Treaty of Paris wrote a national-historical conclusion to the *Register*'s printed imperial history, Burke effaced it immediately by continuing his project of writing present-history as a new, episodic “History of Europe.” Hardly European, Burke's focus in the work lay elsewhere: Manila, Madras, Malacca, and all manner of places where “the theater of hostility was infinitely enlarged,” despite the false “peace [that] seemed so well settled.”¹¹⁷ The “extent of the commercial empire of Great Britain is such, and it engages her in such a vast variety of difficult connections,” he explained in 1763, “that it is impossible for any considerable length of time to pass over, without producing an abundance of events.”¹¹⁸ While Whig political cultures of “provincial patriotism” stressed the insight that meaningful historical processes, events, and actors often operated far from the metropolitan center, the alienation of Bolingbroke and other prominent “Jacobites” extended the “provincial” critique by suggesting that local allegiances could often find a better, more sustainable articulation in cosmopolitan global contexts than in national ones.¹¹⁹ As John C. Weston, Jr. remarks, Burke believed that he could “see, through a survey of societies of the present

115 Ibid, 2–3.

116 Burke, *Vindication*, 142.

117 Edmund Burke, “History of Europe,” *The Annual Register, for the Year 1763* 6 (London, 1763), 1.

118 Ibid, i.

119 For eighteenth-century “provincial patriotism” and its contexts within the development of Whig political discourse, see the work of Ned Landsman, notably in “Nation, Migration, and the Province in the First British Empire: Scotland and the Americas, 1600–1800,” *The American Historical Review* 104, no. 2 (1999): 463–475;

world, every ‘state of gradation of barbarism’ and every ‘mode of refinement’ which man has experienced, but he never expressed a view of any sort of progress in universal history.”¹²⁰ To the contrary, he believed that “we know that *we* have made no discoveries, and we think that no discoveries are to be made, in morality, —nor many in the great principles of government, nor in the ideas of liberty, which were understood long before we were born altogether as they will be after the grave has heaped its mould on our presumption.”¹²¹ His *Register* histories were thus a circumvention of what he perceived as the hollowness of national-historical narrative on a grand imaginative scale. But by the commencement of his active political career in 1763, Burke had effectively exchanged margin for margin in the *Register*, translating the Blackwater’s nostalgic draw into the unfolding futurity of the British Empire.

As Geoffrey Plank observes, the “Jacobite rising influenced the administration of the empire,” both through the “military confrontation itself, which affected all of Britain’s domains ... [and the military establishment’s subsequent] prominence in the governance of the Highlands and in the empire as a whole.”¹²² For Burke, however, the imperial shift meant a return to the domain of individualistic romance rather than bureaucratic progress, adventure-plot rather than dialectics, and an “abundance of [discreet] events” that confronted a range of imperial heroes, just as they had for the pirates, highwaymen, State criminals, and cavaliers of the “cottage classics.” In fact, the “doggerel” romances of Burke’s youth, reflecting the diasporic realities of life on the British cultural margins, often had an imperial outer limit. Even the pro-Hanover romance, *Virtue Rewarded; or The Irish Princess*, counterpointed Ireland’s Williamite War of the 1690s with Spanish Colonial adventures in Peru.¹²³ Not surprisingly, Burke culled a series of “extraordinary

Ned C. Landsman, ed., *Nation and Province in the First British Empire: Scotland and the Americas, 1600–1800* (Cranbury: Associated UP, 2001).

¹²⁰ John C. Weston, Jr., “Edmund Burke’s View of History,” *The Review of Politics* 23, no. 2 (1961), 204.

¹²¹ Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. Conor Cruise O’Brien (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), 182.

¹²² Geoffrey Plank, *Rebellion and Savagery: The Jacobite Rising of 1745 and the British Empire* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2005), 6.

¹²³ Ian Campbell Ross and Ann Markey, eds., *Virtue Rewarded; or, The Irish Princess* [1693] (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2010).

adventures" from the British Empire for his first issue of the *Register*, reflecting that "the human mind can have no entertainment at once more congenial and useful to it, than ... [stories] of extraordinary distresses, and wonderful deliverances,"¹²⁴ such as those of John Zephaniah Holwell, a prisoner in the Black Hole of Calcutta, and Robert Eastburn, a Pennsylvania blacksmith captured by an Iroquis raiding party in 1756.¹²⁵ But the representative adventurers that Burke chose are hardly uncommon men. Robert Eastburn, for example, marches "behind an Indian, who had a large bundle of scalps hanging at his back, which was increased as often as some straggling wretch was overtaken."¹²⁶ The cardinal virtue of Eastburn, who must keep "this object perpetually before his eyes" and can do nothing about his own misfortune, is essentially that of Edward Waverley—he is drawn into historical violence and manages simply to survive.

Ian Duncan suggests that, "like the treatises of Burke ... Scott's first novel represents rebellion, for all the variety of motive for those involved, as a reactionary adventure, so making it more difficult to imagine in any other terms."¹²⁷ Although the form of the novel tends to repress the possibility of a "sole verbal and semantic center of the ideological world," the reactionary adventure-plot ensures that *Waverley's* poetic strain, through which Edward negotiates the dialogic aspects of the shifting historical landscape as "pure and direct expression[s] of his own intention," triumphs in the end.¹²⁸ This is a key distinction between the revolutionary outlook, which anticipates radical shifts in culture, and that of rebellion, which presupposes that cultures writ large can retain their coherence as private states of mind. In a sense, this psycho-

¹²⁴ Burke, *Annual Register* (1758), 278.

¹²⁵ See John Zephaniah Holwell, *A Genuine Narrative of the Deplorable Deaths of the English Gentlemen, and Others, who Were Suffocated in the Black-Hole ... in a Letter to a Friend* (London: A. Millar, 1758); Robert Eastburn, *A Faithful Narrative, of the Many Dangers and Sufferings, as Well as Womderful Deliverances of Robert Eastburn ... With a Recommendatory Preface, by the Rev. Gilbert Tennent* (London: William Dunlap, 1758).

¹²⁶ Burke, *Annual Register* (1758), 303.

¹²⁷ Ian Duncan, *Modern Romance and Transformations of the Novel: The Gothic, Scott, Dickens* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992), 53.

¹²⁸ Mikhail Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, tr. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: Texas UP, 1981), 366, 285.

logical lyricism is what gives the *Vindication's* Noble, who has “played long enough [on the world’s stage] to be tired of the Drama,” the last word in the tragic “ancient Theatre” of history’s “immense and rapid Conquests” and “usual Carnage.”¹²⁹ But for Burke, the social psychology that constituted the foundational aspiration of commonwealths was the idea that a “stable family, the acquisition of property, and freedom go together.”¹³⁰ While the Noble’s anarchism in the face of the violent irrationality of empires makes him an apostate in civil society, the *Vindication's* imperial setting also draws his familial impulse into high relief. “Happy, my Lord,” he concludes, “if instructed by my Experience, and even by my Errors, you come to make such an Estimate of things, as may give Freedom and Ease to your Life. I am happy that it promises me some Comfort at my Death.”¹³¹ Just as the great reversal in *Waverley* is not the easily anticipated failure of Jacobite aspirations, but the *Waverley-Bradwardines'* poetic translation of historical principles into the domestic psychology of a stable paterfamilias, the ideational progression in Burke’s imagination from Blackwater romance, through the Noble’s death in the *Vindication*, to the “extraordinary adventures” of the midcentury British Empire involved both an expansion of the idea of the political family to the global scale of Empire, as well as a reformulation of Jacobite cultural identity as a matter of familial identity. Scott’s final resolution of Edward Waverley’s adventure is thus an astute historiographical intuition, although not because—as is often claimed—it illustrates how Jacobites were subsumed into the dialectical “inevitable” of life in modern Britain. Instead, it illustrates the reduction of the values and aspirations of “the Chevalier’s Court” to the small scale of the domestic paterfamilias; but given the extent of the diaspora of former Jacobite families and their associates throughout the British Empire, the “Court,” in this sense, took seed everywhere that the House of Hanover ruled. Often, it also made cosmopolitan encounters with Imperial subjects abroad empathetic or potentially empathetic—like to like, kin to kin—even when it served little utilitarian logic to do so.

¹²⁹ Burke, *Vindication*, 183, 144.

¹³⁰ Francis Canavan, *The Political Economy of Edmund Burke: The Role of Property in His Thought* (New York: Fordham UP, 1995), 32.

¹³¹ Burke, *Vindication*, 184.

By the 1770s, this logic of the Jacobite paterfamilias seems to have the continuing role that Burke played in the Nagle family: he was Garret's leaseholder under the Penal Laws; he helped to raise his nephew, Edmund, after the death of Edmund, Sr. in 1763.¹³² But Burke's sense of what it meant to be a member of a proper family hardly seems to have come from Richard. In fact, his sense of the Irish past is the most inflexible, the most colored in terms of a romancer's heroes and villains, on the question of conformers who adopted an "unaccountable Anglicism, whiggism, and Protestantism, which in those days stood with many, particularly with all the rising men, in the place of honour, conscience, and public spirit."¹³³ In a sense, he was far more the adopted son of the *Vindication's* Noble and kinsman to an ever-increasing number of reactionary adventurers—some from history, some from romance: he often made little distinction. When Burke actually established his own family in the 1750s, it echoed his Blackwater upbringing, not his father's ambitions. Despite the fact that Richard spared no expense to maintain Edmund at Middle Temple, Edmund ruined his prospects for the law by marrying a sixteen-year-old Catholic, Jane Nugent, whose family had Nagle connections; he mortified Richard by flirting with conversion to "the Romish faith" in 1750; he attempted to immigrate to the Middle Colonies, a common option for Jacobites with poor prospects at home.¹³⁴ Edmund guiltily reassured his father that he dreaded "anything that look[ed] ill-judged in [his] conduct,"¹³⁵ but his "frustration, his questioning, and his deep, fundamental unhappiness ... went far beyond the common anxiety about a suitable profession."¹³⁶ As he explained to his friend, the Armenian rebel, Joseph Emin, in 1756, "I am a runaway son from a father, as you are."¹³⁷

132 Burke, *Correspondence* 3:411–416.

133 Burke, *Correspondence* 7:102.

134 Richard Musgrave, *Memoirs of the Different Rebellions in Ireland, from the Arrival of the English ... With the History of the Conspiracy which Preceded it* (Dublin, 1802), 41.

135 Samuels, *Early Life*, 97.

136 Lambert, *Burke*, 34.

137 Joseph Emin, *The Life and Adventures of Joseph Émin, an Armenian. Written in English by Himself* (London, 1792), 90.

The English Identity of Edmund Burke



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Recent literature on the eighteenth-century politician and polemicist Edmund Burke has concentrated much of its energy on recovering a vivid sense of his Irish identity. Since the publication of Conor Cruise O'Brien's 1992 meditation *The Great Melody* in particular, the identification of motivating forces for Burke's politics in his Irish background and domestic ties has become something of a scholarly trope.¹ Monographs, essays, and collections have scoured the correspondence, writing, and speeches to identify Irish echoes, Irish back-stories, and Irish campaigns in Burke's biography and activism.²

The great success of the literature examining Burke's Irishness has been to re-contextualise him by rejecting an unthinking inclusion of him in the canon of English political thought. Yet if this conceit is set aside, and his Irishness emphasised, it rather begs the question of his identification with Englishness. After all, Burke made his career in England, represented a succession of English constituencies, invested

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- 1 Conor Cruise O'Brien, *The Great Melody: A Thematic Biography of Edmund Burke* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1992).
 - 2 Thomas H. D. Mahoney, *Edmund Burke and Ireland* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960); Michel Fuchs, *Edmund Burke, Ireland and the Fashioning of Self* (Oxford, 1996); Luke Gibbons, *Edmund Burke and Ireland: Aesthetics, Politics and the Colonial Sublime* (Cambridge, 2003); for a critical survey see Michael Brown, "The National Identity of Edmund Burke" in *Edmund Burke's Irish Identities*, ed. Seán Patrick Donlan (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2007), 201–225.

his wealth in the development of an English estate, and was patronised by a series of English notables. And whereas the assumption that Burke fits snugly into the development of the corpus of English reflection on politics was largely unthinking about the positive content of English national identity—the flinty empiricism of its epistemological assumptions made its national character commonsensical and its opposition to French abstraction plain—one of the unintended consequences of the work done by scholars to affirm the Irish character and content of his thought is to open up afresh the question of his affiliation with English modes of analysis. This is a roundabout way of getting to the simple question: “How English was Edmund Burke?”³

One way to come at this question is by readdressing a set of apparent silences identified by Conor Cruise O’Brien. In *The Great Melody*, O’Brien proposes that Burke was temperamentally inclined to side with the underdog, a predisposition he links to Burke’s early encounters with the Irish penal code. Once Burke matured, and entered political life, his Irish identity was less forgotten than sublimated. He was sensitive about the charge of adventurism and was cautious about openly engaging with Irish affairs. Instead, his energies were directed towards the “Great Melody” of the title—drawing on the couplet in “The Seven Sages,” by W. B. Yeats, which O’Brien used as an epigram: “American Colonies, Ireland, France and India / Harried, and Burke’s Great Melody against it.” Much of this argument rests on the notion of critical silences, moments when the orator chose to remain aloof. While this was itself something of a standard manoeuvre in O’Brien’s critical arsenal (it informs his study of Albert Camus for example) it was deployed in relation to Burke to postulate a Catholic faith and a repressed politics which accounted for the outbursts of anger, the vociferous campaigning on lost causes, and the oftentimes disproportionate hatreds which Burke enjoyed.⁴ (War-

3 Another individual whose reputation was engaged in the question of English-Irish identity was Wellington: “Champions of Wellington in particular,” Paul Langford notes “were put to some difficulty, explaining that ‘one may talk of England and Ireland as one nation, in a general way,’ or ‘a man may be an Irishman by birth and an Englishman by adoption.’” Paul Langford, *Englishness Identified: Manners and Character, 1650–1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 21.

4 Conor Cruise O’Brien, *Camus* (London: Collins, 1970).

ren Hastings was only the most public subject of Burke's opprobrium: the duke of Bedford suffered similarly for instance.)

Setting aside the vivacity of his portrait, O'Brien's work identifies a distinctive wrinkle in Burke's Irish appearance. He acknowledges that there were a number of instances when, contrary to the Irish identity now being bestowed upon him, Burke himself openly self-identified as an Englishman. One such moment comes in the speech "On Conciliation with America" where he enunciates how:

In forming a plan for this purpose, I endeavoured to put myself in that frame of mind which was the most natural and most reasonable, and was certainly the most probable means of securing me from all error. I set out with a perfect distrust of my own abilities, a total renunciation of every speculation of my own, and with a profound reverence for the wisdom of our ancestors, who have left us the inheritance of so happy a constitution and so flourishing an empire, and what is a thousand times more valuable, the treasury of the maxims and principles which formed the one and obtained the other.⁵

O'Brien reads this passage as having Burke adopt "a persona that does not belong to him; a sort of collective persona, appropriate to the Rockinghams, on whose behalf he is introducing the resolutions ... he is arguing himself out of his own personality and into the 'frame of mind' of a proper English Whig."⁶ O'Brien then laconically remarks, "When 'On Conciliation' was published in the summer of 1775, some copies must have found their way into the Nagle Country in the Blackwater valley of County Cork. Did anyone smile, I wonder, at the phrase 'the wisdom of our ancestors'? Such Whiggish ancestors as Richard Nagle of Carrigacunna, James II's Attorney General?"⁷ The false presumption here that Jacobitism was an Irish cause alone does not wholly undermine the snide power of the observation.

If during this passage, as O'Brien contends, "Burke ... temporarily talks himself out of existence," a slightly different ambiguity emerges in

⁵ Quoted in O'Brien, *The Great Melody*, 151.

⁶ O'Brien, *The Great Melody*, 151.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 152.

a peroration which adorns the first *Letter on a Regicide Peace*. Here the tension that concerns us (but which does not have a substantive effect on the passage itself, which draws its energy from the belittlement of the notion of “an adequate compensation” for the Revolutionary wars) is the modulation between British and English. Burke was commenting on the terms William Auckland had proposed on which the Directory might sue for peace:

Here I recognize the voice of a British plenipotentiary: I begin to feel proud of my country. But alas! the short date of human elevation! The accents of dignity died upon his tongue ... To what are we reserved? An *adequate* compensation ‘for the sacrifice of powers the most nearly connected with us’; —an *adequate* compensation ‘for the direct or indirect annexation to France of all the ports of the Continent from Dunkirk to Hamburg’; —an *adequate* compensation ‘for the abandonment of the independence of Europe’! Would that, when all our manly sentiments are thus changed, our manly language were changed along with them, and that the English tongue were not employed to utter what our ancestors never dreamed could enter into an English heart!⁸

This shift from British to English goes unremarked by O’Brien, but it remains a notable moment of emotional identification by Burke with the English.

A final example of this tendency, dwelt on briefly by O’Brien, saw Burke writing in November 1796 to John Keogh of the Catholic Committee. He offered the following avowal:

You do me Justice in saying in your letter of July that I am a ‘true Irishman’. Considering as I do England as my Country, of long habit, of long obligation and of establishment, and that my primary duties are here, I cannot conceive how a Man can be a genuine Englishman without being at the same time a true Irishman, tho’ fortune should have made his birth on this side of the Water. I think the same Sentiments ought to

8 Quoted in *ibid.*, 550.

be reciprocal on the part of Ireland, and if possible with much stronger reason.⁹

O'Brien suggests of this statement that while "Burke wants Keogh to know that he is both a true Irishman and a true Englishman ... he has unusual difficulty in formulating this particular thought," presumably, given O'Brien's general thesis of Burke's suppression of his integral Irish identity, because the concept of Burke having a form of English affiliation involves his adoption of a form of false consciousness.¹⁰

In all of these moments, O'Brien sees Burke as indicating an anxiety over his Catholic Irish origins. While O'Brien makes this out as a form of "reticence" on the part of Burke; and builds a case for reading the silences as signifiers of Burke's hidden motivations throughout his parliamentary career, he is at times more scathing: "His occasional appearances in the persona of an English Whig, complete with a gallery of English Whig 'ancestors' may not have been the result of actual dissimulation, but if not, they were a flight from distressing and inconvenient reality into a decorous fantasy."¹¹ One does not need to concur with O'Brien's psychological reading of Burke's motivations to conclude that these suggestions of English affiliation are intriguing and potentially revealing. What this essay proposes is that rather than seek an answer to the puzzle by looking deeper into Burke's mind, it is more productive to look outward—to contextualise—by thinking through what such moments of metamorphosis tells us about English identity in the eighteenth century.

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The first difficulty which confronts us is a basic scepticism about the viability of the question we are posing. In thinking about national identity, it may be helpful to begin with an open definition of the subject.

9 Quoted in *ibid.*, 570.

10 *Ibid.*, 570. Another such moment is highlighted by Langford, who fails to mention Burke's Irish identity in commenting on it: "When Edmund Burke, leading the impeachment of Warren Hastings for corruption in 1789, told the House of Lords: 'We call upon you for our national character,' he was expressing a commonplace view that it was the changing product of changing times, its virtues only to be preserved by combating the vices of the day." Langford, *Englishness Identified*, 8.

11 O'Brien, *Great Melody*, 13.

Anthony D. Smith has proposed that national identity constitutes “a named human population sharing a historic territory, common myths and historic memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members.”¹² Smith admits that “a national identity is fundamentally multi-dimensional; it can never be reduced to a single element, even by particular factions of nationalists, nor can it be easily or swiftly induced in a population by artificial means.”¹³ However, unlike other doctrines of the state, it “signifies a cultural and political bond, uniting in a single political community all who share an historic culture and homeland.”¹⁴

While many of the facets of this definition may accord with English experience, Smith concedes that:

It is quite possible to find a population exhibiting a high degree of national consciousness without having much in the way of an ideology or doctrine of the nation, let alone a nationalist movement. England affords a good example of this, though even here nationalist ideologies have made their appearance from time to time, as in the period of Cromwell and Milton or at the time of Burke and Blake.¹⁵

Even this limited vision of English nationalism has been contested, with J. C. D. Clark characteristically trying to dismiss the contention that the English ever experienced a nationalist ideological spasm. Clark accepts that scholarship has oscillated between a modernist thesis that the nation-state was created in Europe after the French Revolution and as a consequence of industrial modernity; and the primordialist antithesis that the idea emerged as a political concept far earlier by building on the Reformation’s presumption of one king, one faith, and the language of biblical tribes.¹⁶ Yet he argues that nationalism did not take hold in England:

¹² Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (Reno, NV: University of Nevada Press, 1993), 43. This definition is developed in *ibid.*, 1–19.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 14–15.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 72.

¹⁶ Clark surveys the literature in J. C. D. Clark, “State Formation and National Identity: The Case of England” in *idem*, *Our Shadowed Present: Modernism, Postmodern-*

English understandings of identity before the nineteenth century had much to do with religiously inspired ideas of the divine institution of peoples and the Providential provision of their fortunes, little to do with the social-anthropological ideas of innate characteristics ... Indeed it was the English who normally satirised the Welsh, Irish and Scots for boasting of (or being uncertain about) their fathers; the English seldom insisted on the purity of their descent ... The more common English locution was not 'true born' but 'free born'.¹⁷

Whether this is sufficient to exempt England from the charge of nationalism might be disputed, as it relies on a heavily race-based rendition of the concept. Yet where Clark does see something distinct is in what he terms "English society": he is primarily concerned with illuminating the ideological underpinnings of the social structure which celebrated church and king and, as distinct from France, enabled the collaboration of the nobility of the pen and sword, of the merchant and the landowner. For Clark, this is a vision of England as a country of "little platoons," living under the great oak of state. This is where Clark and Burke coincide, and in Clark's edition of Burke's *Reflections* the Burke we find is a version of the English gent, who left behind his Irish origins to buy and maintain a landed estate at Beaconsfield; he enunciated a belief in political and religious establishment, leavened by an earthy dose of empirically-driven scepticism and socially inspired confessional latitude, ending his days fighting against the maverick expression of ideological nationalism he found conjoined with free thought in the writings of Thomas Paine.¹⁸

Yet, Burke was as much a man of the law as of the land, the son of a lawyer and training ineffectually for the bar himself before politics called. If Clark's portrayal of Burke is incomplete, so too his treatment of English society has been questioned by scholars who are less sceptical

ism and History (London: Atlantic Books, 2003), 59–86.

17 J. C. D. Clark, "Why was there no Nationalism in England?" in *ibid.*, 96.

18 J. C. D. Clark, "Introduction," in Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France: A Critical Edition*, ed. J. C. D. Clark (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); see also Michael Brown, "J. C. D. Clark's *Reflections* and Edmund Burke's Irish Society" in *Studies in Burke and his Time*, 20 (2005), 127–44.

than he is about the influence of national identity on the cultural imagination. Granted, much of what has been proposed has been less than doctrinaire about the embodiment of the English nation in a British state; yet there have been some significant reflections on the nature of communal identity in England in the eighteenth century. Four models of Englishness will be briefly summarised here, based in turn on ethnicity, confession, community, and statehood.

1. The Ethnic Model

The argument that England experienced the rise of a cultural and ultimately ethnic form of nationalism in the period from 1740 to 1830 is associated largely with Gerald Newman. His 1987 study, *The Rise of English Nationalism: A Cultural History*, hinged on the capacity of William Pitt the Younger to articulate and politically mobilise an otherwise oppositional sense that the British state was not serving the interests of its English subjects effectively. The watershed moment was the 1784 election, when Pitt won an outright majority and was able to dictate terms of governance to a hostile monarch.¹⁹ Newman's thesis was fleshed out with a definitional argument concerning the nature of the English nationalism Pitt promulgated, and a pre-history of what we might now term the literary public sphere that developed the cultural agenda which Pitt successfully deployed in his quest for power. Newman identified in the 1740s and 1750s what he saw as a first stage in the creation of nationalism: "the emergence of nationalist political ideas." This was then provided with a political focus in a second stage, with "the emergence of leaders and groups of activists."²⁰ The third and "climactic moment" was reached by "mustering the people," which Pitt largely effected, before a new epoch opened in which nationalism experienced "consolidation and normalisation"—dated to the 1790s when the conflict with France embedded a popular loyalism.²¹

19 Gerald Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism: A Cultural History, 1740–1830* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1987), 216–21.

20 *Ibid.*, 162, 164.

21 *Ibid.*, 166, 167.

In this narrative of emergent nationalism, Burke's assertions of English identity strike a discordant note. Not only did he practically fall on the wrong side of the 1784 joust, his literary pretensions were limited and abstract—even his “Abridgment of the English History” lay unfinished and unpublished. More pertinent again, Burke was, as O'Brien documents, in no way ethnically English. His father was perhaps a convert—F. P. Lock dismisses the identification of the Richard Burke who signed the Irish convert rolls with Burke's father—but Richard was certainly of Irish heritage. His wife, Mary Nagle, was from a prominent Gaelic family in County Cork, and her extended relations had deep Jacobite connections, which caused Burke himself occasional uneasiness and embarrassment. Newman's English antagonists understood Burke as an outsider, and they mocked his social pretensions, making insistent and offensive allusions to his Irish origins in caricature and polemic.²²

In Newman's account, then, Burke is a foil, articulating a form of European cosmopolitanism wherein “the religion, law, manners, classes, orders and systems of Europe ... ‘were all the same.’ Europe was not so much an aggregate of nations as a single commonwealth.”²³ Later, Newman condemns Burke as a conflicted arriviste snob, arguing that “much of his life [was spent] in service to the Whig grandees” and that his frustrations spilt out in the late attack on the duke of Bedford, which “like acid ... poured out through the walls of inhibition and self-interest,” an outburst caused by “a volatile mixture blended from pride over his own ascent from insignificance, and rage against the obsequious servility imposed upon him by dependence upon the great.”²⁴ Finally, Newman remarks on the debilitating consequences of Burke's adoption of the English national cause. Attacking what he terms Burke's “intellectual shoplifting,” he argues that in the *Reflections on the Revolution in France* “Burke aimed to hijack and remold the mythology which had always constituted the radicals' most powerful argument for democratic

22 Nicholas K. Robinson, *Edmund Burke: A Life in Caricature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

23 Newman, *Rise of English Nationalism*, 10–11. See also his view that Burke “voiced his conviction that Europe was a morally, intellectually and institutionally unified civilization.” *Ibid.*, 17.

24 *Ibid.*, 96, 97.

change.”²⁵ Indeed, “His purpose was not to demand a resumption of ancient rights but instead to check such demands by identifying them with supposedly ‘abstract’ and ‘foreign’ impulses. With Burke, the theory of the English nation was adapted, for the first time in its long history, to the cause of aristocratic ascendancy and social conservatism.”²⁶ Burke here defused English identity; he did not co-opt it.

2. The Confessional Model

Between the atheism of J. C. D. Clark and the doctrinal confidence of Gerald Newman there is a broad community of agnostics and nominal adherents to the idea of eighteenth-century English nationalism, understood as a congruity between the ethnic character of its populace and its governing elite.²⁷ This, as Anthony D. Smith has helped define it, involves “the continuous reproduction and reinterpretation of the pattern of myths, memories, symbols and values that compose the distinctive heritage of the nation, and the identification of its individuals with that pattern or heritage.”²⁸ This “pattern of myths, memories, symbols and values” can be more easily summarised by using Doug Gay’s formulation: the nation is identifiable as a community that seeks to enjoy “common objects of desire.”²⁹ This is to hint that, as Smith himself has explored and Gay openly advocates, national identity is connected to religious sentiment, and that, in a harder formulation than either might endorse, the state is a secular manifestation of a national communion. Adrian Hastings has in this fashion posited an intimate connection between the Church of England and a sense of English identity, providing the English with a unique character, a peculiar mission and a

25 Ibid., 228, 229.

26 Ibid., 228.

27 This is to adopt the definition found in Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983).

28 Anthony D. Smith, “‘Set in the silver sea’: English National Identity and European Integration,” *Nations and Nationalism*, 12 (2006), 438.

29 Doug Gay, *Honey from the Lion: Christianity and the Ethics of Nationalism* (London: SCM Press, 2013).

distinct relationship to the divine.³⁰ This was mediated through a state which claimed religious sanction, intervened in the appointment of the church hierarchy and mediated God's word through state-sponsored translations of scripture, the formulation of state-inspired doctrine, and the provision of state-sanctioned prayer.

The dark side of this form of spiritually-inspired national identity has been explored by Colin Haydon, who has highlighted the extended tradition of anti-Catholicism that it provoked.³¹ As Tony Claydon attested in an essay in 1998, "the main contribution of anti-Catholicism to national identity in the Georgian era was to construct the European continent as fundamentally alien."³² If this provided England with a distinctive character, it also fostered the view that Catholics were foreign to the body politic. While Irish and Scottish Catholics rested at the outskirts of the imagination, marked out by accent, social caste, and peculiar manners, English recusants were more insidious, capable of passing for true Englishmen in their habits, gait, and garb. It was this indigenous community that was the subject of the Gordon riots (prompted by a Scot, Thomas Gordon, who ended his days a millenarian Jew), and whose Jacobite inclinations for much of the century provided occasion for repeated political trials and invasion scares.³³

This was not, however, the complete picture for, as Brian Young has documented, there was a strain of doctrinal thought that appreciated the Catholic heritage of the church and sought to emphasise the shared origins of Anglicans and, notably, Gallicans in the early church. Patristic scholarship repeatedly asserted the connective tissue that bound

30 Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 35–66; notably in this study, England is overtly declared to the "prototype."

31 Colin Haydon, *Anti-Catholicism in Eighteenth-Century England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993).

32 Tony Claydon, "I love my King and my Country, but a Roman Catholic I hate': Anti-Catholicism, Xenophobia and National Identity in Eighteenth-Century England" in *Protestantism and National Identity: Britain and Ireland c. 1650–c. 1850*, ed. Tony Claydon and Ian McBride (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 33–4.

33 See Ian McCalman, "Mad Lord George and Madame La Motte: Riot and Sexuality in the genesis of Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*," *Journal of British Studies*, 35 (1996): 343–67; Paul Kleber Monod, *Jacobitism and the English People, 1688–1788* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

French Catholicism to English Protestantism. Taken together with a wing of Anglican thought that germinated Unitarianism, another room that housed the Methodism of John Wesley (who never broke from the Church of England, even if his followers did), and the internal tensions between Latitudinarian Low Church and ceremonial High Church renditions of the faith, Young's observation that "the surprise may be, not that the church has problems providing a focus for the nation, but that the idea of a national church survived at all" seems apt.³⁴

Burke's position in this is predictably complicated. A defender of religious establishment, he was by no means anti-Catholic. Even setting aside the Catholic coloration of his biography, lengthy passages of the *Reflections* are devoted to upholding the legitimacy of the established church in England and in France. Nor was Burke's attachment to the Church of England entirely straightforward. His personal faith has been the subject of extended scholarly discussion, with favor largely falling on a latitudinarian reading of his sporadic remarks on the subject.³⁵ One point seems to have evaded this debate, and to raise it in this context may help to explain some of the hesitancy Burke's utterances have evinced in the critical discussion: namely, Burke was not raised in the Church of England. Rather, his father was a communicant of the Church of Ireland. This sister church had its origins in the Tudor reformation and shared with its English sibling much of the ecclesiology; it was capable of providing many of the Church of England's clergymen with employment, even if it was something of a dumping ground for the infirm, the indiscreet, and the insane. However, its status remained that of an autonomous province of the Anglican faith, and church governance was technically separate, having a distinct Convocation

34 Brian Young, "A History of Variations: The Identity of the Eighteenth-Century Church of England" in Claydon and McBride (eds), *Protestantism and National Identity*, 107. On Wesley see Jeremy Gregory, "'In the Church I will live and die': John Wesley, the Church of England and Methodism" in *Religious Identities in Britain, 1660–1832*, ed. William Gibson and Robert G. Ingram (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 147–78.

35 For Burke as a latitudinarian see Fredrick Dreyer, "Burke's Religion," *Studies in Burke and his Time*, 17 (1976), 199–212; Nigel Aston, "A 'Lay Divine': Burke, Christianity and the Preservation of the British State, 1790–1797" in *Religious Change in Europe, 1650–1914*, ed. idem (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 185–211, and Clark, "Introduction," 25–30.

and its own doctrinal statement of orthodoxy, the 104 Articles, written by James Ussher in 1615, which was in turn a foundation stone for the Presbyterian Westminster Confession of Faith. By 1660, the Thirty Nine Articles had taken precedence, but the Convocation had carefully ensured that they had been adopted in addition to, not in favour of, the more comprehensive statement of doctrine. While in the eighteenth century many of the differences were smoothed over or lay in abeyance, this structural alienation from the Church of England was to become of utmost importance again in the nineteenth century. The Act of Union created a single entity, the United Church of England and Ireland, but the independent character of the church was resuscitated in 1869, only to enable Gladstone to test out the hypothesis of disestablishment in Ireland without having to rupture the relationship between church and state in England. Given this distinctive history, it is worth acknowledging that in this technical sense the three kingdoms of the Hanoverian state system were mirrored by a tri-confessional church establishment.³⁶ This explains how figures such as William King, the influential Archbishop of Dublin from 1703 to 1729, could avail of the Church of Ireland as a venue to articulate patriotic provincialism.³⁷

In the case of Burke, it set him to one side of the appeal of an English national identity configured in relation to a national church. As J. C. D. Clark has documented in his edition of the *Reflections*, Burke was a man of wide swallow, and was minded to incorporate Presbyterians in the national communion, until their political apostasy (as he saw it) in the 1784 election when they supported Pitt against the rump remains of the Rockingham administration Burke had toiled alongside.³⁸ Similarly, Burke's eirenic tendencies encompassed arguing for the repeal of the Irish penal code—"a machine of wise and elaborate contrivance, as well fitted for the oppression, impoverishment and degradation of a people, and the debasement in them of human nature itself, as ever proceeded from the perverted ingenuity of man"—and the assimilation of

36 This is to complicate further some of the observations made in James J. Caudle, "James Boswell and the Bi-Confessional State" in *Religious Identities in Britain*, ed. Gibson and Ingram, 119–46.

37 Christopher Fauske, *A Political Biography of William King* (London: Pickering & Chatto Ltd., 2011).

38 Clark, 'Introduction', 56.

that society's leadership as a means to inoculate Ireland against abstract democratic ideas concerning the rights of man.³⁹ If Burke was wedded to the idea of establishment, it seems it was for pragmatic purposes of social order, not because of any doctrinal affiliation to a specific church settlement. It was no basis on which to found a national identity that would countermand any other. When in England, Burke was happy to reside in the Church of England: presumably, when he thought of himself as Irish, his religious identity was with the established Church of Ireland. His religious identity was in that sense permeable, not essential.

3. *The Community Model*

If the idea of a national church remained an ideal, and Burke was unable to deploy it as a foundation for his appropriation of English identity, where else might he have sought a justification? For one thing, we need to begin to erode the stable conceit of national identity itself as it has been inherited from the nineteenth century. As Dror Wahrman has elucidated, the eighteenth century understood categories such as gender or race as having more to do with behaviour than with origins.⁴⁰ National identity was a social, not an ethnic concept. As such, contemporary commentators as sophisticated as Montesquieu and Hume endeavoured to identify the characteristic behaviours of particular nations, or what they termed "manners." If Montesquieu was concerned with the effect of climate on social mores and legal requirements—hot countries tended to discourage the consumption of alcohol as the likelihood of dehydration was higher, for instance—Hume, in his essay "Of National Characters," favoured what he termed "moral causes," by which he implied "all circumstances, which are fitted to work on the mind as motives or reasons, and which render a peculiar set of manners habitual to us. Of this kind are the nature of the government, the revolutions of public affairs, the

39 Edmund Burke, "Letter to Sir Hercules Langrishe" in *Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, ed. Paul Langford (Oxford, 1991), 9: 598.

40 Dror Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

plenty or penury in which the people live, the situation of the nation with regard to its neighbours, and such like circumstances."⁴¹

In a similar vein, Paul Langford, in *Englishness Identified*, has mined the impressions of foreign visitors to England to identify six traits that made up the national character as perceived in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The major headings were "energy"; "candour"; "decency"; "taciturnity"; "reserve"; and "eccentricity."⁴² As he explains, these headings were, in part, chosen for their neutrality, however much the book generates a kind a balance sheet of attributes. Taken together, they provide a form of anthropological portrait of the nation, offering insight into normal social customs, habits, and expectations. Niceties here define nations. Elsewhere, Langford is less sanguine about the character of English identity. When, in *A Polite and Commercial People*, he writes openly of English nationalism, he associates it directly with xenophobia as well as national pride. In particular, he accepts that "the most corrosive effects of English nationalism were felt at home. Popular animosity towards the remaining nations of the British Isles was deeply entrenched. It manifested itself wherever Englishmen found themselves afflicted by Irishmen, Welshmen and Scotsmen."⁴³

Entrenched though such attitudes might appear, Langford considers that manners are not static or unchanging. His definition, that "manners were largely the product of social interactions, whether in the past or present," is sufficiently fluid to allow for the possibility of personal and social development.⁴⁴ Indeed, he adds that "explaining an individual's manners was a matter of describing his upbringing, education, and experience. Explaining a nation's manners meant investigating its physical environment, its economic progress and its political framework."⁴⁵ But, in this, the project is largely descriptive, not analytical: Langford himself suggests that his work was concerned with "the things identi-

41 Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), part three, 231–333; David Hume, "Of National Characters" in David Hume, *Essays: Moral, Political and Literary*, ed. Eugene Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1987).

42 Langford, *Englishness Identified*, passim.

43 Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727–1783* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 323–4.

44 Langford, *Englishness Identified*, 8.

45 *Ibid.*, 8.

fied [as English] not the process of identification”—that is, the content of national identity, not the emergence of a national consciousness.⁴⁶

Nonetheless, this seems to be a more open, adaptable way of defining English identity, and one that, at least at first view, might be available for appropriation by Burke. Even if one disputes the value of any one of the six itemised traits in describing Burke’s character, the notion that Englishness involves a mode of behaviour suggests it is as much a learnt identity as an inherited one. One can successfully pass as an Englishman by making a display of English manners. And Burke was apparently prone to such displays. The avowals of English identity are examples of just this, after all. Moreover, Burke was a parvenu; ambitious to embed himself and his family into his adopted society. In Elizabeth Lambert’s sympathetic portrayal, Burke can be understood as akin to a Ciceronian New Man, a self-made progenitor of a prospective landed dynasty. Hence the starching of his personal finances to purchase Beaconsfield and the singular despair which engulfed Burke when his son Richard died before him.⁴⁷ More crudely, contemporaries accused him of being an Irish adventurer.

Yet evidence points in another direction also. Burke not only maintained an interest in Irish affairs, he passed it on to Richard by ensuring his appointment as an agent for the Catholic Committee. So, too, Burke seems to have retained his accent, and did not mimic his betters in his personal affectations. Johnson mocked his “bow-wow” manner of speaking and Boswell abandoned his attempts to capture his spoken voice, admitting the torrential outpouring of words that Burke articulated when animated wore him out.⁴⁸ His manners, it seems, were more Irish than English. The cartoonists may have caricatured his commitments by illustrating him as a Jesuit carrying potatoes, but they were highlighting a very obvious trait to English observers.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 2.

⁴⁷ Elizabeth Lambert, *Edmund Burke of Beaconsfield* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2003).

⁴⁸ See T. W. Copeland, “Johnson and Burke” in *Statesmen, Scholars, and Merchants*, ed. Anne Whitman, J. S. Bromley, and P. G. M. Dickson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 294.

4. *The Statehood Model*

If Burke could not mimic English manners, he was in a position to adopt its politics, and if English identity was compatible with a form of state-sponsored civic nationalism, then this may have provided a sufficient basis for his assertions of Englishness. This is how scholars concerned with the financial revolution have largely chosen to read the English condition. In this narrative the expansion of the state's resources and its concomitant intrusion into the lives of its citizenry inflected their understanding of political identity in a fashion that, when merged with military conflict abroad, generated a form of popular English patriotism. Here the work of P. G. M. Dickson and John Brewer has been influential in tracing out the contours of the fiscal-military state and in Brewer's studies of consumption and the identification of a commercial revolution that emerged simultaneously to that in statecraft.⁴⁹

Despite the value of this work, and the now fashionable literary concentration on economics and finance, the connection between the financial and commercial revolutions remains more assumed than analysed. Even more pertinent, recent essay collections by those associated with the "Money, Power and Print" research group have shown how deep the infiltration of the financial revolution was within Scotland and Ireland.⁵⁰ So too, Stena Nenadic and Martyn Powell have shown that the commercial revolution was informing life in the Scottish highlands and Irish hinterland as much as in its supposed English heartland.⁵¹

49 P. G. M. Dickson, *The Financial Revolution in England: A Study in the Development of Public Credit, 1688–1756* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1967); John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688–1783* (London: Unwin and Hyman, 1989); idem, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Harper Collins, 1997); see also *Consumption and the World of Goods*, ed. John Brewer and Roy Porter (London: Routledge, 1994); Anne Bermingham and John Brewer, *The Consumption of Culture, 1600–1800: Image, Object, Text* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

50 Charles Ivar McGrath and Christopher Fauske, ed., *Money, Power and Print: Interdisciplinary Studies of the Financial Revolution in the British Isles* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2008); Chris Finlay and Daniel Carey, ed., *The Empire of Credit: The Financial Revolution in Britain, Ireland and America, 1688–1815* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2011); see also Patrick Walsh, "The Bubble on the Periphery: Scotland and the South Sea Bubble," *Scottish Historical Review*, 91 (2012): 106–24.

51 Stena Nenadic, *Lairds and Luxury: Highland Gentry in Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (Edinburgh: Birlinn Ltd, 2007); Martyn J. Powell, *The Politics of Consumption in*

In thinking about national identity, J. C. D. Clark has described using this literature to argue for a form of state-led nationalism as a “false start” on the grounds that it fails to provide the state with a meaningful ideological content (which he sees as primarily religious in form). Instead, he argues, it forms “an abstract concept and one that did not clearly distinguish England from Britain or Britain from the United Kingdom.”⁵² The paradox is that by recognising the nature of this failure the problem of English national identity (and ultimately Burke’s relation to it) can begin to be recast.

First, it might be recalled how scholars have treated the repercussions of the parliamentary Union that merged the English and Scottish representative bodies in 1707. While deeply contested by those who wish to assert the continuing legacy of indigenous traditions of Scottish abstract reflection, Nicholas Phillipson has provocatively proposed that one consequence of the loss of the Scottish parliament to London was a recalibration of the concept of virtue from a political to a social domain.⁵³ The outcome was the Scottish Enlightenment, which reified sociability and economic improvement.⁵⁴ While this is a rather more sophisticated rendition of developments than Hugh Trevor Roper’s contention that the Scottish Enlightenment was the consequence of the Scottish finally seeing sense and acting like the English, it does raise the question of how the redrawing of the state reconfigured national identity.⁵⁵ If the

Eighteenth-Century Ireland (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

52 Clark, “State Formation and National Identity,” 68.

53 Nicholas Phillipson, “Culture and Society in the Eighteenth-Century Province: The Case of Edinburgh and the Scottish Enlightenment” in *The University in Society*, Volume 2, ed. Laurence Stone (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 407–48. See, however, Alexander Broadie, *The Tradition of Scottish Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990); David Allan, *Virtue, Learning and the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993); idem, *Philosophy and Politics in Later Stuart Scotland: Neo-Stoicism, Culture and Ideology in an Age of Crisis, 1540–1690* (Edinburgh: Tuckwell Press, 2000).

54 Nicholas Phillipson, “The Scottish Enlightenment” in *The Enlightenment in National Context*, ed. Roy Porter and Mikulas Teich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 19–40; see also John Robertson, *The Case for Enlightenment: Scotland and Naples, 1680–1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

55 Hugh Trevor Roper, “The Scottish Enlightenment,” *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 58 (1967): 1635–58; Nicholas Phillipson, “Politeness, Politics and the Anglicisation of Early Eighteenth-Century Scottish Culture” in *Scotland and England, 1286–1815*, ed. Roger A. Mason (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1987), 226–46.

Scots have led the way in this mode of reflection, it is worth remembering that the Union of 1707 also insisted that the English equally lost their claim to a nation state.

One consequence of this change in the relationship between the citizens and the state has been traced by mapping out the forms of provincial patriotism that the British imperium contained. Ned Landsman has documented a patriotic constituency existing in Scotland, who laid claim to a higher moral vantage point than the mere English. Provincialism was here conceived as a guarantee of native virtue, and the register was developed by using metropolitan vice as a foil. Patriotism was equally evident in Ireland, although there it had to triangulate against English interference in the regional parliament and the threat of native atavism. In this it closely mirrored the form of patriotism that emerged in the American colonies. If anything, the English mode was closer to the Scottish variant. As Kathleen Wilson has shown, it involved an assertion that localities like Newcastle were less corrupt and more civil than a decadent London.⁵⁶ As Christine Gerard and others have recognised, the idealisation of the English countryside and the rejection of the metropolis such language implies ensured that patriotism existed primarily as an oppositional language easily adopted by those who had been forced from office to explain their failing fortunes—hence the power of Johnson’s barb that it was “the last refuge of a scoundrel.”

As Landsman has traced out, the American case of this careful balancing act was not sustainable, and provincial virtue eventually transmogrified into national separation: why stay affiliated with a metropole you conceive of as sinful, enervating, and amoral?⁵⁷ A different trajectory was embarked upon by the Irish as the autonomy granted in 1782 subsided into parliamentary union with Britain in 1800 as the ramifications of the 1798 rising became apparent. Indeed some of the vocabulary of independence that mobilised the Colonists inflected the language of Irish radicals: the United Irish dallied with the idea of separatism and

56 See Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715–1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

57 Ned Landsman, *From Colonials to Provincials: American Thought and Culture, 1680–1760* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000).

Wolfe Tone took the effort to think through the issue explicitly.⁵⁸ A similar process was underway in the outer reaches of Scottish identity also. The British Convention held in Edinburgh in 1793 co-opted the vocabulary of provincial virtue (the Friends of the People of Scotland organised the event) to re-imagine the state system.⁵⁹ Paradoxically, in England these energies found an outlet in the politics of resentment articulated by the little Englanders that surrounded John Wilkes during his Scottophobic campaign against the Earl of Bute.⁶⁰

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What is being suggested here is that the lack of English statehood makes some sense of why the English did not typically identify themselves as being British: the concept of South Briton has not a sting comparable to declaring someone a North Briton or “West Brit.” A search through *Eighteenth-Century Collections Online*, for instance, provided a mere twelve usages of the term “South Britain” in the title of works published in England (three others appeared in Edinburgh) throughout the course of the century.⁶¹ Occasionally it was deployed as a geographic term, as with John Ogilvie’s *Britannia Depicta* of 1710, or in the 1709 almanac *A Useful Companion: Or Help at Hand*. (That both of these were published shortly after the parliamentary Union with Scotland may account for this.) At the other end of the century, a 1799 publication of the Domesday Book held that it described *An Actual Survey of South Britain by the Commissioners of William the Conqueror*, which was a feat of historical telescoping if nothing else. While some pamphlets availed of the term to denote places of historical or contemporary action, and others the reach of particular items of legislation, only one deployed the term in celebration of its political referent. Written by Philopatria, *South Britain: A Poem* alluded in rhyming couplets to its landscape, its

58 Thomas Bartlett, “The Burden of the Present: Theobald Wolfe Tone, Republican and Separatist” in *The United Irishmen: Republicanism, Radicalism and Rebellion*, ed. David Dickson, Dáire Keogh and Kevin Whelan (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1993), 1–15.

59 Gordon Pentland, “Patriotism, Universalism and the Scottish Conventions, 1792–1794,” *History*, 89 (2004): 340–60.

60 Richard B. Sher, “‘The Favourite of the Favourite’: John Home, Bute and the Politics of Patriotic Poetry” in *Lord Bute: Essays in Re-interpretation*, ed. Karl W. Schweizer (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1988), 181–212.

61 Search conducted on 11 March 2014.

history, its economic capacity, and its legal rights and practices (“For Common Good their darling steel they’ll draw / And venture all for liberty and law”).⁶² In that, it accords with Anthony D. Smith’s definition of national identity cited above, all the while subsuming it into a wider political entity, Britain as a whole. Yet even in this work, the vitality of the English was set against the portion of the Scots:

The Caledonians fortify’d with Cold
 Hardy and hungry, truly brave and bold;
 Of nature’s Bounty have but slender Share,
 A barren Country, and inclement Air,
 Doom’d in this District of their dull Abode
 To starve at home, or to be killed abroad.
 From Ice and Snow they flee to martial Flames
 And by their Swords immortalise their Names ...
 Wanted to Vict’ry in the bloody Field
 Yet these to English are inur’d to yield.⁶³

This general resistance to the nomenclature of South Britain is to remind us that Britishness is not a form of hyper-inflated Englishness. Rather, it is a distinct and discreet platform from which to perform political identity. Certainly Burke could perform a kind of Britishness, as he did in taking up English seats in the Westminster parliament.⁶⁴ Britishness allowed Burke an entry into the English world, but it did not imply a total immersion. Indeed, Englishness could be a venue for resistance to the British project of imperial outreach (both within and beyond the archipelago if we follow Michael Hechter’s formulation of Internal Colonisation).⁶⁵ If the creation of Britain is understood as a

62 Philopatria, *South Britain: A Poem* (London, [1731]), 16.

63 *Ibid.*, 17.

64 See for instance his statement to the electors of Bristol, in dealing with the accusation that his Irish affiliation took precedence to the interests of his constituency, “I certainly have very warm wishes for the place of my birth. But the sphere of my duties is my true country ... I was true to my old, standing, invariable principle, that all things, which came from Great Britain, should issue as a gift of her bounty and beneficence.” Edmund Burke, “Speech at Bristol previous to the Election” in Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, 3:630.

65 Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536–1966* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

Union for Empire, Englishness is a form of resistance to that colonising identity.⁶⁶ Britishness is here understood as a co-optive identity, capable of being taken on voluntarily by a series of political choices; Englishness is not. Indeed it is partly defined by a rejection of those choices: imperial ambition, naval supremacy, and the sharing of spoils.

This is to read Britishness as an articulated “imperial ethnicity”: people are British when they identify themselves as being from this archipelago, and they predominately do so when they are abroad, as it provides them with an “empire as opportunity.”⁶⁷ While John Darwin, who has coined this term, accepts that the idea “that empire was the *dominant* element in a modern British identity was always far-fetched, not least because those who proposed it displayed such a crude understanding of what ‘empire’ actually meant,” he also argues that it is more than a cumulative identity or a bundling up of the four nations as a kind of shorthand.⁶⁸ For “amid the joy of ruling, the four British nations could forget their mutual resentments.”⁶⁹ Britishness discriminates the settlers from French imperialists and from the colonised peoples over which they governed, even if there were examples of indigenous elites co-opting British norms for local purposes: William Molyneux for instance discussed how far settlers in Ireland were themselves colonisers or colonised.⁷⁰

Secondly, this view of Britishness indicates how the imperial venture was changing the “home nations.” Recent literature has explored the consequences of involvement in the empire at home, with emphasis falling on the importation of exotica, the cultural production of images of imperial adventure (both thrilling and terrifying), and the influx of

66 John Robertson (ed.), *A Union for Empire: Political Thought and the Union of 1707* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

67 On the concept of “imperial ethnicity” see John Darwin, “Empire and Ethnicity,” *Nations and Nationalism*, 16 (2010), 392. He notes that this is one of three registers that the concept can carry, the other two being to connect Britishness to a migrant past and to a maritime identity.

68 *Ibid.*, 392.

69 *Ibid.*, 392.

70 William Molyneux, *The Case of Ireland Stated*, ed. J. G. Simms (1698; Dublin: Cadenus Press, 1977).

wealth personified by the nabob.⁷¹ All of this transformed and threatened to displace England, and could provoke a negative and fearful reaction.⁷² “Little Englanderism” was thus a bi-product of imperial expansion as it articulated the views of those who were neither party to the project, nor happy with the paraphernalia of imperialism.⁷³

Thirdly, Britishness acts here as a signifier of a level of compliance or complicity that the person holds to the project of British expansion and hegemony: it is here that Britishness might serve as a meta-language for articulating political allegiance. To be British is to subsume your elective affinities with England, Scotland, Wales or Ireland into a wider project of imperial expansion. Britishness is a supranational identity open to all.

So what of Burke’s appropriation of English identity? One proposition presents itself: Burke may have thought that English decency was being eroded by imperial power. Perhaps we can think of British ambition as being destructive of English identity to the same degree as it warped Irish confessional relations, restricted American autonomy and corrupted Indian virtue. Men were being malformed by an ill-forged empire. In the battle between measures and men, bad measures were

71 Kathleen Wilson, “The Island Race: Captain Cook and English Ethnicity” in idem, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2003), 54–91; Tilman W. Nechtman, *Nabobs: Empire and Identity in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

72 Here I differ from the interesting thesis of Krishan Kumar that “we [should] consider the English state as primarily an imperial state, and the English people as an imperial people.” He reads the Unions of 1707 and 1801 as developing an “inner Empire” and sees “the making of Britishness” as part of that process. I accept that as he proposes, “British identity ..., while not necessarily substituting for other identities, provided a capacious umbrella under which all groups could find shelter.” It may be that one element of our difference is due to the temporal concentration of our work, with Kumar thinking about England within a sixteenth-century context, whereas Englishness was being deployed in a different register by the eighteenth century. Krishan Kumar, “Empire and English Nationalism,” *Nations and Nationalism*, 12 (2006), 5, 5, 7, 7. For a discussion of Kumar’s larger thesis see John Hutchinson, Susan Reynolds, Anthony D. Smith, Robert Colls and Krishan Kumar, “Debate on Krishan Kumar’s *The Making of English National Identity*,” *Nations and Nationalism*, 13 (2007), 179–203.

73 For a different reading of this political tendency, which emphasises resistance to European integration, and argues for English national identity as a combination of island identity (remarkably both including and excluding the Scots here), early state formation, and a ‘dissenting’ (ie: Protestant) national religion see Smith, “Set in the silver sea”, 433–52.

turning men sour. Hastings was one such colonial malefactor, the Irish Ascendancy a caste of them; America had to cast off its British identity to flourish. This may be why Burke thought to cast himself as English when dealing with imperial matters: Britishness would not suffice; it is infused with imperial ambition and spoke of a resistance to the integral identity of the English themselves which was being threatened by the colonial endeavour. Burke's appeal was to a common condition of anxiety over the deforming effect of the British imperial project on home national identities. To adopt an English persona was to earth Burke's sentiments in a landscape his listeners understood to be threatened and thought to be worth saving. It also gave Burke a voice which was not implicated in criticism of English rule, such as his Irish voice would have been, but told his listeners and readers he was with them, he was on their side, he shared their anxieties and fears. It gave him a moral vantage point to criticise empire and imperialists. To do so effectively Burke had to co-opt an English identity.

Echoes from Mulla's Shore

SPENSERIAN CURRENTS AND EDMUND BURKE'S
EARLY LITERARY CAREER IN LONDON¹



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*All literature, all philosophy, all history, abounds with incentives to noble action, incentives which would be buried in black darkness were the light of the written word not flashed upon them.*²

Cicero, *Pro Archia poeta*, 6.14.

I: From Place to Place

The minds of famous figures are shaped before they achieve fame—perhaps even before fame has become an aspiration. This would place the crucial years of Edmund Burke's intellectual development to the period, roughly, from the mid-1740s, when he was a teenager negotiating the

¹ I am most grateful to the board of the Earhart Foundation for their support in the preparation of this article, which is an extended version of a panel paper delivered at the annual conference of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies at Williamsburg, VA, March 2014.

² Quoted in Gavin Alexander, *Introduction to Sidney's 'The Defense of Poesy' and Selected Renaissance Literary Criticism* (London: Penguin Books, 2004), xxxiv.

transition between a Quaker school in Ballitore, thirty miles from his family home by the river Liffey, and undergraduate studies at Trinity College, Dublin, to the mid-1750s, when his first books were published through Robert Dodsley's bookseller business in London. This is an awkward circumstance for students of his life and thought, who are faced in this decade with scanty correspondence, fragmentary writings of uncertain authorship, and scraps of biographical information or memoirs, all made alluringly significant by their very scarcity, yet privileged by the fortunate circumstance of survival.³ On such ground, speculation squeezed from intermittent childhood influences in Ireland or glancing acquaintanceships in England (where Burke migrated to study for the bar in 1750) inevitably guides our steps. How do we build confidence in the substantiality and longer-term direction of such material?

For the purpose of this article, I have chosen to examine some evidence that illustrates this problem of conjecture at the crucial stage of Burke's life, but that might also contribute something fresh and illuminating to a familiar context. Situating the parameters at both ends of that problematic decade, I shall focus first on Burke's youthful Irish background as it relates to the life of the Elizabethan poet and courtier Edmund Spenser, who lived much of his last decade close by Burke's maternal family lands, and then on the intellectual milieu of Tully's Head, or the business of the bookseller Robert Dodsley in Pall Mall, London, where Burke first achieved literary recognition as a critic and writer. I have chosen this Spenserian strand as it connects those *loci* of Burke's formative years for a number of reasons. First, while the importance of Burke's Irish upbringing is beyond question nowadays, its precise significance remains a point of vigorous contention. His local and familial associations with Spenser's plantation home of Kilcolman Castle have been deployed to strengthen the Irish affiliations of Burke's thought; but I am not aware of any sustained attempt to fold that attachment intellectually or artistically into the "mindset" of the subject—except, perhaps, in the implicit context of Spenser's violent planter identity: one more restless ghost haunting Burke's shadowed, Irish present. Second, there is a plain, substantial sense in which Burke carried Spenser with him when he settled in London in the 1750s: the well-documented

3 From 1748 to 1758, just twelve letters from Burke's hand survive, not all complete.

interest in Spenser's work shared by a number of scholars and writers among whom Burke first found literary (and social) success in the British Republic of Letters—that is, the network touching upon “Tully's Head,” the bookselling business founded by Robert Dodsley in 1735. By layering these undisputed horizontal contexts concentrically, a pattern of correspondences and critical themes emerges that may help us to add substance and sharper definition to the Irish echoes that followed Burke to London and to his early success as a writer and critic.

*II: Spenser's Fairy Flute.*⁴

In the published *Table Talk* of the poet Samuel Rogers, a close friend of Charles James Fox, appears the following conversation which, by the internal evidence, probably occurred well into Burke's political career:

The Duke of Richmond, Fox, and Burke, were once conversing about history, philosophy, and poetry. The Duke said, “I prefer reading history to philosophy or poetry, because history is *truth*.” Both Fox and Burke disagreed with him: they thought that poetry was *truth*, being a representation of human nature ...⁵

There are two points worth noting here: the first is the reasonable implication that we might more profitably seek explanations for the underlying consistency of Burke's thought, including his politics of prudence and circumstance, in the field of poetics and criticism than in philosophy or history; the second is that, while this exchange reenacts a debate over virtue and political utility rooted in Plato's *Republic*, it also raises a defining aspect of the eighteenth-century Patriot perception of the genius of the Elizabethan court—a perception that informed the young Edmund Burke's writings for Robert Dodsley in the 1750s. The anecdote contains a Spenserian echo inasmuch as it chimes with Spenser's own courtier-poet role at the court of Elizabeth I, the *Faerie Queene*

⁴ William O'Brien, *Edmund Burke as an Irishman*, 2nd edn. (Dublin, 1926), 13.

⁵ *Recollections of the Table-Talk of Samuel Rogers* (New York, 1856), 82–3. The *Recollections* were drawn from the notes of Rogers' friend Alexander Dyce, and published the year after the poet's death.

both “delighting, instructing, and moving” with his “dark historcall conceit,” and lamenting the corruption of human nature through power and patronage in the poems of his *Complaintes*. It was, indeed, Spenser’s reputation for having laid open through allegory a true philosophical and theological “representation of human nature” (whatever the view of the Gothic vessels he employed) that secured his position as a pivotal figure in the new Patriot canon of the eighteenth century.

There is no doubt that Burke felt strongly the influence of Spenser during his youthful years in Ireland. Intent early on writing poetry, distantly related to the family, and with a direct, childhood experience of Kilcolman and the Spenserian estates, he is quoting the poet in his correspondence to his friend Richard Shackleton as early as 1744 (a couplet from the fourth book of the *Faerie Queene*), and the title of this article recalls Burke’s use of Spenser’s poetical name for the Blackwater River in a poem he penned in February, 1746/7:

And you whose midnight dance in mystick round
With a green Circle marks the flowery ground
O aid my voice that I may wake once more
The Slumbring Echo on the Mulla’s Shore.⁶

Edmund Spenser’s plantation estate in Ireland, which he possessed from 1588 (the formal grant was dated 1590) to his violent ejection in the rebellion of 1598, was just ten miles north of Mallow, where Burke’s parents are said to have been married. Burke’s mother’s family, the Nagles, had land a short distance away, at Ballyduff in the Blackwater Valley, and some speculative stories have Burke attending early classes at a hedge school not far from the castle ruins.⁷ There were more direct fam-

6 The couplet, from the ninth canto, is incorporated into a poem by Burke on friendship and absence: “For Love of Soul doth Love of Body pass / As much as purest gold Surmounts the meanest Brass.” See Burke, *Correspondence*, 1:7. The surviving lines of the poem on the Blackwater are to be found in *Correspondence*, 1:80.

7 The Romantic Irish nationalist William O’Brien reports that Kilcolman Castle was “visible from the Bawn [protective wall or trench] of Ballyduff amidst the haze of the mountains on the northern frontier of the Nagles’ Country.” See *Edmund Burke as an Irishman*, 13. The story of O’Halloran’s hedge school at the ruined castle of Monanimy, also about ten miles from Kilcolman, is recounted in James Prior, *Life of Edmund Burke* (London, 1824), 6. See also Arthur P. I. Samuels, *The Early Life of Edmund Burke* (Cambridge, 1923),

ily connections too: Spenser's son Sylvanus married Ellen, a daughter of Burke's ancestor, David Nagle of Monanimy in Co. Cork.

William O'Brien titled the first chapter of his romantic nationalist recovery of Burke, *Edmund Burke as an Irishman*, "The Slumbering Echoes on the Mulla's Shore." He speaks of his subject as a "fanatical worshipper of the poet," and colors Burke's youthful *furor poeticus* with "the fairy music of Spenser's books and the sunsets and the aspirations of the solitary rambles among the Dublin mountains [that] had deliciously filled his soul."⁸ As with much of O'Brien's description of the "early Burke," however, wish-fulfillment presses upon hard evidence, and, as an ardent Irish nationalist and Home-Ruler, O'Brien was well aware of the ambiguous legacy of an Elizabethan buccaneer such as Spenser. Consequently, his association of Burke with Spenser had to be handled delicately. Burke, it was stressed (like O'Brien himself, who was also of Nagle descent), became a connection of the Spensers "by marriage, not by blood"—that is, through the enlightened act of the poet's son, Sylvanus, who "showed the good sense of innumerable English conquerors of Ireland by submitting to the irresistible yoke of the conquered," and converting to Catholicism on his marriage.⁹ For O'Brien, the source of that "zeal" that shaped Burke's *furor poeticus* was rather one of shared monuments and natural landscapes of the Blackwater Valley than the poetry of truth and the representation of human nature.¹⁰

And to some degree O'Brien is quite correct, for there is nothing in the surviving literary corpus to raise Spenser above several other literary influences on Burke in his early years—Pope, Milton, Virgil, Swift, Cicero. Burke's later writings as a politician are not filled with Spenserian allusions—indeed, while geographical and familial connections might have smoothed his path into certain literary networks in London, there were compelling reasons, as we have observed, why a young

8, Elizabeth Lambert, *Edmund Burke of Beaconsfield* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2003), 25, and Luke Gibbons, *Edmund Burke and Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 159.

8 O'Brien, *Edmund Burke as an Irishman*, 32.

9 *Ibid.*, 17.

10 This approach is evident, too, in Samuels' Irish reading: "Burke felt Spenser's inspiration, and delighted in the same 'mountains and rivers and fair forests'" ... but he ventures no further. Samuels, *Early Life*, 9.

Irishman with complex religious and national affinities should distance himself from the hand that penned the *View of the Present State of Ireland*, with its brutal program for the pacification of Ireland after the risings of the early 1590s. Spenser was an English adventurer and colonial settler, who served under Lord Grey, the butcher of Smerwick, and lived on land confiscated from the rebel earl of Desmond: nothing in his Irish experience prepares us for Burke's famous stands on religious toleration and Irish economic emancipation, it would seem, beyond that evident love of the land itself, captured in the haunting poetic echoes that memorialized the "delightful land of Faërie" along Mulla's shore.¹¹

To see if anything more substantially Spenserian lies behind that anecdote, one could turn to the evidence of Burke's library, as it appears in the auction lists of 1833. Here we find: the 1750 six-volume edition of Spenser's works by John Hughes (volume 3 missing), with his influential "Essay on Allegorical Poetry" appended; the three volume edition of Thomas Birch's expensively illustrated *Faerie Queene* (1751); and a 1762 two-volume edition of Thomas Warton's *Observations on the Faerie Queene of Spenser*. Burke also appears to have owned copies of the work of two of Spenser's recognized literary precursors: Ludovico Ariosto's *Opere* in four volumes (1760), and Torquato Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered* (Fairfax's translation, published in 1749) together with an earlier (1726) edition of the same, listed as "Tasso's Godfrey of Bulloigne."¹² Such evidence, though, is two-dimensional at best: without clear information on the items' provenance, and in the absence of authenticated marginalia, the contents of personal libraries may be suggestive of scholarly follow-up, but cannot reveal an explicit influence.¹³

More compelling, if less concrete, may be the cumulative evidence of recurring thematic patterns to be found in Burke's early writings. Beyond the explicit references and allusions we find in the early correspondence and poetic fragments, such writings include the sketches and draft essays dating from the 1750s and 1760s contained among the

11 O'Brien, *Burke as an Irishman*, 22.

12 See *Catalogue of the Libraries of the late Rt. Hon. Edmund Burke, and a near relative of the late Sir M. B. Clare, M.D.* (London, 1833), 21.

13 For a fuller discussion of the limitations of such evidence, see Francis Canavan, *Edmund Burke: Prescription and Providence* (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 1987), 5-7.

notebooks of Edmund and William Burke, which might—despite, or, indeed, because of their informal, unfinished, and collaborative nature—hold the greatest potential. In the first of these notebooks, for example, dating from the 1750s and published in 1957 by H. V. F. Somerset under the title *A Note-Book of Edmund Burke*, there is a twenty-nine-page collection of observations of considerable interest entitled “Several Scattered Hints Concerning Philosophy and Learning Collected Here from my Papers.” This item may be attributed to Edmund with much confidence: penciled initials “E. B.” can be seen after the heading, and the style of writing fits with that of other of his identified “juvenilia.” The “Scattered Hints,” it should be said, is just what it claims to be: not an essay, even in draft, but a gathering of thoughts on topics that might reasonably be considered “philosophy” and “learning” broadly defined; but, while consistency should not be forced on the whole, a number of salient features emerge strongly from the notes that fit strikingly with Burke’s own early published works.

Toward the front of the “Scattered Hints,” Burke appears to evince a twofold anxiety: first, to defend breadth in learning against the pretensions of specialists in any particular field, and second, to emphasize the relation of learning to character and to the cultivation of virtuous inclinations. Thus, “[c]onfined reading and company are the Greatest Sources of pride that I know,” and “the Chief use of Learning is to implant an elegant disposition into the mind and manners and to root out of them everything sordid, base or illiberal.” Between the two, humility and curiosity are affirmed as the chief mental qualities required of the well educated: “Whatever tends to humble us, tends to make us wiser. Whatever makes us wiser, makes us better, and easier, and happier.”¹⁴

These anxieties, Burke considers, are given their counterpoise in classic Ciceronian positions: that the proper goal of learning is virtuous action, and that the import of that “elegant disposition” is to establish a bias toward truth—even when truth is disguised, veiled, or shadowed by falsehood. “The end of learning,” he writes, “is not knowledge but virtue;

14 Burke, *Note-Book*, 84, 87, 85.

as the end of all speculation should be practice of one sort or another."¹⁵ As a corollary to this, Burke is concerned that misdirected or narrow learning will generate an enervating skepticism and thereby check the beneficial impulse to action for the public good: for who would act selflessly on a supposition of the unknowability of truth? "What," Burke appears to ask, "is to stop mischief, misrepresentation or self-delusion polluting the very well of virtue, even as they dress convincingly in its garb?" Superficially, the conclusion Burke draws from these musings is steeped in resignation: "Perhaps the bottom of most things is unintelligible; and our surest reasoning, when we come to a certain point, is involved not only in obscurity but contradiction."¹⁶ But then, in what may appear a pivotal passage, Burke introduces a quotation from a section of the *Academics* in which Cicero considers the value of studying material evidence even for the absolute or "dogmatic" skeptic who would reject such evidence as lacking the certainty of authentication by the human senses: "[For] all the same," the quotation runs, "I do not think that these physical investigations of yours should be put out of bounds. For the study and observation of nature affords a sort of natural pasturage for the spirit and intellect."¹⁷ Like the mature Tully of the philosophical works, Burke embraces the very unknowability of truth by turning its intellectual elusiveness into the substantive source of practical virtues: acceding to the necessary sufficiency of probability in our decisions, we must accept that all acts of perception must inevitably retain an element of mystery and uncertainty, even as they are resolved into action. This was Cicero's position as explained by Conyers Middleton in his popular biography of the Roman statesman, first published in 1741: "This it was that induced Cicero in his advanced life and ripened

15 Ibid, 82. Compare: "Virtutis enim laus omnis in actione consistit." Cicero, *De Officiis*, trans. Walter Miller (Loeb, 1975), 20–21. Also consider the words of Sir Philip Sidney: "No learning is so good as that which teacheth and moveth to virtue." Quoted in Blair Worden, *The Sound of Virtue: Philip Sidney's Arcadia and Elizabethan Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 24.

16 Burke, *Note-Book*, 93.

17 "Nec tamen istas questions Physicorum contemnendas puto. Est enim Animarum Ingeniorumque natural quoddam quasi pabulum, consideratione contemplatioque Naturae." *Note-Book of Edmund Burke*, 92–93. The translation is from Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods, Academics*, trans. H. Rackham Loeb Classical Library no. 268 (Cambridge, Mass: revised ed. 1951), 631–33.

judgment to desert the old Academy, and declare for the new: when from a long experience of the vanity of those sects who called themselves the proprietors of truth and the sole guides of life, and through a despair of finding anything certain, he was glad, after all his pains, to take up with the probable.”¹⁸ Burke’s wise man is free to respond to the avowed skeptic in similar vein since “it is the bias the mind takes that gives direction to our lives; and not any rules or maxims of morals and behavior.”¹⁹ Such “bias of the mind” is readily recognizable as a constant, central feature in all Burke’s writings, and here its seamless attachment to the concept of “probability” can be noted: “For,” as Cicero argues, “in things uncertain there is nothing probable, but in things where there is probability *the wise man* will not be at a loss either what to do or what to answer.”²⁰ Indeed, as that “natural pasturage” directs the “bias of the mind” to act upon “probability,” so, paradoxically, it should serve, even for the confirmed skeptic, as a surer safeguard against falsehood and delusion than logical or rational certitude—for what can nurture a *bias* or *inclination* toward certitude?²¹ It is, instead, an aggregation of probabilities that will provide the surest spur to virtuous action and public spirit.

This paradox, indeed, suggests to Burke a purpose beyond Cicero’s. Just prior to the quotation from the *Academics*, Burke brings the reader up sharp with the abrupt but intriguing injunction that “we don’t sufficiently distinguish between a Contrariety and a Contradiction”—something of a bathetic pronouncement in its way, but the technical or logical meaning Burke appears to attach to those words sets up the contrast of abstract and empirical “knowledge” in the sense that a contrariety is the awareness of two *apparently* contradictory qualities or features residing

18 Conyers Middleton, *History of the Life of Cicero* (London, 1741), 304.

19 Burke, *Note-Book*, 88.

20 *Academica*, II, xxxiv (my emphases). The translation is from the Loeb edition, 609. The passage is also one of those from the *Academics* included by Middleton. See his *Life*, p.303.

21 It is worth noting that Burke used this same Ciceronian quotation toward the end of his preface to the second edition of the *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (published in January 1759), where the matter of the discovery of truth in the origin of human ideas is treated similarly in the context of a debate within the skeptical tradition itself. See *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, ed. P. Langford *et al.*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981–) 1:191.

in one phenomenon or object: the logical contradiction, which cannot be true, must be distinguished from the contrariety that we all discover in the natural world and in human nature and that is true despite the inability of reason to embrace it. While a contradiction should expose a falsehood to a rational man, a contrariety, or paradox, may show a wise one the truth.²²

What, though, has all this logic-chopping to do with poetry, history, and philosophy? The link is clear if we keep in mind that the comment has arisen in proximity to Cicero's discussion of skepticism, and consequently view the distinction in question as more practical than theoretical—in other words, in terms of the type of *action* contradiction or contrariety suggest in the realm of moral philosophy. This not only brings us back closely to the context of Cicero's discussion of skepticism—the proximate spur for the comment in the first place—but is in line with what we know to have been Burke's acquaintance with two promoters of "applied logic," Bishop Butler, and (more painfully) Franco Burgersdijk, the latter of whose *Institutiones* Burke was familiar with from his college days in Dublin.²³ From this perspective, the faculty of choosing between contraries is distinguishable from the faculty of deciding whether to act or not upon any particular choice: a choice interpreted as a contradiction might lead to inaction from a sense of the impossibility of proceeding on the grounds of certainty (and engender a Stoical loftiness, for example, or a lack of "public spirit"), but a contrariety as the object of choice demands educated discrimination between right and wrong, a decision requiring the engagement of the passions and affections as well as the reason, and, as the agent will be aware of the limitations of his own knowledge, a decision based upon probability. In either case (the theoretical and the practical) Burke's awareness that contrariety, or paradox, is part of the essence of truth is illustrative of his awareness of what the critic and historian Paul Fussell once described powerfully as "the sacredness of human limitations."²⁴ If that truth is to serve somehow as the spring of public spirit and the spur of our pur-

22 Burke, *Note-Book*, 92.

23 For Burgersdijk, see *Correspondence*, 1:412.

24 Paul Fussell, *The Rhetorical World of Augustan Humanism: Ethics and Imagery from Swift to Burke* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 127.

suit of active virtue, and if the “gentlemanly” virtues so required—temperance, prudence, equity—are so linked to the balance of reason and passion that follows upon humility, then we should be able to recognize the superiority of poetic imagery over either philosophic skepticism or rationalist conviction. This, after all, was the claim made for the *Faerie Queene* by Spenser in his prefatory letter at the court of Elizabeth I and it is one of the central points of the *Vindication*, where a pseudo-Bolingbroke’s sterile denial of mystery in his “philosophical history”—both passion-rousing and rationally elitist in its familiar “double doctrine” trope—is parodied by its author. This is the poetic Burke putting philosophy in its place—apparently, from the testimony of Samuel Rogers, a sentiment he took well into his life as an active politician.²⁵

This link between the “Scattered Hints” and the *Vindication* may help us appreciate why Burke also rejected the Duke of Richmond’s confidence in the alternative claims of history. This is, at first sight, a more problematic task than the claim of philosophy, for Burke was, after all, something of an historian, not only parodying bad history in the *Vindication* but composing a rather good one in the form of his posthumously published “Abridgment of the English History.” History, that “Great Map of Mankind,” rather than poetry, would seem to have been his chosen medium for representations of human nature—as far from Spenser’s poetic fairyland as from Bolingbroke’s free-thinking “Fairy Land of Philosophy.”²⁶ Yet the *Vindication* itself shows that history can pervert truth in the minds of the most rational of readers in its simplest narrative form, when accumulated probabilities are rejected or manipulated in favor of a tidied-up history of *a priori*, philosophical certainties. Just as Joseph Warton charged Bolingbroke with having diverted Pope into writing philosophy dressed up as poetry, so Burke parodies

25 The “real” Lord Bolingbroke was fond of the phrase attributed to Dr. Foster that, “Where mystery begins, religion ends.” Burke would not have agreed, and the phrase is obliquely parodied in the *Vindication*. It is worth remarking, perhaps, that the phrase also appears, with the same disapproving connotations, in a sermon published by Matthew Frampton, who was a “particular friend” of Edmund and William Burke from their visits to the west-country of England in the early 1750s. See Burke, *Correspondence*, 1:xx. See also Matthew Frampton, *A Sermon Preached at the Anniversary Meeting of Natives of the County of Wilts in St. Augustine’s Church, Bristol* (Marlborough, 1776), 4.

26 Burke, *Correspondence*, 3:351; *Writings and Speeches*, 1:135.

Bolingbroke in the *Vindication* as peddling philosophy dressed up as history. In which light, consider the matter as reflected in contrasting approaches to Xenophon's semi-mythical account of the Persian ruler Cyrus in the *Cyropaedia*. While Bolingbroke didn't know quite what to make of this work—more literature than historical or philosophical treatise—Spenser privileges Xenophon's republic over Plato's in his letter to Raleigh at the beginning of the *Faerie Queene* with this argument: “for that the one, in the exquisite depth of his judgement, formed a Commune welth, such as it should be; but the other in the person of Cyrus, and the Persians, fashioned a government, such as it might best be: So much more profitable and gracious is doctrine by *ensample, then by rule* [my italics].”²⁷ Sir Philip Sidney, in the *Defence of Poesy*, elevates the same work over more self-conscious philosophical or historical commentaries on the back of Cicero's dictum on virtue and action: “For, indeed, if the question were whether it were better to have a particular act truly or falsely set down, there is no doubt which is to be chosen... But if the question be for your own use and learning, whether it be better to have it set down as it should be or as it was, then certainly is more doctrinable the feigned Cyrus in Xenophon than the true Cyrus in Justin...”²⁸ Perhaps more directly significant to our purpose was the positive opinion of the *Cyropaedia* by the eighteenth-century French historian and educationalist Charles Rollin, in the second volume of his *History of the Ancient Egyptians*, published in 1747. Rollin's argument is fully supported (indeed, almost word for word in places) in Robert Dodsley's educational primer, *The Preceptor*, which was published through Tully's Head the following year. Xenophon's genius was to give plausibility to his narrative through a kind of syncretic typology that spoke to minds, wise minds, fed on the “natural pasturage” of history. The young Burke, we know, was greatly taken by the *Cyropaedia*, writing to Shackleton that he did not know “any Book fitter for Boys who are beginning to Comprehend what they read.”²⁹ Now Burke, in his “Abridgment,” cannot be said to privilege any kind of syncretic pattern

27 *Faerie Queene*, 2

28 [Sir Philip Sidney], *The Works of the Honourable Sir Philip Sidney, Kt.* Vol. I, 15th edn. (Dublin, 1739), 159. See also Worden, *The Sound of Virtue*, 24–25.

29 Burke, *Correspondence*, 1:73.

over accurate narrative when mapping out his representation of human nature, but we do see an accumulation of causal “types”—sometimes invested with the slippery term “providence”—that conforms well with the bias toward probability. In the *Vindication* and in the “Abridgment,” Burke is putting history in its place.

Samuel Rogers’ anecdote places Burke within an enduring literary and philosophical conversation about the interplay of poetry, philosophy, and history in conveying *truth*. We can make greater sense of the particulars by situating him, and his Irish background, within a more specific context of eighteenth-century Patriot projects that aimed at rejuvenating public spirit. Our confidence in these speculative connections, then, might be strengthened by tightening the horizontal context that surrounded the development of Burke’s own mind, and this can be done through detailing the reconsideration of Spenser and his poetry as Burke would have experienced it most directly: at Tully’s Head, in Pall Mall, London.

III: “*I am writing an essay on fable.*”

Robert Dodsley was an astute business man who aspired also to success as a poet and playwright. He had participated in the early Patriot campaigns of the 1730s and 1740s with satirical, dramatic, and poetical works that caught the eye of Alexander Pope and gained him some popular fame in his own right. The brevity of this second Spenserian echo, which comes (closer to Thames’s banks than Mulla’s shore) from a letter Dodsley wrote in 1761 to his friend William Shenstone—“I am writing an essay on fable”—belies a decade or more of exploration at Tully’s Head into how “public spirit” could be communicated to an informed, general readership from a position of moderate but tenacious skepticism. Within that context, it also draws us to Dodsley’s understated importance in promoting the new Spenserian criticism and poetic imitations that surrounded the aspiring writer, Edmund Burke, in the 1750s.

At its founding in 1735, Dodsley’s operation had been primarily concerned with providing an outlet for Pope’s own publishing schemes and support for the cause of Patriotism, a broad and diverse movement of

opposition to government corruption and venality that was, at that time, close to Pope's heart and that of his friend Lord Bolingbroke. In the decade or so after the death of Pope, in 1744, and fueled by the appearance of Bolingbroke's posthumously published works eight years later, Dodsley's flourishing enterprise engaged with the question of why a revitalized Patriot program had failed to establish virtuous government in the country after the fall of Walpole in 1742 and, more particularly, how Pope may have fallen short of Virgil, Spenser, and Milton in summoning a virtuous public spiritedness out of the destabilizing transitions of the time.

Such a focus on Spenser as a poet of national regeneration did not originate at Tully's Head. The iconic spirit of the age of Elizabeth had been a feature of the historical writings of Bolingbroke, the great poets Milton and Dryden had both acknowledged their debts to Spenser, and Pope himself had admired Spenser from his youth, sketching, in his later years, an *epos* of his own in the unrealized "Brutus" project. As his publishing projects and connections illustrate, Dodsley prospered accordingly from the promotion of poetical and critical re-evaluations of Virgilian and Spenserian modes, designed to fix the place of poetry and of "fable" in inculcating not only a moral disposition but virtuous action—a goal with which, as we have seen, Burke's "Scattered Hints" were fully consonant. Gilbert West, for example, became an established name in the Tully's Head lists, from his *Institution of the Order of the Garter* (1742) and the *Canto of the Fairy Queen* (1739—not published at Tully's Head, but included in the fourth volume of Dodsley's popular six-volume *Collection of Poems*) to *Education* (1751). Dodsley also supported popular Spenserian imitations by William Shenstone, Robert Bedingfield, Thomas Blacklock, and Thomas and Joseph Warton.³⁰ A number of these works appeared in the first four volumes of the *Poems*, from 1745 to 1748; Thomas Warton's famous and ground-breaking *Observations on the Faerie Queene of Spenser* was published by Dodsley in 1754, and two years later Spenser's contribution to the canon of English literature was affirmed in the first volume of Joseph Warton's *Essay on Pope*.

30 For a study of Patriot literary developments mid-century, including "Political Spenserianism" and its fate, see Christine Gerrard, *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole: Politics, Poetry, and National Myth, 1725–1742* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

But Dodsley also paid a kind of homage to Spenser's genius in his own output. Following the conventional order of aspiring poets, he progressed from the pastoral—the rather lame verse of much of his 1745 collection *Trifles*, such as “Pain and Patience,” and twelve stanzas of “Colin's Kisses”—through the bucolic failure of *Agriculture*, to experimentation with the richer, more sustained allegorical imagery of *Melpomene* (1757) and the tragic drama *Cleone*, which enjoyed brief success after its debut in 1758. Perhaps owing to the influence of his close friend Joseph Spence, Dodsley was more cautious than other of the Tully's Head writers in his appreciation of the allegorical art of Spenser.³¹ Nevertheless, Dodsley's interest in fable, or “simple allegory,” reflected a sustained willingness to experiment with literary strategies that might touch a deeper level of public spirit, and with the power of personification to conjure direct impressions of virtue and vice. The principle he pursued in his “Essay on Fable,” appended to his edition of Aesop and heavily indebted to La Motte and Plutarch, was that fable and allegory are truth hidden and therefore more likely to hit home to the person of curiosity and humility. And, if he could not fully penetrate Spenser's craft himself, he provided the environment at Tully's Head in which others could aspire to do so.³²

Those critics who did so aspire included Thomas and Joseph Warton, and Richard Hurd, who, while they differed from each other in their critical appraisals of Spenser's position in the Patriot succession, replaced the ageing binary tension of Ancients and Moderns with a more nuanced sense of historical context and particularly of the concepts of imitation and imagination.³³ In their hands, both terms were

31 The two friends and literary collaborators, strongly influenced by French critics such as Du Bos, had too much respect for “propriety.” See, for example, Joseph Spence, *Polymetis*, 2nd ed. (London, 1755), 303: “... in the allegories that are purely of his own invention, (tho' his invention is one of the richest and most beautiful that perhaps ever was,) I am sorry to say, that he does not only fall very short of that simplicity and propriety which is so remarkable in the works of the ancients; but runs now and then into thoughts, that are quite unworthy so great a genius.”

32 De la Motte, *One Hundred New Court Fables*, trans. Samber (London, 1721), 14: “Too proud to be instructed by those Philosophers who seem to command what they teach, they are willing one should instruct them with Humility, and they would not be corrected at all, if they thought that to suffer correction implied Obedience.”

33 Hurd appended “A Discourse Concerning Poetical Imitation” to his edition of Horace's *Epistola ad Augustum*, which Dodsley sold through Tully's Head in 1751. For later critical differences between Hurd and Thomas Warton over Spenser's verse,

purified, as it were, to emphasize the penetrating genius of Spenser as an artist who could both imitate a universal representation of truth in appropriate garb, and energize that representation through an allegorical imagination that preserved the moral and mysterious integrity of unchanging human nature while recognizing its protean forms: mutability and permanence held in an illuminating, dynamic tension.³⁴

By imitation, these critics understood not pure verbal or structural fidelity to an original work but an act of *imaginative translation* that deepened the continuity of ideas and images through changing circumstances by transposing them according to an original, shared pattern of meaning. Translation and imitation, as Thomas Warton stressed, were skills built on a reconstruction of circumstances that did not remain antiquarian, rather than upon a strict set of academic rules. Spenser, then, imitated the purpose of Virgil through the material of Tasso and Ariosto (and the currents of chivalric literary traditions) to create a new epic that was rooted in the fashions of its time and *thereby* able to speak truth to future generations. More than once in the *Observations*, he draws an illustrative distinction between the poet and the historian as imitators, prying apart preservation from conservation, as we might term it today.³⁵ Richard Hurd saw the goal well worth the price to pay: "There is a necessity every day," he wrote in his commonplace book, "to inculcate old truths, *though it be in a worse manner*."³⁶ The feat, in Warton's terms, required "an unbounded imagination" set loose on the evidence of the natural world in a way that penetrated to the connecting sparks of a universal human nature: a gift that critics could only cite as the *je ne sais quoi* of the poetic creation.³⁷ In Joseph Warton's

see the Introduction by David Fairer in *Spenser's Faerie Queene: Warton's Observations and Hurd's Letters. Volume 1* (London: Routledge, 2001).

34 See Hurd's comment in the "Dissertation on Poetical Imitation" (1751): "The superiority of Homer and Shakespear to other poets doth not lie in their discovery of *new sentiments or images*, but in the forceable manner in which their sublime genius taught them to convey and impress *old ones*." (pp. 159–60).

35 Warton, *Observations*, 232.

36 Kilvert, 118 (my italics).

37 *Observations*, 3. For Warton, this was Spenser dangerously "unbounded" from the classical rules of taste and unity, yet loosed to effect that extraordinary combination of Virgil, Tasso, and Ariosto that charmed the Elizabethan court and rendered his verse sublime.

view, it was this *je ne sais quoi* that gained Spenser his laurels, and that ultimately reduced Pope's achievement in the apostolic succession of Patriot poets. Richard Hurd, whose "Dissertation on Poetical Imitation" of 1751 Thomas Warton praised as the work of a "very sagacious critic," undercuts the argument of those who attacked Spenser for failing to replicate the rules of Classical epic poetry, and imitating the forms of the Italian poets Ariosto and Tasso.³⁸ He stressed, instead, that Spenser's achievement lay precisely in his deliberate choice for the "Gothic manners and machinery," which he iterated more than once in his *Letters on Chivalry*, "have, by their nature and genius, the advantage of the [classical] in producing the sublime."³⁹ Hurd is here moving us from the adherence to canons as monuments to the appreciation of them as layers of a typological pattern in history (even though the canonical writers themselves may well have seen their artistic production of imitation as an act of stabilizing purification).⁴⁰

The use of the term "imagination" among these critics takes us not only to an essential facet of imitation but, much more, it denotes invention of the highest stamp: a vivid and vivifying apprehension of the original truth of creation: a richer representation of nature—even, perhaps, than that of a famed "original." Joseph Warton considered the height of Spenser's imaginative genius captured in a quotation from Longinus: "inspired by strong emotion, you seem to see what you describe and bring it vividly before the eyes of your audience."⁴¹

What, then, might this contextual evidence suggest was in Burke's mind when he spoke of the *truth* of poetry lying in its "representation of human nature"? We can surely draw as good an argument as any from the critical literary currents in which he found himself during the 1750s, and through which he obtained some authorial status and, eventually, political patronage. (Joseph Warton had a hand in Burke's appointment with William Gerard Hamilton in 1761.) That critical environment

38 Ibid, 180.

39 Richard Hurd, *Letters on Chivalry* (London, 1762), 33, and see also 43.

40 *Observations*, 141, 93–94. The point is similar to that which Horace lays out in his *Epistola ad Augustum*, an edition of which was published by Richard Hurd and sold through Tully's Head in 1751. It was this edition that contained Hurd's "Dissertation on Poetical Imitation" mentioned above.

41 Warton, *Essay on the Genius of Pope*, 2:36. The quotation is from *Peri Hupsous*, 15.

included the presentation of Edmund Spenser as a key to the revival of public spirit upon solid grounds of universal truth. This was a truth, embracing mystery, discerned not through philosophy or history but by acts of typological imitation, and conveyed most acutely by the imaginative power of words to raise sublime images. Consider the following from the tenth of his *Letters on Chivalry*. Separating “philosophical” method from more fantastic imaginings of the mind, Hurd posits (in line with the comparative structure of the rest of the work) a “probability” of wonder as a poetic channel of truth: “[I]n the poet’s world, all is marvelous and extraordinary; yet not *unnatural* in one sense, as it agrees to the conceptions that are readily entertained of these magical and wonder-working Natures.”⁴² Allegory, which, as we saw in Dodsley’s essay, demands an active engagement of the reader with the questioning ambiguities and double-meanings of the allegory itself, was the key feature of Spenser’s goal “to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline” in the *Faerie Queene*, and therefore, as Hurd observed, provided a moral unity to the work that bound the poetic history of the narrative to its purpose.⁴³ If this returns us to Burke’s anxieties in the “Scattered Hints,” we should note how its assumption of the existence of a universal human nature is affirmed in Burke’s method of searching for the evidence of (universal) physical effects in his assessment of the sublime and beautiful against skeptical arguments to the contrary. In fact, he employs in his preface to the second edition, which appeared in January 1759, the same quotation from the *Academics*, in a very similar analytical context. It should be said, though, that Burke’s innovative treatment of the power of “Words” in that same work, where he fore-fronts the effect of words on the passions through the physiological aspect of that human nature, raises the stakes with regard to allegory and sublime imagery; and, ironically, Spenser is brought forth

42 Hurd, *Letters on Chivalry*, 54. This work does not appear in the Tully’s Head lists. Hurd’s dealings with Dodsley had cooled in the 1750s, in line with Dodsley’s worsening relations with Hurd’s close friend, William Warburton.

43 Both Hurd and Warton refer to this point by quoting Spenser in his own words, from the preface to Raleigh: “For the method of a poet historical is not such as of a historiographer...” See *Observations*, 9, and the tenth of the *Letters on Chivalry*. Spenser’s words are from “A Letter of the Authors,” in Spenser, *The Faerie Queene, in two volumes*, vol. 1 (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1910), 1.

here to support Burke's argument through an unfavorable comparison of the lengthy, or "minute" description of Belpheobe in the second book with the brief impression of Helen's beauty delivered by Priam in the *Iliad*. Perhaps Spenser nodded at that point, and Belpheobe became him as Marie Antoinette did Burke in the *Reflections*. But the key point stands: Burke's imaginative, poetic world is fraught with the volatility of perception and active virtue—"We yield to sympathy what we refuse to description"—a point almost paradoxically stressed in the very structure of Spenser's moral educative outlook, where "good" is often veiled, and vices are not so much opposites of virtues as virtues applied by the vicious.⁴⁴

IV: Relishing Spenser

I should emphasize that the intention in exploring these Spenserian "echoes" is not to claim a novel key for unlocking Burke's early mind-set but, on the contrary, to bring back into play a context that has been hiding under our noses—Tully's Head, from where the pervasive influence of Edmund Spenser reached back to Burke's own Irish and familial background. The anxieties that Burke evidently held as a critic, involving the instability of the transmission of truth to achieve properly ordered public spirit, had also shaped Spenser's literary world in fundamental ways, and informs the imaginative structuring and language of his poetry, particularly in its *imitative* and *allegorical* methods. It is, indeed, noteworthy that one of the factors driving the resurgent analysis

44 Burke's words quoted here appear in a passage that was added to the second edition of the *Philosophical Enquiry*, which appeared in 1759. See Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, 1:319. For another perspective on the link discussed here, see John Faulkner, "Edmund Burke's Early Conception of Poetry and Rhetoric" in *Studies in Burke and His Time* 12 (1971): 1747–63. As Faulkner shows, Burke's understanding of the way words affect the passions does not provide a rigid moral link between impression and moral instruction, but the point, as discussed above, was to insinuate in social context and through deepening acclimatization: "The 'chief use' of eloquence and poetry, of the products of the literary imagination, is, by affecting the passions, to form civilizing prejudices in the mind of the reader" (p. 1760). As is argued below, Burke was also emphatic that the ambiguity of the human passions is part of the truth conveyed. This makes it a volatile but thereby authentic representation of nature.

of his art in the eighteenth century was the appreciation of the Gothic structure of that poetry as reflective or imitative of Gothic architecture: the living stones of Christian symbolism, iconography, and form that had absorbed and transposed the Classical (in a mysterious incorporation) made Spenser, in the words of Richard Hurd, one of the first perfectors of “pure” poetry.⁴⁵

These last observations lead us to one further Burkean anecdote with a Spenserian echo—a rather louder one than the last. It occurs in the memoirs of Burke’s friend, the Irish politician James Caulfield, Earl of Charlemont, which were published by Francis Hardy in 1810. Hardy recounts a conversation with Burke in which Burke recalled Ann Pitt speaking of her brother, William, the Great Commoner. In argument, she said, “[he] knew nothing whatever, except Spenser’s *Fairy Queen*.” “And,” continued Burke, “No matter how that was said; but whoever relishes and reads Spenser as he ought to be read, will have a strong hold of the English language.” Burke’s reported response to a comment that sharpened its edge at Spenser’s expense is instructive in its evident passion, and the more remarkable for the witness being at pains to add: “These were his exact words.”⁴⁶

Ann Pitt was a close confidante of Frances Winchcombe, Lady Bolingbroke, with whom she lived while attending in the household of Augusta, Dowager Princess of Wales. Burke evidently held Ann in high regard, having made her acquaintance sometime in the late-1750s, for, on 24 September 1759, riding the wake of his success with the *Philosophical Enquiry*, he wrote a letter to Elizabeth Montagu asking if she would contact Ann on his behalf concerning the post of the Consulship of Madrid, which was in the gift of William Pitt.⁴⁷ In the following year, a severe falling out occurred between Ann and her brother over

45 Hurd’s exact words, from his commonplace book, are that pure poetry “came to perfection in the hands of Spenser and Milton.” Quoted in Kilvert, 212.

46 Francis Hardy, *Memoirs of the Political and Private Life of James Caulfield, Earl of Charlemont* (London, 1810), 345. The anecdote also appears in Prior, *Memoirs of the Life and Character of Edmund Burke* (London, 1824), 64–65, and in John Timbs, *Anecdote Biography of William Pitt ... and Edmund Burke* (London, 1860), 233. See also, F. P. Lock, *Edmund Burke, Volume 1* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 200.

47 Burke, *Correspondence*, 1: 132. For Ann Pitt, see Archibald Phillip Primrose Rosebery, *Lord Chatham: His Early Life and Connections* (London, 1910). See also Basil Williams, *The Life of William Pitt, Earl of Chatham* (London, 1913).

her acceptance of an Irish pension. Burke surely recognized the coded undertone of her observation: her brother, the Great Commoner, was captive to a Patriot Fairy Land of knight-errantry, savior of Albion, restorer of a Protestant empire. Burke's fittingly sharp parry—"whoever *relishes* and reads Spenser *as he ought to be read*"—damns Pitt further, while coupling his sister to the charge by lauding the status of Spenser's verse. It is a defense of something betrayed, the detection of a falsehood clothed in "so near a resemblance and similitude" of the thing itself, and, as such, its target is surely Pitt's dangerously sublime or bombastic Patriot rhetoric, a not uncommon charge, and one entirely in accord with the references to Pitt to be found in the other notebooks of the Wentworth Woodhouse collection.⁴⁸

Burke's antipathy toward Pitt would have hardened once Burke had attached himself to the Rockingham connection, and it reached a peak in his *Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents* (1770), which, as a defense of party association in the political system ran directly counter to Pitt's own self-image as the "First-Minister-in-Waiting," the Patriot who eschews faction and connection to wage a personal crusade in the cause of reviving public spirit. But how could a man who relished and read Spenser "as he ought to be read" have failed to grasp that the moral unity of the epic, albeit dispersed across a dozen knightly adventures, depends upon an imaginative representation of a single code designed "to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline"—a chivalric code, that bound its members in common purpose and mutual support? The language of Spenser's art is to be relished not least because it builds an architecture of moral instruction on living bricks, as allegory creates structural leitmotifs that engage with recognition and then, through the power of words and imagery, allow the passions to guide reason through the inevitable mystery of perception by a correct bias of the mind toward active virtue. Allegory was, perhaps, more open than anything else to the capacities or inclinations of the hearers, though, "knowing how doubtfully all allegories may be construed . . .," Burke feared that its very strengths could turn, in the

48 For Pitt and "Dr. Bombasto," see *The Correspondence of Robert Dodsley, 1733–1764*, ed. James Tierney (Cambridge: CUP, 1988), 259n2. Lord Bolingbroke referred to Pitt as "Sublimity Pitt": Ann was "Divinity Pitt."

hands of the accomplished rhetorician and demagogue, into a dangerously seductive and ironical power capable of smothering public spirit through the language of one of its greatest figures.⁴⁹

Beyond this highly personal perspective, indeed, we should note that Hardy pursues the influence of Spenser in Burke's writings as a coda to the anecdote: "Many passages or phrases from his own works," Hardy writes, "abundantly testify, that he had himself carefully read that great poet. His reflections on the French Revolution particularly." What did Hardy mean here? To Burke's early writings and "juvenilia" we can hardly imagine Hardy had access. We can, as we have seen above, point to a couple of verses Burke included in his *Philosophical Enquiry*, certainly; but the *Reflections* contains only one quotation from the whole of Spenser's works. Perhaps Hardy is referring to those famous, broader allusions to the age of chivalry and the court of Marie Antoinette—though these, while rooted in a more sophisticated use of the chivalric allusions than is generally understood, hardly have the sharpness of definition to indicate such specific influence.⁵⁰ A closer inspection of that one, single Spenserian quotation itself, however, does offer some illuminating pointers that take Hardy's comments in fresh directions, and will serve to round off our examination of Spenserian echoes.

The brief two lines in question, from the seventh canto of the second book of the *Faerie Queene*, appear a little over half way through the *Reflections*. They are the words of Sir Guyon, the knight of temperance, spoken in response to the boasts and blandishments of "Great Mammon," whom Guyon has just encountered "in secret shade," poring over "Great heapes of gold that never could be spent." Denying Mammon's

49 Burke's early fascination with the way words and poetry might be considered to contribute to the education of the bias of the passions fits here, and provides a further link between the *Note-book* and the *Philosophical Enquiry*. I take this also to be a central reading of Burke by his latest intellectual biographer, David Bromwich. See *Edmund Burke: An Intellectual Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); and also "Burke and the Argument from Human Nature," in *An Imaginative Whig: Reassessing the Life of Edmund Burke*, ed. Ian Crowe (Columbia: Univ of Missouri Press, 2005), 37–58.

50 A more likely direct influence is the French historian of chivalry, La Curne de Sainte Palaye, whose writings were used by Hurd for his *Moral and Political Dialogues* and *Letters on Chivalry*, and whose *Memoires sur l'ancienne chevalerie* was translated into English and published in two volumes in 1784.

Satanic claim to the kingdoms of the world and the power to bestow “Riches, renowne, and principality, / Honour, estate, and all this worldes good...” Guyon reflects on the miseries that attend surrender to such temptation: “troubloous storms that toss / The private state, and render life unsweet.”⁵¹

Burke employs these words of Sir Guyon to underline a point that might, at first, seem trite: that, “History consists, for the greater part, of the miseries brought upon the world by pride, ambition, avarice, revenge, lust, sedition, hypocrisy, ungoverned zeal, and all the train of disorderly appetites” that affect and shape affairs of state and international relations. The point, however, is drawn into sharper focus by setting an analogy between the public and private spheres, which, when denied by historians or careless observers, may mean that, “We do not draw the moral lessons we might from history.” Embedded in the events of the French Revolution and their intellectual justification, this analogy alerts us not only to the misunderstanding of history but to its misuse: “[W]ithout care, it may be used to vitiate our minds and to destroy our happiness.”⁵² Now, the resort here to Spenser’s verse *may* be incidental, an apt quotation familiar to the educated reader. But, mindful of that response—“Those who relish and read Spenser as he ought to be read...”—there is, I believe, a deeper point to Burke’s choice, one that returns us to imitation and imagination.

Burke’s target at this stage of his argument in the *Reflections* is not with the moral perspectives of agents, but with the philosopher who confounds the crimes that have occurred within a system with the system itself. Just prior to the words quoted by Burke, Sir Guyon has expatiated on the moral snares of mammon that lurk behind the self-righteous theater of revolution:

... [R]ealmes and rulers thou doest both confound,
And loyal truth to treason doest incline;
Witnesse the guiltlesse bloud pourd oft on ground,

⁵¹ Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, II, VII, xiv. The quotation is slightly altered from the original: “Long were to tell the troublous stormes that tosse / The private state, and make the life unsweet ...” Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France: A Critical Edition*, ed. J. C. D. Clark (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 311.

⁵² Burke, *Reflections*, 310.

The crowned often slaine, the slayer cround,
 The sacred Diademe in peeces rent,
 And purple robe gored with many a wound;
 Castles surprizd, great cities sackt and brent:
 So mak'st thou kings, and gaynest wrongfull gouvernement.

In Burke's gloss in this section of *Reflections*, the "state of nature" is thereby given a corrective, *inward* turn by the echo of Spenser's allegory, revealing the misuse of "Religion, morals, laws, prerogatives, privileges, liberties, rights of men" as "*pretexts*" that are "always found in some specious appearance of a real good"—*specious* as the *trompe l'oeil* of an outward turn that impresses vice upon some exalted nomenclature or visible symbol of authority. In this, the whole passage, indeed, may remind us vividly of the *Vindication of Natural Society*, where the parody and weight of the satire hang upon the pseudo-Bolingbroke's cumulative list of the crimes of artificial society. The threat being identified is the same, and it lies precisely in the strength of the sympathy that demagogues and "philosophers" can raise with the "truths" of history when, veiling their own ambitions with a veneer of righteous justice and philanthropy, they sever the analogy between the public and the private. This is why it is necessary for us to be genuinely roused by the injustices that Burke, as the pseudo-Bolingbroke, lays out in the *Vindication*. But to move, or be moved, to action on that basis is to be "wise historically, a fool in practice," since "Wise men will apply their remedies to vices, not to names; to the causes of evil which are permanent, not to the occasional organs by which they act, and the transitory modes in which they appear."⁵³ The distinction is crucial in Burke's alarm against the recklessness of the Jacobin project in France, and for his defense of the nobility and clergy then under assault by the revolutionaries. The Patriotism of Pitt was many miles from the *patriotisme* of the French revolutionaries and their philosopher guides; but not so far away that a man who relished and read Spenser "as he should be read" could not detect through poetry the falsehoods that made them partners in a fatal conceit.

53 Ibid, 311.

Summary: The Fairy Land of Philosophy

How, then, can these sparse and soft Spenserian echoes help us shape more clearly, and perhaps predict more accurately, the contours of Burke's political career and beliefs? First, it should be restated that they are presented to add texture to the familiar strains of Burke's life, not to claim some Casaubonesque key to all interpretations. We are familiar with variations of the "political" and "pre-political" Edmund Burke, and with diverse readings of how our subject's early circumstances may have shaped his philosophy, or anti-philosophy, of man in society. We may situate him within, or against, currents of so-called "Enlightenment" thought, and we may make of him a precursor of contemporary phenomena—postcolonialism, perhaps, or conservatism, or Irish nationalism loosely defined. But what of Burke the poet and literary critic? If we can be sure of one distinctly cultural current that he carried with him from Dublin to London in 1750, it was that of Spenser's life as poet and planter—embedded in the very landscape of his youth. This essay has been an attempt to see what echoes we can trace from Mulla's shore to the banks of the Thames, and to offer our findings as one further, but perhaps more substantial, element in the broader picture of Burke's "Irishness." Further, it does argue for the consistency of Burke's privileging of literary criticism above history and philosophy in politics, undergirding all his vital responses to the problem of how to stir men to engage in public spiritedness with vigor and yet also with humility and self-conscious skepticism about their own powers of foresight and circumspection. In this, Spenser's allegorical imagination and powers of imitation, combined with the drama of his own courtly career, both inspired and challenged the patriot auditor with the burden of a kind of "free-willed skepticism."

Such insights, drawn loosely together by his early experiences in Ireland, were tightened and given sharper coherence by the Patriot literary circles in which Burke moved after his arrival in London: circles which nurtured the hope that poetry might regenerate an orderly public spirit and civic virtue. This was a chastened, revised Patriotism, both politically and culturally, and it rose in considerable part upon a reinvigorated critique of Edmund Spenser, whose imitative genius and

imaginative allegorical tropes now appeared exempla capable of recalibrating the balance of passion and reason in the bias of the mind. Here was an antidote to the free-thinking skepticism of Bolingbroke and his followers, which threatened to fracture the bond of poetry, history, and philosophy. Instead, it wagered on the “wise” skepticism of probability, coupling a Ciceronian philosophy with what might be termed a “natural typology” of history, some way between the syncretic conception of William Warburton’s sacred history and the stadial, secular historiography of the Scottish Enlightenment (with which Burke is often, but I believe misleadingly, linked). This coupling preserved poetry as the ultimate conveyance of truth, and the poetic mind as the supreme cultivator of public spirit.

Burke’s later reported attachments to poetry as truth and of Spenser as a genius of the English language hardly constitute conclusive proof of direct Spenserian influence in Burke’s political thought. It has, however, been suggested here (as probable as many other of the Irish influences) that Burke saw clearly in Spenser’s verse the dilemma Ireland presented to the poet and to himself: How could “public spirit” be raised to produce orderly reform in a corrupted and polarized political system? In answering that question, Burke’s eye was drawn early to the quality in Spenser’s poetry of holding in productive tension the timeless and eternal truths of mutability and permanence, and actively to convey that paradox (or “contrariety”?) with kinetic force of imaginative imitation.

So why not more of Spenser from Burke’s own hand? Besides the surface matters of Spenser’s reputation in Ireland, perhaps the answer lies in the fact that Spenser himself, faced with the disillusionments of the patriot in the 1590s, appears to have lost faith in the ability of poetry to convey those truths, and, like Bolingbroke or the Jacobins in different ways, followed instead Irenaeus in his starkly reductionist approach to justice in the *View*. Michael O’Connell has argued persuasively that we can see in the later surviving books of the *Faerie Queene* a growing sense of disillusionment with the ability of poetry and history to articulate a deeper reality or permanence in public affairs.⁵⁴ In this, Spenser’s experience provided a parallel for the Patriot disappointments of the 1740s

54 Michael O’Connell, *Mirror and Veil: The Historical Dimension of Spenser’s Faerie Queene* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977).

and 1750s, where that vital bridge between perception and action crumbled, or, like the pseudo-Bolingbroke's philosophical history, became contracted by a deceptively simple historical or philosophical reasoning that might dazzle judgment but, in doing so, banished the "higher law" of conscience. In these later works, Spenser betrayed his true Patriot calling: there, on the very shores of Mulla that inspired Burke. That betrayal did not make Burke a proto-nationalist or a closet-Catholic: it may have inspired him to search for Spenser Redux. But how could that aspiration be realized in the world Burke chose?

Book Reviews



David Bromwich, *The Intellectual Life of Edmund Burke: From the Sublime and Beautiful to American Independence*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012. Pp. x + 500.

This very fine book is the first installment of a two-volume intellectual biography that aims at recovering Burke's significance as a "moral psychologist" (16). Combining close exegesis of Burke's better known works with an extensive combing of his correspondence, Bromwich charts Burke's activities as thinker, writer and political actor in the roughly three decades from the early 1750s to the end of his tenure as MP for Bristol in 1780. Rather than examine the book's (without exception compelling) interpretations of individual texts in Burke's early corpus, I want to reconstruct what I take to be the core of Burke's moral psychology as Bromwich presents it. Bromwich, I contend, has found in Burke a thinker who saw with unparalleled clarity the importance of the "fear of man" to the maintenance of a free political order (14, 47). "Fear," Thomas Hobbes once argued, was "the Passion to be reckoned upon" and so it is with Bromwich's Burke.¹ But while Hobbes relied on the fear of violent death to bind subjects to an absolutist state, Burke's insight, Bromwich shows, was that if we cease to fear *ourselves* then we will leave our society vulnerable to unconscionable abuses of power. By examining Burke's thought through this lens of the "fear of man,"

1 Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 99.

Bromwich allows us to see consistency in Burke's words and actions where many have seen only careerist opportunism.

What, then, must we fear in ourselves according to Burke? In the first place, we should fear our tendency to gape admiringly at energetic men of talent and thereby hand them untrammelled access to power. In *Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents* (1770), Burke insisted that the ambitious, unconnected courtier, however naturally fitted for governing he may be, poses more danger to freedom than a host of more modestly talented MPs operating in sympathy with the people at large. However unexceptional its members may be, the House of Commons was, to the early Burke, an indispensable guardian of popular liberty precisely because even when mistaken its errors would at least fall "on the popular side" (160). The same could never be said of even the most virtuous of individual courtiers. This is not Burke arguing, in the mode of Aristotle or Machiavelli, that the many are wiser or more constant than the few (Bromwich correctly emphasizes throughout that Burke saw the people mainly as a check on power, never its wielder). But it does show how deeply Burke took to heart Montesquieu's claim that "even virtue needs a limit" (160).

That Burke could voice suspicion of ambitious men of talent even while hoisting himself up by his own abilities would draw derision from later critics. Mary Wollstonecraft, for one, would mockingly hail Burke as a new "Cicero" for having risen by talent alone, only to then damn him all the more thoroughly for fighting a rearguard action for aristocrats against what he called in the *Reflections* the "invasions of ability."² It is unlikely that Burke paid much heed to Wollstonecraft's remark, but had he done so he may well have smiled wryly at her choice of comparison. As Bromwich informs us, Burke from his earliest days "was conscious of Cicero as his model" and alluded to his ancient predecessor by styling himself a *novus homo*, the kind of man of energy and ability that wise governments would do well to encourage (122). But what Wollstonecraft failed to recognize and Bromwich helps us see is that there

2 Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men and A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, ed. Sylvana Tomaselli (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 45. Edmund Burke, *Revolutionary Writings*, ed. Iain Hampsher-Monk (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 52.

was nothing inconsistent about Burke deploying his talents to defend the privileges of those who were considerably less talented than himself. Though he was more than capable of expressing his own disdain for idle aristocrats who had never had occasion to exert themselves (his *Letter to a Noble Lord* springs to mind) he did so because they failed to play their allotted political role to his satisfaction, not because they had no such role at all. Burke was thus that very rare thing: a talented individual in politics who balked at the idea that talent should convert easily into power.

A second form of salutary self-fear Bromwich highlights concerns our ever present temptation to pass judgment in our own case. For Burke, the British government succumbed to exactly that temptation when it arrogated the right to determine, on its own, the extent of British sovereignty over the American colonists. In his *Speech on Conciliation with America* (1775), Burke confessed that “the character of a judge in my own cause is a thing that frightens me,” not because he was particularly doubtful of his own impartiality, but because he clung to the principle that no one, not even a government that enjoys the blessing of popular support, should consider its own will as the final arbiter of its actions (248). Bromwich’s analysis of this speech is the one moment in the book where he (half-apologetically) sees fit to speculate anachronistically about what Burke would have made of recent developments in our own political world. So deep was Burke’s sense that governments are no better than individuals when it comes to judging their own conduct that Bromwich is ready to state “with confidence” that Burke would have endorsed the rise of “international laws to civilize the conduct of nations” (248). This strikes me as plausible, but once we have embarked down the path of anachronistic speculation it is difficult to stop. Would Burke, a fierce critic of imperial abuse but one who carefully refrained from calling for an end to empire as such, have supported the wave of independence movements that gave rise to our current international legal order? Or would some form of international trusteeship by European imperial powers over much of the non-European world have been his preference? Bromwich is quite right when he calls speculation of this sort “tempting but dangerous” (248).

To be feared also, on Bromwich's reading of Burke, is our perverse appetite for frightening things themselves. Most readers of Burke posit an opposition in his psychology between our tendency towards imitation and habit, on the one hand, and what Bromwich calls our "unreasoning hunger for extreme sensations" evoked by the sublime, on the other (285). Key to Bromwich's interpretation of Burke, however, is that the customary and the sublime need not always be at odds. Boldly combining terms that Burke himself was careful to separate, Bromwich finds in Burke's psychology a concern that whole societies can be drawn, in spite of themselves, into a "habit of the sublime" (236). The anxious craving for the extraordinary experiences that disrupt habit, in other words, can itself become habitually engrained, and woe be to the society in which it has. In the excitement of war or revolution in particular, a people may come to desire risk and frightful shock as part of its daily sustenance, causing its members to neglect those more mundane habits upon which their lives and properties depend. Worse still, what began as shocking to our collective conscience (the suspension of basic rights for instance) may soon be dulled into something regrettable but nevertheless acceptable, resulting in a transformed society ever willing to accommodate new barbarities.

This fear that "the dreadful may become habitual" fueled, on Bromwich's reading, much of Burke's opposition to the war against the colonists that the *Speech on Conciliation* failed to avert (237). It also made a clear-cut English victory in that war a more disturbing prospect to Burke than a fudged stalemate with no clear winner. "Victory" in a war with America, Burke memorably stated, would only "vary the mode of our ruin," because no society in which the recourse to coercion has become reflexive could be expected to revert to a calm respect for liberty once the fighting concludes (279). If victory in such a war be considered a success, in other words, then we need fear our successes more than our failures. In several issues of the *London Review of Books*, Bromwich has himself forcefully exposed how the tempting prospect of easy victory in Iraq and Afghanistan has distorted American foreign policy and threatened American freedoms at home. Having read *The Intellectual Life of Edmund Burke* it is difficult not to hear echoes of Burke's writings on the American crisis in many of Bromwich's criticisms of the Bush and

Obama administrations. It is also difficult not to predict that Bromwich will draw again on the notion of a “habit of the sublime” in his analysis of Burke’s response to the French Revolution in the book’s sequel.

Finally, Burke’s “fear of man” is also, on Bromwich’s telling, a fear of our propensity to regard our favorite form of government as somehow enjoying a monopoly on political virtue. From Burke’s perspective, Bromwich writes, a “democracy that keeps its people at war is inferior to a limited monarchy that enables its people to live in peace” (274). Ardor for democracy may encourage the belief that the instant the people acquire power is the same moment we may cease scrutinizing what they get up to with it. Nowhere is Burke’s refusal to grant to the people the kind of license he had similarly denied to monarchs clearer than in his 1780 *apologia* before his constituents at Bristol Guildhall. Accused of extending benevolence too far by voting for Sir George Savile’s attempted repeal of Catholic legal disabilities and for less draconian punishments for debtors, Burke insisted that deferring to the people need not imply a commitment to satisfying their every whim, especially when doing so may mean “acting the tyrant for their amusement” (416). When the people loudly proclaim their intention to act in opposition to basic justice then the “fear of man” should take the form of a mild demophobia that even committed democrats should endorse.

It is moments like the Guildhall speech that Bromwich presumably has in mind when he contends that although “not a democrat,” Burke was a “thinker whom democrats must learn from” (22). He later qualifies this somewhat by declaring that Burke did in fact possess at least the “negative components of a democratic thinker” (namely an unstinting opposition to absolutism and a commitment to the people as a necessary check on government) (421). That Bromwich sometimes struggles to pin down the appropriate role for the people in Burke’s thought owes much to the fact that it is one area of his thinking that varied across contexts. In 1777, Bromwich notes, Burke “reasons like an American,” adopting the Lockean language of original rights and of a contract between people and government to assail crown policy. In the *Speech on the Reform of Representation*, by contrast, the “people” have morphed into a “peril to the constitution” (293, 383). By the 1790s, as Bromwich is ready to concede, Burke had shed even his “negative” democratic doc-

trines, leading Bromwich to ponder whether Burke had forgotten “his radicalism of a decade before” (421).

These shifts in attitude need not fatally undermine Bromwich’s overall claim that Burke’s thought is basically consistent. But they should press him to be more specific about the enduring value he imputes to Burke for democrats today. If Burke’s stance on democracy hardened into outright “hostility” by the 1790s, such that what had begun as imminent critiques became histrionic denunciations, then conceivably it is the early Burke and the early Burke alone from whom democrats must learn (421). Bromwich’s strong sympathy for Burke is evident on nearly every page of this book (consciously or not, even his prose style mimics Burke’s own, to the point where readers may have to occasionally pause to double check whether the words before them are quotation or paraphrase). However, such sympathy is arguably easiest to sustain when relating the first half of Burke’s career, as Bromwich himself admits.³ One wonders whether it will be just as strong in his close engagements with the Burke of the revolutionary 1790s, to which I look forward with relish.

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3 The years from 1777–1783 are, Bromwich contends, the “happiest to contemplate for an admirer of Burke as a statesman” (312).



Iain Hampsher-Monk, ed., *Edmund Burke: Revolutionary Writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014. Pp. lxii + 349.

Iain Hampsher-Monk has written an excellent introduction to Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) and the first of Burke's *Two Letters on a Regicide Peace* (1796) for this new edition of those works. At twenty-five pages, he can't hope to be comprehensive, but he succeeds in being compelling—exactly what you want in the introduction to a classic.

Hampsher-Monk, who wrote essays on the *Reflections* and on Burke's other counter-revolutionary writings in *The Cambridge Companion to Edmund Burke* (2012), is especially strong on discriminating Burke's "procedural conservative" approach from the "rationalist" method of the revolutionaries. Many of Burke's contemporaries thought he had betrayed the cause of liberty that he had embraced with regard to Ireland, India, and (above all) America. Burke scholars have explained his consistency in various ways, down to David Bromwich's recent analysis of Burke's continual awareness of the fragility of the consensus on which political authority rests.¹ Hampsher-Monk accounts for Burke's consistency in a different way. He presses the significance of the revolutionary goal of achieving stability on the basis of social equality (xxv), which required the rejection of any other, competing foundations, such as religion or property rights. Burke saw the implications of this goal more quickly and more clearly than anyone: he saw property rights as essential for guaranteeing the independence of "the Church, universi-

1 David Bromwich, *The Intellectual Life of Edmund Burke: From the Sublime and Beautiful to American Independence* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).

ties, charitable trusts and other elements of what we would now call civil society,” Hampsher-Monk writes (xxiv). And he saw that the Church in particular would have to be eliminated by the revolutionaries, because its moral weight inhibited them from carrying out their most radical social changes (xxv).

I’m not particularly happy with “procedural conservative” as the name for Burke’s mode of politics. As Hampsher-Monk describes it, this approach begins with existing institutions and ideas, then proceeds to sustain or reform that reality so as to maintain the integrity of the whole. Fair enough. But that doesn’t embrace Burke’s critique of, say, Warren Hastings, who made the argument that he was beginning with that very reality in India. A phrase like “historic constitutionalism” would better describe Burke’s approach: it preserves the procedural element while leaving open the sources of the constitution to debate, as I believe they were in Burke’s own thought.

Hampsher-Monk describes Burke’s opponent as the “rationalist reformist” who “starts from a set of principles—in this case those of natural right, or the rights of man—and seeks to deduce the features of a morally defensible political order from those principles” (xxviii). Such a set of principles, Burke realized, could never be limited to one country: it must aspire to universal dominance. As a student of mine once wrote, it’s a beautiful political system except that it forgets to take into account the nature of man—the wisdom of experience as accumulated in traditions and institutions, the power of passion, and above all the limits to reason.

As Hampsher-Monk writes, Burke had been able to assume the limits to reason when he satirically banished them from his first published writing, the *Vindication of Natural Society* (1756). In the *Reflections*, he had to assert them clearly.

The pairing of the *Reflections* with only the first of the *Two Letters on a Regicide Peace* seems odd to me. In particular, the omission of the second of the *Letters* is questionable since the first two were published together. (The second would have added only about 35 pages.) Still, Hampsher-Monk gives a good defense for the letter he does include: it provides a rationale for intervening in the affairs of France based on Roman law, which “provided for pre-emptive intervention to prevent a

neighbor damaging one's property" (xxxvi). This is much more modest than an appeal to international law or natural law, and it's worth our attention.

If Cambridge has now finished publishing Burke's primary sources, it's offering us an odd mixture. *Pre-Revolutionary Writings* (1993), edited by Ian Harris, is an anthology of his writings on America, aesthetics, Ireland, party government, and a few other items. Together, the two volumes leave out nearly all of Burke's writings on India, the great shorter works on the French Revolution, and key works on parliamentary representation. Still, as Hazlitt said, the only selection of Burke is "all he wrote," and Oxford University Press has taken upon itself the task of producing the standard *Writings and Speeches*, eight volumes of which have now been published according to my count.

Just a few other remarks: Hampsher-Monk accepts 1730 as Burke's birth year, following F. P. Lock's magisterial biography. His glossary of terms (misleadingly labeled "Notes") does an excellent job of explaining major individuals, institutions, and events, from D'Alembert to William III. And his footnotes provide excellent insight into Burke's allusions and historical references.

The book is a valuable addition to the available versions of the *Reflections*. And with the prospect before us of a long struggle with an "armed doctrine" like the one undergirding the "Islamic State," the *Regicide Peace* may assume increasing resonance.

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Yuval Levin, *The Great Debate: Edmund Burke, Thomas Paine and the Birth of Right and Left*. New York: Basic Books, 2014. Pp. xix + 304.

“I don’t know what makes this [simple-minded radicalism] so nettling unless it is that it ignores so superciliously the strain we may have been under for years trying to decide between God and the Devil, between the rich and the poor (the greed of one and the greed of the other), between keeping still about our troubles and enlarging on them to the doctor and—oh, between endless other things in pairs ordained to everlasting opposition.”

Robert Frost, “Introduction to Sarah Cleghorn’s *Threescore* (1936).”

In his consideration of the competing strengths of (in one corner) Edmund Burke and (in the other) Thomas Paine, Yuval Levin attempts to fit them to the dualistic approach that goes with “Right” and “Left,” that political pair that seems indeed “ordained to everlasting opposition.” When the early deputies of the National Assembly took up their seating thus, the extreme radicals on one side and the less extreme on the other, they can hardly have been aware of the symbolism that they were laying upon the mind of future times. Given that one of Levin’s aims is to consider, “Why ... there [is] a left and a right in our politics” (p. x), to use Burke and Paine as representatives of each side makes sense, even if the matching of a heavyweight against a less heavy weight might

seem to set up an intrinsically unfair contest. Levin is, however, surely right in showing that they are linked by the debate of their times, joined by a controversy forever enclosed in their writings: "The two men knew each other, met several times, exchanged letters, and publicly answered one another's published writings" (xv). Burke and Paine spoke for two emerging political attitudes which have crystallized into what we call, usually without thinking, Right and Left.

Levin goes further, however, than simply seeing Burke and Paine as representatives of an enduring opposition. He sees them as a kind of yin and yang of liberal thought, at least as it appears in the American political tradition: "As Burke and Paine will show us, the line between progressives and conservatives really divides two kinds of liberals and two distinct visions of the liberal society" (xvi). This is an altogether larger aim, and while the reading is not intrinsically unfair, so far as it goes, there are dangers in elision, and to suggest that Burke and Paine are "counterparts" might have surprised the antagonists themselves, even more than the contemporary reader.

Levin does not, in a reductive manner, attempt to point out the similarities between them. His approach, in chapters two to seven of the book, is to contrast the thinking of both men on major political and social themes: "Nature and History"; "Justice and Order"; "Choice and Obligation"; "Reason and Prescription"; "Revolution and Reform"; and "Generations and the Living." This makes for an engaging review of the ideas but also suggests an inequality of their value. Levin devotes roughly twice the number of pages in direct attention to Burke, as opposed to his treatment of Paine. The great majority of the ideas here are Burke's, while Paine appears mainly in the treatment of Nature in chapter two. Despite his even-handed scheme, Levin's view of the relative paucity of Paine's ideas is always felt.

The author's attempt at balance is accompanied by an uncritical approach in which the ideas of both men are conveyed in descriptive and effective summary; analysis is generally undertaken without judgment, such that the reader draws his own conclusions. A central difference, then, appears, expressed in a comment of Burke, whom Levin quotes: Paine had "not even a moderate portion of learning of any kind" (xviii). For Paine, this was a virtue: "I neither read books, nor studied

other people's opinions; I thought for myself" (xviii). Both intellectually and politically he was dedicated to Year Zero: "we have it in our power to begin the world over again" (48). He had, as Steinbeck says somewhere, "all the conviction of the uninformed," the simple-minded, unreflective naivety that has characterized the "useful idiot" ever since. Burke, on the other hand was, through patient and thorough study, fully integrated into the accumulated wisdom of the western tradition, the common sense of the ages. Paine thought he could interpret common sense by remaining, self-sufficient and utterly convinced, inside his own head. It is thus difficult, in the final analysis, to see both men as two sides of the same coin, unless one is to stretch the term "liberal" into something so broad as to be nebulous.

Levin also compares Burke and Paine as writers: "[Paine's] sheer rhetorical skill sometimes overwhelms the reader, just as in Burke's writing. But where Burke's considerable faculty for expression is most often employed to convey the complexity of social and political life, Paine's most often conveys a simplicity..." (15). More critical, and—perhaps—more true, would be to see Paine as one of Burkhardt's "terrible simplifiers": in that sense, Paine's place in modernity is assured, not for any literary skill. Paine's metaphors and rhetoric frequently collapse on close reading. A prime instance is one of his best known figures, that of the bird in the *Rights of Man* (1791): "[Mr. Burke] pities the plumage but forgets the dying bird." Here, "plumage" stands for an artificial, extraneous and imaginative conceit of the issues at stake, embodied in the picture of suffering royalty and aristocracy. But a little sense tells us that the comparison is unjust; that the plumage of the bird is entirely natural to it, and far from superfluous; and that therefore the metaphor is inappropriate, symptomatic of muddled thinking and empty rhetoric. To read Paine attentively, in fact, is to be constantly aware of language adrift from meaning. Burke, however, it hardly needs saying, is a classic of our literature, as much as of our philosophy. As Levin rightly says of Burke's reading of Paine and his ilk: "Paine and other radical liberal thinkers leave the human sentiments and the role of the imagination out of their understanding of human nature" (57). It is a truth evident in the quality of their writing.

The idea of nature is certainly a central difference between Burke and Paine. Paine's source of authority, insofar as one exists at all outside himself, is the old canard of the "state of nature" school, which Burke had effectively dismissed in his satirical *A Vindication of Natural Society* (1756). The abstraction of the "state of nature," an idea with no reality in history, provides the basis of all Paine's thinking on society. Burke, however, like all wise men from and including Thomas More, was no Utopian, and understood the relationship between principles and circumstances. Some of Levin's most insightful analysis, in this regard, is achieved in the context of his discussion of "Justice and Order." He affirms the importance of religion in Burke's political thought, as being "an element in the larger system of chivalry, ennobling the use of political power and moderating its users." But, says Levin, "Burke turns out ... to be neither a utilitarian proceduralist nor a natural-law philosopher" (76). Rather,

Burke's view of nature and of human nature suggests to him that the standards of justice that are to guide political life are rather discoverable—to the extent we can know them at all—implicitly through the experience of political life itself;

and,

The historical experience of social and political life consists in essence of a kind of rubbing up against the principles of natural justice, and the institutions and practices that survive the experience thereby take on something of the shapes of those principles, because only those that have this shape survive (77).

It might be added that without religion, the principles of natural justice would not be conserved, since religion is the natural means of sustaining them in human society. Similarly, utility, like art, is part of man's nature, and not in opposition to it, although Levin does not pursue this idea.

Paine had his thoughts on religion, too. Levin refers to *The Age of Reason* (1794–95), which is, he says, "in some respects an astonishingly intemperate book and may therefore unduly distract its readers from Paine's case for reason" (154). On the contrary, one might say that the book reveals with particular clarity the inherent irrationality of Paine's

rationalism. Levin quotes from Paine: "I do not believe in the creed professed by the Jewish Church [*sic*], by the Roman Church, by the Greek Church, by the Turkish Church, by the Protestant Church, nor by any church that I know of. My own mind is my own church" (154). There's the rub: Paine is a man who is prepared to believe in a "state of nature," an act of faith if ever there was one, but who is not prepared to accept the authority of any corporate body of actual human beings, political or religious.

Some of Levin's conclusions are astute and thought-provoking. For instance, he notes the limited regard for Burke among American conservatives:

But as Burke himself noted, different societies form such [social and political] institutions differently, and Americans in particular have always been "men of free character and spirit" to an exceptional degree. This, and the simple fact that American conservatives are conserving a political tradition begun in a revolution (even if it was not as radical a revolution as Paine insists), has long made the American right more inclined both to resort to theory and to appeal to individualism than Burke was (228).

In this sense, it is persuasive, as Levin implies throughout, to see the American Right as more disposed to liberal thought than, say, to nativist or to Kirkian cultural conservatism. Burke, in Levin's reading of him, stands for the conservative liberalism of the American tradition, just as Paine stands for the radical liberalism, and each side, Levin suggests, could learn from the other.


It is this balancing act, suggesting a kind of Right-Left equivalence of Burke and Paine, that is not entirely satisfying. Only by the imposition of an external, dualistic scheme (or the historical fact of their controversy, which is not in itself the object of Levin's study) can the ideas of the two figures ever be held together; the desire for truth keeps supervening, at which point Levin's resolutely uncritical stance is somewhat frustrating. It is after all, part of the author's point that the Right-Left scheme prevents clear thought on political matters. Further, is it entirely reasonable to say, as Levin does, that when, today, progressives

aim to preserve public entitlement programs they sound like Burke; or when conservatives seek to transform governing institutions they are full of the spirit of Paine? It would be possible to transpose “Burke” and “Paine” here without doing great violence to the justice of the thought. But if not entirely convincing in its conception, this book is admirably stimulating in its execution, and it will give Burkeans the signal pleasure of seeing Burke’s perennial wisdom juxtaposed with rationalist folly. As Yuval Levin reminds us, America might be more indebted to Paine for the energy of its initial revolution, but fortunately it is more indebted to Burke for the endurance of its subsequent constitution.

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STUDIES IN

Burke
AND HIS TIME



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