

Public Spirit and Public Order. Edmund Burke and the Role of the Critic in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Britain

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ABSTRACT

Ian Crowe: Public Spirit and Public Order. Edmund Burke and the Role of the Critic in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Britain
(Under the direction of Dr. Jay M. Smith)

This study centers upon Edmund Burke's early literary career, and his move from Dublin to London in 1750, to explore the interplay of academic, professional, and commercial networks that comprised the mid-eighteenth-century Republic of Letters in Britain and Ireland. Burke's experiences before his entry into politics, particularly his relationship with the bookseller Robert Dodsley, may be used both to illustrate the political and intellectual debates that infused those networks, and to deepen our understanding of the publisher-author relationship at that time. It is argued here that it was Burke's involvement with Irish Patriot debates in his Dublin days, rather than any assumed Catholic or colonial resentment, that shaped his early publications, not least since Dodsley himself was engaged in a revision of Patriot literary discourse at his "Tully's Head" business in the light of the legacy of his own patron Alexander Pope.

Through a focus on two of Burke's Tully's Head projects in particular, the *Vindication of Natural Society* and the unfinished "Abridgment of the English History," we are able to see how that revisionist process converged upon the problem of how to promote public spiritedness and civic engagement without jeopardizing the political and social order established in the kingdom in the wake of the Glorious Revolution. We can also trace Burke's distinctly Irish contribution to the reconfiguration of a "Patriot" discourse within that

segment of London literary society. What emerges is a sustained critique of the intellectual strategies employed by Lord Bolingbroke and Lord Shaftesbury, particularly their reliance upon philosophical and historical skepticism, and a fresh rhetoric of Patriot criticism built upon an alternative, allegorical and religiously syncretic understanding of the interdependence between the “natural” and “artificial” in human society.

Burke’s professional and personal relationships with Dodsley and with writers such as Joseph Spence and Joseph Warton in Dodsley’s Tully’s Head “circle” provides a challenge to received opinions not only of the roots of Burke’s political thought, but also of the use of concepts such as “Patriotism,” “Nationalism,” and “Enlightenment” in understanding the role of the critic in the mid-century British Republic of Letters.

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Introduction

A little more than a year before his death, Edmund Burke published one of his most powerful works of political rhetoric. His *Letter to a Noble Lord*, which appeared in February 1796, was a response to attacks by the Duke of Bedford, a Whig aristocrat of radical persuasions, on Burke's acceptance of a pension from parliament for services to his country. Those services included, primarily, Burke's attacks on the ideology of the revolutionaries in France, and Bedford's underlying claim was that Burke had fashioned his antirevolutionary writings to secure his financial future. "At every step of my progress in life," Burke argued in response, "(for in every step was I traversed and opposed), and at every turnpike I met, I was obliged to shew my passport, and again and again to prove my sole title to the honour of being useful to my Country, by a proof that I was not wholly unacquainted with it's [sic] laws, and the whole system of it's interests both abroad and at home."¹ Scholars have taken this text to illustrate Burke's lifelong, barely repressed anger at being the eternal outsider in his adopted country. Dogged "in every step" by his Irish ethnicity (he was born in Dublin of "Old Irish" or "Anglo-Norman" stock) and his Catholic sympathies (his maternal family were Irish Catholic landowners in County Cork), his survival at the heart of the British Protestant Establishment seemed to depend, according to this reading, upon repressing his

¹ 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* (London, 1796), 29. See also Edmund Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, 9 vols., ed. Paul Langford *et al.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981-), 9:160. Future references to Burke's collected works will be to this edition unless otherwise stated.

national loyalties and religious sympathies. The price of such repression—ironic, given Burke’s later conservative credentials—was a “Jacobin flame” that ran through his rhetoric and burst out finally in this scorching attack on the ingratitude of the system he had spent his career defending.²

There is, however, an alternative way of interpreting the language of the *Letter to a Noble Lord*. It is one that reads the language of the text out of, rather than into, the strategies and circumstances by which Burke established himself in the literary and political circles of mid-century London. Burke’s *Letter* was not the first such defense by a *novus homo* against the aspersions of his social superiors. As Frans De Bruyn has pointed out, Alexander Pope had penned a similar stylistic broadside against Lord Hervey in 1733, and Burke’s self-description is heavily influenced by his intention of portraying his own enemies as paradigmatic dunces in the Scriblerian mode.³ The *Letter* is not a revelation of the deeply suppressed anger of an outsider: rather, in borrowing that ironically deferential tone to ridicule its target, it is the invocation by an ailing man of a world in which he had once felt at home, to which he had been readily admitted, and in which he had forged an astonishingly successful career.

In the decade that had followed his migration to London in 1750, that world had centered upon the publishing business of Robert Dodsley and the network of writers and politicians that Dodsley had drawn to his bookshop, Tully’s Head, in Pall Mall. It was a network that owed its origins to Pope and to the cultural and political critiques of Walpole’s

² The phrase “Jacobin flame” belongs to Michel Fuchs. See *Edmund Burke, Ireland, and the Fashioning of Self. Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 343 (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1996), 12.

³ Frans De Bruyn, *The Literary Genres of Edmund Burke. The Political Uses of Literary Form* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), esp. 19-58. “A Letter to a Noble Lord” was not published in Pope’s own lifetime, but appeared first in 1751, in William Warburton’s edition of Pope’s works.

“Robinocracy” that flourished in the 1730s. After Walpole’s fall, in 1742, and Pope’s death two years later, Tully’s Head continued to prosper, reinterpreting Pope’s legacy as poet and critic, particularly as it had evolved within the broader movement of political opposition termed “Patriotism.” As part of the process, it strove to redefine the concept of Patriotism itself in response to the experiences and preoccupations of a new generation of writers and politicians. This was the world of the young Edmund Burke: his “title to the honour of being useful to my Country” was that of one such new-generation Patriot, the “Country” in question was the political union that existed under the crowns of England, Scotland and Ireland, and his usefulness that of the critic, who promotes public order by energizing public spirit in the cause of true, “natural” society.

The chief goal of this study is to recover, as far as is possible, the authentic intellectual and professional contexts of Burke’s early career as a writer—contexts freed from anachronistic terminology or retrospective interpretations of Burke’s political thought. Such an exercise will enable us to construct a more nuanced and complex picture of Burke’s early intellectual development and of the literary profession that he joined. It will also expose enduring limitations in our understanding of two central terms of eighteenth-century British intellectual history: “Patriotism,” as it informs the critical literature of the 1740s and 1750s, and the “Enlightenment,” as it is used to designate the goals and central principles of the intellectual classes in this period. Something should be said about the roots of these conceptual limitations before we consider the current state of interpretations of Burke’s own intellectual biography.

In its broadest sense, “Patriotism” may be defined as a mode of criticism fitted to the new political realities that emerged out of the Glorious Revolution of 1688-89 and to the new

vocabulary of civic virtue and public duty shaped by this constitutional upheaval.⁴ “Patriots” considered liberty (or freedom from servitude), the prize of that revolution, as dependent upon the vigorous nurturing of a “public-Spiritedness” that itself had to be rooted in a perception of, and reverence for, the true foundations of natural order. Put another way, the quality that made the spirit of civic engagement truly public was its moral imperative—the good of the community—derived directly from a belief that the natural origins of society were to be found in the providentially ordered needs and aspirations of mankind.

Central to this study will be the ways in which Bolingbroke and other leading Patriot voices were seen, from the 1740s, not to have lived up to that benevolent moral imperative, but to have betrayed Patriotism by artfully substituting in their criticisms one form of unnatural order for another. To grasp this charge in its various forms, however, we need to understand first how the vibrant import of this term Patriotism has been dulled by two contrasting historical perspectives. It has, first, been increasingly overshadowed by a narrative of British “patriotism,” with which it did share some superficial characteristics. Second, where it has retained its distinctiveness, “Patriotism” has been bound too rigidly to the specific goals and interpretations of its most prominent exponent, Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke, whose *Letters on the Spirit of Patriotism* and *The Idea of a Patriot King* appeared in 1749. Relating “Patriotic” texts to looser patriotic themes of national distinctiveness, exclusivity, and bellicosity has been fuelled by scholarly concerns to explain the intellectual roots of nationalism. Working back from the openly nationalist aspirations of

⁴ How far, for example, could John Locke’s philosophical justification for the Glorious Revolution be translated into a practical program of civic education and discourse? The popularity of Lord Shaftesbury’s Whig critique of Locke, and the adaptation of Shaftesbury’s own positions by Francis Hutcheson, exercised an important influence on this vocabulary, as will be discussed below. See Isabel Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment: A Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics in England, 1660-1780. Volume II: Shaftesbury to Hume* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

self-styled patriots in Revolutionary France, researchers have combed the literature of mid- and early-eighteenth-century Britain for a similarly assertive language of cultural and constitutional superiority. As they have done so, “Patriotism” has become increasingly overshadowed by what Gerald Newman termed “the low flame of eighteenth-century English patriotism, of irrational ‘local attachments’ ...fanned into the consuming fire of nationalist ‘demands and actions,’ ‘anger and self-assertion.’”⁵ Linda Colley redeemed patriotism from Newman’s charges of irrationalism by linking it to the more systematic construction of British identity supposedly instigated by the British political elites after the Union of Scotland and England in 1707; but her work failed to address the terminological confusions to which the importation of patriotism into the early part of the century had given rise.⁶

In times of heightened international tension, Patriot writers undoubtedly turned out material that would seem familiarly “jingoistic” to later generations. But Patriotism was engaged in the promotion of home-grown talent and national historical and literary traditions for quite other reasons. Such “cultural protectionism” developed as a medium through which the universal virtues of “publick Spiritedness” could most effectively and efficiently be conveyed to an increasingly broad citizenry, since it was precisely in the reconciliation of local affections and universal benevolence that Patriotism located the natural order that underlay true moral and political liberty. To this end, wars of religion and constitutional revolutions in the seventeenth century had encouraged literary critics and historians to reconsider ways in which the sources of Classical civic virtue could be grasped through the

⁵ Gerald Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism: A Cultural History, 1740-1830* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1987), 60.

⁶ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992). Those confusions are well represented in Ben Rogers, *Beef and Liberty: Roast Beef, John Bull and the English Nation* (London: Vintage, 2003), esp. chapter 4, and Peter Mandler, *The English National Character: The History of an Idea from Edmund Burke to Tony Blair* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

particulars of local or national contexts and exempla, and, in this sense, “cultural protectionism” owed much more to the debate between the “Ancients and Moderns” than it did to the grounding of power structures in notions of national exclusivity and superiority.⁷ When Burke, in the *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), made his famous reference to venerating “the little platoon we belong to in society,” he was not, as is now generally assumed, placing the little platoon as the culmination and sublimation of our social loyalties and identity, “an assertion of British difference, even superiority.”⁸ He was arguing that public spirit had to draw its energy from local affections in order to transform it into that respect for universal principles of social order, without which those local affections could never be perfected.⁹

A further confusion over the term “Patriotism” arises out of the prominence of Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke, and his circle in the intellectual history of early-eighteenth-century Britain. In many respects, of course, this prominence is justified. Bolingbroke popularized the term; he gave “Patriotism” some coherence through his eclectic political, philosophical, and historical writings; he promoted it through an influential network of writers, oppositional politicians and poets, most famously John Gay, George Lyttelton, and

⁷ The term “publick Spiritedness” appears as a definition of Patriotism in the third edition of Bailey’s *Universal Etymological English Dictionary* (1726).

⁸ Philip Spencer and Howard Wollman, *Nationalism: A Critical Introduction* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002), 15. The original quotation can be found in Burke, *Reflections*, 135. Spencer and Wollman acknowledge here their debt to P. Thody, *The Conservative Imagination* (London: Pinter, 1993).

⁹ See, for example, John Brown, *Merit. A Satire* (Dublin, 1746), 8-9: “Let gen’rous actions then your name adorn; / Mankind for mankind mutually was born. / Who for the publick, life devoted spend, / Most nobly answer their creation’s end.” Burke’s criticism of the French revolutionaries was precisely that their universalism was, in fact, particular, and therefore had to be imposed by force. He argued in the same way against the doctrine of “geographical morality,” upon which Warren Hastings attempted to justify his violation of native Indian customs in the interest of Imperial order while he was governor general of Bengal. That his own Patriotism was grounded in universalist moral and philosophical assumptions shortly to be undermined by David Hume among others may help to explain why it was subsumed in the growth of nationalism by the end of the century, and why a detailed study of it has yet to be written.

Alexander Pope. As a result, the history of Patriotism has come largely to follow the contours of Bolingbroke's turbid career.¹⁰ Fuelled by a hatred of Walpole and the Whig parliamentarians who forced him into exile in 1715, "Patriotism" was subject to the suspicions of hypocrisy, insincerity, and treachery that dogged Bolingbroke's own reputation, and it was divested both of purpose and any lingering pretension to principles when its followers, though not Bolingbroke himself, seized power on Walpole's fall, in 1742 only, it appeared, to continue the system of their great enemy. All that remained was for Samuel Johnson to issue the *coup de grâce* when he famously termed Patriotism's short-lived, Pittite revival of the 1760s "the last refuge of a scoundrel."¹¹

This high-political, Bolingbrokean narrative of Patriotism fails to incorporate the ways in which the meaning and praxis of that term were constantly under renegotiation as shifting social, political, cultural, and even commercial, factors demanded changes to the rhetoric of political opposition. In defining the term in the 1730s and 1740s, as part of his campaign against Walpole and the "Robinocracy" of early Hanoverian England, Bolingbroke developed three powerful critiques designed to expose the dual threat of Whiggery and Toryism. These were: the residual threat of priest-craft and superstition to the body politic; the subversion of the historical legacy of an ancient constitution of liberties by cliques of self-interested politicians; the debasement of rhetoric and taste by the commercial and political classes as a means of dulling criticism and covering their tracks. In combination, these factors go a long way to explaining the nature of the threat to liberty that was the consistent rallying cry of the Patriot; but the lord's essentially atavistic appeal to "superior

¹⁰ For a broad survey of Bolingbroke's political and intellectual biography, see Isaac Kramnick, *Bolingbroke and His Circle: the Politics of Nostalgia in the Age of Walpole* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968); and H. T. Dickinson, *Bolingbroke* (London: Constable, 1970).

¹¹ James Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, ed. R.W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), 615.

spirits” and a “Patriot King,” while it certainly drew strength from Bolingbroke’s own stature as an aristocrat, polymath, and statesman, represented only one strategy for restoring virtue and liberty to the sphere of government. Each of those three critiques became increasingly problematical as devices for respectable opposition: the customary attack on priest-craft appeared a backdoor to irreligion and secularism; the methodology employed to identify inherited constitutional liberties appeared unsupportable historically; the rhetoric of lofty social elitism and esoteric skepticism became exposed as inadequate foundations for galvanizing a critical but orderly public spirit in the burgeoning, rapidly expanding public sphere of the 1740s. Consequently, during Burke’s early years in London we find writers at Tully’s Head reconsidering the relationship between religion, history and the rhetoric of criticism, and working to reconfigure the Patriot legacy for fresh social, cultural, and political circumstances.

This process is apparent over time in the publishing list of Dodsley’s business, where we can reconstruct the debate within Patriotism that surrounded Edmund Burke’s early writings, both in London and in Dublin. The aspects of that debate which will form the focus of discussion in this dissertation include: a defense of Lockean “orthodoxy” against the secularizing tendencies in Lord Shaftesbury’s Stoicism; the recovery of the religious underpinnings of natural philosophy by distinguishing “respectable” critiques of enthusiasm and superstition from the propagation of religious skepticism and atheism; an attempt to reconcile legitimate modes of historical skepticism with the upholding of central tenets of sacred history and of the role of providence in particular; the promotion of allegory as a mode of conveying universal principles of the natural moral order, against conventional charges of obscurantism.

Significantly, each of these positions cut across the current of our well-entrenched assumptions about the “Enlightenment.” As a result, it has proved difficult to situate Dodsley, Tully’s Head, and Burke comfortably within the broader narrative of the “Enlightened” discourse. Just as Burke’s own career suffers from the apparent denouement that was his campaign against Jacobinism, so the eighteenth-century Republic of Letters is viewed primarily through the gap that had opened up between the *philosophes* and the political and religious establishments by the end of the century. From this perspective, secularization, rationalism, and growing alienation from the norms of *ancien régime* society continue to constitute the identity of “Enlightened” critics, who were forced to repress, disguise or encode their opposition to prevailing power as a means of avoiding censorship, censure, and penury. Measured against such a standard, Dublin and London in the mid eighteenth century appear parochial and tame intellectual environments. Granted, a burgeoning reading market was fuelling innovations in book design and journals in this period, and taking the Restoration coffee house into a host of new urban and domestic sites. But how are we to measure the political purchase of a book trade that made its money off works such as *Clarissa*, translations of French histories of England, and the literary polemics of the irascible, prolific bishop of Gloucester, William Warburton? What are we to make of a Republic of Letters that never spawned a Republic of Virtue?

Again, Burke offers a useful illustration of the points at issue here. Given the comprehensiveness of his attack upon the French Revolution, much time is still spent situating him in opposition to “Enlightenment” thought, or defining a point where he buried earlier attachments to “Enlightened” causes in Ireland and America. This state of affairs is testimony to the enduring influence of Peter Gay’s narrative of the triumph over superstition

and prejudice of a “coalition of cultural critics, religious skeptics and political reformers” who were united by “a program of secularism, humanity, cosmopolitanism, and freedom.”¹² Gay’s “Enlightenment,” is still, in Roy Porter’s phrase, the “point of departure” for our use of the term, and, while the “stormy” family of *philosophes* may have been expanded and diversified since, their kinship remains defined (rather paradoxically) by a shared “political strategy” centered upon “the right of unfettered criticism.”¹³ That last phrase, in particular, extracted from Kant’s 1784 tract *Was ist Aufklärung?*, still awaits unpacking. Porter himself has rightly drawn attention to Gay’s crucial identification of philosophy with criticism in the Enlightenment, only to ignore the whole question of why, when, and where the art of criticism became synonymous in the minds of intellectuals with the promulgation of programs for social, political, and cultural reconstruction.

Mark Hulliung and Dena Goodman have utilized the innovative methods of the “New Cultural History” to pry open our assumptions about Gay’s “Enlightenment,” Hulliung through a consideration of Rousseau’s internal critique of his fellow *philosophes*, and Goodman by shifting attention to the practical and personal dynamics that constituted the “Republic of Letters” as an alternative community to that of Louis XV’s France. But even here thickened contexts remain rooted in the teleology of eighteenth-century French history and in the goal of explaining radicalism as somehow the historic destiny of the movement.¹⁴ Most recently, Jonathan Israel’s *Radical Enlightenment* has attempted to break away from the defining presence of the French Revolution by positing a radical enlightenment that was

¹² Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation. The Rise of Modern Paganism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), 3.

¹³ Roy Porter, *The Enlightenment* (London, MacMillan, 1990), 5; Gay, *Enlightenment*, 4, 8, 3.

¹⁴ Mark Hulliung, *The Autocritique of Enlightenment: Rousseau and the Philosophes* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1994); Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).

almost complete by 1740, but *mutatis mutandis* perpetuated the idea of an intellectual movement fired by ideas that could be traced through, but were rarely defined by, the untidy practicalities of horizontal contexts: it merely replaced Rousseau with Spinoza.¹⁵ None of these responses opens up the term “Enlightenment” and challenges Gay’s Kantian assumptions in a way that can bring Burke and Tully’s Head in from the periphery.¹⁶

Those historians who have made the case for Burke’s place within the Enlightenment tradition have done so for one of two reasons. First, Annabel Patterson, in her self-styled “New Whig” history, has acknowledged Burke’s early attachment to the principles of the Enlightenment in his support of the American colonies, the better to expose him as a betrayer of that cause later in his career. Her argument serves to reinforce the charges of venality and inconsistency leveled at Burke by the “New Whig” supporters of Charles James Fox—and, of course, by the incautious “Noble Lord”—but it does not challenge the received understanding of Enlightenment thought.¹⁷ A second, more imaginative attempt at recovering an Enlightened Burke has brought about such a challenge. In voluminous studies over the past few decades, J.G.A. Pocock, unhappy with the reasoning that renders figures such as Gibbon and Burke “either not English or not Enlightened,” has attempted to present a Burke “who saw himself defending Enlightened Europe against the *gens de lettres* and their revolutionary successors” and who “stands for Counter-Enlightenment, in Isaiah Berlin’s

¹⁵ Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

¹⁶ Nor does Darrin M. McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment: the French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), which (putting “modernity” aside) commits the double-sin of reifying a coherent Enlightenment and counter-Enlightenment from around 1760.

¹⁷ Annabel Patterson, *Nobody’s Perfect: A New Whig Interpretation of History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002). Patterson sees Burke’s *Letter to a Noble Lord* as an apology for what she styles his “political turn-coatism” (p. 244).

phrase, only in the sense that his is one kind of Enlightenment in conflict with another.”¹⁸

Pocock’s strategy relies upon constructing a “history of Enlightenments,” whereby an eclectic collection of thinkers, including conservatives and churchmen, can be incorporated into intellectual networks through the particularities and peculiarities of their own national circumstances. These networks are then, at a deeper level, given a shared identity through the common goals of extricating the world from religious wars and developing a “series of programmes” for redefining church authority and church-state relations. The latter point was the ground upon which national Enlightenments competed, and where, in his British corner, Burke played out a life-long contribution.¹⁹

Pocock’s treatment of Burke’s position within the dominant strands of “Enlightenment” thought in the eighteenth century has proved highly valuable to the intellectual historian and to Burke studies. Multiplying Enlightenments, however, does not necessarily overcome the teleological issues involved here, especially when recourse is still made to unifying factors that remain entirely abstract and programmatic. At the same time, nationalizing Enlightenments risks overlooking the cohering influence exerted by the sheer practical mechanics of a functioning republic of letters (or *république des lettres*), including the economics of book production and the exploitation of market demand, from at least the early and mid part of the century—and, one might add, by the very dislocation and migration consequent upon the religious and political upheavals that covered Europe in the latter half of the seventeenth century. We need only consider Bolingbroke’s philosophic exiles in France, John Toland’s European wanderings, Voltaire’s *Lettres philosophiques*, the generations of

¹⁸ J.G.A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion, Volume 1: The Enlightenments of Edward Gibbon, 1737-1764* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 7.

¹⁹ J.G.A. Pocock, “The Redescription of Enlightenment,” *Proceedings of the British Academy* 125 (2004), 101-17.

Irish forced to seek education in France and Spain, the astonishing popularity of universal histories and of fictionalized accounts of exotic travelers to and from the Orient, even the rise of public subscription lists across national boundaries, to appreciate that writers and readers *did* see themselves as participating in an international dialogue that shared certain principles and practices, though not programs or ideologies. Despite the advances that Pocock's research contains, then, the central problem remains: as with nationalism and Patriotism, we are faced with a concept, "Enlightenment," that has been stretched back anachronistically to appropriate a fluid and diverse, mid-eighteenth-century intellectual milieu, the "Republic of Letters." How else might this situation be rectified?

J.C.D. Clark has argued recently that historians should jettison talk of "The Enlightenment" altogether, since the term only emerged as a description of an historical period toward the end of the nineteenth century. Clark's exercise in historicization, like his similar assault upon "eighteenth-century radicalism," does much to recover a sense of how the intellectual discourse of Europe before 1789 must be approached on its own terms.²⁰ What it fails to incorporate is the fact that contemporaries such as Burke himself, while they may not have settled on a label, perceived strains of thought that were secular, rationalist, programmatic and politically virulent. The *Reflections* itself was, to some degree, an exercise in conceptual retrospection, of imaginative historical reconstruction, where Burke marked the growth over time of a system of metaphysical reasoning that he believed had invaded and perverted the *république des lettres*. That Burke identified such a system with atavistic religious enthusiasm rather than with benevolent liberalism is not, in itself,

²⁰ J.C.D. Clark, *Our Shadowed Present: Modernism, Postmodernism, and History* (London: Atlantic, 2003). Clark originally broached this general historiographical theme in his seminal works *English Society, 1688-1832: Ideology, Social Structure and Political Practice during the Ancien Regime* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), and *Revolution and Rebellion: State and Society in England in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

sufficient argument for denying the usefulness of a term such as “Enlightenment” *tout court*.²¹

The position adopted by this study offers an alternative strategy to all of the above that addresses the weaknesses in the approaches of Pocock and Clark while acknowledging a debt to their critical insights. It involves recovering the more narrow connotations of the term Enlightenment, including its secularizing and programmatic aspirations, but simultaneously situating it as just one, competing (though ultimately dominant) movement within the wider intellectual community. That community described itself as a “Republic of Letters,” a functioning society where academics, writers, and booksellers self-consciously discovered a convergence of social identity, habits and intellectual engagement, rather than of particular intellectual programs, and as such “Republic of Letters” is preferred over “Enlightenment” as a tool for historical analysis in this study. It is also a term that, as Donald Kelly reminds us, significantly originated in a desire for order, not innovation, at a time when scholars were striving to impose procedural norms upon what appeared almost a surfeit of new ideas.²²

Two points follow from this. First, “Enlightenment” should be used sparingly until that point, later in the century, when certain intellectuals appeared to be undermining the very nature of the Republic in their commitment to a program of anticlericalism and political reform—although, as has been indicated above, critics such as Burke himself saw similar dangers presaged in some of the Patriot discourse around Bolingbroke and in Shaftesbury, dangers decidedly more pressing in mid-century Ireland, where constitutional liberty actually

²¹ See also Porter, *Enlightenment*, 9-10. This aspect of Porter’s description of the Enlightenment remains untouched by Clark’s arguments.

²² Donald R. Kelley, *The Descent of Ideas: The History of Intellectual History* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2002), 70-71.

meant the domination of a minority church, than in London. Second, dimming the focus on “Enlightenment” broadens our perspectives on the diversity, tensions, and vibrancy that constituted the mid-century Republic of Letters. After all, beneath the veneer of Georgian stability and confidence, British and Irish politicians shared continental concerns in that they remained haunted by the specter of disorder, of dynastic, denominational, or imperial rivalries, and, against this background, Burke’s involvement with Tully’s Head brings to light a community of writers in London and Dublin more socially diverse, cosmopolitan, and religious than generally assumed. It is a complex, self-conscious “Republic of Letters” whose citizens employ a rhetoric of civic participation and social and cultural criticism designed to nurture productive social intercourse rather than promote radical change, and who see their role as one of integrating the energizing of public spirit with the defense of public order.

* * * * *

Our reconsideration of the key concepts of Patriotism and Enlightenment now enables us to appreciate better the problems raised by traditional historiographical and methodological approaches to Edmund Burke’s own intellectual biography. Burke’s early writings, those penned between his entry into Trinity College, Dublin, in 1744, and his employment as personal secretary to the politician William Gerard Hamilton from 1759, have received increased attention in recent years, in line with growing interest in the author’s aesthetic thought and Irish background. Whether that interest has been focused on the rhetoric of the sublime, or on repressed conflicts of national identity and colonialism, or both,

these researches have undoubtedly opened up interesting psychoanalytical and rhetorical perspectives on their subject, enriching our understanding of the complexity of Burke's thought by nudging discussion beyond his dominant identity as the anti-Jacobin icon of modern conservatism.

From the close of the Second World War until the early 1990s, attention to Burke's thinking had focused largely upon whether his campaign against the French Revolution had been driven by a commitment to Classical and Christian natural law beliefs or was, rather, the final rhetorical flourish of an inveterate but eloquent political pragmatist.²³ The latter view of Burke, as more accomplished in political propaganda than political philosophy, had come to define academic orthodoxy in Britain largely owing to the enduring influence of the historians Sir Lewis Namier and John Brooke, whose studies of parliamentary politics in the eighteenth century played down the significance of principles and ideology in the formation of public policy in favor of an analysis of networks of personal patronage. Burke's relationship to natural-law thought, meanwhile, constituted the core of a "Burke revival" in the 1950s and 1960s that invigorated Burke studies in the United States at least until the end of the century but that had limited impact across the Atlantic. Indeed, in the charged context of the Cold War, this "revival" was often reduced by unsympathetic scholars to a complaint that Burke's work had been appropriated by new conservative and neo-Thomist American writers—those to whom J.H. Plumb referred, in the 1960s, as Burke's "Cult," and whom Conor Cruise O'Brien warned were using their hero's writings "to validate the policy of American counter-revolutionary imperialism"²⁴

²³ The former position has been most clearly stated by Peter J. Stanlis, *Edmund Burke and the Natural Law* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1958). For a more skeptical view of Burke's anti-Jacobinism, see Leslie Mitchell's introduction to Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, vol. 8.

O'Brien, however, differed significantly from Plumb in holding the political thought of his fellow Irishman in high regard. His powerful work *The Great Melody: A Thematic Biography of Edmund Burke*, restated the charge against America's new-conservative Burkeans while finally putting any lingering Namierites to the sword; but it also established an interpretative shift of its own by presenting a crypto-Jacobite Burke whose Irish Catholic sympathies stayed with him to his deathbed and fired not only his anti-Jacobinism, but his reformist campaigns against British colonial injustices in Ireland, the American colonies, and India. This maneuver served both to sideline the debate over natural law and to reinvest Burke's rhetoric with a passionate sense of social justice. At the same time, the romance of his Irish Catholic roots and his imputed Jacobitism cleared the path for Burke studies to make its mark on the burgeoning field of nationalist and postcolonial studies as they impacted the history of Ireland.²⁵

These fresh historical perspectives have stimulated a re-examination of the significance of Burke's "pre-political" writings. By applying the latest methods of textual criticism, they have found in their author's divided ethnic and religious identities the source of the tension he exhibited in his life between a conservative reverence for tradition and a radical yearning for social justice. The most worked over of these texts to date is A

²⁴ Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. Conor Cruise O'Brien (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968), 59. O'Brien identifies a 1949 anthology of Burke's writings by Ross Hofmann and Paul Levack as the origin of a political project in which Burke's works were "systematically quarried for anti-communist purposes" (p. 56). In the United States, the charge has been repeated most recently by Isaac Kramnick in his introduction to *The Portable Edmund Burke* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999). Plumb, like O'Brien, was concerned not so much at the parallel between Jacobinism and Communism as at the attempt to use natural-law thought to turn Burke into a systematic political thinker. To Plumb, Burke's political thought was "utter rubbish." See J.H. Plumb, "Burke and His Cult," *New York Review of Books* 4, no. 1 (February 11, 1965).

²⁵ Most of O'Brien's arguments for Burke's hidden Catholicism and Jacobitism have since been conclusively refuted. See, for example, Elizabeth Lambert, *Edmund Burke of Beaconsfield* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2003). Lambert is by no means unsympathetic to the broader claims for the significance of Burke's Catholic connections in Ireland, as I discuss in Chapter Three below.

Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful, which some commentators believe Burke was composing ten years before its eventual publication in 1757.²⁶ Here, an existing body of rich research on Burke's aesthetic thought has been imaginatively reconfigured into a system of politicized aesthetics where social affections and structures of exploitation and domination are camouflaged in a conceptual grid stretching from affective "beauty" to fearsome "sublimity."²⁷

Other of Burke's early texts have lately been incorporated into this analytical paradigm. These include, primarily, a short-lived journal, *The Reformer*, with which Burke was closely involved after he graduated from college, Burke's own private correspondence as an undergraduate, and his first published book, *A Vindication of Natural Society*. All can be dated with precision and have been mined for what they can tell us of the impact on his subsequent career of Burke's eclectic up-bringing and education (he spent some time in his early youth in the Cork country with his Nagle relatives, and then attended a Quaker-run school before entering Trinity College, Dublin). On this textual foundation, Michel Fuchs composed a fascinating study for the bicentenary of Burke's death entitled *Edmund Burke, Ireland, and the Fashioning of Self*, and Luke Gibbons, in his study *Edmund Burke and Ireland* has provocatively incorporated them into the aesthetics of the *Philosophical Enquiry* to uncover signs of the ways in which Burke negotiated the imputed stresses of the colonial

²⁶ The long gestation period enables commentators to see the work as fully embedded in Burke's youthful—that is, Irish—experiences. It is an assumption that I do not share. See below, 137.

²⁷ For the place of Burke's work in the development of aesthetic thought, see A.F.B. Clark, *Boileau and the French Classical Critics in England (1660-1830)* (Paris: Librairie Ancienne Édouard Champion, 1925); Samuel H. Monk, *The Sublime. A Study of Critical Theories in XVIII-Century England* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960); and James Boulton's highly influential introduction to Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1958). The political application of that thought, always with an eye to the French Revolution, grew in the nineteen eighties with Tom Furniss, *Edmund Burke's Aesthetic Ideology. Language, Gender and Political Economy in Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); and Stephen K. White, *Edmund Burke: Modernity, Politics, and Aesthetics* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2nd edn. 2004).

and religiously persecuted aspects of his own family background.²⁸ This research has served to connect Burke and the Dublin of his youth more tightly to wider intellectual currents such as the Scottish Enlightenment and trends in aesthetic theory in France, and to deepen our awareness of Irish pedagogical theory in the early eighteenth century—although such success has come at a high price, since some historians are on the verge of ushering into the world an “Irish Enlightenment” to vie with its older, established Scottish sibling!²⁹

Whatever their uses and shortcomings, all of these approaches to Burke’s early writings have remained tethered to a rigidly linear perspective on their significance, which has meant valuing them not for what they tell us about the intellectual and social climate of their time but for how they illuminate their author’s later political campaigns. Consequently, they acquire purchase only insofar as they can be fitted into narratives laden with teleological assumptions—nationalism, Romanticism, Imperialism and the like, or located within established intellectual currents: Lockeanism, perhaps, or Neo-Aristotelianism, Court Whiggery, or proto-Romanticism. Either way, the horizontal contexts referred to earlier, including the practical processes of bookselling, the commercial demands of a constantly changing readership market, and the networks of collaborative literary associations, remain on the periphery. Even the “New Cultural Turn,” with its emphasis upon the interdependence of text and context, has generally failed to reflect the vital interaction

²⁸ Fuchs, *Edmund Burke, Ireland and the Fashioning of Self*; Luke Gibbons, *Edmund Burke and Ireland: Aesthetics, politics, and the colonial sublime* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

²⁹ For the new generation of Burke scholars attending more productively to Burke’s place within the Shaftesburian and Hutchesonian school of moral philosophy see Paddy Bullard, “The Meaning of the ‘Sublime and Beautiful’: Shaftesburian Contexts and Rhetorical Issues in Edmund Burke’s *Philosophical Enquiry*,” in *The Review of English Studies*, New Series 56, no. 224, 169-191. For Burke and the common sense school, see Ian Crowe’s introductory essay in *An Imaginative Whig* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2005), 1-18.

between publications and the multifaceted sites of their reception.³⁰ This is largely because poststructuralist criticism has privileged the constructive, or imaginative, agency of the text's author above the objective, diverse and unpredictable pressures that make the text, in reality, a product of negotiation between a number of interested parties. Such privileging of the text actually allows researchers the room to insert their own ideological assumptions or presentist concerns between author, publisher, reader, and patron in a way that perpetuates reductionist assumptions about those relationships.³¹

This study follows in the spirit of the original aims of the New Cultural History in the sense that it aims to recover the leverage of those horizontal contexts, in their own terms, through adopting a microhistorical method. This choice has been influenced by Giovanni Levi's argument that microhistory offers a "framework of analysis which rejects simplifications, dualistic hypotheses, polarizations, rigid typologies and the search for typical characteristics" and thereby undermines seductive assumptions about the "automatism of change."³² Yet, even here, earlier microhistorical studies have drawn criticism for merely applying reductionist macrohistorical schema to microhistorical subjects, as Dominick LaCapra has shown, for example, in his compelling critique of Carlo Ginzburg's *The Cheese*

³⁰ Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt (eds), *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 1-32.

³¹ See, for example, Betty Rizzo, "The English Author-Bookseller Dialogue," *The Age of Johnson* 2 (1989), 353-74; and Katherine O'Donnell, "'Dick Dicky,' 'Dear Dick,' 'Dear Friend,' 'Dear Shackleton': Edmund Burke's Love for Richard Shackleton," *SEL* 46, no. 3 (Summer 2006), 619-40, where the author claims to have uncovered a "sodomite sublime" in Burke's private letters to his Quaker school friend Richard Shackleton. O'Donnell's observations on Burke's sexuality are not new, having been advanced by Isaac Kramnick thirty years ago in *The Rage of Edmund Burke. Portrait of an Ambivalent Conservative* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1977). Her innovation is to employ Foucault to posit a disjunction between indigenous Gaelic and colonialist British attitudes to homoerotic sex, showing one further facet of the self-repression demanded by Burke's British connections.

³² Giovanni Levi, "On Microhistory," in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Burke, 2nd edition (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 114, 98.

and the Worms.³³ In this respect, the writings of the ethnographer George E. Marcus are of interest in suggesting strategies for “the use of biographical narratives as a means of designing multi-sited research” that remains, as far as possible, open-ended in its expectations: “The idea is that any cultural identity or activity [in this case, of the public critic] is constructed by multiple agents in varying contexts or places” which require the researcher to be prepared to assimilate into his analysis “both intended and unintended consequences in the network of complex connections within a system of places.”³⁴ The emphasis here is not on constructing parallel biographies and then applying the sum as a norm for the period. Instead, it is on juxtaposing cross-sections of biography to provide “points of entry” into the wider currents and “interactive experiences” shaping social and cultural identity.

In the chapters that follow, then, a number of sites and personal associations will be examined for the way they overlapped and interacted to shape the contours of Burke’s early career and writings. The resulting nexus, or cross-section of this intellectual milieu will address the gaps that have opened up between sub-sections of the historical field, such as the history of the book and the history of ideas, by recovering the symbiotic relationship between the aspirations of the writer and the personal, institutional, and commercial networks within which he had to maneuver and through which he shaped his critiques. By interrupting the vertical, teleological approaches that inject both stasis and anachronism into the analysis of intellectual movements, this study will help us to restructure our understanding of expectations, pressures, status anxieties, and multiple “professional” identities in a way that

³³ Dominick LaCapra, *History and Criticism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), 45-69.

³⁴ George E. Marcus, *Ethnography Through Thick and Thin* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1998), 94, 52. I am indebted to Deborah E. Harkness for drawing Marcus’s work to my attention.

reflects more authentically the experiences and perceptions of historical figures such as Burke. It will also help us to appreciate more fully the interaction of such perceptions with preexisting mentalities, accumulated expectations and defined experiences. This, after all, is both the warp and weft of the “Republic of Letters.”

The first chapter of this study comprises an examination of Robert Dodsley’s Tully’s Head business as part of a cross-section of the British Republic of Letters mid-century and as a formative influence upon Burke’s early career as an author and critic. Dodsley was not merely an accomplished talent-spotter, but an active contributor to the market of ideas. Rising from footman to bookseller entirely through the patronage of Alexander Pope, his early professional years in publishing were spent in the service of Pope’s own literary career and the wider cause of the Patriot literary assault upon the “Robinocracy.” But Dodsley showed his true professional acumen in the renegotiation of that Patriot polemical tradition, when new modes of criticism appeared necessary to convey to an ever broader readership the message that liberty (the constant Patriot watchword) could be secured only through a public spirit, or engagement, that was, at the same time, a true acting out of public order. In the collaborative publishing ventures that secured its reputation in the 1750s, we can see the fruits of a commercial and intellectual network at Tully’s Head that set to work transforming and updating the critical legacy of Pope and the lessons of Bolingbroke’s political philosophy. The result was a refashioned discourse of orderly criticism that drew its strength from native aspects of the civic inheritance—the genius of the Anglican settlement, a fresh constitutional historiography, and an imaginative deployment of the inheritance of Elizabethan allegorical writers such as Edmund Spenser. The chapter closes with references

to two figures whose work was significant in this process: the churchmen and scholars William Warburton and Joseph Spence.

This was the environment from which Burke's first book-length publication, *A Vindication of Natural Society*, emerged in 1756. Chapter 2 is devoted to an examination of how a collaborative network of writers at Tully's Head shaped a critique of Lord Bolingbroke's contested intellectual legacy and influence upon Pope, and of how that collaborative process influenced the composition of Burke's text. This contextualization of the *Vindication* will serve to reaffirm the traditional, satirical reading of that problematic text, and challenge its recent appropriation as evidence for Burke's imputed angst over injustices in British colonial Ireland. It will also show how the *Vindication* can provide a valuable window into the wider debate within the Republic of Letters of the correct role and aims of the critic.

The third chapter explains Burke's successful penetration of Tully's Head by showing how his upbringing and education in Ireland had already infused his writing with Popeian imitations and had informed him in the salient aspects of Patriot debate in London. It challenges notions, all too uncritically accepted today, that Burke's Irishness would have been a severe handicap in an increasingly assertive and nationalistic England, and shows how the vibrant exchange of ideas and personnel in the publishing and theatrical circles across the Irish Sea contributed to his identity as a writer and critic. Indeed, the urgency of reconsidering the place of religious toleration, national history, and public rhetoric in shaping the identity of a free, prosperous, Protestant Ireland was made particularly evident by two episodes that disrupted Dublin society during Burke's student days: reaction to Thomas Sheridan's reform program for the Dublin theater in 1747-48, and Charles Lucas's populist,

demagogic campaign for election to the Irish parliament the following year. Both campaigns, it is argued here, shaped Burke's idea of the proper responsibilities of the public critic and therefore formed a vital aspect of his transition to London; but both have been misrepresented to various degrees by attempts to make them the backdrop of Burke's supposed initiation into a proto-Irish Nationalist mentality.

The chief significance of Burke's Irish upbringing was, in fact, precisely that he experienced first hand, and as a self-professed *insider*, divisions over the Hibernian and Protestant Patriot legacy of Molyneux and Swift, fought out between figures such as Lucas, who held to a tight Bolingbrokean paradigm in their propaganda, and other Patriots who saw necessary reform as proceeding from within the existing constitutional arrangement with Britain. Among the latter figures, Sir Richard Cox emerges as, of all writers, the closest to the youthful Burke in style and content. The nature of this connection, which has not been explored by Burke scholars to date, is pursued in the final chapter of the dissertation where Burke's writing career after the success of the *Vindication* is considered, particularly in respect of his unfinished "Abridgment of the English History." The "Abridgment," which was never published during Burke's lifetime, remains understudied and undervalued to this day; but it shows us crucially that Burke had made considerable advances in the development of an accessible style of Patriot history that was designed to promote the civic virtues that lead to liberty through a mixture of religious providentialism and literary allegory. Burke's failure to complete his project, and the subsequent appearance of histories by Hume and Gibbon have unfairly relegated this episode in Burke's formation as a critic to the margins. In many ways, Burke's historical mind was his greatest literary contribution to the Patriot

project of Tully's Head in the 1750s, and it still has much to tell us about the sophistication and variety of British intellectual life at that period.

The picture of Burke that emerges from this study is intended to capture those dominant personal and intellectual influences that have been sidelined by historiographical and methodological orthodoxies to date; but it cannot claim to offer a fully comprehensive coverage of Burke's formative years in the Republic of Letters. For example, recent scholarship is gradually clarifying the importance of Miltonic themes in Burke's rhetoric that are too systemic and broad to be incorporated here. Nor will Burke's most famous pre-political work, the *Philosophical Enquiry*, be addressed in detail, since the literature on its place in the development of aesthetic theory is already voluminous. Furthermore, the reader will not find a resolution to the vexed problem of natural-law thought in Burke's writings, although it is hoped that Burke's treatment of the state of nature in the *Vindication* will contribute to new avenues of research that are just now taking us beyond the responses to Stanlis's work that have dominated the theme over the past few decades.

Finally, consistent with the intention of treating Burke's mid-century milieu as a period on its own terms, this dissertation is not designed to be built upon positions that Burke was to adopt in his later political career. That is not to say, however, that its reconsideration of the "pre-political" Burke offers no clues to explaining important aspects of his later career. Burke's justly famous rhetoric in defense of prescription and providence, in support of justice for Imperial subjects, against programs of social or political innovation, all sprang from insights into the nature of religious, historical, and poetic truth anchored in the Republic of Letters that he knew as a young man. The role of critic that he formed there continued to

dictate his approach as a member of parliament, rendering him much more effective as an opposition spokesman than he ever was holding the levers of power.

Indeed, Burke's *Letter to a Noble Lord* is in many ways the great curtain call of the Tully's Head critic. Summoning the genius of Pope, our author raises his pen to defend public-spiritedness and public order against a fresh strain of disorder and chaos. An unwitting betrayer of his lordly class, the bovine Lord Bedford has sealed an unholy alliance with the Enlightened betrayers of their art—"Pleas'd to the last, he crops the flow'ry food, / And licks the hand just rais'd to shed his blood."³⁵ It is in this charge of double-betrayal, not spurned loyalty, ethnic resentment, or repressed radicalism, that this work most truly reflects the experience of its author and his world. When read as such a Patriot critique, even its swan-song, it shows how urgently the mid-eighteenth-century milieu deserves fresh consideration, not just among Burke scholars, but among intellectual historians of the eighteenth century.

³⁵ Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, 9:181. The quotation is from Pope's *Essay on Man*, I, 83-84.

Chapter 1

Getting inside Tully's Head

1: Pope's Footman

Robert Dodsley's bookselling business operated in Pall Mall, London, under the sign of "Tully's Head," and it was the making of Edmund Burke, financially, intellectually, and professionally. While we do not know the actual circumstances, and even the year, in which Burke first met Dodsley, it is clear that the ambitious Irish immigrant had become received into Dodsley's circle of writers by 1756, when Dodsley accepted for publication his first full-length manuscript, *A Vindication of Natural Society: or, A View of the Miseries and Evils arising to Mankind from every Species of Artificial Society*.¹

In quick succession, Burke was to place two further works with Dodsley, the highly successful *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), for which Dodsley paid treble the fee he had for the *Vindication*, and, in collaboration with his friend William Burke, *An Account of the European Settlements in America* (1757).

¹ With little apparent justification, Robert Straus credits the Irish journalist and playwright Arthur Murphy with introducing Burke to Dodsley, perhaps as early as 1752. See, Ralph Straus, *Robert Dodsley. Poet, Publisher and Playwright* (1910; reprint, New York: Burt Franklin, 1968), 254. Murphy was an Irish journalist, playwright, and actor, three years Burke's senior, who had been educated at St. Omer and established himself in London in 1749 after a spell as a bookkeeper in Cork. Howard Dunbar, *The Dramatic Career of Arthur Murphy* (New York: MLAA, 1946), is probably more accurate than Straus in suggesting that Murphy himself was introduced to Burke while writing the *Gray's-Inn Journal*, in 1753 or 1754. There is no evidence that Dodsley was in touch with Murphy professionally or personally in the early 1750s, although Murphy did review Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry*—respectfully, but not enthusiastically—in Dodsley's *London Chronicle*, in 1757.

That same year, Dodsley also commissioned his new star to write a history of England.²

When he offered Burke the editorship of the *Annual Register* the following year, the terms, though not beyond expectation, were generous, and they marked Burke out as an example of a relatively new phenomenon in the self-styled Republic of Letters—the professional writer with his own, low-born, bookseller patron.

By the time he engaged Burke, Dodsley had built up extraordinary financial and literary leverage which he dispensed and nurtured through gatherings at Tully's Head. He had launched a number of highly respected publishing enterprises, including two serial anthologies—*A Select Collection of Old Plays* (1744-46) and *A Collection of Poems by Several Hands* (1748-58), and an innovative, two-volume educational textbook, *The Preceptor* (1748). He had also achieved success in the journal market with *The Museum, or, Literary and Historical Register* (1746-47), and the popular monthly *The World* (1753-56), and he owned an interest in the *Adventurer* and the *London Evening Post*. A successful playwright and respected poet, he counted Alexander Pope, Samuel Johnson, William Shenstone, David Garrick, Sir George Lyttelton, and Joseph Spence amongst his closer acquaintances, and with these connections he had been able to instigate an effective, collaborative literary operation astutely positioned, physically and figuratively, between the palaces of Westminster and St. James.³

Dodsley's historical profile has risen deservedly in recent years, with the publication of his surviving correspondence in 1988, the appearance of a new biography, and extended

² Dodsley paid Burke six guineas for the copyright of the *Vindication*, and twenty for the *Philosophical Enquiry*. See Burke, *Correspondence*, 1:190n4.

³ Michael F. Suarez has detailed this network in his substantial introduction to, Robert Dodsley, *A Collection of Poems by Several Hands* (1782; reprint London : Routledge/Thoemmes Press, 1997), 1-119. See also William Prideaux Courtney, *Dodsley's Collection of Poetry. Its Contents and Contributors* (1910; reprint, New York: Burt Franklin, reprint 1968).

treatment of his business projects in line with the development of historical sub-categories researching the history of the book, of reading, and of publishing.⁴ And yet historians are still a way from incorporating fully into their work the dynamics of the processes through which bookseller, writer, and market would have interacted—how, in our case, practical publishing concerns, short-term market preoccupations and professional relationships centered upon Tully’s Head impacted the shaping of Burke’s early publications. While those dynamics will be considered in more depth at the beginning of the next chapter, it would be worth laying out more broadly at this point three possible explanations for this flat interpretation of the professional relationship between Dodsley and Burke.

First, and perhaps most understandably, there is a scarcity of surviving correspondence from either party in the years leading up to 1758. Indeed, there are just two extant letters from Burke for the year 1752, and only one thereafter for the whole period to August 1757. His first surviving letter to Dodsley can be dated to early September 1759, by which time he had known the bookseller for some years. Dodsley’s first reference to his protégé appears in a letter of January 10, 1758, a little over three months before he signed Burke on as editor of his new journal the *Annual Register*. Here Burke appears simply as one of a company that dined at Tully’s Head. A year later, we find Dodsley explaining, in response to an enquiry from the poet William Shenstone, that “That Mr Burke who writes so ingeniously, is an Irish Gentleman, bred to the Law, but having ye grace not to follow it, will soon I should think make a very great figure in the literary World.”⁵ Indeed, Dodsley’s

⁴ James E. Tierney, ed., *The Correspondence of Robert Dodsley, 1733-1764* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Harry M. Solomon, *The Rise of Robert Dodsley: Creating the New Age of Print* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996). The only earlier biography is Straus’ *Robert Dodsley*.

⁵ Tierney, *Correspondence of Robert Dodsley*, 330, 393.

surviving correspondence is not only thin (his brother, James, burned his personal papers on his death), but what remains is largely lacking in character, personal details or stylistic flair.⁶ Despite the scarcity of evidence, and James Dodsley's incendiary zeal (which could plausibly indicate a higher degree of personal intimacy in Dodsley's professional communications than one might expect), Betty Rizzo has concluded that Dodsley's "interests were largely confined to his writing and his business, the making and selling of books," and that "his friends were cultivated through and for the sake of these interests."⁷ The effect of such speculation is to reinforce the impression that Dodsley's contribution to Burke's professional development could hardly have been anything more than commercial acumen and astute talent-spotting.

Second, while recent scholarship has enriched our appreciation of Dodsley's own literary output alongside his bookselling business, the artificial division between his creative and professional work has remained redoubtable.⁸ This is a result, probably, of the sub-disciplines of the "New Cultural History" that have compartmentalized new methodologies and allowed the perpetuation of economically reductionist analyses of the bookseller-author relationship. As a result, the interactive processes between bookseller, writer, and market have remained elusive. Betty Rizzo, again, gives surprisingly uncritical credence to the formulaic complaints of authors of the mid eighteenth century that "booksellers in general [were] corrupters of art, mere tradespeople who exerted an unnatural control over the

⁶ The published correspondence contains 393 letters covering the period from 1733 to 1764.

⁷ Betty Rizzo, review of *The Correspondence of Robert Dodsley*, ed. James E. Tierney, *The Age of Johnson* 4, (1991), 388.

⁸ Detailed discussions of Dodsley's literary works may be found in Tierney's introduction to the *Correspondence* and in Solomon, *The Rise of Robert Dodsley*. For Dodsley as businessman, see also James E. Tierney, "Book advertisements in mid-eighteenth-century newspapers: the example of Robert Dodsley," in *A Genius for Letters: Booksellers and Bookselling from the 16th to the 20th Century*, ed. Robin Myers and Michael Harris (Winchester: St Paul's Biographies, 1995), 103-122; and Michael F. Suarez, S.J., introduction to Robert Dodsley, *A Collection of Poems by Several Hands*.

profession of authorship,” and duly unravels Dodsley’s own literary persona to expose him as “a proto-capitalist amoralist masking himself as an honest man.”⁹ Such circular reasoning indicates the presence of an ideological template that cannot accommodate the common ground that bookseller and author shared in anticipating changing markets, or negotiating the fluidity of their own public identities.

The third reason why historians, and commentators on Burke in particular, have remained comfortable with a Dodsley who, in Straus’s words, “rose...by accepting people who from various reasons were desirous to help him” is that crediting him with more artistic purchase would complicate any interpretation of an author’s work predicated on the consistency of the author’s own thought.¹⁰ Carl B. Cone, for example, read the *Vindication* as a first salvo in Burke’s “lifelong struggle against the rationalism of his century.” Peter Stanlis, in similar vein, argued that the author, “With characteristic insight, even at age twenty-seven...perceived the revolutionary tendency of the state of nature theory, which in his last years was to help to destroy the established order.”¹¹ More recently, Seamus Deane has written that “*A Vindication* anticipates, in inverted form, much of what Burke will later say against the French revolutionary belief in the possibility of a secular society based on natural rights, productive of a ‘perfect Liberty’.”¹² Biography naturally privileges intellectual consistency over contingent personal influences, sometimes in spite of itself, and

⁹ Rizzo, review of *Correspondence*, 401, 395. See also “The English Author-Bookseller Dialogue,” *The Age of Johnson* 2 (1989), 353-374.

¹⁰ Straus, *Robert Dodsley*, 304.

¹¹ Carl B. Cone, *Burke and the Nature of Politics: The Age of the American Revolution* (University of Kentucky Press, 1957), 22; Stanlis, *Edmund Burke and the Natural Law*, 125. See also John Morley, *Burke* (London, 1904), 15-17, where Morley argues that “Burke foresaw from the first what, if rationalism were allowed to run an unimpeded course, would be the really great business of the second half of his century.”

¹² Seamus Deane, *Foreign Affections: Essays on Edmund Burke* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 88.

even in the most perceptive and rigorously detailed studies of Burke, such as F.P. Lock's two-volume life, Dodsley remains very much at the margin.¹³

How can we do a better job of assessing Dodsley's influence in shaping the debut of his anonymous satirist in 1756? The answer is that we must be willing to experiment with fresh analytical methodologies. Given the scarcity of archival material for both Dodsley and Burke in the crucial years 1750-1756, this means that we must reconstruct the relationship between the two largely by drawing together a mass of surrounding evidence, thickening the immediate context within which Burke's early projects were published, carefully scrutinizing overlapping and interlinked personal and professional fields, and searching for patterns of repetition within Dodsley's publishing network in the early 1750s. Such a microhistorical approach opens up fresh and exciting questions: How did Dodsley understand his duties and responsibilities as a bookseller and writer in the Republic of Letters? Why did certain writers appeal to Dodsley? To what extent were Tully's Head publications, and those that Dodsley financed through other booksellers, coordinated to nurture certain critical debates within the reading market? What was the extent of the intellectual and commercial influence on Dodsley of his patron Alexander Pope, and how did the personal friendships, animosities and controversies that Pope left at his death impinge upon Dodsley's commercial options? Finally, what was the extent of the intellectual influence of Pope on Dodsley as an aspiring member of the literati, and to what extent was Dodsley able to invest his business agendas with a coherent and vivifying intellectual stamp of his own? When we situate Burke's arrival on the London literary scene in 1750 within the nexus of these enquiries, we find that certain long-term ideological themes lose their import, while more immediate concerns and relations

¹³ F.P. Lock, *Edmund Burke. Volume One: 1730-1784* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

are highlighted in a way that alters considerably our appreciation of Burke's critical methods and professional aspirations.

Robert Dodsley was the son of a dissenting schoolteacher from Mansfield. Breaking off his apprenticeship to a local stocking weaver in his early teens, he sought prospects in household service, and first came to the attention of the literary world through poems that he composed while working as a footman for Charles Dartineuf, an illegitimate son of Charles II, member of the Kit Kat club, and friend of Jonathan Swift and Alexander Pope. In 1732, a subsequent employer, Jane Lowther, financed through private subscription the publication of Dodsley's first collection of writings, *A Muse in Livery*, which included verse in extravagant praise of Pope. By the end of that year, Dodsley was sending Pope manuscripts for comment, including a play, *The Toy-Shop*, which, on Pope's recommendation, was staged by John Rich at Covent Garden.¹⁴ From the profits of this work, and with the addition of a gift of £100 from Pope, Dodsley set up in the bookselling business at Tully's Head in April 1735.¹⁵

Pope, at the time, was cementing his relationship with Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke, who was directing opposition to Robert Walpole's system of patronage through a variety of philosophical and journalistic enterprises including, earlier, the weekly *Craftsman*. Expressing his admiration for Bolingbroke's intellect and character on several occasions, Pope became more bold in his own criticism of the Whig government and its creatures, a fact that helps in a number of ways to explain the poet's generous patronage

¹⁴ The play was a surprise success. It was staged thirty-four times in its first season, and the text went through eight editions in twelve months.

¹⁵ See David F. Foxon and James McLaverty, *Pope and the Early Eighteenth-Century Book Trade* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 113ff.

toward the rising footman, Dodsley. There was, first, a propagandistic purpose. Dodsley's origins brought with them the indelible mark of an outsider and a frisson of potential disorder that had become associated with the figure of the footman in urban areas and theatrical circles. While his earliest published poem, *Servitude* (1729), is an appeal to moral duty and mutual respect between servants and masters, and his *Toy-Shop* is a gentle satire on the airs and graces of "society" folk, Dodsley's chief theatrical triumph after 1735, *The King and the Miller of Mansfield*, was a much more pointed critique of courtly corruption, reminiscent of Bolingbroke's *Craftsman*. This play, first performed under the direction of Colly Cibber at Drury Lane in February 1737, opens with King Henry II of England lost on a hunting trip in Sherwood Forest. After wandering a while in the twilight, the king eventually finds wholesome refuge for the night at the home of an honest, artless miller who is unaware of his identity. "Well," the king says, "I shall once in my Life have the Happiness of being treated as a common Man; and of seeing human Nature without Disguise." Among the company is the miller's son, just returned from a lowly position at court. Having lost the love of his sweetheart Peggy to a lascivious courtier who has seduced and abandoned her, he unwittingly, satirically lays open to his father's royal guest the true extent of the court's moral degeneracy: "I love to speak Truth, Sir; if that happens to be Satire, I can't help it." The king, revealing his identity at last, expresses his gratitude for being brought, both physically and metaphorically, out of obscurity and darkness and into a true appreciation of piety, sincerity, and plain dealing. So plain is the oppositional nature of the play that, ironically, it incited on its first night a riot by footmen in the audience—four months before Walpole's Licensing Act placed the stage under the censorship of the Lord Chamberlain's office.¹⁶

¹⁶ For the impact of the Licensing Act upon the British stage, see John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the*

Second, Pope doubtless intended his generous patronage of Dodsley as a challenge to Queen Caroline's courtly support for the "thresher poet," Stephen Duck. In the hands of Pope and his friends, the footman's acceptance within the circles of their literary elite set up a contrast between the open accessibility to talent found in the "true" Republic of Letters and the manipulation of mediocrity by a philistine court. It is a contrast that had already been well articulated by Pope's close friend Joseph Spence in the preface to his *Essay on Mr. Pope's Odyssey* (1727). Here, Spence delivers a paean to the egalitarian spirit of a Republic of Letters that has given him, an obscure clergyman, a public platform from which to criticize the works of an acknowledged master of the poetic arts. Such disinterested criticism, he suggests, far from harboring insubordination, promotes order and health: "The learned World, as I take it, have ever allow'd a Liberty of thinking and of speaking one's sentiments. That *serene Republick* knows none of the distance and distinctions which custom has introduced into all others. There is a decent familiarity to be admitted between the Greatest and the Meanest Person in it....'Tis this ease of access, 'tis the liberty arising from it, which constitutes and preserves the felicity of the *Republic* of Letters."¹⁷ This formulaic expression of humility fitted Dodsley's case, too, and entirely suited Pope, who was never allowed to escape the taint of arrivism himself. It could also claim to be drawing upon the weighty Classical precedent of the great critic Longinus who, examining the relationship between great literature and the good order of the state in the final extant chapter of *Peri*

Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 381-92.

¹⁷ Joseph Spence, *An Essay on Pope's Odyssey: In which Some particular Beauties and Blemishes of that work are consider'd* (London, 1726), preface [iv-v]. Dodsley bought the copyright to the *Essay* in 1745 and reprinted it eight years later. Christopher Pitt said of Pope's attraction to Spence's critical attention: "I think Mr. Pope discovers a great Spirit of Generosity in the thing; He sees that you deal wth Him as the antient Criticks did with the antient Poets, when...The gen'rous Critick fan'd the Poet's Fire, / And taught the World with Reason to admire." Christopher Pitt to Joseph Spence, undated, 1726/7. Bod MS. Eng. Lett.c.574.

Hupsous, had shown how fostering such critical audacity was a republican duty and a patriotic enterprise from which no friend or patron should be exempt.¹⁸

Finally, Pope had compelling practical reasons for patronizing Dodsley. Any amount of Longinian justification could not clear Pope and his friends from the charge that their critical rhetoric, when directed at governmental corruption, was nothing more than a masquerade of self-interested political opposition, or faction. As such, it came laden with financial and personal insecurities, and Pope realized early that he needed a machine to support his work that could function independent of political patrons. In the wake of the 1709 Copyright Act, then, he constructed an intricate, self-promoting publishing network established upon a set of complicated contractual agreements with booksellers and printers.¹⁹ The former footman, who had been apprenticed to Pope's publisher Lawton Gilliver in 1732, and who now owed his commercial break entirely to Pope, was a useful companion in opposition, and Tully's Head bookshop was intended to supplement this network. Indeed, Pope was keen to expand his tactical options in the mid-1730s since he was well aware that his forthcoming *Essay on Man* would be vigorously attacked, once its author's identity was known, by his enemies and writers who had been parodied by the Scriblerians in the *Dunciad* of 1728. Safely subversive and reliably expendable, Dodsley was a dutiful defender of his patron when the backlash against the *Essay on Man* began. In 1734, he had published two

¹⁸ "Freedom, they say, has the power to foster noble minds and to fill them with high hopes, and at the same time to rouse our spirit of mutual rivalry and eager competition for the foremost place. Moreover, thanks to the prizes which a republic offers, an orator's intellectual gifts are whetted by practice, burnished, so to speak, by friction, and share, as is only natural, the light of freedom which illuminates the state." Longinus, *On the Sublime*, Loeb Classical Library (1995), 301. Against Hume's interpretation of the passage in his essay "Of Civil Liberty," Longinus appears to go on to argue that the decline of sublime art and learning is not related to particular political constitutions, but to the corrupting influence of human passions. Spence is marked out as the candid and generous judge of the Longinian ideal by a contemporary editor of *Peri Hupsous*. See, *Dionysius Longinus on the Sublime: Translated from the Greek, with Notes and Observations, and Some Account of the Life, Writings, and Character of the Author*, trans. William Smith (London, 3rd edition, 1752), 48n14.

¹⁹ Foxon and McLaverty, *Pope and the Early Eighteenth-Century Book Trade*, 47-48.

laudatory poems on Pope's work: *An Epistle to Mr. Pope, Occasion'd by his Essay on Man*, and *The Modern Reasoners*, followed the next year by another, *Beauty, or the Art of Charming*. Now, in the first four years that his business was operational, he published at least eight volumes of his patron's work, on financial terms highly favorable to the author, of course.

Pope's dependence upon his personal publishing network became all the greater in the years following the founding of Tully's Head, when he became more actively involved politically with the network of Patriot opposition writers associated with Bolingbroke. Pope was perhaps attracted by the fact that Patriotism found a powerful patron in the Prince of Wales, who established an "alternative" court at Leicester House in 1737.²⁰ He was also, however, responding to the urgings of a younger group of aristocratic Patriot politicians, "Cobham's Cubs," who had formed around Richard Temple at Stowe some years earlier. Foremost among these was George Lyttelton, who had gained a literary reputation in 1730 for his address *An Epistle to Mr. Pope, from a Young Gentleman at Rome*, penned during a visit to Virgil's tomb in Mantua. In this important poem, Lyttelton had unambiguously tied literary art to political opposition by challenging Pope to "join the Patriot's to the Poet's Praise," turn away from satire, and compose epic verse that would vindicate the cause of the forces ranged against Walpole.²¹ Dodsley, probably for ideological as well as professional

²⁰ "Pope was then [1738] entangled in the Opposition; a follower of the Prince of Wales, who dined at his house, and the friend of many who obstructed and censured the conduct of the Ministers. His political partiality was too plainly shown; he forgot the prudence with which he passed, in his earlier years, uninjured and unoffending, through much more violent conflicts of faction." Samuel Johnson, *Lives of the English Poets. A Selection* (Everyman edition), 365. Johnson was, of course, writing almost forty years after these events, and with an animus against "Patriotism" that owed a great deal to hindsight.

²¹ George Lyttelton, *An Epistle to Mr. Pope, from a Young Gentleman at Rome* (London, 1730), 8. Earlier, the ghost of Virgil has sent this message to Pope: "If mounted high upon the Throne of Wit, / Near Me and Homer thou aspire to sit; / No more let meaner Satire taint thy Bays, / And stain the Glory of thy nobler Lays...." (p. 6). For Lyttelton's political and literary career, see Rose Mary Davis, *The Good Lord Lyttelton: A*

reasons, followed Pope into this political network and, as a result, came into close contact with powerful figures who would leave their own mark on Tully's Head long after Pope had retired, disenchanted, from their circles. Since Pope's contribution to Patriotism, as it was filtered through Dodsley's Tully's Head business, forms the crucial context for Burke's developing understanding of the role of the critic mid-century, it will be worth fleshing out here the broader contours of the Patriot literary and political landscape.

The term "Patriot" was in popular use by 1726, but its origins, for both Bolingbroke and others, stretched back to the Commonwealth tradition of the Restoration period and to what has generally been termed "country" opposition to court venality and self-interest. Writers in this tradition, however, faced a growing problem in the early years of the eighteenth century, as publishing opportunities mushroomed and the identity of the reading public became more broad and amorphous.²² The problem can be stated thus: "How might the critic rouse the spirit of the public against the country's government without appearing to foment social disorder?" The Revolution Settlement that resulted from the crisis of 1688-89 was secured with the accession of George I in 1714; and the defeat of a Jacobite rising the next year, hot on the heels of Dr. Sacheverell's "Church in Danger" campaign and laden with intimations of renewed theological and ecclesiological strife, served to strengthen the hand of the so-called Latitudinarian wing of the Church of England both intellectually, by vindicating their critique of religious enthusiasm and "priest-craft," and practically, by confirming the

Study in Eighteenth-Century Politics and Culture (Bethlehem, PA: Times Publishing Co., 1939), and Christine Gerrard, *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole: Politics, Poetry, and National Myth, 1725-1742* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994). Richard Temple was Lyttelton's uncle. The "Cubs," or "Boy Patriots" also included William Pitt, who was to carry on the Patriot cause in one of its later manifestations.

²² A good, broad and up-to-date survey of research into the expansion of the reading market can be found in James Van Horn Melton, *The Rise of the Public in Enlightenment Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

benefits of doctrinal tolerance within a porous establishmentarianism.²³ The triumph of dynastic Hanoverianism and of moderate Anglicanism reinforced an acceptance of the settlement of 1688-89, upon which conceptual basis “public” discourse could be pursued on the model of Shaftesbury’s “amicable collision” of ideas—that is, by a political elite defined by breeding and taste.²⁴ Furthermore, Walpole’s successful negotiation of the fallout from the South Sea Bubble crisis ushered in a period of relative commercial and economic stability. By 1730, the memories of political discord were sufficiently close to remind people of the consequences of disorder, but sufficiently remote to offer a flattering perspective upon the achievements of the new order. In such a situation, it was hard not to interpret the perpetuation of direct political opposition to Walpole as the attempt of disaffected outsiders to engage disorder in the cause of personal ambition, and, rhetorically, the terms “party” and “opposition” were forced into ever more confined channels of political conversation. Tories might have retained a “party” identity longer than historians once thought; but, after 1715, they did not act independently as such in power-broking negotiations, exerting their influence instead through shifting alliances with Whig factions.²⁵

As Walpole tightened his grip, then, what options were open to the “Patriotic” critic for articulating opposition to the mores and tastes of the contemporary political and social establishment? Answers were sought in Classical parallels. One such option involved cultivating the rhetoric of physical retirement and philosophical detachment, like the

²³ Mark Goldie, “The Roots of True Whiggism, 1688-94,” *History of Political Thought* 1, no. 2 (June 1980), 195-236.

²⁴ The term “amicable collision” is found in, Lord Shaftesbury, *Sensus Communis: An Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour. In a Letter to a Friend* (London, 1709), 8.

²⁵ J.C.D. Clark, *The Dynamics of Change: The Crisis of the 1750s and English Party Systems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). Clark’s work was intended as a corrective to the Namierite interpretation of eighteenth-century politics, adapted most famously by J.H. Plumb in *The Origins of Political Stability in England: 1675-1725* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin: 1967).

enforced exile of Cicero at the end of his life, or the very public withdrawal of the Stoic Thrasea Paetus from the Neronian senate. Another drew on the Catonic ideal popularized by Addison's drama *Cato*, adopting the role of Jeremiah (to mix one's traditions) and awaiting providential vindication of one's martyrdom in the greater cause of the *res publica*. The first-century philosopher-statesman and patrician Helvidius Priscus was an exemplar here in the bold and recklessly noble resistance he led to the ambitions of the socially-inferior Flavians, even in the wake of Vespasian's restoration of social and political order after the disastrous "Year of the Four Emperors." A third strategy involved reconfiguring the relationship between the techniques of detached, objective literary criticism and political and social comment. The tools here had been supplied by the surging interest in Classical criticism that had begun in France in the last decades of the seventeenth century with Boileau's extraordinarily popular translation of Longinus's *Peri Hupsous*, and the works of the Ciceronian Quintilian, whose extensive *Institutio Oratoria* underwent a revival in the first half of the eighteenth century.²⁶ By this template, the constitution of the state and the character of the citizenry was open to analysis as one might render a poem, identifying and praising what is natural, sublime, and spirited in it, and exposing the artificial, the false, the base, and the dull. According to such a method, allegory, metaphor, and analogy might all be deployed, subject to Classical standards of criticism, to expose the formal order of a state as

²⁶ Still useful for tracing the influence of Boileau's Longinus in Britain are Clark, *Boileau and the French Classical Critics in England*; Monk, *The Sublime*; and James T. Boulton's introduction to Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*. See also Richard Macksey, "Longinus Reconsidered," *MLN* 108, no. 5, (December 1993), 913-934; and Ann T. Delehanty, "From Judgment to Sentiment: Changing Theories of the Sublime, 1674-1710," *Modern Language Quarterly*, 66, No. 2 (June 2005), 151-72. Quintilian has been much more poorly served, and his significance to British eighteenth-century criticism is in urgent need of further research. William Guthrie published an edited translation of the *Institutes* in 1756, in which he identifies Quintilian's greatest achievement as restoring the art of simplicity to an art—rhetoric—that had come to "teach Men not how to express, but how to conceal their Thoughts," and associating excellence in that art not only with "a mere Orator, but an honest Statesman and a worthy Patriot." *M. Fabius Quintilianus, His Institutes of Eloquence: or, The Art of Speaking in Public, in every Character and Capacity. Translated into English, after the best Latin Editions, with Notes, Critical and Explanatory, By William Guthrie Esq; In Two Volumes* (London, 1756), 1: x, xxi.

false order, or concealed disorder, and the integrity of literary aesthetics used as a touchstone for perceiving the source of harmony between the natural and the artificial in society. This was a process noted by commentators of Virgil and Horace, whose poetry negotiated the shift from republic to empire by seeking sources of continuing civic vitality in the benign (because orderly) dictatorship of the Julian dynasty, and of Tacitus, whose brisk but profound rhetoric, like a prism placed perfectly over the narrative of the early empire, filtered order from disorder and virtue from vice.

It was the last of these options that informed Lyttelton's urgent request to Pope to unveil a sublime Patriot literature for those who were "Dauntless Opposers of Tyrannick Sway, / But pleas'd a mild Augustus to obey."²⁷ In coupling political and civic vigilance with poetic excellence, Lyttelton was not only drawing upon Virgilian and Horatian precedents, but he was promoting the versification of his and Pope's intellectual mentor, Bolingbroke, in epic form.²⁸ From the lofty enforced exile in France between 1715 and 1725, when Bolingbroke fashioned himself as a philosopher and historian, to the combination of retired statesman-farmer and prophetic journalist when he issued the *Craftsman* from his estate at Dawley in 1726, it was Bolingbroke who epitomized the Patriot for many influential young politicians.²⁹ And it was Bolingbroke's Maecenean sense of the artistic duties of the

²⁷ Lyttelton, *Epistle*, 7. For the relationship between rhetoric and order in this period, see Frans de Bruyn, "Burke and the uses of eloquence: political prose in the 1770s and 1780s," in *The Cambridge History of English Literature, 1660-1780*, ed. John Richetti (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 773.

²⁸ See Christine Gerrard, *Patriot Opposition to Walpole*, chapter 1, with its appropriate corrective to Isaac Kramnick's perception of Bolingbroke's thought as the politics of nostalgia. See also Reed Browning, *Political and Constitutional Ideas of the Court Whigs* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), where the Catonic tradition of opposition to tyranny is compared judiciously with the Ciceronian in late-seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century England. For "radical" Whig thought linking political opposition during the Exclusion crisis to early-eighteenth-century critiques of government, see Mark Goldie, "Roots of True Whiggism," 195-236. But note also J.C.D. Clark's observations on the use of the term "radical" in the context of the eighteenth century, *Our Shadowed Present*, 110-114.

philosopher statesman that explains his assiduous, lengthy, and intimate patronizing of Pope, a relationship that began some time around 1710 and, as we have seen, reached a peak of intellectual cooperation in the 1730s.³⁰

The pivotal moment in that relationship was the publication of Pope's *Essay on Man*, which appears to have grown directly out of Bolingbroke's philosophical correspondence and conversation and, as such, might be considered the first fruits of Lyttelton's appeal for a Patriot successor to Virgil who could give sublime voice to the people in an act of national enlightenment.³¹ The *Essay* aimed to bring within the compass of its audience a philosophical expression of order against which the superficial order, the dullness, of the existing regime could be judged and condemned. In the *Craftsman*, disorder appears through material corruption, venality, and a moral surrender to the enticements of security and placement; but it is also exposed historically and philosophically as the artificial order that a succession of hierarchies has systematically foisted on an unsuspecting or indolent mob through superstition and enthusiasm. Pope conveys the same message in his *Essay* in a more aesthetic and literary form. Both writers intend to teach their compatriots how to recognize true order by leading them to a discovery of their natural selves—and from there to become citizens of *Britannia Prisca*.

²⁹ For the significance of the influence of French thought on Bolingbroke's intellectual works, see Rex A. Barrell, *Bolingbroke and France* (Lanham, NY: University Press of America, 1988). The roots of Bolingbroke's historiographical ideas are discussed in David Womersley, "Lord Bolingbroke and Eighteenth-Century Historiography," *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Practice* 28, no. 3 (1987). See also Folke Nibelius, *Lord Bolingbroke (1678-1751) and History: A Comparative Study of Bolingbroke's Politico-Historical Works and a Selection of Contemporary Texts as to Themes and Vocabulary*. Stockholm Studies in History of Literature, no. 47 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2003.)

³⁰ For an argument highlighting the intimacy of the intellectual relationship between the two, especially in the 1730s, see Brean Hammond, *Pope and Bolingbroke: A Study of Friendship and Influence* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1984).

³¹ The *Essay on Man* was dedicated to Bolingbroke and opens with the words: "Awake, my St. John!"

But as the *Essay* was the pinnacle of Pope's collaboration with Bolingbroke, so it also contributed to the decline of their relationship and to a significant reconsideration by the poet of his Patriot duty. In 1739, Dodsley was briefly imprisoned for publishing Paul Whitehead's *Manners: A Satire*, which had been judged treasonous by the House of Lords. Many years later, Johnson aired the opinion that Dodsley had been brought to book "rather to intimidate Pope than to punish Whitehead."³² If he was correct, it was a highly successful tactic on the government's part. Pope withdrew from the vanguard of Patriot opposition, professing his disenchantment with the movement in his poem *Seventeen Hundred and Forty*. In all likelihood, his concerns about the governmental backlash launched that year were aggravated by assaults on the religious content of the *Essay on Man*, most notably the Swiss philosopher and theologian Jean-Pierre de Crousaz. As a result, he not only removed himself from overt political activity but also briskly struck up a friendship with the churchman William Warburton, who had defended the orthodoxy of the poem and who was, in many ways, the antithesis of Bolingbroke.³³ This shift in affections did not mean that Pope abandoned Lyttelton's challenge; but he did alter his tactics, heightening the uncertainty within Patriot circles about the most appropriate method of communicating the spirit of criticism in defense of natural order.

If anything, Walpole's eventual fall in 1742 helped to heighten that uncertainty. True, the doors of patronage were now opened to Patriots, but the rhetoric of triumph was soon complicated by the disappointments that came with the administration of the former

³² Johnson, *Lives of the Poets*, 366.

³³ Warburton, who had earlier criticized Pope's lack of genius in a private letter, first defended the *Essay on Man* against de Crousaz in *The History of the Works of the Learned, for the Year One Thousand Seven Hundred and Thirty-eight*, vol. 2 (London, 1739), 425-36. This defense was then expanded into *A Vindication of Mr. Pope's Essay on Man, from the Misrepresentations of Mr De Crousaz* (London, 1740).

Patriot Whigs Carteret and Pulteney. Parliamentary investigations into charges of corruption against Walpole were restricted or obstructed to such a degree that the new ministers came under suspicion of venality themselves. Foreign policy, given a temporary lift by the British victory at Dettingen in 1743, was soon bogged down in inconclusive diplomacy. Then the French triumph at Fontenoy, in May 1745, opened the way for Charles Stuart's Jacobite rebellion and his alarming victory at Prestonpans four months later.

It would be hard to overestimate the shock delivered to the British ruling elites by the "Forty Five," and the Young Pretender's advance to Derby the following year. The composition of the rival armies shows that this was not a crisis between nations and nationalities but a civil war, and, as such, it was potentially all the more easily transported into England. The underlying fragility of the new British order, sealed by the union of the crowns of England and Scotland in 1707, was revealed at just the time when Patriot propaganda appeared to have triumphed. Furthermore, the sporadic recurrence of popular disturbances, such as those over the Westminster election of 1749 and the Jew Bill debates of 1751-53, was an uncomfortable reminder of the volatile nature of the rhetoric of criticism when deployed among an increasingly broad and diverse readership. The footmen's protests, it seemed, were no longer contained within the theaters, and the consumers of journalistic fare were no longer confined to Shaftesbury's elite, engaged in polite and rational discourse.³⁴ *Britannia Prisca* was starting to appear as elusive as ever.

³⁴ See Lawrence Klein, "Shaftesbury, politeness and the politics of religion," in *Political Discourse in Early Modern Britain*, ed. Nicholas Phillipson and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 283-301. Paul Langford argues that the debates over the Jew Bill drew together "popular, patriotic, xenophobic Whiggism, and High Church Toryism." See, *A Polite and Commercial People* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 224,

II: Pope's Legacy

When he died, in 1744, Pope did not bequeath to Robert Dodsley the lucrative copyrights for either his published or manuscript materials, which went to William Warburton and Lord Bolingbroke respectively. He did, however, leave Dodsley what amounted, in the long run, to a rather more weighty legacy—one that was both personal and intellectual and centered upon the network of friends and projects that surrounded him in his last years. Dodsley, for his part, was well positioned to take advantage of the uncertainties and opportunities that Pope's association with Patriotism had helped to fuel, and he nurtured his patron's legacy masterfully, weaving it into a reformation of the Patriot literature of the Republic of Letters that simultaneously honored and transcended his patron's achievements. Since it is impossible to understand Burke's early writings independent of the dynamics of this reformation, we need to consider: first, the salient features of the Tully's Head business that made such a process of reformation feasible; second, the specifics of the personal and intellectual aspects of Pope's legacy; finally, the practical results of the incorporation of that legacy on Dodsley's publishing lists and commercial projects, and on his own writings.

By 1744, Dodsley had already emerged as one of the most prosperous and well-connected booksellers in the country, and he continued to fashion an image of his business that combined respectability with dynamism and innovation. To start with, the physical quality of Tully's Head as a meeting place of writers, with its spatial relationship to the coffee-house origins of the British Republic of Letters, formed an important aspect of the bookseller's professional identity. While the coffeehouse, like Dodsley himself, had in some ways signified the ambiguous quality of social fluidity and accessibility, coffeehouse owners

had also been keen to represent their businesses as bastions of a deeper order, and it was this that ultimately helped to define their critical function. Brian Cowan has argued persuasively and perceptively that the coffeehouse itself, with all that it meant to the identity of the Republic of Letters, did not develop “in complete opposition to the existing structures of late seventeenth-century government,” but, “[i]n most cases the coffeehouses of London fit smoothly into the various layers of ward, parish and vestry, civic community, and state governments.”³⁵ Perhaps in violation of our modern-day expectations, which we draw from an environment where order is the norm, markets in the eighteenth century, including the market of ideas, worked to reinforce the sense of commitment to an existing moral order, and Dodsley was similarly careful to couple his own innovative commercial skills with the expected norms of respectability. He was a vigorous member of the Royal Society, and presented an image as the “vir honestus” of his trade with a degree of success that even the most industrious of scholars have not been able to tarnish.

This image was bolstered by the *modus operandi* at Tully’s Head, where, from at least the later years of the 1740s, Dodsley presided over a suitably impressive gathering of established and aspiring literary figures. Samuel Johnson was moved at one point to remark that, “The true Noctes Atticae are revived at honest Dodsley’s house,” and there are other illuminating incidental references to Dodsley’s commercial salon at work.³⁶ James Boswell mentions a brain-storming session, some time before 1753, in which Dodsley, Joseph Warton, Edward Moore “and several of [Dodsley’s] friends” attempted (unsuccessfully) to agree upon a title for the periodical that was later to become *The World*. In one of his own

³⁵ Brian Cowan, “The Rise of the Coffeehouse Reconsidered,” *Historical Journal* 47, no. 1 (2004), 21-46.

³⁶ Quoted in Tierney, *Correspondence of Robert Dodsley*, 19.

surviving letters, Dodsley throws out a casual reference to a dinner he held in January 1758 comprising “no less than a round dozen” literary companions (of whom he names, among others, Joseph and Thomas Warton, Joseph Spence, David Garrick and Edmund Burke). Such esprit de corps spilled outside the confines of the bookshop, too. The actress George Bellamy recalls in her memoirs how, at Covent Garden later in 1758, “All Mr. Dodsley’s friends, who were numerous, attended the rehearsal of his piece [the tragedy *Cleone*]; particularly the literati.”³⁷ The results of such social and professional collaboration can clearly be seen in the quality of the works that emerged from Tully’s Head—journals such as *The Museum*, for example, which was edited by the Shaftesburian, political radical and deistic Mark Akenside and lasted 39 numbers, and a string of anthologies and educational texts, including the *Collection of Poems* and *The Preceptor*, and specific collaborative publications such as Joseph Warton’s edition of Virgil’s *Works* (1753) and his *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope* (1756).³⁸

Fundamental to this fraternal system was Dodsley’s clutch of journalistic investments, which delivered a regular publishing profile alongside lucrative financial returns. Advertisements and astutely placed news items stimulated increased sales and profits, and contributed articles and poems could also provide cheap material for later anthologies and collections. By the time Dodsley set up business in 1735, Edward Cave’s

³⁷ Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, 144n1; Tierney, *Correspondence*, 330; George Anne Bellamy, *An Apology for the Life of George Anne Bellamy*, 5 vols. (London, 1783-85), 3:106. This latter expression of solidarity was all the more striking given that *Cleone* had been the cause of an acrimonious breach in the friendship between Dodsley and Garrick, when the latter had refused to perform it at his own theater in Drury Lane.

³⁸ James E. Tierney, “*The Museum*, the ‘Super-Excellent Magazine’,” in *Studies in English Literature*, 13 (1973), 503-515; Courtney, *Dodsley’s Collection of Poetry*, and Suarez, introduction to Dodsley, *Collection of Poems*, 6. This last publication, in all likelihood a follow-up to the closure of *The Museum*, contained 85% “in-house” sources, suggesting a smart off-loading of a backlog of poetic material, but also, as Suarez has termed it, a “fluid” tribute to the influence of Pope. See James Tierney, “Robert Dodsley: The First Printer and Stationer to the Society,” *Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacture and Commerce Journal* CXXXI (July-August 1983), 481.

Gentleman's Magazine was selling at the rate of 10,000 issues a month and successfully fighting off frantic competition from rival booksellers. Despite early set-backs, Dodsley achieved signal successes after Pope's death with quality journals designed to inspire the market with a taste for the principles of true, Popeian criticism. Besides their sheer commercial value, *The Museum: or, the Literary and Historical Register* (1746-47), the *London Magazine* (1748), *The World* (1753-56) and the *Annual Register* (1758-), revealed, in their consciously Classical and Addisonian style of criticism, that their owner was a bookseller diligently striving against the debasement of publishing sketched in *The Dunciad*. While the empire of Dullness spread unrelentingly westward from Grub Street to the centers of polite and political society (an appropriate parallel, perhaps, to Troy's removal west to Latium), Dodsley remained ensconced in his lofty perch in Pall Mall, the antithesis to Edmund Curll, that unscrupulous book pirate and peddler of pornography who had been pilloried in Pope's and Swift's satires.

With such a carefully crafted public image, Dodsley was ready to absorb and utilize Pope's twofold legacy. The personal dimension of that legacy comprised an existing network of friends that extended from statesman-aristocrats to Anglican intellectuals. These included, in particular, two pillars of the Leicester House opposition, Philip Dormer Stanhope, 4th Earl of Chesterfield, and Sir George Lyttelton himself. Both had come forward to stand Dodsley's fine when he was imprisoned over the Whitehead affair in 1739. Chesterfield had, indeed, been singled out for praise by Whitehead—"Abroad the Guardian of his Country's Cause; / At Home a *Tully* to defend her Laws"—and he was destined to achieve his greatest political success as lord lieutenant of Ireland, when he presided over a

quiescent Irish Catholic population in the tense months of the “Forty Five.”³⁹ Besides his own literary contributions to Dodsley’s journals the *Publick Register* (1741) and *The World* (1753-56), his continuing patronage of Dodsley’s work was important in delivering George II’s support for the bookseller’s educational venture *The Preceptor*, in 1748, and in arranging for the staging of Dodsley’s own dramatic tragedy, *Cleone*, a decade later.

Lyttelton’s career, however, illuminates even better the trajectory of Dodsley’s own in the years following Pope’s death.⁴⁰ A member of the Prince of Wales’ circle until the prince’s death in 1751, and a minister under Newcastle in the mid-1750s, Lyttelton had been Dodsley’s patron as early as 1737, when the relationship is mentioned in the *Daily Gazetteer*. His deep attachment to the ideas of Bolingbroke can be seen in his early writings. These include: his *Epistle to Mr. Pope*; an unpublished essay on the reign of Queen Elizabeth, written in 1733 and built upon a parallel between Walpole and Burleigh; *Observations on the Life of Cicero* (c.1733); *Letters from a Persian in England to his Friend at Ispahan* (1735), a Montesquieuian critique of the constitution; and *Considerations upon the Present State of Affairs*, a bellicose political tract dating from 1739. Shortly after Pope’s death, however, Lyttelton appears to have undergone a religious awakening from his earlier deism, perhaps under the influence of his cousin Gilbert West, a poet and Biblical scholar. In 1747 he published a theological tract, *Observations on the Conversion and Apostleship of St. Paul*, which Samuel Johnson judged beyond the counterarguments of “infidelity.” He contributed to Tully’s Head as an author and literary adviser, both on projects such as the *Collection of*

³⁹ Paul Whitehead, *Manners: A Satire* (London, 1739), 9. Chesterfield held the lord lieutenantancy from 1744 to 1746, before embarking on an unhappy period as secretary of state with Newcastle.

⁴⁰ Tierney is hardly exaggerating when he suggests that “Dodsley’s allegiance to the government followed the fortunes of Lyttelton’s career.” *Correspondence*, 21. For Lyttelton’s political and literary career, see Rose Mary Davis, *The Good Lord Lyttelton: A Study in Eighteenth-Century Politics and Culture* (Bethlehem, PA: Times Publishing Co., 1939), and Christine Gerrard, *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole: Politics, Poetry, and National Myth, 1725-1742* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

Poems and on Dodsley's own writings, helped found the journal *The World* in 1753, and was the recipient of an extensive and interesting dedication penned by Joseph Warton in his four-volume edition of *The Works of Virgil*, which appeared the same year.⁴¹ Through Lyttelton, Dodsley also struck up a very productive relationship with the reclusive William Shenstone, who furnished a number of local literary connections from his estate at the Leasowes near Birmingham. But perhaps the lord's greatest practical use came at the cresting of his own political career in 1755, when he was appointed lord of the Treasury by Newcastle, and appears to have provided Dodsley with franking privileges. He was, all in all, a crucial figure at that juncture of literature, politics and patronage which formed the intellectual nexus of Tully's Head and its commercial procedures.

At the same time, Pope's less public network of friends provided Dodsley with an equally useful pool of scholarly writers. Foremost here was the Anglican minister Joseph Spence, who had known Pope for the last seventeen years of his life and whose observations on the art of criticism in the Republic of Letters has been mentioned above. Spence proved an excellent resource for talented writers and translators drawn, in large part, from his old school, Winchester, and through his connections as professor of poetry, and later regius professor of modern history, at Oxford. These scholars included Christopher Pitt, the translator of Virgil and great-nephew of William Pitt, the Hebrew scholar Robert Lowth, William Whitehead, who was to be appointed poet laureate in 1757, the clerical scholar-poets Joseph Warton and Gloucester Ridley, who all attended Winchester School, and a host of minor poets who contributed to Dodsley's cash-cow periodicals and anthologies of verse.⁴²

⁴¹ Tierney, *Correspondence*, 162, 175, 344.

⁴² Courtney, *Dodsley's Collection of Poetry*, 2-3.

This was a rich legacy of talent through which Tully's Head could attempt to forge a reconfiguration of Patriot literature for a new market, and for a rising generation of critics, by asking where Pope should be ranked in the pantheon of poetic geniuses. It was a task that Dodsley exploited, and made distinctively popular, through his promotion of poetic and dramatic anthologies and literary histories. These not only provided Pope's own work with a rich historical context, but also served to situate him within an apostolic succession of English poets that included Spenser and Milton, and, by so doing, to raise the question of how far Pope was worthy of such an honor. Was he truly, as Warburton contended, the last of this illustrious line, or had he ultimately failed to reach the destiny toward which George Lyttelton had urged him—that of assuming the mantle of Britain's epic poet for the new age.⁴³

This was an open-ended, canonical, polemical, and Patriotic, venture; but precisely *because* it drew upon the personal nature of Pope's legacy, it contained hidden dangers for Dodsley. Not least, in profiting from the critical evaluation of Pope's genius, he risked the charge of ingratitude and *lèse majesté* from some of the poet's influential friends, a charge all the sharper for an *arriviste* like Dodsley. Indeed, wishing to justify his decision to keep Dodsley out of a share in the copyright of Pope's published works in 1755, William Warburton was to resort to just such a tactic, accusing him haughtily of not having been "very regardful of the memory of a man to whom you was so much obliged."⁴⁴ Dodsley

⁴³ See, Solomon, *Rise of Robert Dodsley*, chapter 4, for the author's apposite reference to Dodsley's process of "creating canons."

⁴⁴ Warburton to Dodsley, December 26, 1755, in Tierney, *Correspondence*, 212. Warburton was being disingenuous here, as Dodsley observed in a draft reply, since nothing Tully's Head had published approached the level of disrespect that had come from publishers Warburton was happy to favor. The strained relations between Dodsley and Warburton can be followed in Donald W. Nichol, *Pope's Literary Legacy: The Book-*

attempted to negotiate this danger by channeling potentially sensitive material through the bookshop of Mary Cooper in Paternoster Row, and it is significant that Joseph Warton's measured, academic *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope* carried Cooper's name. Even then, we find Dodsley writing to the author in 1755, "I dare say you will contrive in your *Animadversions* to allow [Pope] all his due praise; and where you differ from him will do it in such a manner as to render it no impropriety in me to be the Publisher of it."⁴⁵ Cooper, a retailer rather than wholesaler, carried more popular and polemical tracts than Tully's Head, and coordinated her stock closely with newspaper advertising. Through her, Dodsley could manipulate and modulate discussion on Pope and his personal friends from a number of angles while maintaining the impression of prudent detachment. It is therefore somewhat ironic that Warburton's wrath was fired more by publications he erroneously believed Dodsley had an interest in, than by those, such as Thomas Warton's *Observations on the Faerie Queene of Spenser* (1754), that offended his academic judgment but carried the Tully's Head imprint openly.

However astute a businessman Dodsley proved to be, however savvy a player of the market, we must remember that we can only gain a complete picture of the impact of Pope's legacy upon Tully's Head if we view him also as one of the literati himself, not least since developments evident in the publishing lists and projects of Tully's Head can also be traced in Dodsley's own literary writings during the 1740s. This brings us to the intellectual dimension of Pope's legacy to Dodsley. This arises from three important aspects of Pope's

Trade Correspondence of William Warburton and John Knapton, with other letters and documents, 1744-1780 (Oxford: Oxford Bibliographical Society, 1992), 46-47, 118-123.

⁴⁵ Dodsley to Warton, dated January 18, 1755, in Tierney, *Correspondence*, 190. Mary Cooper's business operations are examined by Beverly Schneller, "Using Newspaper Advertisements to Study the Book Trade: A Year in the Life of Mary Cooper," in *Writers, Books, and Trade: An Eighteenth-Century English Miscellany for William B. Todd*, ed. O.M. Brack, Jr. (New York: AMS Press, 1994), 123-44. Dodsley had also considered getting Millar to publish the book.

career that were prominent in the last four years of his life, when he was detaching himself from political opposition but still fashioning a response to Lyttelton's challenge. They include: Pope's plans to write an epic poem on the subject of Brutus; the growing breach between two of Pope's closest confidants, Lord Bolingbroke and William Warburton; and the powerful but generally unstated influence of another of those confidants, Joseph Spence, on the poet's understanding of the use of allegory in conveying religious and political truths.

Pope's treatment of the story of Brutus, the mythical founder of Britain whose arrival from Troy was related in the medieval chronicles of Geoffrey of Monmouth, was intended to form the third book of a four-part "Essay on Man," which was itself an ambitious expansion of the original poem of that title.⁴⁶ "Brutus" would develop the theme treated in the third book of the *Essay*, which Pope himself summarized as, "Civil Regimen, or the Science of Politics, in which the several forms of a Republic were to have been examined and explained; together with the several Modes of Religious Worship, as far forth as they affect Society; between which the author always supposed there was the most interesting relation and closest connection."⁴⁷ The most detailed plan for the project is to be found in Owen Ruffhead's 1769 biography of Pope. Ruffhead relied heavily upon material supplied by his patron, Warburton, and appears to have had access to an original draft of Pope's that is now lost. Though Pope told Joseph Spence shortly before his death that his epic was "planned already," we have virtually nothing in the poet's own hand but a brief sketch of the work, and it is not therefore possible to be sure whether or how far Ruffhead or Warburton embellished

⁴⁶ For an explanation of the plan of "Brutus" and its connection to Pope's other writings, see Donald T. Torchiana, "Brutus: Pope's Last Hero," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 61, (1962), 853-67.

⁴⁷ [William Warburton], "Advertisement" to the *Epistles to Several Persons*, the so-called "death-bed" edition of Pope's *Moral Essays*, which was intended for publication in 1744 but was suppressed and burned on the advice of Bolingbroke. The full text of Warburton's "Advertisement" can be found in Alexander Pope, *Epistles to Several Persons (Moral Essays)*, ed. F.W. Bateson (London: Methuen & Co., 1951), xviii-xx.

Pope's original.⁴⁸ Johnson records that the executors of Pope's unpublished writings—that is, Bolingbroke—burned them on his death, probably out of disapproval of its contents.

What can we deduce from the fragments of the “Brutus” project that we do have to hand? Brutus, driven by the ruling passion of benevolence and by the affirmation of Hercules, who visits him in a dream, sets out to redeem the remnants of the Trojans by journeying West to establish an uncorrupted society devoted to “freedom and felicity on a just form of Civil Government” and ruled according to manners, “true religion,” and the “useful arts.” In his wanderings toward his new Troy, the hero's understanding of government is deepened by reflection upon the fate of his homeland, and by his wanderings in Greece and Rome, while his knowledge of true religion is awakened by a sojourn in Egypt, where he “learned the unity of the Deity, and the other purer doctrines, afterwards kept up in the mysteries.”⁴⁹ Fortified by these principles and driven by his ruling passion, benevolence, he finds in the island of Britain a promising environment for his redemptive plan, with ideal climate, mild inhabitants, and “ye Druids Doctrine tending to a nobler Religion, & better Morall suited to His Purposes.”⁵⁰ First, though, he must secure the native population from the encircling threats of priest-craft, tyranny, and anarchy, before “ye whole Island submits to good Government wch ends ye Poem.”

The picture we are given of a salvific “Patriot” king from over the water presents an implied contrast to the sovereign from Hanover who presides over the kingdom of Dullness

⁴⁸ Joseph Spence, *Observations, Anecdotes and Characters of Books and Men*, 2 vols. , edited by James M. Osborn (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1966), no. 302, 1:134; Owen Ruffhead, *The Life of Alexander Pope, Esq.* (London, 1769), 2: 75-84. For a consideration of the lost draft from which Ruffhead appears to have worked, see Miriam Leranbaum, *Alexander Pope's 'Opus Magnum,' 1729-1744* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 155-74.

⁴⁹ Spence, *Anecdotes*, no. 343, 1:153.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Torchiana, “Brutus,” 855.

in *The Dunciad*. To that extent, and in its treatment of the threat of priest-craft to felicity and true religion, “Brutus” is clearly in keeping with the dominant themes of Lord Bolingbroke’s writings. Important aspects of the project, however, are suggestive of a significant shift of emphasis, not least in the choice of epic poetry itself as the medium of communication—a medium that Pope had up to that point preferred to employ as a vehicle of ridicule in the tradition of Boileau’s highly popular *Le Lutrin*. Now, apparently, Pope had decided that the treatment of man in his social, political, and religious capacity might, in Warburton’s words, “be best executed in an EPIC POEM; as the Action would make it more animated, and the Fable less invidious; in which all the great Principles of true and false Governments and Religions should be chiefly delivered in feigned examples.”⁵¹ Owen Ruffhead’s extended version of the original “Brutus” draft, and marginal comments from Pope’s own notes, show the elaboration of a travel narrative in which good and evil contend over the human passions, which are exemplified in different character types in a way that draws strongly from Spenser and Tasso. As Miriam Leranbaum has pointed out, “The creation of multiple points of view relieves Pope of the need to impose his ‘moral’ from without; instead he can weave it into the very fabric of the epic story.”⁵² This strategy highlights an important stage in the recovery of allegorical writing as supportive of the principles of truth, nature, and simplicity, rather than as a device of esoteric obfuscation. This marks a significant shift from the critical method of Shaftesbury and Bolingbroke, who believed that truth in the simplicity of its first principles could be apprehended only through the application of philosophical skepticism and empirical reasoning. Pope’s “Brutus” appeared destined to invert those pillars of Patriot rhetoric.

⁵¹ Warburton’s introduction to the “death-bed” edition of the *Epistles to Several Persons* (London, 1744).

⁵² Leranbaum, *Pope’s ‘Opus Magnum,’* 168.

Furthermore, in embracing blank verse as the style of communication—that is, poetry released from the “gothick shackles of rhyme”—“Brutus” also signifies Pope’s acceptance of a Miltonic legacy that had previously been associated, in its sublime imagery, with the political upheavals of the seventeenth century and with the ludicrous imitations of the style pilloried in *Peri Bathous* (1728). In a conversation with Spence in 1739, Pope had argued that the high-style of blank verse required “strange out-of-the-world things” and could not support itself “unless it be stiffened with such strange words as are like to destroy our language itself.” By 1741, he had been persuaded, perhaps by Spence’s own dislike of rhyme, to use that very “high-style” in facing Lyttelton’s latest challenge to “draw something like History out of the Rubbish of Monkish Annals” and “out of these Gothick Ruins, such as they are, Raise a new Edifice, that would be fitt to Enshrine the Greatest of our English Kings, and Last to Eternity.”⁵³ Remarkable also is Pope’s willingness to grapple with the “Rubbish of Monkish Annals,” since it contrasts starkly with his earlier criticism of Aaron Thompson’s translation of Geoffrey of Monmouth, with its stated goal of popularizing “that Heroick Beginning which this History ascribes to the British Nation...”⁵⁴ The allegorical mode was essential to any such endeavor, since only it could convey the underlying order and universality of human nature through the particularities of historical circumstances and bridge the historical gap that separated the truths buried in the “Monkish Annals” from the direct experience of readers in the cosmopolitan world of eighteenth-century Britain.

The central points at issue here are perhaps best illustrated in the way that Brutus’s devotion to “true religion” is presented in the draft of the poem. Natural in its simplicity, its

⁵³ Quoted in Torchiana, “Brutus,” 857. Lyttelton himself was setting to work at this time on a history of the reign of Henry II.

⁵⁴ Aaron Thompson, *The British History. Translated into English from the Latin of Jeffrey of Monmouth* (London, 1718), ix.

monotheism, and its practical emphasis on benevolence, “true religion” involves a syncretic approach to ancient religious practice, and to druidic rituals in particular, that was popular in historical and theological works of the time. Egypt is the source of the mysteries of “true religion,” as it is also the birthplace of the priestly class; but the benign intervention of Providence, or the hand of God, in Brutus’s travels—again presented syncretically in the form of Hercules and of angels—satisfies us that Brutus’s induction into the Egyptian mysteries was religious in the fullest sense, and not an initiation into an esoteric, secularized philosophical naturalism—the suspicion that dogged deists such as Bolingbroke himself.⁵⁵ Brutus “prays to God” when faced with incomprehensible perils such as hurricanes and volcanoes, and God “answers by sending a guardian angel who explains the phenomena, and directs him to the south-west parts of England.”⁵⁶ In Pope’s allegorical rendition, then, *theologia prisca*, as understood and upheld by Brutus, actually exposes the dangers of associating “true religion” with “natural philosophy” and of secularizing or dismissing the realm of the providential. In so doing, “Brutus” reinforces Pope’s sensitivity about questions over the orthodoxy of his *Essay on Man* and, therefore, fuels the rivalry between Warburton and Bolingbroke. It is this rivalry, and more particularly Warburton’s ascendancy, that forms the second of the defining themes of Pope’s intellectual legacy to Dodsley and Tully’s Head.

William Warburton’s rise in the circles of Pope’s friends was astonishingly swift, but its significance has largely been confined by commentators to Warburton’s editorial influence over Pope’s literary legacy—an influence generally regarded as intrusive and

⁵⁵ “Pope [was much] shocked at overhearing Warburton and Hooke talking of Lord Bolingbroke’s not believing the moral attributes of God disbelief of the moral attributes of God. ‘You must be mistaken,’ [he said]. Pope afterwards talked with Lord Bolingbroke about it; he denied all, and Pope told his friends of it with great joy, and said, ‘I told you you must be mistaken.’” Spence, *Anecdotes*, 1:127.

⁵⁶ From the Edgerton manuscript, quoted in Laranbaum, *op. cit.*, 162.

negative.⁵⁷ Pope had diligently patronized this assertive autodidact after the latter's *Vindication of Mr. Pope's Essay on Man* "Christianized" a work pronounced atheistic by de Crousaz, and whether through genuine admiration or professional calculation, the poet was prepared to go on record as judging Warburton "the greatest general critic I ever knew."⁵⁸ In 1740, most likely through Pope's influence, Warburton was appointed chaplain to Frederick, Prince of Wales.⁵⁹ Within months he had become a rival to Bolingbroke and a check on the latter's deistic and philosophical influences on Pope. His intellectual ascendancy appears emphatically in the shaping of the new version of *The Dunciad*, which appeared in 1742, and he made a significant contribution—as "Ricardus Aristarchus of the Hero of the Poem"—to the *Dunciad in Four Books*, which was published by Mary Cooper in 1743. Warburton's first acclaimed work had been *The Alliance between Church and State, or, The Necessity and Equity of an Established Religion and a Test-law demonstrated, from the Essence and End of Civil Society, upon the fundamental Principles of the Law of Nature and Nations* (1736), a spirited argument, *post hoc facto*, that Britons enjoyed, "under our present happy

⁵⁷ Mack states that Warburton "occasionally abused [his editorial responsibility by] inserting notes in later *Dunciad* editions to pay off personal scores." Maynard Mack, *Alexander Pope. A Life*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1985), 745. F.W. Bateson's editorial comment that he intended "to relieve the poems as far as possible from the load of Warburtonian incrustation" is typical. Alexander Pope, *Epistles to Several Persons (Moral Essays)*, ed. F.W. Bateson (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1951), xvii.

⁵⁸ Spence, *Anecdotes*, 1:217. The conversation took place in August 1742.

⁵⁹ William Stukeley offered the following succinct and laconic description of Warburton's rise: "He wrote a treatise against Mr. Pope's essay on man, to prove it to be atheism, spinosaism, deism, hobbism, fatalism, materialism, & what not. In that my sentiments fully coincided. On a sudden he alter'd his style, & wrote a comment to prove the sublimity of that work. This did his business effectually. It brought him acquainted with Pope. Pope brought him acquainted with Ld. Chesterfield, Bathurst, Burlington, Mr. Solicitor Murray, &c., & this last got him to be preacher to Lincolns inn. Mr. Pope introduc'd him too to Mr. Allen of Bath, with whom he is become so great that Allen has married his niece to him, & effectually made his fortune." *The Family Memoirs of the Rev. William Stukeley, M.D. and the Antiquarian and other Correspondence of William Stukeley, Roger & Samuel Gale, etc.* publication of the Surtees Society, vol. LXXIII, LXXVI, or LXXX (Durham, 1882), 127-28. For Warburton's influence on the 1743 *Dunciad in Four Books*, see Valerie Rumbold, "Milton's Epic and Pope's Satyr Play: *Paradise Lost* in *The Dunciad in Four Books*," *Milton Quarterly* 38, no. 3 (October 2004), 139-62; and Robert O. Rogers, *The Major Satires of Alexander Pope* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1955), especially chapter 5.

Constitution in Church and State...an Established Church with a free Toleration, by the medium of a Test Law.”⁶⁰ In his *Divine Legation of Moses* (1738-41), Warburton took up his cudgel against deists and “free-thinkers” such as Spinoza, Collins, and Toland, whose works, he argued, were pernicious and socially corrosive because they drove a wedge between philosophical method and faith, and aspired to undermine the providential authority of the Old Testament prophets and lawgivers such as Moses. The historical thrust of these deistical views, as Warburton considered them, was that the Old Testament Jewish dispensation had been superseded (rather than transformed) by the teachings (rather than the resurrection) of Christ, which had then become instantiated in, and perverted by, a new clerical power structure. While staunchly anti-Catholic and hardly a rigid dogmatist, Warburton saw this perspective as dangerously secular in its understanding of “natural” religion, philosophically hubristic in its arrogant rejection of the “unnatural” intervention of providence, and destructive of order in its over-zealous critique of the clergy and church establishment. According to Warburton, Pope, in his *Essay on Man*, had given “direct Answers to those Objections which libertine Men, on a View of the Disorders arising from the Perversity of the human Will, have intended against Providence: And...obviates all those Objections, by a true Delineation of human Nature, or a general but exact Map of Man; which these Objectors either not knowing, or mistaking, or else leaving (for the mad Pursuit of metaphysical Entities) have lost and bewildered themselves in a thousand foolish Complaints against Providence.”⁶¹ The problem of “natural” religion here, as understood by Shaftesbury, Bolingbroke and their disciples, was that it was unnatural. It was therefore also an entirely

⁶⁰ William Warburton, *A View of Lord Bolingbroke’s Philosophy; in Four Letters to a Friend. Letter the Fourth and Last* (London, 1755), 85.

⁶¹ Warburton, “A Commentary on Mr. Pope’s *Essay on Man*,” in *Works of the Rt. Rev. William Warburton*, ed. Richard Hurd (London, 1788), 6:31.

unsuitable basis upon which to build an oppositional or Patriot critique of society. In this, Warburton's insights provide an interesting foretaste of Burke's ironic vindication of natural *society* later.⁶²

While Warburton's arrogant polemical style and intellectual hubris have severely dented his intellectual reputation over time, there is much to admire in his critical method, which ranged far beyond his defense of "true religion" and providence.⁶³ In particular, he was an important figure in moves to reassess Lord Shaftesbury's legacy to natural philosophy, pointedly claiming after the poet's death that Pope had "told me, that to his knowledge, the *Characteristicks* had done more harm to Revealed Religion in England than all the works of Infidelity put together."⁶⁴ In his pointed dedication to Free-thinkers at the beginning of his *Divine Legation*, Warburton defends John Locke against the criticisms and personal slights of Shaftesbury, who had sneered at Locke's belief in the afterlife as confided by Locke to his friend Collins shortly before his death. This dishonorable behavior Warburton attributes to Shaftesbury's desperate attempt to defend his concept of a moral sense against Locke's refutation of innate ideas: "In vain did Mr. Locke incessantly repeat, that the Divine Law is the only true Touchstone of moral Rectitude. This did but increase his Pupil's [Shaftesbury's] resentment..." In a further assault on Shaftesbury, Warburton goes on to deplore the use of ridicule in attacking sacred subjects, regarding it as a pathway to

⁶² "But as before [civil society was established], Religion alone was an ineffectual Remedy to moral Disorders; so now, Society, without other Assistance, would be equally insufficient." Warburton, *The Divine Legation of Moses Demonstrated, on the Principles of a Religious Deist, from the Omission of the Doctrine of a Future State of Reward and Punishment in the Jewish Dispensation* (London, 1742), 1:12.

⁶³ Appropriately respectful assessments of Warburton's critical analysis can be found in Robert Ryley, *William Warburton* (Twayne, 1984); and in Stephen Curry, "The Literary Criticism of William Warburton," *English Studies* 48, no. 5 (October 1967), 23-33.

⁶⁴ Warburton to Hurd, January 30, 1749-50. *Letters of an Eminent Prelate*, 26. Warburton put one of his acolytes, John Brown, to the task of refuting Shaftesbury's "test of ridicule." The result was *Essays on the Characteristics*, dedicated to Ralph Allen and published in 1751. Brown duly drew the fire from outraged Shaftesburians. Warburton had also asked Brown to complete the Brutus project from Pope's sketches.

disorder: “[I]t is inconceivable what Havoc false Wit makes in a foolish Head: *The Rabble of Mankind*, as an excellent Writer well observes, *being very apt to think, that every thing which is laughed at, with any mixture of Wit, is ridiculous in itself*. Few reflect on what a great Wit has so ingenuously owned, *That Wit is generally false Reasoning*.”⁶⁵ In opening up this breach with Shaftesbury, Warburton exposed differences—or created polemical opportunities—within Tully’s Head, too. William Whitehead’s *Essay on Ridicule* (1743) stated the case against Shaftesbury’s position eloquently: “We oft, ’tis true, mistake the Sat’rist’s Aim...”; while Mark Akenside’s *The Pleasures of Imagination*, published by Dodsley the following year, contained a lengthy footnote defending Shaftesbury and “our natural Sense or Feeling of the Ridiculous” and expressing astonishment at “those Men, who imagine it for the Service of True Religion to vilify and blacken it without Distinction.”⁶⁶

In both these polemical issues of natural religion and ridicule, in its defense of Locke against the more extreme imputations of Shaftesbury, and in its caution against the misapplication by critics of Wit and Sophistry, Warburton’s “Dedication” is intriguingly reminiscent of Burke’s later Preface to the second edition of the *Vindication of Natural Society*. This is a point that has passed unnoticed by Burke scholars; but it is actually Warburton’s contribution to *historical* method that remains most underappreciated and that ties his work most closely to Dodsley, to Tully’s Head, and thence to Burke himself. In 1750, Warburton published *Julian*, an analysis of the historical evidence for the “miraculous” intervention that destroyed the emperor Julian’s plans to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem.

⁶⁵ Warburton, *Divine Legation*, xxvi-vii note b; xii.

⁶⁶ Warburton took umbrage at this statement in his *Remarks on Several Occasional Reflections* (London, 1744). Akenside responded with *An Epistle to the Rev. Mr. Warburton. Occasioned by his Treatment of the Author of The Pleasures of Imagination* (London, 1744), which was printed for Dodsley but sold through Mary Cooper.

After reading this work, Montesquieu was prompted to “make a further acquaintance with Dr. Warburton, and take a nearer view of his great talents.” To Warburton himself, Montesquieu sent congratulations on refuting Bolingbroke so comprehensively in the *Divine Legation* and *Julian*, both of which books, he said, deserved wider dissemination in French translation.⁶⁷ Warburton’s history is syncretic in the sense that it draws coherence from those incorporative and transformative aspects of political and cultural development often best explored in the evolution of literary forms. It is this that helps to explain Robert Ryley’s judgment that, in *Julian*, Warburton displays an unusually “sophisticated historical sense, and awareness that the reliability of ancient sources must often be judged in the light of alien habits of thought.”⁶⁸ Underpinning the whole of Warburton’s method is a belief that a common human nature has been providentially oriented to the social and economic engagements that have driven the progress of civilizations through history, and that allegory had often been understood as the most appropriate channel of this intelligence from generation to generation. Thus, in an eclectic string of historical studies—on chivalric romances, mystery and morality plays, fiction—and commentaries on texts as diverse as the *Aeneid* of Virgil, the writings of the Church Fathers, Medieval chronicles, and Apuleius’s *Golden Ass*, Warburton carries out a tenacious search for consistency through historicization and contextualization, a feature that reflects Pope’s own awakening to the conceptual links between Classical Epic poetry and monkish annals in his “*Brutus*.”⁶⁹

⁶⁷ A.W. Evans, *Warburton and the Warburtonians: A Study in Some Eighteenth-Century Controversies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932), 173-74.

⁶⁸ Robert M. Ryley, *William Warburton* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984), 36.

⁶⁹ Curry is right to stress here Warburton’s influence upon two scholars close to Dodsley in the 1750’s: “Later [Richard] Hurd and Thomas Warton accept the supernatural Gothic machinery in the epics of Spenser and the Italians. Their rationale has the same basis as Warburton’s justification of the *Aeneid*; the Gothic, they claim, was a part of medieval superstitious belief: the Gothic machinery is, therefore, on one level, totally

The intellectual differences between Warburton and Bolingbroke, then, were considerable and fundamental, and the stakes—the posthumous interpretation and guardianship of the “authentic” Pope—were considerable. It is hardly surprising that the rivalry was also an intensely personal one. Each figure was possessed of an enormous ego, and Pope himself had failed to designate one or other as the supreme guardian of his reputation by the time of his death. Indeed, though there is no evidence that Warburton and Bolingbroke ever met in person, Spence’s *Anecdotes* show how they jostled for position over the poet’s deathbed in the spring of 1744. Warburton was at Pope’s house in early April that year, pontificating on the immortality of the soul as a staple of the mysteries and arguing that the Greeks, “when [they] grew wicked,” came to associate Momus, complainer against Providence and son of “*Ignorance* and Disorder,” with “Wit.” At the end of May, it was Bolingbroke’s turn to attend the dying poet, and Spence records how he flew into a rage when he heard that Pope had received the Sacraments. For some years after Pope’s passing, the struggle was low-key. In 1749, however, recriminations broke out in earnest over Bolingbroke’s public exposure of Pope’s breach of faith in secretly printing 1,500 copies of the *Idea of a Patriot King*.⁷⁰ Bolingbroke’s withering assault on Warburton, *A Familiar Epistle to the Most Impudent Man Living* (1751) might be described as the antithesis of the *Letter to a Noble Lord* genre in its social conceit.⁷¹ But the author’s death the year it was

realistic because totally historical. In this way the miraculous transforms itself into an essential, organic aspect of the poet’s technique and message...” “Literary Criticism of William Warburton,” 28.

⁷⁰ Bolingbroke first learned of this betrayal in 1746. H.T. Dickinson, “Bolingbroke’s Attack on Alexander Pope in 1746,” *Notes and Queries*, n. s., 16, no. 9 (September 1969), 342-44.

⁷¹ Bolingbroke pointedly writes in the persona of a friend of his. “That you may not pretend I write in Defence of my L.B. or in Answer to you, as your Vanity might tempt you to suggest, I declare I have no such Intention. He wants no defence. You deserve no answer....Contempt will be your Security, and you will have no Reply to apprehend from any Man, who would not dispute with a common Scold, nor wrestle with a

published allowed Warburton the leisure of awaiting the arrival of Bolingbroke's posthumous works in 1752-54 before landing his reply. This was his gleefully unanswerable *View of Lord Bolingbroke's Philosophy* (1754-55).

Dividing his copyright as he did, Pope could almost be thought to have deliberately fuelled the contest between his beneficiaries.⁷² And while he must have rued his own exclusion from those valuable copyrights, Dodsley was quick to see how he could exploit their increasingly vitriolic disputes, while raising himself above the fray, by building a lucrative and titillating business in Popeiana and Pope criticism. We have already seen an instance of this in Dodsley's concurrent patronage of Shaftesburians and Lockceans. He was, for example, willing to publish John Cooper's *Life of Socrates* (1749), which was critical of Warburton's Greek scholarship, and he followed that up two years later with Cooper's attack on Warburton's edition of Pope's works (though this time the piece was prudently channeled through Mary Cooper). Indeed, Dodsley was never able to achieve, or interested in securing, a comfortable relationship with Warburton, who duly followed Pope's advice to publish future editions of his work through John Knapton's bookselling business. Eventually, Warburton paid Dodsley back for his evenhandedness by closing him out of the copyright of Pope's published works when Knapton was forced into bankruptcy in 1755.⁷³ And yet the dominant intellectual tone in Tully's Head after 1744 fitted more snugly with Warburton's critical apparatus, his interpretation of Pope, and of history, providence, allegory and "true

Chimney-sweeper." [Viscount Bolingbroke], *A Familiar Epistle to the Most Impudent Man Living* (London, 1751), 12-14.

⁷² In 1736, Pope wrote to Jonathan Swift: "I have lately seen some writings of Lord B's, since he went to France. Nothing can depress his Genius: whatever befalls him, he will still be the greatest man in the world, either in his own time, or with posterity" (Letter of 25 March, 1736, *Correspondence*, 4:6). There is a famous story that Bolingbroke cried inconsolably on hearing of Pope's death.

⁷³ Donald W. Nichol (ed.), *Pope's Literary Legacy: The Book-Trade Correspondence of William Warburton and John Knapton* (Oxford: Oxford Bibliographical Society, 1992).

religion,” than with Bolingbroke’s philosophy. In part, this is explicable in terms of Dodsley’s business acumen. While Dodsley was “astonished” at Pope’s admiration for Warburton, it was clear that Warburton’s reputation was in the ascendancy and that his powers of patronage would be considerable. If the bookseller could do nothing else he could identify the way the current was moving. Yet there was another factor at play: this was the quiet but profound influence of Joseph Spence upon both Pope and Dodsley. Spence’s writings have generally received only cursory notice by historians, but they dovetail tightly with Warburton’s own and form a vital component of Pope’s intellectual legacy to Dodsley and his circle at Tully’s Head.⁷⁴

The clergyman and academic Joseph Spence (1699-1768) was arguably *the* most intimate link between Pope and the Tully’s Head circle after 1744. An acquaintance of the poet from 1727 until the latter’s death, Spence occupied the chairs, successively, of poetry and of history at Oxford, but he is most famous today for his posthumously published *Observations, Anecdotes and Characters of Books and Men* (1820), which immediately became a respected source for information on Pope’s personal life and relationships. He was also, in Tierney’s words, “one of [Robert Dodsley’s] closest friends,” performing a variety of roles in Dodsley’s enterprise, including reading and editing manuscripts and, doubtless, serving as an informal adviser during the walking vacations that the two men took together.⁷⁵ Besides numerous contributions to collections and journals such as *The Trifler*, *The Museum*,

⁷⁴ Secondary scholarship on Spence remains thin. Austin Wright, *Joseph Spence, A Critical Biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950) is the only devoted study, and its tone is biographical rather than analytical. Assessments of Spence’s writings are, on the whole, mildly defensive comments on the personal and professional opinions of contemporaries or on Spence’s fall from grace after the drubbing his *Polymetis* received in Gotthold Lessing’s *Laokoön*. There are useful but more narrowly focused treatments in James M. Osborn’s introduction to Spence, *Anecdotes*, and Slava Klima ed., *Joseph Spence: Letters from the Grand Tour* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1975).

⁷⁵ Tierney, *Correspondence*, 125n1, 19-20. It was during one such vacation that Dodsley was to die, at Spence’s home in Durham in the north of England, in 1764.

and the *Collection of Poems*, Tully's Head published at least seven works written or introduced by Spence. Dodsley secured the copyright for the *Essay on Mr. Pope's Odyssey* by 1745, and reissued the work in 1753. A short essay, "Some Account of the Lord Buckhurst and his Writings," was prefaced to a publication of Buckhurst's tragedy *Gorboduc*, which appeared in 1736—in Spence's own words, "a task imposed upon me by Mr. Pope."⁷⁶ *Polymetis*, a study of the relationship between poetry and the plastic arts in ancient Rome, inspired by Addison's celebrated *Dialogues upon the Usefulness of Ancient Medals*, finally saw the light of day after several delays in 1747, and was really the work that established its author's reputation. Then, in quick succession and under the pseudonym "Sir Harry Beaumont," came: *Crito* (1752), a dialogue on beauty; a translation of Jean-Dennis Attiret's *Particular Account of the Emperor of China's Garden near Peking* (1752); and *Moralities* (1753), a collection of essays the majority of which had appeared in Dodsley's periodical *The Museum* the previous decade. Spence's *Account of the Life, Character, and Poems of Mr. Blacklock* was published in 1754, with a second edition of *Polymetis* appearing the following year. At the same time, Spence was providing considerable assistance to Joseph Warton with his volumes on Virgil and Pope, which are discussed in the next chapter. For a while, he was cited as an authority on aesthetics in his own right: Burke inserted a critical reference to his introduction to the works of the blind poet Blacklock into his *Philosophical Enquiry* in 1757, and G.E. Lessing's *Laokoön* contains an extensive refutation of Spence's position on the relationship between poetry and art.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ *The Tragedy of Gorboduc: Written by Thomas Sackville Lord Buckhurst, afterwards Lord Treasurer to Queen Elizabeth, and Earl of Dorset* (London, 1736), ix.

⁷⁷ Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, 1:313 & n2. See also Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. James T. Boulton (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1958), lxix-lxx.

The similarities between Spence's scholarship and that of Warburton have been overlooked, possibly as a result of wide differences in personality and style. Spence may not have taken to Warburton as a friend (and Warburton, in the 1750s, was privately disparaging about Spence's abilities as an editor), but Spence did furnish a large amount of personal material on Pope for Warburton's 1751 edition of Pope's *Works* and for Owen Ruffhead's later biography. The two also consulted over Spence's *Polymetis*, and it is almost certain that Spence's respect for Warburton was increased by the latter's spirited and lonely defense of Pope against Bolingbroke's charges of betrayal in 1749.

Central to Spence's researches was the reenergizing of allegorical thought. Spence aimed to achieve this by showing how allegory was, properly understood, entirely compatible with the translation and cross-generational transmission of simple or natural truths about religion and society. This thesis was brought to fruition, after many years' gestation, in *Polymetis*, which the author states was intended "to give our artists and poets more regular and sensible ideas, in treating all sorts of allegorical subjects."⁷⁸ *Polymetis* is a statesman and patron of the arts. In a series of conversations with two of his friends, inspired by his impressive collection of Classical statuary, he defends rhetorical orthodoxy in stating that the enemy of truth, and therefore of nature, is whatever violates natural simplicity. He advances from this position, however, to explore the much-misunderstood role of allegory in rhetoric through aesthetic parallels between poetry, painting, and sculpture. Statues show the power of simplicity and propriety in the personification of complex abstractions, and thereby point to ways in which allegory can facilitate the moral labor of poetry. Sadly, *Polymetis* notes, in the modern world both the visual and the poetic arts have become prey to excessive

⁷⁸ *The Museum, or Literary and Historical Register*, 26th April, 1746. Spence's draft for this advertisement can be found in the Osborn Manuscript collection at the Beinecke Rare Books Library, Yale University, OSB MSS 4, box 5, f.144.

ornamentation and obfuscation. The modern imagination must therefore be re-educated in the allegorical method.

In the closing dialogues of the book, Polymetis turns his critical attention to the work of two great Englishmen, Edmund Spenser and John Dryden, considered respectively as a poet and as a translator of epic verse. While he acknowledges the genius of Spenser, “the best allegorist” the moderns can offer, Polymetis highlights the poet’s misuse of allegory. Spenser mixes “the fables of heathenism with the truths of Christianity”; he misrepresents the allegories of the ancients; he over-gilds or overextends description, introducing unnecessarily “filthy” images; and he produces inappropriate physical parallels. The cause of these failings is situated chiefly in the poet’s imitation of fashion. Insufficient attention to the Classical artists on their own terms, or to the historical context of his more recent sources, means that Spenser has upset the natural balance of permanence and change that, ironically, constitutes the central moral of his greatest achievement, the *Fairie Queene* itself—that is, the triumph of Nature against mutability and corruption.⁷⁹ “Had Spenser formed his allegories on the plan of the antient poets and artists,” we are told, “as much as he did from Ariosto and the Italian allegorists, he might have followed nature much more closely; and would not have wandered so often, in such strange and inconsistent imaginations.”⁸⁰ Of Dryden’s weaknesses as a translator of Virgil, the chief, we are told, was judging the machinery of Classical allegory to be little more than a device for amusement and ornamentation. Dryden

⁷⁹ Like Adonis in the third book of the *Faerie Queene*, Nature contains change within a greater permanence: “All be he subject to mortality / Yet is eterne in mutability, / And by succession made perpetuall, / Transformed oft, and chaunged diverslie” (3.6.47).

⁸⁰ Joseph Spence, *Polymetis: or, An Enquiry concerning the Agreement Between the Works of the Roman Poets, and the Remains of the Antient Artists* (London, 1747), 307. In his *Essay on Pope’s Odyssey*, Spence had criticized Ariosto particularly for infecting Spenser with a taste for rhyme (*Essay*, 1:125). The criticism of imitation of the Italian style was also popular in theatrical circles with the popular enthusiasm for pantomime.

had failed to appreciate the “real intent and design of the allegories,” rooted in the divine economy as the term was understood at the time, and had confused them, instead, with metaphor.⁸¹ Again, this betrayed a lack of mastery of the details of Classical mythology, and of the signification of certain symbols embedded in the literature and artifacts of the period. Dryden’s errors, at root, are errors of historical contextualization that hamper the imitative functions of his allegories and bind them too closely to immediate or fashionable causes. They also signify an excessively programmatic intent in his critical work, in other words, the smothering of genius by politics and patronage.

In Spence’s thinking, a reformed approach to allegory could not only cleanse rhetoric of the crusts of fashion, but it would also inspire a transformation in our conceptualization of historical evidence. Here, his thoughts reflect a wider resurgence of interest in the relationship between history and literature along the lines that writers such as Sir Philip Sidney and Spenser himself had discussed during the period known as the “Elizabethan Renaissance.” Indeed, in its sophisticated pursuit of truth in the imitation of nature, Spence’s was an Elizabethanism shorn of the shallow symbolism and parallels employed in nostalgic or propagandistic histories of the time.⁸² In challenging the perception of allegory as artful obscurity or lies, Spence along with Warburton also found himself confronting the implications of growing skepticism over the validity of ancient sources of sacred or secular history. Both responded by arguing that only an imaginative combination of history and literature could unlock in such sources truths about the perennial, conflicted nature of man

⁸¹ Spence, *Polymetis*, 316. See also his *Essay*, 1:32-33.

⁸² The varieties of Elizabethanism in Britain in the eighteenth century are well documented in Gerrard, *Patriot Opposition to Walpole*. Her assessment of the “depoliticization” of Spenser, however, which she dates to the 1740s, is premature and appears to lie in too sharp a distinction between the constitutional histories of the early part of the century and the romantic literary movement with which it ended (pp. 166-84).

and translate them into compelling modern idioms. This, in turn, involved a nuanced and syncretic evaluative technique that emphasized the universality of human nature within the complexity of diverse historical circumstances, and a resituating of the providential, religious element of history to the forefront of intellectual debate.

These intellectual and methodological developments were drawn together interestingly several years ago by Albert J. Kuhn, who argued that Spence, in “elucidating the myths of the ancients and thereby ‘settling’ their allegorical meanings...hoped to make it possible for modern writers of the epic to readapt the old machinery in accordance with the doctrinal truths of Christianity and the discoveries of the Newtonian philosophy.”⁸³ Kuhn’s insight appears within a broader description of a syncretic movement in the eighteenth century that insistently probed the relationship between heathenism and Christianity. This involved, in particular, tracing the development of monotheism and its relationship to polytheistic religious rituals in the Classical age, with Heathen religious mythology interpreted in a way that was consistent with, and therefore affirmed, later Christian revelation. Such an interpretation is nowhere better shown than in Spence’s linking of allegory to the popularization of Classical concepts of Fate, whereby the actions of one central divinity are artfully broken up into personifications of minor deities, passions and appetites in a way that parallels similar movements in philosophy. Warburton and Bolingbroke were at the same time contending over the political and theological issues involved here: whether it was more natural to understand polytheism as emerging from the popularization of a monotheistic power, or of monotheism evolving as a more mature

⁸³ Albert J. Kuhn, “English Deism and Romantic Syncretism,” in *PMLA*, 71 (Sept.-Dec. 1956), 1099.

understanding of nature than that encompassed by polytheistic mythology.⁸⁴ Kuhn's thesis certainly accords with Spence's Latitudinarian stance and the wider interest in diverse religious systems that is evidenced in his private notes and published work. It should also remind us that scholars such as Spence and Warburton displayed, in their historical imagination, an openness to widely different expressions of moral truth while nevertheless—indeed *necessarily*—retaining a faith in the truth of the Christian revelation and a commitment to the social importance of Christian religious practice for the stability and order of a liberal society. A syncretic methodology, then, might actually deepen faith and loyalty to existing modes of spiritual worship as those modes lead to a particular appreciation of the normalizing orientation of nature. This may explain the popularity and continuing significance of Warburton's efforts, *pace* Bolingbroke, to make a Christian out of Pope.

Seen in its specifically British context, this syncretism served to validate the Anglican settlement as the recovery of the *prisca theologia*, since Anglicanism could be seen to combine the natural simplicity of the Apostolic religion with the civilized appurtenances of the modern commercial state. It was also, in a sense, the foundation of a Latitudinarian historiography, proud of its historic mission against superstition and priest-craft, but now determined to transcend either the atavistic theories of the seventeenth-century commonwealthmen and their successors or the blind Whiggish confidence of the

⁸⁴ “The greatest of the ancient poets seem to have held, that everything in the moral, as well as the natural world, was carried on by the influence and direction of the supreme being....This universal principle of action they considered, for their own ease, as divided into so many several personages, as they had occasion for causes....What the vulgar believed to be brought about, by the will of their gods; the poets described, as carried on by a visible interposition of those gods: and this to me seems to be the whole mystery of the machinery of the ancients” (*Polymetis*, 316, 319). Bolingbroke pursues an opposite approach in arguing that, “polytheism and idolatry have so close a connection with the few superficial and ill-verified ideas and notions of rude ignorant men, and with the affections of their minds, that one of them could not fail to be their first religious principle, nor the other their first religious practice” (*Philosophical Works*, 1:301). This issue arises in Bolingbroke's historical treatment of Moses' theocratic regime, which formed one of the central intellectual points of dispute between him and Warburton, in whose *Divine Legation of Moses* the precedence, both chronological and intellectual, of monotheism is asserted.

“Robinocracy.”⁸⁵ More important to this argument, it diverged from the philosophically-driven methodology to be found in the writings of Toland and Boulainvilliers on Mohammed, which could themselves be seen as positing a religious syncretism of a different form in their emphasis upon the historical recurrence of movements back to a pure monotheism.⁸⁶ Neither stadial nor mechanistic in its approach, and distinct from the philosophical history of Hume and Gibbon, it posited, rather, a more complex, on-going act of historical purgation in which universal moral truths are summoned and transmitted from specific historical circumstances to the present.

In matching the allegorical imagination with the simple truths of “natural” religion, this Latitudinarian history also brought with it rhetorical implications. Spence, in the *Essay on Mr. Pope’s Odyssey*, had pointedly denied to the irreligious the capacity to produce truly sublime literature, folding this statement into a partial rehabilitation of enthusiasm, as John Dennis would have understood it, against Shaftesbury’s denigration of the term.⁸⁷ By the same token, he reaffirmed the necessity of religion in detecting the “false” sublime, or rhetorical fraud and insincerity. Set against this position, the opinion of Longinus, who had left such detection to anyone “who has a competent share of natural and acquired taste,” and of Shaftesbury, who had left it to an innate moral sense, were designed to appear shallow and

⁸⁵ For the theological background to this Anglican historiography, see Gerard Reedy, S.J., *The Bible and Reason: Anglicans and Scripture in Late Seventeenth-Century England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985).

⁸⁶ John Toland, *Nazarenus* (London, 1718); Boulainvilliers, *Life of Mahomet* (London, 1731).

⁸⁷ Spence, *Essay on Pope’s Odyssey*, 2:13, 57, 119. The most famous such reference to the sublime in Longinus is the “Fiat lux” passage from *Genesis*. It is the only reference to Scripture in the text and its authenticity has been hotly contested. See William Smith’s editorial notes in his edition of *Dionysius Longinus on the Sublime* (London, 1752), and those of Zachary Pearce, *Longinus De Sublimitate* (London, 1724), to which Smith was greatly indebted.

recklessly complacent.⁸⁸ Spence's position was reinforced by Robert Lowth in his highly influential lectures on Hebrew poetry, where he argued that the irreligious mind, according to preeminence to philosophy over literature and history, could never scale the rhetorical or historical heights of allegory since it was incapable of apprehending or truly articulating the sublime and transcendent in human experience.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Spence may have been drawing here in part not only from Dennis, but from the work of Samuel Werenfels, who, in his short tract, *On Meteors of Style, or the False Sublime*, published in English translation in 1711, gives the character failings that lead to the bombastic style a religious twist: "[M]any, who cannot discern true Magnanimity from Pride, will believe that to be sublime, which is really insolent and profane; which argues not a Contempt of little things, but of things far superior to the Contemner himself, and of the highest Importance: and this is not a Sign of a great, but of a proud and vainglorious Mind." Joseph Warton, in a Quintilianesque passage deploring Pope's youthful attraction to the ornate Roman writers of the first and second centuries of the empire, warns against those writers who, by their predilection for forced conceits, violent metaphors, and swelling epithets "have a strong tendency to dazzle and to mislead inexperienced minds, and tastes unformed, from the true relish of possibility, propriety, simplicity, and nature." A corrective to their attractions is suggested in the "sensible discourse of S. Werenfels [sic], of Basle, *De Meteoris Orationis*." Warton, *Essay on Pope*, (London, 4th edition, 1782), 2:22n. For Werenfels, see James Noggle, *The Skeptical Sublime: Aesthetic Ideology in Pope and the Tory Satirists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), and also Edward Tomarken's introduction to Samuel Werenfels, *A Dissertation concerning Meteors of Stile, or False Sublimity* (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1980).

⁸⁹ Robert Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* (London, 1753). Published by Dodsley, Lowth's study stressed the "magnificent plainness" and "terrible simplicity" of biblical poetry, and argued that religious subjects are inherently the most sublime. In terms that strongly echo Warburton, he writes that, to experience the sublimity of such poetry, "We must read Hebrew as the Hebrews would have read it." See David Morris, *The Religious Sublime* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1972), 160-162. Lowth published much work through Tully's Head in the 1750s and 1760s, and Dodsley confided in Spence that Lowth had given him the idea of the collection of fables that he published in 1761. David Fairer argues for the influence of Robert Lowth on Thomas Warton's historical method. See "Oxford and the Literary World," in *The History of the University of Oxford*, vol.5, ed. L.S. Sutherland and L.G. Mitchell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 799. Somewhat against the Gibbonian orthodoxy, Fairer states that the Oxford of Lowth, Spence, and Warton, was "represented in the forefront of literary trends during this decade [1740s]."

III: Pope's Guardian

This discussion of Pope's personal and intellectual legacy would not be complete, for our purposes, without evidence of the practical impact it had upon Tully's Head in the decade or so after the poet's death. Such evidence can be found where no historian has really looked to date—that is, in the writings of Dodsley himself, including those Tully's Head publications in which he had a direct hand. None of the above should be taken as suggesting that Tully's Head failed to embrace a variety of perspectives on Pope's legacy and on the direction of Patriotic critical writing in the new environment of mid-eighteenth-century Britain. Certainly, the evidence does not show that Dodsley attempted to impose an ideological consistency upon his publishing lists, beyond the broad parameters that have been sketched above. But Dodsley did aspire to be seen as a member of the Republic of Letters in much more than an operational and commercial sense, and the influence of Spence and Warburton can be detected in his own literary output, particularly in relation to the application of allegory and religion. By overlooking this aspect of Dodsley's life, we risk gathering only an incomplete sense of the Republic of Letters to which Burke was drawn, and by which he was, in some significant degree, molded.

Dodsley's interest in the critical function of allegory reaches its most explicit form in his *Essay on Fable*, prefixed to his four-volume *Select Fables of Aesop and other Fabulists* and published in 1761. Here the businessman and litterateur combine to assess the value of fable, or "simple" allegory: "It pleases in order to convince; and it imprints its moral so much the deeper, in proportion as it entertains; so that we may be said to *feel* our duties at the

very instant we *comprehend* them.”⁹⁰ In this important essay, Dodsley reconfigures the famous Horatian dictum that poetry should delight, move, and teach its audience. In contrast to the art of satire, which has descended into “wit” and “ridicule,” allegory facilitates instruction and improvement by building its regenerative moral case through a gentler and more reflective imagination. Where wit and ridicule linger, they are tempered by the ambiguity that surrounds the target, a characteristic of allegory that addresses John Brown’s observation, voiced in his poetic eulogy to Pope, that: “Satire displeases none, though sharp the strains: / For ’tis our neighbour, not ourselves, it means.”⁹¹ This is not to say that Dodsley eschewed satire entirely. His early works, after all, like *The Toy-Shop* and the *King and the Miller of Mansfield*, were centered upon it, as was his facetious response to the “Walpolean” histories of that time, *The Chronicles of the Kings of England*; but he was, like the Toy-Shop owner, “a general Satyrist, yet not rude nor ill-natured,” and he appears to have become increasingly sensitive to the disorderly and subversive impact of the genre.⁹² By the early 1750s, allegory had come to infuse his poetic approach and redirect his dramatic efforts toward tragedy. He worked and reworked his tragedy *Cleone* for several years before its successful staging at Covent Garden in 1758, and his correspondence indicates that behind his determined efforts to get the piece staged lay a genuine commitment to the art of tragic drama as a popular source of moral education: “Cleone,” he stresses in a letter to one of his revisers, is a “domestic distress” and the language therefore “should be as far remov’d from

⁹⁰ Robert Dodsley, *An Essay on Fable*, 1764 (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1965), lx.

⁹¹ John Brown, *Merit. A Satire. Humbly addressed to His Excellency the Earl of Chesterfield* (Dublin, 1746), 3. Brown was writing under Warburton’s patronage at this time, and is repeating a point that Swift had made earlier.

⁹² Robert Dodsley, *The Chronicles of the Kings of England, from the Norman Conquest unto the Present Time, written in the Manner of the Ancient Jewish Historians, by Nathan Ben Saddi, a Priest of the Jews* (London, 1742).

all pomp of expression as elegance will permit, and the versification to contain “a natural ease and simplicity of language, as might flow without harshness and inelegance from the lips of the Speaker.”⁹³ The composition of his tragedy was complemented by the appearance of his ode *Melpomene: or the Regions of Terror and Pity*, which is laden with Spenserian personification, and by a draft of an unpublished but substantial history of drama.⁹⁴

With respect to religion, both Tierney and Solomon have stated simply that Dodsley was a deist throughout his life. He certainly nursed an antipathy toward ritual and sacramentalism, as we see in an uncharacteristically unguarded letter to his friend Solomon Mendes, written in 1744, where he refers to “the solemn foolery of a Christening,” and observes wryly that, “’Tis very wisely done, to tye us down so early to believe, what otherwise, perhaps, might never enter into our heads.” In his early poem *Religion: A Simile*, which appeared in the collection entitled *A Muse in Livery* (1732), Dodsley had bemoaned the misuse of “true religion” by an axis of atheists and puritans. These extreme positions, which share the conspiratorial intent to blur the simplicities of religious truth, bear the imprint of Bolingbroke’s conspiracy of atheists and priests, and they appear again in Dodsley’s *Epistle to Mr. Pope*, where, the “Great Bard...in whom united we admire / The Sage’s Wisdom, and the Poet’s Fire” confounds both “*Wits and Fools...Libertines and Saints*” with his “Doctrine sound” that man is “a Part of that stupendous Whole, / ‘*Whose Body Nature is, and God the Soul.*’”⁹⁵

⁹³ Tierney, *Correspondence*, 271-72.

⁹⁴ For *Melpomene*, see *The Annual Register for the Year 1759*. The unfinished history of drama can be found in one of Dodsley’s commonplace books, currently housed in the Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California, Phillipps MS 20112.

⁹⁵ Robert Dodsley, *An Epistle to Mr. Pope, Occasion’d by his Essay on Man* (London, 1734), 3, 6, 5.

Yet there is a sense in which labeling Dodsley a deist creates the same problems as calling him a satirist. After 1744, deism, like satire, became increasingly associated in the circles of Tully's Head with a potential for disorder and misplaced zeal. Consequently, by 1750 we encounter a more earnest, didactic tone in Dodsley's own projects in which the Christian moral code is validated through its conformity with diverse religious traditions, and the saints and puritans cede the stage of foolery entirely to the libertines, atheists, and anyone else who would push philosophical enquiry to excess in matters of nature and religion. In Dodsley's tremendously popular *Oeconomy of Human Nature* (1750), which ran to almost two hundred editions by 1800 (forty-eight in America alone), the imaginary text of an ancient Brahmin, leads the reader by its moral universalism to an appreciation of how Christianity mediates timeless truths through a time-bound system of language and symbolism. In this way Dodsley shows how "natural religion," far from undermining Christianity, authorizes its artificial but socially cohesive function through the very fact of its providential historicization.

By this time, then, calling Dodsley's religious position "deistic" obscures as much as it reveals. In particular, it is insufficient for clarifying the increasingly important distinction between "anti-priestcraft" (from anti-Catholicism to Quakerism) on the one hand, and, on the other, religious skepticism that was emerging through a series of scholarly and political issues in the 1740s and 1750s. Fear of enthusiasm and priest-craft had diminished with the ecclesiastical patronage of Walpole and the failure of Jacobitism, and was replaced by a resurgent concern over the socially disintegrative threat of intellectual irreligion from deists and free-thinkers. This shift provided the crucible for a revived mid-century Latitudinarianism which was doctrinally elusive but committed to upholding the providential

truth of Christianity as evidenced in history and in the aesthetic compass of human nature. It is well illustrated in a cluster of theological works that Dodsley published or sold under the Tully's Head sign mid-century, including: Gilbert West's *Observations on the History and Evidence of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ* (1747)—which ran to five editions in eight years—and *Education* (1751); Lyttelton's *Observations on the Conversion and Apostleship of St. Paul* (1747); *A Summary of Natural Religion* (1749), attributed to John Barr; Christopher Smart's *On the Eternity of the Supreme Being* (1750), and *On the Omniscience of the Supreme Being* (1752); and William Hay's *Religio Philosophi* (1753, 2nd edition 1754). While it is true that Warburton's *bête noir*, John Gilbert Cooper, had more publications pass through Tully's Head in this period than any of these authors individually, the cumulative evidence of these works reinforces the sense of Dodsley's concern to superimpose a Latitudinarian face on his tenaciously anticlerical religious output. Historians with a late-eighteenth-century eye to the secularizing influence of the Enlightenment are prone to exaggerate the homogeneity of deism, or predate its popularity among the intellectual elites, and, consequently, the Anglican Latitudinarianism of figures such as Spence is seen more as a pragmatic compromise than a vigorous intellectual position. But James Noggle is more insightful when he comments that, within the broad definition of deism, "Radical skepticism is just what the constructive variety sets out to mitigate."⁹⁶ Such a "constructive" recovery of the simple truths of natural religion and natural society lay at the heart of Tully's Head and of the professional identity that Dodsley forged for himself and attempted to bestow upon his critics in his corner of the mid-century Republic of Letters.

We might bring this chapter to an appropriate close with a practical illustration of the convergence of these influences, legacies and themes within Tully's Head. In 1748, Dodsley

⁹⁶ Noggle, *Skeptical Sublime*, 15.

published an innovative and highly successful educative project entitled *The Preceptor*. Marking a considerable investment of Dodsley's resources, this two-volume anthology of didactic writings promised to reward "curiosity through variety, diligence by its facility, and to reward application by its usefulness." The "Preface" grounded the origins of the project in the marked expansion of educational institutions that had taken place in the early eighteenth century, noting that "every Age, Sex, and Profession is invited to an Acquaintance with those Studies, which were formerly supposed accessible only to such as had devoted themselves to literary Leisure, and dedicated their Powers to philosophical Enquiries."⁹⁷ *The Preceptor* contained chapters on geometry, chronology, rhetoric, logic, trade and commerce, ethics, and human life and manners among others, and, in that characteristically collaborative spirit mentioned above, contained new or reprinted materials from such authors as Samuel Johnson, Robert Lowth, David Fordyce, William Duncan, and Dodsley himself. The philosophical and educative commitment to providing clear and accessible means of transmitting "natural" moral truths to as wide an audience as possible in a way that was incisively critical yet supportive of social order was pursued by closing up the tired ancient/modern dichotomy through the promotion of modern translations of the Classics and by the development of expanded canons of modern classics. Entirely within the Patriot program of civic regeneration, and couched in the spirit of Spence's Republic of Letters, we should nevertheless not miss here the advisory note that such a broadening of the gentlemanly qualities required careful negotiation to preserve the traditional parameters of polite society.

⁹⁷ *The Preceptor: containing a General Course of Education. Wherein the First Principles of Polite Learning are laid down in a Way most suitable for trying the Genius, and advancing the Instruction of Youth*, vol. 1 (London, 1748), v.

James Tierney states that *The Preceptor* was conducted in “an atmosphere of deism, pragmatism, and common sense,” but, again, this description is too broad to capture the significance of the contents.⁹⁸ The misconception here is well-illustrated in Dale Randall’s otherwise excellent, short study of Dodsley’s *Preceptor*, which Randall, too, is inclined to view as an illustration of deistic rationalism. A cursory look at the chapter titles of this modern educational textbook, he states, with extensive pieces on Geography and Commerce but nothing on Theology or the teachings of the Church, suggests that the work “deals principally with matters beyond the sphere of religion,” an observation that encourages Randall to conclude that “the only way to make religion of great importance in Dodsley’s work is to equate it with ethics, and, while this is not an impossible sleight of hand, it scarcely seems advisable or necessary.”⁹⁹ But Randall’s position is unsupportable. It was Samuel Johnson, after all, (who can hardly be said to have left “religion” out of anything,) whom Dodsley selected to write a lengthy introduction to the work and who contributed for the final chapter, “On Human Life and Manners,” a “modern allegory” entitled “The Vision of Thøedore, the Hermit of Teneriffe, found in his Cell.” The most striking purpose of the latter essay, which Johnson is reported to have considered one of his finest pieces, is precisely to emphasize the insufficiency of reason to provide contentment and the necessity of religion for leading man to the temple of happiness, which is situated beyond “a Mist by which [Reason’s] Prospect is terminated, and which is pierced only by the Eyes of Religion.” Indeed, in Johnson’s allegory Reason herself is at pains to warn passing travelers of her own

⁹⁸ Tierney, *Correspondence of Robert Dodsley*, 8. Harry M. Solomon judges the same work “a very influential piece of rhetoric, infused with Dodsley’s Lockean associationism, ethical sentimentalism, egalitarian politics, and deism” (*Rise of Robert Dodsley*, 128).

⁹⁹ Dale Randall, “Dodsley’s ‘Preceptor’—A Window into the Eighteenth Century,” *The Journal of the Rutgers University Library* XXII, no. 1 (December 1958), 20-21.

inadequacies: “counsel[ing] them at their first entrance upon her Province, to inlist themselves among the Votaries of Religion; and inform[ing] them, that if they trusted to her alone, they would find the same Fate with her other Admirers...who having been seized by *Habits* in the Regions of *Desire*, had been dragged away to the Caverns of Despair”¹⁰⁰

Closing thus with the *Preceptor*, our survey of the personal and intellectual legacy that Pope left to Dodsley and his enterprise at Tully’s Head has revealed a vibrancy and diversity in the British Republic of Letters that is often overlooked when broader paradigms of the Enlightenment and early nationalist literature are applied to the evidence. In particular, we can trace significant shifts in the critical language of Patriot writers that accompanied political and social developments in the 1730s and 1740s, and these shifts complicate the nature of the religious, literary, and historical debates that informed critics’ understanding of their role in society at that time. Within Tully’s Head, the influence of figures such as Joseph Spence and William Warburton can be seen edging out Bolingbroke’s philosophical skepticism, his deistic reductionism or principles of “natural religion,” and his carefully constructed world of court factions, political cabals, and shadowy religious elites, replacing it with a more sophisticated blend of historical contextualization, syncretism, and providence. This alternative perspective, pulled into focus by a revived conception of the allegorical imagination, was deemed capable both of disclosing the “natural” order that underlay the artifices of human society, and exposing the false order that masqueraded as “natural” religion or its concomitant “natural” society. In so doing, it showed how philosophical skepticism opened the way to the betrayal of Patriotism rightly understood by inverting the qualities of nature and artifice. And it is here that we get a true grip upon the

¹⁰⁰ Dodsley, *The Preceptor* (London, 1748), 521.

crucial, and to date unexplored, personal and intellectual nexus that received Edmund Burke into London literary life, that reinforced the beliefs and predilections that he had acquired as a student in Dublin, and that shaped his first successful publication, *A Vindication of Natural Society*.

Chapter 2

Unraveling the Threads in Edmund Burke's *Vindication of Natural Society*.

So spins the silk-worm small its slender store,
And labours till it clouds itself all o'er.¹

I: Recovering Burke's *Vindication*.

On May 18, 1756, Edmund Burke's first book, *A Vindication of Natural Society: or, A View of the Miseries and Evils arising to Mankind from every Species of Artificial Society* went on sale in London under the imprint of "M. Cooper in *Pater-noster Row*." This short work, a little over one hundred pages octavo, purported to advance the claims of the state of nature against those of "artificial," or political, society in the style of the statesman Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke. Bolingbroke had died five years earlier, and his works had appeared in a cluster of volumes over the period from 1752 to 1754.² As was normal for the times, the author of this debut performance remained anonymous, hidden behind the title of "a late Noble Writer." The *Vindication* itself, it was claimed in the publisher's advertisement, was the text of a letter written about the year 1748 but evidently not intended by the writer for general circulation: "By what means it came into the hands of the editor, is

¹ Alexander Pope, *The Dunciad*, IV, 253-54.

² These included: *Letters of Lord Bolingbroke to Dr. Jonathan Swift* (1752); *Letters on the Spirit of Patriotism* (1752); *Letters on the Study and Use of History*, 2 vols. (1752); *Reflections concerning Innate Moral Principles* (1752); *Remarks on the History of England* (1752); *Memoirs secrets and Testament politique* (both 1754); *A Dissertation on Parties* (1754); *The Philosophical Works of Lord Bolingbroke*, 5 vols. (1754); *Works of the Late Rt. Hon. Henry St. John Viscount Bolingbroke*, 5 vols. (1754). The list is not exhaustive. The editor of the collected volumes was the poet David Mallet, and the publisher A. Millar, in London.

not at all material to the publick, any farther than as such an account might tend to authenticate the genuineness of it, and for this it was thought it might safely rely on it's [sic] own internal evidence."³ That device, also, was not an unusual practice among publishers, although in this case it was surely designed to remind the reader of the circumstances of Pope's illicit printing of the manuscript of Bolingbroke's *Idea of a Patriot King*.

A diversion wrapped in a deception, the *Vindication* was a success on a number of levels. With an initial print run of 500 copies, it amused the market sufficiently to warrant a second edition in 1757, and this time it carried Dodsley's own imprint, rather than Mary Cooper's, on its title page. The identity of the author had also become generally known. Edmund Burke, the young Irish immigrant, had evidently been an ideal choice for the project, since his touch was almost too exquisite. Bolingbroke's own editor, David Mallet felt obliged to deny the authenticity of the text in front of Dodsley himself; Warburton was initially inclined to accept it as the work of his former antagonist; and, when the imposture became evident, Richard Hurd stated dryly that a piece of satire is hardly good satire when it cannot readily be perceived as such. In a move, perhaps, to address this confusion, but also, surely, as a smart marketing ploy, the second edition included a preface in which the argument of the work is briefly stated: "The Design was, to shew that, without the Exertion of any considerable Forces, the same Engines which were employed for the Destruction of Religion, might be employed with equal Success for the Subversion of Government; and that

³ 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). All references are to the first edition, unless otherwise stated.

specious Arguments might be used against those Things which they, who doubt of everything else, will never permit to be questioned.”⁴

Burke’s Irish background had helped equip him to carry out such a design. He had grown up in a Dublin where issues of public order and public spirit, religious toleration and irreligion, and the use of history for partisan politics existed in concentrated form, and, as will be shown in the next chapter, a perusal of his surviving youthful writings and journalism shows that he was deeply engaged by such subjects. But Burke also delved into history during his college days, an interest that was to develop into a search for an impartial and genuine historical narrative capable of incorporating both the Anglo-Norman and Gaelic traditions within his own ancestry. Furthermore, his parents’ mixed marriage brought him face to face with the realities of an Irish Patriot historical tradition that was closely linked to the methodology of Lord Bolingbroke. This contained within it a tension between loyal agitation for greater civic independence and anxiety over the potentially explosive social and political pressures posed by a disenfranchised Catholic majority. Finally, a fortuitously preserved collection of short, unpublished essays by Burke, contained in a “Note-book” found among his remains and dating from his early years in London, confirms that he continued to experiment with certain styles that stand out in his Dublin writings: a bent to satire drawn particularly from Pope and from Addison’s *Spectator*, a fascination with the

⁴ Burke, *Vindication* (London, 2nd edition, 1757), v-vi. An alternative view is that the *Vindication* was not true satire, but a double bluff through which Burke provided an encoded expression of his beliefs, and that the addition of the preface was a necessary statement of orthodoxy by the author as he entered his career in parliament. Besides ignoring the dynamics of the publishing process, this view was initially supported through the misdating of the preface to 1765—see Murray N. Rothbard, “A Note on Burke’s *Vindication of Natural Society*,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 19, no. 1 (Jan. 1958), 114-118. While Rothbard approached the issue from a Libertarian position, general skepticism about the preface has been revived in more sophisticated form by Frank N. Pagano, “Burke’s View of Political Theory: or, A Vindication of Natural Society,” *Polity* XVII, no. 3 (Spring 1985), 446-462, and see also Pagano’s introduction to the Liberty Classics Edition of *A Vindication of Natural Society* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1982).

representation of moral order and disorder in dramatic and poetic literature, and a religious distaste for the intellectual liberties of “free-thinkers.”⁵ How proactive Burke was in suggesting a short satire on Bolingbroke we will never know; but, with such a background, it is not difficult to imagine how Dodsley would have found the proposal attractive and its proponent qualified to undertake it. *Mutatis mutandis*, Dodsley’s Irishman had the air of Pope’s footman.

We have considered above a number of reasons why Burke’s debut on the London literary scene has not yet been understood in terms of the crucial overlap between the personal and intellectual backgrounds of writer and bookseller. To these, we need now to add the fact that the question of the purpose of the *Vindication* remains dominated by the teleological concern to plunder the text for evidence either of a “Jacobin flame” of repressed indignation that is assumed to have driven Burke as an Irish immigrant or for early intimations of his later anti-Jacobin stance. In this chapter, precisely by acknowledging the various explicit and implicit motivations that comprise the act of publishing a text, we will consider a reading of the *Vindication* that escapes such historiographical limitations and opens the way for a more authentic appreciation of Burke’s position in the field of literary and political criticism. In so doing, it will also serve to emphasize Burke’s value as a case-study in the mid-century Republic of Letters. First, these teleological concerns must be explained and addressed.

It cannot be denied that there are passages in the *Vindication* that are written with such conviction and so little relation to anything to be found in Lord Bolingbroke’s writings that they suggest a concealed, personal authorial motive working well below the surface of

⁵ H.V.F. Somerset, ed., *A Note-book of Edmund Burke* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957). Particularly appropriate in identifying disagreement with Bolingbroke are the essays “Religion,” and “Religion of No efficacy considered as a State Engine,” both attributed to Edmund.

the satire. The most remarkable of these passages, and the one most frequently referenced by commentators since, occurs when the pseudo-Bolingbroke defends the state of nature against artificial society by mustering a powerful rhetorical condemnation of the social, political, and economic evils endemic in civilizations both ancient and modern: “The whole Business of the Poor is to administer to the Idleness, Folly, and Luxury of the Rich; and that of the Rich, in return, is to find the best Methods of confirming the Slavery and increasing the Burthens of the Poor.” “I suppose,” the writer continues, “that there are in Great Britain upwards of an hundred thousand People employed in Lead, Tin, Copper, and Coal Mines; these unhappy Wretches scarce ever see the Light of the Sun; they are buried in the Bowels of the Earth [while a]n hundred thousand more at least are tortured without Remission by the suffocating Smoak, intense Fires, and constant Drudgery necessary in the refining and managing the Products of those Mines.”⁶ Might Burke be serious here? The vigor of the passage, and its placement immediately following a trenchant critique of the iniquities of the legal system (an issue with which we know Burke was sympathetic after his years studying at the Middle Temple), suggest that the real author had momentarily broken his parodic cover.⁷ But, if he is, how can we square this with his later defense of the status quo in ancien régime France, or with the laissez-faire economics to be found in his *Thoughts and Details on Scarcity*, penned in 1795?⁸ If he is not, what are we to make of the compelling parallels that present

⁶ Burke, *Vindication*, 90-91.

⁷ See, for example, Burke’s fragment of “An Essay toward an History of the Laws of England” in *Writings and Speeches*, 1:321-331. Burke gave up his legal studies at the Middle Temple around 1755, much to his father’s displeasure. (Burke, *Correspondence*, 1:xvii, 119.) The influence on Burke of his early studies in the law is well treated in Seán Patrick Donlan, “Law and Lawyers in Edmund Burke’s Scottish Enlightenment,” *Studies in Burke and His Time* 20, no. 1 (2005), 38-65.

⁸ “The labouring people are only poor, because they are numerous. Numbers in their nature imply poverty....That class of dependant pensioners called the rich, is so extremely small, that if all their throats were cut, and a distribution made of all they consume in a year, it would not give a bit of bread and cheese for one

themselves between the *Vindication*'s Swiftian bite and the youthful anger Burke is thought to have harbored at the social injustices associated with British rule in his native Ireland and, later, in India?⁹

To date, scholars who have argued for the satirical consistency of the *Vindication* have done so from the position of defending Burke's reputation as an undeviating conservative thinker in the natural-law tradition, taking such rhetoric as a sign of Burke's prescience in exposing the disorderly mischief underlying the state-of-nature metaphysics of the *philosophes*. Carl B. Cone read the *Vindication* as the first salvo in Burke's "lifelong struggle against the rationalism of his century." Peter Stanlis, in similar vein, argued that the author, "With characteristic insight, even at age twenty-seven...perceived the revolutionary tendency of the state of nature theory, which in his last years was to help to destroy the established order."¹⁰ These interpretations at least recognize the complexity introduced into the question of Bolingbroke's intellectual legacy by the influence that French thinkers had upon the philosopher statesman in exile. Consequently, they place Burke's project within the wider debate that was emerging from Rousseau's recently published *Discourse on Inequality* without having awkwardly to invert Burke's own assertions that Bolingbroke's thought was, indeed, his chief target. But in their desire to trace a straight line between the *Vindication* and various of Burke's later writings, these scholars also pass over the true source of the

night's supper to those who labour, and who in reality feed both the pensioners and themselves." (Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, 9:121.)

⁹ Evidence for this youthful anger most often cited by commentators today include: the so-called "Tracts on the Popery Laws," written some time between 1761 and 1765, in *Writings and Speeches*, 9: 434-82; issue 7 of *The Reformer*, in Arthur P. I. Samuels, *The Early Life Correspondence and Writings of the Rt. Hon. Edmund Burke LL.D.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1923), 314-317; and the *Speech on Fox's India Bill*, 1783, in *Writings and Speeches*, 5:378-451.

¹⁰ Cone, *Burke and the Nature of Politics*, 1:22; Peter J. Stanlis, *Edmund Burke and the Natural Law* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1958), 125. See also John Morley, *Burke* (London, 1904), 15-17, where Morley argues that "Burke foresaw from the first what, if rationalism were allowed to run an unimpeded course, would be the really great business of the second half of his century."

text's satirical plot, which does not lie with the information brought to bear on the argument, nor with the reasoning used to interpret it, but with the ridiculous impression created when the former is trivialized by the abuse of the latter.

This interpretative blind-spot is shared by the contending view that passages such as that quoted above reveal the *Vindication* to be the carefully disguised cry of a repressed colonial voice. Isaac Kramnick's *The Rage of Edmund Burke*, which appeared in 1976, has proved the most influential and enduring study to discern beneath this satirical *jeu d'esprit* the author's seething anger at the social injustices that his Irish youth had fired.¹¹ For Kramnick, following a psychoanalytical paradigm based on the work of Erik Erikson, Burke wrote the *Vindication* as he emerged from a self-imposed "moratorium" of six years (directly following his move from Ireland to London in 1750) in which he was "wrestling with his own ambivalent social views" prior to "breaking loose" and committing himself to a political, rather than literary, career. By his mid-twenties, according to Kramnick, Burke had acquired a powerful magazine of middle-class and colonial resentment that now required camouflaging with the deference necessary to progress in the very seat of aristocratic privilege and British power. The *Vindication*, then, emerged as "at one and the same time a radical manifesto and a conservative apologia," with the preface to the second edition composed as a judiciously orthodox response to the unexpected success of the unvarnished piece.

¹¹ Isaac Kramnick, *The Rage of Edmund Burke: Portrait of an Ambivalent Conservative* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1977), 88-93. The best survey of Burke's childhood and education in Ireland can be found in Lock, *Edmund Burke*. The central issue for most commentators is Burke's "mixed" parentage. His father, Richard, was a Protestant lawyer in Dublin. His mother, Mary, was a Nagle, from a Catholic landowning family in County Cork that had suffered from the popery laws which had been introduced by the government of William and Mary after the final defeat of James II in 1690.

Kramnick's psychological analysis has now given way to more fashionable nationalist and postcolonialist ones, in which tensions of sexuality and class have been fully replaced by the outsider identity of the Irish colonial; but much of Kramnick's original evidence has been incorporated *à la mode*. Michel Fuchs, for example, describes the *Vindication* as the first rhetorical outburst from "an accumulation of contradictions, political, historical, and personal" that constitute Burke's process of self-fashioning. The deficiencies of Bolingbroke's style become the complacent, aristocratic betrayal of the passion for justice, and the purpose of the work itself "to force open the doors of the society in which Burke longed to be received without abjuring his loyalty to his mother country." Burke "entered those doors stealthily," Fuchs continues, "and, as he proceeded, he placed explosive devices here and there that he tended to defuse as soon as he had set them."¹² Like Kramnick, Fuchs points to the persuasive rhetorical power of the social critique contained within the *Vindication* and considers the addition of the preface in 1757 as a prudent move to avoid the implications of association with such rhetoric once his identity had been disclosed.¹³ Unlike Kramnick, Fuchs's Burkean "self" is fashioned more consciously and programmatically, with Erikson's interpretive paradigm being replaced by Frantz Fanon's study of the colonized mind in *Peau noire, masques blancs*.¹⁴

Most recently, Carole Fabricant has revisited this material in a 2005 article, "Colonial Sublimities and Sublimations: Swift, Burke, and Ireland," that expands upon elements of her

¹² Fuchs, *Edmund Burke*, 110-11, 148.

¹³ The text is said to have influenced Godwin and Wollstonecraft, and John Nichols went so far in a conversation with Arthur Young as to attribute to it the outbreak of the French Revolution through its influence on Diderot and d'Alembert, although, as the context involved a direct comparison with the *Reflections*, the statement was probably more wit than judgment. See M. Betham-Edwards, ed., *The Autobiography of Arthur Young, with Selections from his Correspondence* (London, 1898), 428.

¹⁴ Fuchs, *Edmund Burke*, 148n133.

earlier book-length study *Swift's Landscape*. Drawing upon other works on literature and the colonial politics of eighteenth-century Ireland, Fabricant interprets the *Vindication* as a powerful specimen of the “colonial unconscious” or the Irish nationalist voice.¹⁵ In her approach to the texts, Fabricant deploys close Swiftian parallels to highlight both the sense of alienation experienced by talented Irishmen attempting to storm the gates of the British establishment, and the satirical weapon with which such an eternal outsider could safely give vent to that alienation from within. Thus, the *Vindication* is revealed as one of Fuchs’ explosive devices through its textual and stylistic similarities with Swift’s own *Tale of a Tub*, *Modest Proposal*, and *Short Description of Ireland*—similarities which also offer a connection between Burke’s rhetorical skills and his fascination with the aesthetics of the sublime.¹⁶ But Fabricant’s debt to Kramnick and Fuchs is also revealed in the evidence she summons up from other writings by Burke, most notably his contributions to *The Reformer*, a journal that he is believed to have edited during its short existence from January to April 1748 and which attacks the enormous disparities of the Irish economy, and, from the other end of his life, his *Letter to a Noble Lord*.¹⁷

Such political and social psychoanalysis has certainly reinforced our understanding of important aspects of the background to the writing of the *Vindication*. It simply cannot be

¹⁵ Carole Fabricant, “Colonial Sublimities and Sublimations: Swift, Burke, and Ireland,” *English Literary History* 72, no. 2 (Summer 2005), 309-337; and *Swift's Landscape* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982). For the “other works,” see in particular Thomas McLoughlin, *Contesting Ireland: Irish Voices against England in the Eighteenth Century* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1999), and Luke Gibbons, *Edmund Burke and Ireland: Aesthetics, Politics, and the Colonial Sublime* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

¹⁶ Fabricant argues that the *Philosophical Enquiry*’s publication “in the same year...underscores how early in Burke’s mental development the political and the aesthetic became fused in the concept of the sublime.” “Colonial Sublimities,” 324.

¹⁷ “I fancy, many of our fine Gentlemen’s Pageantry would be greatly tarnished, were their gilt coaches to be preceded and followed by the miserable Wretches, whose Labour supports them.” Samuels, *Early Life*, 316. Fuchs asserts that *The Reformer* “was part of the broader ideological assault on the indolent and useless great from self-made men of talent and genius.”

denied that Burke's professional insecurities and Irish background combined in some degree to shape its style and content; but difficulties arise when that interpretative framework, reinforced by presentist assumptions and anachronistic terminology, invades all aspects of the complex stages by which such a text was manufactured.¹⁸ The point is, ironically, made by Fabricant herself, when, after declaiming against the "appropriation of [Burke] as a staunchly conservative, even reactionary thinker" by modern-day "Neocons," she offers this conclusion: "[I]t is precisely—indeed only—by recovering the Irish context of [Swift and Burke] and insisting on its centrality to their thought that we can come to appreciate their global significance, their important impact on questions of universal values that confront us today."¹⁹

While the dangers of anachronism and ideological appropriation are evident in discussion over Burke's consistency, the same approaches open up one undeniably positive channel of investigation: they remind us of the sheer rhetorical accomplishment of the author of the *Vindication*. It is a tribute to his stylistic method that, even after the cumulative evidence of forty years in the political spotlight, we are left unsure of Burke's true relationship to observations that he incorporates into his parody. This point has been developed in an interesting, because more open-ended, way by David Bromwich, who suggests that the language of the *Vindication* provides an early illustration of Burke's lifelong attempt to resolve the tension between man's natural condition and the artificiality of

¹⁸ The work of J.C.D. Clark has helped to show how insidiously anachronistic terminology has inhibited the analysis and evaluation of eighteenth-century debates. In particular, contemporary preoccupations with ideological radicalism in politics and with nationalist theory have obscured the continuing power of religion to shape the parameters and language of debate at that time. My own debt to Clark's historiographical arguments should be evident in the course of this dissertation. See, J.C.D. Clark, *English Society, 1660-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), and *Our Shadowed Present*.

¹⁹ Fabricant, "Colonial Sublimities," 329. The now ubiquitous "Neocons" appear to have taken on the convenient role of the defining "Other" in these current ideological preoccupations.

social life, a tension that is all the greater since man naturally acts, not with rational foresight, but in accordance with the sympathetic inclinations and choices that emerge from persuasion and human passion. What, then, if bad or deceitful reasoning gains rhetorical force through the sheer power of its appeal to our sentiments? “Bad as the theory is,” Bromwich reasons, “the momentum of the parody [in the *Vindication*] seems to show that one could think about society like that if one chose; and if enough others were persuaded, society would have to be altered accordingly, with whatever effects of mayhem.” It is a vivid reminder of how rhetoric always holds the potential to escape the pen, uprooting the passions and creating in the audience disorders unintended by the speaker. Bromwich pushes his point further by linking it to Burke’s treatment of the sublime in his *Philosophical Enquiry*. Here, Burke argues that the “sublime” has the capacity to attract us naturally toward a relationship or apprehension that appears to transcend or overwhelm our nature itself. Thus, in Bromwich’s own words, Burke’s satire “is of that uneasy kind that turns against the party it means to protect; or, anyway, readily entertains the thought of what it would be like to turn against them.”²⁰

Relating the *Vindication* to the *Philosophical Enquiry* through the rhetoric of the sublime marks an important step toward a better understanding of Burke’s purpose, although this essay will point to a slightly different interpretation of that relationship, one that focuses much more on the “false sublime” as a means of detecting and disarming flawed, disorderly, and deceitful reasoning. It is, after all, not necessary to decide whether Burke is ever in danger of believing his own rhetoric to appreciate the pressing concern of this topic for a young man brought up in the volatile atmosphere of Protestant Dublin in the 1740s, or

²⁰ David Bromwich, *A Choice of Inheritance: Self and Community from Edmund Burke to Robert Frost* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 50.

pursuing his journalistic aspirations in the burgeoning market for printed material that existed in London in the 1750s. When one considers that large sections of the *Vindication* comprise rhetorical flourishes in the style of Bolingbroke that are clearly intended to jar with the thinness of their content and appear ridiculously pompous and overblown—in other words, falsely sublime—we can discern how immediate circumstances around Burke and in the Republic of Letters in the mid-1750s invited a satirical link between the rhetoric of the deistic, anti-Hanoverian Bolingbroke on the one hand and the destabilizing perversion of learning and the moral bankruptcy of political opposition on the other. Such a link would explain much of the web of deception, tensions, and ambiguities that comprise the *Vindication* without requiring speculative recourse to internalized national or sexual identities; but to appreciate this it is necessary to absorb more carefully than researchers have done to date the nature of projects that were taking shape within Tully's Head at the same time that Burke was working out this one.

II: The Lost Patriot Epic

We have gone some way to this goal in our analysis of the researches of Spence and Warburton. We can draw the intellectual and personal context of Burke's first book-length work tighter still by considering the publications of one more figure who was central to the Tully's Head circle at this time. This was Joseph Warton, a friend of Spence and Dodsley, and someone close enough to Burke to secure for the young Irishman his first political position, as secretary for the rising parliamentary star William Gerard Hamilton, around

1759.²¹ Warton edited and authored two important works that straddle Burke's own debut: a four-volume edition of Virgil's works, published in 1753, and the first volume of *An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope*, which appeared three years later, that is, at the same time as the *Vindication*, and also under Mary Cooper's name. They prove to be excellent resources for enriching our understanding of how Tully's Head shaped Burke's professional work at this crucial stage in his career.

Joseph Warton's researches at the heart of Tully's Head were, as he acknowledged himself, heavily influenced by Spence. Taken as a whole, they concern the application of the latest scholarship in Virgil, Spenser, and Lucretius to a Longinian critique of Pope's *oeuvre* that was similar in tone to Spence's own *Essay on Pope's Odyssey*. Warton himself was more than twenty years Spence's junior, but the two shared a similar background, having been educated at Winchester School and Oxford and proceeding to ordination in the Church of England. Warton's first major publication, the poem *Fashion*, appeared in 1742, after a few short poetical contributions to the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and was followed two years later by *The Enthusiast, or, the Lover of Nature*, a riposte to Shaftesbury's denunciation of enthusiasm. In 1746, he wrote for Dodsley's *Museum*, and Dodsley published his *Odes on Various Subjects*, which included an "Ode to Fancy" that William Shenstone judged the best imitation of Milton's *Il Penseroso* he had read. As their titles indicate, these poems share a fascination with solitude and the simplicity of nature, and many rely for their effect upon a personification of passions that reveals a deep debt to Spenser and Milton. In 1755, just as

²¹ Hamilton wrote to Warton on February 12, 1765: "Some years since you was so kind as to recommend Mr. Burke to my attention, to whose conversation I have been indebted for all that entertainment and improvement which you then assured me I should receive from so very literate and ingenious an acquaintance." See, John Wooll, *Biographical Memoirs of the Late Revd. Joseph Warton D.D.* (London, 1806), 299. Burke split with Hamilton acrimoniously in 1765 over the terms of their working agreement. See Burke, *Correspondence*, 1: 163-66, 179-86.

his involvement in Tully's Head was at its height, Warton returned to Winchester as an usher, and then served from 1766 to his retirement in 1793 as headmaster of the school. This shift in employment helps to explain the contours of his own literary output, particularly the barren publishing record over the twenty-six years that separated the appearance of the first volume of his influential *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope* from the second.²² His significance within the Tully's Head network, however, does not appear to have diminished greatly, with his status resting doubly on his position at Winchester and later, in the mid-1760s, his membership of the famous "Club" established by Reynolds and Johnson.²³ His brother, Thomas, a don at Trinity College, Oxford, and professor of poetry there from 1757, also had several works published through Tully's Head.

Warton's first major work of critical commentary was his edition of *The Works of Virgil*, which was dedicated to George Lyttelton and is of particular significance for two reasons. Structurally, it is a fine example of the collaborative working of the Tully's Head circle and shines valuable light upon the scholarly personalities that Dodsley was drawing upon at the time. Among the eclectic group of writers whose works were incorporated into the four volumes were William Warburton, William Whitehead, Thomas Warton (Joseph's brother), Samuel Johnson, Mark Akenside, and William Benson. Analytically, the edition as a whole also owes a substantial debt to Joseph Spence, whose name appears on the title page

²² Volume 1 was published in 1756, and volume 2 (which included 200 pages believed to have been composed in the 1750s), not until 1782. The second volume appeared under the slightly reformed title *Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope*. See William Darnall MacClintock, *Joseph Warton's Essay on Pope* (1933; reprint, New York: Russell & Russell, 1971), and David Fairer, "The Writing and Printing of Joseph Warton's *Essay on Pope*" in *Studies in Bibliography*, 30 (1977), 211-219.

²³ A selection of Warton's correspondence can be found in Wooll, *Memoirs of Warton*, 203-406. The most recent biographical study of Warton is John A. Vance, *Joseph and Thomas Warton* (Boston: Twayne, 1983); but see also Joan H. Pittock, *The Ascendancy of Taste. The Achievement of Joseph and Thomas Warton*. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973).

below Warton's. Indeed, there is no better illustration of the way in which Spence performed his cardinal and transitional role in working through Pope's intellectual legacy. "I must inform the reader," writes Warton in the advertisement to the first volume, "that Mr. Spence hath promoted this undertaking with that warmth and readiness with which he always serves his friends, by communicating to me a great number of manuscript notes of the late Mr. Holdsworth, author of *Muscipula*, &c:....Mr. Spence likewise obliged me with several excellent remarks of his own, made when he was abroad, that were never yet published, and with some few of Mr. Pope's. His *Polymetis* also hath greatly enriched the following collection."²⁴ Since Spence's contributions are scattered throughout the footnotes and commentary, it is easier for our purposes to trace his influence thematically, in the ways that Warton treats Virgil as an allegorist and as an epic poet.

According to Warton, in his "Dissertation on the Nature and Conduct of the Aeneid," Virgil has a "perfect insight in to human nature." This is seen in the way he is able to convey the simple and natural through sublime rhetoric, and his unerring sense of propriety, his accompanying grasp of what is "proper," means that he never descends into the false sublime—he never "sinks"—like authors whose "affectation of greatness often hurts the perspicuity of style." He exhibits the technical qualities of "perspicuity, purity, harmony, brevity, and sublimity" that constitute the genius of the composer of epic poetry. This insight into human nature is also what makes Virgil's epic poetry a supreme act of historical translation. The brevity and clarity of his phrases and images are accompanied by a moral and historical imagination that is entirely proper in its context and consistently rises above

²⁴ Warton, *Works of Virgil*, 1:xviii, xxviii-xxx. Wooll states that Thomas Warton "was sedulously employed in the edition of Virgil" (*Memoirs of Warton*, 75). The significance of this collaboration lies particularly in the nature of Thomas's own research, on Spenser, which was realized in the publication of his commentary on the *Faerie Queene*, mentioned below, p. 102.

the fashionable mode. Virgil does not mix his styles, like Tasso and Ariosto, and his “Strength of Imagination” is incorporative, rather than innovative: “Almost all the little Facts in [the *Aeneid*] are built on History: and even as to particular Lines, no one perhaps ever borrowed more from the Poets that preceded him, than he did.”²⁵

Preserving an understanding of this genius through modern translation was a prime concern of Warton’s. He provided his own renditions of the *Eclogues* and *Georgics*; but when he considered whose translation of the *Aeneid* he should use, he settled on a recently completed one by Spence’s close acquaintance, the poet and former Winchester scholar Christopher Pitt.²⁶ This choice was a clear sign of the end of John Dryden’s dominance in that field. Warton goes to some length to explain why, technically and stylistically, Dryden’s famous translation was rejected and, in so doing, he drives home Spence’s argument in the final dialogue of *Polymetis* about “how deficient or incurious our translators are, in representing the allegories of the antients.”²⁷ Pitt had completed his translation of the *Aeneid*, with encouragement from Spence, in the 1720s, and Warton introduces it with Pope’s posthumous blessing and an apology to Dryden that is clearly indebted to *Polymetis*.²⁸ In an acute article on Warton’s *Virgil*, Mark Thackeray has noted the methodological differences between Pitt’s *Aeneid* and Dryden’s, and shown how they are reflected also in Warton’s own translations of the *Georgics* and *Eclogues*. Both Pitt and Warton intensify the use of imagery and allegorical personification to tighten the association between simplicity

²⁵ Ibid., 2: iii-xxiii.

²⁶ Ibid., 1: xxvii.

²⁷ Spence, *Polymetis*, 307-8.

²⁸ Warton, *Works of Virgil*, 1:xvi-xxvii.

and sublimity, and, at the same time, to deflect from Dryden's political agenda through a more stringent historicization of Virgil's work.²⁹

At this point we find ourselves again confronting the influence of William Warburton. Warton includes among the essays and translations that comprise his edition an extract from the *Divine Legation of Moses* under the title "A Dissertation on the Sixth Book of Virgil's Aeneis [sic]." This weighty contribution reveals a great deal about the historicizing of allegory that we find in Spence, as well as about Warburton's own polemical and syncretic views on the rituals of the ancient mysteries. These mysteries, as we have seen in the "Brutus" plan, were understood to contain the wisdom necessary for passing on the truths of natural religion and natural society to successive generations—in pure or debased form, according to whether they were viewed as esoteric philosophy or corrupted theology. Warburton's stated purpose in his essay is to show that "Aeneas's adventure to the infernal shades, is no other than a figurative description of his initiation into the mysteries" and that Virgil uses this lengthy digression "to represent a perfect lawgiver, in the person of Aeneas." In other words, the *Aeneid* was an extended allegory upon a "system of politics."³⁰ Warburton's interpretation, to which we will return later in this chapter, is affirmed by Warton in his own introductory "Life of Virgil." Here, the poet's work is forcefully laid out as a commentary upon the negotiation between republic and empire, or liberty and order, under Augustus, and the genius of the artist shown most fully in the way that sublime

²⁹ Mark Thackeray, "Christopher Pitt, Joseph Warton, and Virgil" *The Review of English Studies*, n. s., 43, no. 171 (Aug., 1992), 333, 331n10. Thackeray is surely right to argue that, in constructing this project, "Pitt and Warton were then doing for Virgil what Alexander Pope had done for Homer."

³⁰ Warton, *Works of Virgil*, 3:1, 10; 3:2. "A Dissertation on the Sixth Book of Virgil's Aeneis" takes up seventy-six pages of the third volume. Warburton had been asked originally if he would allow passages from this dissertation to be used as footnotes, but he refused. See Stephen J. Curry, "The Literary Criticism of William Warburton," in *English Studies*, XLVIII, no. 5 (October 1967). Slava Klima states that Spence, as professor of poetry, "lectured on the *Aeneid* as a political poem." Slava Klima, ed., *Joseph Spence: Letters from the Grand Tour* (Montreal : McGill-Queen's University Press, 1975), 1.

allegorical writing is used to combine a lamentation for past glories with a spirited vision of the prospects for civic and moral regeneration. In this way, under Warton's, and Tully's Head's, careful hands, Virgil is enthroned within an apostolic succession of epic poets running from Homer to Milton, and we are brought back to Lyttelton's exhortation to Pope, conceived over the tomb of the great Mantuan, to continue that apostolate.

But had that apostolic, Patriotic succession actually ended with Milton? And, if so, why had Pope been unable to carry it on into his own times? What, in other words, explained the lost Patriot epic of the eighteenth century? Warton set about answering these questions in his second main publication of the decade, his *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope*, where he strengthens and accentuates the personal and intellectual threads that were woven together in his *Virgil*. Structurally, the *Essay* comprises a chronological commentary of Pope's major works. Editorial comment is highly variable in quantity and quality, but is given coherence through the overarching attempt to rank Pope within a pantheon of English poets, of which Spenser, Milton, and Shakespeare occupy the top rank. The litmus test for Warton's ranking is *acer spiritus ac vis*—a phrase borrowed from Quintilian that suggests a creative and glowing imagination tuned to a correct apprehension of the sublime and pathetic. For Warton, this faculty, or genius, arises out of the proper convergence of literary, historical and philosophical thinking that we find in Sir Philip Sidney's classic of the Elizabethan renaissance, the *Defense of Poesy*.³¹ By this measure, Warton feels obliged to

³¹ Warton may have compiled an edition of Sidney's *Arcadia*, with the *Defense* attached, between 1784 and 1787. John Nichols transcribes Warton's advertisement for the project, which begins: "The Public has paid, of late, so much attention to our *old Poets*, that it has been imagined a perusal of some of our *old Critics* also may be found equally agreeable." The project also apparently included critical writings by Ben Jonson. See Edward L. Hart, ed., *Minor Lives, A Collection of Biographies by John Nichols* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), 157-58. Warton's "Dissertation on the Aeneid" at the beginning of the second volume of the *Works of Virgil* surely takes its referents from the *Defense of Poesy*; but John A. Vance's statement that Warton published an edition of Sidney's work in 1784 appears to be incorrect. See John A. Vance, *Joseph and*

exclude Pope from the top rank of the “transcendently sublime [and] pathetic,” and so answers the great Lytteltonian counterfactual—Could Pope have ever emulated Homer and Virgil?—in the negative. He justifies his opinion most succinctly when discussing Pope’s plans for the epic poem “on the arrival of Brutus, the supposed grandson of Aeneas, in our island, and the settlement of the first foundations of the British monarchy.” Warton is unconvinced that “so didactic a genius” could have succeeded here, for Pope’s “close and constant reasoning had impaired and crushed the faculty of imagination.” He would, Warton concludes, most likely have written more in the ornate and fashionable style of Voltaire’s *Henriade* or even of Tasso than with the “affecting strokes of nature” that are characteristic of Homer’s work.³²

A particularly striking aspect of Warton’s study is the use made of Lucretius and Spenser to justify his judgment of Pope. Edmund Spenser was a statesman and critic of the systemic moral corruption that he observed at the “Fairy Court” of Elizabeth I, and, apart from his poetic muse, Bolingbroke’s exemplary historical Patriot. Spenser earns Warton’s praise for his “simplicity, with elegance and propriety.” While on one level this judgment is orthodox Aristotelianism, Warton, both following and departing from Spence, reconfigures the idea of “simplicity” to make it compatible with particularity and detail, a point raised in support of the genius of Spenser and validated by a lengthy passage from the eighth book of Quintilian’s *Institutes*.³³ General characters and generalized descriptions fail to penetrate the

Thomas Warton (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1983), 85. An unattributed edition of the *Defense*, dated 1752, is mentioned by Rodney M. Baine, *Studies in Bibliography* 3 (1950-51), 262-65.

³² Warton, *Essay on Pope*, 1: 279, 280-81.

³³ For Spenser’s standing in British literary circles in the first half of the eighteenth century, see Richard Frushell, *Edmund Spenser in the Early Eighteenth Century: Education, Imitation, and the Making of a Literary Model* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1999), and the very useful chapter on “Political Elizabethanism” in Gerard, *Patriot Opposition*, 150-84.

levels of meaning accessible to true allegory and inhibit the sublime through their lack of contextual or historical propriety; but Spenser's allegorical figures, in pointed contrast to Pope's youthful imitations, are "drawn with so much clearness and truth, that we behold them with our eyes, as plainly as we do on the cieling [sic] of the banqueting-house. For, in truth, the pencil of Spenser is as powerful as that of Rubens, his brother allegorist; which two artists resembled each other in many respects; but Spenser had more grace, and was as warm a colourist."³⁴ Here, Warton owes a great deal to the researches of his brother Thomas, who had recently explained in his *Observations on the Faerie Queene of Spenser* how Spenser's imagination had deepened the allegorical and moral-philosophical penetration of the poem: "Ariosto relates the adventures of Orlando, Rogero, Bradamante, &c. by which is understood the conquest of the passions, the excellence of virtue, and other moral doctrines; on which account we may term the Orlando a moral poem; but can we term the Faerie Queen upon the whole, a moral poem? is it not equally an historical or political poem? for tho' it be (according to its author's words) an allegory or dark conceit, yet that which is couched or understood under this allegory is the history, and intrigues of Queen Elizabeth's courtiers; which however are introduc'd with a moral design."³⁵ Thus Thomas Warton shows, as Warburton did with Virgil, how it is in the very contextualization of the poet's work that his allegorical skill is employed to its fullest extent and reveals its truths most clearly and broadly. Only by such art can the true signification of man's "natural" state be employed as a critical device to challenge the fashions, iniquities and moral excesses of civilized society,

³⁴ Warton, *Essay on Pope*, 2:32. Although the second volume was not published until 1782, the first two hundred sheets had been printed and stored by 1760.

³⁵ Thomas Warton, *Observations on the Faerie Queene of Spenser*, (London, 1754), 220. Warton argues that "[Spenser] has shewn himself a much more ingenious allegorist" than Ariosto, since "his imagination bodies forth unsubstantial things, turns them to shape, and marks out the nature, powers, and effects of that which is ideal and abstracted, by visible and external symbols."

since only in this way are the issues revealed in their immediate relation to the inner conflicts and passions that the reader will feel at work within himself. It is crucial to note how this allegorical perspective on “nature,” or the plain truth of things, shifts the basis of criticism in a radically different direction from the imputed, philosophical or historical alienation of “natural” man from his “artificial” surroundings that was being developed contemporaneously by thinkers such as Bolingbroke and Rousseau.

When we turn to Warton’s treatment of Lucretius, we find that his admiration for the Roman poet is not focused upon the subject matter of the *De Rerum Natura*, where there is much to confirm a clergyman’s fear of the attractions of “Spinozism.”³⁶ Instead, it concerns the art by which Lucretius transmitted complex scientific and philosophical concepts on the relationship between nature and artifice, virtue and corruptibility, through the medium of poetry. Regardless of its materialistic and anachronistic description, the poem conveys, through the sheer force of its rhetoric, a narrative of the liberation of nature from superstition, fear and enervation. In his own essay on didactic poetry in the first volume of the *Virgil*, Warton had devoted seven pages to this neglected poet, “who seems to have had more fire, spirit and energy, more of the *vivida vis animi*, than any of the Roman poets.”³⁷ Warton was struck particularly by Lucretius’s skill at conjuring up vivid “allegorical personages” to convey the competing passions of the human condition.³⁸ This selective emphasis upon

³⁶ “’Tis hard to determine whether the poetry or impiety...(where many weak arguments are brought against the immortality of the soul) be greatest.” *Works of Virgil*, 2:421.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 1:416.

³⁸ Warton describes Lucretius as the “sculptor-poet” (*Essay on Pope*, 2:101n). In his “Reflections on Didactic Poetry,” he quotes sections from Lucretius with the comment that, “I am sure there is no piece by the hand of Guido or Carrache, that exceeds the following groupe of allegorical personages” (*Works of Virgil*, 1:421). Burke, in his *Philosophical Enquiry*, uses the *De Rerum Natura* I, 62-67 to show how poetry and rhetoric affect by sympathy rather than imitation (Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, 1: 316-17). A comparison of

Lucretius as an allegorist and epic poet permits an application of the “naturalistic” critique of civilization that is not analogous or metaphorical or even literalistic, but directed at the perennial struggle of the individual to attain moral self-discipline, to express and channel his nature within and through the very artifacts of civilization.

For Warton, Pope’s *Essay on Man* was perhaps the closest to the Lucretian model in terms of intent that the eighteenth century had yet produced. So what had held Pope back from equaling Lucretius and Spenser as an epic poet, and transforming his poetry into literature sophisticated and subtle enough, yet sufficiently broad in its affective appeal, to elevate the moral cause of the political Opposition? Warton concludes that Pope lacked the required degree of “creative and glowing imagination”—*acer spiritus ac vis*—because he brought to his verse “more of the philosopher than of the poet,” and it is here that we reach the underplot of the author’s schema.³⁹ For the person who, by Pope’s own admission, was the genius that taught him the philosophical analysis of nature was Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke, the quality of whose wisdom had finally been revealed to the world in the posthumous works that had hit the bookshops from 1752 to 1754.⁴⁰ Warton had taken great care in his researches to trace the textual similarities between Bolingbroke’s writings and the *Essay on Man* and he states explicitly that, “The late Lord Bathurst repeatedly assured me, that he had read the whole scheme of the Essay on Man, in the hand-writing of Bolingbroke, and drawn up in a series of propositions, which Pope was to versify and illustrate.”⁴¹ Nor

the fifth section of Burke’s *Philosophical Enquiry*, on words and poetry, with Warton’s treatment of Spenser has not yet been attempted, and might yield some valuable points of comparison.

³⁹ Warton, *Essay on Pope*, 1: 281.

⁴⁰ Pope’s admiration for Bolingbroke’s intellect is attested by Spence. Warton writes that, “Pope, indeed, idolized him: when in company with him, he appeared with all the deference and submission of an affectionate scholar.” *Ibid.*, 2:115.

was Warton slow with more pointed opinions about the late noble writer when occasion allowed: “When Tully attempted poetry, he became as ridiculous as Bolingbroke when he attempted philosophy and divinity; We look in vain for that genius which produced the Dissertation on Parties, in the tedious philosophical works; of which it is no exaggerated satire to say, that the reasoning of them is sophistical and inconclusive, the style diffuse and verbose, and the learning seemingly contained in them not drawn from the originals, but picked up and purloined from French critics and translations.”⁴² In unpublished notes that Warton had prepared for the conclusion to his *Essay*, we find a more pithy judgment still: “Ld. Bolingbroke led [Pope] to read the French Moralists....I think Ld. Bolingbroke a great hand in making Pope a moral poet—Ld. Bolingbroke himself had no Taste of true poetry & Pope fell into his tastes of all sorts.”⁴³ It was, then, evident to Warton that the roots of the Patriots’ disappointments of the 1740s were exposed in the flaws of their founding genius.

The first volume of Warton’s *Essay* provided a refreshing and innovative slant on the publicity that had surrounded the posthumous publication of Bolingbroke’s works—which smelt, to many readers, of esotericism and irreligion. Between 1754 and 1756, a number of replies to Bolingbroke’s *opus* had been published, varying from Warburton’s gleefully hubristic *View of Lord Bolingbroke’s Philosophy; in Four Letters to a Friend* (1754) to the more focused *Notes on the Philosophical Writings of Lord Bolingbroke* (1755), by Charles

⁴¹ Ibid., 2:58. For those “passages in Bolingbroke’s Posthumous Works, that bear the closest resemblance to the tenets of this Essay,” see 2:115n (where fourteen are listed in all).

⁴² Ibid., 1: 119-20. Warton cannot resist driving home further the point about Bolingbroke’s “insufferable arrogance to vilify and censure, and to think he can confute, the best writers in that best language [Greek].” He quotes extensively from Harris’s *Hermes* on such short-sighted intellects and muses that, “one would think the author had Bolingbroke in his eye, if his valuable work had not been published before the world was blessed with the First Philosophy.” Ibid., 1:120n.

⁴³ Quoted by Pittock, *The Ascendancy of Taste*, 159.

Bulkley. The only direct contribution to the debate to carry the imprint of Tully's Head before the second edition of the *Vindication*, in 1757, was an ambiguous text entitled *Miscellaneous Observations on the Works of the late Lord Viscount Bolingbroke. Part I. By a Free-thinker* (1755).⁴⁴ As his private comments to Warton confirm, Dodsley was still cautious about the possible reaction of friends of Pope whose admiration for Bolingbroke remained undimmed: they still included influential figures such as Chesterfield. But there was room for a lighter *jeu d'esprit* at the lord's expense, or, rather, a modification of the academic in-fighting that might just be oblique enough to broaden the discussion and draw in a wider audience. A satire on Bolingbroke, then, was a delicate but attractive prospect.

III: A New Patriot Satire

The real key to interpreting the impact of these personal, professional, and intellectual contexts upon Burke's *Vindication* is to acknowledge that Dodsley and Burke were not so much interested in fashioning a direct satire of Bolingbroke's writings as parodying the position Bolingbroke had assumed within various reading markets, from the small circle debating his impact upon Pope's legacy to the wide field of readers for whom he had become symbolic of the subversive link between free-thinking and irreligion. An attack on the "real" author of the contested texts was a pointless exercise, since those texts had taken on novel

⁴⁴ The reception of this work, of which a second part remains untraced, might be gauged from the introduction to a reply it elicited the same year, where it is described as, "a Pamphlet, so equivocal that the Town is not agreed either what the Design of it is, or even on which Side of the Question it is written..." Philologus Cantabrigiensis, *The Freethinker's Criteria Exemplified, in a Vindication of the Characters of M. Tullius Cicero and the Late Duke of Marlborough, against the Censure of the late Lord Bolingbroke* (London, 1755), 1.

interpretations according to the ways and circumstances in which they had been propagated by Bolingbroke himself, by Pope (underhandedly), and by Bolingbroke's editor Mallett. Burke's chief task was to devise a format that could play upon these themes of fame and infamy simultaneously on a number of levels, linking the intellectual and the personal, in a form appropriate for the market at the moment, and in a spirit that conformed to the wider schemes of Dodsley and of the Tully's Head circle. Commentators who approach this text as if it stands or falls by the accuracy of its imitation of the "authentic" Bolingbroke are missing the point.

Burke's strategy rests upon a "pseudo-Bolingbroke" whose defective rhetorical style, unimaginative historical analysis, and inflexible reasoning lead him to follow a distorted view of "natural" society, posited upon a fallacious sense of the "simple truths" of human nature. The consequence of this distortion is that the pseudo-Bolingbroke is transformed in the presentation of his argument precisely and ironically into the very metaphysical obscurantist and privileged elitist that he sets out to expose as the source of society's woes. The intended moral is not that the real Bolingbroke lacked learning or erudition, but that: first, his dangerously irreligious, deistic esotericism and his social elitism have rendered him void of the literary and historical imagination necessary to perceive the real source of natural order; second, when this deficiency is brought to bear on politics and moral philosophy, the result is a "false sublime" discourse that is bombastic, ridiculous, and dangerously subversive. The noble lord becomes the antithesis of the public spirit and public order for which he claimed to be the country's principal advocate.

The stages by which the pseudo-Bolingbroke argues his case are as follows. First, we are given an historical catalog of wars and invasions, charting the millions slaughtered for

imperial or national profit in the ancient and Classical world. The author then passes to an examination of the inner workings of political society, including a critique of all constitutional forms, a topical rant against the iniquities of the legal system, with its “Injustice, Delay, Puerility, false Refinement, and affected Mystery,” and a passionate attack on the divisions between rich and poor that render both parties slaves to their circumstances.⁴⁵ Finally, there is a personal testament by the author to his youthful correspondent explaining his own world-weary initiation into the truths of political society—truths that, while offering no solution to the miseries of the human condition, at least provide consolation in death.

In his appropriation of the character of Lord Bolingbroke, Burke’s stylistic borrowings from the *Letters on the Study and Use of History* (1752) and the *Philosophical Works* (1754) are evident. The imitative format of a “private” letter to a young lord lets us into an intimate world of esoteric knowledge and mysteries of statecraft, and sets up the coming historical evidence as an initiation into the real, hidden dynamics of continuity and change, where nothing is as it appears. At the same time, a recognizably ornate and overworked literary style alerts us to the self-referential emptiness of the writer’s philosophical history in a way that strips even compelling material of the genuinely pathetic, and therefore of its capacity for moral edification. In the introductory section of the tract, then, instead of leading us to the truths of nature through simplicity, clarity, and propriety (for, as the author himself says, “Life is simple [in the state of nature], and therefore it is happy”), the pseudo-Bolingbroke offers arguments that are repetitious and long-winded.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Burke, *Vindication*, 89.

⁴⁶ The following passage provides an example of the author’s impropriety: “But with respect to you, ye Legislators, ye Civilizers of Mankind! Ye Orpheus’s. Moseses, Minoses, Solons, Theseuses, Lycurguses,

Any inclination to self-examination is obviated by an overemphasis upon conspiracies of elites, which leads the author himself into “[t]he great Error of our Nature...not to know where to stop.”⁴⁷ Thus, in matters of style, the satirical effect of the *Vindication* relies heavily on the emptiness of the pseudo-Bolingbroke’s conviction that the true nature of things can only be perceived once the veil of superstition, imposed by lawgivers, priests, and politicians, and kept in place by the ignorance of the multitude, is rent by the remorseless and courageous exercise of natural reason.

As to matters of substance: in the *Letters*, Bolingbroke had attempted to liberate the study of history from the obscurantist activities of antiquarians, pedants, bigots and enthusiasts by applying a simple, rational philosophical method to the evaluation of historical sources. A man who wishes to gain true moral and civic education from the study of history should apply himself “early to the study of history *as the study of philosophy*, with the intention of being wiser and better, without the affectation of being more learned” [emphasis added].⁴⁸ In the *Philosophical Works*, the same liberation was offered in respect of theology and “artificial” religion, with the roots of moral and civic principles being comprehended within the accessible bounds of natural religion. Now, in the *Vindication*, the same method is applied to political philosophy: “I have defended Natural Religion against a confederacy of Atheists and Divines,” states the pseudo-Bolingbroke, “I now plead for Natural Society

Numas! With Respect to you be it spoken, your Regulations have done more Mischief in cold Blood, than all the Rage of the fiercest Animals in their greatest Terrors, or Furies, has ever done, or ever could do!”; and this of his overamplification: “On considering the strange and unaccountable Fancies and Contrivances of Artificial Reason, I have somewhere called this Earth the Bedlam of our System. Looking now upon the Effects of some of those Fancies, may we not with equal Reason call it likewise the Newgate, and the Bridewell of the Universe.” *Vindication*, 34, 92-93.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 5.

⁴⁸ Bolingbroke, *Letters on the Study and Use of History*, 2 vols. (London, 1752), 1: 27, and see also 57-58.

against Politicians, and for Natural Reason against all three.”⁴⁹ Natural reason alone can lead the enquirer out of the Serbonian bogs of scholasticism or popular prejudice to “truth,” the providential result of nature in simple contemplation of itself. But by this point, the audience is already on its guard that the pseudo-Bolingbroke’s concept of natural society is, precisely, artificial, that his conception of the plain truth is elaborate falsehood, and that what he allows to pass as natural religion, or deism, is, in reality, an artificial, institutionalized system of obfuscation.

For the pretended author of the *Vindication*, the contemplation of what is “true” or “natural” must begin with the state of nature, or “*Natural Society*,” where man stands an object stripped of the accretions, encumbrances, superstitions, fears, customs, and animosities of society. In the first few pages of the piece, the pseudo-Bolingbroke offers his understanding of this primitive condition, “founded in natural Appetites and Instincts, and not in any positive Institution.” It is a description closely reminiscent of Lucretius’s in *De Rerum Natura*.⁵⁰ If it is true, as has been suggested, that it was Rousseau’s *Second Discourse* rather than Bolingbroke’s works that was the intended target of the *Vindication* (an enticing theory, given Joseph Warton’s aside about “French Moralists” and Burke’s later assault upon Rousseau and the radical *philosophes*), it is only a part of the context.⁵¹ In fact, Burke’s treatment of the subject falls neatly within the parameters of a discussion that had been going on for a number of years over the relationship of natural law and natural right theory to moral and civic order, particularly in respect of religious toleration. The chief issues here were

⁴⁹ *Vindication*, 67. But compare Bolingbroke, *Philosophical Works*, 4:1: “Let us take things then as we find them, more curious to know what is than to imagine what may be.” “Were we able to range in the field of first causes,” he states elsewhere, “we should be unable to walk in our own.” *Ibid.*, 1:40.

⁵⁰ See Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, 5: 937-1027.

⁵¹ See Richard B. Sewell, “Rousseau’s Second Discourse in England from 1755 to 1762,” *Philological Quarterly* 17, no.2 (April, 1938), 97-114.

spun out of comparisons between Hobbes and Locke, but they were given added vigor by the popularity of the natural-law thinkers Hugo Grotius and Samuel Pufendorf, and their absorption into early-eighteenth-century political thought through the works of writers such as Lord Shaftesbury and Francis Hutcheson. It is by looking backward into this intellectual context, rather than forward to the eruption of Jacobinism or Rousseauian political radicalism that we will understand best the critical configurations that make up this Burkean satire.

Hobbes, in his relentlessly logical balancing of civil order with the anarchy of the state of nature, was generally considered to have undermined any religious and moral foundations for that order. Attempts by writers such as Shaftesbury to replace man's anarchic tendencies with innate social affections may have softened Leviathan, but they did little to recover those religious and moral foundations and were eventually hollowed out by Hume's demolition of the concept of innate moral or aesthetic senses. Such a recovery, however, could be found in Jean Barbeyrac's popular commentaries on the works of Samuel Pufendorf, which began to accompany English translations of those works from 1710 onwards. Barbeyrac propounded a reading of the author that recovered the spiritual dimension of the transition from the state of nature to society by showing how it was precisely man's conflicted or "fallen" nature—a nature both sociable and antisocial—that drove mankind to impose a civic order upon itself in the interest of security. The breadth of the transmission and popularization of Pufendorf's work in France and Britain remains generally underappreciated by historians; but it had a considerable influence on Montesquieu, and the *Whole Duty of Man* and the "small Pufendorf" (an epitome of the *De jure naturae et gentium*) were soon staples on the university curricula in Britain and Ireland—including at

Trinity College, Dublin, when Burke was a student there.⁵² Indeed, one could almost imagine passages such as the following from the *Whole Duty of Man* being plundered to provide the motto of Patriotism: “From What has been said, it appears, that this is a fundamental Law of Nature, That EVERY MAN OUGHT, AS MUCH AS IN HIM LIES, TO PRESERVE AND PROMOTE SOCIETY: That is, the Welfare of Mankind.”⁵³ In Dodsley’s *Preceptor*, Pufendorf is highly recommended for teaching “the Obligations of Morality” in conformity with “the Sanctions of Christianity.”⁵⁴

Barbeyrac’s Pufendorf opened the door, as it were, for Hutcheson’s “Christian Utilitarianism,” for a Latitudinarian understanding of religious toleration, and for Warburton’s conception of the relationship between secular and religious authority. It argued, in contrast to Hobbes and, later, Rousseau, that the reconciliation of man’s *bellum intestinum* of social and individualistic inclinations lay in apprehending and accepting the providential naturalness of the artifices of society. In so doing, it reconfigured the relationship of the critic both to society and to the individual hearer; but, further, since the seamlessness of this conflict meant that each individual at any time was poised on the edge of that reconciliation, it showed how the truths of the relationship between simple nature and artificial society are better understood through allegory than by rational philosophizing or

⁵² For Pufendorf’s influence on Montesquieu, see Robert Shackleton, *Montesquieu. A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 72. Shackleton sees that influence as concerning the fear and recognition of God that accompanies man from the state of nature into society. Burke’s debt to Montesquieu will be discussed below, in Chapter Four. In the catalog of Burke’s library can be found a copy of the “small Pufendorf,” a 1749 edition of J. Spavan’s annotated *Pufendorf’s Law of Nature and Nations: Abridg’d from the Original* (London, 1749), and Thomas Johnson, *S. Pufendorfii De Officio Hominis & Civis juxta Legem Naturalem* (London, 1737). The former work contains Barbeyrac’s notes to his French translation of the original. Thomas Johnson has erroneously been cited as the author of *A Summary of Natural Religion*, the second edition of which was published by Dodsley in 1749 under the author John Barr (see p. 78 above).

⁵³ Samuel Pufendorf, *The Whole Duty of Man, According to the Law of Nature*, I.3.ix.

⁵⁴ *Preceptor*, xxviii.

historical causality. This distinction was the foundation upon which Burke constructed his Bolingbrokian satire in the *Vindication*, and it relates directly to the issues and debates raised by Warton, Spence, and Warburton in their own publications.⁵⁵

The pseudo-Bolingbroke, precisely because of his reliance upon rationalism and philosophical history to expose the truth of man's nature, cannot encompass the paradoxes and conflicts that are absorbed into Barbeyrac's Pufendorfian schema. As a result, from its promising Lucretian beginnings—Warton, after all, had recognized this epic poet and philosopher as a genius in the art of allegory—the argument of the *Vindication* shortly takes what will strike the modern reader as a Rousseauistic twist, as the loss of this state of primitive innocence is forced into a rationally-driven, speculative narrative and imputed to the growing, restless curiosity of its inhabitants. Lucretius's natural man emerges from the state of nature through a sort of pre-Wagnerian impulse to bodily security and the consequent submission of natural strength and genius to the possessors of gold. The pseudo-Bolingbroke's savage, however, is more a victim of physiology: "the Mind of Man itself is too active and restless a Principle ever to settle on the true Point of Quiet. It discovers every Day some craving Want in a Body, which really wants but little." As a result, local familial groupings cluster into civil societies that are increasingly shaped by the drive for illusory necessities and authorized through artificial religions propounded by lawgivers and

⁵⁵ In *The Allegory of Love*, C.S. Lewis traces the relationship between allegory and the emergence of a consciousness of the *bellum intestinum*: "We cannot speak, perhaps we can hardly think, of an 'inner conflict' without a metaphor; and every metaphor is an allegory in little. And as the conflict becomes more and more important, it is inevitable that these metaphors should expand and coalesce, and finally turn into the fully-fledged allegorical poem." *The Allegory of Love* (New York: Galaxy Books, 1958), 60-61. My reading of Burke's Pufendorfian inclinations may be seen to be reinforced by David Bromwich's recent, highly persuasive description of Burke's lifelong fascination with this "subliminal" impulse, and its relationship to his horror at the revolutionary's or enthusiast's self-destructive urge to fracture the social and moral order. See David Bromwich, "Burke and the Argument from Human Nature" in Ian Crowe, ed., *An Imaginative Whig: Reassessing the Life and Thought of Edmund Burke* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2005), 37-58. I would contend that it is possible to read Burke's "sublime" and "beautiful" as the aestheticizing of Barbeyrac's Pufendorf.

perpetuated by the mechanisms of monarchical tyranny. At the end of this process, the natural passions have subverted reason in an act of self-alienation, and “Natural Society” has been successfully, but artfully, placed in stark contrast to “*Political Society*,” or, the “States, civil Societies, or Governments; into some Form of which, more extended or restrained, all Mankind have gradually fallen.”⁵⁶

The pseudo-Bolingbroke next surveys the humanitarian record of “Political Society” and illustrates the deleterious effects of the move from nature to artifice through a catalog of wars rifled from ancient historical sources. “War,” he opines solemnly, “is the Matter which fills all History.” He computes that governments have been directly responsible for the death of some eighty thousand million souls in the world’s four-thousand-year existence.⁵⁷ Here, the pseudo-Bolingbroke sails very close in spirit to his original, who had written that “Societies become in all respects individuals....Like the philosopher of Malmesbury’s wild men, they act as if they had a right to all they can acquire by fraud or force: and a state of war, so far from being the cause, has been the effect of forming distinct societies....”⁵⁸ In certain respects, the text here is in conformity also with the dramatic requirements of the *Preceptor*, since it makes us aware of the miseries as well as the glories associated with figures such as Julius Caesar and Alexander the Great. It is, in fact, not so much the argument as the rhetorical style of this investigation that rapidly undermines the content. Although the pseudo-Bolingbroke has professed that he has “purposely avoided a Parade of

⁵⁶ Burke, *Vindication*, 3, 6. But see Bolingbroke, *Philosophical Works*, 4:80-81, where the “real” Bolingbroke places greater stress upon the deliberate acts of the lawgivers and their successors, perhaps to signify the possibility of resistance through enlightenment. In both cases, there is a systemic, conspiratorial aspect to man’s social servitude that reflects a contemporary French, rather than Classical, interpretation of the exile from the natural state.

⁵⁷ Burke, *Vindication*, 12, 31.

⁵⁸ Bolingbroke, *Philosophical Works*, 4:53.

Eloquence” on such a subject, the labored repetition of statistics and the continuous straining for more extreme language that he then employs gradually desensitize the reader.⁵⁹ In this way, Burke cleverly conveys an impression of Bolingbroke’s multi-volume verbosity in little over twenty pages; but he also exposes the limitations of Bolingbroke’s philosophical history. The much vaunted evidence of “history and experience” is soon hi-jacked by received opinions rifled from philosophers such as Hobbes and Machiavelli. *A posteriori* analytical techniques become *a priori* assumptions as historical material is applied so selectively that, to take just one example, the whole history of the Athenian republic is treated as “but one Tissue of Rashness, Folly, Ingratitude, Injustice, Tumult, Violence, and Tyranny, and indeed of every Species of Wickedness that can well be imagined.”⁶⁰ Necessarily, written sources are evaluated according to their suitability to the argument rather than in their own right, and gaps in the evidence are confidently interpreted at the same time that the untrustworthiness of the material that does exist is emphasized. Thus, “we have no Particulars of Ninus, but that he made immense and rapid Conquests, which doubtless were not compassed without the usual carnage....” In one particularly delightful passage, after warning that “[w]e know little of Sesostriis,” the author proceeds to six consecutive speculations on that reign, all introduced by the phrases “must have...” or “must know....” Twice in this section, the pseudo-Bolingbroke confesses that he does not have to hand “the Books necessary to make very exact calculations,” and at other times he professes the unreliability of his sources only then to use them uncritically as the basis of his computation

⁵⁹ Burke, *Vindication*, 30-31.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 61. In the *Letters*, Bolingbroke does appear to confirm the circularity of his philosophical history: “Such is the imperfection of human understanding, such the frail temper of our minds, that abstract or general propositions, tho never so true, appear obscure or doubtful to us very often, till they are explained by examples...” *Letters on the Study and Use of History*, 1: 16.

of the number of persons killed directly as a result of the belligerence of political society, calculating that number to be eighty thousand millions. There is sweet irony then, when, in bringing his historical chronicle to an end, he takes for granted the persuasive force of “so fair an Examen, wherein nothing has been exaggerated; no Fact produced which cannot be proved, and none which has been produced in any wise forced or strained, while thousands have, for Brevity, been omitted...”⁶¹ The point to be stressed here—and it will be central to the argument of the fourth chapter below—is that Burke is not merely taking cheap shots at Bolingbroke’s professional pretensions or erudition as an historian: that point had been happily conceded by Bolingbroke himself, in his *Letters*, where he stressed the importance of history as “prudential instruction” rather than accurate record. Burke’s parody takes the noble lord at his word and applies it instead to the more serious point that, in the words of Justin Champion, “History was a means of creating assurance in an audience.”⁶² Given the noble lord’s gravitas and rhetorical skills, this is precisely why Bolingbroke the historian was no laughing matter.

For Burke, a recent initiate into the Republic of Letters, the pseudo-Bolingbroke’s florid but flawed historical reasoning boils down to a matter of authority betrayed. On one level, as we have seen above, this betrayal is signified by the false tone with which the rhetoric strikes the educated ear. On another level, Burke associates it with a central intellectual theme in the armory of the deist and free-thinker: that is, the deliberate closing of any distinction between the sacred and the profane in the material of historical interpretation. This device opens up the way to expose the historical artifices of institutionalized religion

⁶¹ Burke, *Vindication*, 16, 14-15, 18, 31, 66.

⁶² J.A.I. Champion, *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken. The Church of England and its Enemies, 1660-1730* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 34.

and their validating providential claims, to all the rigors of Bayle's historiographical skepticism, and, naturally, to find them wanting. In the context of Tully's Head, that leveling of the sacred and profane was a blunt and ready-loaded device that stood in stark and inferior contrast to the syncretic and allegorical experiments of a Spence or a Warburton. While the issues concerned had already been played out in the pages of writers such as Thomas Burnet, John Toland, and Patrick Delany, the appearance of Bolingbroke's *Letters* in 1752, with their brittle evaluation of ancient and medieval histories, temporarily gave the debate fresh impetus, not least as a revelation of the degree to which radical deism had apparently infected the British political and intellectual elites. This time, a powerful counterattack was launched by Robert Clayton, bishop of Clogher in Ireland, whose *Vindication of the Histories of the Old and New Testament* was sold by Mary Cooper, also in 1752. Significantly, Clayton's argument presages Burke's *Vindication* in many ways. Not least, its early focus is fixed on ridiculing the double standards at play in Bolingbroke's own evaluative techniques: "That there were pious Frauds committed in, and before the Days of *Eusebius*, is not to be denied," Clayton avers smartly, "but it is the Business of *Criticism*, as his Lordship justly expressth it, 'to separate the Ore from the Dross'." He traces the inconsistencies in Bolingbroke's thought to the very insensitivity brought about by compounding "sacred" and "profane" history and leveling contexts with a mechanical philosophical method. It is a fault that Clayton goes on to attribute to the more sinister motivation of the noble lord's concealed campaign against Christianity. Clayton's book appears to echo other aspects of the Tully's Head circle's critiques of Bolingbroke: in the weight it attaches to John Locke's approach to the source evaluation against that of David Hume; in its emphasis that one of Bolingbroke's chief faults is his association of Christianity with Popery, on account of his having

“conversed so long with the Divines in Paris”; and in its use of the reign of Julian the Apostate (two years after the appearance of Warburton’s *Julian*) as proof of the persistence of providential events in history well beyond the age of the Apostles.⁶³ Finally, Clayton summarizes the theme of his *Vindication*, and the best approach for dealing with the ideas of thinkers such as Bolingbroke, in a way that strikingly prefigures Burke’s own Preface of 1757: “[I]f any one attempted to *establish* Mystery, Revelation, or Matters of Fact on such Foundations [metaphysics, philosophy, and abstract reasoning], it would certainly be absurd, and their *Pains* would be *silly*. But when some Scepticks have made Use of Metaphysicks, either in Opposition to Mystery, or to give a wrong explanation of it; and of Philosophy to overturn Revelation; and of abstract Reasoning to confound Matters of Fact; is it not proper that such Persons should be answered, their Objections obviated, and Mystery, Revelation, and Matters of Fact, vindicated from all the *silly* Cavils that have been raised against them? Or in short, is it not fitting that, suitably to the Advice of *Solomon*, *A Fool should be answered according to his Folly, lest he be wise in his own Conceit?*”⁶⁴

⁶³ Robert Clayton, *A Vindication of the Histories of the Old and New Testament. In Answer to the Objections of the late Lord Bolingbroke. In Two Letters to a Young Nobleman* (Dublin and London, [1752]), 12-13, 67-68, 85-86, 64, 81. Clayton’s work is mentioned by McLoughlin and Boulton in Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, 1:129n7, though only in relation to the cluster of “Vindications” that appeared in response to Bolingbroke’s writings. While there is no evidence that Burke knew this work, it deserves more extensive comparison with Burke’s satire than it has received to date, and it is worth noting that Clayton’s father was a clergyman in St. Michan’s parish, Dublin, where Burke grew up.

⁶⁴ Clayton, *Vindication*, 58. Burke was to write: “I cannot conceive how this sort of Writers propose to compass the Designs they pretend to have in view, by the Instruments which they employ. Do they pretend to exalt the Mind of Man, by proving him no better than a Beast? Do they think to enforce the Practice of Virtue, by denying that Vice and Virtue are distinguishable by good or ill Fortune here, or by Happiness or Misery hereafter? Do they imagine they shall increase our Piety, and our Reliance on God, by exploding his Providence, and insisting that he is neither just nor good? Such are the Doctrines which, sometimes concealed, sometimes openly and fully avowed, are found to prevail through the Writings of Lord Bolingbroke; and such are the Reasonings which this noble Writer and several others have been pleased to dignify with the Name of Philosophy. If these are delivered in a specious Manner, and in a Stile above the common, they cannot want a Number of Admirers of as much Docility as can be wished for in Disciples.” Burke, *Vindication*, 2nd edn., iv-v.

To this point in the *Vindication*, the pseudo-Bolingbroke has dealt with the crimes of political society only in its external aspects, as one society confronts another on the international stage. Now our guide asks us to look inwards to the framework of artificial society. Gravely, he reveals that all constitutional systems, being born out of the esoteric conspiracies of Moses and other lawgivers, are able to engender nothing but the enslavement of all who live under them, both rich and poor alike. The former settle into a struggle for status or for unrelieved luxury, the latter become content with their ignorance, and consequently each party slips into a process of moral degeneration by which liberty is lost. We are not surprised to see how the pseudo-Bolingbroke deploys the histories of Athens, Sparta, Rome, Venice and Florence to demonstrate that “the three simple Forms of Artificial Society...however they may differ in Name, or in some slight Circumstances, [are] all Tyrannies”; so much will be familiar from the *Craftsman* and other of Bolingbroke’s writings. But we are surprised to discover that this catalog of political illusions is actually only preparatory to a deeper truth that the writer will confide to the noble reader, which is that even the much vaunted “mixed Form of Government” is nothing more than “an inconsistent Chimaera and Jumble of Philosophy and vulgar Prejudice, that hardly any thing more ridiculous can be conceived.” Since nothing in Bolingbroke’s actual works had prepared the reader for this, the pseudo-Bolingbroke is compelled to confess his earlier belief in such a system, and to explain this away as youthful ignorance or, later, “Sacrifices I have made to Truth.” We are astonished to discover the point to which we have now arrived, and confused by the heightened esoteric or conspiratorial tone of the *Vindication*, since it reinforces the sense of a static, elitist and closed reality of power that is supposedly to be dispelled.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Burke, *Vindication*, 63-4, 69, 70, 69.

To drive home his theme of systemic governmental corruption, the pseudo-Bolingbroke does not return to his historical catalog but shifts, instead, to an argument from analogy. Here, as a parallel illustration, he selects the legal profession, explaining how initial attempts to curb the iniquities of political associations had resulted in the “Miseries derived to us from Artificial Law”—obfuscation, delay, partiality, inequality and a false veneer of order, or “due process.” Burke, something of a fugitive from legal studies himself, is on home ground here, and his authorial pen weaves an impressive list of complaints to hit home with his audience. The real sting in the tail, though, comes with the pseudo-Bolingbroke’s clinching argument, when he draws a further parallel between the legal and the clerical hierarchies, painting them as co-conspirators in the perpetuation of injustice and the destruction of liberty: “The Professors of Artificial Law have always walked hand in hand with the Professors of Artificial Theology. As their End, in confounding the Reason of Man and abridging his natural freedom, is exactly the same, they have adjusted the means to that End in a Way entirely similar....A good Parson once said, that where Mystery begins, Religion ends. Cannot I say, as truly at least, of human Laws, that where Mystery begins, Justice ends?”⁶⁶

Now at this point the author has overreached himself, since the parallel works both ways and the astute reader becomes aware that he has been whisked up into a circular argument. It is not that the pseudo-Bolingbroke’s criticisms against the law are false, any more than his complaints against the prevalence of clerical abuses might be false. Indeed, he speaks through Burke and borrows the conviction of someone who has experienced such abuses first hand. But religion and justice are not creations of society: they are factors in the creation of society itself and, as such, their mysteries can only arise out of the conflicted

⁶⁶ Ibid., 89, 87, 81, 89.

nature of social man, not out of any split between the natural and the artificial. The pseudo-Bolingbroke knows this to the extent that it is in the name of “natural” religion and “natural” justice that he condemns all civil society. His *ignis fatuus*, however, his confidence in the analytical powers of pure philosophical rationalism and his dismissal of the allegorical dimension of man’s condition, leads him—like Rousseau later—to a flat, inelastic, and polarized (rather than conflicted) individual. The criticisms that the pseudo-Bolingbroke presents in such passionate language may be true in themselves, but that is precisely the problem—they are true only in themselves. They are altogether incapable of incorporating the wider context within which the natural and the artificial exist symbiotically, and where a more authentically religious, historical and literary imagination will develop its critiques from a position that sees public spirit and public order as providentially oriented toward a state of civic harmony.

The ironic result of this one-dimensional approach is that compelling criticisms of these initiates into “the Mysteries of the blindfold Goddess” are taken to such extreme that the reader becomes uncomfortable with the comprehensiveness of the attack. The audience experiences a sort of reverse enthusiasm, thoroughly exhausted and discomforted by the author’s meteors of style, and unable to hold their bearings between what is ordered and what is disordered. So, when the pseudo-Bolingbroke then reveals to us in a final crescendo society’s greatest injustices—the “Millions [of poor workers] daily bathed in the poisonous Damps and destructive Effluvia of Lead, Silver, Copper, and Arsenick” for nothing better than the artificial pleasures of their masters—we remain awkwardly unmoved. Even if “the Blindness of one Part of Mankind co-operating with the Frenzy and Villainy of the other, has been the real Builder of this respectable Fabrick of Political Society,” we feel only too much

sympathy for the blind, since natural reason appears to have brought us nothing but a sterile picture of systemic oppression over which we have no real purchase.⁶⁷ The pseudo-Bolingbroke may intend his style to rouse our passions against artificial order, but the irreligious and constricting philosophical foundation of his reasoning inverts the truth and works against natural order in the very act of advocating it. Indeed, in rousing the critical spirit of his public without providing any practical program for action, he has also subverted the benevolent will to reform in the act of demanding it. He reveals himself, consequently, as a traitor to the moral purpose of rhetoric and a betrayer of the Republic of Letters.

Our guide, however, oblivious to the workings of this *ignis fatuus*, brings his assault upon artificial society to a close in a fashion that is both phlegmatic and personal. Having reasoned himself out of “Civil Usurpation” and the “Dreams of Society” indulged in by the vulgar, “together with their Visions of Religion,” he confides to his young disciple that he has by this vindication of “perfect Liberty,” acquired the wisdom with which the initiated may be consoled as death approaches.⁶⁸ Perhaps Burke’s intention here is to take us back to Lucretius and his Epicurean philosophy, a system of ethics that would fit the tenor of Bolingbroke’s life rather well: certainly, both moral philosophers are antagonistic toward revealed religion and equate wisdom with the dispelling of superstition.⁶⁹ But, if this is his design, the contrast between the two is even more instructive. As Joseph Warton argued, Lucretius’s sublime rhetoric draws the reader toward the consolation of enlightened self-examination through the exercise of an allegorical imagination, using poetry to broaden the

⁶⁷ Ibid., 83, 92, 93.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 104.

⁶⁹ Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, V.1194-1203: “O unhappy race of mankind, to ascribe such doings to the gods and to attribute to them bitter wrath as well! What groans did they then create for themselves, what wounds for us, what tears for generations to come...”

appeal of a pathetic history and uncover a “deeper” truth beneath the particularities of circumstances.⁷⁰ By comparison, all one can say about the pseudo-Bolingbroke’s *opus* is that it falls into the type of scholarship that so offended Samuel Johnson, where the reader is left to reflect on “the disparity between the enormity of the subject and the shallowness of [the author’s] treatment of it.”⁷¹

There is one final point of significance to the closing of the *Vindication* which has remained unexplored by editors and commentators to date, but which takes us to the core of the satire and shows how closely the work is entwined with the unfolding of Pope’s legacy. The pseudo-Bolingbroke’s style, as we have seen, is carefully crafted around the ritual of initiation into an elite Truth— or, that “perfect liberty” which is the triumph over imagined necessity. This esoteric dimension is not just implicit in the epistolary form, or in scattered allusions. The pseudo-Bolingbroke states on the first page of the *Vindication* that when, in “our late conversation,” he had “laid open the Foundations of Society,” his pupil had “allowed my Principle, but...dreaded the Consequences.” Now, he intends to unveil the “sober mysteries of Truth and Reason” for “such men as are fit to be initiated in [them],” and the leitmotif of bold investigation recurs strongly midway through the book, where the teacher, about to embark on his demolition of mixed constitutions, pointedly reminds his pupil of the similarity between truth and liquor: only the strong head can endure either.⁷² If the real Bolingbroke considered allegory an atavistic device used by the clergy to hold

⁷⁰ Burke borrows Lucretius’s description of Superstition, “lowering over mortals with horrible aspect,” to illustrate the power of words to affect without raising images in his *Philosophical Enquiry* (Section V).

⁷¹ Johnson was reviewing Soame Jenyns’ *Free Enquiry* in *Literary Magazine*, II: 13, 14, 15 (May-July, 1757). See O.M. Brack, Jr.’s Introduction to Samuel Johnson, *A Commentary on Mr. Pope’s Principles of Morality, or Essay on Man*, Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson, vol. XVII (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 393.

⁷² Burke, *Vindication*, 1, 67, 69.

together the inconsistencies of latitudinarian and “rational” Anglicanism, the pseudo-Bolingbroke secularizes the mysteries entirely by converting them from matters of faith and reverence into simple but heady principles of “natural” philosophy.⁷³ In so doing, he turns his back on the scholarship of the most prominent contemporary commentator on the historical mysteries: none other than William Warburton, who, as we have seen, had issued his own *Vindication* in defense of Pope’s *Essay on Man* some years earlier, and had proceeded to absorb the ancient mysteries of the Egyptian priesthood into his popular attempt to explain the historical truth of revealed religion and of Moses’ divine legation. For Pope’s Anglican defender, it was simply crucial to find an historical conformity of Egyptian, Mosaic and Christian Mysteries that could deliver a syncretic consistency to the relationship between religious revelation and political and moral wisdom. This conceptual bridge between natural society and the contrivances of civil government, shared by all the great civilizations, was, in Warburton’s mind, held in place by an allegorical understanding of the truths locked up in unfamiliar modes of historical communication and could be seen to infuse Pope’s *Essay*, making it a sublime restatement of the mysteries for the eighteenth-century mind. The pseudo-Bolingbroke’s *Vindication* was therefore a direct challenge to Warburton’s own.

As we have seen, Burke was playing here on the latest stage of a periodically reheated controversy; but whereas Clayton had tackled Bolingbroke directly (if posthumously), Burke’s satire, by ridiculing the mysteries of “natural philosophy,” took a more circuitous route to the same position. Indeed, Warburton had most recently felt driven to defend his position against William Cooper, whose *Life of Socrates* (1749) had challenged his

⁷³ “The whole system of mythology and pagan theology was so absurd, that it could not have been introduced into common belief, if it had not begun to be so, like other absurd systems of religion, in times of the darkest ignorance.” And such absurdities could not have endured without the deliberate misuse of allegory over the ages “to puzzle and perplex the understanding, or to hold out nothing to us but itself.” Bolingbroke, *Philosophical Works*, 1: 339, 340.

interpretation of the Hellenic mysteries. Given that Cooper was one of Tully's Head's "staple" writers in the early 1750s, and that Dodsley also published an attack on Clayton and Warburton entitled *Miscellaneous Observations on the Works of the late Lord Viscount Bolingbroke*, by "A Free-thinker," in 1755, it cannot be said that the bookseller was fighting Warburton's corner—he was too sharp a businessman for that. Burke's *Vindication*, rather, with its satirical ambiguities and mirrors, may have been intended as a way of holding the balance between the sides and averting any escalation in partisanship—although it is only fair to mention that, despite Warburton's reputation today, Burke appears genuinely to have been impressed by the bishop's scholarship. In any event, Burke executed his task superbly, and the satire in the final pages of the *Vindication* increases in sharpness as our world-weary statesman shuffles offstage toward death. While this curtain-call is drawn directly from the *Letter on the Spirit of Patriotism*, it is also, surely, a reminder to the reader of a familiar Classical allegory: the descent into the underworld where the mysteries of nature and statecraft are unveiled to the novice (Orpheus and Aeneas most famously, or the ritual symbolism of temple cults in ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome).⁷⁴ For this is the moment when the aging mentor is reborn in the figure of his young lord. The former's simple, secular wisdom is passed on through a sort of double irony, where the pretended recovery of intellectual simplicity and lack of art is actually pursued through labyrinthine passages of innuendo and conspiratorial esotericism entirely at odds with the "natural reason" that is meant to provide enlightenment.⁷⁵ Playing off Bolingbroke's own reputation with

⁷⁴ Bolingbroke, *Works*, 2:352, and see Davis, *The Good Lord Lyttelton*, 75.

⁷⁵ Bolingbroke, *Philosophical Works*, 4:1. Bolingbroke's sense of privileged wisdom is not an invention of Burke's. In the first of his *Letters on History*, Bolingbroke points out that a man "must be as indifferent as I am to common censure or approbation, to avow a thorough contempt for the whole business of these learned lives..." (p. 6)

considerable aplomb, Burke has slyly painted him, at the end, as precisely the Moses-like lawgiver the noble lord spent much of his life condemning.⁷⁶

Such a picture of the pseudo-Bolingbroke pontificating on his retirement from public life, blissfully ignorant of the spurious initiation that he has received and is passing on, would have provided a bitingly topical cap on Burke's joke, and would have done no harm with the famously touchy but influential bishop. The pseudo-Bolingbroke's claim to be able to penetrate the veil *sola philosophia* is revealed as the conceit that it is; but, by the false sublime tone in which this spurious initiation is communicated, we are also reminded that his faults are, at root, character faults—a result of his intellectual pride and irreligion, masquerading as skepticism and deism. If we recall Johnson's "modern allegory" in *The Preceptor*, our statesman-philosopher appears a perfect example of the man who places a faith in reason that Reason herself would reject. How ironic that someone who saw the reign of Elizabeth I at the center of his Patriotic agenda was so deficient in his understanding of Sidney, Spenser, and the intellectual foundations of the renaissance that the Virgin Queen had inspired.

More to the point, though, this was the sage who had presumed to educate Pope in his own initiation, and here Burke makes a particularly astute move that must have delighted his publisher. In one of the few direct references to the poet in the *Vindication*, again at the point where he is commencing his critique of mixed government, the pseudo-Bolingbroke distances himself from—better, raises himself pompously above—his "pupil": "There are few with whom I can communicate so freely as with Pope," he states, "But Pope cannot bear every Truth. He has a timidity which hinders the full expression of his faculties, almost as

⁷⁶ There are periodic, thinly-disguised references to Bolingbroke's career throughout the piece. This author writes in exile, and he appears to have direct experience of the iniquities of court politics and legal chicanery of attainder and treason.

effectually as Bigotry cramps those of the general herd of Mankind.” Teacher and pupil part ways, the latter redeemed by a desertion of which he was unaware.⁷⁷ Yet Bolingbroke’s lack of that “greatness of mind,” of the sublime and pathetic genius, had already taken its toll. The source of the teacher’s failings—an arrogant philosophical self-sufficiency—had seduced the pupil into striving to be more a philosopher than a poet, with the result that the supreme mark of Lucretius, Virgil, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton, that “creative and glowing imagination,” had been denied him.⁷⁸ Now Bolingbroke’s patronizing praise of his pupil can be read in all its bitter irony: “You give us philosophy in a poetical dress.”⁷⁹

In one of his posthumously published letters to Pope, Bolingbroke made approving reference to the inscription carved on the statue of Athena at Saïs, in Egypt: “I am all that has been, is, and shall be, and my robe no mortal has yet uncovered.” The words were there to remind the initiate of two powerful human instincts: ambition, or the desire to possess the truth, and humility, the truth that possesses us when we are confronted with the deepest mysteries of life. Contemporaries could reasonably have inferred, from his writings and from his political career, that the lord himself had allowed the former passion to overwhelm the latter. The high priest of a secularized religion, he had stormed the temple and rent the veil, to his own temporary advantage, perhaps, but to the detriment of his understanding and that of his acolytes. The errors to which his methods of “natural” enquiry gave rise rested on his elevation of rational philosophy above poetry and history, in defiance of both Classical and Elizabethan learning. The danger here was neatly stated by Montesquieu, in a letter to

⁷⁷ In his *Lives of the Poets*, Johnson observes that, at more than one point in their relationship, “It is known that Bolingbroke concealed from Pope his real opinions.” *Lives*, 357-58, 360.

⁷⁸ Warton, *Essay on Pope*, 1:iii.

⁷⁹ Bolingbroke, *Philosophical Works*, 1:89, and see 1:125. Genius is defined by Bolingbroke here as the correct association of “great heat of imagination, and great coolness of judgment...”

Warburton: “It is not impossible to attack a revealed Religion, seeing it depends on particular facts, and facts are, in their own nature, liable to be controverted: but that is not the case with Natural Religion; for it is to draw from the Nature of Man, which cannot be disputed, and from the internal Sentiments of mankind, which are equally indisputable.”⁸⁰ To controvert those internal sentiments, even for the sake of spirited critical analysis, would be to release *what* manner of religious or social chaos under the guise of natural order?

Bolingbroke’s intellectual hubris, as revealed in his posthumous works, lent itself fully to satire, since it embraced the topical amusement of an academic catfight at one end, and the problem of the rhetoric of social and political criticism at the other. It also fitted perfectly the short and long term, intellectual and commercial concerns that Pope bequeathed to Tully’s Head, and that formed the backdrop to Burke’s *Vindication*. For Burke scholars, it is therefore crucial to integrate such factors with any of Burke’s own personal ideas and prejudices that we might care to extrapolate from his later works, and this chapter has been an essay in reconstructing their trajectories by drawing us away from the straight, diachronic lines of the usual author-centered approaches to the *Vindication*.

When we consider the same text in relation to the wider history of the British Republic of Letters, and as a mirror reflecting the self-perception of critics mid-century, it is useful to retrace the similarities with the *Vindication* of Robert Clayton—and all the more so since Clayton’s work is little regarded now, and was contentious in his own time for its heterodox Arianism. Clayton himself was a strange combination of inclinations: growing up in Ireland, he was a consummate place seeker who gained the bishopric of the second richest

⁸⁰ Montesquieu to Warburton, May 26, 1754. Reproduced in Richard Hurd (ed.), *Works of the Right Reverend William Warburton, Lord Bishop of Gloucester. In seven volumes* (London, 1788), 7:554.

Irish diocese, Clogher, in 1745, and yet was, at the time of his death, about to be dethroned for persistently petitioning to remove the Nicene Creed from services. His apparent recklessness may be explained by the fact that the impulse of his writings, as C.D.A. Leighton has indicated in a thoughtful article, comes rather from an early-eighteenth-century rejection of the mechanics of religious intolerance than from a committed theological stance.⁸¹ As such, Clayton's religiosity was shaped by a belief in the social and polite impulses that he saw working within the individual conscience, rather than by *a priori* assumptions about the spiritual nature of the human individual. It was an outlook well within the latitudinarian orbit, a point illustrated by the nature of his defense of Locke's epistemology, and from this position he was quicker than most to appreciate how the intellectual war against priest-craft and superstition might easily lend itself to a new type of secularized priest-craft based on secular mysteries, rational enthusiasm, and a new type of intolerance. In his native Ireland, for example, he need only have observed the growing union between the advocates of liberty and the supporters of penal legislation against the Catholic church.⁸² In its goal to promote a more authentic toleration and stay the hand of secularism, Clayton's Arianism removed the more extreme claims of sacerdotal authority without denying the possibility of the Creator's providential disclosure in history. While we do not know the processes by which Clayton placed his work with Mary Cooper, this

⁸¹ "To embrace Arianism in the eighteenth century did...mean to call for a more thoroughgoing reformation, in the usual early modern sense of calling for a return to the pristine; to a situation in which, with the fetters of creeds and confessions removed, Christian doctrine could be made anew." C.D.A. Leighton, "The Enlightened Religion of Robert Clayton," *Studia Hibernica* 29 (1995-97), 167. I agree entirely with Leighton's comment, in respect of Clayton, that "The less-gifted thinker is the more revealing depicter of the mind of the period and it is that which is the primary concern of the historian." Ibid., 158. Clayton drew from the Cambridge Platonists, whose writings also had a deep influence upon Burke's religious vocabulary as shown by F.P. Lock, "Burke's Religion," in Crowe, ed., *An Imaginative Whig*, 36.

⁸² This extremism in the defense of liberty was professed by Toland among others. See Chapter Three below.

approach fits very well with the orderly balance of revelation and enlightenment, providence and reason, anticlericalism and piety, that propped up the self-perception of the citizens of the Republic of Letters around Dodsley. It was a balance designed also to show how a correct understanding of natural and artificial man could produce an effective critical rhetoric that strengthened rather than jeopardized the union of public spirit and public order. This self-perception is much more the intellectual milieu of Burke than the suppressed resentments of a closet papist or Hibernian nationalist—a point that will be affirmed as we consider in the following chapter the historical, literary and rhetorical influences of Burke's Irish youth. These are influences that place him in a context of critical Patriot thought that, like the milieu of Clayton and Dodsley, has largely escaped the focus of research to date.

Chapter 3

Dodsley's Irishman: Edmund Burke's Ireland, and the British Republic of Letters.

*Patria est ubicunque est bene.*¹

I: The Irish Question

The aim of this chapter is to place Burke's association with Robert Dodsley and Tully's Head in the context of his Irish background and upbringing before his arrival at the Middle Temple in London in 1750. A reassessment of the significance of Burke's "Irishness" is necessary because the predominant historical approaches to the subject today, influenced by current ideological and disciplinary preoccupations, almost unanimously convey a slanted and negative picture of that background. They assume that his ethnicity ("Old English" in Ireland), and the Roman Catholicism of his maternal family, the Nagles, was a source of bitterness to him in his youth and a hindrance to him when he arrived in London, where he was forced to contend with persistent, negative stereotypes of "the Irish." They conclude, therefore, that his critical rhetoric must be read in a way that accommodates a concealed anger at the injustices perpetrated against his nation, his compatriots and his mother's coreligionists. The picture presented here will modify that view in a number of ways. It will show how Burke worked imaginatively within an increasingly diverse and contested Irish

¹ Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, V.37. "A man's country is wherever he lives at ease." Cicero is quoting from the Roman poet Pacuvius's tragedy *Teucer*.

Patriot tradition and was able to work his Irish background to his advantage in the British Republic of Letters. This was the case since political developments in Ireland in the 1740s shared with Britain a common rhetoric of political liberty and common threats of dynastic and religious disorder, arising from the expulsion of the Catholic king James II in 1690 and the subsequent imposition of the Revolution Settlement. Indeed, the existence of a disfranchised and defeated Catholic majority in Ireland added a sharpness to the imported, British Patriot vocabulary of civic participation, religious toleration, and the inheritance of constitutional liberty. A talented writer of Burke's background, then, enjoyed many potential advantages when it came to accommodating himself to the intellectual and professional preoccupations of Tully's Head in the 1750s.

Burke was born into a well-to-do but religiously mixed family of "Anglo-Irish" ancestry, that is, an ancestry stretching back to the Norman settlers. His father was a Dublin attorney, most likely a recent convert to the Church of Ireland: his mother was from an established Catholic landowning family in County Cork, some of whose members had been, and were to be, implicated in anti-government activities.² Considering, then, the vehemence of his later campaigns against the injustices of British imperial rule in the American colonies and India, it has been all too tempting to co-opt Burke himself into wider narratives about imperialism, nationalism, and postcolonialism that have been read back into the British empire of the mid eighteenth century.³ But inasmuch as these lines of enquiry are intended

² The most comprehensive and up-to-date treatment of Burke's family can be found in F.P. Lock, *Edmund Burke*, 1: 3-15. More stress upon the formative influences of the Nagles on Burke (a stress that remains largely speculative), can be found in Lambert, *Edmund Burke of Beaconsfield*, 24-25, where Lambert refers to Burke's uncle Patrick Nagle as a "surrogate father." See also Elizabeth Lambert, "The Law, the Nun, and Edmund Burke" in Crowe, ed., *An Imaginative Whig*, 158-174.

³ My position here rests on the need to recognize the significant developments in the conceptions of "empire" and "nation" that took place in the later eighteenth century and early nineteenth century in response to factors such as the persistence of global Anglo-French rivalry, the establishment of slavery in an independent

to help us understand national resistance movements in the modern world, they generally fail to engage sufficiently with the subtleties of the language and complexity of the political issues of the time. As a result, they load eighteenth-century debates with anachronistic terminology and misrepresent the very principles that attracted Burke to the Tully's Head circle and that grew to define key aspects of his political thought later in life.⁴ It is these perspectives that have prevented us from appreciating the real significance of "Patriotism" in Burke's early intellectual formation in Ireland, particularly since the concept itself was under renegotiation as vigorously in Ireland as in England. In Burke's Irish biography, "Patriotism," erroneously presented in modern literature as, at best, a precursor of nationalism, and, at worst, a cover for cynical political opportunism, has been interpreted as proto-nationalism, exclusionary Protestant bigotry, or both, depending upon whether Burke is considered as an "enlightened" Protestant or a crypto-Catholic.⁵ It is the goal of this chapter to redress these distortions by situating Burke within the Irish Patriot discourse, but outside

United States of America, and the growth of scientific anthropology. In defiance of these complicating factors, and driven by contemporary movements such as the breakdown of British and French imperial power after the Second World War and the movement toward a united European citizenship in an expanded European Union, historians have succumbed to the temptation of tracing the "origins" of imperialism, nationalism, and postcolonialism further and further back in time. Works that illustrate this trend with regard to mid-eighteenth-century Britain and Ireland include: Gerald Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism. A Cultural History, 1740-1830* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997); Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); and Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

⁴ For the broader historiographical background to these terminological issues, see J.C.D. Clark, *English Society and Our Shadowed Present*.

⁵ In their studies of the growth of English and British nationalism, neither Newman nor Colley deals with this term with sufficient sensitivity to its shifting intellectual and political contexts. "Zeal for one's country" (Johnson's *Dictionary*, attributed to Bishop Berkeley) suggests a reorientation of enthusiasm toward the social, rather than religious, affections, which is in line with contemporary critiques of religious extremism. Johnson's famous comment that "Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel" perpetuates the association of the term with a careless incitement of public spirit; but it was uttered in 1775, at the height of debate over the government's response to the growing rebelliousness in the American colonies, and after Pitt the Elder's revival of the term. See, Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, 615.

any movement, Catholic or Protestant, that could be regarded as proto-nationalist or anticolonialist in any sense recognizable today.

Historiographical misconceptions have dogged analysis of the Irish Burke ever since Patriotism, Irish Nationalism, and British Imperialism were brought together in conflict in the late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century to take a form still familiar to us. One year after Burke's death, an unsuccessful Irish rebellion brought about the dissolution of the parliament in Dublin and Ireland's complete constitutional subordination to Westminster. Precisely because of the subsequent emergence of a violent, Catholic-centered Irish nationalism, Burke's Anglocentric attachment to his homeland became almost immediately a delicate matter, since it appeared to condone constitutional subservience. Judiciously understated by his earlier biographers, it gained brief consideration in the years of Gladstone and the Home Rule question, but remained problematic for Protestant and Catholic Home-Rulers alike, since Burke at no time furnished an unambiguous defense of Irish independence or supra-constitutional resistance.⁶ In 1923, however, in the fraught early days of the Irish Republic, Arthur Warren Samuels, former M.P. for Dublin University and Judge of the High Court of Justice in Ireland, published the unfinished researches of his late son, Arthur P.I. Samuels, under the title *The Early Life Correspondence and Writings of The Rt. Hon.*

Edmund Burke LL.D. This volume has become significant in Burke scholarship in part

⁶ The Liberal politician and historian John Morley gives some space to Ireland in his biography of Burke, where the "virulent opposition of the tyrannical Protestant faction in Ireland, and the disgraceful but deep-rooted antipathies of the English nation" are marked out as the chief obstacles to the removal of commercial restrictions and the gradual emancipation of the Catholic majority—"the two processes to which every consideration of good government manifestly pointed." (Morley, *Burke*, 25.) Such policies, of course, promoted industriously by Burke during his parliamentary career, would have been implemented by a Gladstonian government *avant la lettre*. In this way, Burke is volunteered for Home Rule rather as an example of the prudent British statesman than as a passionate Irish exile. Matthew Arnold published a collection of Burke's writings on Ireland entitled *Edmund Burke: Letters, Speeches and Tracts on Irish Affairs*, by which he attempted to "set [people] on thinking" about Gladstone's plans for Home Rule. See Conor Cruise O'Brien, "'Setting People on Thinking': Burke's Legacy in the Debate on Irish Affairs" in Crowe, ed., *Edmund Burke: His Life and Legacy*, 94-103.

because it contains transcriptions of a number of scarce documents and publications related to Burke's student days, including information from material lost in the fire that engulfed the Dublin Record Office during the Easter Rising of 1916. But Samuels also used that material to describe a Burke closely identified with the Protestant nationalist wing of Irish Patriotism in the 1740s—a Burke, in other words, highly suited to the new Republic.⁷ Samuels's interpretation of the texts gained little purchase among Burke scholars, and the soil for an Irish Nationalist Protestant Member of the British Parliament became increasingly barren thereafter, at least until denominational and nationalist tensions decreased in the 1990s.

The wide-ranging Burke revival that occurred in the 1950s was spurred by two factors: the opening of the massive Fitzwilliam archive, with its wealth of Burke papers, in 1949, and a Catholic-driven intellectual response to the threat of Soviet Communism in the postwar United States.⁸ Neither indicated a prominent position for Ireland in the reconsideration of Burke's political thought. The opening of the archives fueled the debate on the praxis of government procedure and Burke's relationship with Rockingham: neo-Thomist and New Conservative scholars focused upon Burke's antipathy toward the revolutionary ideology in France.⁹ As late as 1992, Conor Cruise O'Brien, in an influential, "thematic" biography of Burke, focused more on Burke's Irish *Catholicism* than his Irish-

⁷ Arthur P.I. Samuels, *The Early Life Correspondence and Writings of The Rt. Hon. Edmund Burke LL.D. With a Transcript of The Minute Book of the Debating "Club" founded by him in Trinity College Dublin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1923).

⁸ See Ross J. S. Hoffman and Paul Levack (eds.), *Burke's Politics. Selected Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke on Reform, Revolution, and War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949), xi-xxxvii.

⁹ One exception to this is Thomas H.D. Mahoney, *Edmund Burke and Ireland* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960).

ness, taking it this time as a source of his imputed progressive liberalism in social and political affairs.¹⁰

As the Cold War era receded, commentators on Burke's life folded their researches increasingly into the burgeoning study of the history of nationalism and the debate over Irish historical revisionism, reconfiguring the significance of Burke's early life and producing powerful, incisive analyses both of the tensions passed on through his ancestry and the cultural influences of his ethnicity.¹¹ Initially political in focus, these influences have recently taken a literary turn in which Burke's aesthetic writings have been interpreted through his imputed experiences of social injustice and colonial violence.¹² At the same time, each of these interpretative variants has adhered to certain evidential and analytical constants: the repressed tension of the outsider or subaltern, the primary influence of the marginalized in Burke's early life and consciousness (whether nationalist or Catholic), the rhetoric of the unspoken agenda, and the centrality of certain "canonical" documents. The last, which were once almost exclusively focused on Burke's American speeches and the *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, now include: *The Reformer*, a student publication in which Burke was involved from January to April, 1748; the "Tracts relative to the laws against popery in Ireland" (c.1761-64), notes unpublished in Burke's lifetime and highly

¹⁰ Conor Cruise O'Brien, *The Great Melody* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992). This work is largely a development of O'Brien's introduction to the Penguin Classics edition of Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, in which O'Brien tackles both those whom he inaccurately terms the "cold war warriors" of American Burke scholarship, and the claimed ambivalence of Burke's position on social issues—restoring a coherent and principled political stance *contra* Namier and his disciples.

¹¹ For a useful survey of the historiography, see Michael Brown, "The National Identity of Edmund Burke," in *Edmund Burke's Irish Identities*, ed. Seán Donlan (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006), 201-25.

¹² Luke Gibbons, *Edmund Burke and Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Gibbons is following upon broader couplings of Burke's aesthetic and political thought to be found, for example, in Tom Furniss, *Edmund Burke's Aesthetic Ideology: Language, Gender and Political Economy in Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) and Stephen K. White, *Edmund Burke: Modernity, Politics, and Aesthetics* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1994).

critical of the philosophy underpinning what later became known as the Protestant Ascendancy; *A Vindication of Natural Society*, particularly the section on the wide social inequalities of artificial life mentioned in Chapter Two above; *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), Burke's challenge to orthodox thinking on the aesthetics of sublimity, which it is generally claimed he began writing while a student at Trinity College, Dublin; and *A Letter to a Noble Lord* (1796). While postcolonialist and aesthetic readings of these texts create as much distortion as the earlier "history of ideas" approach that they have supplanted, they have acquired considerable purchase in Burke studies and so we need to look briefly at some recent examples of the genre.

We have mentioned above Michel Fuchs's attempt to incorporate the *Vindication* into a pattern of repressed Burkean identities. His impressively researched bicentennial study of Burke hid nothing of its underlying thesis in its choice of title, *Edmund Burke, Ireland, and the Fashioning of Self*, and built upon two earlier biographies, Isaac Kramnick's *The Rage of Edmund Burke* and Conor Cruise O'Brien's *The Great Melody*, to construct a "hidden," perpetually-alienated subject whose political and rhetorical passions were driven by the resentment of the colonized and marginalized Irishman in England. The covert Burke of Kramnick's and O'Brien's researches fitted into the socio-economic and psychological interpretations popular at the time they were published. In the first we find Burke dogged by sexual ambivalence; in the latter, as we have seen, by a repressed but potentially explosive sense of injustice. Fuchs traveled to Ireland, as it were, to update these readings with the language of the "New Cultural History" and, like Kramnick, who had earlier stressed Burke's anger at the economic iniquities he had witnessed as a child, he points to the persuasive

rhetorical power of the social criticism contained within Burke's early writings as evidence of the depth of his antipathy to the colonial attitudes of his new masters.

In *Edmund Burke and Ireland: Aesthetics, Politics, and the Colonial Sublime*, Luke Gibbons eschews the narrative of self-construction and erects, instead, a conceptual bridge linking the suppressed anger of the *Reformer's* youthful critique of economic inequality with Burke's withering attack on the dull progeny of England's hereditary aristocracy in his *Letter to a Noble Lord*, which was almost the last piece Burke penned. Gibbons achieves this by making sense of his subject's "anxious aesthetics" in terms of deeply ingrained feelings of colonial oppression and violence.¹³ Following the work of Sara Suleri and Uday Singh Mehta, he brings together the young and old Burke by binding Ireland to India as a paradigm of colonialism, where a surface order and calm is spread thinly and tightly over economic exploitation, cultural oppression, and simmering native discontent.¹⁴ From this vantage-point, Burke's great aesthetic tract, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), can be seen to mark the inception of a novel aesthetic concept of "sublimity" by which the terror-inducing qualities of war, death, and famine can be related directly to experiences that Burke may have shared in his youth in Dublin and County Cork.¹⁵ Gibbons's chief aim is to show how Burke, like Swift, was determined to "reinstatate the wounds of history into the public sphere, and, by extension, 'obsolete' or

¹³ Gibbons, *Edmund Burke and Ireland*, 8.

¹⁴ Sara Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). Burke's first famous statement on Indian affairs was his *Speech on Fox's India Bill* (1783). The procedure of impeaching Warren Hastings, the governor-general of Bengal, with which Burke was intimately associated from beginning to end, lasted from that time to Hastings' final acquittal nine years later.

¹⁵ Gibbons, *Edmund Burke and Ireland*, 2: "The provenance of some of the central ideas in the *Enquiry* can be traced to Burke's adolescence in Dublin..." Gibbons must take as read here the unproven assertion that Burke had started to write his *Philosophical Enquiry* while still a student at Trinity College, Dublin.

‘traditional’ societies into the course of history;” but his attempt to show how, ironically, the “cultural logic” of this sublimated colonial discourse “led ultimately to the political project of the United Irishmen,” depends upon a cross-referencing of texts from Burke’s youth and old age that militates against any sense of development in the contexts that shaped his thought.¹⁶

In opposition to these dominant analytical currents, I wish to argue that, for Burke, the Irish context of his early writings was shaped primarily by the debate within Irish Patriot groups about how public spirit could best be promoted for the greater prosperity of Ireland without reigniting religious and ethnic tensions rooted deeply in the history, language, and culture of the land. For an aspiring member of his country’s Republic of Letters, this involved balancing a number of factors: the origin of Patriotic rhetorical modes in London—even, of course, for the doyen of Hibernian Patriotism, Jonathan Swift; the desire for an orderly broadening of civic involvement in a period of expanding public markets; the need to nurture local civic affections while recognizing the stability generated by the union with Britain. The key to this balance appeared to be separating religious identity from civic identity without endangering the religious pillars of society. A contextualization of Burke’s private and early public writings as an adolescent and undergraduate in Dublin in the 1740s will show how Burke attempted to negotiate these issues from the position of a young Patriot for whom the rhetoric of an older generation of Patriots was no longer entirely appropriate. This was particularly the case with the sectional histories that were being promoted to provide authority for matters of public order and constitutional policy. What will emerge from this treatment is a writer committed to a cosmopolitan rhetoric of Patriot affections,

¹⁶ Ibid., xii. It also rests upon the assumption, powerfully questioned by L.M. Cullen, that Burke maintained a clear-sighted connection with developments in Ireland after his departure in 1750. See Louis M. Cullen, “Burke’s Irish Views and Writings,” in Crowe, ed. *Edmund Burke: His Life and Legacy*, 62-75.

sympathetic to Catholicism only in the sense that he refused to see ecclesiology as a basis for constitutional policy, convinced that the prosperity of the little platoon depended upon the wider union of Ireland and Britain, influenced much less by colonial resentments or imperial disaffection than by writers such as Pope, Clayton, and Sir Richard Cox, and, consequently (despite undoubted anti-Irish prejudice in Britain) highly marketable among the Patriot circles of literary and political London.

II: An Irish Republic of Letters

The Ireland in which Burke grew up and was educated, and which he left in 1750, was not the Ireland of the agrarian disturbances of the 1760s or of those organized Patriot political campaigns of Henry Grattan and Henry Flood that led to greater constitutional independence between 1779 and 1783. This is an obvious point that nevertheless requires emphasis at the outset, since nineteenth- and twentieth-century critiques of British imperial rule have stretched an artificially cohesive narrative of systemic oppression right across the varied features of eighteenth-century Ireland. In fact, the political and social issues that surrounded Burke in his youth had their strongest referents pointing not forward to independence but back to a shared constitutional history with England. It was the Glorious Revolution and subsequent Revolution Settlement that had established the meaning of liberty in the two islands and of liberty's relationship to religious tolerance. The same revolutionary upheaval had also highlighted the threat posed by liberty's enemy, servitude, either from foreign invasion or through corruption from within. It was upon this ground that Patriot writers in

London and Dublin shared modes of critical literary and political rhetoric, and the literature of a Bolingbroke or Pope resounded in Dublin as it did in London. Furthermore, Jacqueline Hill has stressed how the positive aspirations embodied in the Scottish union of 1707 represented an ideal for emulation among many Irish Protestants through much of the eighteenth century, since Patriotism was seen as a way of resolving the inevitable attendant tension between subordination and equality.¹⁷ Hill proceeds to identify a number of areas in which English Patriot thought contributed to this dialogue through its own historical understanding of the nature of the liberties enshrined in the ancient constitution, preserved through vibrant civic republicanism, and bolstered by Anglican political theory. She concludes that, “The Dublin civic Patriots saw themselves as engaged in an identical campaign with their London counterparts.”¹⁸

At the same time, in the aftermath of Catholic resistance to the Glorious Revolution, Patriots in Ireland had to negotiate particular complications that made this rhetoric even more raw and urgent. William III’s triumph over James II, and the resulting Treaty of Limerick, had seen the salvation of the existing Protestant classes, but only at the price of their incorporation into a highly ambiguous liberal inheritance. While those liberties were now identified more clearly than ever with the rights enshrined in Magna Carta and its successors, their exercise rested upon a constitutional subservience to England implied in the Revolution Settlement and upon the oppressive institution of anti-papery laws in their own country. Did the struggle of the Irish Protestant elites against the return of servitude, then, depend upon the constitutional enforcement of servitude?

¹⁷ Jacqueline Hill, *From Patriots to Unionists: Dublin Civic Politics and Irish Protestant Patriotism, 1660-1840* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 96.

Grappling with such political, philosophical, theological, and, increasingly, historical ambiguities were a number of Irish-born intellectuals who might be said to have constituted the kernel of an Irish Republic of Letters, and who were prominent in the Patriot discussions that surrounded Burke as he grew to intellectual maturity. Of these, the following (besides Jonathan Swift) achieved particular significance. William Molyneux, founder of the Dublin Philosophical Society (which he envisioned on the model of the Royal Society in London), laid down the historical case for Irish constitutional independence most firmly in his seminal tract *The Case of Ireland's Being Bound by Acts of Parliament in England, Stated* (1698), which was dedicated to William III and owed a great deal to the author's close friendship with John Locke. The occasion was the passing at Westminster of commercial restraints on the Irish woolen manufacture that provided a lightning rod for constitutional debate for the next several decades. Robert Molesworth, in his *Account of Denmark as it was in the Year 1692* (1696) and his edited translation of François Hotman's *Franco-Gallia* (1711), stressed the role of a virtuous and independent noble class in preserving political liberty against the encroachments of monarchical tyranny. As Michael Brown has shown, Molesworth developed that concept of liberty culturally and philosophically by connecting commonwealth principles, aesthetic philosophy and moral improvement, and he became something of a living paradigm, both through his patronage of Francis Hutcheson during the latter's time in Dublin and by his own example in cultivating his estate at Brackdenstown.¹⁹ Hutcheson himself reached the peak of his influence in Ireland in the years 1724-28. In *An Inquiry Concerning the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1724), he presented a philosophical and moral system for the preservation of civil liberty that rejected the amoral, rationalist mechanism of Hobbes and Mandeville in favor of the theory of an innate "moral

¹⁹ Michael Brown, *Francis Hutcheson in Dublin, 1719-1730* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002), 41.

sense,” a concept that was intended to ground the natural human sociability of Lord Shaftesbury’s moral philosophy more firmly in science and religion. Out on the periphery, John Toland, a friend of both Molyneux and Molesworth, offered a philosophical, rationalist alternative to denominational divisions within the Irish social classes through a powerful critique of priest-craft and superstition to which Bolingbroke appears to have been indebted. Most famous for his *Christianity not Mysteriorious*, which occasioned his flight from Dublin in 1697, he later explored in *Tetradymus* (1720) the tension between the pursuit of philosophy and civil order and the esoteric/exoteric division first mentioned by Parmenides and popularized in the works of Plato. His references here to the Egyptian temple of Saïs, his interest in secret societies, and his historical jibes at Moses the Lawgiver all put one in mind of Bolingbroke’s later philosophical and historical essays.

While none of these intellectuals resided or pursued their careers exclusively, or even primarily, in their native country, their works and literary networks should remind us that Ireland was not an isolated country, either politically or intellectually. Before he moved to Glasgow in 1730, Hutcheson was patronized by John Carteret, a leading Patriot politician who was Lord Lieutenant of Ireland from 1724-5—that is, in the period of the crisis over “Wood’s Halfpenny” and Swift’s immensely powerful *Drapier’s Letters*. John Toland (*né* Seán Eoghain) after a short and somewhat fraught period in his native land, traveled extensively in Europe and, as a result, gathered an eclectic and cosmopolitan group of acquaintances included Leibnitz, Bayle, Robert Harley, and Lord Shaftesbury himself. Molesworth and Molyneux graduated from Trinity College, Dublin, to the Inns of Court in London to pursue legal training, and both experienced a brief exile from their homes during the Stuart invasion of Ireland in 1689. Molesworth became a diplomat in the service of

William III and wrote pamphlets against stockjobbers during the South Sea Bubble crisis, a commercial upheaval that had serious repercussions on the Irish economy in the 1720s.

Jonathan Swift's personal, emotional, and professional ties across the Irish Sea are too well known to be repeated here; but in the relatively restricted geographical area of Dublin, he was a key focal point for the Scriblerian world of the 1720s and for Dublin's own home-grown polemicists such as Thomas Sheridan Sr. and Patrick Delany.²⁰

Within the wider post-Revolution context mentioned above, what were the immediate practical issues to which this Republic of Letters applied its historical and cultural perspectives? The two chief recurrent themes were the effects of the popery laws upon Roman Catholics and the impact of British trade restrictions upon the Irish economy. While both issues continue to drive perceptions of mid-eighteenth-century Ireland, neither is necessarily perceived today in the way it was by contemporaries. In each case, driven by the ideological perspectives we have already identified, the nature of the source material has tended to privilege legislative intent above practical effect and, as a result, commentators have taken the burden of the latter too much for granted and, in respect of the former, passed too lightly over the inconsistencies of Ireland's political, social and economic development. The more penetrating findings of revisionist historiography over the past twenty years have introduced some welcome complications to the orthodox narratives about the practical effects

²⁰ Central aspects of Swift's "Irishness" are treated in: Robert Mahony, *Jonathan Swift: the Irish Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Carole Fabricant, *Swift's Landscape* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982); F.P. Lock, *Swift's Tory Politics* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1983). Delany hosted weekly gatherings for the literati at his town house in Stafford Street, Dublin, and at his suburban retreat, Delville.

of Catholic legal penalties, the rise of Irish nationalism, and the unrelieved desolation of the *Pax Britannia*.²¹

The actual impact of the legislation passed against popery in the years following the revolution remains a matter of considerable uncertainty and contention.²² Burke would certainly have had some first-hand experience of the effect of these laws through his relationship with the Catholic Nagles, his mother's landowning family in County Cork, although their experiences could equally be drawn upon to argue the continuing vibrancy of entrepreneurial opportunities open to such families. For example, although the legal bars upon Catholic education in Ireland may have driven young Catholic Irishmen abroad to colleges in France or Spain, it should not be forgotten that this could also lead to the strengthening of commercial ties that Catholics were still at liberty to exploit.²³ Such ties helped to establish Cork as one of the more prosperous ports in the British sphere of influence, and the Nagles of the Blackwater Valley, while they owed their security to the conversion of Burke's father to the Church of Ireland, were neither impoverished nor stultified. So, while Elizabeth Lambert has followed the received line of argument in stating recently that Burke's home was "an Ireland that was divided in essential ways between the Roman Catholics, who were impoverished and stultified by law, and their Church of Ireland countrymen who, in contrast, could be described as 'flourishing,'" Kevin Whelan has shown

²¹ For a comprehensive, early revisionist position, see S.J. Connolly, "Eighteenth-Century Ireland: Colony or *ancien régime*?" in *The Making of Modern Irish History: Revisionism and the Revisionist Controversy*, ed. D. George Boyce and Alan O'Day (New York: Routledge, 1996), 15-33.

²² For a good summary of the debate, see C.D.A. Leighton, *Catholicism in a Protestant Kingdom: A Study of the Irish Ancien Régime* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 6-13.

²³ The perpetuation of Catholic-Protestant extremes has hindered historians from appreciating the significance of Catholic merchants, businessmen, and travelers to the wider Irish economy and to cultural and economic links to the European continent. See, as a recent corrective, Graham Gargett and Geraldine Sheridan, eds., *Ireland and the French Enlightenment 1700-1800* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1999).

the Nagles themselves to be a part of an established rural Catholic class that was “[p]rosperous, self-confident, well-educated, well-connected, aware of external ideas and motivations.”²⁴

More broadly, L. M. Cullen has argued persuasively for the relative stability of the Irish economy during the period of Burke’s youth. In times of dearth, agriculture, while dangerously inflexible in its yield, benefited from buoyant overseas demand or impetus from the revival of the linen trade in the 1730s and 1740s, an event that helped to moderate the rhetoric over British trade restrictions. It also served to shift the attention of some reformers to the less contentious or constitutionally-fraught issue of absentee landlords, where attention to the draining of Irish currency and issues of neglect, character, and dereliction of public spirit, formed a perspective well suited to Patriot rhetoric. Cullen, indeed, paints a picture of “decisive improvement in economic conditions in the late 1740s and early 1750s,” a period marked by increasingly ambitious schemes of civic renovation and estate planning, fuelled by upturns in landlord income. Such conditions were to contribute to widespread social unrest only when a change in fortunes led to retrenchment and tightening of leaseholds early on in the next half century, by which time Burke had moved to England. Consequentially, Cullen’s researches also suggest that levels of smuggling and tenant-landlord hostility have

²⁴ Elizabeth Lambert, *Edmund Burke of Beaconsfield*, 22. And see also B. O’Connell, “The Nagles of Ballygriffin and Nano Nagle,” *Irish Genealogy* 3 (1957), 67-73. Whelan writes that the Nagles “epitomize perfectly that fusion of long-established rural Catholic families, with close ties to the towns and links to the continent and the new world, which backboneed Irish Catholicism....There is no reason to suggest that the foundations of such successes had not been laid or preserved during the earlier part of the century.” Kevin Whelan, “The Regional Impact of Irish Catholicism 1700-1850,” in *Common Ground: Essays on the Historical Geography of Ireland*, ed. William J. Smyth and Kevin Whelan (Cork: Cork University Press, 1988), 268.

been overestimated by historians anxious to read back into the eighteenth century the problems of landownership that drove political division in post-Famine Ireland.²⁵

One uncontested fact about the popery laws, and about British commercial policy toward Ireland, is that they had not produced any open Catholic resistance during the first half of the eighteenth century. Indeed, Burke's youth spanned a period that saw no wide-scale, sustained political or social unrest apart from perennial and sporadic outbreaks of urban disorder. Those protests that did occur—the famous *Drapier's Letters* crisis of 1723-24, over the proposed introduction of a new halfpenny coin, and the Lucas affair of 1748-49, considered below—were indicative of divisions within the politically enfranchised, rather than of systemic or chronic economic conditions. Indeed, it was the very lack of widespread disorder in the 1730s and 1740s that provided an opportunity for Irish commentators and public critics to revisit assumptions about the advisable limits of religious toleration in the kingdom, since it appeared to diminish the negative threat of popery understood primarily as the slavery of a superstitious loyalty to a foreign temporal power, the pope. Instead, borne in by the tide of Shaftesburian and Hutchesonian philosophy, there developed a more positive sense that dogmatic Catholicism, detached from its European network, could be depoliticized and absorbed into a strain of active citizenship through a mixture of legal incentives and the example of industrious Protestant settlers. Fresh opportunities for civic participation would offer a way out of superstition much more effective, and more likely to promote social order and prosperity, than legal coercion. In Cork, Sir Richard Cox, without ever suggesting a repeal of the penal laws, could describe his promotion of the linen industry on his estates as a way of making popery wither from the root. The chief requirement was public-spirited,

²⁵ L.M. Cullen, "Economic Development, 1691-1750" and "Economic Development, 1750-1800," in *A New History of Ireland, Vol. IV: Eighteenth-Century Ireland, 1691-1800*, ed. T. Moody and W.E. Vaughan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 123-158, 159-195.

resident landowners. Even trade restrictions were tangential concerns, since the strength and interests of the mother country were precisely the safeguard against Irish Catholics being reabsorbed into the secular orbit of the bishop of Rome. In other words, the constitutional independency demanded by some Irish Patriots, in the tradition of Molyneux, could be interpreted by others as precisely the solvent to the Patriot program that would bring disorder and slavery back to Hibernia.

In Dublin in particular there was a further, social dimension to these considerations. While it was recognized widely in Ireland and Britain that the nurturing of a politically responsible citizenship was a prerequisite for the preservation and strengthening of liberty, there remained many Protestants for whom Irish history showed incontestably that a hasty repeal of the laws against popery would open the door to Catholic-fomented disorder within the corridors of power. Consequently, civic “inclusivity” could be interpreted as the prising open of doors to political power that had been sealed by closed cabals of corrupt politicians, and such a move seemed possible only by mobilizing the Protestant citizenry in its widest sense. Since this included people whose credentials to the status of gentleman were hardly established, it was open to interpretation as, potentially, an act of social subversion. Yet how could the achievements of the Orange settlement be secured otherwise, without relying upon a perpetual constitutional subservience to London? As Helen Burke has shown recently, this mobilization of an allegedly disenfranchised citizen electorate was not confined to printed broadsheets and journals, but took place prominently upon the stage and through developments in the organization of the theater in Dublin—a situation made more volatile by the fact that the constitutional remit of Walpole’s 1737 Licensing Act in Dublin was uncertain. It is not so much in an unverifiable and repressed yearning for justice, but within

this intellectual and cultural nexus, and the tensions that shaped the Hibernian Patriot legacy in the 1740s, that we need to understand the early writings of Edmund Burke.

III: Juvenilia

Burke's childhood was undoubtedly one of divided experiences. It was stretched between his father's house on Arran Quay, on the banks of the Liffey in Dublin, and the rural settings of the Nagles' homes in the Blackwater Valley in County Cork, where Burke is thought to have spent some extended periods of time on account of ill-health.²⁶ This might well be seen to represent the stark contrasts of early-eighteenth-century Ireland: the young Burke would have been brought up in the religion of his Protestant father, while the Nagles were Catholics, and there is a persistent rumor that he was educated for a while at a hedge school by a priest. At the same time, beyond the geographical and denominational contrasts, a young mind might as easily have absorbed the similarities between his parents' backgrounds, and it may have been these, rather than the differences, that set the young Burke thinking critically about the religious, legal and constitutional anomalies of his native land.

Burke spent his first three years of formal schooling under an English-born Quaker, Abraham Shackleton, at Ballytore, just thirty miles, or a day's ride, from Dublin. The school was non-sectarian, and the detailed documentation left by the Shackleton family suggests

²⁶ Lock, *Edmund Burke*, 1:18. Cullen writes of Burke's "five childhood years on the Blackwater," though the actual timing and nature of the stay are not known. See L.M. Cullen, "Burke, Ireland, and Revolution," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 16 (1992), 24. In this article, Cullen, like others after him, appears too ready to equate enduring ties of kinship with the Nagles as solidarity with Catholicism in its opposition to Protestantism.

strongly that the experience, which Burke found highly congenial, would have strengthened in him a sense of religious toleration and of denominational differences rightly subordinated to the higher goals of learning and sociability. “I am sure,” Burke wrote to his schoolmaster’s son, Richard, in October 1744, “I should not be displeased at hearing all the praises you could possibly bestow on a belief which you profess and which you believe to be the true and pure Doctrine of Christ, we take different Roads tis true and since our intention is to please him who suffered the punishment of our sins to justifie us, He will I believe consider us accordingly, and receive us into that glory which was not merited by our own good Deeds but by his sufferings which attone for our Crimes. Far be it from me to exclude from Salvation such as beleive [sic] not as I do, but indeed it is a melancholy thing to consider the Diversities of Sects and opinions amongst us...”²⁷ What better preparation for the Latitudinarian religiosity of Dodsley’s Tully’s Head enterprise?

Dublin, Burke’s home during his teenage years, was, like the country generally, a society in controlled and gradual transition, experiencing significant but short-term economic crises cushioned by a broad and general increase in economic activity, and we know that Catholic families such as the Nagles were fully involved in civic projects such as support for educational establishments (taught in English) and societies for cultural and agricultural betterment.²⁸ Rather than the legal oppression of an ideological system yet to be labeled as “Protestant Ascendancy,” Burke was more likely to see in the Dublin around him, instantiated in its architecture, a vibrant sense of the potentialities of economic, commercial,

²⁷ Burke, *Correspondence*, 1:32-33. Letter to Richard Shackleton, 15 October, 1744. See also his letter to Richard Shackleton, dated 1 November, 1744, *ibid.*, 1:35-36. Richard Shackleton’s daughter gathered a valuable family archive, including a significant number of private letters between Burke and Shackleton in the years 1744-1750. These were later published in, Mary Leadbeater, *Leadbeater Papers*, 2 vols. (London, 1862).

²⁸ The Dublin Philosophical Society, the Dublin Society, and the Physico-Historical Society of Dublin were all in existence by 1744.

and social progress offered by a sort of “Enlightened” Imperialism. In this light, and in that of the recent Union of Scotland and England in 1707, his experiences would have opened up to him the possibilities that a civic-centered religious toleration held out for the reconciliation of religious conscience and civic duty, or of public spirit and public order, in his native country.²⁹ This was a hope that was only dashed after he had moved to London, with a renewal of constitutional conflict over the Money Bill of 1753, and of an economic downturn that stirred the infamous “Whiteboys” disturbances of the early 1760s.

When he entered Trinity College, Dublin, on April 14, 1744, Burke is unlikely to have encountered any serious challenges to such perspectives. Trinity College was a center of Irish Protestant sentiment, and also, under its long-serving, English-born provost Richard Baldwin, increasingly focused on the raising of virtuous, civic-minded gentlemen.³⁰ Baldwin appears to have been an indifferent scholar, but he was a loyal Whig placeman who worked hard to impose discipline among the students after years in which they had gained a reputation for laxity and disorder. The thrust of the college’s pedagogic priorities is a subject that commentators on Burke’s Irish background have glossed over, but it conformed closely to the mixture of Christianized Shaftesburianism and Lockean empiricism that was helping to redefine debate within Irish Protestant “Patriotism” in the first half of the century.³¹ Those (admittedly few) members of the teaching staff at Trinity College who published in this

²⁹ For a useful section on Unionism from the perspectives of Burke and Adam Smith, see Cullen, “Burke, Ireland, and Revolution.”

³⁰ Baldwin, who was driven into exile by the Jacobite occupation of the college in 1689-90, was elected a fellow in 1693 and was provost from 1717 to 1758. Records suggest that his rule was remarkable for an improvement in the behavior of Trinity students. See R.B. McDowell and D.A. Webb, eds., *Trinity College Dublin, 1592-1952: An Academic History* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1982), 37-41.

³¹ An excellent study of the influence of Shaftesburian thought in Ireland, and particularly the secular and anti-Lockean aspects of that thought, can be found in Isabel Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment. A Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics in England, 1660-1780. Volume 2, Shaftesbury to Hume* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

period were united in their support for the various institutes of civic renewal that were to become, by mid-century, exempla of the Patriot program of self-help in the cause of liberty. Patrick Delany, for example, a Tory, a close associate of Jonathan Swift's, and the college's first professor of oratory and history, wrote many pamphlets in support of new enterprises such as the Incorporated Society in Dublin for promoting English Protestant Working-Schools in Ireland, on trade reform with Britain, and on broader themes of educational reform.³² John Lawson, one of Delany's successors in the chair of oratory and history, published numerous charity sermons on behalf of local schools and hospitals. This growing confidence in the duty of the homegrown Patriot had a material parallel in the building enterprises that took place in the college under Baldwin's rule. A magnificent new library building was opened in 1732, and the Printing House, designed by the German immigrant architect Richard Cassell, was completed two years later.

Contemporary records of the undergraduate curriculum, which is described by Webb and McDowell as "cosmopolitan and conservative," reveal examination exercises that contain a broad and predictable list of loyal Protestant themes, from "Queen Elizabeth" to "Death of the Queen" (1737); from "Commerce" (1748) to "Death of the Prince of Wales" (1751).³³ The lists of set texts for the period suggest that Burke enjoyed a fairly conventional curricular fare in Greek, Latin, logic, natural science and ethics and metaphysics.³⁴ In his

³² See, for example, Patrick Delany, *A Sermon Preach'd before the Society Corresponding with the Incorporated Society in Dublin, for promoting English Protestant Working-Schools in Ireland* (London, 1744). Delany, whose *Revelation Examined With Candour* (1731) was also an important defense of divine providence against the "misdirected wit" of free-thinkers, was chancellor of Christ-Church Cathedral, Dublin, at the time of publication. The chair of oratory and history at Trinity was founded in 1724.

³³ TCD Mun/v/27/1 fo.906. McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College*, 49.

³⁴ Lock, *Edmund Burke*, 35-37; Francis Canavan, *The Political Reason of Edmund Burke* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1960), 197-211.

surviving private correspondence as an undergraduate, though, certain particular interests and recommendations reveal a more discriminating picture: enthralled, early on, by the pseudo-Platonic *Table of Cebes*, by his third year he was enthusing to Shackleton (now a schoolmaster at his father's school) over Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*—"I don't know any Book fitter for Boys who are beginning to Comprehend what they read"—and recommending Sallust as "indisputably one of the best Historians among the romans, both for the purity of his Language and Elegance of his Stile."³⁵

But woven through the successive *furores*—*logicus, historicus, poeticus*—that he charted in his private letters to his old school friend were also extracurricular works, most markedly a recurring interest in Pope's writings, from a mock-heroic poem penned in June 1744 with reference to the *Dunciad* (the fourth book of which had been published in Dublin that year), and his recording of the purchase of a copy of the *Ethick Epistles* in July 1744, "which...I assure you they are very fine," through criticism of his own Latin style as "prose on Stilts or poetry falln [sic] lame," to a quotation from the *Essay on Criticism* built into his letter of 5, March 1747—"Each bad author is as bad a friend." This interest only grows through his remaining years in Dublin, and, as is argued below, serves almost as a template for the literary and political criticism to be found in his early journalism. He was familiar with other writers from Pope's literary circle: Swift, of course, but also George Lyttelton, the

³⁵ Burke, *Correspondence*, 1: 73, 89. An edition of the *Table of Cebes* was published by Dodsley in 1754. Earlier translations had been added to the text of *Arrius on Epictetus* (London, 1709) and to *Porch and Academy Opened, or Epictetuss [sic] Manual* (London, 1707). The latter advertised, on its title page, "Cebes's Table. Never before Translated into English Verse. By a Lady." For the *Cyropaedia*, see below, pp. 243-45. T. Gordon published an edition of Sallust's works in Dublin in 1744, complete with prefatory discourses on subjects including "Faction and Parties," and "Patriots and Parricides."

pennames of whose characters in the *Persian Letters* he appropriates for a letter of his own in November 1744.³⁶

A selection of Burke's youthful poetry, the composition of which we can also trace in part from the private letters, has been collected in the first volume of *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, where it is described by the editors as "satiric, complimentary, imitative in the Augustan sense; but present, too, is that critical intelligence so evident in the final part of the *Philosophical Enquiry*, during the subtle and sensitive investigation of affective language."³⁷ The pervasive influence of Pope, again, is apparent in each piece. In his early months at Trinity College, Burke appeared more inclined to imitate Pope's mock-heroic style, an affectation of modesty, perhaps, but indicative of a persistent sensitivity to the pitfalls of the "dunces." Besides these Popeian references, we find a couple of borrowings from Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. Spenser, the growing fascination of literary Patriots, had lived and composed at Kilcolmon Castle, not far from the Nagles' lands, and his son, Sylvanus, had later married into the Nagle family.³⁸ Scattered archival evidence also yields a lengthy "Ode on the Birth-day of his Majesty King George the Second," entirely in spirit, as one might expect, with the loyal Protestant college topics mentioned above.³⁹

Above all, perhaps, these poetic efforts reflect a highly social and collaborative process of composition. Burke is both poet and critic in his personal letters to Shackleton,

³⁶ Burke, *Correspondence*, 1:12-15, 29, 69, 85, 34-36.

³⁷ Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, 1:25. No anthology of Burke's works that I have come across contains any of this material.

³⁸ Burke, *Correspondence*, 1:80n1.

³⁹ Bodl. MS Eng. Misc. b.169, fos. 35-38. Lock confirms the date of composition as 1747, *Edmund Burke*, 53n73.

and revisions of each other's verse drafts evidently continued sometimes for months.⁴⁰ We can trace, for example, the production of a panegyric on a prominent Dublin businessman and family friend, John Damer, from its inception in July 1744 to its completion three years later.⁴¹ Perhaps this collegiate spirit helps to explain the prominence of one particular theme across the years—that of friendship *in absentia*. It speaks of a social and mental rootedness that might suit an aspiring citizen of the Republic of Letters but should not be associated too quickly with the physicality of one's native soil.⁴²

Alongside his enduring friendship with Richard Shackleton, Burke developed two important new relationships with contemporaries in Dublin during his undergraduate years. One was with Beaumont Brenan, who, it appears from the surviving correspondence, helped to draw him away from poetry to an interest in the theater in his final year at college. Brenan's influence will be considered in more detail below. The other, more dominant, relationship was with William Dennis, Burke's college roommate. In a natural extension of collegiality, Dennis and Burke founded a debating club in April 1747, the first minute book for which has fortuitously survived and is now housed in the Trinity College archives. The

⁴⁰ Mary Leadbeater believed her father had possessed "a genius for poetry." *Leadbeater Papers*, 1: 38.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 29. The final version can be found in *Writings and Speeches*, 1: 27-30.

⁴² That physical attachment to the local soil is often assumed in Burke's later, famous comment about the "little platoon" that we love in society. But, from the evidence of a poem of 1751, his early sense of belonging, at least, points in another direction: "In vain we fly from place to place to find / What not in place consists, but in the mind." "An Epistle to Doctor Nugent by E.B.," *Correspondence*, 1:116. Recently, Katherine O'Donnell has revisited questions of the sexual nature of the relationship between Burke and Richard Shackleton. In so doing, she ingeniously adds a further dimension to British colonial oppression of the Irish, rooted in contested attitudes to "the sodomite sublime": "The argument might be made that Burke developed a traditional understanding of same-sex sworn friendship from his boyhood spent among his mother's family, the Nagles of North Cork who were Catholic, Jacobite, and crypto-aristocratic. Such a traditional understanding of same-sex friendship is out of step with the conception of what love means and how it might be expressed between men in eighteenth-century Britain." Katherine O'Donnell, "'Dear Dicky,' 'Dear Dick,' 'Dear Friend,' 'Dear Shackleton': Edmund Burke's Love for Richard Shackleton," *SEL* 46, no.3 (Summer 2006), 637. If O'Donnell's reading of Burke's language is correct, we must presumably consider Mary Leadbeater either the most progressive or the most naïve of Victorian family biographers.

entries are largely in Burke's hand.⁴³ This club, comprising six members at its height—Burke and Dennis, Andrew Buck, Richard Shackleton, Joseph Hamilton and Abraham Ardesoif—met at least twice weekly, and ran on a formal set of fundamental laws designed to regulate the various activities of speech-making, paper presentation, recitation, and formal debate.⁴⁴ There was a president, a secretary, a censor, a budget, and an elaborate set of penalties for absence or failure to submit assigned materials. Clearly, these minutes present an opportunity to uncover formative aspects of Burke's thinking, or, at least, the early context of that formation; but they are also open to the historiographical distortions outlined above and in the Introduction to this dissertation.

The most prevalent of these distortions is the assumption that Burke was the intellectual and organizing genius behind the project. Samuels, for example, who first published the text of the minute book in his *Early Life Correspondence and Writings of The Rt. Hon. Edmund Burke*, is characteristically overzealous in, first, ascribing to Burke the motivation for the establishment of the Club and, second, interpreting Burke's contributions as displaying "the germs of his career and character."⁴⁵ Following a similar line of thinking, Thomas Mahoney asserts that, "The numerous speeches which membership in the 'Club'

⁴³ TCD Mun/Soc/Hist/81, and Samuels, *Early Life Correspondence and Writings*, 226-95. See also Declan Budd and Ross Hinds, *The History of Edmund Burke's Club* (Dublin, 1997), 2, where the club is described as "the earliest debating society composed of students of the university of which any definite record remains"; and L.M. Cullen, "Edmund Burke and Trinity College," *Studies in Burke and His Time* 20, no. 1 (2005), 82-94. The club was eventually incorporated into the college Historical Society, which is still in existence.

⁴⁴ Dennis eventually took holy orders and became a parish clergyman; Buck became Principal of the Hibernian Academy; Shackleton took over his father's school in Ballytore. Of Hamilton and Ardesoif we know nothing.

⁴⁵ Samuels, *Early Life of Burke*, 214. Samuels goes on to state that "the young Edmund Burke training in these College debates was there rapidly evolving those distinct characteristics which, matured, distinguished him as the greatest statesman of his time, and, perpetuated, have moulded ever since, and will in future ages, mould the polity of every nation that seeks progress and safety along the paths of ordered liberty."

enabled [Burke] to make were notable for their contents rather than for their delivery.”⁴⁶ In fact, the truth of the matter is probably the reverse. It is evident, and sometimes recorded explicitly, that members often adopted positions contrary to their persuasions or inclinations. The “Club” was, in large part, role-play, and an exercise in the recovery of “the plain truth of things” within a framework of rhetorical order and historical imagination. Thus, issues under debate ranged from the fate of Scipio, Hannibal, or Philopoemon to the expulsion of Coriolanus, from the great earthquake in Peru in 1746 to clemency for the Jacobites or the Prince of Orange haranguing his troops, and from atheism to Mahomet’s banning of alcohol. It is no surprise to see how closely these subjects shadow the college curriculum, and they can also be discerned, to some degree, in the lists of Dublin booksellers and newspaper advertisements.⁴⁷ Presidential judgments on the debates, whoever was in the chair, were almost always scrupulously moderate.

Having said this, the minutes do offer valuable insight into the context of Burke’s developing thought when they are interpreted in the light of formal procedure and patterns of characterization. First, as F.P. Lock points out, there is as yet no sign of interest in theatrical matters, but rather a stress upon the need for purity in “language,” which, in the preamble to the laws of the “Club,” or “Academy of Belles Lettres,” is described as “the tye of Society.” “[A]s language is the cement of Society,” the text continues, “so is the perfection thereof

⁴⁶ Mahoney, *Burke and Ireland*, 4.

⁴⁷ For example: Mark Akenside’s *Pleasures of the Imagination* and T. Gordon’s edition of the *Works of Sallust* (1744); Thomas Prior’s *A list of the absentees of Ireland, and the yearly value of their estates and incomes spent abroad. With observations on the present trade and condition of that Kingdom*—a new edition with a “Letter to a Member of the Parliament of Ireland,” by Philo-Patria (dated November 8, 1745), added (1745); Addison’s *Cato*, and Onno Zwier van Haren, *The Sentiments of a Dutch Patriot* (1746); John Hawkey’s edition of Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (1747). Hawkey, an Englishman and alumnus of Trinity College who had established a school in Dublin, also published editions of Horace and Juvenal around this time. Thomas Prior, a friend of Berkeley’s and also an alumnus of Trinity, was one of the founders of the Dublin Society for the Promotion of Agriculture, Manufactures, Arts and Sciences, which was incorporated in 1749.

perhaps its greatest ornament, and not the least of its Blessings.”⁴⁸ Second, occasional heated debates over the regulations and laws informing the procedures of the Club were evidently stoked by the common recognition that, since passion mattered in rhetoric, rhetoric required a regulatory structure that could be defined in some sense as “natural” in its style. This perceived need to balance the spirit kindled by rhetoric with an implicit orientation to order meant that excessive or disorderly rhetoric was challenged by members on occasion as a sign of disloyalty or false Patriotism. Katherine O’Donnell has drawn out the immediate topicality of this issue by identifying a divergence between a group of scholars she terms “the Trinity rhetoricians” or “Trinity school,” including Thomas Leland and John Lawson, and the disciples of John Locke, with the former supporting Bishop Berkeley’s defense of eloquence in rejection of Locke’s apparently reductionist semantics.⁴⁹ Third, there is *some* evidence of repeated differences of opinion that may be read as symptomatic of more ingrained attitudes or character traits among the club members. In particular, Dennis appears willing to pursue a distinctly “protectionist” position on Irish economic and cultural issues to an extent that discomfited Burke. More than once Burke censures his friend for heat and disloyalty (to the crown). On May 26, 1747, we find Dennis writing, in a joint letter with his accuser, Burke, that: “I’m now accused of a design of destroying the Club, (thus modern patriots urge every thing an introduction to popery and slavery, which they don’t like,) when, alas! No one has a greater desire to preserve it...The approbation I met with in the character of Cato has made

⁴⁸ Samuels, *Early Life*, 228.

⁴⁹ O’Donnell, “Burke and the Trinity School of Irish Oratory,” *Studies in Burke and His Time* 22 (2006-07), 77, 80. My feeling is that O’Donnell overstates the cohesion of the “Trinity men” and their impact upon Burke’s thought; but her broader point might stimulate important discussion of the significance of Burgersdijk as a conveyor and adaptor of Aristotelian rhetorical thought. The “hideous” (in Burke’s words) Burgersdijk was a seventeenth-century Dutch philosopher and author of the *Institutionum Logicarum Libri Duo*, which was set for Trinity undergraduates in their first year of study. Burke, *Correspondence*, 1:4, 7.

me so much the more a stickler for liberty, that not bearing any encroachment on it in our assembly I am deemed a criminal..." Burke, as censor of this rhetorical "exclaiming for his liberty," plays a consistent role in defense of a few, but rigorously enforced, laws.⁵⁰ On one occasion, Dennis is pointedly made to orate upon dissuading the students from rioting (at a time when the student body had been embroiled in the so-called Black Dog riots in Dublin), and, on another, Burke cannot believe Dennis speaks in earnest when he adopts a position *against* the taxing of absentee landlords.⁵¹

We hear nothing more of the Club after the minute book records break off on July 10, 1747. Burke is quite explicit in his private letters about the enduring power of his *furor poeticus*, and he, together with Shackleton, did, indeed, have some verse published the following year, in a collection by Mary Goddard entitled *Poems for Several Occasions*.⁵² As Gaetano Vincitorio has emphasized, Burke's preoccupations at the end of his time at Trinity remained literary rather than overtly political.⁵³ But they were also turning, more practically, to the opportunities that Dublin might offer to satisfy his own publishing ambitions and those of his confederates. By the time he graduated, in January 1748, Dublin appears already to

⁵⁰ Burke, *Correspondence*, 1:93; Samuels, *Early Life*, 253. That extreme Patriotism might ironically usher in popery and slavery through dividing the existing Establishment was a charge leveled at the politician Charles Lucas in the stormy Dublin election of 1749. Burke has occasion later to object to Dennis's "hot speech"—this time against passing a bill against piracy in the publishing trade (Samuels, 272).

⁵¹ Samuels, *Early Life*, 252.

⁵² These included an imitation of Virgil's *Georgics*, II.458-540, "By a young Gentleman," and a short piece entitled "On a bad Poet's turning Critick." See [Mary Goddard], *Poems on Several Occasions* (Dublin: by S. Powell for the author, 1748), 15-22, 96-97. The latter piece is answered by a "Mr. B---," most likely Burke's close friend and Trinity scholar Beaumont Brenan. Another of Burke's friends, Richard Shackleton, contributed a verse introduction "To the Author of the Following Poems." For Mary Goddard, see A.C. Elias, Jr., "Male Hormones and Women's Wit: The Sex Appeal of Mary Goddard and Laetitia Pilkington," *Swift Studies* 9 (1994), 5-16.

⁵³ "Every sign points to Burke's absorption in poetry and aesthetics in his latter days at Trinity." Gaetano Vincitorio, "Edmund Burke and Charles Lucas," *PMLA* 68, no. 5 (Dec., 1953), 1050. Vincitorio inexplicably leaves out drama.

have become too provincial for him, and he could see more attractive prospects awaiting him as a writer in London where, in conformity with his father's plans, he had been registered to study law at the Middle Temple. Ironically, it was the shattering of that very provincial dullness over the next year, by a powerful combination of cultural and political Patriotism, that provided a perfect opportunity for this aspiring critic to sharpen up his professional skills for his escape.⁵⁴

IV: Journalism

The early stages of this Patriot furor concerned the role of the Dublin stage in the politics of the city. It was, in fact, as part of a campaign against Thomas Sheridan, manager of the Theatre Royal in Smock Alley, and Sheridan's alliance with Charles Lucas, Dublin's leading Patriot demagogue, that Burke had his journalistic career launched, in the same month that he graduated.

Thomas Sheridan was a former student at Trinity College and the son of Jonathan Swift's literary acquaintance Dr. Thomas Sheridan. In a decision that was to haunt him through his career, however, he had decided to risk his inherited social status as a "gentleman" by entering the acting profession. In 1745, two years after a highly successful debut at Smock Alley, he was appointed manager of the theater there. Immediately, he

⁵⁴ Burke "had been enrolled on 23 April, 1747, as a student of the Middle Temple" (Samuels, *Early Life*, 219). Burke wrote later that year to Shackleton, presumably about his friend Dennis, "Don't you think had he money to bear his charges but 'twere his best course to go to London? I am told that a man who writes, can't miss there of getting some bread, and possibly good. I heard the other day of a gentleman who maintained himself in the study of the law by writing pamphlets in favour of the ministry" (Burke, *Correspondence*, 1:101). The original of this letter has been lost.

introduced a series of procedural, financial, and technical reforms in the staging of performances designed to establish firmer order among theater audiences and elevate the perception of the theatrical profession in the cultural life of the city. These ranged from reorganizing the flow of street traffic outside the theater to pacifying the traditionally disorderly gallery audience, abolishing cheap tickets for late arrivals (who were often drunk and disruptive), cutting back the number of spectators allowed on the stage, and prohibiting public access backstage.

Such artistic and managerial concerns could not be detached from wider political and social currents, and Sheridan's innovations, however much driven by the demands of budgets and practical concerns, were interpreted in the context of wider movements for the reformation of *mores* and government in Dublin, and the elevation of city's social and cultural status. The theater, after all, as Simon Davies reminds us, was "a public space where people not only came to see but to be seen, a potential site of collective celebration or factional disapproval."⁵⁵ It was also a field in which there was considerable movement and interaction between Dublin and London. Sheridan's programs, indeed, had their parallels in London, where we have already noted the prominent, disruptive role that footmen could play in and around the capital's theaters. David Garrick, whom Sheridan met and acted under on a visit to London in 1745 and who performed at Smock Alley during the 1745-46 season, was to institute similar reforms at Drury Lane mid-century. Sheridan was initially rewarded for his reformist agenda with the approval of the king's ministers in Dublin, during the tense period of the Jacobite rising in 1745-46, and of early Patriot politicians such as Lucas, who saw it as a positive example of, and inspiration to, native Protestant leadership.

⁵⁵ Simon Davies, "Ireland and the French Theatre," in Graham Gargett and Geraldine Sheridan (eds.), *Ireland and the French Enlightenment, 1700-1800* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1999), 197.

Sheridan also drew support from the students of Trinity College, who had first backed him in a trivial but salacious spat with Theophilus Cibber (son of the actor and poet laureate, and Pope's *bête noire*, Colly Cibber) in 1743.⁵⁶ In February 1747, as we learn from Burke's private correspondence, they lent practical support to him during the so-called "Kelly Riots," when the Smock Alley theater was sacked by a group of "gentlemen" from Connaught, a predominantly Catholic area. The destruction was an act of vengeance on behalf of a certain "Kelly," the group's leader, who had been publicly reprimanded by Sheridan for sexually accosting one of his actresses backstage during an earlier performance. The flashpoint for the contretemps, significantly, had been Sheridan's reported claim to be addressing Kelly "gentleman to gentleman," an assertion of social equality that had rankled with the group, who vainly demanded a public apology. Burke himself was involved in the next episode of retribution directed against Sheridan's tormentors: after they had halted business at Smock Alley for several nights, the ringleaders were sought out by Trinity students and led forcibly to College Green where they were made to pay public penance for their lawlessness.⁵⁷

The "Kelly Riots" spawned a rash of publications, including a pro-Sheridan tract entitled *Brutus' Letter to the Town* which was written by William Dennis. Perhaps emboldened by Sheridan's perceived debt to the student body, Burke and Dennis also started agitating for Smock Alley to stage "The Lawsuit," a play written by their friend Beaumont Brenan. Brenan who appears first in Burke's correspondence in 1746, was perhaps, among his companions, the closest to achieving a wider public recognition. While we know little of

⁵⁶ This was the affair of Cato's cloak, centered upon Sheridan's wish to cancel a performance of Addison's *Cato* because he could not find the cloak he preferred for the lead role. Cibber, instead, took on Cato's part as well as his own and the performance continued. The episode resulted in a pamphlet war that can be followed in Theophilus Cibber, *Cibber and Sheridan: or, the Dublin Miscellany* (Dublin, 1743).

⁵⁷ Letter to Richard Shackleton, 21 February, 1747 in, Burke, *Correspondence*, 1:82-84.

his rather peripheral, and short, literary career, Brennan authored *A Congratulatory Letter from One Poet to Another, on the Divorcement of His Wife* in 1747, and Burke's private correspondence attests that he was well known in publishing circles in Dublin.⁵⁸ Burke, at least, appears to have been committed to his friend's success: among his unpublished works can be found a fragmentary "Hints for an Essay on the Drama," composed around 1761, where "The Lawsuit" is used as a model of propriety in the comedic style.⁵⁹

As 1747 drew to a close, though, the "Reformer of the Stage," as Sheridan was happy to be styled, appeared to be hesitating in his Patriotic duty to foster the native talent of Burke's friend. In all likelihood, his indecision was based on strong, practical and commercial grounds. He had not been long in his managerial post, his reforms were producing some financial dislocation, and he was now facing serious competition from a theater company that had been established nearby in Capel Street, in 1745. Confronted with such challenges, Sheridan turned his popular credentials into populist ones and ostentatiously consulted his market on the selection of plays for his seasons' programs, a tactic that

⁵⁸ *Correspondence*, 1:72. Brennan's *Congratulatory Letter* was something of a public taster for a longer collection of his poetry, but that project never materialized. After a few more minor publications, Brennan made the move to London in 1758 but died three years later. "Sure he was a man of first rate Genius," Burke wrote to Shackleton in 1761, "thrown away and lost to the world." *Correspondence*, 1: 142-43. No copy of "The Lawsuit" is known to exist.

⁵⁹ The text of the "Hints for an Essay on the Drama" can be found in *Writings and Speeches*, 1:553-563. Samuels goes so far as to suggest that Burke had also written a play in 1747, which he passed, unsuccessfully, to Benjamin Victor, assistant manager at the Smock-Alley theater, for consideration; but the reference, which is to Burke visiting Victor, "who has not yet read the play," comes from a letter written by William Dennis to Shackleton and more probably refers to Beaumont Brennan's "The Lawsuit." Samuels, *Early Life*, 113-14. Sheldon rashly and uncritically accepts Samuels's attribution of the piece to Burke and assumes that personal slight to be the cause of Burke's later hostility to Sheridan. Sheldon, *Thomas Sheridan of Smock-Alley*, 118, and 105n149.

naturally increased the representation of traditional, familiar, tried-and-tested pieces in the repertoire.⁶⁰ It was no time for taking chances on little-known writers.

In the face of such frustrating prevarication, Burke's associates decided on a new strategy to force the issue: a press war was to be waged against the theater manager until he should relent and stage the play. The scheme is outlined in a surviving letter of William Dennis to Richard Shackleton, dated January 14, 1748. The letter, headed by the famous martial opening of the *Aeneid*, closes with a mock heroic couplet swearing hatred toward "The mighty Tom, and all his mimic state." Dennis outlines a scheme for forming "an association in defense of Irish wit; then charging the town with a heap of papers on Sheridan, proving him an arrogant ass, and displaying his faults in the management of the theatre till having weakened his party so as not to fear opposition." This Grub Street project was to be coordinated with the activities of unspecified friends, who would "spread a favourable report of ["The Lawsuit"] to prepare the town for its reception when they call for it in the playhouse..." Dennis urged Shackleton to join the group by "throw[ing] some hints together likewise immediately for the press and send[ing] them up. Talk how trivial it is to keep a stage well swept and painted, and the candles well snuffed, when teaching the actors and choosing good plays should be his employment, and hint at his indifferent performance." As one last prong of the attack, Brennan himself was to produce a more substantial tract or "grave enquiry" into the behavior of the manager, "and thus we will persecute [Sheridan] daily from

⁶⁰ It is noteworthy that Sheridan twice appealed to "majority" votes among his audience in face-to-face confrontations with Kelly's supporters in the theater auditorium. The need to appeal to regular patrons would also explain Sheridan's conservative approach to the structure of evening programs, including dance and pantomime routines that Burke and his associated were to attack vigorously in their journal *The Reformer*.

different printers till the plot is ripe, and we have established liberty on the stage, and taste among the people.”⁶¹

It is unclear whether the Club formed an integral part of this “association in defense of Irish wit,” (Shackleton had been admitted and retained as a member even though he could rarely attend meetings in person), or even whether it was now still in existence; but one of the “heap of papers” was shortly to be realized in the publication of a weekly journal that appeared later in January 1748 under the title *The Reformer*. Significantly, this paper complemented another anti-Sheridan weekly, *The Tickler*, which was written by Dr. Paul Hiffernan, a Catholic Irish writer who was already a fierce enemy of Sheridan’s ally Charles Lucas. While Dennis may claim his share in the shaping of this anti-Sheridan strategy (the letter has all the vigor of his contributions to the Club earlier), it is possible that the driving force was, actually, Hiffernan, to whom Dennis refers in his letter as “a poet, philosopher, and play-wright in this town, who stirred up by hatred to Sheridan as manager, and as we suspect by the rejection of a play he offered to the stage, is purposed to oppose and pull down that tyrant’s pride.” The point is significant since Hiffernan, who had spent time in France training first for the priesthood and then in medicine, was a friend of the bookseller Samuel Cotter and his daughter Sally and probably the person who introduced Burke to the Cotters. Like Burke and Brennan, he was eventually to seek success in London, where he eked out a writing career until his death in 1777.⁶²

⁶¹ The text of this letter can be found in James Prior, *Life of Goldsmith*, 2 vols. (London, 1837), 2:315-18.

⁶² Helen Burke makes a claim for Burke’s admiration for Hiffernan, but she is surely wrong in suggesting that Burke’s poem “Ode to Dr. H---n,” admittedly highly ambiguous in its construction, is dedicated to him. Instead, I agree with the editors of the *Writings and Speeches*, who identify “H----n” as Francis Hutcheson. See Burke, “Speaking from behind the Scenes: Edmund Burke and the Lucasians, 1748-49,” in *Edmund Burke’s Irish Identities*, ed. Seán Patrick Donlan, (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006), 36, 43n42; Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, 1: 30-38.

This, then, was the “association in defense of Irish wit,” comprising Burke, Dennis, Brennan, Shackleton, and Hiffernan, that forms the context for Burke’s early journalistic and critical works, and the immediate purposes that shaped that association should not be overlooked when interpreting their contents in a longer perspective.

Dennis also mentions in his letter a “paper,” or broadsheet, written by Burke, that had recently “paved the Way” for the “heap of papers” by selling 300 copies in its first day. This was actually Burke’s publishing debut: a tract signed by “Punchinello” and entitled *Punch’s Petition to Mr. S-----n, to be admitted into the Theatre Royal*. Dennis records that Hiffernan persuaded Cotter to publish it, “telling him he thought it a humorous, sharp piece.” *Punch’s Petition* purports to be an appeal by the fictitious author for admittance into the Smock Alley repertory, now that Sheridan’s “excellent Design for the Improvement of the Stage, and your happy Executions of it...have effected what has been so long Wish’d for by all who love the Stage, namely, the bringing it to as near a resemblance of your Petitioner’s as may be, which has always been look’d upon by the judicious as the Standard of Perfection in that way.”⁶³

F.P. Lock is the first commentator to have incorporated this text into a survey of Burke’s Irish writings, linking the style and subject matter to the burlesque satire evident in Burke’s letters and in the famous literary examples of Swift. This is surely correct. The ironic praise of the comedies that had been performed recently at Smock Alley, and of the “Reformation you have made in the Morality of the Stage” establish a key theme in Burke’s

⁶³ Burke to Richard Shackleton, 28, 29 May, 1747: “I have myself almost finished a piece—an odd one; but you shall not see it until it comes out, if ever...” *Correspondence*, 1:92. In the same letter, in Dennis’s hand, we find that the piece is a humorous one, intended for publication. I agree with Lock that this is unlikely (*pace* Samuels and Boulton) to be an early draft of the *Philosophical Enquiry*. *Punch’s Petition* is a much more likely candidate, unless the reference is to a lost piece. The eight-month gap between this reference and the appearance of the piece is not hard to explain, especially since the theater program did not start again until the fall. The complete text can be read in Lock, *Edmund Burke. Volume One*, plate 3.

youthful journalism, as will be seen below, and identify the piece as a promotion of Brennan's "more wholesome Comedic" achievement. Recently, Helen Burke has provided a more extensive and illuminating stylistic contextualization of the work by drawing attention to the traditionally subversive harlequin genre within which *Punch's Petition* gains its layered appeal. "Punch" figures were utilized by Patriot writers of the 1720s, by Sheridan's own father (protesting at the popularity of Stretch's puppet show, which was established in Dublin in 1721), and also, significantly, by Paul Hiffernan in *The Tickler*, which started its run in March 1748.⁶⁴ She is also probably correct in concluding, from Hiffernan's influence, that Charles Lucas was as much the target of Punchinello's satire as Sheridan, and that the source of Burke's antipathy to the theater manager was the threat that he believed a Lucas-Sheridan alliance posed to cultural standards in Dublin. Just as that alliance exacerbated the confusion between politics and entertainment, so it drew out increasingly antagonistic themes within Irish Patriotism, touched upon earlier in this chapter, that focused on the potential impact of broadening the sphere of public participation—and of the term "gentleman"—on social and civic order. Who was now to be admitted into the political audience, and how were they to be instructed in the proper channels of public duty? In this respect, it is worth noting, with Helen Burke, that Swift satirized the Irish Whig politician Richard Tighe as a "Punchinello" in his poem "Mad Mullinix and Timothy," which appeared in a short-lived journal that he co-wrote with Sheridan's father, in 1728. By using that term, Swift meant to pillory Tighe's form of anti-Jacobite populism as nothing better than the performance of an outdated and manipulated puppet, holding to party and denominational hatreds long after the leaders he

⁶⁴ Helen Burke, *Riotous Performances: The Struggle for Hegemony in the Irish Theater, 1712-1784* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), and "Speaking from behind the Scenes," in Donlan, *Edmund Burke's Irish Identities*, 28-44. Some of the works cited here include: Thomas Sheridan's *Punch Turn'd School-Master* (Dublin, 1721), and the anonymous *Punch's Petition to the Ladies* (Dublin, 1724).

had served decades earlier had laid down their arms and made off with the prizes. It would not be strange for Burke to see Sheridan and Lucas in a similar light, remembering all the time that Punch is a violent as well as a ridiculous figure, a source of subversion in his pantomimic chaos as well as of entertainment.⁶⁵

When she attempts to turn *Punch's Petition* into a bitter religio-social critique of the "Protestant Ascendancy," however, Helen Burke delivers a fair illustration of the analytical pitfalls of replacing close historical contextualization with speculative presentist concerns. Posing at the outset the anachronistic question of whether Burke's hostility to the Sheridan-Lucas reforms displayed in *Punch's Petition* made him "a conservative or a radical in his early days," she discovers the key to this juvenile text by relating its content to the mature *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. In so doing, she discloses in Burke "a politically unstable kind of conservatism," by which he harbored suppressed loyalties to a persecuted and marginalized Catholic nobility while abhorring the rise of Lucas's "proto-Jacobin" demagoguery: "This Punchinello act of ventriloquism, it could be said, allows Burke to complain of the ascendancy of the new elite and the marginalization of the old gentry while simultaneously concealing his Catholic sympathies." Constrained by her own interpretative structure, Burke then forces a number of other issues into the pattern: the Kelly riots become symptomatic of a deeper structural crisis—a "veiled protest at...broader humiliations" suffered by Catholic gentlemen at the hands of thrusting Protestant arrivistes; Sheridan's

⁶⁵ For a survey of harlequins, pantomime, and political entertainment in Britain in the 1730s, see John O'Brien: *Harlequin Britain: Pantomime and Entertainment, 1690-1760* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004). O'Brien stresses also the analogical commonplace between Walpole's political craft and the theatrical craft of Punch.

reforms become “neocolonialist theater”; and Burke is co-opted into Kelly’s marginalized social group, coming, apparently, from “much the same socio-religious ‘border zone’.”⁶⁶

Apart from the circularity of the arguments about Burke’s Catholic proclivities and social alienation, this move to uncover a psychological subplot to *Punch’s Petition* displays the same contextual leveling that we have seen with the *Vindication*: a simplified understanding of the text’s production (as opposed to its “reading”), and the assumption that Burke exerted more autonomy over his writings than we have reason to expect. As a result, we fail to apprehend the complexity of the debates within which Burke was positioning himself. In particular, the satire in *Punch’s Petition*, as we have seen, is entirely explicable in terms of critical techniques familiar to the Patriot mainstream—a mainstream clearly signaled by Burke in his own hand as fully in the tradition of the “Hibernian Patriot” Jonathan Swift. If “Punch” or his harlequins had a more loaded religious symbolism, it might strengthen Helen Burke’s argument, but none has been found to date. What Punch says of himself is that he is “an ingenious native...descended from the Antient British Harlequins, who have had Possession of the Stage long before these Italian Performers were heard of.”⁶⁷ While an Ancient British identity might just point to a breach between the Anglo-Irish and the Cromwellian settlers (among whom Lucas, but not Sheridan, proudly counted himself), the explicit contrast with “Italian Performers” should indicate the broader national, and yet more narrowly Scriblerian, tradition within which the petitioner is making his plea.

⁶⁶ Burke, *Riotous Performances*, 173, 146. Given that we know next to nothing about Kelly apart from his name, this is an ambitious claim; but the author is attempting to adjust Sheldon’s social interpretation of the “gentleman” jibe by interposing a religious dimension.

⁶⁷ Lock, *Edmund Burke. Volume One*, plate 3.

Just five days after the appearance of *Punch's Petition*, on January 28, *The Reformer* began its run. It was a weekly four-page journal, and lasted for thirteen issues, the final issue appearing on April 21, 1748. Each number comprised, in the main, one central essay and occasional advertisements and correspondence, both genuine and contrived. Textual and circumstantial evidence suggest that the main essays were written by Burke, Brennan, Dennis, and Shackleton, although no certain identification is available for the four monikers "B," "AE," "U," and "S." In some ways, attribution is not important—Burke's involvement in the project as a whole is evident and deep, but the project was, just as evidently, a collaborative effort.⁶⁸ Consequently, problems only arise when the contents of specific essays are fitted into a longer-term analytical perspective. This is most famously the case with the seventh essay, on social and economic inequalities in Ireland, which has become central to the lineage of the repressed, radical or unstable conservative Burke, and which is considered in more detail below. Samuels transcends any such authorial complications by attributing all but "S" to Burke: the one piece by "S" being a religiously self-conscious piece judged to be more in the character of the Quaker Shackleton.⁶⁹ But Samuels is almost certainly incorrect. F.P. Lock, while he agrees that the essay by "S" is too "earnest" for Burke, is surely closer to the mark in giving a share of the essays to each of the four members of the group.⁷⁰ In this scheme, Burke is "AE," credited with pieces on acting and the vicious tastes of contemporary audiences, "spirit" in writing and its inauthentic imitation in the false sublime style, the

⁶⁸ For a summary of the debate about the extent of Burke's involvement in the project, see T.O. McLoughlin, "Did Burke write *The Reformer*?" *Notes and Queries* 39, no. 4, (December 1992), 474-77.

⁶⁹ Samuels, *Early Life*, 174. But this is to ignore two private letters by Burke (both to Shackleton) that show a similar style of tolerance and enthusiasm. See *Correspondence*, 1:32-34, 35-36.

⁷⁰ Lock, *Edmund Burke*, 1:56-57.

relationship between poetry and the prosperity of the state (illustrated with references to Spenser and Roscommon), and the famous seventh issue.

Stylistically, the *Reformer* project contains all the ingredients of smart, presumptuous, self-promoting students just graduated from college: it shows signs both of the energy generated by the immediate, personal goals of the enterprise, and a lack of any mature awareness of the commercial restraints that necessarily acted upon theater managers. As such, it may be seen as a natural development for aspiring critics from the activities of the Club, a youthful imitation of the Scriblerian Republic of Letters. In addition to internal textual borrowings from that literary tradition—open references to works such as the *Dunciad*, the *Essay on Criticism*, and echoes of Swift’s satire, *Peri Bathous*, and the *Ode on Solitude*—there are more circumstantial parallels: the anonymity that the writers appear to revel in (as when the author of the fifth essay passes from coffee house to coffee house, incognito, “to see how the Town stood affected to my Labour”); the attempt to manipulate the publisher, Samuel Cotter’s, publishing list through advertisements for book subscriptions; the very idea of a concerted journalistic campaign against Sheridan, (which conjures up the Scriblerian attacks on Rich, Colley Cibber, and Walpole over the fate of Gay’s *Polly* in 1730); even the fact that Sheridan does not easily fit the characterization in the *Reformer*, since this mismatch parallels the insertion of Cibber into the *Dunciad* in place of Theobald, (as an act of spite after an acrimonious dispute between him and Pope in the early 1740s).

Helen Burke brings her assumptions about *Punch’s Petition* to her reading of this short-lived journal. While agreeing with T.O. McLoughlin in seeing the project as revealing Burke’s early sentiments of Irish nationalism, she pushes the theory a step further by arguing that McLoughlin focuses too narrowly on the influence of the existing Patriot tradition and

overlooks a covertly pro-Catholic agenda woven into Burke's sympathy for the native Irish gentry.⁷¹ Her position rests heavily upon Sheridan's support for the fiercely Protestant Lucas, and on her stress upon the Swiftian-Hiffernanian Punchinello leitmotif discussed above. In a recent study of eighteenth-century Irish writers, McLoughlin, under the heading of "Burke's early cultural nationalism," has suggested ways in which *The Reformer* imitates familiar Popeian critiques of dullness and debased taste to blast Sheridan and his audiences for their "uncritical acceptance of 'English prejudice'" and their servile acceptance of colonial oppression.⁷² He illustrates this position by reference to attacks on British playwrights and actors that appear in the earlier issues in particular, and by the intensity of the description of "the utmost Penury in the Midst of a rich Soil" that marks the theme of the seventh issue's essay.⁷³ Elsewhere, situating the journal within Burke's burgeoning aspiration to become a writer and critic, McLoughlin notes the uniqueness of a paper dealing "more often than not implicitly, with the city's theatre as a manifestation of the cultural vitality of a national socio-economic system," and suggests that this reveals a Burke already

⁷¹ Helen Burke, "Speaking from behind the Scenes," 39. Helen Burke's statement that "Burke began editing and publishing" *The Reformer* perhaps follows Mahoney, who argues, on no evidence at all, that "Burke founded a short-lived periodical...which he produced almost single-handedly" (*Edmund Burke and Ireland*, 5).

⁷² T.O. McLoughlin, *Contesting Ireland*, 167, 168.

⁷³ "Our Countrymen are esteemed in a neighbouring Isle the dullest of Mankind, and there is scarce a Scribbler among them who has any other name for this Nation than BOEOTIA: I don't know for what we deserve the Appellation more than the senseless Encouragement we give their wretched Productions; so plentifully do they supply, and so greedily do we swallow that Tide of fulsome *Plays*, *Novels*, and *Poems* which they pour on us, that they seem to make Stupidity their Science, and to have associated for the Destruction of Wit and Sense..." (Samuels, *Early Life*, 297-98). But Benjamin Victor, Sheridan's sub-manager, who was English and represented all the worst of budget-driven Anglocentrism, is not mentioned. The seventh issue is actually an attack on absenteeism, which, while it may be nurtured by colonialism, is hardly the same thing. See *ibid.*, 314-17 and below.

harboring the strength and passion of suppressed resentments, “crusad[ing] for an Irish identity for Irish culture.”⁷⁴

There is certainly more to *The Reformer* than an opportunistic plug for Brennan’s play, and it should, indeed, be taken together with *Punch’s Petition* as indicative of Burke’s affections for his native land. As a fresh, precocious graduate, he has more than Sheridan’s theater management in his sights, and, behind the Popeian verse and Swiftian satire, the internal evidence of the paper shows a group of friends engaged in a serious exploration of what it means to engage with Dublin’s “public sphere.” But both Burke and McLoughlin divert us from the real significance of its patriotic, or, rather, Patriot program by explaining it retrospectively through the lens of Burke’s later texts, by applying anachronistic concepts, and by assuming, too narrowly, that it was Burke’s own, undiluted ideological creation.⁷⁵ In fact, *The Reformer* attests to two themes in particular: the continuing influence of Pope and Swift on a rising generation of aspiring public critics, and the desire of Burke and his friends to articulate from within that tradition a re-formation of a Swiftian “Hibernian Patriot” program of cultural and political self-education appropriate to the changing religious and commercial dynamics of Ireland in the 1740s.⁷⁶ It was in this latter maneuver that Sheridan, Lucas, and their new political allies (like Bolingbroke and the Pelhams across the water) emerged as not just obstacles to cultural aspirations, but, through their adherence to rigid constitutional and historical interpretations of liberty, as potential betrayers of Patriotism.

⁷⁴ T.O. McLoughlin, “The Context of Edmund Burke’s *The Reformer*,” *Eighteenth-Century Ireland* 2 (1987), 42.

⁷⁵ McLoughlin, “Context of Burke’s *The Reformer*,” 45.

⁷⁶ For the “Hibernian Patriot,” see p. 182 below.

Increasingly, their rhetoric appeared to denote not the rejuvenation of true public spirit at which it purportedly aimed, but disorderly faction disguised.

The first two issues of *The Reformer*, which sold, reportedly, an impressive one thousand and five hundred copies respectively, flowed smoothly from *Punch's Petition*. They castigated theater manager and patrons for their attention to shallow, imported drama, and charged them with ignoring their duty to patronize the morally educative productions of the native Republic of Letters. The specific target of Sheridan's management is never lost sight of in the run of issues, recurring in numbers 8, 10, and 11 as the season's program unfolded; nor is the centrality of the relationship between taste in the theater and the broader appeal to a recovery of moral spirit among the Irish people: for "the Depravation of Taste is as great as that of Morals, and tho' the correcting the latter may seem a more laudable Design, and more consistent with *public-Spirit*; yet there is so strong a connection between them, and the Morals of a Nation have so great Dependence upon their Taste and Writings, that the fixing the latter, seems the first and surest Method of establishing the former."⁷⁷ This point is given specificity in the eighth issue, when the author is advised by "one of the *Smarts* of this City" that "to rail at what the People lik'd, was the worst Way in the World to gain their Esteem," and in the tenth, where Edward Moore's recently staged *Foundling* is critiqued as symbolic of the formulaic, sentimental entertainment that has dislodged the true, Classical *vis comica* and its noble task, "by ridiculing the Follies, and Vices of Men, to make them ashamed of them."⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, 1:66.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 1:101-02, 113.

Moore's piece was one of several imports from London that Sheridan used this season, and which earned the dismissive judgment of *The Reformer*: "A Set of Writers have stolen into the Esteem of this City, who while they continue in vogue, will never suffer good Taste to make any Advances among us; such are *Farquhar*, *Cibber*, *Centlivre*, &c. and the fustian Tragedies of *Lee* and *Young*." While Farquhar was Irish, the other names, juxtaposed against appeals for native Irish talent might suggest support for McLoughlin's cultural nationalist and anticolonialist interpretation. But the fixing of this discussion within familiar currents of broader criticism—regret for the passing of the art of satire, contempt for the expense lavished on "Fiddlers, Singers, Dancers and Players"—makes the national appeal to home-grown talent incidental to the wider problem of the debasement of taste and the driving of moral purpose and political criticism from the stage. As Jonathan Swift had earlier suggested in his poem "Mad Mullinix and Timothy," it was undoubtedly convenient to British colonial rule and the Protestant political elite to turn the city's entertainments insipid and the populace comatose; but this "national embarrassment" was also part of a character flaw that was blind to ethnicity—the indolent beggary, extortion, and inventive paralysis that had been produced by absentee landlordism that is the subject of a vicious Swiftian admonition against "*Whoredom, Idleness, Thievery*, and all manner of *Debauchery*" supplied by "S" in issue 9.⁷⁹ One solution to this indolence, as Pope, Dodsley and the Tully's Head circle evidently understood, started with a reengagement of the audience with home-grown culture (Brutus, the "Virgin Queen") and native talent. Serious cultural and historical education, rather than cultural protectionism and political nationalism, was the best response to French fopperies and English comedies: the former policy was rooted in the very

⁷⁹ Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, 1:108.

principles of civic participation and benevolence, while the latter were artificial constructs imposed from above.

The Reformer does, however, attempt to live up to its name and balances its disgust over the state of public taste with some positive models for achieving a revitalization of public spirit. The first is institutional. The journal makes a number of commendatory references to organizations, “formed for the support of useful Trades and Charities,” that symbolize and give effect to the principles of civic improvement. These include the Dublin Society, founded in 1731 (which Burke, at one of the Club sessions, had suggested might be supported by a tax on absentee landlords), the Physico-Historical Society, founded in 1744, and the charter schools that had been established to instill industry, loyalty, and religion in the city’s youth.⁸⁰ The second is moral, and focuses upon the proper character of a “gentleman.” As the Patriot’s task is to “establish a spirit of Benevolence, good sense, and religion in [Dublin],” the Patriotic duty of *The Reformer* is to restore public spiritedness citizen by citizen; but that requires the identification of the virtues necessary for such vital public involvement. We have already met the urgency of this issue of “gentlemanliness” in the disciplinary reforms of Provost Baldwin at Trinity College and in the origins of the Kelly riots in 1747. However we choose to interpret Burke’s emotional investment in that latter episode, the frequent use by writers in this period of the “buck” or “smart”—the “anti-gentleman,” who debased leadership and squandered responsibility by a sterile application of his personal, physical, and financial resources—was intended to show forcefully that breeding alone was no guarantee of gentleman status. This picture of the gentleman in negative was popularized by Addison in the *Spectator*, and it appears several times in the *Reformer*, where, for example, the wandering writer is vexed to see in the coffee houses of

⁸⁰ Ibid, 1:93, 82, 85, 107.

Dublin, “so much Gentility, with so little Appearance of Reason,” or gentlemen whose discussion was of “their wenches, or who danced best at the Theater.” The writer’s friend Asper (possibly Hiffernan) argues persuasively in the sixth issue that “the young Gentlemen of this Age, partly from Nature, partly from Education, have got a low kind of Prudence, and are taught to think every Thing that does not gratify the Senses, unsubstantial and trifling, and fit only for romantick Heads.”⁸¹

But the idea of the Patriotic “gentleman” is given positive, concrete form in that famous seventh issue, in which, after a bitter attack upon landowners and their neglect of their subtenants that is now generally regarded as an indication of Burke’s indignation at the consequences of a repressive denominational colonialism, “AE” furnishes the story of a “Gentleman of Fortune” who reforms the life and productivity of his tenants through careful cultivation of the local economy. While much of the attention to this essay has focused on the opening vivid description of “the utmost Penury in the Midst of a rich Soil,” this text’s most recent editor correctly points out that the latter section fits closely with a genre of contemporary Patriot pamphlets. In one such publication, *A View of the Grievances of Ireland* (1745), a “True Patriot” argues from the same stark starting point for a more astute implementation of the goals of the popery laws that will produce the gradual elimination of Catholicism through the integration of a class of middle-status—that is, “gentleman”—Catholic landowners. This would produce a new, cohesive class of public-spirited individuals, such that, “Had many of our Gentlemen the same just Way of thinking, we should no doubt see this Nation in a short time in the most flourishing Condition, notwithstanding all the Disadvantages we labour under...”⁸² In its stress upon the evils of

⁸¹ Ibid., 89, 93.

⁸² Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, 1:96, 99n5, 100.

absenteeism, this *Reformer* is also probably indebted to the reissuing of Thomas Prior's infamous pamphlet *Irish Absentee Lords*, first published in 1729. Prior, together with a number of his acquaintances including the Cork landowner, politician and writer Sir Richard Cox, saw absenteeism as a moral rather than a constitutional or political issue: at least, a fierce stand against absenteeism need not imply any sympathy toward constitutional independency at all, and was as compatible with the full exercise of the popery laws as it was with covert Catholic sympathies.⁸³

Far from an “unstable” conservative nostalgia for the native, hereditary aristocracy, this program for reconciling education, breeding, and taste in the “gentleman”—a proper citizen of the Republic of Letters and of the *Patria*—could be taken as a striking validation of the role of the *novus homo*. But, if so, it is a highly conditional one, since *The Reformer* holds its fiercest attacks precisely for “those who owe much of their own Fortune to their parts, [but are] so slow in rewarding them in others, and...so diligent in raising Funds for Folly, but none for Science.” Henry Fielding shows us in *Tom Jones* that education, no more than breeding, is sufficient to make a gentleman. In the failings of the religious zeal of Tom's tutor Thwackum and the philosophy of his other mentor, the free-thinker Square, Fielding reveals the limitations of Shaftesbury's detached aesthetics, which, in its dispassionate approach to the qualities of judgment and taste, lacks the *je ne sais quoi* of a gentleman's. Not unlike Spence's stress upon the importance of religion to the critic and poet, the virtues of an educated, but not *inspired*, gentleman can become desiccated and sterile. We see in the fourth issue of *The Reformer*, for example, how the preference shown

⁸³ See, for example, Sir Richard Cox, *A Letter from Sir Richard Cox, Bart. To Thomas Prior, Esq; &c.* (Dublin, 1749). Cox introduced a linen manufacture on his estate in Cork and hoped thereby to “release the inferior People, from a state of Villeinage; and to create a Yeomanry at last in the Kingdom” (p. 43). What better aspiration for a public-spirited gentleman, especially as the yeomanry was, *naturally*, to be Protestant.

to a foreign dancer over a native writer is cleverly imputed to “the Politeness of the Audience, who would not dishonour their Country, by ill-treating a Foreigner; but let them consider that this Complaisance is a Detriment, not to say Disgrace to our Nation; Politeness we grant in itself very laudable, but when, by Misapplication, it opposes that greater Virtue Publick-Spirit it is liable to the severest Reproach.”⁸⁴

The virtue of a gentleman, then, must be infused with a status-free *acer spiritus ac vis* to realize its true civic potential. At root, this means that the recovery of the “gentleman” is a *religious* issue, and public spirit, while it is awakened, nurtured, and engaged at a local level, has its origin and ultimate goal in “the love of Mankind.” We might not expect to find great religious import in a youthful paper of literary criticism; but it is there in the moral censoriousness of the early essays, in S’s (Shackleton’s?) strident attack on the “Canker of Idleness” and “Ruse of Sloth,” and in the Maundy Thursday sermon (written by “U” but entirely consistent with Burke’s style), in a way that shows how the religious focus, uncomfortable with denominational qualifications, has shifted to the broader program of civic tolerance and latitudinarian conscience. Issue 11, in particular, contains a fascinating assault upon “The two greatest Enemies of Religion...Infidelity and *Blind Zeal*” and argues that “a true religious Life has the same Efficacy to the prevention of both.” It might finally be noted here that Burke was to pen a few years later, in London, some short essays on the character of “a wise man,” “a good man,” and “a fine gentleman,” in each of which it is the lack of religious coordinates in the superficial politeness and virtues of these figures that renders their public roles sterile.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, 1:86.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 116. Somerset, *A Note-Book of Edmund Burke*, 103-118.

Nor should any of this surprise us, since it had been Hutcheson's goal while in Dublin to promote a concept of benevolence that held to the civic importance of religion while acknowledging the need to divorce benevolence from the fear or promise of future reward. This maneuver, central to his *Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, which appeared in 1725, was both a defense of Locke against the criticisms of his former pupil and an implicit recognition that Shaftesbury's own Classical moral parameters, strictly understood, could not provide the moral underpinning of the natural affections required to insure public order in an increasingly unwieldy and diverse public sphere.⁸⁶ "I doubt," Hutcheson observes, "we have made Philosophy, as well as Religion, by our foolish management of it, so austere and ungainly a Form, that a Gentleman cannot easily bring himself to like it; and those who are Strangers to it, can scarcely bear to hear our Description of it. So much it is changed from what was once the delight of the finest Gentlemen among the Antients, and their Recreation after the Hurry of publick Affairs!"⁸⁷ Burke may not have accepted Hutcheson's solution to the secularizing tendencies of Shaftesbury and his followers, but it would be hard to argue that the "association in defense of Irish wit" was not in tune with the spirit of Hutcheson's enterprise.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, 205-15.

⁸⁷ Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (Dublin, 1725), 9-10.

⁸⁸ Hutcheson was to reaffirm this purpose in his *Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections* three years later: "The Knowledge and Love of the DEITY, the universal MIND, is as natural a Perfection to such a Being as Man, as any accomplishment to which we arrive by cultivating our natural Dispositions; nor is that Mind come to the proper state and vigor of its kind, where Religion is not the main Exercise and Delight." Francis Hutcheson, *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections. With illustrations on the moral sense* (Dublin, 1728), 213. The editors of Burke's *Writings and Speeches* have attributed a poem, "To Dr H-----n," to Burke and argued that it is dedicated to Hutcheson (Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, 1:32-34). But see footnote 62 above. The similarity between Hutcheson's moral aesthetic work and Burke's later *Philosophical Enquiry* is, of course, notable.

Against such a manifesto for civic rejuvenation, the enemy was only incidentally and partially British colonial rule. A more urgent problem was the enemy within—the sort of Protestant Patriot who used history and reason to produce a hardening and narrowing of Irish civic identity and fed upon the language of religious bigotry. *The Reformer* encounters such a figure amid the self-obsessed characters—“Divines, Gentlemen, Grave Citizens, Scholars, Fops, Pedants, Lawyers and Politicians”—who inhabit the capital’s bars and coffee houses, where he is circulating covertly to test reactions to his journal. Amid this disconnected group, in an inner room, the Reformer spies an earnest orator, declaiming passionately in the cause of Sheridan and against the Reformer himself, who “must necessarily be some Scoundrel, who was tempted to write thus for the sake of a Dinner.” “The Meanness of this last Reflection,” the essayist continues, “so grated me, that I could not help stepping up, and representing to him, how unworthy of a Gentleman such Expressions were; which so raised his Choler, that the Cudgel, which till now stuck under his Arm, began to appear in his Hand; when one of his Auditors...cautioned me to have a Care what I said, for that, to his Knowledge, this angry Person was one of Manager’s [sic] Partizans, who had it in his Commission to abuse all who dared dislike his Proceedings.” As the writer retires, the orator takes his opportunity to lead the rest of the crowd against *The Reformer*, and those who lack the stabilizing orientation of true taste fall to partisanship masquerading as righteous judgment. They have been beguiled by an *ignis fatuus*, which AE (Burke?) helpfully identifies in issue 12 with “a flighty bombast Stile, without connection or order [or] full of that low kind of City Pertness, so conspicuous in waggish Apprentices, joined to some Market Phrases and some Parody.”⁸⁹ For Burke and his Irish Patriot reformers, it is here, in

⁸⁹ Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, 1:89, 90, 121, 120.

the heart of Dublin's public spaces, even within the boundaries of the Irish Republic of Letters and the ranks of the Patriots, that the true enemy of liberty and order is to be found.

In his introduction to a selection of Swift's Irish pamphlets, Joseph McMinn describes the "Hibernian Patriot" in the following terms: "Swift's patriotism is real, but it belongs to eighteenth-century Ireland not to modern romantic nationalism. It is based solidly on the idea of public service. It is conservative but critical, against useless change but forever demanding improvement. The pamphlets expose many contradictions of the colonial relation with England, but they can never envisage a resolution of those contradictions."⁹⁰ The evidence of his early literary experiments suggests strongly that this was the spirit of the Irish Republic of Letters with which Burke and his associates identified.

V: Reconstituting Patriotism

T.O. McLoughlin, pursuing his theme of Burke as a frustrated polemicist, argues that Burke was tinged with "cynicism and disillusion" by the end of *The Reformer's* run of thirteen copies; but the insight, once more, fails to take full account of the immediate goals of the project. There was no practical sense in agitating for Brennan's play after April, since the season closed then. Besides, the final few issues of the journal suggest more strongly than frustration the mapping out of a new, more ambitious publishing enterprise to follow the *Poems on Several Occasions*. For example, we find in those pages advertisements for a proposed publication entitled "The Foolish Miscellany," a "choice Collection of the most

⁹⁰ Joseph McMinn, ed., *Swift's Irish Pamphlets. An Introductory Selection* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1991), 19.

singular and entertaining Pieces of Dulness that have been written or published for this three Years past in this City.” The project falls entirely within the spirit of the Scriblerians’ *Peri Bathous*, as “perhaps as poignant [sic] a Satyr upon the Scriblers of these Times, as ever was written.”⁹¹ More immediately, though, a number of alternative publishing opportunities arose for Burke and his friends through the fierce pamphlet war that was being generated by Charles Lucas’s tenacious political ambitions in Dublin. It was this extended contest that was to bring to a head the tensions within the Patriot tradition that we have been tracing in this chapter so far. In so doing, it was to place the capstone on Burke’s cultural and political aspirations as he prepared his move to London, and, incidentally, to further enhance his marketability in the particular surroundings of Tully’s Head.

Charles Lucas was born in 1713, in County Clare, of Cromwellian planter stock, and trained for a profession in medicine. From the time of his appointment to the Dublin City committee as a representative of the guild of apothecaries, in 1741, he associated himself with the imputed liberties of the Protestant free citizens and freeholders of the city and fomented opposition to what he saw as the monopolistic privileges of the aldermen. Manipulating every device available in Dublin’s “public sphere” to promote his populist agenda, including the stage, he sealed his reputation as a dangerous demagogue when he stood for a vacant parliamentary seat in Dublin in 1748.⁹² Issuing more than 200,000 printed words in defense of his candidature, he was eventually threatened with imprisonment for

⁹¹ Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, 1:122, 124. There is no record of the project ever reaching publication. The possible allusion to Lucas is strengthened by the fact that the writer traces the origin of the “flighty bombast Stile” to John Lilburne, a mid-seventeenth-century political agitator and pamphleteer—see *Writings and Speeches*, 1:120n1.

⁹² The sitting MP died in August 1748, but since the Irish parliament met only biennially, a writ for a by-election was not issued until the following year. The election campaign in this case lasted fourteen months. See Sean Murphy, “Charles Lucas and the Dublin Election of 1748-1749,” *Parliamentary History* 2, (1983), 93-111.

sedition and fled to the Isle of Man days before the poll, in October 1749. He was to return home eleven years later, transformed by events into the vatic protector of Protestant hegemony in the island.

The Lucas affair of 1748-49 was a pivotal moment in Dublin politics and yet it has been surprisingly understudied.⁹³ Burke's involvement in the pamphlet wars that surrounded Lucas's election campaign is thought either to have been indirect, arising, as we have seen, from Lucas's associations with Thomas Sheridan earlier, or speculative, relying upon the uncertain attribution of a number of anonymous political tracts, both for and against Lucas's candidature. In any event, Burke's assumed Catholic sympathies are generally considered by commentators to have placed him in opposition to Lucas. That view is strengthened by his evident friendship with Paul Hiffernan, whose *Tickler*, as we have seen, was openly hostile to Lucas, and it has recently been argued that Burke was involved in the production of another such attack, the *Censor Extraordinary*, which masqueraded as a special edition of Lucas's propaganda mouthpiece, the *Censor*, and parodied the Lucasian position *ad absurdum*.⁹⁴ Certainly, by 1761, when Lucas returned triumphantly to Dublin from exile, Burke had come to see the old Patriot as a "Mountebank" and expressed wearily the wish that he would "descend from his stage," and cover his political blunders with his "medical quackery."⁹⁵

⁹³ There is no biography of Lucas, but note the work of Sean Murphy above, and his article "Charles Lucas, Catholicism and nationalism," *Eighteenth-Century Ireland* 8 (1993), 83-102. See also Hill, *From Patriots to Unionists*, chapter 3. "It was to be Lucas's achievement during the 1740s," Hill writes, "to transform a purely municipal struggle for the restoration of 'ancient rights' into a campaign of national (and, in the eyes of some supporters, international) significance, aiming at nothing less than the regeneration of the ancient 'free' constitution as a whole" (p.83).

⁹⁴ Lock, *Edmund Burke*, 62. This possible attribution is all the more intriguing since the *Censor Extraordinary* focuses its attack particularly on the false sublime as a means of demagoguery and the misapplication of charters and old histories. The first issue of the *Censor* does promise that, "as often as any particular Emergency demands [the writer's] more immediate Interposition, [the writer] will not fail to send forth an OCCASIONAL CENSOR." (*Censor*, no. 1, Saturday June the 3d, 1749, p.1.)

⁹⁵ Burke, *Correspondence*, 1:139-40.

Sean Murphy has recently revived Samuels's contention that Burke wrote in support of Lucas by identifying five articles in *The Censor*, signed "B," that are "almost certainly the work of the young Edmund Burke." Given that we can be sure Burke was opposed to the popery laws and to anti-Catholic rhetoric, Murphy is obliged to accompany his attribution with a modification of our perception of Lucas's religious bigotry, and he duly claims that Lucas withdrew somewhat from the fierce anti-Catholicism of his "Barber's Letters" in support of Sheridan, which had appeared in 1747.⁹⁶ While it appears beyond doubt that Lucas, whatever his personal views, wanted his Patriot stand for liberty to be interpreted as naturally anti-Catholic (since its rhetorical opposite, "slavery," was most effectively and urgently associated with the apparatus of popery and the Catholic priesthood), it is true that Protestant orators could benefit, in these calmer times, from fudging the distinction between Catholic religious doctrine and the church's position on the temporal power of the papacy.⁹⁷ Murphy's reopening of this debate over Burke's attitude to Lucas, while inconclusive in itself, at least allows us space in which to reconsider the complexities and inner tensions of the Irish Patriot position in these pivotal years, and to avoid the tendency to simplify it by considering it only as the prelude to more sharply defined nationalist and sectarian movements later in the century.⁹⁸ In making the valuable point that Burke's anti-Lucasian stance has rested until now largely on assumptions of his Catholic sympathies, Murphy helps

⁹⁶ Murphy, "Charles Lucas, Catholicism, and nationalism," 92.

⁹⁷ References to Catholicism in the *Censor* focus largely, as one would expect, on the deviousness or intolerance of the priesthood rather than on liturgical or doctrinal issues.

⁹⁸ Murphy can only go so far as to argue that, on the question of the Popery Laws, Lucas, "[w]hile not committing himself to a call for their repeal...clearly implied that penal laws obliging catholics and other non-Anglicans to deny their religion or limiting their property rights were unjust, and that all that should be required of them was acceptance of the civil constitution" ("Lucas, Catholicism and nationalism," 89). Ironically, Murphy reveals his own design to co-opt Lucas into a conveniently expanded definition of the Irish "nationalist" movement.

us to recover aspects of the intellectual context of Dublin in the 1740s that we have encountered in *The Reformer*, such as the continuing vibrancy of Irish-British Patriot discourse, and the moral and religious context within which public spirit and civic participation were understood. We must add to these one further one: the significance of historiographical analysis and legal precedent in defining the constitutional liberties at the heart of the Patriot program. Each of these aspects illuminates in its own way subtle and not so subtle divergences in outlook between Burke and Lucas that would explain the former's antipathy toward the latter in intellectual and rhetorical rather than social and religious terms. They could also, incidentally, be seen to broaden the scope of Murphy's authorial investigation further than he appears to contemplate by raising the question: Why couldn't Burke have written *both* for *and* against Lucas?

The literature of Lucas's parliamentary campaign in 1749 illustrates in a number of ways the significant level of interaction between the Republic of Letters in Dublin and London. In particular, Lucas shared the dire, formulaic English Patriot diagnosis of corruption in the body politic, the threat of civic "Bondage...effac[ing] all Rudiments of Public Spirit," and the attendant identification with "all Men of Genius and Morals, who, scorning to stoop to the mean and sordid Ends of private Parties, or Factions, have the general Good of Civil Society, principally, if not solely, at heart."⁹⁹ The *Censor* acknowledges its debt to Bolingbroke, Pulteney, and the *Craftsman* from the outset, and those borrowings appear prominently in an emphasis on the dangers of infection from London and its "scalawag" stooges in Dublin. The admonition becomes increasingly frantic as the contagion of moral bankruptcy is spread all the more virulently through the tentacles

⁹⁹ *The Censor*, no.1, p.1.

of the expanding commercial metropolis of London. Indeed, Lucas wonders whether eradicating the source of the infection is even an option any more:

I fear, incurable poison to the state; *Fraud, Venality and Corruption*, into the *Fountain-Head* of our *Liberties*, ELECTIONS and PARLIAMENTS; and, by *Bribes* and *Pensions* cunningly applied; suppressed, or extinguished the *vivifying Spirit* of LIBERTY and PATRIOTISM, in England; their Parliaments have been running counter to the Principles of *their Policy*, to the very Ends of their Institution ...”¹⁰⁰

Irishmen have to be more keenly educated in the political and civil rights they have inherited: “It is time...to be put in Mind,” Lucas affirmed, “that Liberty is not the Product of any particular Soil, nor inherent to any particular Climate,” in furtherance of which, he republished the *British Free-holder’s Political Catechism*, written by that “true Patriot of a neighbouring Country,” under a modified title in 1748.¹⁰¹

Lucas and his supporters, like Irish Patriots more widely, were in fact negotiating a difficult path between, on the one hand, a critique of political corruption and cultural enervation that respected no national boundaries and, on the other hand, the particularities of Ireland’s situation, which became increasingly centered upon its constitutional history. This required a perpetuation of the language of political opposition as it existed in England, not least because Lucas’s campaign was designed to have purchase with parliamentarians in Westminster who had next to no knowledge of Ireland. In an attack on the Walpolean years that could have come directly from Bolingbroke’s writings, Lucas states that, “It is most certain, that while British parliaments stood on pure, constitutional principles, such an Outrage on the Rights and Liberties of Ireland, as governing it, by Laws, made without the

¹⁰⁰ Charles Lucas, *A Tenth Address to the Free Citizens, and Free-holders of the City of Dublin* (Dublin, 1748), 29.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 31. Charles Lucas, *The British Freeholder’s Political Catechism: Addressed and Recommended to the Free Citizens, and Free-Holders, of the City of Dublin, at this Critical Juncture* (Dublin, 1748). In the preface to this work, Lucas writes: “Among the various means whereby wicked Men have effected the enslaving of Nations, the keeping them in Ignorance has always proved the most effectual.”

Consent of the People; was never attempted.” At the same time, Lucas had to particularize his rhetoric for his Irish audience, which he did by demanding the recovery of legislative independence in a way that built upon Molyneux through the remembrance of a catalog of injustices inflicted by the English on that country. This was a pitch that was certainly politically—though not culturally—“nationalist,” and, ironically, it was a maneuver that drove him to a further conceptual borrowing from the British Patriots, the historiographical tradition associated most closely with Bolingbroke by which liberty was understood to reside within canonical texts that must be contested, recovered, and preserved, in their legal and linguistic purity. As a result, we see that much of Lucas’s propaganda, including such a “popular” vehicle as *The Censor*, focuses on the support for legislative independence and popular liberties enshrined in historical charters and a particular interpretation of Ireland’s incorporation into the constitutional inheritance of the English nation.

Lucas stated his historical position most directly, if not lucidly, in *A Tenth Address to the Free Citizens, and Free Holders of the City of Dublin*, which appeared early in 1749. Here, he claims that “it is, on all hands confessed and agreed, that the Constitution of Ireland was settled and established upon the same Foundation and Principles, with that of England; Being made a free, independent and compleat Kingdom, under the Crown of England.” The conclusion he draws from that proposition, that “there was no general Rebellion in *Ireland*, since the first *British Invasion*, that was not *raised or fomented*, by the *Oppression, Instigation, evil Influence, or Connivance* of the *English*” was to be the cause of his indictment on a charge of treason later in the year and his flight into exile.¹⁰² In the first *Censor*, dated June 3, 1749, he states, feigning the impartiality of the antiquarian, that one of

¹⁰² Lucas, *A Tenth Address*, 15, 24.

the editor's goals is "to collect a History of the antient and present State, or Constitution, of all the Cities, Boroughs, and Towns Corporate in this Kingdom. And to enquire into, and explain the true Causes of the Devastation of many, once considerable, Towns, in this Kingdom." On a later page is advertised the publication of "Magna Charta Libertatum Civitatis Dublini: The Great Charter of the Liberties of the City of Dublin. Transcribed and Translated into English, with explanatory Notes. Dedicated to his Majesty, and presented to his LORDS JUSTICES of IRELAND. By C. Lucas, a Free Citizen." The Magna Charta itself, a common focal point for the liberties of the *Britannic Constitution*, provides the measure, in future issues, of the loss of liberties by Dublin's citizens that forms the subject matter of the essays.¹⁰³ As in the *Tenth Address*, Lucas draws from Bolingbroke and the older tradition of seventeenth-century constitutional thought to affirm Molyneux's earlier denial that Ireland had been "conquered" by Henry II, while stressing that the Irish lords willingly entered under the protections and liberties of laws stretching back to Anglo-Saxon times. Thus, the pre-conquest origins of English constitutional liberties recover their direct significance for the Irish, having been exported under the Plantagenets through consent of the indigenous people, not by conquest.

In this way, Lucas effects an historical union of Norman and later English settlers in an alliance that transcends, or, at least, subordinates, the strict denominational divide between Protestant and Catholic; but the move carries a number of further significant implications. The recovery of rights assumed "time out of mind" follows a narrative, familiar from

¹⁰³ See, *Censor*, no.4, June 24, 1749, 1, on the delay, denial, and obstruction of justice by local city magistrates. Such offenses, predictably likened to "a Popish Inquisition," were imputed to the grandfather of Sir Richard Cox, "one of the knighted, ermined Villains of the perfidious Ministry of the late abused Queen ANNE." Lucas's charge, that Cox had imprisoned the Gaelic poet Hugh Mc Curtin for having criticized his *Hibernia Anglicana* appears to be unfounded and surfaces for the first time in print here.

Bolingbroke's writings, that privileges the collapse of the superstition and ignorance associated with Catholicism and the pope's historic claims to *plenitudo potestatis*. As a result, Lucas can leave his hearers free to draw the conclusion that the grip of priest-craft renders Catholics incapable of the exercise of the duties of a free citizen. It is something of a judicial and political parallel with the economic reductionism echoed in a "True Patriot's" insistence that "there was something in the Spirit of Popery incompatible with a laborious life."¹⁰⁴ At the same time, this approach to constitutional liberty leaves little room for an effective, theoretical attack upon the moral or legal rectitude of the penal laws, since their origins are evidently bound in with the preservation of rights recovered in the Revolution Settlement.

It seems precisely to have been this historical methodology, and its political applications, that concerned Burke. To some degree, this may have been a generational issue. For Burke and his immediate associates, the defining experience of Patriotism was not the establishment of the Williamite settlement in Ireland but the loyalty and quiescence of the Irish Catholic population during the Jacobite rebellions of the eighteenth century. This perception could only weaken the prejudices that bound respectable Catholics to a history of insurgency, priest-craft, and foreign intervention, and it threw back into discussion the immediate context within which the legal disabilities against Catholics had been established. It also reopened investigation into the roots of earlier Catholic rebellions in Ireland, especially that of 1641, and looked to history for a different narrative that was founded not

¹⁰⁴ [True Patriot], *View of the Grievances of Ireland* (Dublin, 1745), 3. The "True Patriot's" concerns about the lack of public spirit also contain interesting similarities to the diagnosis of *The Reformer*, not least in their attack upon the indolence and selfishness of the "gentlemen" of Ireland. A familiar variant of the criticism of "bucks" to be found in the *Spectator* and elsewhere, this might, in and of itself, explain the tensions raised by Kelly and his followers: "It is evident...that the great Bane of this Country lies in our having no Class of People amongst us between the Gentleman and the Beggar" (p. 6).

on matters of exclusion and independence, but on liberty and slavery as denominationally blind and as moral rather than constitutional issues.

Lucas's Irish history could also be interpreted as threatening, rather than consolidating, order precisely because it failed to allow subsequent events to work upon and mediate the raw material of historical charters and texts. The liberty it ushered forth was dangerously abstracted from the contexts within which it had originally been articulated, and the proof of the pudding here lay, as so often, in the rhetoric through which such abstractions were propagated. Thus, the satirical *Censor Extraordinary*, in shadowing Lucas's demagogic parliamentary campaign, is careful to commence each issue with a specimen of the false sublime. The thirteenth number, for example, opens with this particularly impressive comet: "Whosoever taketh a View of the State of this Nation from the first Dawnings of Government in it, will see a Scene, perhaps, the most melancholy that History affords; such a Succession of TYRANNY, handed down under the Names of Kings, Priests, Lords, Lords Lieutenants, Lords Deputies, Lords Justices, Lords Bishops, and Lords ALDERMEN, and all the Lords who have lorded over us...etc."¹⁰⁵ Accompanying such speechifying, the journal published spoof charters, such as that of "the Reign of William Rufus, Ann. 27. Gul. 2di" against the corruption of local officials, which carefully complains at the same time that, "Our Justices behave as if they knew nothing of this Act, which is yet unrepealed."¹⁰⁶ Surrounding such pseudo-erudite fare are parodies of Lucas's recurrent stress, in the *Censor*, upon the casual brutality and arrogance of "high boasted" gentlemen and Jesuitical intrigues

¹⁰⁵ *Censor Extraordinary*, no. 13, August 19 – August 21, 1749, p.1.

¹⁰⁶ *Censor Extraordinary*, no. 11, August 5 – August 7, 1749, p.1-2.

among the Catholic priesthood. The resultant effect is that of veiled threats of violence which might put us in mind of the coffee-house orator and his cudgel in *The Reformer*.

Beside any generational factor, personal experiences clearly contributed to Burke's search for a more "usable" approach to Ireland's constitutional history than that being offered by Patriots such as Lucas. Here, his Nagle ties to Cork are certainly important, not as sources of marginalization and repression but as illustrative of the practical benefits that could be derived from a concept of citizenship more flexible in respect of personal religious commitment. In a letter dated July 12, 1746, shortly after the defeat of the Jacobite rising at Culloden, Burke confided to Shackleton that he had been "read[ing] some history...endeavouring to get a little into the accounts of this our own poor Country."¹⁰⁷ The key here for Burke was discovering an historical perspective that undermined the brittle, text-based narrative of liberty and servitude without whitewashing popery or opening a back door to the complete secularization of politics and public spirit. This ambition was to draw him to a growing band of Catholic intellectuals and antiquarians, such as John Curry and Charles O'Connor, who were intent on integrating the evidence of Gaelic history into the study of liberty and civilization in Ireland, and, more contentiously, revising the record of the 1641 Catholic rebellion.¹⁰⁸ But Burke did not *have* to enter these circles to engage in such revisionism. Indeed, there is strong evidence to suggest that the most significant influence on

¹⁰⁷ Burke, *Correspondence*, 1:68.

¹⁰⁸ John Curry, *A brief account from the most authentic Protestant writers of the causes, motives, and mischiefs, of the Irish rebellion* (London, 1747); Charles O'Connor, *Dissertations on the Ancient History of Ireland* (Dublin, 1753). Curry was from a Catholic mercantile family, who studied medicine in Paris and set up business in Dublin in 1743. O'Connor, who, like Curry, had Jacobite ancestors, was a successful gentleman farmer. Lucas's historical approach drew its scholarly weight from publications such as Walter Harris's *Hibernica* (Dublin, 1747). Harris, who challenged the findings of Curry and O'Connor, is described by Leerssen as an Irish Bolingbroke (*Mere Irish*, 323). See also *New History of Ireland*, lxi-lxiv.

his historical outlook in the short term was a doyen of the Protestant settler Establishment, the Cork landowner and politician Sir Richard Cox.

Cox's grandfather, Sir Richard Cox, had spent some years in self-imposed exile in Bristol, but returned to Ireland in the service of William III, crushing Jacobite resistance as governor of the county and city of Cork in the aftermath of the rising of 1689-91, and being rewarded with the post of lord justice of Ireland under Queen Anne. The younger Richard Cox's writings reflect an intellectual as well as personal debt to his grandfather, who, as a Tory committed to the 1688 revolution, had written a loyalist history of his native country, *Hibernia Anglicana* (1689-90) and *An Essay for the Conversion of the Irish* (1698), in which he had argued that the Gaelic and British peoples came from the same ethnic stock. From a similarly loyal position, he had criticized the proposed restrictions on the Irish woolen trade in 1698 on the grounds that they would harm both English and Protestant interests in the island.¹⁰⁹ The family's fortunes had been affected both by the threat of Catholic rebellion and the vagaries of party politics, and this genealogy perhaps explains the sensitivity to the interplay of circumstances and history, of caution and innovation, that runs through the writings of both Coxes. When he inherited the family properties, the grandson showed himself an imaginative estate manager, promoting linen manufacture over wool and encouraging the immigration of skilled Protestant weavers from northern Ireland.¹¹⁰ By the mid-1740s, he was, like his grandfather sixty years earlier, expressing a cautious optimism over the growth of the Irish economy, perhaps influenced by the urban and commercial

¹⁰⁹ Cox had collaborated with William Molyneux in 1685 on a topographical survey of Cork that lauded its recent social and economic progress.

¹¹⁰ Sir Richard Cox, *A Letter from Sir Richard Cox, Bart. To Thomas Prior, Esq; Shewing, from Experience, a sure Method to establish the Linen-Manufacture; and the Beneficial Effects, it will immediately produce* (Dublin, 1749). Prior was a founding member of the Dublin Society for the Promotion of Husbandry, Manufacture, Science, and the Useful Arts, in 1731.

renewal taking place in the city of Cork at the time.¹¹¹ Heavily invested in the Patriot cause, Cox found his own credentials, together with those of his family, challenged forcefully in 1749 by Charles Lucas, who objected to the family's adherence to Ireland's constitutional dependence upon Great Britain.¹¹² Cox responded through a number of works against Lucas, including a series of seven short papers entitled *The Cork Surgeon's Antidote, against the Dublin Apothecary's Poyson* (1749) that made him, in Samuels' words, "by far the most powerful and virulent opponent of Lucas."¹¹³ It was, in fact, Cox who was instrumental in setting in motion the charges against Lucas that resulted in the latter's flight, and he was rewarded by being appointed collector of customs for Cork in 1750. Somewhat against his enemies' claims of venality, he then clashed with the authorities at Dublin Castle during the money bill dispute of 1753-56, at which time he was lauded by Burke's old friend Beaumont Brennan in his poem *The Patriots*.¹¹⁴

While there is no surviving proof of a direct relationship between Burke and Cox, some circumstantial and textual evidence suggests they were moving close together in the same political and literary orbit. Circumstantially, Cox's estates and political base at

¹¹¹ "[A] very worthy Gentleman of this City [Cork], Sir R---D C--x...informed me, Ireland was so much improved of late Years, that if a Person could but rise from the Dead, who was intombed forty Years, he would not know the Spot where he was born, or his surrounding Neighbourhood; for the Face of Nature, with the Help of Art, had entirely altered every Feature." *A Tour Through Ireland. In several Entertaining Letters. Wherein The present State of that Kingdom is consider'd; and the most noted Cities, Towns, Seats, Rivers, Buildings, &c. are described* (London, 1748), 98. S.J. Connolly, to whom I am indebted for this reference, points out that the observation is the more remarkable for Co. Cork having suffered a devastating famine in the years 1739-40. See S.J. Connolly, *Religion, Law, and Power: The Making of Protestant Ireland, 1660-1760* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 53-57.

¹¹² Specifically, Lucas charged the senior Cox with imprisoning the Gaelic poet Hugh McCurtin on a personal slight. See footnote 103 above.

¹¹³ Samuels, *Early Life*, 182.

¹¹⁴ Beaumont Brennan, *The Patriots: A Poem* (Dublin, 1754). Brennan's list of Patriot heroes includes James FitzGerald, Lord Kildare, who had married Lady Emily Lennox, sister of the duke of Richmond, in 1746, and Anthony Malone, brother of the writer Edmond Malone. Both the Lennox and Malone families were close friends of Burke later in his political career.

Dunmanway, Co. Cork, were not far from those of John Perceval, 2nd Lord Egmont, for whom we know Burke was to work during his early years in London. Cox's and Egmont's similar positions within the Patriot camp are attested by the fact that Egmont's powerful plea for the removal of British restrictions on the Irish wool trade, *Some Observations on the Present State of Ireland, Particularly with Relation to the Woollen Manufacture* (1731) was misattributed to Sir Richard Cox by contemporaries.¹¹⁵ More telling are the arguments and rhetoric that Cox employs in his texts to attack Lucas's historical claims for "Independancy" and his related charges against English misgovernment in Ireland reaching back through 1641 to the original acceptance of Magna Carta by the Irish nobles. In the tense atmosphere of 1749, Cox was less interested in refuting Lucas's facts than in tracing how "restless and turbulent spirits" were fashioning an explosively disorderly concept of liberty out of a pseudo-genealogy of half understood and butchered charters. He upbraids Lucas for his false historical memory and his secret desire to "play the Tyrant, as MASSIANELLO [of Naples] did before him," and caricatures him as a modern-day Thersites, "Loquacious, loud, and turbulent of Tongue" whose chief joy was "To Lash the Great, and Monarchs to Revile."¹¹⁶ Ultimately, Cox wished to argue that Lucas's historical defense of independency would only play into the hands of a resurgent papist interest by sowing discord among Protestants, thereby resulting in the reintroduction of slavery. We might be reminded here of the comment made by William Dennis in the early days of the "Club," and directed at Burke,

¹¹⁵ The original 1731 pamphlet was reprinted in 1749 under the title *A Patriot's Letter to the Duke of Dorset, Written in the Year 1731, with a Dedication to the Cork-Surgeon of the Year 1749*. The satirical effect of the dedication presupposes that the Cork-Surgeon was the author of the tract, a misattribution followed by Samuels. For the correct attribution, see *Manuscripts of the Earl of Egmont* (London: Historical Manuscripts Commission, 1920), 1:172. Beside a reference to the *Observations*, the 1st Earl has written "I did not then [1731] know nor does any more than myself now know, that my son wrote that pamphlet."

¹¹⁶ Anthony Litten [Sir Richard Cox], *The Cork Surgeon's Antidote*, no. 5 (Dublin, 1749), 13, 14.

that “modern patriots urge every thing an introduction to popery and slavery, which they don’t like.”

Against the Lucasians, Cox offered a vision of progress brought about by cautious, prudential reform in the face, and not at the beck and call, of agitators of the lower ranks of society, and the thrust of his appeal to the voters of Dublin was threefold. First, in the words of S.J. Connolly, he launched “an effective critique of Lucas’s autodidactic obsession with ancient grants and charters, arguing that texts and precedents from the remote past must be read in their historical context.”¹¹⁷ From this basis, he appeals to the steadying hand of prescriptive right as shown through history, and argues that “Independancy” as it is extracted from old charters is “a Doctrine, which had but little force, when it was first broached, but is totally enervated, by a long Possession against it, and by the Authority, against which it Points, being now necessarily interwoven with our Constitution, and intermixed with all our Property.”¹¹⁸

This prescriptive historical authority informs Cox’s second, political point, which is that reform accompanies order and can never come out of disorder. To be effective, reform must be directed through accepted channels of authority, and its implementation entrusted to responsible gentlemen, versed in prudence, and well situated within the political establishment. In *A Serious and Seasonable Address to the Citizens of Dublin* (1749), in language sometimes strikingly redolent of Burke later, he advises his readers on their selection of public representatives in the spirit of such historically-rooted prudence. While “A ready Disposition to censure Governors, and a solemn Avowal of redressing publick

¹¹⁷ S.J. Connolly, “Cox, Sir Richard, first baronet (1650-1733),” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

¹¹⁸ *Cork Surgeon’s Antidote*, no. 3, p. 4.

Grievances...has ever been the notorious Conduct of ambitious and aspiring Minds,” gentlemen should be guided in their choice of representative by the following facts: that no government has ever been good enough to avoid the censure and condemnation of “restless and turbulent Spirits”; that defects must exist in every administration; that errors complained of are often “of the smallest Kind” and redressing them frequently “proves of more pernicious Consequence to the Community than the Errors themselves, were they real, could have done”; that a discretionary power within every government must exist “to recede a little, in some Instances, from the strictness of stated Rules and Laws”; that “the lowest among the People are very unfit Instruments” for reforming even dangerous abuses of power; that there will surely be a number of “good and disinterested Minds” found in any government equal to the task of rectifying abuses and restoring “the good Order of that Administration, wherein they preside.”¹¹⁹

Finally, Cox addresses the constitutional implications of his position by arguing that a prudent, historically-grounded acknowledgment of the reality of Irish constitutional subservience to Britain is a source of, and not a hindrance to, Irish liberty: “He who represents a DEPENDANCY to be the *free Choice* of IRELAND, puts her into the most amiable Light, of using her *Liberty, so as not to abuse it*; and preferring her true Interest, to the vain Caprice of her *licentious Children*...”¹²⁰ Beside the practical economic benefits he sees accruing to the Irish linen manufacture and entrepreneurial estate management from such a constitutional relationship, his argument accords on a theoretical plane with the position of the Rockingham Whigs when they passed the Declaratory Act in respect of the

¹¹⁹ Sir Richard Cox, *A Serious and Seasonable Address to the Citizens and Freemen of the City of Dublin* (Dublin, 1749), 6.

¹²⁰ Cox, *Cork Surgeon's Antidote*, no. 3, p.5.

American colonies in 1766. Burke was a vocal supporter of this Act because, not in spite, of his conciliatory attitude toward to the colonies, arguing that concessions were much more feasible within a context of the unquestioned theoretical constitutional supremacy that the Declaratory Act affirmed. It is not so well known that a similar act had already been passed in respect of Ireland, in 1719.¹²¹

It could be reasonably stated, then, that Sir Richard Cox, who, in his local political and commercial enterprises, epitomized the spirit of the Patriotic gentleman lauded in *The Reformer*, was also the pamphleteer whose political tracts are most reminiscent of Burke's own emerging political rhetoric.¹²² His critiques of Lucas return time and again to the violent undertones of the rhetoric and the boundless application of "liberty" in the abstract, and to the need to pursue reform within the existing constitutional arrangement, however flawed that might be.¹²³ In his emphasis on the contextualization of historical material we can identify a strain of Patriotism that combined a more integrative and orderly path to progress with a pragmatism that could accommodate the gradual enfranchisement of civic-minded Catholics. Of all the possible influences upon Burke in his days before leaving for London,

¹²¹ The official title of the act was the Dependency of Ireland on Great Britain Act.

¹²² Other examples of this rhetorical similarity are: "[Q]uerulous Malcontents" possess "a turbulent Disposition to unhinge all Order"; gentlemen should not be swayed by "a noisy and popular Declamation for Liberty and Property, the boasting Cant of defending your Constitution, or a theatrical Declaration about the Redress of Grievances, but a well grounded Knowledge of the genuine Sentiments and Character of the Candidate who addresses you"; "A laboured Piece of splendid Oratory and Elocution in these Instances...resembles the Bombast and Fustian of a Mountebank"; "Their darling Prerogative, Liberty, they extend to such a boundless Comprehension, that no Ordinance they imagine ought to bind them, which they do not approve of, or which offers any Degree of Violence to so sacred and universal a Blessing." See, *A Serious Address*, 7, 7-8, 8, 31. There are passages too long to quote here (6, 15), the application of *reductio ad absurdum* to counter a strict legal fundamentalism (29), and, in closing, a paean to "A more powerful and opulent City...in our neighbouring kingdom...who generally chuse their Representatives in Parliament, from those of the superior Rank amongst themselves, and as constantly give the Preference to such as are most eminent for their Interest, Wealth, and Reputation" (34).

¹²³ See, for example, the doggerel by a "Friend to Liberty" printed in *Censor*, no. 5, p.3. Lucas's position of independency can be traced developing over the summer of 1749, and is clearly stated in *Censor*, no. 20 (October 7-14, just before Lucas's flight). Significantly, and as a rein on the language of nationalism, Lucas returns to English historians for his justification, as in *Censor*, no. 5, p.2.

from Hiffernan to Dennis to the Scriblerians themselves, it is Cox who, in this game of speculation, deserves the most prominent place. Why has this not been noticed before?

Perhaps the question can best be answered by posing another one: Where would the Cox connection take us, and Burke, in matters of religion and nationalism? Here, the need to see Burke as standing at the threshold of Irish Catholic or nationalist liberation movements requires us to distance him from the doomed agendas of figures such as Cox, or to interpret those agendas in language that makes their failure self-evident. Cox's brand of "dependent" Patriotism, seen through the lens of later nationalist movements and growing sectarian violence, appears paradoxical at best and, at worst, confirms our expectations of the bigoted conceit of colonialism. In matters of religion, Murphy describes Cox as "uninhibited in [his] attacks on Catholicism"; but this is stated, in part, to soften the anti-Catholicism of Lucas by contrast. Cox certainly refused to question the historical record of 1641, and his view of Catholicism was that it predisposed its members to poverty and indolence, and to the thrall of a foreign power. But precisely because of this, he saw constitutional "dependency" on a strong Britain as bringing commercial and therefore moral benefits equally to Catholic and Protestant Irish. "The Increase of the Protestants," he writes concerning the achievements of his linen enterprise, "is entirely by Tradesmen and their Families, and generally from the *North*: But that of the *Papists* is, by Labourers and their Families, who are, in their Way, as necessary, and by good Discipline, are turned to the best Use, and give us many excellent Spinners."¹²⁴ It is, in fact, hard to see Burke objecting either to the tenor or the sentiment of this passage. Burke would have parted company with Cox over over the Penal Laws; but

¹²⁴ Cox, *Letter to Thomas Prior*, 38. "I am convinced," he adds later, "that Trade will operate more effectually than any Law, to release the inferior People, from a State of Villeinage; and to create a Yeomanry at last in the Kingdom" (p.43).

even here Cox left his readers room for maneuver through his repeated emphasis that “an Over-strictness in the Execution of Laws may become the highest Injury” and that “not to allow [the] Liberty of receding from the Strictness of them in certain Points, as the Necessity and State of Things may require, would in all Probability be productive of the greatest Evils.”¹²⁵ It could, indeed, be argued that for a young man in Burke’s situation, Cox’s dependent Patriotism held a greater possibility of reform in religious affairs and among the gentry who held power than that of the Lucasians, and much less danger of such a change being accompanied by serious social upheaval. In all this, it is important to bear in mind Michael Brown’s astute comment that, “[W]e should not confuse Burke’s antipathy for the jobbing ascendancy for a hidden affiliation with the religious belief system offered by Roman Catholicism. To be sympathetic to the plight of the Roman Catholic community does not imply any intellectual assent to their foundational assumptions.”¹²⁶

In respect of nationalism, too, we have already seen how Burke espoused a constitutional preference very similar to Cox’s theory of liberty and dependency later in his political career. Cox’s contest with Lucas reminds us that Patriotism contained within it widely variant paths toward one goal. That goal of Irish cultural and economic self-sufficiency, realized through the capacity for Irish gentlemen to cultivate a vibrant public spirit, was shared by Cox and Lucas, and the former would have had little to object to in the *Censor*’s observation that, “This Island is happy in it’s Climate; and nothing, but Inattention to the true Interest of the Country, could render it incapable of supporting it’s Inhabitants.”¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Cox, *Serious Address*, 27.

¹²⁶ Michael Brown, “The National Identity of Edmund Burke,” in Donlan, ed., *Edmund Burke’s Irish Identities* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006), 357.

¹²⁷ *Censor*, no.5 (July 1, 1749), 1.

The more important question, after years of increasing stability and prosperity was, rather, what was most likely to jeopardize that interest. If some saw Independency—or what some term nationalism—as the antidote, others, with contrasting perceptions of history, reached exactly the opposite conclusion. In either event, Patriotism need not lead to nationalism, need not even imply sympathy with it, and this is the intellectual and political space where a careful reading of Burke’s early critical and journalistic writings places him most realistically.

This is not to say that Burke was a devoted follower of Cox’s any more than it assumes his total rejection of Lucas’s revisionism. But the controversy between Cox and Lucas does thicken and consolidate the Patriot context of Burke’s credentials as he prepared to travel to London. An affinity with Cox’s critique of Lucas’s program would also accommodate Burke’s possible alliance with Hiffernan, and it certainly conforms to what we know of his adherence to Rockinghamite constitutional thinking later in his life.¹²⁸ At the same time, it is fully in tune with Burke’s evident anxiety to preserve the discourse of the gentleman in the public sphere against the encroachments of “dullness” or social disorder. It does not require the repressed presence of crypto-Catholic or anti-colonialist sympathies, but creates space for a more authentic understanding of a vibrant, principled and partly generational division within the Irish Patriot tradition itself, played out in the minute book of the Club, in *Punch’s Petition*, and in the pages of *The Reformer*, distinct from and antagonistic both to Lucas’s constitutional nationalism and to Catholic revanchism.

¹²⁸ The Rockingham position broadly affirmed the belief that interdependence within a wider constitutional entity (empire) could provide a stronger guarantee of liberty than separation. In the context of the American Revolution, see Peter J. Stanlis, “Edmund Burke and British Views of the American Revolution” in Crowe, ed., *Edmund Burke: His Life and Legacy*, 30-38.

As events turned out, Burke and those who thought like him were to become frustrated by the disappointments of the 1750s (disappointments paralleled in the relationship with the American colonies during the next decade). The money bill crisis and a downturn in the economy fueled the growth of the Catholic League, led by men such as O'Connor and Curry, and more extreme forms of Protestant separatism. In the early 1760s, the "Whiteboy" rural disturbances exposed the lost opportunities for constitutional reform and formed the background to Burke's bitter "Tracts on the Popery Laws," which were never published while he was alive. Around the time that he was working on these notes, and now employed in Ireland under William Gerard Hamilton, chief secretary to the lord lieutenant Lord Halifax, Burke wrote to his friend Charles O'Hara, a member of the Irish parliament: "I own I am somewhat out of humour with patriotism; and can think but meanly of such Publick spirit, as like the fanatical spirit, banishes common Sense; I do not understand that Spirit, which could raise such hackneyed pretenses, and such contemptible Talents, as those of Dr Lucas to so great consideration, not only among the mob, but, as I hear on all hands, among very many of rank and figure."¹²⁹

But these disappointments lay in the future. The evidence suggests that when he left Dublin in 1750, Burke did so believing that the union of crowns, administered by Patriot gentlemen, held the best hope for releasing the potential of an Hibernian public spirit that could reconcile the country's fractured religious and ethnic past.¹³⁰

¹²⁹ Burke, *Correspondence*, 1:139.

¹³⁰ We should not overlook here the example of the Scottish Lowlanders who heralded the Union with England in 1707, especially in the light of Burke's later affinities with Adam Smith and his tenure as rector at the University of Glasgow. See, for example, *The Patriots of Great Britain. A Congratulatory Poem to Those Truly Noble and Illustrious Peers who happily United the Two Kingdoms of England and Scotland, under the Auspicious Government of the most Sacred Majesty Queen Anne, etc.* (London, 1707). (The poem's contents add little to the title.)

VI: Selling Irishness

On October 6, 1759, Burke's roommate at Trinity, William Dennis, now an ordained minister in the Church of Ireland, wrote to his old friend Richard Shackleton: "So long is it since I have heard from the triumvirate, I have most valued these fifteen years. Ned [Burke], like a Colossus, strides above us wrapped in his own sublimity he cannot look down on his humble friends. Brennan [sic] has strayed to London, and is lost amid the crowd of new wits and new faces and forgets those who valued him most; and you enveloped in shades, worried with teaching sense to the thoughtless, and morals to the truant, retain no sense of that strong moral tie friendship. Though the youthful vanity of writing first connected us, yet something more than vanity I hope keeps alive the remembrance of each other—*Idem velle ac idem nolle* is true of our devotion to virtue and learning."¹³¹ Beneath the banter, it is hard to miss the accusation of treachery in these words. The schoolteacher and the clergyman remain to plough their Patriot duty, while the poet and the playwright seek their own fortunes in Babylon. Here, surely, we also glimpse a residual trace of the personal dynamics that were once at work in the Club, and in the *Reformer* project, with Dennis stoking a fire that could always illuminate the higher purpose that lay beyond "the youthful vanity of writing."

For Burke, Dennis's reproach might have been harsh, but it is true that his move to London signified nothing new either in his goals or in the style through which he attempted to achieve them. Compared to his friends, there was less in the particularity of his homeland that fashioned his identity because he saw that identity in broader terms. "In vain we fly from place to place to find," he wrote in 1751, "What not in place consists, but in the

¹³¹ Samuels, *Early Life*, 213-14. Dennis still finds time in the letter to attack his old enemy, Thomas Sheridan.

mind.”¹³² Our approach to Burke’s early life through the recovery of the complexities and practicalities of the concept of “Patriotism,” and its cosmopolitan and socially orderly significance, helps us to understand how these sentiments reconcile Burke’s attachment to the trials of his native land and family with his regenerative sense of optimism for the benefits of British rule in Ireland as he moved to London. And it helps us to understand that Burke’s own Irish identity was in as many ways an advantage as a hindrance to his career once he had arrived there.

Burke did, of course, experience obstacles arising from his Irish background, but all those occasions of which we have a record date from his political career, and, ironically, are likely to have been stirred by his speedy promotion into the confidences of the powerful Marquis of Rockingham.¹³³ The sparse evidence of the years 1750-56 show him to have been able to utilize a network of Irish contacts from Bath to London, including Nagles from his mother’s side of the family, and, buttressed against penury by his father’s money and his position at the Middle Temple (with its own lineage of Irish students), he would have found time and contacts enough to wind himself into writing short pieces for a supplementary income.¹³⁴ In this, his Irish perspectives would have proved attractive, both politically, with the eruption in the early 1750s of sensitive issues over the disposal of an Irish budgetary

¹³² Burke, *Correspondence*, 1:116.

¹³³ The first such recorded occasion concerns the Duke of Newcastle’s insinuations to the Marquis of Rockingham, in 1765, that the marquis’s new, Irish employee was “one who was by birth and education a Papist, and a Jacobite.” Newcastle was pressing the cause of another candidate for the position of Rockingham’s private secretary, and Burke easily refuted the charges. Hardy, *Memoirs of Charlemont*, 2:281-84.

¹³⁴ In 1750 nineteen out of forty-seven students at the Middle Temple were Irish. We know of two Nagle cousins who lived in Bath in the 1750s. See Lambert, *Burke of Beaconsfield*, xx. Bath is where Burke met Dr. Christopher Nugent, an acquaintance of Samuel Johnson’s, and Nugent’s daughter, whom he was to marry some time around 1756. Nugent’s *Essay on the Hydrophobia* (1753), while published through the Bath booksellers Leake and Frederic, was sold in London at Mary Cooper’s bookstore.

surplus in 1753 and the debate over the raising of Irish Catholic regiments to fight in Portugal, and culturally, given the continued high level of interaction between the theaters of Dublin and London.¹³⁵ When we add to this scenario the general evidence of a more benign stereotype of the Irishman in English society sketched by Joep Leerssen, and the considerable cultural, economic, and intellectual links between southern Ireland and Bordeaux, and then add to it all Burke's own family associations with Edmund Spenser and the ruins of Kilcolman castle in the Blackwater Valley of County Cork, we can see how Burke would have offered just the mix of native talent, cosmopolitan aspirations, and personal interest to suit the business of Tully's Head.¹³⁶

As we have noted above, we do not know how Burke came to the attention of Robert Dodsley. We can, however, discover important clues from the professional patronage networks that were available to him as an Irishman. He was, indeed, writing pamphlets for John Perceval, 2nd earl of Egmont, by 1758, and the association may well have gone back several years.¹³⁷ Egmont (1711-1770), as we have seen, was a prominent landowner in County Cork, and he had been highly influential in the opposition politics of Leicester House

¹³⁵ This was the period when Garrick was attempting to institute Sheridan-like reforms into his theater in Drury Lane. Consider also the staging of the Irishman Arthur Murphy's loose translations of the plays of Voltaire, and the Irish actress George Anne Bellamy's description of Sheridan's apartment in London, during his stay in 1744, as "generally crowded with Irish gentlemen from the College of Dublin" George Anne Bellamy, *An Apology for the Life of George Anne Bellamy, Late of Covent-Garden Theatre*. 6 vols. (London, 1785), 1:27.

¹³⁶ Irishmen who achieved some literary success in London around this time included: Henry Brooke, Arthur Murphy, Paul Hifferran. Sheridan himself fled to England in the 1750s and published a number of tracts on elocution. For intellectual links with France, see Graham Gargett and Geraldine Sheridan, eds., *Ireland and the French Enlightenment, 1700-1800*. Basingstoke, England: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1999. Edmund Spenser's son, Silvanus, married Ellen Nagle in the early seventeenth century, and local lore had it that Burke used to play in the ruins of Spenser's Kilcolman Castle as a young boy. See Burke, *Correspondence*, 1:80n1. Burke used Spenser's name "Mulla" for a tributary of the Blackwater in a poem he sent to Shackleton early in 1747.

¹³⁷ "Ned I fancy writes Pamphlets for the great ones for he continues to visit Lord Egmont very constantly, as I hear from one here who was his fellow student." Dennis to Shackleton, [post 5 August, 1758], Ballitore MSS, A/39.

from 1749 until the death of the Prince of Wales two years later. His *Faction Detected, by the Evidence of Facts*, published in 1743, was an intricate attempt to trace the distinction between faction and opposition in the shifting circumstances of Walpole's fall, and his growing anger at the betrayal of the Patriot cause imputed to the Pelhams was articulated most strongly in *An Examination of the Principles, and an Enquiry into the Conduct, of the Two Brothers; in Regard to the Establishment of their Power, and their Prosecution of the War, until the Signing of the Preliminaries* (1749). The same year, on a visit to Ireland, Egmont was feted in the pages of Lucas's *Censor* as "our illustrious Countryman who has so long eminently distinguished himself by his Love of his Country and his general patriot Spirit, in the British parliament, as to endear him to all the good Subjects of this Kingdom..."¹³⁸ Given that Egmont was much more closely associated with Sir Richard Cox, this passage reinforces Egmont's status as an ideal of the commercially- and agriculturally-progressive, Patriot landowner, who fearlessly and independently worked his influence both sides of the Irish Sea. It was an ideal that was to appear late in Burke's rather awkward defense of Irish absentee landlordism, issued on behalf of his patron, Charles Watson-Wentworth, 2nd Marquis of Rockingham and the greatest absentee landlord of the age.

As far as his value to Dodsley was concerned, perhaps we can get closest to this by striking a contrast with the trajectory of another Patriot writer who, for a while, was an important figure in the Tully's Head lists. Henry Brooke, like Burke, was an Irish-born lawyer and writer, though from a generation earlier. Having studied for a while under Thomas Sheridan Sr., and graduated from Trinity College, Dublin, Brooke entered the Middle Temple, after which he shuttled between London and Dublin, and between a legal and literary career, until he broke into the limelight in 1738 with Dodsley's publication of his

¹³⁸ *Censor*, no. 3, June 10 – June 17, 1749, 3.

translation of the first book of Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*.¹³⁹ The following year, Brook's status among Patriots was consolidated when his play *Gustavus Vasa* was banned by the Lord Chamberlain for its perceived anti-government invective. This work, also published by Tully's Head, was staged successfully in Dublin five years later by Sheridan under the title *The Patriot*. But his later play, *Jack the Giant Queller*, did not fare so well. It was banned by the authorities there in 1749, leading Charles Lucas, for whom Brooke was working at the time, to rail against this "late unprecedented and unaccountable Violence offered the Stage" in Dublin.¹⁴⁰ Brooke, who had wisely returned to his native land in 1739, became a strong supporter of Lucas's, and Helen Burke, labeling him "Lucas's chief propagandist," presents him as illustrative of the religious intolerance of the Irish Patriots.¹⁴¹ Brooke had, indeed, lent his hand to his native country by warning Protestants in his *Farmer's Letters to the Protestants of Ireland* (1745) of the potential for Catholic risings in 1745 and 1746, a stance confirmed in his later *Spirit of Party* (1754); but by this time his rhetoric appears to have become strained, disproportionate to the realities of the Catholic threat, and he turned his attention to research into ancient Irish history and to novel writing until his death in 1783. After *Gustavus Vasa*, he had nothing more published through Tully's Head, except a prologue to Edward Moore's *The Foundling* (a play that was heavily criticized in *The Reformer* when it appeared at Smock Alley). If James Prior is correct, then, in stating that Burke had written pamphlets against Henry Brooke, under the pseudonym

¹³⁹ Torquato Tasso, *Tasso's Jerusalem, An Epic Poem. Translated from the Italian. By Henry Brooke, Esq. Book I* (London, 1738).

¹⁴⁰ *Censor*, no. 1, p.3. For an interpretation of Brooke's *Jack the Giant Queller* as a careful combination of Anglo- and Gaelic-Irish (that is, proto-nationalist) culture, see Kevin Donovan, "The Giant-Queller and the Poor Old Woman: Henry Brooke and the Two Cultures of Eighteenth-Century Ireland" in *New Hibernia Review*, 7, no. 2 (Summer 2003), 106-120.

¹⁴¹ Burke, "Speaking from Behind the Scenes," 40.

“Diabetes,” there is something almost symbolic about Burke’s appearance at Tully’s Head. As Henry Brooke had been Dodsley’s Irishman in 1739, the development of Patriot thought on both sides of the Irish Sea shows us how fittingly Burke could take his place a generation later.¹⁴² The following chapter will show how Dodsley was particularly attracted by the revised Patriot history that Burke forged in Dublin, and how it could be incorporated profitably into the critical rhetoric of the mid-century Patriot at Tully’s Head.

¹⁴² There is one reference to Henry Brooke in Burke’s correspondence. In an undated letter to a Michael Smith, Burke refers to him as “author of the justly celebrated tragedy of Gustavus Vasa.” *Correspondence*, 1:363. I am inclined to doubt the authenticity of this letter, which has come down to us only second-hand—see Edmund Burke, *The Beauties of the Late Right Hon. Edmund Burke* 2 vols. (London, 1798), 1:vii-x.

Chapter 4: Burke's History

*Nunc demum redit animus.*¹

I: Dodsley's Historian.

In 1757, following the success of the *Vindication of Natural Society*, Robert Dodsley published Burke's tract on aesthetics *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. While the *Philosophical Enquiry* has become the second most studied of Burke's writings, it is not so well known that in the same year Dodsley also contracted with Burke to produce a multi-volume abridgment of English history from ancient times to the reign of Queen Anne. He proposed publication by Christmas of 1758 and a generous payment of three hundred pounds by installment.² Quite possibly, Dodsley's confidence in the young Irish immigrant was also influenced by the appearance of another work, *An Account of the European Settlements in America* (1757). This was a two-volume history of the colonization of the American continents by the European powers that ranged from the voyage of Columbus, through the conquests of the Spanish, Portuguese, French, Dutch, Danish, and English, to the settlements of Georgia and Nova Scotia. Internal and external evidence suggest that this work was largely written by Burke's kinsman William Burke, and it has never appeared in the corpus of Edmund Burke's works; but F.P. Lock has

¹ Tacitus, *Agricola*, 3.1. "Now, at last, our spirit is returning."

² The contract is dated February 25, 1757. For the full terms, see Tierney, *Correspondence of Robert Dodsley*, 510.

argued persuasively that Edmund's involvement was significant.³ In any event, we have seen that Burke's interest in history was serious and deep, both in Dublin, with his criticism of existing accounts of Irish history and their political application by Irish Patriots such as Charles Lucas, and in London through his satirical use of Bolingbroke's *Letters on the Study and Use of History* to expose the methodological limitations of philosophical skepticism in historical writing. Seen against this background, Dodsley's plans for the "Abridgment" and his concurrent intention to hire Burke to write an annual historical essay for his new journalistic enterprise, the *Annual Register*, suggest that the bookseller was setting up his Irish protégé as something of an "in house" historian.

As things turned out, Burke's historical career was promising but short. He completed around 90,000 words, or 300 pages, of the "Abridgment" before he finally laid down the project, probably by the end of 1762. In three books, he had covered the conquests of the Romans, Saxons, and Normans, incorporating informative digressions on such topics as the customs of the ancient Britons, Saxon and feudal law, monasticism, and the Crusades, and closing with the death of King John in 1216. No part of this work was published in Burke's lifetime, although six sheets, headed "An Essay towards an Abridgment of the English History," were run off in 1760 by Dodsley's printer John Hughs, who set a further nine sheets.⁴ The whole text first appeared in the fifth volume of *The Works of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke* (1812), edited by Walker King and French Laurence.⁵

Intriguingly, it was accompanied by a number of other examples of Burke's eclectic

³ Lock, *Edmund Burke*, 1:127. From the evidence of Dodsley's copybook we can see that payments for the publication were drawn by both William and Edmund.

⁴ Burke, *Correspondence*, 1:164n1. Copies were discovered among the papers of Robert Dodsley.

⁵ William B. Todd, *A Bibliography of Edmund Burke* (Godalming: St Paul's Bibliographies, 1982), 42 and Plate 1, 240-41.

historical interests. There is, first, a much shorter piece entitled “Fragment: An Essay towards an History of the Laws of England.” Probably written around 1757, it is unclear whether this was intended for incorporation into the “Abridgment” at some stage or as a synopsis for a separate work. It is more overtly polemical in style than the “Abridgment,” challenging the conventional teaching of legal studies in Britain at the time for their narrow and unhistorical conception of the uniformity of the English common-law tradition. Another incomplete draft included in the *Works*, entitled “Hints for an Essay on the Drama,” has been mentioned in the previous chapter in connection with Burke’s campaign against Thomas Sheridan in support of his friend Beaumont Brenan’s play “The Lawsuit.” Since it can be dated internally to around 1761, it provides evidence of Burke’s enduring interest in the theater and, perhaps, of the subsequent influence upon him of Dodsley, Warburton, and Thomas Warton, who had all been working on literary and dramatical histories in the 1740s and 1750s.⁶

There is one more project from Burke’s pen that could, in a number of respects, count as an historical work: the so-called “Tracts relative to the Laws against Popery in Ireland.” Drafted around 1764, this uneven survey of the content, intentions, and effects of the popery laws extends to more than 16,000 words. It contains an angry critique of the laws in all their aspects and was shaped both by Burke’s irritation at the historical propaganda that supported the Protestant power structure in Ireland and by his first-hand experiences of parliamentary politics in Dublin during the sessions of 1760-1 and 1762-63, when he was employed as

⁶ Warburton produced historical essays on chivalric romance, mystery and morality plays, and fiction in the 1740s; Dodsley’s draft history of drama has been mentioned above, p.76; Thomas Warton began work upon a history of English poetry as soon as his *Observations on the Faerie Queene* had been published, in 1754, although the work was not completed until 1774. Dodsley’s former neighbor, and Thomas Sheridan’s assistant manager at Smock Alley, Benjamin Victor, published *The History of the Theatres of London and Dublin* in 1761.

private secretary to the British politician William Gerard Hamilton in the office of the lord lieutenant's secretary.⁷ Michel Fuchs speculates that Burke was contemplating writing his own history of Ireland at this time, a project that would have diverted him from completing the "Abridgment," but that he gave it up for reasons of political discretion, or lack of time, or because he was daunted by the emotional burden it would have placed upon him. All we know for sure, from his private correspondence, is that Burke became increasingly overwhelmed by the requirements of his secretarial post in the early 1760s, and all the more so when Hamilton was promoted to the position of Chancellor of the Exchequer of Ireland in 1763. Indeed, conflicting literary and political demands finally brought about an acrimonious break between Burke and Hamilton two years later. By that time, however, the second *furor historicus* appears to have cooled, since Burke promptly entered employment as private secretary to Thomas Watson Wentworth, 2nd Marquis of Rockingham, a move that effectively ended any academic historical aspirations he may still have harbored.

This chapter will examine Burke's historical writings for what they tell us about their author's understanding of the role of history as a vehicle of public criticism and moral and civic education. In so doing, it will focus particularly on the "Abridgment," since that is the most substantial of the historical texts that we can attribute entirely to Edmund Burke; but the analysis will be supported at various points with references to the other material mentioned above. Through a brief survey of how these early writings have been evaluated in the past in relation to Burke's wider thought, I intend to show how potentially valuable avenues of investigation have been underutilized owing to a narrow and weakly-contextualized concern for using Burke's historical thought to supplement interpretations of his later

⁷ These experiences are well and fully described in Louis Cullen, "Burke, Ireland, and Revolution," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 16 (1992), 21-42. For Cullen's dating of the "Tracts," see p. 39.

antirevolutionary beliefs or the hidden tensions of his Irish identity. Instead, we need to read his history less through the lens of his *Reflections* or of his evidently disappointed hopes for his native land, and more in the immediate context of his Tully's Head associations. This can be done structurally, as a product designed to exploit perceived trends in the reading market, stylistically, as an experiment in historical criticism designed to provide an authoritative medium for educating gentlemen in their civic duty, and conceptually, as a means of making plain the true foundations of "natural" order in "artificial" society. Understood on each of these levels, the "Abridgment" emerges as an historiographical achievement in itself, an essay in a revised Patriot history that provides a sophisticated, imaginative, and distinctive survey of the lineage of "liberty" in England. It also appears in Burke's own bibliography as a close continuation of the satirical message of the *Vindication* by other means. In an astutely modulated rhetorical setting, it offers an historical narrative to engage, arouse, and educate its audience while exposing alternative histories that offer only a critical *ignis fatuus*, or a system of analysis that creates division where it claims disinterest and disorder where it professes to reveal true order.⁸

This comparison within Burke's early historical writings is long overdue. Indeed, these texts received surprisingly little scholarly treatment for some one hundred years after they first appeared in print. Uncertainties about the extent of Burke's authorship may explain the neglect of the *Account of the European Settlements*, and the "Tracts" was problematic for the sheer vehemence of its critique of British governmental policy in Ireland. As for the "Abridgment" itself, by the time it saw the light of day, in the early nineteenth century, it

⁸ This goal, which is a key aspect of the *Vindication*, as we have seen, is well summed up in the following from *The Reformer*'s "AE": "The false *Spirit* [*ignis fatuus*] is like an undisciplined Army, its first Attack is furious, in which if it fails it is of no further Use; but the true like a well trained one, wins by Constancy, Regularity, and continued Heat." Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, 1:121.

appeared a pale and outdated shadow of the substantial “philosophical” histories of Hume, Gibbon, and Robertson. On a superficial reading, many of its ingredients were familiar, even formulaic. There were strong echoes of Montesquieu in the attention Burke had given to climate, geography, and manners, while the sources upon which the narrative drew—Caesar, Tacitus, Bede, and Matthew Paris, for example—were the accepted fare of eighteenth-century works such as the histories of Rapin de Thoyras and Tobias Smollett. As late as 1943, the historian G.M. Young felt justified in dismissing the “Abridgment” as essentially a French translation, too derivative to be remarkable.⁹ Those features of the work that will emerge from this account as distinctive and worthy of examination, such as the incorporation of providence within the narrative, the rehabilitation of religious institutions in the growth of civilized societies, and the deliberate fracturing of any organic or systematic pattern of social and political development, were hardly going to register with historians preoccupied by the Enlightenment as a secularizing and systematizing process of interdisciplinary analysis.¹⁰

The fact that the “Abridgment” was sacrificed to Burke’s political ambitions has also encouraged commentators to consider it only insofar as it is thought to prefigure later political positions.¹¹ Even then, it is mined for passages that support historical observations scattered throughout Burke’s more famous texts, rather than as a product in itself. Not surprisingly, then, when Burke’s historical thought did start to attract serious attention, during the Cold War, it was as part of the debate over the ideological uses of Burke’s

⁹ G.M. Young, “Edmund Burke,” *Proceedings of the British Academy* XXIX (1943), 6.

¹⁰ See Johnson Kent Wright, “Historical Thought in the Era of the Enlightenment” in *A Companion to Western Historical Thought*, ed. Lloyd Kramer and Sarah Maza (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2002).

¹¹ For Burke’s move to politics and its relationship to the ending of his historical and literary projects, see Thomas W. Copeland, *Our Eminent Friend Edmund Burke: Six Essays* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949), esp. chapter 2, and Walter D. Love, “Burke’s Translation from a Literary to a Political Career,” *The Burke Newsletter* 6, no. 2, 376-390. It may also be significant that Robert Dodsley died in 1764.

antirevolutionary works. John C. Weston published the first extended study of Burke's history in the early 1960s. In his pioneering article he looks to the "Abridgment" to explain the problem of how Burke could reconcile his belief in the organic constitutional progress that had been perfected in the Glorious Revolution with the phenomenon of the French Revolution. Weston finds the answer in Burke's particular sense of providence and free-will as they are revealed in his view of history.¹² According to Weston, Burke's history teaches us that man is happiest when he realizes that society is a providential gift of God, ultimately unfathomable, and humbles himself accordingly by revering the past and displaying an accompanying skepticism toward utopian projects of improvement.¹³ Through prudent statesmanship of this kind, an ordered liberty could take root in constitutional agreements across the medieval and modern periods, reaching a state of perfection in the settlement of 1688-89; but its continued security is heavily dependent on the perpetuation of that historical sense of religious awe. By this interpretation, Weston shows the survival and growth of liberty to be contingent, in Burke's mind, upon moral leadership in a way that usefully undermines assumptions that Burke's political views were essentially organic and proto-Romantic. But his insights also depend upon fitting together Burke's historical utterances across forty years of political life with little attention to intent, rather than first distinguishing Burke's idea of history from his use of historical material. As a result of this, and perhaps also of Weston's training in political science, Burke's view of history is given a false

¹² John C. Weston, Jr., "Edmund Burke's View of History," *Review of Politics* 23, no. 2 (April 1961), 203-229.

¹³ Weston might have noted in defense of his argument Burke's notes on "Philosophy and Learning": "Whatever tends to humble us, tends to make us wiser. Whatever makes us wiser, makes us better, and easier, and happier." *A Note-Book of Edmund Burke*, 85. There are many instances of Burke linking such humility with reflection on the tragedies and triumphs of history, or "the rise and fall of kingdoms..." (ibid.), such as the following famous passage: "when kings are hurl'd from their thrones by the Supreme Director of this great drama, and become the objects of insult to the base, and of pity to the good, we behold such disasters in the moral, as we should behold a miracle in the physical order of things..." (Burke, *Reflections*, 175).

consistency, and a coherence that depends upon the *Reflections* and later antirevolutionary writings. Furthermore, the formative context of important mid-century debates is lost, and Burke's idea of providence becomes essentially the "negation of ideology" (to use Stuart Hughes's succinct term) rather than something more active in its principle.

In 1963, Peter Stanlis, in what is still probably the best single-volume anthology of Burke's writings, gave over twenty pages to excerpts from the "Abridgment," arguing that it confirmed Burke's Christian Aristotelianism: "His veneration of antiquity, his awareness of the slow organic growth of institutions and nations and of man's subordination to moral and civil laws, and, above all, his sense of the intricacy and mystery at the core of man's life on earth, flowed from his faith in historical revelation."¹⁴ As in Weston's case, this is the "Abridgment" interpreted through later writings, especially the *Reflections*, and neither commentator attempts to compare the text with other contemporary histories, or relate its purpose to an intended audience of its time. Some progress was made on that front, however, by C.P. Courtenay, whose *Montesquieu and Burke* appeared at the same time as Stanlis's anthology and incorporates both the *Account of the European Settlements* and the "Abridgment" into early-eighteenth-century Anglo-French and Franco-Irish intellectual debates on historiography and moral philosophy.¹⁵ Courtenay's work remains important in reminding us of the impact of French historical writing on British thought at the time, although his references to Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Rapin-Thoyras require supplementing with more recent work on less familiar figures such as François Hotman and Henri comte de

¹⁴ Edmund Burke, *Selected Writings and Speeches*. Edited by Peter J. Stanlis (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 1963), 65.

¹⁵ C.P. Courtenay, *Montesquieu and Burke* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963).

Boulainvilliers.¹⁶ Courtney's attention to Burke's undoubted debt to Montesquieu, however, is sufficient to reveal important methodological links between the "Abridgment," the *Vindication*, and the *Annual Register*.¹⁷ Perhaps even more valuably, it points to divisions within the mid-century French *République des lettres* that emerged with the early writings of Rousseau in particular and that may have sharpened Burke's awareness of the implications of the debate with British free-thinkers such as John Toland and, later, David Hume. These divisions have been explored very ably in the works of Mark Hulliung and Dena Goodman.¹⁸

But Courtenay is also firmly rooted in the post-war "History of Ideas" tradition that is too uncritical of the familiar Francocentric narrative of the Enlightenment. His understanding of Burke's own relationship with French thought is, therefore, restricted by a failure to incorporate the influence of British and Irish writers, most significantly Shaftesbury and Toland himself, upon French thinkers in the early years of the century.¹⁹ That weakness also turns the book's greatest strength into one of its characteristic flaws: in heaping too much weight upon the one intellectual link between Burke and Montesquieu, it neglects the

¹⁶ Dodsley published Voltaire's *Le Siècle de Louis XIV* in 1752, with an English translation going through its third edition in the following year. Molesworth published an edition of Hotman's *Franco-Gallia* in 1711. Rapin de Thoyras's *History of England* was initially published in fifteen volumes from 1728 to 1731. Montesquieu's *Esprit des Lois* appeared in English translation in 1750, and his *Reflections on the causes of the rise and fall of the Roman Empire* two years later. Available works of Boulainvilliers included *Histoire des anciens parlemens de France* (1737, English translation 1739), *État de la France* in eight volumes (1752) *The Life of Mahomet* (1752), and *Lettres sur des anciens parlemens de France* (1753).

¹⁷ "In developing his own empirical method Burke will, as we shall see, take Montesquieu as his model, and this appears clearly in the 'Abridgment of English History' [where he] seeks physical and moral causes, never confuses occasion with cause, understands the continuity of historical experience, and the importance of the esprit general." Courtenay, *Montesquieu and Burke*, 42, 55.

¹⁸ Mark Hulliung, *The Autocritique of Enlightenment: Rousseau and the Philosophes* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994). Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).

¹⁹ This limited perspective on the circulation of ideas in the "Enlightenment" has been successfully challenged in recent decades. See, for example, Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, Justin Champion, *Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken*, and Gargett and Sheridan, eds., *Ireland and the French Enlightenment*.

formative nature of the physical and personal circumstances through which that influence was mediated.

With the end of the Cold War, and in line with the reorientation of Burke scholarship outlined in the Introduction above, Burke's historical thought has received fresh consideration, although the *Reflections* and Burke's later writings on Empire have remained tenacious filters for any reinterpretation. James Conniff, for example, in *The Useful Cobbler: Edmund Burke and the Politics of Progress* (1994), has updated Weston's enquiry by considering how Burke could reconcile his evident belief in a just or benign providence with his horror at, and implacable opposition to, the unfolding revolution in France. Also concerned to expose hubris in the New Conservative critique of Communism, Conniff sees the key to Burke's dilemma in the progressive constitutionalism that he finds in the "Abridgment." Burke's "accomplishment was to recognize that the past could be a guide to the future, and, therefore, need not be set in opposition to it." As a "theorist and practitioner of representative government," he understood that parliament could act as an appropriate rein on the inevitable dynamics of change in the state to the degree that it balanced interest-based party politics with a conflict-resolution model of government. Conniff concludes that Burke found this balance in the Revolution Settlement, believed it was being defended by the American revolutionaries, but felt that the *philosophes* and revolutionaries in France were ignoring it, with fatal consequences, in their own haste to assume the reins of providence.²⁰ While Conniff's eye is firmly set on Burke's final years, his analysis would certainly help to explain Burke's lack of sympathy with Bolingbroke's atavistic and Polybian strain of cyclical history; but the "Whig progressive" label also places him closer to the systematic thought of the Scottish Enlightenment than the religious and rhetorical aspects of his providential

²⁰ James Conniff, *The Useful Cobbler*, 3, 7.

narrative allow. In part, Conniff is simply reflecting the tenacious desire among many Burke scholars to secularize the religious aspects of Burke's thought in line with assumptions about the early Republic of Letters; but the consequent flattening of Burke's historical imagination is also related to the selective and over-literary contextualization of that work: Conniff (a political scientist like Weston) persistently translates the language of the "Abridgment" "second-hand," as it were, through a welter of quotations pulled from works that were shaped in circumstances quite different from those that surrounded Burke in the 1750s.

If Conniff's Burke—liberal, progressive, optimistic—is an historian for the New World Order of the 1990s, Michel Fuchs and Thomas McLoughlin present a more parochially grounded and pessimistic historian, who employs history to launch a veiled challenge to the injustices of colonial rule in his native Ireland. The salient arguments of Fuchs's work have been discussed above, and the "Abridgment" is easily fitted into Fuchs's thesis of repressed colonial identity. It is Fuchs who suggests that Burke may have abandoned the "Abridgment" through disappointment at the failure of his historical researches to provide a clear solution to the problems of Ireland. Noting with characteristic perception that Burke links the emergence of liberty with violent conquest, Fuchs imagines his subject silenced by the inescapable truth of the English conquest of Ireland—that, unlike the earlier conquest of England and Wales, it had brought few of the civilizing improvements that marked the narrative of English history itself. This Burke is a soul stretched between the desire to expose this tragic deformity in Ireland's colonial history and the professional need to hold his counsel, finding some meager consolation only in his later political crusades, which served as a sort of vicarious Imperial critique. Fuchs's position is similar to that of T.O. McLoughlin, whose *Contesting Ireland* (1997) presents a significant contribution to our

understanding of Irish eighteenth-century historiography, with its focus on the mid-century debate over the conquest of Henry II and the issuing of Magna Carta in Ireland. McLoughlin dexterously employs his approval of the writings of Charles O'Connor of Balanguere to suggest that Burke harbored a hope that Protestant and Catholic could be reconciled through an integrated historiography that would blend respect for an ancient Irish civic tradition with the existing Protestant narrative of constitutional liberty. Such aspirations, carried on well into his political career, finally came to grief, McLoughlin argues, in the disappointment of Thomas Leland's *History of Ireland from the Invasion of Henry II* (1773), which Burke had hoped would challenge commonplace Protestant legends of the innate treachery of Irish Catholics and their priests.²¹ In treating of the early writings specifically, McLoughlin focuses on Burke's conception of Empire, rather than conquest (a priority that will be disputed below) and this emphasis allows him to contrast with later comments on the glories of the British Empire the "much more complex and ambiguous attitude to empire and to England" that emerge from the wasted years of English colonial rule painted in his treatment of Medieval Ireland and in the "Tracts." Thus Burke's unpublished history gives posthumous voice to the muted nationalist.

There is much to be gained from concentrating on the Irish background of Burke's historical writings, and it will be argued below that implicit parallels between the experiences of England and Ireland as conquered nations are vital parts of the purpose of the "Abridgment." Problems arise, however, when one assumes that Burke's particular perspectives on Ireland's history form not just a part, albeit a significant part, of the

²¹ Burke, *Correspondence*, 2: 285n5.

unfolding map of mankind, but the key to the map itself.²² McLoughlin, like Fuchs, rightly indicates that Burke's historical obsession was conquest and empire, but since both writers see those terms as matters of constitutional and cultural nationalism, they fail to grasp the many levels upon which Burke's narrative is working. As a result, the cosmopolitan and comparative dimensions of Burke's thinking are subordinated to an overriding national identity, and this, as we have argued above, inverts the sense of the Patriotism to which Burke was committed. When he observes that, "Conquest is both the past and present of Ireland," Fuchs is merely stating what was, in Burke's mind, an historical truism. The issue, rather, was how to embrace that providential and non-moral reality and elevate it into a force for social and political improvement—how to balance loss and gain by combining the elegiac, awesome features of conquest and settlement into a transformed, cohering public-spiritedness.

In his magisterial biography of Burke, F.P. Lock provides the most extensive treatment yet of Burke's early historical writings. Particularly useful is his examination of the *Account of the European Settlements*, where he highlights some of the key themes that prefigure the "Abridgment" there: the social benefits of organized religion, the economic virtues of religious toleration, and political wisdom of an anti-monopolistic commercial policy. Lock points out that, in the *Account*, the Burkes praise the constitutions of Pennsylvania, Maryland and the Carolinas for their toleration, recommend the encouragement of colonial trade through promotion of non-competitive staples and small-scale farming such as indigo and silk, and present the Jesuit commonwealth of Paraguay as an epitome of effective colonization in both its good and bad respects. In line with his later

²² Burke famously referred to "the Great Map of Mankind" in a letter to William Robertson, 9 June, 1777. See Burke, *Correspondence*, 3: 351. Less well-known is Warburton's use earlier of the term the "map of man"—see p. 59 above, and Ryley, *William Warburton*, 53.

stress on Montesquieu's influence in the "Abridgment," Lock fleshes out the Burkes' debt to the French Jesuit Lafitau's pioneering anthropological study *Moeurs des sauvages américains* (1724). Consistent with this Continental orientation, when he turns to the "Abridgment" itself, Lock largely passes over Ireland's contested historiography and offers as the focus of Burke's agenda an alternative *via media*: this time one that provides an accessible and usable history by moderating the deterministic ambitions of existing universal histories without falling into the opposite extreme of antiquarianism.²³

Lock's intention to place Burke among pioneers of "a new kind of 'philosophical' history" such as Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Bolingbroke, emerges as both the strength and chief limitation of his textual analysis. His close association of Burke's historical thought with that of Montesquieu confirms the findings of Courtenay without adding a great deal to the picture.²⁴ But, more importantly, it enables him to throw into relief the areas where that association fails. Putting to one side specific disagreements on anthropological interpretations such as the origins of the trial by ordeal, the central point is "the question of Providence, for which Montesquieu's material causes left little room."²⁵ Here Lock has put his finger on a crucial divergence that takes us back to the *Vindication*, where deism and free-thinking undermine our appreciation of the natural social order by replacing the mysteries of revealed religion with eloquent but empty sophistries. Burke, it must be

²³ Lock's corrective to the current emphasis upon Burke's buried Irish identity and preoccupations is welcome, although the cursory treatment that he gives to Burke's "Tracts on the Popery Laws" in his two-volume, thousand-page biography is remarkable.

²⁴ Lock, *Edmund Burke*, 145: "Montesquieu had sought to explain the course of history through the discovery of uniformly operating general causes, and Burke was the first historian of England to follow his method. This approach requires not a detailed narrative, but an analysis of selected themes. Montesquieu's *Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur des romains et de leur décadence* (1734) is perhaps the closest precedent." The reference to the *Considérations* is unsupported by evidence and remains unconvincing.

²⁵ Lock, *Edmund Burke*, 1:152-54.

stressed, is questioning the abuse of philosophy, not the application of reason, and his incorporation of providence in the “Abridgment” is a remarkable corrective aimed at one perceived tendency of philosophical history. Lock is absolutely right to focus his attention here, and yet ironically it is precisely by doing so that his own understanding of “philosophical” history is exposed as too vague to carry the weight assigned to it. “For all Burke’s critical acumen and sense of anachronism,” he writes, “[Burke] remains firmly within the humanist tradition that regarded history as ‘philosophy teaching by examples’.”²⁶ This is a contentious and unsupported assertion that begs the question, and it is made more puzzling by Lock’s own use of another term, Burke’s “moral historiography,” a page later. The difficulty here, as with “Patriotism” and “Nationalism,” lies in a confusion of modern and contemporary terminology. In this case, Lock fails to recognize that “philosophy” and “philosophical” had become loaded and contested terms within the very environment in which Burke was writing, and that providence was central to the debate.²⁷

It is worth briefly recapitulating the issues at stake here. The hopes of some thinkers was that “natural” philosophy’s rational and experimental methods, pursued to their fullest degree, would recover “natural” religion and finally dispel the obscurities of theology or Scholastic metaphysics. These hopes were quickly subjected to skepticism by philosophers as well as churchmen who may have been sympathetic to the idea of *theologia prisca* and its

²⁶ Ibid., 153.

²⁷ Lock is by no means alone in his problematic use of the term “philosophical” history. Philip Hicks’s definition of philosophical history as “concerned with all aspects of civilization—laws, morals, manners, trade—not just politics and diplomacy” would encompass Burke but is too vague to hold any real value in itself. Hicks, “Bolingbroke, Clarendon, and the Role of the Classical Historian,” *Eighteenth Century Studies* 20, no. 4 (Summer 1987), 471. Walter Love argues that the point of philosophical history was “correcting religious bias,” in which case Burke would not fit the bill. Love, “Edmund Burke and an Irish Historiographical Controversy,” *History and Theory* 2, no. 2 (1962), 181. Johnson Kent Wright, in his essay on “Historical Thought in the Era of the Enlightenment,” confines the term essentially to the latter half of the century, which avoids a number of difficulties, albeit by largely bypassing the earlier half of the period. See Kramer and Maza, eds., *Companion to Western Historical Thought*, 132.

status within the Reformed church tradition, but who feared the new philosophy's potential for irreligion and extreme skepticism. Many such figures, taking Locke as their authority, warned from within the Republic of Letters of the consequences of the substitution by stealth of metaphysical for moral arguments. In a wider epistemological view, they also considered the enthusiasm with which some philosophers discarded any evidence that appeared paradoxical or contradictory as simply replacing one species of intolerance with another. This was, indeed, the thrust of Leibniz's response to John Toland's *Christianity not Mysteriorious* (1695), in which Leibniz argued that the inescapable finitude of the human mind requires us to accept the authority of traditional Christian mysteries that cannot be proven unambiguously to be "*sine ratione*."²⁸ To deny any paradox or revelation simply because it is irrational in our terms is not to rediscover natural religion but to butcher religion with the tools of philosophy, and to replace sacred mysteries with secular ones. John Reedy and Justin Champion have shown, in excellent studies, how an invasive philosophical rationalism impacted both divine and profane history in the latter half of the seventeenth century, in the wake of Bayle's writings. This is why the question of the nature of the Mosaic dispensation became such a battleground in the early decades of the eighteenth century, and we have observed later manifestations of that debate in Burke's *Vindication* and in Montesquieu's praise of Warburton's scholarship.²⁹ For critics such as Spence and the Wartons, as we have

²⁸ Leibniz, *Annotatiunculae subitaneae*... (1701). I am indebted to Dr. Maria Rosa Antognazza for this reference. Compare the similar argument of William Warburton, in his Preface to John Towne's *Critical Inquiry into the Opinions and Practice of the Ancient Philosophers* 2nd edn. (London, 1748): "It appears...that the only View of Antiquity which gives solid Advantage to the *Christian* Cause, is such a one as shews natural Reason to be *clear* enough to perceive Truth, and the Necessity of its Deductions when *proposed* and shewn; but not generally *strong* enough to *discover* it, and draw right Deductions from it" (p. viii).

²⁹ Reedy, *The Bible and Reason*; J.A.I. Champion, *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken: The Church of England and its Enemies, 1660-1730* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). Warburton clearly saw his rival Bolingbroke as having been affected by the same philosophical enthusiasm that he identified historically with Hobbes and Spinoza. "I heartily wish," he wrote to Richard Hurd about Bolingbroke's *Letters*

seen in the first chapter above, this question of the appropriate parameters of philosophical method was prefigured in the aesthetic and literary writings of the Elizabethan renaissance. Sir Philip Sidney's orthodox Aristotelian thoughts on the distinct qualities of philosophy and history in their subordinate relation to poetry—the ultimate conveyor of truth—provided the coordinates for the Tully's Head circle as it worked to reinforce the distinctive contribution of history to the art of criticism, a goal they worked toward not only by challenging the encroachments of natural philosophy but by recovering history's religious and rhetorical facets. Any approach to Burke's history that overlooks their work will fail to grasp the full complexity of Burke's own relationship with the dominant historical currents of his time, particularly "philosophical" history, and underestimate the extent to which his dramatic and poetic interests were essential in shaping his historical imagination.³⁰

Carefully situated between Fuchs and McLoughlin on the one hand, and Lock on the other, Seán Donlan's treatment of Burke's historical thought shows a shift in the interpretative focus to Burke's own professional training in law. In a cluster of scholarly articles, Donlan has drawn together Burke's education at the Middle Temple, his reading in natural law, and his dissatisfaction with English jurisprudence and legal scholarship to explore the central role that Burke gives to manners in his historical analyses. One helpful

on the Study and Use of History in 1752, "that all who hereafter shall be so weak or so wicked to write against Revelation, may write just like this formidable politician." (*Letters of an Eminent Prelate*, 75.) Alongside Warburton's *Divine Legation*, Patrick Delany, professor of history and oratory at Trinity College published *Revelation Examined*, a defense of the Mosaic dispensation, in 1731. The attempt to subsume Moses within an esoteric lawgiving tradition reaching back to Plato and beyond was the chief reason for Warburton's controversy with William Cooper and its repercussions for Dodsley's relationship with the bishop in the early 1750s.

³⁰ One might add to that list the work of Warburton's close friend Richard Hurd, whose *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (1762) is indicative of the fresh weight being given to Medieval chivalric codes as a window onto the universal moral and aesthetic foundations of order in society. It is precisely in its historical and aesthetic, or factual and moral, overlap, not as an atavistic defense of the *ancien régime*, that we should understand Burke's use of the term in the *Reflections*: "But the age of chivalry is gone.—That of sophisters, oeconomists, and calculators, has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever" (Burke, *Reflections*, 170).

effect of this shift has been to elevate the “Fragment” from an appendage of the “Abridgment” to a project in itself, albeit an unfinished one. Donlan argues that it is here that we find the kernel of a natural law approach rooted not in Thomist or neo-Aristotelian philosophy, as Stanlis argues, but in the responses of seventeenth-century European theorists such as Grotius and Pufendorf to problems of property rights, possession, and international law. Just as these jurists were responding to the dire upheavals of the wars of religion, so Burke’s narrative of successive conquests of England, with their waves of usurpation and confiscation and disruption of customs and manners, exposes the weakness of arguments that situate rights and liberties in an unbroken legal tradition like the much-vaunted English common law.³¹ Such arguments, according to Burke, simply failed to acknowledge the complex environment from which positive law took its authority and against which its capacity to establish a true natural social order had to be measured. Since the same could be said of constitutional settlements, Burke’s position entirely undermined the arguments of Patriots such as Bolingbroke and Lucas about the source of order and liberty in the body politic. Instead, Burke muddies the waters with a concept of prescriptive right that embraces providential discontinuities by appealing to equity rather than original right.

Donlan, like Conniff, sees Burke’s “Abridgment” as almost a precursor of the “Scottish ‘philosophical’ and ‘conjectural’ histories” of the 1760s and 1770s, though he concedes that it lacks the substructure of distinctive stages of societal development and a

³¹ In the “Fragment,” Burke cites two principal causes of the poor state of English legal thought: “the first, a persuasion hardly to be eradicated from the minds of our Lawyers, that the English Law has continued very much in the same state from an antiquity, to which they will allow hardly any sort of bounds. The second is, that it was formed and grew up among ourselves; that it is in every respect peculiar to this island; and that if the Roman or any foreign Laws attempted to intrude into its composition, it has always had vigour enough to shake them off, and return to the purity of its primitive constitution.” (Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, 1: 323.)

stress upon the primacy of commerce.³² Donlan does a serious service to Burke's history by rooting his natural-law perspectives more firmly in the broader context of Irish and Scottish intellectual thought, heavily influenced as this was by Shaftesburian and Hutchesonian responses to Grotius and Pufendorf. Not least, he raises Burke's intentions above the immediate concerns of Irish historiography and correctly emphasizing that those intentions were "not anti-Imperial or anti-colonial."³³ Similarly, this highlighting of Burke's stress upon manners and customs as the prime validators of law, and therefore of liberty and order, enables us to see how Burke could be both a passionate critic of the popery laws and a "British patriot" dedicated to the union of the kingdoms of England, Scotland, and Ireland. At the same time, though, Donlan's focus on the legal and natural-law background serves Burke's years at the Middle Temple at the expense of his evident passion for the laws of aesthetics and rhetoric as authenticators of the common sense of mankind. Thinking, perhaps, too clearly with the mind of a lawyer himself, Donlan sees rhetoric only in its persuasive capacity, and not, as Burke did, as the conveyor of a hidden order under apparent disorder. Providence, about which Donlan has little to say, is not just an invisible hand, but a reconciler of reason and imagination, of paradox and order. Without its divine referents, Burke's understanding of natural law has very little traction.

³² "In the years 1757-65, drawing on British and European jurists, the 'culture of politeness,' contemporary empiricism, 'comparative' geographies, 'philosophical' histories, and even histories of Ireland, Burke gestured towards a 'natural' and 'historical' jurisprudence more sophisticated than anything found at the Inns of Court." Seán Patrick Donlan, "'A very mixed and heterogeneous mass': Edmund Burke, English History and Jurisprudence, 1757-62," *University of Limerick Law Review* 4, (2003), 79-88.

³³ Seán Patrick Donlan, "The 'genuine voice of its records and monuments': Edmund Burke's 'interior history of Ireland'" in Donlan (ed.), *Edmund Burke's Irish Identities*, 80. For the relationship between the "modern" school of natural-law thinkers and the stadial conception of historical development, see Wright, "Historical Thought...of the Enlightenment," 127-28. Donlan mentions that Hutcheson, while he was teaching in Scotland, "had...challenged the rationalism and egoism of 'modern' natural lawyers" (p.83).

II: Marketing History

The limitations of existing analyses of Burke's historiography, then, arise largely out of a persistent failure to understand his early works in the immediate context of Tully's Head, where the critical tools of Patriotism were being rescued from the secularizing tendencies of "free-thinker" philosophers. This chapter will examine the practical and intellectual ways in which Tully's Head shaped the history Burke wrote as a self-conscious Patriot.

We might reasonably start such an examination with some of the practical marketing issues that bore upon Dodsley's decision to encourage Burke's historical muse. James Tierney states that "Dodsley was principally a publisher of poetry," and Dodsley was, indeed, most famous for his *Collection of Poems*; but the judgment requires some modification, since even Tierney's own evidence suggests that, by the early 1750s, the bookseller had begun to look for fresh ways to package moral and critical messages for an ever-expanding market.³⁴ Before 1750, "poetry" formed the largest category of Tully's Head titles year by year; but by Tierney's own method of categorization, this was never to be the case thereafter.³⁵ It is true that Dodsley brought out a fourth volume of his *Collection of Poems* in 1755, and added a fifth and sixth three years later; but it should be noted that, while sales remained high and the critics' comments were positive, Dodsley chose to subsume the later volumes into complete sets, to be purchased along with new editions of the earlier volumes.³⁶ Dodsley also appears to have found gathering material for the latter collections increasingly problematic, and relied

³⁴ For a survey of reading trends in this period, see Melton, *Rise of the Public*, 86-104; and Moyra Haslett, *Pope to Burney: Scriblerians to Bluestockings* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

³⁵ Tierney, *Correspondence of Robert Dodsley*, 26.

³⁶ See Suarez, Introduction to Dodsley, *Collection of Poems*.

heavily on the tardy and reclusive William Shenstone for submissions and recommendations. In 1747, he refused Young's price of one hundred guineas for the copyright of the three latest books of *Night Thoughts*, and focused instead on reissuing the earlier ones. Seven years later he turned down Berckenhout's solid translation of Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock's *Messiah*, a project that he had himself initiated, only to publish a poor quality prose translation of the work ten years later.³⁷ Furthermore, Dodsley had some personal intimations of a shift in popular taste. After the tremendous success of his *Oeconomy of Human Nature* (1750), he worked hard on his own four-part poetic enterprise "Public Virtue"; but the reception of the first installment, "Agriculture," was so disappointing when it came out in 1753 that he appears not to have progressed any further.³⁸ He had similar difficulties with his *Melpomene: or The Regions of Terror and Pity*, which was only finally published, with all due humility, in the first issue of his own *Annual Register*.³⁹

If he sensed that the market for poetry was shrinking, to what types of works did Dodsley turn? It is, perhaps, significant that Dodsley appears not to have thrown much investment behind the increasingly popular field of fiction by the time of his death in 1764. Instead, the Tully's Head publication lists suggest that Dodsley plumped chiefly for moral tracts—short

³⁷ Tierney, *Correspondence of Robert Dodsley*, 116n2, 159-60, 171n2. According to Tierney, the prose work, by Mary and Joseph Collyer "served to cripple the German poet's early reputation in England and, justly, to anger him" (p. 171n2).

³⁸ Dodsley had sent drafts to Lyttelton, Joseph Warton, Shenstone, and Horace Walpole among others through 1753 and early 1754, without stirring any great excitement. On January 15, 1756, Thomas Blackwell wrote to Dodsley: "Be not discouraged at the moderate Demand for the first Part [of *Public Virtue*]. A Work, even of true Merit, must have Time to work its Way." *Ibid.*, 217.

³⁹ For a broader perspective on the decline in profitability of poetry, see Terry Belanger, "Publishers and Writers in Eighteenth-Century England," in *Books and their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England*, ed. Isabel Rivers (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982). Belanger shows the short life-span of poetic works through the valuation of their copyright in auctions. One third of the output of Stephen Duck was sold for a guinea in 1756, and half of Gray's works for one hundred pounds around the same time. By contrast, the copyright on Farquhar's plays was between £25 and £30 each a decade earlier, and *Cato* was valued at £300 mid-century. The exception among poets was, of course, Pope himself, whose copyright sold for £5,000 as late as 1767.

works like his own *Oeconomy*, collections of republished essays such as Spence's *Moralities*, articles from *The World* (1753-56) and *The Museum*, and a miscellany entitled *Fugitive Pieces, on Various Subjects* (1761), and, of course, eclectic literary collections such as Warton's *Virgil* (1753). But Dodsley was also evidently aware of the popularity of history among the mid-century readership, where multi-volume narratives had been a staple of the book market for some decades, and, with characteristic imagination, he explored the potential for combining the edification of moral tracts with the entertainment value of history to elevate the latter as a facet of "polite" education.⁴⁰ Dodsley was not, of course, a pioneer in recognizing the moral and civic role history could play within a curriculum designed for the modern gentleman; this had been a central aspect of educational theory at least from the sixteenth century, and, as we have observed above, an ingredient in the circles of Elizabethan courtiers and men of letters. Charles Rollin had discussed the pedagogic importance of history later in his highly influential *Method of Teaching and Studying the Belles Lettres* (1734), setting a sturdy template that recurs in a string of similar volumes such as James Buchanan's *Complete English Scholar* (1753). But Dodsley can be seen to have diverged from that template in interesting directions. His own pedagogic manual, the *Preceptor* (1748), stresses that any historical method designed for rising gentlemen must not only *instruct* and *delight* but *engage the passions* in the cause of benevolence.⁴¹ In other words, history must aspire to the poetic universal even as it is tethered to the particularities of human events, since only then can it truly uncover, and make us love, the natural order that lies

⁴⁰ Dodsley published through Tully's Head a number of editions of Voltaire's *Siècle de Louis XIV*, in the original and in English translation in the early 1750s.

⁴¹ Horace famously wrote that the highest goal of verse was *docere, delectare, movere*. For the original quotation, see *Ars Poetica*, ll. 333-34. The aspiration was not for history to challenge poetry, but to bring it closer to the poetic ideal.

beneath narratives of apparent disorder. This education of the imagination required a history authorized not only by scientific standards of evaluation, but through the force of honest rhetoric.

In the fourth section of the *Preceptor*, “Chronology and History,” an imaginary governor introduces his pupil to “that Study, which above all others conduceth to make a Man knowing, prudent, and virtuous.” As the benefits of the study of history are unfolded, it becomes evident that Dionysius Halicarnassus’s famous dictum that history is “philosophy teaching by examples” is seen to be insufficient, in itself, to satisfy the aspirations of the historian. Instead, we are presented with a much more ambitious and encompassing view of history as a “Representation of Mankind, in all the various Circumstances and Conditions of Life,” incorporating not just the ideals of civic virtue, and the corresponding “Detestation of Vice” in talents misapplied, but the delight in imagining oneself “an Eye-witness to the astonishing Changes and Revolutions” by which “we become instructed in the several Windings and Labyrinths of the Human Heart, and may be said to enter into the Commerce of the World, before we meddle with the Business and Transactions of it.”⁴² History, in this view, is not just informative and admonitory, but imaginative and transformative: “By pursuing the Records of past Ages, we carry ourselves back to the first Original of things, and enter upon a new Kind of Existence.” While the result of this transformation might strike us as unexceptional, it actually entails an engagement and openness to the contours of social duty that distinguishes it both from the Stoical Jeremiads of the *Craftsman* and the propaganda of Walpole’s courtiers. The mind of the gentleman, “rightly constituted,” is “not intoxicated with Prosperity; but still looking forward, and foreseeing the Possibility of a Change, disposes itself to submit without Murmuring or Regret.” The lessons of history are

⁴² *Preceptor*, 1: 231, 233-236, 239.

designed to educate the reader in a Patriotic duty in which the free will is tempered by humility before the unfathomable dispensation of providence, the only way by which public spirit and public order can be reconciled in the common good. Without that humility, there is little to prevent Patriotism itself becoming just one more esoteric system competing cynically for control over a humanity reduced to little more than machines in an historical narrative of ignorance and exploitation. It was this flat, mechanical view of mankind that, as commentators such as Bullitt and Mahoney have pointed out, Swift worked up in his satire; and it was that same flat, mechanical view of mankind that some commentators suspected had infected Pope's *Essay on Man* through the influence of Bolingbroke. In the context of Tully's Head's Popeian legacy, then, history offered a fresh way of articulating the ideas that Pope was thought to, or *should*, have been fashioning in his *Moral Essays* and, later, in his "Brutus" project—that is, prying open the true, conflicted state of man and allowing us to glimpse within him the artificial and the natural working in a symbiotic, not an antagonistic, relationship.

This revised Patriotism necessitated changes in the structure, style, and methodology of historical writing. Structurally, while the great historical narratives, from Rapin to Voltaire, sold well, multi-volume histories could also place a serious initial financial burden on their publishers. James Rivington made an excellent £20,000 out of the publication of the first volume of Tobias Smollett's *Complete History of England* in 1756—but it had cost him £32,000 to produce! John Knapton fell into bankruptcy in 1755 partly owing to the expense of publishing Rapin's *History of England*.⁴³ The growth of the journal market, however, which accelerated from 1730, offered an opportunity to provide history in a more accessible

⁴³ Patricia Hernlund, "Three Bankruptcies in the London Book Trade, 1746-61: Rivington, Knapton, and Osborn," in *Writers, Books, and Trade. An Eighteenth-Century English Miscellany for William B. Todd*, ed. O.M. Brack, Jr. (New York: AMS Press, 1994), 77-122.

form, and, incidentally, to exploit the crossover between history and current affairs, since the former was not subject to stamp tax. Quick to sense the opportunity, Dodsley ran in *The Museum* (1746-47) a series of historical essays by John Campbell which were later published in one collection as *The Present State of Europe*.⁴⁴ In addition, the “Succinct History of the Rebellion” that ran in *The Museum* during the Pretender’s rebellion was reissued under one cover the year after the journal closed.⁴⁵ These were smart money earners in themselves; but Tierney also sees Dodsley’s integration of news and history as a weapon in his fight with Cave’s formidable *Gentleman’s Magazine*, and argues that, through *The Museum*, readers “could not only enjoy passing entertainment but also gain comprehensive and integrated views of contemporary domestic and foreign affairs, a service for which there had been no precedent in periodical literature.”⁴⁶ Later, Dodsley was to employ a similar maneuver in the *Annual Register* (1758-). Here, Burke was to compose and compile an annual “History of the Present War” and a separate “Chronicle” of significant events that blurred the distinction between history and current affairs.⁴⁷ This more flexible structure was carried over to some degree in Burke’s “Abridgment,” where a brisk narrative, largely lacking footnotes, was accessibly subdivided, and interspersed with detailed diversions on topographical, legal, and cultural matters. Indeed, there is a need for more investigation into the ways in which Dodsley and Burke could be said to have helped redefine the whole idea of an “abridgment”

⁴⁴ [John Campbell] *The Present State of Europe. Explaining the Interests, Connections, Political and Commercial Views of its Several Powers, comprehending Also, A Clear and Concise History of each Country, so far as is necessary to show the Nature of their Present Constitutions* (London, 1750).

⁴⁵ *A Compleat and Authentick History of the Rise, Progress, and Extinction of the Late Rebellion* (London, 1747).

⁴⁶ James E. Tierney, “The Museum, the ‘Super-Excellent Magazine’,” *Studies in English Literature*, 13 (1973), 513.

⁴⁷ For Burke’s authorship of the historical essays see, T.O. McLoughlin, *Edmund Burke and the First Ten Years of the Annual Register, 1758-67* (Salisbury: University of Rhodesia, 1975).

since, earlier in the century, this form of historical writing was largely a fleshing out of chronology with passages from Classical and medieval works, a vehicle of instruction and reference rather than reflection.⁴⁸

Structural adaptations such as these required corresponding developments in style, of which Burke's "Abridgment" offers some interesting illustrations. In the first place, the goal of carrying the reader into the "windings and labyrinths of the human heart" lent itself to a rhetoric that closely mirrored the ideal theater of the *Reformer*: energizing the narrative in a way that avoided partisan identifications, engaging the passions while retaining an apparent objectivity, avoiding flights of sensational description, and reuniting the "sacred" and "profane" in historical interpretation. We do, indeed, find Burke skillfully modulating his rhetoric, winding himself into carefully selected dramas with the deliberation and eye to detail of an accomplished set designer, then accelerating into clipped Tacitean summaries that, in their perfect poise, refuse to close accounts with the *dramatis personae*, but leave the audience suspended in sympathetic indecision. The chapter dealing with the reign of Henry II, for instance, commences with a brisk survey of the royal lands and dynastic diplomacy before gliding into an extended treatment of two defining episodes, the Becket controversy and the invasion of Ireland. Each of these provides a sub-narrative that broadens the context of the reign and ensures that, when we are called to play the part of critic, "we may...not," in Burke's own words, "judge, as some have inconsiderately done, of the affairs of those times by ideas taken from the present manners and opinions." Returning us then to the personal

⁴⁸ The product is exemplified by Thomas Hearne's revised edition of De Vallemont's *Ductor historicus* (1704-05), and Nicholas Tindal's abridgment of Rapin's *History of England*, published in three volumes. Thomas Hearne, *Ductor historicus: or, a short system of universal history, and an introduction to the study of it* (London, 1704); M. Rapin de Thoyras, *An Abridgment of the History of England. Being a Summary of Mr. Rapin's History and Mr. Tindal's continuation, from the Landing of Julius Caesar, to the Death of King George I* (London, 1747). Burke owned twenty-two volumes of the unabridged, 1728 edition, including Tindal's "Continuation," which Warburton considered "a miserable farrago" (*Letters of an Eminent Prelate*, 200).

treachery that divided Henry's family at the end, Burke closes with the striking image of the king's abandoned corpse, stripped and laid in an empty church, "affording a just consolation for the obscurity of a mean fortune, and an instructive lesson how little an outward greatness and enjoyments foreign to the mind contribute towards a solid felicity, in the example of one, who was the greatest of kings and the unhappiest of mankind."⁴⁹ With such accomplished literary skills, Burke's achievement was to compose a conceptual as well as a factual abridgment for public consumption.

At another level, we find in the "Abridgment" a sharp contrast to the lofty intimacy of Bolingbroke's historical style. While the noble lord passes his esoteric lessons in statecraft on to his acolyte through the faux-intimacy of private letters made public, Burke, studiously committed to transcending faction in the recovery of true public-spiritedness, is fishing in other waters. He is searching out the gentleman who frequents the theater of taste, who aspires to the honors of a true public servant, and who wishes to obtain not an initiation into some corpus of coded knowledge but a heightened sense of his duties as they arise out of his social position, which he believes to have been set providentially by the Creator's dispensation for man's conflicted nature. Burke establishes his authority with this audience through a studied objectivity. He seats himself alongside his audience conveying a judicious balance of physical and moral determinism, reason and providence, and a deliberate humility in the face of the paradoxes and apparent contradictions that history presents. After describing graphically the scale of depredation brought about by the barbarian invaders of Roman Britain, Burke muses: "We are almost driven out of the circle of political enquiry: we are in a manner compelled to acknowledge the hand of God in those immense revolutions, by which, at certain periods, he so signally asserts his supreme dominion, and

⁴⁹ Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, 1: 500, 519.

brings about that great system of change, which is perhaps as necessary to the moral as it is found to be in the natural world.” It is a far cry from the *Vindication*’s rationalizing of the massacres of the ignorant armies thrown up by artificial society, and it shows how Burke’s rhetorical purpose—as artfully contrived as the other, certainly—is to establish an inclusive complicity with his audience that flatters them by nurturing their faculties of imaginative self-recognition, rather than their mastery of pure philosophical method.⁵⁰ And just as the *Vindication* seeks to expose the deficiencies of philosophy’s grasp of the “first Original of things,” so the “Abridgment” might be read as an essay in how the imaginative internalization of history can forge a more natural and ordered critique of “artificial” society. For, in Burke’s world, the dynamics of change do not originate in stem-conspiracies; but our understanding is quickened, as it were, by the sheer scale of complexity and conflicted workings of human nature—a sort of “historical sublime,” the impact of which is heightened by the measured and open way in which the historian, eschewing the meteors of style, forces us to confront the fragile and obscure interface between our individual and social natures.

Burke’s style was underpinned by a methodological framework familiar to the Tully’s Head circle of the 1750s. This included, on a conceptual and philosophical level, an adherence to what were perceived as John Locke’s standards of historical evaluation. These incorporated the realm of religious mystery and held the line, as it were, against the more skeptical and secularizing positions of writers such as Shaftesbury, Toland and, of course, Bolingbroke himself. More practically, writers such as Thomas Warton and Richard Hurd exposed the shallowness and inflexibility of skeptical philosophy by their efforts to fully contextualize historical literature and by opening up Spenser’s poetry and the tradition of

⁵⁰ The pseudo-Bolingbroke’s “sober Mysteries of Truth and Reason,” in Burke’s hands, require the courage to discover the conflicts of history within the ambiguities of our own social nature, not in the externalized conspiracies of elites.

chivalric romances to wider interpretation as windows upon the social and political history of their times. More contentiously, this method of contextualization was also applied to the delicate task of rehabilitating writers who incorporated tales of miracles in their histories. William Warburton's *Julian* was just such a work, focusing on an examination of the evidence for the "providential" destruction of the emperor's project to rebuild the Temple of Jerusalem. Warburton wrote to Hurd that the thrust of the final section of the book was addressed to the question, "What evidence is required, and what is its peculiar nature, that will justify a reasonable man in giving credit to a miraculous fact?"⁵¹ Such a project, in Warburton's hands, was clearly intended as a riposte to "atheists" like Hume, and a further defense of the authenticity of the Mosaic dispensation; but the "Abridgment" indicates that Burke appreciated the freedom this technique offered for a sophisticated and nuanced picture of medieval religiosity as a social force in his own history. The historian's prime job was to assess the sincerity of professions of divine intervention in sources by placing them firmly against the standards and expectations of their time, and to accept that such sincerity itself constitutes, in an active sense, historical truth. Thus, while Medieval chronicles were, in their time, "received with a blind credulity," he writes, "they have been since rejected with as undistinguished a disregard. But as it is not in my design nor inclination, nor indeed in my power, either to establish or refute these stories; it is sufficient to observe, that the reality or opinion of such miracles was the principal cause of the early acceptance and rapid progress of Christianity in this island."⁵²

It might be possible to interpret Burke's position here as simply a prudent nod to religious respectability; but such an interpretation would need to ignore a number of

⁵¹ Warburton to Hurd, June 13, 1749, in *Letters from a Late Eminent Prelate*, 4.

⁵² Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, 1:393-94.

significant points: Burke's own professions of a belief in a personal God, repeated both privately as well as publicly; his consistent assertions of the limited extent of man's understanding as a created being; the fact that defending Medieval monastic chroniclers was hardly an article of faith in polite society. Indeed, Burke pushes rather further in the latter area even than most. Warburton argues in the introduction to *Julian* that writers such as Bede and Matthew Paris should not have their honesty, discernment and veracity dismissed across the board just for giving credence to "every strange tale of Monkish extraction," since this was simply the "general contagion" of the time.⁵³ Burke's own judgment of Bede, couched in that characteristic reassuring detachment, would seem to go further: "On the whole, though this father of the English learning seems to have been but a genius of the middle class, neither elevated nor subtil; and one, who wrote in a low style, simple but not elegant; yet when we reflect upon the time, in which he lived, the place, in which he spent his whole life, within the walls of a monastery, in so remote and wild a country; it is impossible to refuse him the praise of an incredible industry and a generous thirst for knowledge."⁵⁴

Far from making the age of Bede or the Medieval monks even more remote from the reader, evaluating the literature in its own context was intended, almost paradoxically, to strike up identification or sympathy through recurring moral themes and patterns which could be detected more sharply the more a text was understood in its social function. This eliciting

⁵³ Warburton, *Julian*, x.

⁵⁴ Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, 1:403. The Victorian educationist Thomas Arnold wrote of Bede's reporting of miracles, that the student of history "will, I think, as a general rule, disbelieve them....But, with regard to some miracles, he will see that there is no strong a priori improbability in their occurrence, but rather the contrary; as, for instance, when the first missionaries of the Gospel in a barbarous country are said to have been assisted by a manifestation of the spirit of power; and, if the evidence appears to warrant his belief, he will readily and gladly yield it. And in so doing he will have the countenance of a great man (Burke) who in his fragment of English history has not hesitated to express the same sentiments." Quoted in Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (eds.), *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*. Second series, Vol. XI (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1890), 4n1. I am grateful to Dr. William Fahey for directing me to this passage.

of self-recognition through curiosity at difference was a favorite method in Burke's rhetoric throughout his life, and what worked in the field of moral literature also worked in the wider field of language and culture. So, in the "Abridgment," Burke deepens his audience's understanding of their Britishness, or Patriotism, by leaning at key moments on England's peripheral relationship to the European continent. His opening chapter, entitled "Causes of the Connections between the Romans and Britains," is a brisk geographical and anthropological survey of Europe in which England emerges into focus through a recounting of the movements of peoples and the shifts in Imperial diplomacy. In part, this is a recognition of his debt to Montesquieu in its attention to climate and geography: "Though I am satisfied from a comparison of the Celtick tongues with the Greek and Roman, that the original inhabitants of Italy and Greece were of the same race with the people of northern Europe, yet it is certain, they profited so much by their guarded situation, by the mildness of their climate favourable to humanity, and by the foreign infusions, that they came greatly to excel the northern nations in every respect, and particularly in the art and discipline of war..."⁵⁵ But it is also—if we dwell a moment on that reference to "foreign infusions"—designed to soften the particularity of Englishness and to place national shibboleths in their correct hybrid and interconnected nature. This applies chiefly to the Common Law tradition, but even in matters of marginal detail Burke concedes priority to others. Druidism, for example, could not have been spread to France from the Celtic tribes of Ireland and England, as Caesar supposed, since, "I find it not easy to assign any tolerable cause, why an order of so much authority, and a discipline so exact, should have passed from the more barbarous people to the more civilized; from the younger to the older; from the colony to the mother country." By the same token, the reader is educated in the rudiments of British Druidism

⁵⁵ Ibid., 1: 339.

through a syncretic approach that focuses on its resemblances to “the Jewish priesthood, the Persian Magi, and the Indian Brachmans”—and even the Roman priesthood in “the original objects or in the general mode of worship, or in the constitution of their hierarchy.”⁵⁶ Burke stays very close to Warburton’s argument here as outlined in the *Divine Legation of Moses*.⁵⁷ It is a position that allows him to make the role of religion in artificial society appear quite natural while also undermining the view of writers such as Toland and Hume that uniquely terrible aspects of the Druid system meant that it was rightly exterminated by the Roman invaders—a point Burke knew only too well could be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to the situation of the Catholic priesthood in Ireland. But, in the broadest methodological sense, it is a way of presenting an English history that is never Anglocentric, so the passions and affections are diverted from the parochial to their ultimate end in the widest incorporation of mankind. In this we are reminded of the difference between Burke’s British Patriotism and the parochial nationalism with which he is often erroneously identified.

The theme that, above all, binds these features into a coherent methodology is the rehabilitation of allegory as a conveyor of truth, a maneuver that, as argued above, was central to the reassessment of Pope’s Patriot legacy, and to the criticism of Bolingbroke’s influence on the poet’s work. We have also noted how the contextualizing of allegorical works and their observations on the human condition, as in the *Faerie Queene* or in growing interest in Medieval and early-Modern chivalry, provided a way into the social and political history of the times.⁵⁸ Allegory also offered a scheme of criticism that reined in the excesses

⁵⁶ Ibid., 1: 358-59.

⁵⁷ See, for example, the *Divine Legation*, third edition, 1:339. Also, second edition, 2:19. The original link with a “core” Egyptian religiosity is a staple of Plutarch’s writings.

⁵⁸ “It is affirmed by Plutarch, that ‘Allegory is that, in which one thing is related and another understood’on which account we may term the Orlando [of Ariosto] a moral poem; but can we term the

of modern philosophical reasoning without returning to the language of superstition and obfuscation. There are a number of reasons for this. First, its critical purchase is based upon a relationship between the particular and the universal that preserves the prior and prime reality of the particular. As such: it provides a crucial counter to symbolism or idealism, by which particular historical events gain significance only as they relate to the higher reality of a universal concept—the abstract norm or ideal; it subverts the orthodox Aristotelian position that history’s weakness, in relation to philosophy and poetry, is its incapacity to furnish the mind with a method for contemplating and understanding the universal; and it inverts the use of historical material as instructive parallels by aspiring to read the present into the past, rather than the past into the present.⁵⁹

Second, precisely because it works on the accretion rather than the selection of evidence, allegory is resistant to systematization.⁶⁰ Burke’s refusal to impose a “system” on history was to become a distinguishing feature of his later political career—a preference for the inexact science of prejudice over the programs of scientific conviction—and it is signified in the syncretic anthropology and his studied, persuasive air of inconclusiveness

Faerie Queen upon the whole, a moral poem? is it not equally an historical or political poem? for tho’ it be (according to its author’s words) an allegory or dark conceit, yet that which is couched or understood under this allegory is the history, and intrigues of Queen Elizabeth’s courtiers; which however are introduc’d with a moral design.” Thomas Warton, *Observations on the Faerie Queene*, 219.

⁵⁹ This issue has reappeared in recent years in the attack on historicism by philosophers such as Leo Strauss and Karl Popper. Strauss famously charged Burke with an historicist approach that precluded adherence to universal principles of morality. See *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950), 304-323. Of the responses to Strauss on Burke’s behalf, perhaps Claes Ryn’s conception of “value-centered historicism” comes closest to the imaginative, allegorical dimension that I argue for in this dissertation. See Claes Ryn, “Defining Historicism,” *Humanitas* 11, no. 2 (1998), 86-101.

⁶⁰ There is an intriguing short digression in the “Abridgment” that is worth mentioning. In speaking of the “systematick and logical” method introduced into theology by John of Damascus in the eighth century, Burke states that “the allegorical gave way to the literal explication; the imagination had less scope; and the affections were less touched. But it prevailed by an appearance more solid and philosophical; by an order more scentifick; and by a readiness of application either for the solution or the exciting of doubts and difficulties.” Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, 1:401. Burke was to speak in later life of history as the “preceptor of prudence, not of principles” (*Correspondence*, 2:282). See also Warburton, *Divine Legation*, vol. 2 sect. 2, p. 25.

that we have noted above. Of course, the systematizer (like Bolingbroke) often professed *a posteriori* humility, and not always in bad faith. Such a person might only be exposed ultimately through the false tone of his rhetoric: allegorical imagery requires a reverent, ordered imagination to translate experience from one generation to another with natural conviction, and those who lack this imaginative faculty are exposed by unnatural meteors of style, false or sophistic analogies, and simplifications that jar with the discerning, educated audience. Most important, then, is the relationship of allegory to the air of providential mystery that surrounds its narratives. From the artifices of imagination and from historical evidence, allegory draws a true representation of the conflicted nature of man in sharp contrast to any pessimistic formula for the rise and decline of civilizations, or, worse, the alienated savage who has been civilized out of his nobility.⁶¹

Finally, allegory renders the strange or exotic familiar and may also transform the familiar and make it strangely enchanting. It is in the context of such transformations that Burke's Patriotic affection for the local and native must be seen, not as an expression of some nascent parochial nationalism. Burke's point, best conveyed allegorically, is that the strangeness and diverse forms of such affections is not a barrier to, but precisely evidence for, the universality of our duties. It is one of the responsibilities of the historian to personalize and particularize these affections, but never to romanticize them, and to teach his readers to feel them almost before they are understood. It is history aspiring toward the poetic.⁶²

⁶¹ For the influence of the Polybian and Machiavellian paradigm in the early eighteenth century, see Gerrard, *Patriot Opposition to Walpole*, 132-34.

⁶² Samuel Rogers gives us an illuminating light upon this matter in his record of a later conversation: "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

A useful illustration of the methodological points at issue here may be found in differing contemporary evaluations of the *Cyropædia*, Xenophon's famous account of Cyrus, founder of the Persian Empire. This work was problematic as a piece of profane history since it appeared to be rather a collection of fables and moral exhortation than a serious attempt at biographical narrative. Cicero had questioned its historical value in a letter to his brother Quintus, arguing that Xenophon's goal had not been "truth" so much as an illustration of a just government and exemplary rulership. Bolingbroke appeared to assent to this sundering of the factual and the moral in his *Letters on the Study and Use of History*, where, while praising Xenophon's historical skills, he interposes a reservation about this particular work: Xenophon and Thucydides, in contrast to Herodotus, "wrote on subjects on which they were well informed, and they treated them fully: they maintained the dignity of history and thought it beneath them to vamp up old traditions, like the writers of their age and country, and to be the trumpeters of a lying antiquity. The *Cyropædia* of Xenophon may be objected perhaps; but if he gave it for a romance, not a history, as he might for aught we can tell, it is out of the case: and if he gave it for a history, not a romance, I should prefer his authority to that of Herodotus, or any other of his countrymen."⁶³ A more nuanced response to the relationship between moral instruction and factual accuracy had been presented by the poet Edmund Spenser, who used the *Cyropædia* in his Preface to the *Faerie Queene* to justify his own "Allegoricall devises" as a way of fashioning the gentleman of the times "in virtuous

disagreed with him: they thought that poetry was truth, being a representation of human nature." See Samuel Rogers, *Recollections of the Table-Talk of Samuel Rogers* (New York, 1856), 82-83.

⁶³ Bolingbroke, *Letters on the Study and Use of History*, 159-60.) Characteristically, Bolingbroke had offered a less nuanced opinion in an earlier letter: "Herodotus flourished, I think, little more than half a century, and Xenophon little more than a whole century, after the death of Cyrus: and yet how various and repugnant are the relations made by these two historians, of the birth, life, and death of this prince? If more histories had come down from these ages to ours, the uncertainty and inutility of them all would be but the more manifest." *Ibid.*, 78.

and gentle discipline.” “For this cause,” he writes, “is Xenophon preferred before Plato, for that the one, in the exquisite depth of his judgment, 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 might best be: So much more profitable and gracious is doctrine by ensample, than by rule.”⁶⁴ Rollin builds this elision of philosophy and narrative by recommending this profane history on account of its conformity to the sacred (decidedly not an option for Bolingbroke), and confidently includes Xenophon in his catalog of educative works for students. In his *History of Cyrus* he restates his confidence: “The authority of this judicious historian ought not to be lessened by what Cicero asserts in his first letter to his brother Quintus,” he argues, since “the substance of the events and facts may be considered as true, as they are confirmed by their conformity to the holy scriptures.”⁶⁵ Rollin’s opinion is repeated in Dodsley’s *Preceptor*, where it is stated that, “the History of Xenophon, as it is itself the best connected, and the most probable of any, so does it exactly agree with Scripture, which on account of its Antiquity...would evidently deserve the Preference to the Greek Accounts, were we to consider it as no more than a bare History of these Times.”⁶⁶ The young Burke, we might recall, recommended the *Cyropædia* for Shackleton’s use in school, being unable to think of any work “fitter for Boys who are beginning to Comprehend what they read.”⁶⁷ We now see

⁶⁴ Preface to the *Faerie Queene*.

⁶⁵ Rollin, *The Method of Teaching and Studying the Belles Lettres, or, An Introduction to Lanuages, Poetry, Rhetoric, History, Moral Philosophy, Physicks, &c with Reflections on Taste; and Introductions with regard to the Eloquence of the Pulpit, the Bar, and the Stage* (London, 1734), 3:245; *The History of Cyrus. By Mr. Rollin, Translated from the French* (London, c.1740), 2-3. The publisher was Mary Cooper; the name of the translator is unknown.

⁶⁶ *Preceptor*, 291.

⁶⁷ Burke, *Correspondence*, 1:73. Burke owned a copy of the 1561 edition of *Xenophontis Opera*. In a letter to Richard Shackleton, dated July 4, 1745, Burke had considered requesting Rollin’s *Ancient History* as a book prize, and he drew upon Rollin later in both the *Vindication* and the “Abridgment,” although we do not have a record of any copy of the work in Burke’s ownership. On Rollin’s educational thought in relation to

what Burke meant by that term “comprehend.” Just as the historicizing of allegorical works served to cast fresh light on the social and political history of the times in which they were composed, so Burke allegorizes history to enlighten the Patriots of his own time.

III: Patriot History

Burke’s goals in writing his “Abridgment” were conventionally “Patriotic” and his sources, generally, unremarkable; but his execution was radically subversive of the philosophical approach that had come to identify Patriotism in the first half of the century. He planned to trace the emergence of liberty through a narrative that showed how the aspirations of the human spirit, working with the grain of human nature, are oriented toward the emergence of a constitutional and legal order in society. But whereas conventional histories sought to isolate the meaning of liberty *in* history at particular points of triumph or eclipse (such as the collapse of the Roman Republic, the renaissance of Elizabethan England, or the triumph of the Revolution Settlement), Burke sought it *through* history, in the aggregate of crises and discontinuities that formed the memory and experience of loss or gain, and that occasionally, by a concatenation of factors, became released in a spirit of political resistance. This is why the allegorical imagination was crucial for Burke in conveying his underlying meaning. It is a point illustrated by the emphatic and distinctive way in which Burke fashioned his narrative of liberty upon two key concepts: paradox, or the recovery and refining of the order of liberty precisely in circumstances of apparent chaos and disorder; and providence, or the mysterious concurrence of events and associations through

civic virtue and the duties of citizenship, see Jay M. Smith, *Nobility Reimagined: The Patriotic Nation in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 49-55.

which the memory of an ordered liberty is sensed, articulated, and realized. As Burke wrote in 1761, in his review of Hume's history of medieval England: "It will be curious to observe from what a strange chaos of liberty and tyranny, of anarchy and order, the constitution, we are now blessed with, has at length arisen."⁶⁸

If the pseudo-Bolingbroke claimed to have discovered a natural disorder lurking under the apparent order of artificial society, Burke set out in the "Abridgment" to show precisely the opposite, and the paradoxes that are central to Burke's plan here, rather like the imputed crimes of artificial society in the *Vindication*, are also viewed in the external and internal relations of governments. With respect to the external paradoxes, we find the "Abridgment" divided into three books that deal, respectively, with the invasions of the Romans, Saxons, and Normans. Burke points out repeatedly that each of these invasions was enormously destructive, not only of political systems, but of every aspect of social life. The Romans wrought a "great change" in "the manners [of the Britons]; their art of war; their religious and civil discipline": under the onslaught of the German tribes the Britons were "much more broken and reduced than any other nation": and during the Norman Conquest "The English laws, manners, and maxims were suddenly changed."⁶⁹ Burke argues unequivocally for the central importance of conquest—violent and, at least in the first instance, destructive—to our understanding of liberty; but his attention is drawn to the

⁶⁸ *Annual Register for the Year 1761* (London, 1762), 301. "Curiosity" was an intellectual virtue that Burke closely associated with the truly learned in his *Note-Book*, in an essay on "philosophy and learning." Interestingly, in the same essay, he described providence as "the wisdom of nature" (p.91). As Lock suggests with respect to Montesquieu, this stress on providence also creates space between Burke and the historians of the Scottish school such as Robertson.

⁶⁹ Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, 1: 345, 389, 453. The latter is a point reinforced in the "Fragment," where the impact of the enforcement of foreign law after 1066 is assessed: "New courts of justice, new names and powers of officers, in a word, a new tenure of land, as well as new possessors of it, took place. Even the language of publick proceedings was in great measure changed." *Ibid.*, 1:331. Had it gone to completion, the "Fragment" would have answered Bolingbroke's appeal for a seriously rooted history of jurisprudence, which we find in the fifth *Letter on the Use of History*. But it would not have been a history of Bolingbroke's choosing.

disruptions and subsequent interactions of colonization rather than to native resistance. In the second chapter of the work, the author inserts a lengthy account of “the first peopling of this island; the manners of its inhabitants; their art of war; their religious and civil discipline.” This is done not merely for antiquarian reasons, but “as not wholly unnecessary towards comprehending the great change made in all these points, when the Roman conquest came afterwards to be compleated.”⁷⁰ Burke graphically and symbolically reinforces the magnitude of such change by recounting the story of how the Roman general Suetonius Paulinus “burned the Druids in their own fires” after the subjugation of their center on the Isle of Man.⁷¹ Here, indeed, there is something distinctive about the English experience: as Roman power receded, the native Britons faced the incursions of the Saxons and were “much more broken and reduced than any other nation, which had fallen under the German power.” Burke justifies this statement with evidence of “[t]he sudden extinction of the ancient religion and language.”⁷² These catastrophic irruptions are followed by descriptions of the gradual recovery of social and political equilibrium, and of an accompanying “memory” of order that attunes the conquerors and acclimatizes the vanquished to the new circumstances, but also remains to be energized again at points of future crisis. It is the functioning of this memory, with its rational, emotional, instinctive and customary components, the crucible of loss and gain, that forms the sense of liberty and thereby transforms the trauma of conquest for both settlers and settled.

⁷⁰ Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, 1:345.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 1:364. The story is by no means particular to Burke’s account, but the brevity of Burke’s work draws out its symbolic import more effectively. Hume, significantly, makes Paulinus’s response entirely reasonable by claiming that the Druidic religion, being uniquely terrible, was found entirely incompatible with Roman manners and laws. Similar reasoning, albeit in milder form, was to shape the attitude of Protestants and free-thinkers such as Toland to Catholicism in Ireland.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 1:389.

When we turn to the *internal* paradox of “liberty and tyranny, anarchy and order,” we find that Burke inverts the expected layering of social order and disorder, marking the periods of stability and flourishing merely as brief episodes in, or digressions from, the narrative pattern, which is forcefully centered upon points of friction and competition between institutions. Constitutional uncertainties at the beginning of the reigns of the Norman kings, for example, form the crucible for the emergence of a sense of ancient liberties among the Norman and Angevin nobles and clergy, so that a constitutional uncertainty that “exposed the nation, at the death of every king, to all the calamities of a civil war” actually made Henry I give “to the whole kingdom a charter of liberties, which was the first of the kind, and laid the foundation of those successive charters” that, instantiated in the collective memory, “at last completed the freedom of the subject.”⁷³

It is through this chain of disjunctions and uncertainties that Burke attempts to describe the memory of liberty, which is not a yearning to return to a primitive state of natural order but distress at the loss of familiar social patterns and understandings. As such, liberty may be said to inhabit the gaps where institutions and customs rub against each other in a state of imbalance and heightened contestation. But what is remarkable about Burke’s perception is that this contestation is not so much one between classes or orders as between secular and religious institutions. In Roman Britain, the invaders’ total overturning of the Druidical institution is revealed to have had unpredicted and dangerous consequences for the establishment of Roman civilization and rule in that it aroused the furious resistance of the indigenous population and brought about their subsequent enslavement. The Romans had destroyed not just a system of religious belief, but the institution in which all social liberties that were understood to exist at the time had been invested. From Burke’s Lockean

⁷³ Ibid., 1: 486.

perspective this means, in particular, the authority to summon and dissolve “public assemblies” and the mediation in legal issues that arose among the “freemen and heads of families.” While the long-term benefits of the destruction of Druidism may have been considerable, the issue at hand was the immediate *sense* of disorder and the fractured aesthetics of liberty that required judicious handling by the conquerors. The establishment of Christianity and its attendant hierarchy brought with it new frictions in different forms since, in a sense, the religious was now colonizing the secular. In the Anglo-Saxon world that replaced the Roman occupation, political violence and monastic discipline coexist as two inseparable facets of life, with Saxon kings sometimes renouncing the sword for the cloister. Later, the Crusades revealed a similar conjunction of religious devotion and chivalry, out of which paradox of loyalties, further advances in the conception of liberty were to be struck.⁷⁴ At the same time, “Papal and Imperial powers mutually gave birth to each other” and the Italian city states, “By contending for a choice in their subjection, grew imperceptibly into freedom, and passed through the medium of faction and anarchy into regular commonwealths.”⁷⁵ Culturally, it is in the crucible of the moral and physical chaos of Stephen’s reign that the deeply ordered system of knight errantry is formed: raw power absorbed and tempered by the authority of a king of Peace. We can see why Burke later viewed the passing of the age of chivalry not as a liberating revolt against the outdated manners of an oppressive social order but as the loss of man’s knowledge of his own capacity for evil and therefore the prelude to a new and terrible disorder.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 1:481, 495. Burke writes “[T]he Saxon Kings and ruling men embraced religion with so signal, and in their rank so unusual a zeal, that in many instances they even sacrificed to its advancement the prime objects of their ambition.” 1:395.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 1: 455, 456.

Burke's insights into the dynamics between secular and religious institutions is quite astonishing for a society that was used to hierocratic conspiracy theories and saw Medieval religion as destructive of liberty and natural order. Bolingbroke considered all history before the end of the fifteenth century to be of mere antiquarian interest: "To be entirely ignorant about the ages that precede this era would be shameful...But to be learned about them is a ridiculous affectation in any man who means to be useful to the present age. Down to this era [of the Renaissance] let us read history: from this era, and down to our time, let us study it." Burke shows how the study of medieval society, precisely in its apparent paradoxes, reveals to the curious the inextricable relationship between natural and artificial society. By affirming the providential origins of society, the religious underpinnings of civilization, and the necessity of both for true liberty, it vitally thickens our understanding of liberty and earns its place in the education of the modern Patriot.

The significance of Burke's recovery of the contribution of religious institutions to the history of liberty can hardly be overstated. In a way analogous to the literary work of Spence and the Wartons, Burke argues that the true critic and citizen learns through history that rightly ordered public-spiritedness is fundamentally religious, since religion has effected the transition from a rude to a civilized liberty. "The first openings of civility," Burke writes, "have been every where made by religion," and this is not only because man's religious instincts are a natural and ineradicable part of the tension between the personal and the social that accompanies him everywhere, but because those instincts, being ineradicable, must be refined and ordered through the teachings of a structured religious class, as the history of "artificial" religion has shown from the Egyptian priesthood on.⁷⁶ This aspect of Burke's

⁷⁶ Ibid., 1:349. Burke states, for example, that "The idea of the soul's immortality is indeed ancient, universal, and in a manner inherent in our nature" (1:352).

revision of Patriot critical thinking is well illustrated in the “Abridgment” in the treatment of two religious institutions given short shrift by the free-thinkers and deists: Druidry and Medieval monasticism.

In line with his template for the rise of priest-craft and the fall of “true religion,” John Toland had considered the Druidic system as ushering obfuscation into ancient Celtic society: “They dexterously led the people blindfold, by committing no part of their Theology or Philosophy to writing, tho’ great writers in other respects; but their dictates were only hereditarily convey’d from masters to disciples by traditionary Poems, interpretable (consequently) and alterable as they should see convenient: which is a much more effectual way, than locking up a book from the Laity, that, one way or other, is sure to come first or last to their knowledge, and easy perhaps to be turn’d against the Priests.”⁷⁷ Burke was considerably more even-handed. Labeling a number of aspects of the Druid religion as “almost universal” in primitive societies, including belief in the immortality of the soul, observance toward rude stone, human sacrifice, and “some notions...of a Being eternal and infinite,” he observes that “no Heathen Priesthood ever came up to the perfection of the Druidical.” This might, of course, be taken ironically, if Burke had not gone on to explain the practical uses to which the Druids put the authority they drew from these religious instincts: “Justice was in all countries originally administered by the priesthood; nor indeed could laws in their first feeble state have either authority or sanction, so as to compel men to relinquish their natural independence, had they not appeared to come down to them enforced by beings of more than human power.” The “triple respect” that Druidic science gained in the areas of medicine, politics and religion “was in general usefully exerted,” and not least

⁷⁷ Toland, *Specimen of Critical History*, 10.

because it also provided a repository of memory upon which customs and manners (and therefore laws) rested. Burke rejects Toland's assertion that the bards were separate from the body of the Druids, incorporating them instead as a "class of the Druids" and complicates his cynical view of their oral tradition by contrasting the cohering and stabilizing tendency of an unwritten memory with the logocentric Athenian Academy, where "everything was disputed."⁷⁸

Burke's treatment of the Medieval church is similarly revisionist. In a chapter largely devoted to the social and political impact of monastic institutions, he argues that the Saxon monks were praiseworthy in their "zeal for personal freedom." Besides their significant role as clerks and archivists, the monks "urged their powerful penitents to the enfranchisement of their own slaves, and to the redemption of those, which belonged to others; they directed them to the repair of highways, and to the construction of churches, bridges, and other works of general utility." In matters of charity, they were "the sole channel, through which the bounty of the rich could pass in continued stream to the poor." Under great reformers such as Dunstan, they led by example, being "unmarried; austere in their lives; regular in their duties; possessed of the learning of the times; well united under a proper subordination; full of art, and implacable towards their enemies."⁷⁹ It is hard not to see in Burke's descriptions, *mutatis mutandis*, a reflection of the public spiritedness he believed was now required of the gentleman Patriot, a point confirmed by Burke's concern that the interaction of religion and liberty can only be understood fully when the status of both the regular and the secular clergy is seen in the context of their own times. In another elucidating digression, as a prelude to his account of the struggle between Henry II and Becket, Burke explains how the privileges

⁷⁸ Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, 358-59, 349, 351.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 1:415.

of the clergy, seen in their historical milieu, was justified as benevolent according to the standards and possibilities of the time: “Thus, necessary to the great by their knowledge; venerable to the poor by their hospitality; dreadful to all by their power of excommunication; the character of the clergy was exalted above every thing in the State; and it could no more be otherwise in those days, than it is possible it should be so in ours.”⁸⁰ We should also note that the great churchmen Burke mentions—Lanfranc, Anselm, Langton—were often operating in conflict with, or at least independently from, papal power. In this way, Burke could distinguish antipopery from anti-Catholicism, and more confidently apply his methodology to counter the way in which free-thinking Patriots confounded the two and married anticlericalism with irreligion.

The paradoxical ways in which liberty appears to take historical form indicate, in Burke’s thinking, that the gift of liberty is providential. That means that, while it will never be something that humans can “fix” in a philosophical equation or a code of law, it will always form an aspect of memory and feeling, associated with our reasoning but always obliging us to reconcile our intellect to what is mysterious in our own social forms and habits. It is also providence that transforms freedom into ordered liberty, because providence discloses the order that rational analysis alone can never replicate. Let us take its incorporation in the “Abridgment” in two stages: first, as an expression of the anthropology of man’s social nature, and secondly in its more unambiguously religious aspect.

For Burke, the primary concern of anthropology is an examination of how man’s associative and individualistic impulses are held in productive tension. Physical environment, its local dangers, resources, and allurements, gives this tension its particular expressions. But while Burke’s “Abridgment” commences appropriately with a grand

⁸⁰ Ibid., 1: 502.

climatic and geographical survey of the European continent, this is certainly not intended as a tapestry or panorama of essentially static national characteristics. Indeed, the most striking feature of Burke's Europe is its constant, unpredictable motion and reconfiguration by the "spirit of migration." In a passage that superficially echoes the *Vindication*, Burke writes: "Ancient history has furnished us with many instances of whole nations, expelled by invasion, falling in upon others, which they have entirely overwhelmed; more irresistible in their defeat and ruin, than in their fullest prosperity.... Thus the bleak and barren regions of the North, not being peopled by choice, were peopled as early, in all probability, as many of the milder and more inviting climates of the southern world; and thus, by a wonderful disposition of the Divine Providence, a life of hunting, which does not contribute to increase, and war, which is the great instrument in the destruction of men, were the two principal causes of their being spread so early, and so universally over the whole earth." Burke is at pains to point out that these demographic shifts were not merely the result of overpopulation, but "grew out of the ancient manners and necessities, and sometimes operated like a blind instinct, such as actuates birds of passage."⁸¹ In this way, the determinism and immorality of the act of invasion are undermined at the same time. Environmental features and the ethnic identities and manners of indigenous groupings clash or combine here with invaders armed with memories and mores of their own that help to define their expectations, with the result that the existing artifices of society cannot fail to leave some mark on the way the newcomer satisfies his appetite.⁸² In later, more settled societies, the "spirit of migration" is channeled

⁸¹ Ibid., 1: 346-47.

⁸² Karen O'Brien makes the important point that this emphasis on movement should help to redress the stress upon the "Other" in the development of a sense of national identity at this time. See Karen O'Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment: Cosmopolitan History from Voltaire to Gibbon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1. In discussing Robertson's *History of Scotland* (1759), O'Brien argues that

through more organized ventures such as pilgrimages and crusades, but the effects are similar: “It is not wholly unworthy of observation, that Providence, which strongly appears to have intended the continual intermixture of mankind, never leaves the human mind destitute of a principle to effect it. This purpose is sometimes carried on by a sort of migratory instinct; sometimes by the spirit of conquest; at one time avarice drives men from their homes, at another they are actuated by a thirst of knowledge; where none of these causes operate, the sanctity of particular places attracts men from the most distant quarters. It was this motive, which sent thousands in those ages to Jerusalem and Rome; and now in a full tide impels half the world annually to Mecca.”⁸³

When we turn to the religious aspect of Burke’s use of providence, we do not, with one possible exception, encounter any intimations of direct divine intervention.⁸⁴ Burke is not advocating a return to the providential history of writers such as Bossuet. Nor do we find affinities with Protestant apologists such as William King, who ascribed to providence the favorable winds that carried William of Orange to the rescue of Protestant Ireland in 1690. And certainly Burke would have rejected the more insidious relation of miraculous events circulated to build a Protestant martyrology out of the contested accounts of the Catholic massacres of 1641.⁸⁵ Yet he is firm in his belief that religion operates as an independent

Robertson used the union with England in 1707 as a way of showing how Scotland was opened to contribute to *European* civilization in concert with England. (*Narratives*, 102.)

⁸³ Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, 1:399.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 1:485: William Rufus and another of the Conqueror’s sons both died in one of the hated royal forest’s established by the Normans, and this led Burke to muse that their fates might therefore be considered “equivocal marks of the vengeance of Providence.” Hume uses the term “providence” only twice in the first volume of his *History of England*, one time to describe the reaction to Rufus’s death.

⁸⁵ William King, *The State of the Protestants of Ireland under the Late King James’s Government* (London, 1691). For a selection of reported miraculous phenomena during the atrocities of 1641, see Curry, *Brief Account*, 61.

force, working with the grain of human nature to quicken those associative impulses in a way that may only be revealed *post hoc facto*. Of the miracles that attended the conversion of the Saxons in the seventh century he states that, “the introduction of Christianity, which under whatever form always confers such inestimable benefits on mankind, soon made a sensible change in these rude and fierce manners,” to the degree that “[i]t is by no means impossible, that, for an end so worthy, Providence, on some occasions, might directly have interposed.”⁸⁶ Similarly, the Crusades, in their original design to protect the pilgrim routes between the West and the Islamic centers, served indirectly to perpetuate the West’s profiting from “the improvements of that laborious people” the Saracens, and to foster “that intercourse amongst mankind, which is now formed by politicks, commerce and learned curiosity.”⁸⁷

IV: Recovering Patriotism: Redeeming Empire

How, then, might Burke’s paradoxical and providential history have contributed to the revision of Patriotism as it was being pursued at Tully’s Head? In a directly polemical sense, it marginalized, or transcended, the Whig and Tory debates that were raging over the ancient constitution as a repository of Saxon “liberty.” Bolingbroke had made this historical perspective a central feature of his critique of the corruption and dullness that he believed post-revolutionary Whigs such as Walpole had instituted to bury English liberty. Fortunately for Bolingbroke’s followers the spirit of liberty among figures of elevated mind was resilient, and could be transmitted through knowledge of its historical origins and of the various guises

⁸⁶ Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, 1:393.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 1:399.

adopted by its enemies, both lay and clerical. In Letter IV of the *Remarks on the History of England*, Bolingbroke argues that neither William I, while “he imposed many new laws and customs [and] made very great alterations in the whole model of government,” nor his sons could “destroy the old constitution; because neither he nor they could extinguish the old spirit of liberty.” He continues: “As losing the spirit of liberty lost the liberties of Rome, even while the laws and constitutions, made for the preservation of them, remained entire; so we see that our ancestors, by keeping this spirit alive and warm, regained all the advantages of a free government, though a foreign invasion had destroyed them, in great measure, and had imposed a very tyrannical yoke on the nation.”⁸⁸ This was an analytical paradigm derived in part from the Commonwealthmen of the seventeenth century, and shared with writers such as Molesworth and Molyneux. Burke unequivocally undercuts the premises employed here by revealing them as static and inflexible. Most persuasively, in a lengthy digression he shows how the English Common Law, far from lending plausibility to the lineage of an ancient constitution by preserving intact principles formulated “time out of mind,” was, by the thirteenth century, “in a great measure composed of some remnants of the old Saxon customs, joined to the feudal institutions brought in at the Norman Conquest.”⁸⁹ He concludes: “All these things are, I think, sufficient to shew of what a visionary nature those systems are, which would settle the ancient Constitution in the most remote times exactly in the same form, in which we enjoy it at this day; not considering that such mighty changes in manners, during so many ages, always must produce a considerable change in laws, and in

⁸⁸ Bolingbroke, *Historical Writings*, ed. Kramnick, 179, 181.

⁸⁹ Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, 1: 544.

the forms as well as the powers of all governments.”⁹⁰ Positive law, no more than a constitutional arrangement, can incorporate man’s natural rights in their perfection, or even in their highest possible degree. It can only aspire to represent the harmonious balance between the natural and the artificial that emerges first and foremost in custom, manners and memory.⁹¹ We will see below that this approach is central to Burke’s critique of the popery laws in Ireland.

Conceptually, Burke’s use of providence to reintegrate the religious and the secular in history carries with it significant implications for key concepts of the Patriot discourse. In Burke’s mind, the consequence of driving out the mystery from historical analysis is to flatten and constrict the examples that inform us of our duties toward our native land. The Patriot who secularizes his love of country by framing it, however unwittingly, in metaphysics, turns it also into a *faux* religion and builds his criticism on a fundamentally disordered basis. The recovery of a truly religious dimension leads us to a deeper order and a reinvigorated conception of liberty precisely by putting a check on our systematizing and forcing us to search for it in the unfolding social patterns that history weaves from the footprints of man’s conflicted nature. Philosophy is insufficient for understanding that pattern, in all its diverse guises and situations. To “comprehend what we read,” we must instead be prepared to approach the natural and the artificial, order and disorder, slavery and liberty with a mind steeped in allegory. As we noticed in the *Vindication*, this understanding

⁹⁰ Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, 1: The same point forms the crux of the argument in the “Fragment”: “[England’s] ancient Constitution, and those Saxon Laws, make little or nothing for any of our modern parties; and when laid fairly open will be found to compose such a system as none, I believe, would think it practicable or desirable to establish” (1:325).

⁹¹ This staple of Burke’s later political thought can be seen already stated in the “Abridgment” where Burke is speaking of the imposition of Saxon rule in Britain: “If people, so barbarous as the Germans, have no laws, they have yet customs, that serve in their room; and these customs operate amongst them better than laws, because they become sort of nature both to the governours and the governed” (1:430).

is related to a critical perception of society that draws from a strain of natural-law thought distinct from Thomism or proto-Romantic primitivism and heavily influenced by Pufendorf. In the *Whole Duty of Man*, Pufendorf states that: “Man is an Animal very desirous of his own Preservation; of himself liable to many Wants; unable to Support himself without the Help of other of his Kind; and yet wonderfully fit in Society to promote as common Good.” That said, it is foolish sophistry to attempt to distinguish man in his natural and artificial states. “The Rules of this Fellowship,” Pufendorf continues, “which are the Laws of Human Society, whereby Men are directed how to render themselves useful Members thereof, and without which it falls to pieces, are called the Laws of Nature.” Succinctly put by Pufendorf’s most recent editors, the natural law comprises the “rules through which man imposes sociability on himself, as the comportment needed for security.”⁹² It is in this comportment that liberty exists—a function of instinct and memory as well as rational judgment that calls upon the fabric of artificial society to help balance the individual in the art of self-socializing. “Liberty,” Burke was later to say in his speeches on the American colonies, “inheres in some sensible object”; yet, if liberty is time-bound, Burke also understood it to be timeless, and universal only in its particularity.

This allegorical transformation of the key Patriot term “liberty” applies to another, too: “public-spiritedness,” or benevolence, cannot be understood, let alone exercised, in a universal sense until we have learned how to love the particular circumstances and associations that providence has assigned to us. In a similar way, the lessons the Patriot discovers in his own country’s history become preceptors of public spirit in its widest sense, and so Burke’s providential history has the power to transform the cycle of decline into the

⁹² Samuel Pufendorf, *The Whole Duty of Man, According to the Law of Nature* (London, 1735), ed. Ian Hunter and David Saunders (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2003), 55, 56, 55n10.

constant prospect of rejuvenation: though also, of course, the constant danger of catastrophe. The duty of the Patriotic statesman is to learn how to ride providence, and to transform it into hope for the future rather than regret for, or hubris at, the past. That critical moral window is the price we pay for liberty; but in the balance, history teaches the wise and humble that the hope of success begins where philosophical systems end.

Although it remained unfinished, the “Abridgment” as it stands has a certain completeness, since the final chapter, concerning the disastrous reign of John and the signing of the Great Charter, appears to have been written as the climax to a first volume. Not only does its lively narrative incorporate all the facets of paradox and providence that we have examined above, but the events of the reign were central to the debate among Patriots in Britain and Ireland over the relationship between liberty, the Constitution, and English law. To plumb any direct political application for his revised history, we need to consider how Burke reconfigures the popular Patriot “memory” of 1215, and its parallel with 1688-89.

Burke introduces the chapter with a rhetorical flourish rare in the work as a whole: “We are now arrived at one of the most memorable periods in the English story: whether we consider the astonishing revolutions, which were then wrought; the calamities, in which both the prince and people were involved; or the happy consequences, which, arising from the midst of those calamities, have constituted the glory and prosperity of England for so many years.” There follows a familiar narrative of John’s struggles with rival royal claimants, with his own barons, with the Roman Church, and with the king of France, culminating in the drama at Runnymede, “a place, long consecrated by publick opinion, as that wherein the quarrels and wars, which arose in the English nation...had been terminated from the remotest

times.” Here John signs the two documents, Magna Carta and the Charter of the Forest, which “laid the foundation of English liberty.” As in the rest of the “Abridgment,” Burke’s written sources are unremarkable; but his focus subverts the usual narrative at crucial points.⁹³

The symptoms of disorder traced in earlier reigns—uncertain succession, institutional frictions, papal and royal competition, foreign invasion, economic and social dislocation—appear to the reader to converge in John’s troubled reign. The new king swiftly consolidated his succession through the removal of his rival, Arthur, and the intimidation of the French king Philip II Augustus, so that, by 1204, “[t]he good fortune of John now seemed to be at its highest point.” But, Burke continues, that fortune “was exalted on a precipice; and this great victory proved the occasion of all the evils, which afflicted his life.” Like the predatory conqueror of a foreign land, John squeezed his territories dry of money, disrupted trade, and added “personal vices” to the “impotent violence of his government.”⁹⁴

John compounded his tyranny, and hastened his own end, through the reckless disrespect he showed to the church, an institution whose power he underestimated, despite the lessons of his father’s reign. Consequently, a dangerous compact grew up between the secular and spiritual lords. Out of the undirected and loosely-understood complaints of the barons, Archbishop Hubert and his successor Stephen Langton forged the “memory” of an elective monarchy with the tools of learning drawn from their archives, their schools, and the power of Innocent III’s resurgent papacy. In 1208, when John refused to admit Langton as archbishop of Canterbury, a papal Interdict added to the existing sense of disorder: “divine

⁹³ Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, 1:527, 542, 543. Burke’s chief source is Matthew Paris, whose chronicle is also drawn upon heavily by Smollett and Hume.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 532.

service at once ceased throughout the kingdom: the churches were shut. The sacraments were suspended. The dead were buried without honour, in highways and ditches; and the living deprived of all spiritual comfort.” John’s subsequent excommunication confirmed the people in “the most terrible confusion” of conflicted duties and allegiances. John himself, fighting now on three fronts since Langton had broken with the papacy, was finally forced to turn his kingdom into a fiefdom of the pope’s; but when his revived power was abruptly smashed by the French king at the battle of Bouvines in 1214, barons and archbishop conspired under Langton’s guidance to force him to sue for peace.⁹⁵ After a close survey of the terms of Magna Carta and the Forest Charter, Burke proceeds briskly with John’s final attempt to escape the implementation of these liberties, the invasion of England by French troops, and the king’s own death. A comparison of the reigns of Philip II and John closes out the chapter and the “Abridgment.”

This familiar narrative of England’s revolution for liberty is, in Burke’s hands, characteristically shot through with paradoxical readings that challenge the interpretations of philosophers and lawyers. That “grand revolution in favour of liberty,” states Burke, occurred in “the most turbulent and calamitous” reign in England, when “the principles of freedom were predominant, though the thing itself was not yet fully formed.” To add complication, it was, in the eyes of its proponents, a revolution to reform feudal law, “not to destroy the root, but to cut short the overgrown branches of the feudal service,” in which the most prominent doctrine motivating their actions was “the doctrine of an unalienable tenure.” Only when our understanding has been grounded in such particularities does Burke mention those aspects of the charters that “went deeper than the feudal tenure.” These included,

⁹⁵ “Langton, who no longer acted in subservience to the Pope, from whom he had now nothing further to expect, and who had put himself at the head of the patrons of civil liberty...laid his protestation on the altar.” Ibid., 1:541.

famously, the right to the judgment of one's peers, the right of *habeas corpus* ("the grand article, and that, which cemented all the parts of the fabrick of liberty"), and the extension of the liberties gained by the royal vassals to their own dependents and so on down the strata of feudal obligation.⁹⁶ They are all points that invested the English system with a new distinctiveness when compared to the more tightly structured feudal aristocracy that emerged in France, but their historic importance was hardly signified in the original documents.

Despite the paradoxes and disjunctions upon which it rests, Burke's radical reordering of the narrative of resistance in John's reign enables him to extrapolate timeless lessons from time-bound particularities. That act of translation, however, asks of the reader an imaginative and allegorical mindset prepared to reorder the historical narrative as moral fable and pursue truth beyond the tethers of philosophical method. On these terms, Burke leads us to seek continuities in the seemingly disorderly dynamics of resistance rather than in the legal achievements of revolution itself. When the leading rebels did attempt to give substance and direction to their discontents, they resorted to a "memory of the ancient Saxon liberty" that Burke has already indicated was defective. And even "[their] idea...of liberty was not (if I may use the expression) perfectly free," since "they did not claim to possess their privileges upon any natural principle or independent bottom, but, just as they held their lands, from the king." Yet Burke wishes us to accept that the memory, for all its legal fictions, was also real in the deeper sense that it answered to an instinctive sense of social disorder and a manifest disjunction between the natural and artificial order. This is why it was capable of immediate purchase and transcendent historical significance when it found articulation in an existing tradition of documented rights. It is a point best conveyed in Burke's own words, as he

⁹⁶ Ibid., 1:550-51, 545-47.

describes the slow consolidation of the barons' revolt. Since this episode presents something of a climax to the work as it stands, and since its interpretative rhetoric is crucial to the reformed Patriot theme of this dissertation, it is worth quoting at some length:

The English barons had privileges, which they knew to have been violated: they had always kept up the memory of the ancient Saxon liberty; and if they were the conquerors of Britain, they did not think that their own servitude was the just fruit of their victory. They had, however, but an indistinct view of the object, at which they aimed; they rather felt their wrongs, than understood the cause of them; and having no head nor council, they were more in a condition of distressing their king, and disgracing their country by their disobedience, than of applying any effectual remedy to their grievances....Langton saw these dispositions, and these wants. He had conceived a settled plan for reducing the king; and all his actions tended to carry it into execution. This prelate, under pretence of holding an ecclesiastical synod, drew together privately some of the principal barons to the church of St. Paul in London. There having expatiated in the miseries which the kingdom suffered, and having explained at the same time the liberties, to which it was entitled, he produced the famous charter of Henry I, long concealed, and of which, with infinite difficulty, he had procured an authentick copy....The barons, transported to find an authentick instrument to justify their discontent, and to explain and sanction their pretensions...depart to confederate others in their design.⁹⁷

This process perfectly reflects Burke's natural order of reality—the artificial lies implicit in the natural, and “order” is the realization of those laws that are in accord with the manners, memory, and instinct of the people—that is, the artificial arrangements that *constitute* society. But we also see in this passage an ingredient that is distinctively Burke's. Having already failed to get the king to sign one petition “declaring their liberties, and praying that they might be formally allowed and established by the royal authority,” the barons had realized “that no design can involve all sorts of people, or inspire them with extraordinary resolution, unless it be animated with religion.” This is why Langton was able to become the “first mover in all the affairs, which distinguish the remainder of this reign”

⁹⁷ Ibid. 1:540.

after his return from exile in 1213. The church as an institution, providentially and in many senses unintentionally, was vital in the process of conceptualizing liberty: “The continual struggle of the clergy for the ecclesiastical liberties laid open at the same time the natural claims of the people; and the clergy were obliged to shew some respect for those claims, in order to add strength to their own party.”⁹⁸ Burke’s stress upon Langton’s contribution differs markedly from Rapin, where it is not mentioned, and Smollett, where it is undeveloped.⁹⁹ For Bolingbroke, as we would expect, the concurrence of ecclesiastic and secular interests is accidental rather than providential: “It is true that during these contests Magna Charta was signed and confirmed, and the condition of the people, in point of liberty, very much improved. But this was the accidental effect of the contest between the kings, the barons, and the clergy.”¹⁰⁰ This is the approach adopted by Hume later in his own history.

In the “Abridgment,” Burke appears to have drawn an implicit parallel between the revolutions of 1215 and 1688 that takes the reader in two directions simultaneously. By stressing the alien, feudal context in which Magna Carta and the Forest Charter were composed, he divests them of their power as iconic representations of a pristine constitutional order, and detaches the Revolution Settlement from any supposed chain of historic “liberties” that might validate constitutional or legal policies instituted in its name. But by throwing the spotlight onto the nature of baronial resistance and the disorder of the time, he restores a sense of familiarity: a disputed succession, friction between church and state, the fear of

⁹⁸ Ibid., 1:551.

⁹⁹ Langton, we are told, “was at the head of the confederacy” that brought John to Runnymede, and acted as mediator in the adjustment of the articles of the two charters. See Tobias Smollett, *A Complete History of England, deduced from the Descent of Julius Caesar, to the Treaty of Aix La Chapelle, 1748* (London, 1757), 1: 444.

¹⁰⁰ Letter 12 of the *Remarks*, in Kramnick, ed., *Historical Writings*, 234. These quotations show the reification of liberty in Bolingbroke’s philosophical and deistic perspective.

tyranny articulated through the memory of rights enjoyed “time out of mind,” a rebellion quickened by foreign intervention and charters proclaiming an historical rather than philosophical justification for resistance. The result is subtly to redirect the line of enquiry from how we understand 1688 in terms of 1215 to how we shift the collective memory of liberty from modes of resistance to modes of benevolence: how, in absorbing the trauma of revolution, we reintegrate and reinforce public spirit and public order.

This line of enquiry brings us full circle, back to Burke’s Ireland, where the Glorious Revolution did, of course, have direct practical application. As we have seen in the previous chapter, debate over Irish liberties since the final defeat of James II had hinged upon historical continuities between Magna Carta and the Protestant settlement, and the related question of whether the Irish nobles had assented to the constitutional changes brought about in the wake of Henry II’s intervention. (The link between constitutional liberty and Protestantism was made stronger by the fact that Innocent III had absolved John, as a papal vassal, from adhering to the charter, and this is almost certainly the reason why Burke stresses the breach between Langton and Rome that preceded the baronial revolt.) Had the Irish barons of the medieval period willingly accepted Henry II as their feudal lord at the council held at Cashel in 1172, and had they later assented freely to the terms of the Great Charter? Or had both events been aspects of a brutal conquest? Burke’s “Abridgment” affirms the latter; but it also attempts to soften the impact of that naked truth for the Ireland of his own time by guiding us to the more urgent issue of how it could still form the basis of an inclusive Irish liberty. It is a subtle and ingenious maneuver performed through careful engagement with current historiographical debates.

Taking Burke's argument chronologically, we should note first his interest in the recovery of early Irish history. Researches in this field brought with them weighty implications for Ireland's colonial identity as they posited an ancient Irish civilization with close ties to Continental and even Mediterranean cultures and possessing ancient constitutional liberties or, at least, identifiable conceptions of civic liberty, that mirrored the ancient constitution of the Germanic tribes. One potential benefit of this research was, in the words of Jacqueline Hill, "the capacity to appeal to patriots and unionists, to native Irish and Anglo-Irish and to Catholics and Protestants."¹⁰¹ We know that Burke was sympathetic to a sophisticated treatment of ancient Irish history through his encouragement, for example, of a greater knowledge of Gaelic among historians.¹⁰² In part, he hoped that such researches would correct the prejudiced and dismissive accounts of Irish culture propagated by writers such as Hume; but he would doubtless also have welcomed Walter Harris's attempts to historicize and understand Ireland's historic myths and legends in his *Hibernica; or, Some Antient Pieces relating to Ireland* (1747). With certain reservations, Burke also promoted the work of his acquaintance Charles O'Connor, who argued that the civil powers of Druidism had failed to affect ancient Irish society as much as other societies owing to "the constant Use of Letters among the People, and...that free and happy Genius of the Laity, for examining into the Reason of Things."¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Jacqueline R. Hill, "Popery and Protestantism, Civil and Religious Liberty: The Disputed Lessons of Irish History, 1690-1812" *Past and Present* 118 (February 1988), 104.

¹⁰² "The Irish language is not different from that of all other nations, as Temple and Rapin, from ignorance of it, have asserted." Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, 1: 510. Burke is correct. Toland also took his rivals to task for their ignorance of the language, although his own knowledge was uncertain. Burke's own grasp of Gaelic is unclear. He owned, and was reported to have been able to converse with a Scot in his native tongue; but he himself stated that his grasp of the language was shaky.

¹⁰³ [Charles O'Connor], *Dissertations on the Antient History of Ireland: Wherein an Account is given of the Origine, Government, Letters, Sciences, Religion, Manners and Customs, of the antient Inhabitants* (Dublin,

Burke was, however, also sensible to the dangers of romanticizing Ireland's past. These were exemplified in the attempts of Henry Brooke and Colonel Charles Vallancey to push beyond O'Connor and Harris and uncover a highly sophisticated Irish civilization, anciently educated, bound to the Mosaic and Egyptian spiritual traditions, and yet skeptical of the acts of the Druidic priestly class.¹⁰⁴ First, such an exalted common ancestry could be used not only to elevate respect for the indigenous population, but to justify the forcible Anglicization of the Irish Catholics. Since it assumed a fall from a state of "natural" enlightenment at the hands of superstition and priest-craft, it served to bolster the argument of Protestants such as Sir Richard Cox, Sr., who had accepted the unity of Anglo-Irish stock as the basis of his *Essay for the Conversion of the Irish* (1698), or of free-thinkers such as Toland, whose anti-Catholicism in the name of liberty was resurrected by Lucas. Each believed that the elimination of Catholicism was a moral good proven in history, and could therefore argue for the repressive popery laws as progressive legislation. Second, the replication of a Bolingbrokean attempt to see Irish constitutional history through an English paradigm gave historical support to the argument for constitutional separation. As Jim Smyth has pointed out, "Irish lawyer-politicians had long insisted upon Ireland's status as a separate and distinct kingdom under the crown, with its own laws, parliament and ancient constitution."¹⁰⁵ Third, as Joep Leerssen has shown, an increasing fascination with the political role of Gaelic bards and bardic mythology in ancient Irish society tended to

1753), 100. Part of O'Connor's argument rested in the soon to be exploded existence of the Mur-Ollavan, "the celebrated Mother of all our other Philosophical Schools." Harris's work was carried out under the aegis of the Physico-Historical Society, praised in the *Reformer*. See Leerssen, *Mere Irish*, 322ff.

¹⁰⁴ Henry Brooke, *An Essay on the Ancient and Modern State of Ireland* (Dublin, 1760); See Leerssen, *Mere Irish*, 315-32, esp. 324-25.

¹⁰⁵ Jim Smyth, "'Like amphibious animals': Irish Protestants, Ancient Britons," *Historical Journal* 36, no. 4 (1993), 791.

reinforce ideas of cultural and national distinctiveness that could provide fertile ground for the development of Jacobite and anti-British sentiment.¹⁰⁶

Burke's approach to memory and resistance in history is designed to defuse these problematic associations. Just as the Norman barons were energized by memories of Saxon liberties that they had not, in fact, enjoyed, Irish people were confusing a memory of Irish/Gaelic history with historical detail. Burke accepts the power and import of national histories and myths here; but he denies their precise parallels and analogies, stressing instead the common experience of conquest and integration that Celts, Britons, and Saxons shared. "The people of Ireland," he states, "lay claim to a very extravagant antiquity, through a vanity common to all nations. The accounts, which are given by their ancient chronicles, of their first settlements are generally tales confuted by their own absurdity."¹⁰⁷ Like the destruction of Druidry under the Romans, Burke points to the speed and completeness of the Christian conversion of Ireland: "The Druid discipline anciently flourished in that island; in the fourth century it fell down before the preaching of St. Patrick; then the Christian Religion was embraced and cultivated, with an uncommon zeal, which displayed itself in the number and consequences of the persons, who in all parts embraced the contemplative life." After a period of flourishing under Celtic Christian auspices, the Danish invasions then effected a further crushing change, reducing the island to "a state of ignorance, poverty and barbarism."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Leerssen, *Mere Irish*, 151-241. In summarizing, Leerssen argues that, "a self image of a Gaelic Ireland of ancient civilization and cultural refinement (implying as its obverse the un-Irish foreignness and cultural dissipation introduced by the anti-Gaelic forces) was transmitted from the bardic poets into middle-class Dublin of the late eighteenth century" (p. 252).

¹⁰⁷ Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, 1:509-10.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 1:510-511.

The implications of Burke's narrative of conquest and resistance are brought into sharper focus still with the narration of Henry II's invasion and its impact on Irish society. Burke explicitly sets up a parallel with the Norman Conquest, stating of the former that it "stands a single event in history, unless, perhaps, we may compare it with the reduction of Ireland some time after by Henry the Second."¹⁰⁹ Concerning the circumstances of Henry II's occupation and the attitude of the Irish nobles, Burke, in opposition to Molyneux, Lucas and others, argues that English rule was emphatically and brutally imposed from above and that Ireland was suffered "reduction" into the Angevin system just as England had been coerced into the Norman territories. This explains the high-handed treatment of the Irish by John, and the dismissive ethnic descriptions to be found in sources such as Gerald of Wales.¹¹⁰ But the point of the parallel is, precisely, that this is no different from the Anglo-Saxon experience of the previous century. Indeed, Burke's use of the term "rude and barbarous" in reference to the Saxons is significant because it was a term commonly applied by the English in the eighteenth century to the native Irish.¹¹¹ Of the implications of Magna Carta for Irish liberty, Burke's complex picture of the interrelationship between manners and constitutional law makes Irish nobles' assent to the original charter implausible. Instead, Burke chooses to stress how alien the language of feudal law was to the Irish nobles in key respects, something he achieves, characteristically, through careful attention to tanistry and

¹⁰⁹ Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, 1: 427. The narrative of Henry II's conquest follows very closely that of William I. See pp. 512-14.

¹¹⁰ "Full of the insolent levity of a young man of high rank without education, and surrounded with others equally unpractised, [Prince John] insulted the Irish chiefs; and ridiculing their uncouth garb and manners, he raised such a disaffection to the English government, and so much opposition to it, as all the wisdom of his father's best officers and counselors was hardly able to overcome." *Writings and Speeches*, 1: 529.

¹¹¹ I am indebted to Seán Donlan for this parallel. Donlan has a good summary of the constitutional and legal parallels that form the basis of Burke's critique of Irish histories from Gerald of Wales to Sir John Davies in "The 'genuine voice of its records and monuments'?" 69-101, esp. 74.

native Brehon law. He does not deny that the introduction of English and French law opened up the potential for strengthening the associative tendencies in Irish society, such as trade, commerce, and religious toleration; but he regrets the bluntness with which it was effected. At the outset of his treatment of Medieval Ireland, Burke emphasizes the favorable, but undeveloped commercial situation in Ireland: “Whilst it possesses...internal means of wealth, it opens on all sides a great number of ports, spacious and secure, and by their advantageous situation inviting to universal commerce. But on these ports, better known than those of Britain in the time of the Romans, at this time there were few towns, scarce any fortifications, and no trade, that deserves to be mentioned.”¹¹² We are reminded by the comparison that after a peaceable possession by Rome of more than 300 years, the Britons had “derived but very few benefits from their subjection to the conquerors and civilizers of mankind.”¹¹³ With even greater natural potential, Burke insinuates, what had the Irish gained from their conquerors and civilizers after twice as long a period? The memory of ancient liberties was sharpened by the practical injustices that the Irish nobles felt with every passing year that colonial rule stood unreformed. Both were interconnected, and both were damning indictments of English failure to ride providence.

This is how Burke’s revised Patriot history winds its way into the most sensitive and pressing aspect of the wider Patriot critique: the problem of the justification of resistance to perceived tyranny. With respect to Ireland, the sensitivity focused particularly on the “memory” of the Catholic rebellion of 1641, which was the cornerstone of the popular Protestant view that the Irish Catholics, under the thrall of their priestly caste, were so inherently treacherous as to use any relaxation of legal penalties as an opportunity for revolt.

¹¹² Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, 1:509.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 1: 384.

Hume himself was of this opinion. In the first volume of his *History of Great Britain*, he argues that the rebellion of 1641 had been particularly wicked for occurring at a time of national jeopardy (the struggle between king and parliament) and in the absence of any severe legal or religious grievances.¹¹⁴ Burke, however, moves to dispel the unique evil of the events of 1641 by using the concept of resistance to include that event, too, among the parallels with the iconic Protestant events of 1215. Just as the barons of 1215 could not, by Burke's account, be said to have conspired to rebel in taking advantage of the government's weakness, or in conspiratorial league with the church, so the Catholic rebellion of 1641 was caused not by Catholics wanting to eradicate Protestants, nor by the workings of an international league of priest-craft (as William King and others had suggested), but by a natural, visceral sense of injustice and disorder. It is no surprise to find that Burke had encouraged works, such as John Curry's *Historical Memoirs of the Irish Rebellion in the Year 1641*, in a letter to Walter Harris (1758), designed to correct the factual details about the scale of the reported Catholic massacres of Protestants.¹¹⁵

Yet the dark side of this parallel remains. Indeed, Burke's emphasis on the power of an indistinct memory or sense of grievance, on the power of manners, and on the leading role of the church in political affairs appears, if anything, to broaden the scope for justifying rebellion, particularly against invaders who attempt to eradicate ancient customs, however well-meaning their actions. The link between John's tyranny and the actions of the English

¹¹⁴ Hume, *History of Great Britain, Volume One, containing the reigns of James I and Charles I* (1754). The narrative Hume uses is conventional in its details. Of the "old Irish catholics" he writes that, "Tho' their animosity against [the English], for want of an occasion to exert itself, seemed to be extinguished, it was only composed into a temporary and deceitful tranquility" and that the revolt was stimulated by a combination of priestly resentments and, in matters of land tenure, a preference for ancient customs before "the more secure and narrower possessions assigned them by the English."

¹¹⁵ See Burke, *Correspondence*, 1: 201. Burke's later disappointment with John Leland's *History of Ireland* has been mentioned above, p. 220.

in Burke's Ireland is brought even closer by Burke's treatment of the Forest Laws and their consequences, which are limned in language strikingly similar to that used about the popery laws in his later "Tracts." The Medieval Forest Laws "had indeed all the qualities of the worst of laws. Their professed object was to keep a great part of the nation desolate. They hindered communication, and destroyed industry": the popery laws of his own time were "unjust, impolitic, and inefficacious" and were rendered "void in [their] obligatory quality on the mind" because they infringed the very founding principles of law, equity and utility—that is, not contractual rights, but the natural impulses that make man, naturally, a member of society.¹¹⁶

The "Tracts," like the "Abridgment," remained unpublished in Burke's lifetime, and strictly the text is a political and jurisprudential, rather than an historical, account; but it was composed after the author had had first-hand governmental experience of the practical effects of the popery laws as secretary to William Hamilton in Dublin, and had seen the recurrence of widespread social unrest in the form of the agrarian "Whiteboys" risings in the early 1760s.¹¹⁷ Thus it may be argued that it reflects Burke's own working out of the lessons of the "Abridgment" and therefore illustrates, as close as we can get, the revised Patriot program for Ireland. At the same time, the way Burke treats resistance in the "Abridgment" may serve to temper our response to the "Tracts." Through the filter of Pufendorf's natural-

¹¹⁶ Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, 1: 543. One might recall that Robert Dodsley's fictional "Miller of Mansfield" lived in a royal forest. The terms equity and utility, as used by Burke here, are grounded in Ciceronian perspectives. Cicero argues (*De Legibus*, I, xvi) that the foundation of justice, and therefore the basis of assent to positive law, lies in the common nature of man, not the "decrees of peoples, the edicts of princes, or the decisions of judges," for the faculty of perceiving what is just is a quality of his nature that all men share with the divinity. Equity, then, in Burke's own words, "grows out of the great rule of equality which is grounded upon our common nature," and utility "must be understood, not of partial or limited, but of general and public utility, connected in the same manner with, and derived directly from, our rational nature." This is entirely in conformity with the way Pufendorf and his early eighteenth-century commentators understand man's move from natural to artificial society.

¹¹⁷ Members of the Munster Nagle family were implicated in these events through the doubtful evidence of a government informer. See Burke, *Correspondence*, 1: 147n5.

law theories, we can see that resistance is instructive, in Burke's historically informed imagination, not so much for what it tells us about rights as what it says about government. The history of rebellions is a moral lesson both for rulers and ruled, not a repository for factional vengeance. In its providential and religious dimensions it warns us that there are never winners when the artifice of society is stripped away, since the workings of a partial or systematic historical memory leads not to the recovery of the natural man, but to the worst of all scenarios, the emergence of unnatural creatures—machines with unlimited potential for destruction.

Is there any one figure from the drama of the English history who might serve as an example of statesmanship to the modern Patriot? Given what has just been said about Burke's historical method, this is perhaps an inappropriate question; but we do encounter early on in the "Abridgment" the paradigm of a true conqueror, and one who has already, in a sense, been allegorized by his original biographer, Tacitus. This was Gnaeus Julius Agricola, who "knew that the general must be perfected by the legislator; and that the conquest is neither permanent nor honourable which is only an introduction to tyranny." In Burke's account, Agricola is clearly established as a contrast to his predecessor, Suetonius Paulinus, whose brutal crushing of Druid-inspired resistance and imprudent rigidity in enforcing Roman law inspired Boadicea's revolt.¹¹⁸ Agricola's contrasting policy was to soften the experience of domination by a careful access to the benefits of incorporation into a great civilization. "In short," Burke writes, "he subdued the Britons by civilizing them; and made them exchange a savage liberty for a polite and easy subjection. His conduct is the most

¹¹⁸ Suetonius, according to Burke, had resolved to shorten the process of subjugation by making "such a blow at the head [of the enemy], as must of course disable all the inferiour members." This meant the Druidic center on Anglesey. After his brutal suppression of Boadicea's revolt, Suetonius "would probably have succeeded to subdue, but at the same time to depopulate the nation, if such loud complaints had not been made at Rome of the legate's cruelty as procured his recall." Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, 1: 363, 365.

perfect model for those employed in the unhappy, but sometimes necessary task of subduing a rude and free people.”¹¹⁹ With its intimations of the *Reformer*, it is worth noting that the policy that finally brought Agricola’s goals to nothing, besides the enmity of the emperor Domitian, was the Romans’ preference for an exploitative fiscal system of taxation over any sustained effort to colonize Britain with permanent settlements. The consequence was the province’s speedy collapse before the barbarians in the fifth century. In his final months of life, Burke was to predict a similar fate for his native land at the hands of imported Jacobins.

In structure, style, and argument, the “Abridgment” fits snugly with what we know of Burke’s early critical and Patriotic thinking in Dublin and London. Its rhetorical and historiographical features echo his differences with Lucas and Brooke, round out the critique of Bolingbroke and the older Patriot generation that we find in the *Vindication*, and explain the anger and disappointments with Patriotism that we find in the “Tracts” and in other of Burke’s observations in the 1760s.¹²⁰ It also bears the imprint of the Tully’s Head circle and that wider segment of the British Republic of Letters which strove to counter the dangers of skepticism and free-thinking. Finally, it offers a valuable corrective to the tendency of recent commentators to invest Burke’s critique of colonial government in Ireland with suppressed nationalist and Catholic sympathies—a tendency furthered by the stress that Irish writers

¹¹⁹ Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, 1: 367-68.

¹²⁰ The depth of Burke’s historically-directed commitment to this revised Patriotism can be seen pursued on a more practical level, in his encouragement of an even-handed Irish history that would avoid all the pitfalls above. Walter D. Love, for example, traces Burke’s criticism of Colonel Charles Vallancey’s development of the Milesian/Orientalist approach to ancient Irish civilization through his support for Thomas Campbell’s corrective researches. Vallancey had published his *Collectanea De Rebus Hibernicis* in 1770, building upon former historians such as Roderich O’Flaherty, Geoffrey Keating, John Toland, and Charles O’Conor; but Burke was dissatisfied with the linguistic and contextual evidence that Vallancey presented. See Walter D. Love, “Edmund Burke and an Irish Historical Controversy.” See also Smyth, “Like amphibious animals.”

such as Gibbons and McLoughlin have placed upon Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry*. In actual fact, Burke's emphasis upon conquest, dislocation and memory is not a coded and updated bardic lament over the violence inflicted 500 years earlier by Angevin conquerors, or even over the wasted years of English misrule that followed. It is, rather, an alarm for his fellow British Whigs to seize the possibilities for civic regeneration presented by the Revolution Settlement, and a warning that these opportunities will be lost, too, unless, by an act of disciplined and religious imagination, history can be made to disclose the pattern of liberal order that is embedded in the providential dynamics of man's social and individual nature.

Burke was engaged in the writing of a new Patriot history. Forged in Tully's Head, it is fitting that at its root lay the Ciceronian belief that the laws of nature that drive the individual into society carry over from the tiniest platoon to the state, and ultimately to the empire. This is what makes Burke's history instructive in the constant struggle to reconcile empire and liberty. Yet the "Abridgment" also drew deeply from the glimmer of Tacitean hope that we find in the *Agricola*. Despite its premature end, *Agricola*'s governorship provides Burke with a paradigm that was to inform his sense not only of the public duties of the gentleman but of Britain's imperial responsibilities. Might benevolence restore morality and prosperity to Burke's favored empire, as it had Rome on the death of the emperor Domitian?

Conclusion

Edmund Burke was elected to parliament in December 1765, just a few months after he had been appointed private secretary to the prime minister, Thomas Watson-Wentworth, second marquis of Rockingham. He appears to have come to Rockingham's notice through the offices of two young career politicians, William Fitzherbert and Lord John Cavendish, although Lord Charlemont, an Irish acquaintance of both Burke and Rockingham, was later to write that Burke had been able also to draw on "the warm recommendation of many friends."¹ These friends may well have included more prominent figures such as Lord Egmont, for whom Burke had written earlier, who advised the king on the appointment of Rockingham's ministry in 1765 and served in it as first lord of the Admiralty. In any event, they evidently had the combined purchase necessary to help Burke survive the duke of Newcastle's mischievous approach to Rockingham concerning Burke's suspected Catholic and Jacobite sympathies.² It is also likely that Burke's appointment was assisted by his close friendship with William Burke, who had been a contemporary of Rockingham's at

¹ Burke writes specifically: "We ought not to forget how much we are obliged to [William] Fitzherbert for his most friendly and zealous, and indeed well managed and elegant recommendations of us..." Edmund and William Burke to Charles O'Hara, July 4, 1765, in Burke, *Correspondence*, 1: 207. Cavendish's name is mentioned in G.H. Guttridge, *The Early Career of Lord Rockingham, 1730-1765* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1952), 48-49, and in Lock, *Edmund Burke*, 1: 213.

² The story has come down to us through the notes of Lord Charlemont, and is recounted in Francis Hardy, *Memoirs of the Political and Private Life of James Caulfield, Earl of Charlemont* (London, 1812), 2: 281-83. Charlemont himself acknowledged that Newcastle's suspicions gained plausibility from "some juvenile follies" on Burke's part.

Westminster school and who was, at the same time, given a post as under-secretary to one of the two secretaries of state.

None of these lines of patronage constitutes a link with the Tully's Head circle, such as we saw at work in Joseph Warton's relationship with William Hamilton; but they must be understood in the context of Burke's extensive connections in London literary life (with the bluestocking Elizabeth Montagu, for example, and with Samuel Johnson, who was a friend of Cavendish's) and of his editorship of the *Annual Register* from 1758. All of these associations would have smoothed his career path, the more so since a shift from the Republic of Letters to the Palace of Westminster was nowhere near as great a change of direction as might be thought.³ Burke himself was to observe, and there is no reason to doubt his words, that he entered politics with his principles of public service fully formed, and those principles are no less significant politically for having been sharpened by an apprenticeship in the world of literary journalism.

The overlap between a literary and a political career has long been acknowledged by historians, and has been vigorously cultivated in recent years through the profession's "linguistic turn" and the accompanying focus on rhetorical style and aesthetic theory in the language of eighteenth-century statecraft. Nothing in the previous chapters should be interpreted as questioning that overlap. Instead, the microhistorical approach adopted in this dissertation has been designed to examine that common area at a more practical and fundamental level, at the point where perceptions of the relationship between nature and artifice become matters of judgment and prudence, and where the art of the literary critic and

³ The impression that 1765 marked a significant, conscious change of profession for Burke has perhaps been strengthened by the work of Thomas Copeland, who argued that financial pressures drove Burke to abandon "a career in literature so creditably begun." (*Correspondence*, 1: xviii). Lock's impression of Burke aspiring to "public life" from his early days in London is closer to the truth.

of the political orator exercises its corrective—or destabilizing—effect on the mind of the public. What we have uncovered is the considerable extent to which Burke's experiments with such ideas were shaped and refined in the personal and professional circle of Robert Dodsley's Tully's Head, through connections to writers now at the very periphery of our historical sights and in debates that have passed into obscurity. Consequently, the evidence should persuade us that any consideration of Burke's political beliefs and parliamentary practice has to proceed from a reconstruction of the particular issues that were occupying Tully's Head in the early 1750s, from an assessment of how their responses to those issues were grounded in the practical political and professional concerns of the period, and from their understanding of the role of the critic in the Republic of Letters which the young Irish Patriot aspired to join.

Specifically, in providing a cross-section of this Republic of Letters centered upon Dodsley's Tully's Head enterprise, this dissertation has shown how the expansion of the literary market mid-century and the contestation over the political and social implications of the Glorious Revolution impacted the self-identity of Dodsley's literary associates and forced them to reconsider how they could construct a modern Patriot discourse of criticism, political and cultural, that harnessed the energy of broad civic participation to the reinforcement of true public order. In so doing, it has also laid open an alternative picture of the role of Burke's Irishness in his literary and political career that challenges increasingly dominant, but anachronistic, nationalist and anti-colonialist contexts. First, we can make better sense of Burke's early journalism when we ground his Irishness in a narrative of the renegotiation of Patriotism and understand it as contributing to a new Patriotic discourse in Dublin in the 1740s that was intended to reconcile the Protestant settlement in Ireland with greater

toleration for Catholics. Second and consequentially, we see how well-suited Burke's Irish background made him to join in the reflections upon the legacy of Pope's writings that were producing a parallel reinvigoration of Patriotism at Tully's Head. Here again, while scholars have recently discovered a Burke much more indebted to the literary styles and genres of early-eighteenth-century Patriot literature than had been recognized, they have overlooked the influence upon his *Vindication* of the debate over Pope's legacy and the influence of Bolingbroke, a debate that, more than style, fashion, or historiography, epitomized the confusion of artificial and natural order that Burke came to believe characterized the false and disorderly, but seductive, rhetoric of an older generation of Patriots.

When we view Burke's political career in the light of these mid-century preoccupations, we build up some resistance to the prevailing temptation to lift his early writings out of their immediate contexts and read them in terms of his later positions. In a sense, by recovering the dynamics of the immediate personal and professional networks that surrounded Burke's critical identity, we are returning the "history" to "intellectual history."⁴ As a result, we are better able to grasp certain factors that shed authentic light on the later Burke and, just as important, enable us to use Burke's example to challenge some of our assumptions about the intellectual and political history of the eighteenth century. Those factors include the reconfiguration of three crucial ingredients of the remodeled Patriot literature that Burke and those with whom he associated considered, in their proper combination, essential for bringing public spirit and public order into complete harmony: the allegorical, the historical, and the religious.

⁴ I am thinking here, in part, about Jeremy Black's recent provocative appeal for historians to recover the context of early-eighteenth-century diplomatic and political history. See Jeremy Black, "'George II and All That Stuff': On the Value of the Neglected," *Albion* 36, no. 4 (Winter 2005).

Burke was drawn to the recovery of allegory as a way of transmitting the true order of the human condition, and, rhetorically, he appreciates its capacity to inspire a moral and corrective spirit within a received framework of order, and it imparts the coveted *acer spiritus ac vis* precisely as it exposes the incapacity of natural philosophy to achieve the same. Not only does this approach reveal itself in Burke's acknowledged admiration for Milton and in his attested borrowings from Spenser; but it also informs his ironic understanding of unrestrained philosophical skepticism as the fount of a new intolerance—that is, philosophy transformed into secularized religion, and promulgated with all the enthusiasm and obscurantism of priest-craft. In this sense, we find in the *Vindication* the paradigm that enabled him to weave so quick and comprehensive a denunciation later of the French revolutionaries, the infamous “philosophers, oeconomists and calculators” of his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*.

Burke saw that the crucial issues here were being contested most critically in the field of history, where the methods of natural philosophy were being applied, as he saw it, like blunt tools upon the sources, fracturing and butchering meanings that had been carefully layered and packaged for more imaginative minds. For Burke, as with Warburton, the antidote to this vandalism was the reintegration of providence in history in such a way that the superficial perception it gave of order overturned was counterbalanced by the apprehension it provided of a deeper order unfolding. This faculty of decoding the “map of mankind” is what has been presented above as Burke's allegorical approach to history, a mode of historical analysis that was eclipsed by the success of Hume, Gibbon and the Scottish School even before it saw the light of day, but one that arguably contained a more sophisticated understanding of how liberty and duty are brought into harmony to generate

benevolence and cultural progress in human societies. It is, at least, in this powerful compound of allegory and history that we can discern the outline of Burke's later critique of empire and of British rule in America and India. His withering challenges to the British Establishment on those occasions are the language not of colonial resentment but of Patriot Imperialism, of a belief that the affections of the "little platoon" can be transformed into universal benevolence, and that "empire" is an inevitable—even, in a metahistorical perspective, desirable—phenomenon, providentially sent to draw out the greatest achievements of humankind, or tempt the deepest injustices.

In Burke's reasoning, the providential order that directs our choice of paths as Patriots and citizens is inescapably religious in its source. Without that religious underpinning, and the intellectual humility it demands, allegorical truths are directed only outwards at others. As a result, they shrivel into self-serving analogies and parallels. But, as his experiences as a young man in Dublin suggested, this religious awareness must also contain within it the capacity to distinguish between the specifics of our "own" religion as it operates upon us in our confined platoons and the universal principles that are extrapolated from those specifics to produce a syncretic understanding of the truth that religion contains about the nature of order. Religion, for Burke, was not mere Christian Utilitarianism, an icing that he applied increasingly thickly to the cake of society as the threat of religious dissent and political radicalism grew toward the end of the century; it was a *sine qua non* of his perception of true order, rhetorical, literary, political, and social. Far from being summoned only in the last years of his life, religion informed Burke's earliest critical writing through his sense of the hollowness of the rhetoric of his Patriot enemies, and determined his consistent opposition to the extension of civil rights to anti-Trinitarians and atheists. Burke was neither a deist who

donned Catholic garb later in life, nor a crypto-Catholic who camouflaged himself in Latitudinarian clothing early on, but that hardest of creatures for us to understand today, a committed, enthusiastic Latitudinarian.

There is one more point worth noting here, since it speaks to the practical as well as intellectual influence of the Patriot context on Burke's parliamentary career. It has often been noted with some puzzlement that Burke appeared in his element as a politician in opposition rather than in power. It is, for example, remarkable how quickly and comprehensively Burke was able to fashion a principled defense of organized parliamentary opposition—"party" as opposed to "faction"—in his apology for the Rockingham Whigs, *Thoughts on the Cause of Our Present Discontents* (1770). There were doubtless temperamental reasons for this—he was, as C.J. Fox attested, a maddeningly undisciplined party colleague; but the allegorical and historical critiques we have analyzed here do describe a critical mind very much attuned to the reflective and admonitory, rather than to the active and programmatic: they are, to risk a cliché, suited to "speaking truth to power." From a position of intense loyalty to his small Rockingham platoon, Burke worked upon the reconciling of spirit and order that he felt he had achieved in his refashioned Patriot rhetoric to spin out a moral critique of power that, as in the case of the American colonies and the Hastings impeachment, increased in persuasiveness in proportion as it fell short of its immediate goals. No-one has ever gilded the gadfly with greater aplomb.

It follows from the premises of this dissertation that Burke's concerns in the 1750s, if not his conclusions, were shared by at least a prominent section of his compatriots and professional associates in the British Republic of Letters. We should, then, finally ask how the details of Burke's relationship with Tully's Head, and his appropriation of the role of a

public critic, might modify or correct some of the assumptions about the intellectual currents of the time that accompany the term “Enlightenment.” It appears, first, that we need as historians to work even harder at incorporating the figure of the bookseller in the shaping of the texts they produced, and in a way that passes beyond the stubborn, reductionist language of author-bookseller antagonisms and exploitation. Read against the background of a more complex and interactive publishing process, where commercial imperatives blend realistically with the intellectual, we have seen how the *Vindication* reveals the existence of a vital historical and literary discourse, energized by a sophisticated Latitudinarianism, that was designed to peel the history of anticlericalism away from the philosophical attack on providence, and thereby save the Established Church and the principle of toleration from the virulent turn that deism had taken. It was a struggle that was not finally lost until the next century, but its proponents have generally been assigned prematurely to the margins of lost causes. This study of Burke’s “pre-political” career shows just how urgently we need fresh studies in the thought and writings of the churchmen-scholars of the mid eighteenth century, figures such as Spence, Warburton, Lowth, and Hurd.

In the part of this struggle that concerned the perceived excesses of Bolingbroke and other British and Irish deists, Burke’s work also points to the continuing vibrancy of an international discourse in natural law theory, most particularly in the influence of Barbeyrac’s Pufendorf and the use of seventeenth-century jurists to bolster Lockean orthodoxy against adherents to a more secularized conception of the relationship between the state of nature and artificial society. Such interaction between French, British and Irish citizens of the Republic of Letters is in danger of being overlooked by the growing tendency to nationalize enlightenments and to interpret literature of the period in increasingly

nationalistic terms. Instead, Joseph Warton's and William Warburton's concerns at the deleterious effect of the French moral philosophers on Bolingbroke and his circle should be taken more as part of a continuing, transnational discussion about the appropriate parameters of intellectual investigation among citizens of that Republic. Certainly, they are concerns that are replicated by Burke as a member of the younger generation in the 1750s, facing the rising popularity of writers such as Rousseau. The evidence as it has been presented in this dissertation would suggest that, when Burke wrote his *Reflections*, he was driven to his feats of critical insight more through his identity as a citizen of the Republic of Letters than as an Englishman or an Irishman. This perspective opens up an area rich for further comparative research, probing the transnational nature of the fracture that affected public critics in the years leading up to the French Revolution.

Does this mean, though, that we should see Burke coming into his own toward the end of his life, with the culminating fight against Jacobinism? To some degree. But, as is the case with his famous *Letter to a Noble Lord*, in looking for the real influences on his response to that crisis, we need to recognize that he was writing, both consciously and unconsciously, as one whose time had passed. The secret to his explosive engagement with his contemporaries was, in fact, the historiographical perspectives upon which he drew from his early years: that the upheavals and apparent disorders in history must be played out in the orchestration of loss and gain: that, meanwhile, the duty of the Patriot is to embrace history by willingly standing athwart it, and to recognize humbly that a deeper order will be revealed only with the passage of time. In 1791, Burke wrote: "If a great change is to be made in human affairs, the minds of men will be fitted to it, the general opinions and feelings will draw that way. Every fear, every hope, will forward it; and then they, who persist in

opposing this mighty current in human affairs, will appear rather to resist the decrees of Providence itself, than the mere designs of men. They will not be resolute and firm, but perverse and obstinate.” Whatever Providence was to bring, Edmund Burke was determined to perform his Patriotic duty to the end.⁵

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⁵ The passage appears in Burke’s *Thoughts on French Affairs* (1791). See Burke, *Writings and Speeches*, 8:386.

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