

University of Southampton

EDMUND BURKE'S REVOLUTION: THE DISCOURSE OF AESTHETICS,
GENDER, AND POLITICAL ECONOMY IN BURKE'S PHILOSOPHICAL
ENQUIRY AND REFLECTIONS ON THE REVOLUTION IN FRANCE

Tom Furniss

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*Es sind viele antirevolutionäre Bücher für die
Revolution geschrieben worden. Burke hat aber ein
revolutionäres Buch gegen die Revolution geschrieben.*

(Novalis)

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ABSTRACT

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by Thomas Eric Furniss

This thesis seeks to demonstrate the importance of developing new ways of reading the writings of Edmund Burke which allow us to perceive the complexities of the interplay between politics and culture in the second half of the eighteenth century. The first part of the thesis concentrates on Burke's early aesthetic treatise, A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful (1757-59), in order to suggest that the Enquiry is itself a revolutionary text which constructs an aesthetics which promotes the social order which emerged from the revolution of 1688. The Enquiry's governing paradigms are articulated with passages from the discourses of political economy and philosophy of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century in order to demonstrate how Burke's treatise addresses itself to the crucial problems facing a bourgeois culture attempting to establish political hegemony.

Parts II and III analyse the interrelation between the Enquiry and Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790) by suggesting that the latter attempts both to exploit and to limit possibilities opened up by the former. The contradictions of this project are most clearly exposed through an extended analysis of Burke's representation of the events at Versailles on 5-6 October 1789, and through tracing the paradigms and dislocations which structure the discourse in Reflections on language, gender, economics, and political representation.

The relation between text and history -- especially in conditions of revolutionary crisis -- is considered throughout in terms drawn from recent post-structuralist thought; in this way, Burke's texts are seen as participating within discursive projects crucial to a specific historical and socio-economic moment. To read Edmund Burke's 'revolution' in this way is understand how his texts set the terms both for radicalism and for Romanticism. It is also to underline how post-structuralist ways of reading allow specific insights into politics and history even as they transform our concepts of them.

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Introduction: Ways of Reading Burke, and Why

This introduction begins with a short account of Edmund Burke's life and work. It then looks at the various ways Burke has been read -- both by his immediate contemporaries and throughout the almost two hundred years since his death -- particularly in terms of how they have detected or constructed 'the Burke problem.' This 'problem' -- conceived and 'solved' differently by different readers -- revolves around questions of why Burke should have attacked the French Revolution at all, why so vehemently, and whether his response is evidence of an 'inconsistency' in the man and/or in his writings. The chapter concludes with a section which delineates the theoretical sources, assumptions, and methods which inform my own way of reading Burke and attempts to indicate why such a rereading has important consequences for recent work on the politics of Romanticism, for larger questions about the relation between texts and history, and for the political implications of post-structuralist thought.

(i) Burke's Life and Work

Edmund Burke (1729-1797) is known primarily for his opposition to the French Revolution in Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790), and to a lesser extent as the author of a treatise on the sublime -- his early A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful (1757-59). Indeed, these two books, which form the centre of attention in the present study, are the only works of Burke currently available in separate editions. It will be useful, however, to give a short general account of Burke's life and work not only to provide a sense of their relation to the issues of the period but to enable a greater understanding of what

follows. Burke was far more than the author of these important texts: Carl B. Cone suggests that his career was 'one of the most controversial and spectacular ... in the history of British politics,' having as its forum 'the press as well as the floor of the House of Commons' (Age of the American Revolution, p.xiii).

Born in Dublin to a Catholic mother and an Anglican father, Burke's early education was entrusted to a local school and then to a boarding school run by a Quaker.¹ In 1744 he earned a scholarship to Trinity College Dublin, where his courses included 'natural philosophy (and mathematics), logic and metaphysics, history, and poetry, and was built upon the classical foundation laid [earlier]' (Age of the American Revolution, p.7). Intended by his father for the law, Burke left Dublin in 1750 in order to attend the Middle Temple in London -- a city which formed 'the hub of an expanding empire, the world's money market, the centre of British commercial, political, literary, artistic, and social life' (Age of the American Revolution, p.14). In this milieu, Burke found the life of a man of letters more congenial than that of a student of law. In 1756 he published A Vindication of Natural Society (an anonymous and ironic attack on Rousseauist thought so convincingly written in the style of Lord Bolingbroke that many readers took it literally as a vindication), while the appearance in the following year of the Enquiry associated Burke's name with a radical 'departure' from traditional aesthetics (Age of the American Revolution, p.25). In 1758, he began editing and writing most of the material for a new periodical, The Annual Register -- a political and literary review which he was associated with for more than thirty years. In the last years of the 1750s Burke made the acquaintance of figures -- such as Garrick, Goldsmith, Reynolds, and Johnson -- with whom he would form important friendships (Age of the American Revolution, pp.38-39). Walpole's impression of Burke in this period was that "he is a

sensible man, but has not worn off his authorism yet -- and thinks there is nothing so charming as writers and to be one -- he will know better one of these days" (quoted in Age of the American Revolution, p.39).

Burke entered English political life through becoming Lord Rockingham's private secretary in 1765; Rockingham was forming a government after Grenville's dismissal and perhaps saw that Burke's literary talents could be employed for political ends (Hampsher-Monk, p.3). Burke was given a borough seat in parliament,²² and from this point, 'until his break with Fox in 1791 he was the principal advisor, spokesman and pamphleteer of the Rockingham Whigs' (Hampsher-Monk, p.3). In 1768 Burke purchased a country estate, transforming himself into a landed gentleman-farmer and fulfilling an ambition to own property and live 'magnificently' -- the estate included six hundred acres and a significant art collection, and involved Burke in financial difficulties for the rest of his life (Age of the American Revolution, pp.123-25). Burke had married in 1757, regarding marriage as an important social institution; indeed, Cone tells us, 'Boswell thought the Burkes' to be one of the few continuously happy marriages he knew of' (p.27). In many ways, then, Burke seemed to have 'arrived' in the world. But even ^{though he was} a property owner, member of parliament, and celebrated author, England's social and political hierarchy never really recognized Burke's considerable talents and political endeavours; his nationality, relatively humble origins, and connections with catholicism continued to count against him (see Hampsher-Monk, p.4).

In Cone's analysis, the course of Burke's political career before the French Revolution can be charted by his deep involvement with the 'succession of crises [which, beginning in the 1760s] confronted statesmen who guided the destinies of the British Empire;' thus Burke, like every man in public life, 'had to take his stand upon the

problems of Ireland, the American colonies, and India' (p.xiii). Of these, the most important for my present purpose is the crisis over America, since Burke's attitude to the American colonies is often contrasted with his response to the French Revolution. Burke's speeches on American affairs 'earned the highest applause,' securing the admiration of the House of Commons and his reputation as a great orator and acute political thinker (Age of the American Revolution, pp.259-85). At the same time, he failed to convince the government of the folly of its heavy-handed treatment of the American colonies.

Burke's understanding of the American problem, throughout most of its course, was that if the government refrained from imposing taxes a peaceful and prosperous relation would persist between Britain and its colonies. Burke argued, in this case, that expediency ought to temper the full exertion of Britain's constitutional rights -- he did not disagree with the principle that Britain might tax its imperial subjects, only with North's punitive measures against the recalcitrant colonies. Burke's first concerns were with imperial unity and the protection and promotion of 'imperial commerce, to the benefit of mother country and colonies alike' (Age of the American Revolution, p.262, p.261). Thus his generous and eloquent speeches on 'American Taxation' (April 1774), and 'Conciliation' (March 1775), respectively suggest the repeal of the duty on tea and 'extending to America the British constitution, especially the ancient principle that advised taxation by representatives of the people's choosing' (Age of the American Revolution, p.282). By opposing North, Burke won the gratitude of the American colonists but misunderstood, Cone argues, the fundamental issues at stake. Behind their stand on 'no taxation without representation,' Cone suggests, the colonies sought to throw off the ties of the British commercial system and were concerned with questions of abstract rights (p.282, p.284). Burke's analysis had developed by

November 1775 when he submitted a bill which went a lot further towards meeting the American demands, but the bill was defeated and in any case it was too late. Although Cone suggests that when news of the Declaration of Independence reached him he 'was ready to concede American separation from the British Empire' (Age of the American Revolution, p.290), Burke had never supported the notion of an American revolution. On the contrary, he had worked to *prevent* revolution by urging justice and magnanimity in order to maintain Britain's commercial interests.

A further series of crises, important for an understanding of Burke's defence of the British constitution in 1790, troubled English political life in the 1780s. Of these, it is most useful here to briefly mention the constitutional crisis of 1782-84. Between March 1782 and December 1783, Cone writes in the second volume of his study of Burke's political life, 'four changes of government ... occurred amid a great debate on the British constitution, specifically on the related questions of the influence of the crown, the independence of the House of Commons, the nature of the electoral system, and the relations among ministers, king, and parliament' (Age of the French Revolution, p.8). Cone summarizes Burke's position on these problems:

Burke believed that the independence of the Commons could only be assured if the influence of the crown was diminished while the parliamentary franchise remained restricted and the distribution of seats in the House of Commons unchanged. Then the men of property - - many of them of aristocratic lineage and others with status achieved through hard work and ability -- who could resist pressures from the people below or the king above, could control the legislature and the administration. This would provide a stable political order in which liberty and opportunity would be combined with security of property, respect for organized religion, and leadership by the properly qualified, while the gradations of a hierarchical social

structure would be preserved (Age of the French Revolution, pp.8-9).

According to Cone, this vision of government was an ideal for which Burke fought throughout his life and provides an 'overriding unity' to his thought (Age of the French Revolution, p.11). It was also a 'revolutionary' vision:

In so far as he championed the cause of party government, Burke the conservative, the opponent of parliamentary reform, did more than the political radical to change the nature of the cabinet, of parliament, of their relationship to one another, of the monarchy and its relationship to the cabinet and parliament -- in short, to revolutionize the practical working of the political and constitutional system of England (Age of the American Revolution, p.xv).

Some headway towards this 'revolution' was made in the early 1780s (the Whigs formed two short-lived administrations in 1782 and 1783, the second in coalition with Lord North). But George III's dismissal of Fox and North in December 1783 marked 'the end of an eighteen-month struggle for the independence of parliament,' and a reaffirmation of the royal prerogative (Age of the French Revolution, pp.138-39). The king called the young Pitt to form an administration which was to prove 'the start of almost fifty years of a new and revitalised Toryism in government' (Hampsher-Monk, p.5). Burke spent the rest of his life in opposition; in the almost forty years between his appointment as Rockingham's secretary and his death in 1797 the Whig party enjoyed only three brief periods in office -- in none of which was Burke offered the cabinet position he must have felt he deserved.

The overthrow of the Fox-North coalition in 1783 and the consolidation of Pitt as the king's choice in the elections of 1784 was a major setback to Burke's attempt to secure the sovereignty of parliament. The means by which the wishes of the Commons were disregarded seemed to place parliament at the mercy of a terrifying alliance

between the king and popular opinion. For in the 1780s, Burke thought he perceived another threat to liberty -- radicalism's attempt to locate political authority in the people. This meant that 'the eighteenth-century aristocratic order was being attacked from below' as well as from above (Age of the French Revolution, p.152).³ To add to Burke's sense of defeat, 'the new parliament evinced contempt for the opposition and disrespect for Burke. ... [who] was ... made aware that he belonged to the old order, not only on account of his age but, it seemed, because his Whiggish ideas were anachronistic' (p.148). From having been one of the most attended to and admired speakers in the House, Burke found himself 'ridiculed by "boys" [as he was taunted into calling the ministry] who openly expressed their impatience with his newly recovered readiness to speak' (Age of the French Revolution, p.149).

Burke's major project in opposition, apart from continuing the attempt to reform parliament, was the impeachment of Warren Hastings, whom he accused of corruption in the administration of India: 'This massive undertaking consumed Burke's energies from well before April 1786 ... until 1795, when Hastings was, to Burke's despair, acquitted' (Hampsher-Monk, p.5). The last glimmer of hope for the Whigs to gain power, and for Burke to begin again his programme of reforms, came in the Regency crisis -- which ended in an ignominious defeat of the Whigs in which Burke received more than his share of abuse (Age of the French Revolution, pp.257-82). On the eve of the French Revolution, then, he was 'a rather isolated figure, unpopular, frustrated, hard-pressed by exhausting labours, and to some extent already estranged from his old parliamentary friends and colleagues' (Conor Cruise O'Brien, 'Biographical Note,' Reflections, p.80). It would have been impossible to foretell that his greatest crisis and his greatest work was yet to come.

Although, as we will see, Burke's writings on the French Revolution appeared to many of his contemporaries as the betrayal of a lifetime's commitment to reform (Hampsher-Monk, p.5), Cone, like many twentieth-century readers, sees Reflections as the culmination of Burke's political thought and experience. Apart from the Enquiry, and to a lesser extent the Vindication of Natural Society, all Burke's publications were written as analyses of specific political problems. Although Reflections was also written for the occasion, the particular nature of the problem it posed for Britain called on Burke's greatest resources. While previous crises had concerned matters of interpreting the constitution in changing circumstances and reforming abuses in order to more fully embody the spirit of 1688, the philosophy and example of the French Revolution threatened the British constitution's very existence. For Cone, Burke met this challenge by raising himself from practical politician to political philosopher, expounding 'within a single book the ideas that he had earlier acquired and formulated but had never set forth in comprehensive fashion' (Age of the French Revolution, p.287):

He had always been a philosopher of sorts, better able than most politicians to formulate appropriate generalizations about politics and the constitution These generalizations form a coherent body of thought, but they are scattered through his formal publications, his speeches, and his correspondence. ... His writings on the French Revolution, however, contain his complete political thought. Taken together, they have unity, and one of them, the Reflections ..., crystallizes all of value that Burke had said and thought about the nature of man and society (pp.5-6).⁴

(ii) The Burke Problem

Cone's way of reading Burke's life and work is just that -- a way of reading. His insistence that Burke's thought has an overriding unity, and that Reflections represents the most profound encapsulation of that unity, can be seen as a historically conditioned reading.⁵ It is perhaps no coincidence that 1957-64 (when Cone's two volumes were published) are years of political conservatism in the United States in which New Criticism -- with an obsession with organic unity -- dominated ways of reading literature in institutions.⁶ Cone's very insistence on the coherence of Burke's writings disregards the fact that, for many of his contemporaries, Burke's reaction to the French Revolution was an inexplicable betrayal of his earlier ideals. From the moment of its publication, and into the late twentieth century, readers have perceived Reflections as a *problem* text; yet Cone's very endeavour to demonstrate the unity of Burke's thought perhaps attests to the endurance and importance of 'the Burke problem.'

Thomas Babington Macaulay, in an essay on Bacon, makes an intriguing observation about the shape of Burke's discursive career:

The treatise on the Sublime and Beautiful, though written on a subject which the coldest metaphysician could hardly treat without being occasionally betrayed into florid writing, is the most unadorned of all Burke's works. ... At fifty, his rhetoric was quite as rich as good taste would permit; and when he died, at almost seventy, it had become ungracefully gorgeous. In his youth he wrote on the emotions produced by mountains and cascades, by the master-pieces of painting and sculpture, by the faces and necks of beautiful women, in the style of a parliamentary report. In his old age, he discussed treaties and tariffs in the most fervid and brilliant language of romance ('Lord Bacon,' pp.424-25).

Macaulay's retrospect introduces at least three themes which will become central to the present thesis: the

possibility that Burke's discourse underwent a kind of metamorphosis between his early writings on aesthetics and the late writings on the French Revolution; the idea that his writings on aesthetics and politics might be implicated with one another in complex ways; and the notion that the relation between style and subject matter in Burke might be comparable to that between dress and body (though he seems to make sartorial blunders, or challenges decorum, in choosing styles 'inappropriate' to the occasion).⁷ If Macaulay therefore suggests that Burke's life work undergoes an internal 'revolution,' one of the aims of this thesis will be to explore how far this revolution is at once potential within, and a reversal of, relations between aesthetics and politics left largely implicit in the early Enquiry. This will involve not only a close textual analysis of Reflections and the Enquiry but an 'archaeological' investigation of the interrelations between Burke's texts and the discourses of philosophy, political economy, and gender in the second half of the eighteenth century.

Few readers of Burke remain neutral. There is something about his politics and his way of writing about them that precipitates either extravagant praise or offended repudiation. In recent years he has been both eulogized as a 'Master of English' by Conor Cruise O'Brien and wishfully 'deconstructed': '[Ayer's] deconstruction of Burke,' Tariq Ali writes in a review of A.J. Ayer's Thomas Paine, 'will be of value to students everywhere.'⁸ If O'Brien offers Reflections as a kind of holy text with which to exorcise the revolutionary 'spectre' haunting the western world in 1968,⁹ Ali -- a leading figure at the barricades of the most recent 'French revolution' -- continues his review of Ayer's biography by suggesting that it will be useful 'not least in Poland where dissidents who should know better are currently engaged in establishing a praxis based on the marriage of Edmund Burke to Pope Wotyla. Ayer's book, one hopes, will help

in aborting this and similar projects.' Burke's Reflections, on this evidence, continues to occupy a central place in political controversy in the late twentieth century, provoking radical writers to wish that its politics be silenced once and for all.

Although its publication in 1790 provoked a flurry of radical refutations, Reflections was acclaimed, though usually privately, by those readers it was aimed at -- the ruling classes.¹⁰ From being considered an object of derision or pity, Burke became the toast of the nation; George III, J.T. Boulton reminds us, whose prerogative Burke had sought to limit all his life, 'recommended it as a book every gentleman ought to read' (Language of Politics, p.80). Boulton's quotation from William Windham's diary entry of 7 November 1790 reveals the sense of power Reflections seemed to possess: 'Never was there, I suppose, a work so valuable in its kind, or that displayed powers of so extraordinary a nature. It is a work that may seem capable of overturning the National Assembly, and turning the stream of opinion throughout Europe' (pp.79-80). With the power to turn and overturn, Reflections was perceived as a revolutionary book which promised to intervene in political life in tangible ways. Radical writers saw the need to respond quickly -- to write their own revolutionary texts. England in the early 1790s therefore became the site of what Alfred Cobban has called 'perhaps the last real discussion of the fundamentals of politics in this country' (Debate on the French Revolution, p.31) -- a discussion whose issues resonate throughout the historical period of English Romanticism and beyond. Burke's Reflections both divided and galvanized its early readership, stimulating more than seventy polemical 'replies' in the years 1790-93.¹¹ The documents of 'the Revolution controversy' show that many of Burke's first readers were shocked and often offended by Reflections. Radical readers were puzzled that the champion of the American Revolution (as they thought)

should attack the French Revolution -- and especially so violently. 'Virtually every radical writer of this time,' James K. Chandler writes, 'saw Burke's position on France as a change of political colors, and at the same time realized that Burke's reputation made him one of the worst English enemies the French Revolution could have made' (Wordsworth's Second Nature, p.19). In its original form, Reflections was conceived as a letter in reply to Charles-Jean-Francois Depont's requests, in late 1789, for Burke's advice on and approbation of the Revolution.¹² As Boulton puts it, 'de Pont anticipated that the man who had supported the American Revolution would defend a revolution in France':

When I took the liberty, last year, of asking your opinion on the political events in France, I had certainly no idea that my letter would lead to the publication of the work you have so kindly sent me. I will even confess that I should never have made the request, had I been able to foresee its effect; and that if I had at that time known your opinions, far from begging you to express them, I should have besought you not to make them public (Language of Politics, p.95).¹³

Thomas Paine, in Rights of Man (1791/92), was equally surprised by Burke's stance: 'From the part Mr Burke took in the American Revolution, it was natural that I should consider him a friend to mankind I am the more astonished and disappointed [by his 'outrageous abuse on the French Revolution, and the principles of Liberty'], as ... I had formed other expectations' (Rights of Man, p.57). Burke's expressions of confidence in England's system of representation reveal him as a turncoat: 'This declaration from a man who has been in constant opposition to all the measures of parliament the whole of his political life, ... is most extraordinary; and, comparing him with himself, admits of no other alternative, than that he acted against his judgement as a member, or has declared contrary to it as an author' (Rights of Man,

p.246). It was not only that Burke opposed the Revolution, however, but that he opposed it so aggressively which needed explaining. This is 'a general enigma running through the whole of Mr Burke's book,' which Paine solves by proposing that it is in Burke's political and personal interest to 'rage':

He writes in a rage against the National Assembly; but what is he enraged about? If his assertions were as true as they are groundless, and that France, by her Revolution, had annihilated her power, and become what he calls a *chasm*, it might excite the grief of a Frenchman ... and provoke his rage against the National Assembly; but why should it excite the rage of Mr Burke? -- Alas! it is not the Nation of France that Mr Burke means, but the COURT; and every Court in Europe, dreading the same fate, is in mourning. He writes neither in the character of a Frenchman nor an Englishman, but in the fawning character of that creature known in all countries, and a friend to none, a COURTIER. ... Courts and Courtiers form a common policy throughout Europe, detached and separate from the interest of Nations; and while they appear to quarrel, they agree to plunder. Nothing can be more terrible to a Court or a Courtier, than the Revolution of France. That which is a blessing to Nations, is bitterness to them; and as their existence depends on the duplicity of a country, they tremble at the approach of principles, and dread the precedent that threatens their overthrow (pp.160-61).

The question from the very first, then, was over Burke's consistency -- whether or not he had betrayed his life-long principles in Reflections, but also whether Reflections itself was a coherent production. Indeed, a nineteenth-century historian, eager to celebrate Burke's earlier 'liberal' writings, could only account for 'his French period' by imputing 'that ... Burke had gone out of his mind.'⁴ In The Friend, however, Coleridge would not say of Burke 'that this great man supported different principles at different eras of his political life. On

the contrary, no man was ever more like himself.'¹⁵ Boswell -- at the nadir of Burke's career in 1785 -- has Johnson saying something similar: 'What I most envy Burke for is his being constantly the same' (Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides, p.19). But while, in 1807, in a 'fit of candour,' Hazlitt could suggest that 'the only specimen of Burke is, all that he wrote,'¹⁶ in a second 'Character' he claims that 'Mr. Burke, the opponent of the American war, and Mr. Burke, the opponent of the French Revolution, are not the same person, but opposite persons -- not opposite persons only, but deadly enemies.'¹⁷

At first sight, it might appear that 'the Burke problem' arises out of a misreading of Burke's role during the American crisis. But Hazlitt's assessment seems to point to a more complex problem: 'The burthen of all his speeches on the American war,' he continues, 'was conciliation, concession, timely reform, as the only practicable or desirable alternative of rebellion: the object of all his writings on the French Revolution was, to deprecate and explode all concession and all reform, as encouraging rebellion, and as an irretrievable step to revolution and anarchy' (Complete Works, 7, p.226). That Macaulay detects an apparently quite distinct turn around in Burke's writings, involving intricate shifts in relations between politics, language, and aesthetics, adds to a sense that 'the Burke problem' is not amenable to simplistic solutions.

Burke's writings on the French Revolution produce more interesting and surprising responses in radical readers than straightforward hostility. Chandler shows how Burke's writings on the Revolution energized both reactionary and revolutionary fervour:

It goes without saying that he ... was largely responsible for the wave of anti-French sentiment which was already gaining momentum by the end of 1792, when Paine was arrested for part 2 of The Rights of Man, and which subsequently carried over into war abroad and

numerous sedition trials at home. What is ... seldom recognized outside a relatively small circle of Burke scholars, is Burke's unwitting service to the radical movement itself. Burke contributed much to the formation of an articulate radical ideology in the England of the 1790s (Wordsworth's Second Nature, pp.16-17).

I will discuss this apparently paradoxical effect at greater length in later chapters. But we might ask here whether the peculiar history of Burkean criticism over the last two centuries might be a product not simply of shifting political concerns or fashions but also of a strange quality of the text itself which is symptomatically 'expressed' in these early radical responses.¹⁸ Although his writings on the French Revolution have meant that he is often thought of as 'the first modern Conservative,'¹⁹ the majority of his writings -- including, in Burke's view at least, Reflections -- were written to promote the Whig position.²⁰ And if the second half of the twentieth century appropriated Burke as 'a crusader against radicalism' who provided a theoretical gloss to cold war policies, the nineteenth century could claim him as a unitarian liberal.²¹ Ways of reading Burke therefore vary markedly according to the reading's historical moment and political (or literary) theory or position.

Difficulties arise for any reading of Burke through the question of classification and genre. Burke can be, and has been, read as a practical politician, a political philosopher, an economist, a man of letters, a theorist of aesthetics, and more.²² Reflections in particular poses difficulties, as O'Brien notes:

The very richness and variety of Burke's Reflections have from the beginning charmed and dazzled some, but puzzled and alienated others. The Reflections are difficult to classify, and to some minds this is a scandal. The title of the work does not harmonize with its tone, which is often passionate and always

contentious; the work starts out as a letter, and ends up as a mixture of a treatise, a pamphlet and a speech. Even before the Reflections were published at all, serious exception had been taken to their form (O'Brien, p.49).

Marilyn Butler articulates the problem in a slightly different way: 'Nowadays we lack commonly accepted rules for reading books like Burke's Reflections, Paine's Rights of Man, Wollstonecraft's Rights of Woman, or Godwin's Political Justice' (Revolution Controversy, p.2). The methods and presuppositions of New Criticism -- developed for certain kinds of 'literature,' emphasizing internal consistency, and tending to isolate text from historical context -- seem particularly inappropriate here. One of the objects of this thesis is to offer, not a set of rules, nor a judgement in political or literary terms, but a way of reading these texts as discursive practices and products. In doing this, I draw on Terry Eagleton's speculations on what a 'theory of discourse' might entail:

What would be specific to the kind of study I have in mind ... would be its concern for the kinds of *effects* which discourses produce, and how they produce them. Reading a zoology textbook to find out about giraffes is part of studying zoology, but reading it to see how its discourse is structured and organized, and examining what kind of effects these forms and devices produce in particular readers in actual situations, is a different kind of project. It is, in fact, probably the oldest form of 'literary criticism' in the world, known as rhetoric. Rhetoric ... examined the way discourses are constructed in order to achieve certain effects. ... its horizon was nothing less than the field of discursive practices in society as a whole, and its particular interest lay in grasping such practices as forms of power and performance (Literary Theory, p.205).²³

Before I go on to sketch out what might be involved in such a mode of reading, I want to briefly examine the various ways Burke has been read in the twentieth century

in order to demonstrate that reading Burke has remained a problematic activity. These readings suggest that there is an ongoing Burke problem whose different configurations and solutions raise questions of central importance to theoretical issues currently being debated.

Gerald W. Chapman, observes, in 1967, that 'Burke means many things to many men' -- conservative, liberal, neoclassic, romantic, 'a throwback to the seventeenth century and a seminal thinker for the nineteenth ... a busy-buzzing M.P. whom at least three respectable judges ... have called the greatest prose writer in English literature. He is one of those great amphibious Englishmen' (Practical Imagination, p.1). Although he does imply that there is a 'latent coherency' in Burke's thought -- 'a characteristic activity' of what he calls the 'practical imagination' -- Chapman is unusual in arguing that there is only a small 'possibility of abstracting a system' from Burke's writings; 'pin Burke down at one point, and he dances away at another, in what Hazlitt called admiringly, his "circumgirations."' This is because 'there seems hardly a trend of Burke's thinking for which there is no countertrend almost equally essential, locked up in the mystery of his quality and not to be shaken out' (Chapman, p.2, p.12). But although this presents Burke's work as complex and demanding -- rather than simplistically extracting single, unifying meanings -- it does so through a process of organicist mystification, as if all the contradictory readings of Burke it lists are somehow 'right' though partial. My own project is not to reconcile contradictory readings of Burke in order to finally solve the Burke problem, but to explore what it is about his texts which impel readers to produce such 'unified' though mutually incompatible readings.

Despite the problems raised by genre, there is a flourishing tradition of reading Burke as 'literature,' perhaps originating in Hazlitt's ambivalent attempts to

celebrate the prose while condemning the politics.²³⁴ Boulton's analysis of the texts of the Revolution controversy in his Language of Politics in the Age of Wilkes and Burke (1963) is a landmark here,²³⁵ though unlike Hazlitt, Boulton is not at all disconcerted by the possibility that the 'poetry' and the politics are part and parcel of one another. Burke is thought to demonstrate higher 'literary' qualities than Paine or any other radical: 'though contemporary critics denounced Burke for the seeming extravagance and grand disorder of the Reflections, he was writing within an imaginative discipline. It makes for a wholeness and coherence which provides permanent delight' (p.120). This is so because although Burke exercises a 'subtle control ... over the reader's response' (p.103) he does so for benign ends. His 'emotive techniques are ... more than persuasive methods: they convey the essence of Burke's philosophical position': 'the very strength of his feelings is a salient feature of the case he is arguing: the traditional order takes full account of natural feelings; the revolutionists deny them. Seen from this angle, his emotive prose is the embodiment of the fundamental nature of his thought' (p.121). But there are a number of problems with this. Firstly, for example, the 'revolutionists' do not deny 'natural' feelings; both discursive positions in the Revolution controversy argue for 'natural feelings' but differ about what they are. The radical appropriation of the 'natural' ground is, in fact, one of the challenges radicalism poses for Burke. For although critics such as Peter J. Stanlis in Edmund Burke and the Natural Law attempt to differentiate between 'Natural Law' and the 'natural rights' which underpin eighteenth-century radicalism, we will see that the attempt to distinguish between 'civil' and 'pre-civilized' nature is precisely one of the unstable yet crucial projects which Reflections becomes involved in. A second and related problem with Boulton's analysis is the assumption that Burke's language

honestly embodies, or reflects, his 'feelings.' 'Emotive' prose -- at least in this case (Wollstonecraft's 'emotionalism' is seen as a weakness) -- supposedly indicates strength of feeling, but the question about the relation between 'natural feelings' and 'emotive techniques' remains. Boulton cannot allow that the 'genuinely' literary might be 'merely' ideological, or persuasive towards 'illegitimate' ends: Burke's 'literary scope,' we are assured, 'corresponds to the comprehensiveness of his political wisdom' (p.124). But read in another way, Boulton's account of Burke's literary techniques precisely reveals the rhetorical strategies at work in these 'natural' effusions.²⁴ Although Boulton can admit that Burke is 'occasionally guilty ... of hysterical outbursts' which take him to the threshold of decorum and excess, we will see that the very distinctions between decorum, hysteria, 'sophistry,' and 'gross overwriting' (see Language of Politics, p.122) become deeply problematic in Reflections. The assumptions which underlie Boulton's reading -- distinctions between natural and unnatural, authentic and inauthentic -- are precisely those which both structure and destabilize each discursive position in the Revolution controversy.

In the 1968 introduction to his edition of Reflections, O'Brien claims that 'the more one reads Burke the more one is impressed, I think, by a deep inner consistency, not always of language or opinion, but of feeling' (p.23). That emphasis on the essential consistency of the *inner* man as opposed to the, by comparison, *superficial* problems of style or opinion is a theme which runs throughout readings of Burke. Raymond Williams, in 1961, invokes analogous metaphors by developing conservative estimates such as Matthew Arnold's into the conclusion that the particular quality of Burke's writing is that it is the product of 'a special immediacy of experience, which works itself out, in depth, to a particular embodiment of ideas that become, in themselves,

the whole man' (Culture and Society, p.24). Williams is thus able to admire Burke's thought as a set of general political truths which happened to be wrongly applied to their historical objects: 'The confutation of Burke on the French Revolution is now a one-finger exercise in politics and history' (p.24). Although Burke was profoundly consistent, he was 'blind to many of the changes which, even as he wrote, were transforming England' (p.31):

His doctrines rest on an experience of stability, containing imperfections, but not essentially threatened. As the current of change swelled, the affirmation became a desperate defence. And even while Burke was writing, the great tide of economic change was flowing strongly, carrying with it many of the political changes against which he was concerned to argue (p.30).

I go on to show how such an understanding of Burke -- however often it has been reiterated -- is problematized by a more recent marxist reading of his relation to the economic 'currents' and 'tides' he appears to resist. At the moment, I want to suggest that in affirming Arnold's claim that 'almost alone in England, ... [Burke] saturates politics with thought,'²⁷ Williams joins Boulton and O'Brien in a New Critical celebration of Burke's prose: 'This consistency,' O'Brien writes, 'by no means excludes complexity and contradictions; rather, it is the consistency of a complex and powerful personality, successfully withstanding unusual stress' (p.23). Yet although such Coleridgean formulations can be seen as evolving from Burke's own organicist thought, O'Brien allows us to perceive those contradictions and stresses in ways which question both his own New Critical-cum-Romantic model and Williams's suggestion that Burke is out of touch with the historical transformations at the end of the eighteenth century.

O'Brien suggests that there is a range of reasons why the French Revolution should have brought out

contradictory reactions in Burke. If one of its disturbing aspects was that it was effected by people with ability and energy without attachment to landed property, O'Brien claims (with only partial accuracy) that Burke 'was himself one of the most notable examples of the conjuncture which he thought most redoubtable to ordered society: ability without property.' This leads O'Brien to suggest -- and in this he acknowledges Wollstonecraft's insight to the same effect -- that had Burke 'been born in similar social circumstances in Arras in the 1750s, or in Dublin or Belfast in the 1760s, he might conceivably have been a revolutionary' (O'Brien, p.20; see Wollstonecraft, Rights of Men, p.109). A related source of possible ambivalence arises from Burke's Irish catholic origins, which would have led to a division of loyalties: 'between the ruined Irish catholics and the owners of the wealth of England there is a chasm for Burke's affections to bridge. I believe ... that there is a connexion between the tensions of this spanning and the emotional charge, the pathos and fury, of the Reflections' (pp.24-25). It is supposed, then, that Burke's catholic sympathies necessarily charge his responses to a revolution which had attacked the church as well as the aristocracy. This also serves to partly explain the sheer violence of his abuse of those dissenting radicals in England who welcomed a revolution for having 'undermined superstition and error.'²⁰

O'Brien contends that Burke's background adds still more complexities and ambivalences since it allows him to perceive justifications for revolutionary action against the English state in Ireland: 'where the Irish Catholics were concerned, he makes a unique allowance, if not for a legitimate kind of Jacobinism, at least for a kind rooted in human nature' (p.32). For these reasons, O'Brien concludes that Burke's 'relation to Ireland made impossible for him two of the stock responses of Englishmen to the opening stages of the Revolution: that

of approval for what seemed an anti-Papist reformation and that of "It can't happen here" (p.33). And yet, O'Brien acknowledges, these considerations do not 'explain the intensity of [Burke's] counter-revolutionary passion. ... Whence, then, comes the tremendous emotional force that animates not only the misleadingly named Reflections but all his writings on the Revolution, up to and including the fourth Letter on a Regicide Peace, left unfinished at his death?' (p.34). O'Brien's 'conjectural answer' to this formulation of the Burke problem

is that Burke, in his counter-revolutionary writings, is partly liberating -- in a permissible way -- a suppressed revolutionary part of his own personality. These writings -- which appear at first sight to be an integral defence of the established order -- constitute in one of their aspects ... a heavy blow against the established order in the country of Burke's birth, and against the dominant system of ideas in England itself (pp.34-35).

This leads O'Brien to suggest that 'the drama of Burke's writings about the Revolution, and much of their power, comes from the collaboration in them of two personalities. ... [a] reasonable elderly Whig, [and] a slumbering Jacobite' (pp.37-38). And yet Burke is recuperated from such a radical split through recourse to a topology of 'inner self' and 'persona': 'The author of the Reflections ... wrote in the persona of an Englishman -- which is in itself a cause of confusion -- but was in fact Irish to the marrow of his bones' (p.41). In O'Brien's view, Burke's writings on the Revolution constitute a personal counter-revolution which amounts to self-revelation:

when he does decide to let go, he inevitably releases greater forces than any calculation could determine in advance. He enters the controversy as a Whig, and ends up the idol of the Tories. He 'runs down' his friend Charles James Fox, as he had once run down Lord North. It is extremely improbable that these results were calculated in advance. It is more

probable that Burke had never fully realized -
 - until the events in France provided the
 critical test -- how profoundly he was at odds
 with much that was fundamental in the
 philosophy of Englishmen with whom he had
 allied himself (p.55).

Another recent and influential reading also suggests that the Revolution releases internal forces in Burke's psyche over which he has no control. Here too the struggle between reaction and revolution is, in the first place, a personal one. Isaac Kramnick's 'psychobiography,' The Rage of Edmund Burke (1977), suggests that Burke's 'rage' and 'ambivalence' originate in a never adequately resolved oedipal anxiety.²⁷ Kramnick's introduction -- indicatively titled 'The Burke Problem' -- 'stands Burke on his head, replacing the Tory prophet with the ambivalent radical. There are two Burkes and doing the man and his works full justice requires a revision of the conventional image' (p.4). A re-reading of Burke's oeuvre is said to reveal a range of interrelated ambivalences: the Letter to a Noble Lord (1796) is an attack on the aristocracy which 'reads a close kin to much of the ideological writing [Burke] so despised' (p.6); and while 'he hated the ambitious Jacobins ... he also shared some of their aspirations' (p.8). Underlying and organizing Burke's ideological ambivalences, however, are a set of internal psychological conflicts: 'Crucial to the evolution of this ambivalence were Burke's complicated attitudes to his mother and father, authority in general, his "cousin" Will and wife Jane, and to such issues as ambition, industry, status, merit, privilege, action, aggression, passivity, masculinity and femininity' (Kramnick, p.10).

Kramnick's argument is that, in Burke's psycho-ideological rhetoric, bourgeois radicalism represents an active 'masculine' principle and the aristocracy a passive 'feminine' one. Burke is at once attracted to and

repelled by the oedipal energies of radicalism, at once despising passive femininity and regarding it as a necessary softening of the masculine principle. Burke is compelled, then, to figure the ideological crises of the late-eighteenth century in ways which 'evoke oedipal terms' (p.109). Such an insight, Kramnick contends, enables us to understand the passion of Burke's response to the Revolution, since it is mainly directed at English dissenters:

The [potential] triumph of the dissenters represented the total victory in England and in Burke of the bourgeois principle, unchecked and unbalanced by the aristocratic principle. It was an unacceptable resolution of Burke's inner ambivalence and as such he was moved to right the balance again by vigorous defense of the aristocratic principle (p.151).

Kramnick thus 'solves' the problem of why Burke should 'rage' against the Revolution by suggesting that its insurrection against traditional and paternal power structures unbalances an only precariously resolved oedipus complex and stimulates a massive compensatory celebration of the mother. But although Kramnick usefully stresses the bourgeois, free-market strands in Burke's writings and shows how they come into conflict with his extravagant defences of aristocracy, he plays down socio-economic readings which explain this divided focus as resulting from an attempt to coordinate a compromise between aristocracy and bourgeoisie. In Kramnick's view, the attempt to understand the contradictory impulses in Burke's texts as arising from a crisis in what Engels sees as the essential achievement of 1688 -- the balancing of aristocratic political power with capitalist economic power -- suffers 'from what we now know about Burke' (Kramnick, p.164).³⁰ However problematic Kramnick's 'Freudian' assumptions might be -- both as readings of Burke and in terms of recent psychoanalytical theory -- his work nevertheless allows us to see that aesthetics,

politics, economics, and gender are complexly interrelated in Burke's work.

Ronald Paulson, in Representations of Revolution (1789-1820) (1983), builds on Kramnick's analysis of the Burke problem by stressing the need to complement it with attention to the 'literary': 'Kramnick tends to go straight to the archetype or the biography, over the head, so to speak, of the literary text' (p.65). Paulson takes up Kramnick's narratives of ambivalence, especially regarding Burke's uneasy response to Rousseau: for if he sees 'Rousseau's Confessions with its young parvenus ... who enter the sacred family circle, seduce the wife or daughter, and undermine the authority, indeed take the place of the father-husband' as prefigurations of the French Revolution (which we will see him figure as the symbolic rape of the French queen), Burke 'himself was, after all, a parvenu, like Rousseau the music-master or philosopher who used his talents to insinuate himself into the lives of the great, toward whom his feelings were ambivalent' (Paulson, p.62, p.65).³¹ And yet, Paulson suggests, it is as important to concentrate on the 'literary' sources of Burke's imagery in his writings on the French Revolution as it is to invoke oedipal anxieties. To instil horror in its readers, Reflections draws on Swift, Pope, Milton, and above all on Burke's own Miltonic aesthetics in his Enquiry: 'Burke's solution to the confrontation with this unthinkable phenomenon, the French Revolution ... was to fit it into the framework of aesthetic categories he had worked out himself thirty years before' (p.68).³²

Paulson's attention to the 'literary' nature of Burke's texts, however, seems to reconfirm, rather than develop, Kramnick's basic proposition. While Neal Wood notes Burke's association of the sublime and the beautiful with the father and mother respectively and relates it to Burke's general theory of government' ('Aesthetic Dimension of Burke's Political Thought,' pp.48-50),

Paulson claims that his own 'Freudian' reading of Burke's pamphlets of the 1790s 'is at a deeper level of consciousness, revealed by his excesses of rhetoric, his metaphors, and his half-articulated examples' (Paulson, p.66 n.27). In Reflections and the Enquiry alike, Paulson believes that 'the illustrations and metaphorical decoration take us closer to Burke's true intention, often saying more than he may have meant to say' (p.66). Paulson concludes, in Kramnick's wake, that the oedipal character of Burke's sublime explains his ambivalences towards the Revolution:

It is the experience of the son's revolt, with its implications of sexual release, followed by his feelings of guilt, and the accommodation by which he comes to terms with the father, internalizes him as superego, and himself becomes a father. . . . The ambivalence of the rebel towards the act of revolt is both because it is an aggressive act and because the object remains beyond comprehension. It is also because Burke can imagine himself in one or both positions (p.70).

This is, however, to remain within the basic assumptions shared by Kramnick and O'Brien; Burke is a self divided, variously revealing more to himself than he may have realized about himself, or unwittingly displaying the disparity between his 'true intentions' and what he 'meant to say.'

This last convoluted suggestion reveals some of the problems which reading for intention may involve itself in. For my own way of reading the Burke problem I move from such author-centred, intentionalist models of reading and textual production in order to see Burke's texts as a weave of discourses which intersect with a range of interrelated writings at the end of the eighteenth century. This allows me to suggest that there might be quite different relationships between, say, politics, aesthetics, and sexuality in Burke's texts and quite different ways in which they ambivalently interact with

radical discourse. Important to my argument is a recent marxist formulation of Burke's historical context and his relation to it which draws on Engels's account of 1688 and Marx's identification of Burke as a 'bourgeois.' In his introduction to Burke (1980) -- yet another discussion of 'The Burke problem' (pp.1-7) -- C.B. Macpherson rapidly dismisses earlier perceptions of that problem. He argues that the question about Burke's consistency towards the aristocracy which so preoccupies Kramnick is of 'secondary' consideration; the ambivalence revealed in the Letter to a Noble Lord (the Duke of Bedford had criticized Burke for taking the civil pension, and Burke responds by dwelling on the less than honourable origins of the Duke's title) is explained by Burke's social position as 'an Irish parvenu' who 'was never admitted to cabinet rank, to which his energy, his ability and his party service might well be thought to have entitled him' (Burke, p.6). Burke's complex attitude 'was not a matter of the apparent but unreal inconsistency between his traditionalist and his bourgeois liberal positions; it was not Burke the bourgeois, but Burke the ranker, never fully accepted by those to whom he had attached himself, who composed the Letter to a Noble Lord' (p.6). Macpherson is equally dismissive of the 'alleged discrepancy' between Burke's 'defence' of the American Revolution (Macpherson makes the same mistake as Burke's first radical critics) and his attack on the French Revolution: 'No one who reads Burke at all attentively could find any contradiction between his defence of the American Revolution ... and his implacable opposition, a decade later, to the French Revolution. Both positions were firmly grounded in his attachment to the principles he found in the English Whig Revolution of 1689' (p.7).

By clearing the ground in this way, Macpherson allows himself to redefine the Burke problem in his own terms: 'the central Burke problem which is still of considerable interest in our own time is the question of the coherence

of his two seemingly opposite positions: the defender of a hierarchical establishment, and the market liberal' (p.7). Putting aside 'psychohistorical' explanations, Macpherson claims that 'nowhere in the two-hundred-year see-saw of images of Burke is this problem adequately faced' (p.4). Macpherson's 'resolution' of the Burke problem -- and his reading falls in with the tradition of explaining away Burke's 'inconsistencies' -- forms the central argument of his study:

There is no doubt that in everything he wrote and did, he venerated the traditional order. But his traditional order was already a capitalist order. He saw that it was so, and wished it to be more freely so. He had no romantic yearning for a bygone feudal order and no respect for such remnants of it as still survived, notably in the royal household He lived in the present, and made it his business to study the economic consequences of actual and projected state policies. ... Indeed, his most explicit statement of his economic assumptions came first in that full-dress defence of the old order, the Reflections There is thus a prima facie case for seeking in Burke's political economy a resolution of this central problem of coherence (p.5).⁵³

Such an appeal to 'the economic' as the ultimate explanation of all that Burke wrote is to gloss over the powerful contradictions in Reflections which agitate and exercise commentators of all persuasions. In using 'the economic' as a base with which to resolve problems at a rhetorical -- 'superstructural' -- level, Macpherson reproduces the manifest/latent textual topography he implicitly repudiates in Freudian readers, and in explaining Burke's texts as uniformly working to promote 'secret' economic interests he develops not a historical but, precisely, a personalized reading. My own reading, then, while taking Macpherson's into account, uses it to help situate Burke's discourse as participating within a socio-economic crisis in late eighteenth-century England,

rather than as an explanation of its covert project. To read the texts of this juncture as discourse is not so much to ask about their authors' intentions but to analyse how their rhetorical strategies function, how they engage in intertextual dialogue with other discourses, and how they intervene in and have effects on the way political events and texts are discursively constituted and read.

In my own reading I come neither to bury Burke nor to praise him, neither to find him consistent nor inconsistent, but to ask what it is about Reflections that continues to exercise readers -- what it is about this text which is of interest both to an understanding of the late eighteenth century and to ongoing discussions and problems about reading the interplay between literature and politics, texts and historical 'contexts.' Among other things, I argue that Reflections problematizes conventional categorizations of texts as 'radical' or 'reactionary' by revealing that such judgments are inadequate to the intricacies of texts and their relations to politics and history. O'Brien's suggestion that Burke struggles to repress a revolutionary self is transformed into the possibility that Reflections is structured as an unstable oscillation between 'reactionary' and 'revolutionary' impulses.

(iii) From Work to Text: Reading Burke's Works as Textual Discourse

If one wishes to undertake an archaeological analysis of knowledge itself, it is not these celebrated controversies that ought to be used as the guidelines and articulation of such a project. One must reconstitute the general system of thought whose network, in its positivity, renders an interplay of simultaneous and apparently contradictory opinions possible (Michel Foucault, The Order of Things, p.75).

It is customary to see the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as an age of revolutions in which the French Revolution is only the most palpable; 'revolutions' are seen to take place in political structures, the production of wealth, artistic activity, scientific knowledge, and so forth.³⁴ Foucault's The Order of Things (1966) attempts to transform this understanding of the age of revolution through an 'archaeological' analysis of the various 'transformations' which took place in the discourses of the human sciences. These reformations -- in the way the natural world, wealth, and language were understood -- take place not because of 'advances' in thought or because discourse belatedly recognizes changes which have already taken place 'in the world' (such as the shift from mercantilism to early forms of capitalism), but because of mutations within the fundamental '*episteme*' which organizes and makes possible a period's thought in the first place.

Foucault's notion of the '*episteme*,' as its etymology suggests, means something like 'the grounds of knowledge' or, in his own words, the 'rules of formation, which were never formulated in their own right, but [which] are to be found in widely different theories, concepts, and objects of study' in any specific period ('Foreword to the English edition' [1970], [pp.ix-xiv], p.xi). Thus Foucault tries 'to determine the basis or archaeological system common to a whole series of scientific "representations" or "products" dispersed throughout the natural history, economics, and philosophy of the Classical period' (pp.xi-xii). Of crucial importance to my thesis is Foucault's attempt to register the collapse of the classical *episteme* at the end of the eighteenth century in order to 'describe the combination of corresponding transformations that characterized the appearance of biology, political economy, philology, a number of human sciences, and a new type of philosophy, at the threshold of the nineteenth century' (p.xii). The idea that there is a

'discontinuity' between periods helps Foucault redraw the historical map of Western culture, conventionally thought of in terms of 'development': 'this archaeological inquiry has revealed two great discontinuities in the *episteme* of Western culture: the first inaugurates the Classical age (roughly half-way through the seventeenth century) and the second, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, marks the beginning of the modern age' (p.xxii). Although each 'age' is distinguished from those which precede and follow it, it derives its character from the ubiquitous presence of a single *episteme*: 'In any given culture and at any given moment, there is always only one *episteme* that defines the conditions of possibility of all knowledge, whether expressed in a theory or silently invested in a practice' (p.168). Foucault sums up his 'findings' as follows: 'analysis has been able to show the coherence that existed throughout the Classical age, between the theory of representation and the theories of language, of the natural orders, and of wealth and value. It is this configuration that, from the nineteenth century onward, changes entirely' (p.xxiii). Ushered in by the *episteme's* transformation, 'philology, biology, and political economy were established, not in the places formerly occupied by *general grammar*, *natural history*, and the *analysis of wealth*, but in an area where those forms of knowledge did not exist, in the space they left blank' (p.207). That which was unavailable to the classical *episteme* can be determined by what characterizes the modern: if the analysis of wealth had dwelt on representations of objects of need, political economy is concerned with 'time and toil, transformed, concealed, forgotten' (p.25); if natural history was interested in the classification of forms according to visible characteristics, biology is organized around concealed organic structures and functions (pp.226-32); and while general grammar was preoccupied with the representative status of words, philology investigates inflexion as the interior mechanism

of language (pp.232-36). The somewhat static objects of knowledge of the classical period are replaced by analyses of 'the force of labour, the energy of life, the power of speech' (p.244). Interest shifts from the immediately visible to the concealed, from the passive to the active, from the order of things to the processes of history.

We will see, throughout the present thesis, that Burke's discourse returns time and again to the set of issues that Foucault delineates here. Both his political economy and his aesthetics is organized around concepts of labour and repose, activity and passivity -- so much so that my reading of his aesthetic treatise is articulated with passages from Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations. This emphasis on labour reappears in Reflections where, against the grain of Burke's aesthetics and political economy, inactivity becomes reassessed in positive terms. This is partly because the Revolution shows how easily the hitherto hidden and contained forces of capital and labour may displace those 'inactive' institutions such as the aristocracy and the church which have previously held sway in society through exploiting the visible (pageants, decoration, etc). And yet this reevaluation in Burke remains problematic and unstable, precisely because it does run against the grain of the physiological thesis of the aesthetics; this instability is registered, for example, through the way the apparently straightforward gendering of terms in the Enquiry becomes much more openly ambiguous and contradictory in Reflections.

Drawing on Foucault, my thesis therefore argues that Burke's texts cannot be read in isolation; it proceeds by articulating the Enquiry and Reflections with a range of contemporaneous discourses (philosophical, political, economic) which are, sometimes surprisingly, seen as engaged with analogous problems and projects. I attempt to demonstrate not only the ways in which Burke's discourse on language, aesthetics, sexuality, and politics operates with, and is organized by, common concerns and

paradigms, but that his texts are inserted within a set of larger problematics facing European culture at the turn of the nineteenth century. At various points throughout the thesis, therefore, Burke's formulations are juxtaposed with passages from, among others, Adam Smith's economics and Hegel's philosophy. In my use of The Order of Things, I am conscious of interpreting its 'open site' (p.xii) in a way which, for Foucault, might seem reductive but which I have nevertheless found productive in mapping interrelations within Burke's oeuvre and between it and other discourse. In place of the term *episteme* I use the idea of the 'paradigm,'³³ which allows me to trace common patterns in the different weaves of Burke's texts on politics and aesthetics and to show that other major discursive projects of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries work with different variations of that same pattern (which, with Foucault, is not to imply a process of 'influence' [p.208]). Foucault, on the other hand, is interested in the *episteme* which underlies and enables such paradigms and patterns of thought. Thus when he takes note of the way political economy draws on biological thought to produce the physiological paradigm of 'circulation,' Foucault argues that 'the metaphor of the city and the body, so assiduously put to work in our Western culture, derived its imaginary powers only from the much deeper foundation of archaeological necessities' (p.179). My interest, however, is precisely in such transferences of metaphor -- in their political implications and in the ways they work as textual strategies which paradoxically unsettle the political certainties they are meant to convey. Thus I am interested not in what lies 'behind' Burke's discourse but in the texture and textile nature of his texts, with the patterns they weave, and with the unexpected designs which emerge by juxtaposing or superimposing one text with another.

What emerges from my enquiry into the organizing paradigms of Burke's discourse is not a resolution of the Burke problem by identifying how his paradigms conform to a single *episteme* (whether the classical or the modern), but its complication. Burke emerges as an 'amphibious' figure, at home, yet never fully at home, in both the classical and the modern epistemological environment -- a threshold figure producing a set of texts about revolution which are themselves revolutionary, in revolution against themselves. Paradoxically, Wollstonecraft and Paine seem more 'classical' than Burke; while the latter participates in the revolution of the *episteme*, writing a revolutionary book *against* revolution, the former can be seen as producing antirevolutionary books *for* the revolution. Foucault characterizes the classical age as the age of representation: 'the end of Classical thought -- and of the *episteme* that made general grammar, natural history, and the science of wealth possible -- will coincide with the decline of representation, or rather with the emancipation of language, of the living being, and of need, with regard to representation' (p.209; see 'The Limits of Representation,' pp.217-49). In these terms, Burke can be seen as the revolutionary protagonist of the Revolution controversy, for while he attempts to break with the notion of representation in language and in politics, his radical detractors call for 'open,' 'equal,' and 'manly' representation in money, language, and political forms.

If Burke is a 'threshold' figure, the work of Jacques Derrida offers a point of view which raises fundamental questions for Foucault's theory. Foucault himself draws attention to the difficulty he has of accounting for the causes and processes of the mutation from one *episteme* to another -- even though his work is primarily concerned with change (pp.xii-xiii, p.50, p.221, p.238):

What event, what law do they obey, these mutations that suddenly decide that things are

no longer perceived, described, expressed, characterized, classified, and known in the same way ...? For an archaeology of knowledge, this profound breach in the expanse of continuities, though it must be analysed, and minutely so, cannot be 'explained' or even summed up in a single word. It is a radical event that is distributed across the entire visible surface of knowledge, and whose signs, shocks, and effects it is possible to follow step by step (p.217).

Without seeking explanation or causality, recourse to Derrida's thought bears upon Foucault's problem here. For Foucault's conception of change as a movement from one 'continuity' to another makes it impossible to conceive of the dynamics of change except as arising from some 'erosion from the outside' (p.50). For Derrida, on the other hand, continuity is understood as a reductive, symptomatic reading of a complexly unstable situation. The revolution Foucault so admirably maps remains inexplicable to his archaeology, whereas Derrida's 'desedimentation' allows tensions and faults within strata to be exposed. In Derrida, revolution is understandable not as the passage from one continuity to another, but as the dramatization of discontinuities already at work within apparent continuity:

if there is change this means that there is somewhere a structural logic which makes it possible. This has to do with deconstruction. For instance, if you take a philosophical system or a social structure, it has in itself, I would say, the 'principle' of its own opening, dislocation, disintegration. If you read anything -- Plato, Descartes, or a social system -- you can find somewhere something inadequate which accounts for its own deconstruction.³⁴

Thus two models of revolution emerge -- one in which change is initiated from the outside, and a second in which change emerges from discontinuities already at work within an apparently stable structure. We will see that

Reflections is in many ways motivated and fissured by a conflict between these two models of revolution.

Yet Foucault does offer one way out of his impasse. For if, as he says, he is 'concerned, in short, with a history of resemblance' (and the distinction with Derrida's emphasis on difference is pertinent), he seems to imply that The Order of Things might be read alongside his Madness and Civilization:

The history of madness would be the history of the Other -- of that which, for a given culture, is at once interior and foreign, therefore to be excluded (so as to exorcize the interior danger) ... whereas the history of the order imposed on things would be the history of the Same

And if one considers that disease is at one and the same time disorder -- the existence of a perilous otherness within the human body, at the very heart of life -- and a natural phenomenon, with its own constants, resemblances, and types, one can see what scope there would be for an archaeology of the medical point of view (Order of Things, p.xxiv).

Thus Foucault ends his Preface with a claim which seems to exceed the scope of his 'history of the Same': 'In attempting to uncover the deepest strata of Western culture, I am restoring to our silent and apparently immobile soil its rifts, its instability, its flaws' (p.xxiv). That description of the paradoxical relation of the Same to the Other -- as madness or as disease -- offers a succinct analysis of the way Burke's attempt to defend England against the French Revolution by identifying it as a madness or disease to be excluded is complicated by the possibility that revolution might already be at work within the body politic.

The main problem with Foucault's use of discourse is that he seems to regard it primarily as documentary evidence which demonstrates his thesis. Thus there is little close analysis in The Order of Things, apart from the opening discussion of Velasquez's Las Meninas (pp.3-

16). A second theoretical position associated with French post-structuralism, and often in open conflict with Foucault, is one concerned not with 'discourse' but with 'text.' My own 'textual' readings of Burke draw on Roland Barthes's notion of 'text,' most concisely explicated in 'From Work to Text' (1971), and, more importantly, on Derrida's Of Grammatology (1967).³⁷ Reading works as 'texts' rather than as 'documents,' Derrida seeks to attend to 'the very tissue of the "symptom," to its proper texture' rather than rushing to a signified conceived as existing somewhere 'outside the text' (Of Grammatology, p.149, p.159). This emphasis on 'texture' is characteristic of the tendency of textual readings to focus attention on the density of texts through a series of puns on the term text itself. Barthes discusses the '*stereographic plurality*' of the 'weave of signifiers' which make up a text: '(etymologically, the text is a tissue, a woven fabric)' ('From Work to Text,' p.159). His notion of text represents a subversion and reversal of received understandings of the term which emphasize its (scriptural) authority, its filiation with a father-author, its association with (good) 'literature,' its organic unity, and the idea that its (single) meaning lies somewhere before or behind it. Instead, Barthes argues that a textual reading conceives of the author not as the guarantor of meaning, but as one of the figures in the 'carpet' (pp.160-61); it subverts traditional generic classifications (p.157); it emphasizes the language of a text, and suggests that although texts are structured, they are off-centred and without closure (p.159); it thinks of texts not as sealed units but as woven out of citations from other texts (p.160); and it asserts that reading is not an objective practice which simply identifies what is already and always 'there' in the text, but an active participation which produces readings which are themselves 'textual' (pp.162-64).

In 1974, Gayatri Spivak attempted to summarize Derrida's textual, deconstructive reading practice. While traditional interpretive methods regard their task as discovering the 'truth' which is thought to lie behind a text's metaphors (in the author's intention, unconscious wishes, or ideological context), deconstructive criticism, on the premise that 'there is no pure language that is free from metaphor,' 'must take the "metaphoric" structure of a text very seriously. Since metaphors are not reducible to truth, their own structures "as such" are part of the textuality (or message) of the text' (Introduction to Of Grammatology, p.lxxiv):

If in the process of deciphering a text in the traditional way we come across a word that seems to harbour an unresolvable contradiction, and by virtue of being one word is made sometimes to work in one way and sometimes in another and thus is made to point away from the absence of a unified meaning, we shall catch at that word. If a metaphor seems to suppress its implications, we shall catch at that metaphor. We shall follow its adventures through the text and see the text coming undone as a structure of concealment, revealing its self-transgression, its undecidability. ... [in] a moment that genuinely threatens to collapse [the text's] system (p.lxxv).

Spivak seemed unable, in 1974, to give a reason for such reading strategies, other than the oscillating desire on the part of the critic to experience at one and the same time the pleasures of mastery and the intoxicating fear of the abyss which reveals the impossibility of mastery (pp.lxxvii-lxxviii). In the 1980s, post-structuralism has increasingly been under attack for supposedly being 'ahistorical' and 'apolitical,'³⁸ and Spivak is now to the fore among those who have developed readings of Derrida which see his work as a political and historical practice which simultaneously transforms received notions of politics and history.³⁹

My own interest in Derrida for the purposes of this thesis is primarily in the reading of Rousseau in Of Grammatology (pp.141-316), where his discussion of the operations and effects of the 'supplement' across a range of Rousseau's texts can be read as having radical implications for an understanding of the way the intricate textuality of discourse is deeply implicated within the political history of its moment of production even as it transforms our reading of that moment. Derrida's reading both revolutionizes our understanding of a set of texts which are of central importance culturally and historically to the eighteenth century (and especially to Burke and his radical protagonists), and identifies a larger problematic (the unstable relation between nature and culture) which continues to preoccupy our thinking about culture and politics.⁴⁰ We will see that the effect of the supplement undercuts from within Foucault's notion of the stability and singleness of the *episteme*; Derrida's work therefore shows the importance of reading discourse not as documentation but as text.

Though both draw parallels between Reflections and the Enquiry, Boulton's and Paulson's analyses represent two distinctive ways of reading the relation between politics and aesthetics in Burke's writings on the Revolution. The former sees Reflections as the admirable creation of a literary master whose form reflects the organic society it would defend; the latter reads it primarily as the production of unconscious anxieties newly cathected by political events. Yet both readings stress the *origins* of Burke's rhetoric; in each case, those origins make that rhetoric 'authentic' -- for Boulton because embodying genuine feeling, for Paulson because expressing oedipal trauma. But both readings also stress the *literary* aspects of Reflections as evidence of Burke's rhetorical skill, and thereby allow attention to its *ends* as much as to its origins. For if we are swayed by craft, it might seem difficult to determine if that craft

reflects genuine feeling, psychic anxiety, or politically interested persuasion. To choose any one or even all of these interpretations would seem to avoid attention towards the *textures* and *effects* of language itself. It may be that in being affected by texts we ascribe those effects according to received models -- political, psychoanalytic, literary -- which claim to be prior to and serve to divert attention from the structures and movements of figuration. The 'density' of language is all-too-often by-passed in an attempt to isolate the ideology, the hidden desire, or the profundity supposedly lying 'behind' that language as its 'true' meaning.

One of the aims of the present thesis is to argue that we need to develop methods of reading texts such as those which make up the Revolution controversy in ways which register their 'density' and rhetoricity. This is because, as this thesis will attempt to demonstrate, the political meanings of any text do not exist apart from the 'texture' of its language; formal structures of all kinds -- figurative language, tone, mode of address, and so on -- are deeply implicated within the 'textuality' of the historical moment in which the text appears. Derrida's reading of Rousseau, in Of Grammatology, is of central importance to this project; if we have seen how traditional modes of criticism seem inadequate to an understanding of texts such as Burke's, Derrida feels that 'no model of reading seems ... at the moment ready to measure up to this text [Rousseau's Confessions] -- which I would like to read as a text and not as a document' (Of Grammatology, p.149). To read Burke's 'works' as texts -- for them to undergo the passage from work to text -- is to see their language not as transparent medium, embodiment, or expression, but as the very *fabric* of meaning. This involves attending to the textile quality of these texts, taking their metaphors seriously -- especially since the relation of metaphor to meaning, the very nature of metaphor itself, is crucial to the Revolution controversy.

Part of my project, then, is to demonstrate, through close and extended critical exegesis of Burke's writings, how post-structuralist readings produce understandings of political texts and their historical moment which are not available to other forms of reading.

One of the central interests of my thesis is how the contradictory effects Reflections had in the Revolution controversy might dramatize differences already at work within that text; this draws on Barbara Johnson's meditations on her own critical practice:

The starting point [of her 'Essays in the Contemporary Rhetoric of Reading' collected in The Critical Difference] is often a binary difference that is subsequently shown to be an illusion created by the workings of differences much harder to pin down. The differences between entities (prose and poetry, man and woman, literature and theory, guilt and innocence) are shown to be based on a repression of differences within entities, ways in which an entity differs from itself. But the way in which a text thus differs from itself is never simple: it has a certain rigorous, contradictory logic whose effects can, up to a certain point, be read. The 'deconstruction' of a binary opposition is thus not an annihilation of all values or differences; it is an attempt to follow the subtle, powerful effects of differences already at work within the illusion of a binary opposition. ... Far from eliminating binary oppositions from the critical vocabulary, one can only show that binary difference does not function as one thinks it does and that certain subversions that seem to befall it in the critical narrative are logically prior to it and necessary in its very construction. Difference is a form of work to the extent that it plays beyond the control of any subject: it is, in fact, that without which no subject could ever be constituted (pp.x-xi).

Johnson's remarks here develop Derrida's coinage of the French term *différance*: 'In coining the word *différance* with an a, he combines the two senses of the French verb *différer* -- to differ and to defer (postpone) -- into one

designation for what both subverts and produces the illusion of presence, identity, and consciousness' (p.xi).⁴¹ Johnson's ideas have multiple resonances for a reading of the Revolution controversy, partly in that they show how Derrida's notion of *différance* might 'deconstruct' the opposition between synchrony and diachrony in a way which seems to point to an important, if buried, relation between textual structure and history -- a relation which I wish to work out in specific terms for my reading of Burke. Binary opposition seems to be the very *modus operandi* of the Revolution controversy, not only through the differences between revolution and reaction and between Burke and the radicals which animate it, but through the immense labour of much of the discourse of the period -- from Burke, Wollstonecraft, and Paine through to Coleridge -- toward *making distinctions* between and within 'essentially contested concepts' such as nature and culture (each term of which is further complicated by controversies over 'good' and 'bad' nature, 'good' and 'bad' culture).

One example of such a distinction -- which reappears in a variety of discourses and cuts across 'radical' and 'reactionary' positions alike -- is that between the 'authentic' and the 'false.' Burke and his radical 'opposites' agonize -- in remarkably similar ways -- over this distinction in discussions of political representation, language, aesthetics, economics, and sexuality. I argue, after Johnson, that these 'collusions' -- and the subversions that seem to befall both the 'reactionary' and the 'radical' narratives which seem compelled to participate in this 'game' -- are not accidents as such but logically prior, and necessary, to the very construction of their 'alternative' paradigms. The differences between entities which Burke strives to establish -- which can be summarized as a difference between 'English' and 'French' aesthetics and politics -- 'are shown to be,' in Johnson's words, 'based on a

repression of differences within' those 'English' entities which Burke would construct as prior, pure, natural, and legitimate. One of the assumptions of the present thesis is that, as Johnson puts it, the effects of this repression of the ways these 'wholesome' values already differ from themselves 'can, up to a certain point, be read.' Part of my project, then, 'is an attempt to follow the subtle, powerful effects of differences already at work within the illusion[s] of ... binary opposition[s]' which Burke's troubled Reflections labours to construct and keep distinct.

At the same time, the *political* and *historical* nature of that labour and those oppositions is crucial in a reading of these operations in Burke's texts and in understanding Paine's and Wollstonecraft's alternative labour. I argue against those critics who assert Burke's consistency (synchronically and diachronically) and try to show not only that Burke's politics and aesthetics are internally riven, but that these rifts operate differently in different historical crises. If Derrida's *différance* undercuts what have become traditional readings of Saussure's 'ahistoricism,'⁴² I would want to articulate its implications -- which is to exploit intersections without masking differences -- with a much earlier critical reading of Saussure. In order to foreground the political implications of Derrida's work, I draw on V.N. Volosinov's analysis, in Marxism and the Philosophy of Language, of the 'multiaccentuality' of the ideological sign in repressive societies and in revolutionary crisis. Volosinov's theories about language can be used to make explicit the political implications of Derrida's thought and render it especially effective in reading a set of texts which participate within what is many ways the 'birth crisis' of modern capitalist society. For Volosinov, the very project to isolate a synchronic *langue* is a de-historicizing abstraction. Language, rather, is inescapably in flux at any one moment and through time.

This enables him to argue that linguistic signs are not positive, univocal entities but always already in contest, internally contradictory. This is so because

Existence reflected in sign is not merely reflected but refracted. How is this refraction of existence in the ideological sign determined? By an intersecting of differently oriented social interests within one and the same sign community, i.e., by the *class struggle*.

... various different classes ... use one and the same language. As a result, differently oriented accents intersect in every ideological sign. Sign becomes an arena of class struggle. ...

The very same thing that makes the ideological sign vital and mutable is also, however, that which makes it a refracting and distorting medium. The ruling class strives to impart a supraclass, eternal character to the ideological sign, to extinguish or drive inward the struggle between social value judgments which occurs in it, to make the sign uniaccental (Volosinov, pp.23-24).

Although there are obvious differences between the U.S.S.R. in the 1920s and '30s and England in the 1790s -- save that both were counter-revolutionary, repressive situations (historians can talk of Pitt's 'reign of terror'⁴³) -- it is remarkable how much of Volosinov's analysis of language in a divided society has implications in the earlier context. E.P. Thompson can write of this period in terms of the *making* of the English working class, while Burke and Paine may be seen as the representative voices of two classes -- or, perhaps, of one class divided against itself -- beginning to realize, in some ways for the first time, that they exist in a relation of *struggle*. Burke was *perceived* as defending the interests and meanings of the ruling classes against radical interests and meanings, while that defence enraged, inspired, and helped define radical discourse and consciousness. At the same time, the moment is complicated in that Burke and Paine share the same

paradigms and work towards a capitalist-bourgeois future.⁴⁴ In this reading, the differences between Burke and Paine are partly established through their differing views of which social group (landed aristocracy or working classes) the new bourgeoisie has common interests with.

Volosinov argues that in a stable society the ruling class attempts to repress the 'multiaccentuality' of the sign in order to reinforce a dominant ideology. Political hegemony depends on hegemony in language; authoritarian government on authoritative, proper, uniaccentual meanings. (We will see Burke involved in attempts to stabilize meanings in order to preserve traditional political forms.) But the *refractive* nature of language necessarily undermines such a project: 'In actual fact, each living ideological sign has two faces, like Janus. Any current curse word can become a word of praise, any current truth must inevitably sound to many other people as the greatest lie' (Volosinov, p.23). At the same time, Volosinov argues that the perception of this multiaccentual nature of the sign differs under different historical conditions:

This inner dialectic quality of the sign comes out fully in the open only in times of social crisis or revolutionary changes. In the ordinary conditions of life, the contradiction embedded in every ideological sign cannot emerge fully because the ideological sign in an established, dominant ideology is always somewhat reactionary and tries, as it were, to stabilize the preceding factor in the dialectical flux of the social generative process, so accentuating yesterday's truth as to make it appear today's. And that is what is responsible for the refracting and distorting peculiarity of the ideological sign within the dominant ideology (Volosinov, pp.23-24).

If such passages amount to an attack on the Stalinist regime in marxist terms, they also allow us to theorize both Burke's attempt to impose a chivalric gloss on an increasingly capitalist society at the end of the

eighteenth century -- so accentuating yesterday's truth as to appear today's -- and the peculiar way in which his Reflections enabled radicals to perceive the *refractions* and distortions of traditionalist politics and rhetoric more clearly than ever before.

Volosinov's analysis has many resonances for a reading of the Revolution controversy because we witness there not simply the first major revolutionary crisis of the Western world, but a historical moment in which *three* classes engage in mutual struggle. If, as Macpherson argues, Burke's project is not just to defend a traditional aristocratic order against the dangerous doctrines of the French Revolution, but also to uphold an already capitalist order against egalitarian notions about the 'rights of men,' Burke is caught up in a historical moment in which at least two different but related struggles are taking place over and within the same linguistic and ideological forms. I go on to show that Burke's text participates within those complex struggles and is a multiply fractured and accented *product* of them, even as it *produces* them with or without the 'intention' of its author. The differences Burke perceives and attacks 'without' -- outwith the body of his text and body politic -- are produced or prompted by differences already at work within the textual and political corpus. As a 'ruling class' text, Reflections 'strives to impart a supraclass, eternal character to the ideological sign, to extinguish or drive inward the struggle between social value judgments which occurs in it, [and] to make each sign uniaccental' (Volosinov, p.23). But as Volosinov and Barbara Johnson, in different ways, argue, such a contradiction -- as difference, as multiaccentuality -- may be already 'embedded,' already at play 'within' forms which appear uniform and univocal. The 'subversions' which Burke sees as foreign to his privileged terms and concepts can never be wholly excluded, therefore, since

they are logically and politically prior and necessary to their very constitution.

To develop more fully the implications of Burke's concerns -- and the difficulties his text becomes involved in -- I want here to work through Derrida's concept of the 'supplement' -- whose operations and effects already underlie the attempt in the last few pages to reformulate 'the Burke problem' in terms of irreconcilable internal differences operative within Burke's language, aesthetics, and politics. My readings throughout this thesis show that the strange logic of the supplement shapes a range of struggles within Reflections to differentiate between 'wholesome' and 'peccant' forms of representation. That these struggles are politically urgent within Reflections and within the historical moment, and that the texts of Burke's opponents are structured by the same logic, is to argue for the political nature of Derrida's reading of representation in Western discourse 'from Plato to Rousseau to Hegel' (Of Grammatology, p.167). Derrida's analysis of supplementary effects and structures is developed in a reading of Rousseau's speculations on the relations between nature and culture. Given Rousseau's evident influence on the Revolution and on Burke's English antagonists, it is intriguing to see Burke's and Rousseau's texts (usually thought of as paradigms of reactionary and radical discourses) paradoxically in collusion. This is so not only because both share a set of themes and concerns, but because both can be seen as striving to contain the doubled effects of the supplement's strange play. So much so, that it would be quite possible to substitute the proper name 'Burke' for that of 'Rousseau' in Derrida's analysis.⁴⁵

The theory of the supplement draws attention to the co-presence within the linguistic sign (and of representational forms in general) of two apparently opposite effects. If the written or voiced sign is considered as the indicative mark of 'the thing,' and

therefore of natural 'plenitude,' it may be seen as a surplus to that plenitude: 'The supplement adds itself, it is a surplus, a plenitude enriching another plenitude' (Of Grammatology, p.144). Language itself is normally conceived as a plenitude through its re-presentation of another, anterior plenitude. In this way, the richness of art, of representation, is given as a bonus to the richness of the natural world that it images. This conception of the relation between art and nature is dependent, however, upon a limited reading of its own terms. Firstly, by a kind of double-think, it must say at once that art-artifice-culture is a plenitude because it represents the original plenitude of nature, and that, since nature is already plenitude, what is added to it '*is nothing because it is added to a full presence to which it is exterior*' (p.167). Such a way of thinking overlooks the implications of its need to supplement nature -- i.e. that nature might not be the self-sufficient fullness it wants to claim, and it ignores the inference that if the sign 'represents and makes an image, it is by the anterior default of a presence' (p.167). For an image implies the absence of that which it images; where the image is, the thing is not:

For the concept of the supplement -- which here determines that of the representative image -- harbors within itself two significations whose cohabitation is as strange as it is necessary. The supplement adds itself, it is a surplus, a plenitude enriching another plenitude, the *fullest* measure of presence. It cumulates and accumulates presence. It is thus that art, *technè*, image, representation, convention, etc., come as supplements to nature This kind of supplementarity determines in a certain way all the conceptual oppositions within which Rousseau inscribes the notion of Nature to the extent that it *should* be self-sufficient.

But the supplement supplements. It adds only to replace. It intervenes or insinuates itself *in-the-place-of*; if it fills, it is as if one fills a void. If it represents and

makes an image, it is by the anterior default of a presence. . . . The sign is always the supplement of the thing itself (pp.144-45).

In a curious way, then, the two effects of the supplement seem not opposites but aspects of one another -- a double movement registered and enabled by the 'chance' coincidence that both significations occur within the same term. But if the 'second signification of the supplement cannot be separated from the first,' Derrida traces a structuring anxiety and effort in Rousseau's texts (as I do in Burke's) to employ each in certain moments by strategically excluding the other:

We shall constantly have to affirm that both operate within Rousseau's texts. But the inflexion varies from moment to moment. Each of the two significations is by turns effaced or becomes discreetly vague in the presence of the other. But their common function is shown in this: whether it adds or substitutes itself, the supplement is exterior . . . alien to that which, in order to be replaced by it, must be other than it (p.145).

The supplement, as writing or the representative image, is for Rousseau (as for Burke) 'a menacing aid, the critical response to a situation of distress' (p.144). But Rousseau, like his 'English' opponent after him, 'cannot utilize it at the same time in all the virtualities of its meaning.' To bring in the dangerous but urgently necessary supplement is to allow, though without a choice, the supplement to become -- or to show that it has always been -- the structuring principle of one's text, of textuality:

The way in which he determines the concept and, in so doing, lets himself be determined by that very thing that he excludes from it, the direction in which he bends it, here as addition, there as substitute, now as the positivity and exteriority of evil, now as a happy auxiliary, all this conveys neither a passivity nor an activity, neither an

unconsciousness nor a lucidity on the part of the author (p.163).

Derrida argues that reading should abandon these categories about the relative degree of agency of the author and recognize itself as a 'production': 'because I do not simply duplicate what Rousseau thought of this relationship. The concept of the supplement is a sort of blind spot in Rousseau's text, the not-seen that opens and limits visibility' (p.163).

The need to dwell on Derrida's 'production' of the supplement in Rousseau may already be apparent; Rousseau himself says that 'more depends on this than you realize' (*Emile*, quoted in *Of Grammatology*, p.146). Derrida shows that the strange economy of the supplement organizes Rousseau's discourse (as I argue it does Burke's) on politics, sexuality, education, culture, language, law, and nature itself.⁴⁶ Derrida's section on the interrelation of political evil and linguistic evil in Rousseau's texts, for example -- which shows that Rousseau conceives of writing as a supplementary imposition on speech and liberty at one and the same time⁴⁷ -- has enormous importance for the Revolution controversy, where political struggle takes place partly as a struggle for hegemony in language -- a contest which can be provisionally articulated in terms of the writings of the dead versus the freedom of speech of the living. And as Derek Attridge reminds us, in a 'supplementary' reading of the history of poetics, the relation between nature and culture is always governed by the political interests of a period -- even as it tends to problematize those interests (see *Peculiar Language*, especially 'The Politics of Nature,' pp.33-40).

In this way, Rousseau's political discourse is shown to function as a set of texts in which contradiction is not explained away but seen as a structural principle intrinsic to the texts themselves and to the discourse of

the period. At the same time, the strange logic of the supplement is not presented as a transcendental principle but is seen to function in specifically political ways and to be organized differently in different historical contexts. Derrida's reading of Rousseau, I would argue, demands that we re-read Rousseau's 'influence' on the Revolution controversy precisely in terms of the way the supplement organizes not only radical and reactionary discourse but also the terms of their agonistic relation. In subsequent chapters, I show that it is possible to see the theme and the logic of the supplement surreptitiously at work in Burke's discourse on aesthetics, language, sexuality, economics, and political structures. One sign of this is his constant need to argue at once for nature and for the necessity of supplementing nature with a custom and habit which will yet, as 'second nature,' become *part of nature*. The very energy with which Burke asserts the benevolent effects of his privileged supplements in contradistinction to those operative in revolutionary practices attests to the political urgency of this project. Attempting -- in a range of its manifestations -- to exclude the 'negative' accent of the irreducibly multiaccentual supplement as exterior and alien to its 'positive' meanings, Reflections reveals itself as at once the representative text of its moment and the index of a crisis in representation.

My thesis does not, then, claim to resolve the Burke problem; on the contrary, it proceeds on the premise that traditional claims to stand outside texts in order to deliver objective readings are necessarily problematic. In other words, the Burke problem is our problem, not only because he is struggling in particularly strenuous ways with problems which still concern us, but because when we read Burke we are *implicated* within his textual manoeuvres. For Shoshana Felman, reading -- and I would include the readings presented in this thesis -- is less objective analysis than a process of generating

implications -- both the exposure or production of a text's implications and the discovery that a reading is necessarily implicated within the text it engages with ('To Open the Question,' p.9.) As Attridge puts it, 'the claim to stand completely outside the field of study, and to make assertions about it which have no effect upon it, is one that must be dubious in any discipline but especially in the study of cultural phenomena' (Peculiar Language, p.6). To which I would add the suggestion that reading not only has an effect on what is read, but that 'the read' has an effect on the reading. Indeed, Felman's statement about the effective nature of Henry James's Turn of the Screw -- a terror text partly woven from eighteenth-century aesthetics -- could equally apply to Reflections: 'If the strength of literature could be defined by the intensity of its impact on the reader, by the vital energy and power of its effect, The Turn of the Screw would doubtless qualify as one of the strongest -- i.e., most effective -- texts of all time' ('Turning the Screw of Interpretation,' p.96). One of the principle sources of that effect -- what is most scandalous about it -- is that James's readers (and Burke's, I suggest) are forced to participate in the 'scandal' of the text's themes: 'In other words,' Felman suggests, 'the scandal is not simply in the text, it resides in our relation to the text, in the text's effect on us, its readers' (p.97).

Of the many radical reactions to Reflections, I concentrate on Wollstonecraft's and Paine's, whose readings seem to develop, in different ways, the most searching contemporary critiques of Burke. Yet I read them not simply for 'insights' into Burke's position, but as symptomatic readings of contradictions already fissuring Burke's reading of the French Revolution and its implications for England.⁴⁴⁹ Felman's reading of James becomes particularly apposite here since it seeks to demonstrate how contradictions internal to a text are acted out, or dramatically projected, in critical

controversy. Finding that each critical claim about the 'real' meaning of James's tale seems to repeat, unwittingly, one of the possible but problematic readings already at play within the text itself, Felman argues that

The scene of the critical debate is thus a repetition of the scene dramatized in the text. The critical interpretation, in other words, not only elucidates the text but also reproduces it dramatically, unwittingly participates in it. Through its very reading, the text, so to speak, acts itself out. As a reading effect, this inadvertent 'acting out' is indeed uncanny: which ever way the reader turns, he can but be turned by the text, he can but perform it by repeating it ('Turning the Screw of Interpretation,' p.101).

In the same way, readings of Burke -- even those we might admire -- seem inescapably implicated within and compromised by Burke's scandalous performance. Wollstonecraft's and Paine's readings participate within, rather than stand outside, the same historical problems as Burke's -- save that Reflections in many ways constitutes that moment's problems, gives them their peculiar turn. This is not to dismiss Wollstonecraft's and Paine's radical interventions against Burke but to measure their co-implication -- not simply as interfering from the outside so as to affect a course or issue (to influence the way Burke is read), but producing a reading which is already (employing the range of possibilities opened by the Latin prefix of 'intervention') 'between, among, amid, in between, in the midst.' My thesis will therefore, in Felman's words, 'undertake a reading of the text which will at the same time be articulated with a reading of its readings' (p.102).

I do not set out to condemn Burke's reading of the French Revolution, nor valorize those attacks on Burke whose politics I might be more sympathetic to (I suggest rather that Wollstonecraft's and Paine's texts need to be as rigorously analysed as Burke's -- that their politics

cannot be taken for granted or extracted from the texts which constitute their textures). As Attridge suggests, in a use of Derrida not altogether dissimilar to my own, 'deconstructive readings do not by any means invalidate the distinctions in question [here, nature/culture in all its variants] or find faults with the texts that rely on them; on the contrary, they enhance the significance of the texts as cultural indexes by tracing within them much more than the writer's conscious intentions' (Peculiar Language, p.22).

My thesis therefore attempts to address three different but interrelated issues. (1) It seeks to develop a reading of Burke which demonstrates the central importance of his texts to an understanding of the interplay between politics and culture at the end of the eighteenth century, and tries to rethink the Burke problem not in order to catch Burke out (expose his secret psychology or ideology, or find fault with his argument), but to trace how his texts strenuously engage with instabilities endemic to, in Attridge's phrase, 'the intellectual and ideological texture of [a] period' (p.53) in which the order of things was undergoing revolutionary upheaval. (2) I suggest that Burke's texts constitute a sensitive 'seismometer,' registering the faintest as well as the most violent tremors of a society and culture in crisis, and that it is therefore crucial to read them as texts in order to initiate a more textual approach to the politics of Romanticism in which the 'text and background' paradigm is dislodged by a practice which pays full attention to the textual nature of context. (3) On a larger scale still, a reading of Burke enables us investigate a particularly crucial example of the interplay between culture and politics, literature and history. Although the notion of discourse enables us to understand how all kinds of linguistic productions operate with a set of paradigms which serve as indices to a culture's implicit assumptions, textual reading is crucial

if we are to understand the discontinuities which foster that culture's anxieties and concerns. In this way, my reading of Burke's texts from 1757 and 1790 (the latter of which concerned all of Europe) intervenes within a set of questions which preoccupy a more limited section of the western world in the late 1980s.

1. The following biographical sketch of Burke is gleaned from Cone's two-volume political biography (Age of the American Revolution, and Age of the French Revolution), and from Iain Hampsher-Monk's introduction to his Political Philosophy of Edmund Burke, pp.1-43 (pp.1-6). The rest of Hampsher-Monk's introduction to this selection of Burke's writings provides excellent introductory material on 'Eighteenth-century political theory and the political background to Burke's thought' (pp.6-14), 'The political economy of empire' (pp.14-30), and 'Burke's political philosophy' (pp.30-43).

2. The borough of Wendover was controlled by Lord Verney; about one hundred people were qualified to vote (in a population of thirteen hundred) and they were all Verney's tenants (Age of the American Revolution, pp.76-77). When Verney lost control of the seat in 1774, Burke was invited to stand for, and was successfully elected by, the free borough of Bristol (which had a relatively wide franchise) (Age of the American Revolution, pp.267-76, Hampsher-Monk, p.3). When he lost the seat in 1780 Burke returned once more to the patronage system, accepting Malton from Lord Rockingham and representing it until he retired in 1794.

3. In the course of a particularly useful account of the way Burke's personal and political fortunes, and his understanding of political events during his career, may have contributed to the making of Reflections, F.P. Lock points out that 'a new element in the 1780s was the [to Burke] deplorable way the aristocratic guardians of the constitution seemed to be deserting their posts. Burke regarded aristocratic radicalism as an absurd paradox, yet it was very much in evidence in the 1780s' (Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France, p.41).

4. Burke continued to write against the French Revolution until his death; the most important of these writings are Thoughts on French Affairs (1791), Letter to a Member of the National Assembly (1791), Observations on the Conduct of the Minority (1793), Remarks on the Policy of the Allies (1793), Letter to a Noble Lord (1795), and Letters on a Regicide Peace (1796). My main interest, however, is in Reflections and if I refer to any of the above it is only in passing.

5. Lock (pp.193-94) suggests that Cone's reading participates in a tendency in modern criticism to synthesize Burke's thought into a system, and is particularly influenced (though presumably only in the second volume) by Peter J. Stanlis's Edmund Burke and the Natural Law (which was published in 1958).

6. For a polemical discussion of the relation between New Criticism and its ideological context in the United States, see Terry Eagleton, Literary Theory, pp.46-50.

7. It is striking how much discussion, in precisely these terms, was given over by his early readers to the nature of Burke's language. In the 1807 essay on 'Burke,' 'written in a fit of extravagant candour, at a time when I thought I could do justice, or more than justice, to an enemy, without betraying a cause,' William Hazlitt finds it important to ask 'whether Burke was a poet.' He concludes in the negative, not only because Burke's 'subject-matter ... is not poetical,' but also because 'the finest parts' of his writings 'are illustrations or personifications of dry abstract ideas; and the union between the idea and the illustration is not of that perfect and pleasing kind as to constitute poetry, or indeed to be admissible, but for the effect intended to be produced by it; that is, by every means in our power to give animation and attraction to subjects in themselves barren of ornament, but which at the same time are pregnant with the most important consequences, and in which the understanding and the passions are equally interested' (Complete Works, 7, pp.301-13 [pp.312-13]). In a passage which reveals the gendered nature of thinking about language in this period, Hazlitt claims that Burke 'was so far from being a gaudy or flowery writer, that he was one of the severest writers we have. ... One would suppose, to hear people talk of Burke, that his style was such as would have suited the 'Lady's Magazine'; soft, smooth, showy, tender, insipid, full of fine words, without any meaning. ... The florid style is a mixture of affectation and commonplace. Burke's was a union of untameable vigour and originality' (pp.309-10). Conservative thinkers were also exercised by the nature of Burke's language, and in similar terms. As late as 1828, Thomas De Quincey seems to have felt that Burke's rhetorical practice was still in need of defence. In the essay on 'Rhetoric,' he claims that Burke was 'the supreme writer of his century,' and defends him against the 'immortal donkeys' who have 'brayed away for one third of a century about that which ye are pleased to call his "fancy." Fancy in your throats, ye miserable twaddlers! As if Edmund Burke were the man to play with his fancy, for the purposes of separable ornament!' ('Rhetoric' [1828], Collected Writings, X, pp.81-133 [pp.114-15]). Echoing Coleridge's formula -- developed to describe Burke's language -- that 'it seems characteristic of true eloquence, to reason in metaphors; of declamation, to argue by metaphors' ('Review of Burke's "Letter to a Noble Lord,"' [March 1796], in The Watchman, edited by Lewis Patton, Collected Works, 2, pp.30-39 [p.31]), De Quincey argues that a 'fine thinker' has 'a schematizing (or, to use a plainer but less accurate expression, a figurative) understanding. In that sense, and for that purpose, Burke

is figurative: but, understood, as he has been understood by the long-eared race of his critics, not as thinking in and by his figures, but as deliberately laying them on by way of enamel or after-ornament, -- not as incarnating, but simply as *dressing* his thoughts in imagery, -- so understood, he is not the Burke of reality, but a poor fictitious Burke, modelled after the poverty of conception which belongs to his critics' (p.115). But even De Quincey qualifies his position: 'It is true, however, that in some rare cases Burke did indulge himself in a pure rhetorician's use of fancy; consciously and profusely lavishing his ornaments for mere purposes of effect' (p.115). Nevertheless, Burke's figurative performance is given as an exemplary contrast to 'the French writers' who use merely 'mechanical devices for raising the style; [while] in the substance of the composition, apart from its dress, there is nothing properly rhetorical' (p.124). Developing these distinctions, he writes that 'it may be remarked of the imagery in the French rhetoric that it is thinly sown, commonplace, deficient in splendour, and above all merely ornamental; that is to say, it does no more than echo and repeat what is already said in the thought which it is brought to illustrate; whereas in Jeremy Taylor and in Burke it will be found usually to extend and amplify the thought, or to fortify it by some indirect argument of its truth' (p.125). Coleridge's introductory remarks to his 'Review of Burke's Letter to a Noble Lord,' confirm that conservative attacks on 'French style' and radical attacks on Burke's rhetoric were often couched in the same terms: 'When men of low and creeping faculties wish to depreciate works of genius, it is their fashion to sneer at them as "*mere declamation.*" However accurate the facts, however just the inferences, yet if to these be added the tones of feeling, and the decorations of fancy, "*it is all mere declamation.*" Whatever is dull and frigid is extolled as *cool reasoning*; and where, confessedly, nothing else is possessed, sound judgement is charitably attributed. This mode of evading an adversary's argument is fashionable among the aristocratic faction, when they speak of the French writers; and has been applied with nauseous frequency to the writings of EDMUND BURKE by some low-minded sophisters who disgrace the cause of freedom' (The Watchman, p.30).

8. See Conor Cruise O'Brien, 'Edmund Burke, Master of English,' and Tariq Ali, 'Tom Paine's Schooldays' (review of A.J. Ayer's Thomas Paine). Ali's use of 'deconstruction' follows currently fashionably misuses of the word to mean something like damaging criticism.

9. 'The spectre haunting Europe in The Communist Manifesto (1848), and haunting the world today, walks for the first time in the pages of Burke' (O'Brien, introduction to Reflections, p.9). (All references to O'Brien's simulating introduction and notes are referred to as

'O'Brien.') This is not, of course, to suggest that Burke was a proto-communist but that he is acutely sensitive to the trends which the Revolution initiates.

10. For a discussion of favourable responses to Reflections, see Lock, pp.133-38.

11. For a 'Chronological Survey of the Controversy Concerning Burke's Reflections, 1790-1793,' see Language of Politics, pp.265-71. The most recent study of the political pamphlets of the early 1790s considerably expands on Boulton's findings, claiming that at least 225 were published in response to Reflections, while up to 325 involved Burke, Paine, and Richard Price (see Gayle Trusdel Pendleton, 'English Pamphlet Literature of the Age of the French Revolution'). For a good introduction to the Revolution controversy, as well as a selection of extracts from pamphlets for and against Burke, see Burke, Paine, Godwin, and the Revolution Controversy, edited by Marilyn Butler. The statistics of the Revolution controversy alone indicate its importance in shaping the thought and issues of the 1790s and beyond. The sales of Burke's Reflections are impressive even by today's standards: 5000 copies in 17 days and 30,000 within a few years. But if these sales were high, those of Paine's Rights of Man were astonishing: part one sold 50,000 copies in 1791 alone, while parts one and two together sold 200,000 in two years. By 1809, Paine estimated sales at one and a half million -- which if exaggerated is at least of the right order (see Language of Politics, pp.79-84; Henry Collins, pp.32-34; E.P. Thompson, p.117; Olivia Smith, pp.57-58; and Marilyn Butler, The Revolution Controversy, pp.35 and p.108). Such huge sales, and the fact that its low cost made it available to 'the lower orders,' seems, as much as its content, to have stimulated the government's action against the book (see Thompson, pp.117-18; and Olivia Smith, pp.63-67). For a useful collection of contemporary responses to Burke, see Edmund Burke, Selections, introduced by A.M.D. Hughes, pp.1-38.

12. For information about Depont, and about Burke's relation to him, see Lock, pp.52-54.

13. Boulton quotes from de Pont's Answer to the Reflections of the Right Hon. Edmund Burke (1791).

14. Henry Thomas Buckle, quoted by C.B. Macpherson, Burke, p.4.

15. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'On the Grounds of Government', The Friend (October, 1809), Collected Works, 4, II, p.123.

16. 'Character of Mr. Burke' (1807), Complete Works, 7, pp.301-13 (p.301).

17. 'Character of Mr. Burke' (1817), Complete Works, 7, pp.226-29 (p.226). Hazlitt's doubled attempt to write about Burke's character illustrates Jonathan Cook's contention, in 'Hazlitt: Criticism and Ideology,' that Hazlitt's work may almost be defined as an on-going critique of Burke's writings.
18. For a detailed discussion of the contemporary reception to Reflections, see Lock, pp.132-165; Lock's account of the subsequent vacillations in interpretation through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (pp.166-99) claims that 'interpreted broadly, the critical history of the Reflections could become a virtual history of political thought since 1790' (p.166). An outline of the long-continued and on-going critical controversy over the nature of Burke's political thought -- whether conservative or liberal, utilitarian-positivist-pragmatist or natural law philosopher, aristocratic or capitalist, revolutionary or counter-revolutionary -- is given by Clara I. Gandy and Peter J. Stanlis in Edmund Burke, A Bibliography of Secondary Studies, pp.123-30. This is the best source of bibliographical material on Burke up to 1982. For further discussion of the conflicts in interpretations of Burke over the last century, see Walter D. Love, '"Meaning" in the History of Conflicting Interpretations of Burke.'
19. Raymond Williams, Culture and Society, p.23; Williams alludes to the title of A.A. Baumann's Edmund Burke, the Founder of Modern Conservatism (1929).
20. Burke's Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs (1791) (Works, VI, pp.69-267) strives to demonstrate -- in face of charges of apostasy from Burke's own party colleagues -- a consistency between the political principles of Reflections and the settlement of 1688-89. Burke anticipates such an accusation in the last paragraph of Reflections (pp.376-77).
- 21 See Macpherson, Burke, pp.3-4, and O'Brien, pp.56-76.
22. Gandy and Stanlis arrange their bibliography of critical writings on Burke in thirteen separate categories, including 'Burke as Writer and Speaker,' 'Burke's Aesthetic Theory,' 'Interpretations of Burke's Political Thought,' 'Economics, Society and Religion,' 'Burke and the American Colonies,' 'Burke and France,' 'Reputation and Influence,' and 'Miscellaneous Writings on Burke.' Stanlis provides a useful, if limited, sketch of 'Burke's Historical Reputation: 1797-1981,' which demonstrates how interpretations of his political position have fluctuated wildly over the past two hundred years (pp.xix-xxx).

23. For further introductory material on the notion of discourse, see Diane Macdonell, Theories of Discourse, especially pp.1-7.

24. Lock suggests that 'few critics have gone as far as Hazlitt in assigning Burke to literature rather than to history or politics' (p.176). For an example of Hazlitt's attempt to separate the prose from the politics, see the earlier note on early disputes about the nature of Burke's language. Elsewhere, Hazlitt can claim that 'politics became poetry in [Burke's] hands' ('Arguing in a Circle,' Complete Works, 19). For a sustained exploration of Hazlitt's ambivalence towards Burke's politicization of the imagination for reactionary ends, see John Whale, 'Hazlitt on Burke: The Ambivalent Position of a Radical Essayist.'

25. For a discussion of the 'literary qualities' of Burke's writings,' see Peter Hughes 'Originality and Allusion,' and O'Brien, 'Edmund Burke: Master of English.'

26. Lock analyses Reflections precisely in terms of its careful exploitation of classical rhetorical techniques (pp.100-31).

27. See Matthew Arnold, 'The Function of Criticism in the Present Time,' Selected Prose, pp.130-57 (p.139), quoted by Williams, p.24.

28. Richard Price, Discourse on the Love of Our Country, p.49 (quoted in Reflections, p.157, and by O'Brien, p.28). Burke had once been an advocate of the dissenters' cause - - until they supported Pitt in 1784.

29. Lock regards Kramnick's study as 'surely the most perverse interpretation of Burke to date' (p.198) -- thus shifting the charge of 'perversity' from Burke to his 'psycho-biographer.'

30. Kramnick is referring to Engels, 'On Historical Materialism.'

31. Compare Kramnick, pp.154-55.

32. This too draws on Kramnick, pp.93-98.

33. Lock is equally dismissive of Macpherson's 'anachronistic' reading of Burke as he is of Kramnick's 'perverse' one. The only valid reading of Burke, Lock suggests, is to see him as he presented himself and as George III saw him -- as an defender of the 'cause of the Gentlemen.' 'To understand the Reflections today,' Lock sententiously concludes, 'we need to combine a sensitivity to Burke's rhetoric with an imaginative historical

understanding of the conditions that shaped his political world' (p.199).

34. For an account of the multiple revolutions between 1789 and 1848, see E.J. Hobsbawm, Age of Revolution.

35. My use of 'paradigm' in terms of a model shared by contemporaneous human sciences is akin to Thomas Kuhn's in The Structure of Scientific Revolutions.

36. Jacques Derrida, 'Some Questions and Responses,' The Linguistics of Writing, p.262.

37. For an account of the strained intellectual relation between Derrida and Foucault, see Gayatri Spivak, 'Translator's Preface,' Of Grammatology, pp.lix-lxiii.

38. Influential criticisms of post-structuralism from this perspective have come from Frank Lentricchia, After the New Criticism, and Terry Eagleton, Literary Theory, pp.127-50.

39. For a recent collection of essays which assembles important work on this problem, see Post-Structuralism and the Question of History; the introduction by Bennington and Young (pp.1-11) offers a brief history of the controversy and suggests ways in which Derrida challenges received ideas about history and politics. The collection includes an example of Spivak's attention to the politics of deconstruction, 'Speculations on reading Marx: after reading Derrida,' which implicitly distances itself from the work of one of her students (Michael Ryan's Marxism and Deconstruction) which nevertheless forms an important attempt to 'articulate' Derrida and Marx.

40. Derek Attridge suggests that the structure of thought which Derrida analyses in Rousseau (characterized as the strange logic of the supplement) 'is far from being a mere historical curiosity: it continues to underlie most conceptions of ethics, education, religion, politics, law, and aesthetics' (Peculiar Language, p.43). Attridge's demonstration of the way the supplementary logic inhabits and problematizes 'classical' and 'romantic' conceptions of the relation between nature and culture, and of the political implications of the instability of this structure of thought, is germane to my own reading of Burke.

41. Johnson refers to Jacques Derrida, 'La différence,' Théorie d'Ensemble (Paris, Seuil, 1968), pp.51-52.

42. For Derrida's reading of Saussure, see Of Grammatology, pp.6-73. For a Derridean reading of Saussure which revises Derrida's own reading, see Attridge, 'Language as History/History as Language.'

43. It must be said that historians are not happy with using the term 'terror' for Pitt's policies: 'The Government's strategy has sometimes been termed "Pitt's Reign of Terror," though the repression was less than that in contemporary France and pales in comparison with policies of some modern regimes. Nonetheless, there can be no denying the Government's determination to destroy the radical threat or the suffering inflicted on many honest men whose only crime was a desire to improve the lot of the ordinary people' (H.T. Dickinson, British Radicalism and the French Revolution, p.37; also see Clive Emsley, 'Repression, "terror" and the rule of law').

44. For a discussion of the ways Burke and Paine might be involved in similar bourgeois projects, see David Aers, 'Coleridge and the Egg that Burke Laid.'

45. Anne Marion Osborn claims, strikingly enough, that, if Burke's project is to supplant Rousseau, he curiously turns out to add to or develop Rousseau's work; rather than being incompatible opposites, Burke's work comes to *supplement* the insidious effects of Rousseau's: 'in the course of his denunciations of Rousseau and his disciples, Burke showed the essential weaknesses of Rousseau's doctrine, while at the same time he gave it its practical corrective. Thus as he pointed to the dangers and problems which confronted the state that was dedicated to liberty, he supplemented Rousseau's work' (Anne Marion Osborn, Rousseau and Burke, p.vii). 'From a comparison of ... [Rousseau's and Burke's] ideas,' Osborn suggests, 'it becomes evident that, in spite of Burke's scathing denunciations of Rousseau in the years of the French revolution when he regarded him as a false prophet who was leading a great empire to destruction, there was no important divergence of opinion on the question of fundamental principles. Indeed, when on occasion Burke presents a statement of abstract principle, he gives the best possible phrasing of Rousseau's doctrine. ... It is not necessary to conclude that Burke derived the essentials of his political philosophy from Rousseau, for he did not. He was entirely unaware of the fact that his sovereign principles were in accord with Rousseau's' (p.vii). For Burke's reading of Rousseau's works, see Peter J. Stanlis, 'Burke and the Sensibility of Rousseau.'

46. All of these themes are interwoven in Rousseau and in Derrida's reading -- especially the analogous relation between sexuality and writing (see Of Grammatology, pp.144-57). Of particular interest is the relation between speculation (the links between vision, philosophical writing, and economic venture implied by this term are germane to my own project) and the fetishization of representation in the auto-affective moment: 'But what is no longer deferred is also absolutely deferred. The presence [of the imagined woman] that is

thus delivered to us in the present is a chimera. Auto-affectation is a pure speculation. The sign, the image, the representation, which come to supplement the absent presence are the illusions which sidetrack us. To culpability, to the anguish of death and castration, is added or rather is assimilated the experience of frustration. *Donner le change* ["sidetracking" or, "giving money"]: in whatever sense it is understood, this expression describes the recourse to the supplement admirably. ... The enjoyment of the *thing* itself is thus undermined, in its act and in its essence, by frustration.' (Of Grammatology, p.154).

47. See Of Grammatology, pp.167-71. Derrida reads The Essay on the Origin of Languages as desiring, among other things, that mastery and servitude, liberty and non-liberty be exterior to each other. This can be seen in terms of the exteriority of writing and speech: 'Heidegger [in 'Of the Essence of Truth'] has summarized the history of metaphysics by repeating that which made of liberty the condition of presence, that is to say, of truth. And speech always presents itself as the best expression of liberty. It is by itself language at liberty and the liberty of language, the freedom of speech which need not borrow its signifiers from the exteriority of the world, and which therefore seems incapable of being dispossessed' (Of Grammatology, p.168). Derrida sees Rousseau's Essay 'as the accomplishment of the "philosophic" program charted by Duclos [in his Commentary].' In Duclos, 'the degradation of the language is the symptom of a social and political degradation (a theme that will become most frequent in the second half of the eighteenth century) ... The political model that inspires Duclos is Athenian or Roman democracy. The language is the property of the people. Each derives its unity from the other. ... "It is a people in a body that makes a language ... A people is thus the absolute master of the spoken language, and it is an empire they possess unawares." To dispossess the people of their mastery of the language and thus of their self-mastery, one must suspend the spoken element in language. Writing is the very process of the dispersal of peoples unified as bodies and the beginning of their enslavement: "The body of a nation alone has authority over the spoken language, and the writers have the right over the written language: *The people, Varro said, are not masters of writing as they are of speech*"' (Of Grammatology, pp.169-70). Such a theorization of speech as freedom and writing as a means of enslavement has to be qualified, however, in reading the politics of language in the eighteenth century and in the Revolution controversy. It is true that Burke cites the manuscripts of the dead for his authority and that Paine argues for the freedom of speech of the living; but Paine's text, the democratic societies inspired by it, and the radical projects for a phonetic language, are also concerned with enabling people

to read and write. This is seen as an urgent political project in a context where writing is the preserve of the ruling classes and where the people, if they are allowed access to written texts at all, are limited to reading (for a discussion of the political implications of language and writing in eighteenth-century England, see John Barrell, An Equal, Wide Survey, pp.110-175).

48. For the idea that the French Revolution was self-consciously rhetorical or theatrical, see Lynn Hunt, Politics, Culture, & Class in the French Revolution, pp.19-119, especially pp.19-28.

Part I: Politics, Labour, and Language in Burke's Early Aesthetics

The first part of this thesis produces a reading of Burke's Enquiry which locates it within a history of aesthetics from Longinus and Milton through to Kant and Hegel. Chapter 1 concentrates on the main arguments of the Enquiry and its place within eighteenth-century aesthetics; in doing this it attempts to understand Burke's aesthetic categories in terms of their political and historical relation to the political settlement of 1688. Chapter 2 examines the ways Burke's early aesthetics can be seen as engaging with a set of problems intrinsic to its own project and endemic to the discourse of political economy in the late eighteenth century. Chapter 3 returns to the Enquiry in order to examine how Burke's apparently marginal account of the power of language forces us to reread Burke's aesthetics and rethink its politics. Throughout the discussion I move forwards and backwards between the Enquiry and Reflections in order to establish and complicate the relationship between them and to anticipate the ways in which a rereading of the former demands a reinterpretation of the latter.

Chapter 1: Burke's Enquiry: Aesthetics for a Bourgeois Revolution

This chapter concentrates on the aesthetic categories of the sublime and the beautiful, looking at their development and significance in the eighteenth century in order to produce a reading of Burke's Enquiry which will foreground embedded relations there between aesthetics and politics. Such a project involves reading Burke's treatise against late-eighteenth-century economic and philosophical discourse in order to trace the network of paradigms in which the Enquiry figures. This will point forwards to a re-reading of Reflections which suggests that, in the particular context of the Revolution controversy, radical possibilities inherent in the early aesthetics are repressed in favour of other more reactionary ones. At the same time, those repressed possibilities continue to exert an interior pressure within the later text which might partially account for the sheer energy of Burke's rage against radicalism. This will allow subsequent chapters to suggest that a necessary part of radicalism's project, in the early 1790s, is to develop an 'alternative' aesthetics -- centred around the notion of an authenticating labour -- whose principle characteristics are yet, paradoxically, already inscribed within Burke's mid-eighteenth-century treatise.

(i) A Theory not to be Revoked

The first edition of Burke's Enquiry appeared in 1757; the critical reception it received, which Burke read and took note of, prompted him to publish a second and substantially revised edition in 1759. In the introduction to his edition of the Enquiry, Boulton indicates that although 'each critic acknowledged the newness of many of Burke's assertions, and praised his perspicuity and provocative method of presentation, ...

none fully accepted his theory' (p.xxiii).¹ The 1759 edition included a new preface, an introductory essay 'On Taste,' and a section on 'Power,' as well as additions which, Boulton suggests, meet attacks on the theory (especially the association of the sublime with pain and terror) by dogmatically reiterating the initial argument (p.xxv). In the new preface, Burke explains that 'though I have not found sufficient reason, or what appeared to me sufficient, for making any material change in my theory, I have found it necessary in many places to explain, illustrate and enforce it' (Enquiry, p.3). That he goes on to repudiate critics for not having attended closely enough to the theory and for not realizing that it was the main point of his treatise (pp.4-6), suggests that Burke's investment in the theoretical principles developed in the Enquiry will not allow them to be easily relinquished.

Burke's theory is developed through establishing a number of distinctions, some of them common in the eighteenth century, some of them innovative. The first of these, fundamental to all that follows, is the commonplace distinction between pain and pleasure (pp.33-35). This leads on to the more important and controversial distinction between pleasure and delight -- the former being the enjoyment of some 'positive' stimulus of the senses, the latter (Burke claims) the previously undefined feeling 'which accompanies the removal of pain or danger' (pp.35-37). These two sensations, held to be utterly opposed to each other, are in turn associated with another ubiquitous eighteenth-century distinction -- that between the passions which accompany or promote self-preservation and those concerning society: while 'the passions ... which are conversant about the preservation of the individual, turn chiefly on pain and danger, and ... are the most powerful of all the passions' (p.38), 'the society of the sexes' and 'general society' are accompanied by pleasure (pp.40-41).² Through this series

of distinctions, Burke is able to define his aesthetic categories:

Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime*; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling (p.39).

beauty ... is a name I shall apply to all such qualities in things as induce in us a sense of affection and tenderness, or some other passion the most nearly resembling these. The passion of love has its rise in positive pleasure (p.51).

These definitions lead Burke to argue that the sublime and the beautiful are utterly distinct from each other: 'They are indeed ideas of a very different nature, one being founded on pain, the other on pleasure; and however they may vary afterwards from the direct nature of their causes, yet these causes keep up an eternal distinction between them' (p.124).

By grounding his aesthetics in the emotional experience of the individual rather than in the object itself or in tradition or custom, Burke's Enquiry is said to participate in and encapsulate a significant break in aesthetic thought (Boulton, pp.li-lx), while, in its association of the sublime with pain and danger, Boulton claims that Burke's theory 'had no precedent' (p.lvi). It was this last step which provoked most of the criticism which prompted Burke to repeat and further illustrate his argument.² In the remainder of this chapter, I want, among other things, to consider why this theoretical account of the origin of the sublime in pain or danger represents both the challenge and the problem of the Enquiry. This will involve a consideration of the ideological role and implications of Burke's theory -- especially of the possibilities and difficulties raised by

its grounding in a physiological, sensationist account of aesthetic experience verifiable by everyone.

(ii) The Question of the Interplay between Burke's Aesthetics and Politics

I want to follow the history of the sublime and the beautiful within eighteenth-century discourse in order to register how far Burke's formulations represent a break with that tradition and how far they arise out of it. In order to do this, I draw on the critical argument about eighteenth-century aesthetics -- especially on Boulton's informative introduction to the Enquiry, Martin Price's To the Palace of Wisdom, a study of 'order' and 'energy' in Augustan and early Romantic poetry, Samuel H. Monk's study of the eighteenth-century sublime in The Sublime, and Thomas Weiskel's more recent theoretical analysis in The Romantic Sublime. The trajectory of the sublime in English discourse can be said to 'take flight' in 1674 -- though prior manifestations can be found, say, in Shakespearean tragedy (Boulton, pp.lix-lx). In that year, amid the power struggles of an England in social, political, and economic transition, Boileau's influential French translation of Longinus and the twelve-book edition of Paradise Lost were published -- these being the two texts which were, as Weiskel puts it, 'to preside ... over the fashion of the sublime' (p.8).⁴ Indeed, as Monk points out, for the eighteenth century, the word 'Miltonic' came to be synonymous with sublimity (p.69).

The political status of the sublime seems to have been at stake at least since the formulations it received in early eighteenth-century English discourse -- in which, Martin Price argues, it features as a mode of revolt against the neo-classical ethos of order and balance (Price, pp.361-370; also see Boulton, pp.lvii-lx). On the other hand, in what Weiskel cites as the 'classic history

of the sublime as a critical fashion' (p.5), Monk writes that,

It seems to me preferable not to regard the cult of the sublime as a revolutionary movement outside of and against neo-classical standards of taste (though eventually it certainly helped to overthrow those standards), but rather as the other, the constantly present but before the 1740s not always eagerly visited, pole on which the world of eighteenth-century art turned (p.iii).

Two models of revolution are at stake here -- revolution as something imposed from without against revolution as a manifestation of internal contradictions already at play within a structure. The difference here seems to depend on whether Addison's Spectator Papers of 1712, in which apparently new aesthetic categories emerge, are seen as complicit with neo-classical tradition -- albeit as its 'other' pole -- or as the first signs of a completely new movement. In Price's reading of those papers, 'Beauty ceases to be a term for all aesthetic experience' and has to take a diminished place alongside two new categories formulated in the Spectator: 'the Great (which was to become the sublime), [and] the New or Uncommon (which was to become the picturesque)' (Palace of Wisdom, p.362). The 'Great' produces, in Addison's phrase, 'pleasing astonishment' -- this being so because 'the Mind of Man naturally hates everything that looks like a Restraint upon it, and is apt to fancy itself under a sort of Confinement when the Sight is pent up in a narrow Compass. ... On the contrary, a spacious Horison is an Image of Liberty' (Spectator, 412 [23 June 1712], quoted in Palace of Wisdom, p.362). 'Liberty' is therefore naturalized or made over into aesthetic experience, but it may be that its political accent continues to have force. The emphasis on landscape signals and anticipates what is for Monk the significant transition which the sublime undergoes in the middle of the eighteenth century from

rhetorical style to aestheticized encounter with nature in its irregular or vast aspects (Monk, pp.63-83). Indeed -- and in this Monk seems to contradict his prefatory remarks quoted above -- this image of nature and the violent emotions which correspond to it represent nothing less than an onslaught against neo-classical enlightenment values (p.63, pp.67-68, p.75). But Monk's history of the sublime's transition between 1735 and 1756 adds still more facets which encourage the view of the sublime as in some ways 'revolutionary.' For part of that transition involves a shift from the authority of tradition to an emphasis on the authenticity of individual experience. This is seen as being initiated by Hume's discussion of the sublime, in Treatise on Human Nature (1739), in psychological rather than 'literary' terms (Monk, pp.63-65). This enables Richard Hurd's subsequent formulation, in 1749, that the sublime 'can be estimated only from its *impression* on the mind, not by any speculative or general rules' (quoted by Monk, p.70).⁵

These various and related transitions -- from rhetoric to nature, from tradition to individual psychology -- are said to find their most influential formulation (prior to Burke) in Baillie's An Essay on the Sublime (1747). According to Monk, Baillie 'frees himself from all rhetorical preconceptions, and attacks the problem through an analysis of the sublime in nature, for he maintains that the sublime in writing is a description of the sublimity of the external world' (p.73). In addition, Baillie's analysis is influentially 'centred in the exploration of the subject rather than the description of the object' (Monk, p.74). By consolidating the transition from 'a code of externally applied rules as an aesthetic norm' to interest in 'individual response,' Baillie is thought to have 'clearly indicated the method of analysis that was to be followed ... after the middle of the century' (Monk, p.85). And yet, implicit in its impressive bursting of neo-classicism's confining

aesthetics in the name of individual liberty, is the problem of co-opting the sublime for a social or ethical programme. Monk shows that Baillie regards as sublime not only 'heroism, power, desire for fame, universal benevolence, and patriotism,' but also 'desire for honour, and the wholly immoral "ravaging conqueror" ... so long as the object aimed at is vast and great' (p.76). Baillie's treatise also suggests that the sublime does not affirm the power of selfhood in a wholly unmixed way: 'He is interested in the complexity and the apparent paradoxes that make up the sublime. Thus, the sublime dilates and elevates the soul, while fear sinks and contracts it; yet both are felt upon viewing what is great and awful' (Monk, p.76). Yet Baillie does try to iron out these paradoxes: either these contradictory effects 'succeed each other by such infinitely quick Vicissitudes, as to appear instantaneous,' or objects are capable of producing, through association, two different kinds of sublimity -- both sublime terror and 'the joyous sublime.'⁶ We can therefore see that the sublime is as much an on-going problem for eighteenth century discourse as it is something unambiguously celebrated.

As this new aesthetic develops, traditional notions of beauty become devalued in comparison: Monk demonstrates 'how the sublime was instinctively felt to be something beyond the sphere of neo-classic beauty' (p.67, also see p.75). And yet it seems that beauty itself undergoes important transformations through this period. In Uvedale Price, for example, beauty becomes less a matter of proportion and order and is characterized more in predominantly erotic terms (Martin Price, p.364). Such a tendency can also be found in Akenside's Pleasures of the Imagination (1744), which both relates beauty to truth and goodness ('for truth and good are one / And beauty dwells in them, and they in her'), and personifies it as a maiden who 'For ever beamest on th'enchanted heart / Love, and harmonious wonder and delight / Poetic.'⁷ In Monk's

account, Burke's Enquiry is written to resolve these uncertainties about the sublime and the beautiful: 'It was in an effort to correct the confusion and ambiguity of discussions of beauty and sublimity that young Burke undertook his investigation of the subject' (p.85). In fact, in what Monk believes to be 'one of the most important aesthetic documents that eighteenth-century England produced' (pp.86-87), Burke at one and the same time 'breaks with tradition' and 'carries over from the past several ideas' (p.86).

If in the period in which the Enquiry was taking shape 'the emotions and imagination began to destroy the perfect balance and harmony which neo-classic art had sought' (Monk, p.87), I suggest that this 'destruction' takes place in Burke's treatise through and within the beautiful as well as the sublime. I would like to pursue this suggestion further, since most critics tend to neglect Burke's concept of the beautiful.² In the Enquiry, the beautiful *subverts* the ethical status of the neo-classical aesthetic by being utterly divorced from its traditional relations with proportion, fitness, perfection, virtue, truth, and goodness. Burke's beauty is defined not in terms of an object's abstract properties but through the *sensation* or *effect* the object produces on the observing subject: 'By beauty I mean, that quality or those qualities in bodies by which they cause love, or some passion similar to it' (p.91). But although Burke is at great pains to distinguish this 'love' from desire (p.91), his conception of the beautiful can be seen primarily in erotic terms. Indeed, Dugald Stewart was quick to point out that 'the idea of *female beauty* was evidently uppermost in Mr. Burke's mind when he wrote his book.'³ Breaking with neo-classical and enlightenment values, Burke first argues that beauty is not caused by proportion in the object: proportion is 'a creature of the understanding,' while 'beauty demands no assistance from our reasoning.' This is said to be most clearly revealed

in considering human beauty. After presenting Renaissance theories of ideal human proportion, Burke asks:

are these proportions exactly the same in all handsome men? or are they at all the proportions found in beautiful women? nobody will say that they are; yet both sexes are undoubtedly capable of beauty, and the female of the greatest; which advantage I believe will hardly be attributed to the superior exactness of proportion in the fair sex (p.98).

In fact, beauty is precisely distinguished from custom and customary proportions (and this utter divorce between beauty and custom should be carefully noted): 'Indeed beauty is so far from belonging to the idea of custom, that in reality what affects us in that manner is extremely rare and uncommon. The beautiful strikes us as much by its novelty as the deformed itself' (p.103).¹⁰

Burke's Enquiry goes on to assault other classical definitions of beauty. Considering the claim that the idea of fitness characterizes beauty, Burke argues that 'if beauty in our own species was annexed to use, men would be much more lovely than women' (p.106). An anatomist examines into and appreciates the fitness of the human body, but beauty is open to all and needs no such investigation: 'how different is [the anatomist's interest] from the affection which possesses an ordinary man at the sight of a delicate smooth skin, and all the other parts of beauty which require no investigation to be perceived' (p.108). Burke marshals similar arguments, with women's beauty as the clinching example in each case, against neo-classical notions that beauty is caused by perfection (p.110), by qualities of the mind (pp.110-11), or by virtue (p.112). Burke's definition of beauty, by centering on a certain representation of femininity, can therefore be seen as systematically undermining a category which is arguably the aesthetic correlative of the Augustan neo-classical state. The beautiful forms part of

Burke's critique of rationalism; beauty demands no assistance from our reasoning and requires no investigation to be perceived; on the contrary rational investigation destroys its effect. At the same time, this emphasis on a traditional construction of the 'feminine' seems to associate the beautiful with a prevalent image of the aristocracy. I will consider the implications of this at greater length; we will see that although Burke comes to champion an aristocratic beauty in Reflections, it is not at all clear that he does so in the Enquiry.

We have seen critics argue that the sublime -- more clearly than the beautiful, though in a different way -- is also a break with traditional aesthetics. This is especially so in that it introduces the energetic, the obscure, the disruptive, the unlimited, the powerful, and the terrible as a new set of positive terms. For Boulton, each of these qualities had been treated before Burke, but 'never before had they been brought together in a coherent and unified theory, and elaborated with such disregard for established aesthetic presuppositions.' By emphasizing these qualities, Burke 'is in open revolt against neo-classic principles' (Boulton, p.lvii). Both of Burke's aesthetic categories in the Enquiry, then, can be seen to be in 'open revolt' against a social order inextricably bound up with a particular set of aesthetic values. At the same time, however, I want to consider whether the 'radical' potential of each of Burke's aesthetic categories is not at once more political and less clear-cut than critics suggest.

In 1964, Neal Wood could claim that 'apparently no systematic effort has been made to ascertain whether a relation exists between the aesthetic theory of Burke's The Sublime and the Beautiful (1757) and his political ideas' ('Aesthetic Dimension of Burke's Political Thought,' p.41). This is thought especially surprising 'since Burke does draw the connection fairly explicitly in the book's longest section, entitled "Power" ... and in

three sections on beauty and the virtues' (p.42). Wood goes on to propose 'that Burke's two aesthetic categories, the sublime and the beautiful, inform and shape several of his fundamental political ideas' -- a proposition which allows yet another solution to the Burke problem:

Indeed, one can argue that these aesthetic categories are a unifying element of Burke's social and political outlook, that they give a degree of coherence and system to the welter of words which he bequeathed to mankind. This is of importance to the student of Burke who is plagued by the absence of architectonic intellectual structure (p.42).

Through a summary of some of the main points of the Enquiry, Wood argues that the later political writings demonstrate that Burke's ideal political state would be one which harmoniously combined the social virtues of beauty with sublime virtues such as justice and authority (pp.46-64). Wood interprets Burke as believing that the 'naked savagery' of the natural state needs to be supplemented with manners -- the 'good manners' of aristocratic Europe rather than the 'bad manners' of revolutionary France (pp.54-55). This distinction between different kinds of manners is emphasized because the elegant manners and customs of the aristocracy are supposed to promote social harmony, while Rousseau's teachings 'corrupt all taste and refinement as well as morals' (p.55). At the same time, in Wood's reading, Burke sees that the beauty of such a society needs to be complemented with stern authority, just as the family is made stable by a combination of the mother's love and the father's discipline (pp.48-49, p.57). For Burke's concept of the sublime seems to draw on Plato's notion of *aidos* -- a reverential fear (or a 'fear of intemperate pleasures'¹¹) necessary for the well-being of the social fabric (pp.58-59). Wood concludes that 'although it follows from Burke's preference for the sublime to the beautiful, that he considers justice a more admirable

virtue than love, in the social sphere authority and concord are equal partners' (p.64).

But there are a number of problems with such a straightforward correlation between Burke's early aesthetics and the later politics, partly because Burke treats 'second nature' or habit quite differently in Reflections from the way he does in the Enquiry (whereas Wood's argument partly depends on their value being equivalent in both texts [p.53]), and partly because, as we have seen, the sublime and the beautiful seem unable, at least in the Enquiry, to exist in harmonious relationship -- as Wood's *précis* itself reveals (pp.44-45). In addition, the distinction between different kinds of manners is perhaps more perplexing than Burke (or Wood) wants to recognize. In his late writings on France manners are figured as supplements to nature which, at their best, become like nature itself and fortify it, but which at their worst represent the greatest possible threat to both nature and society:

Manners are what vex or sooth, corrupt or purify, exalt or debase, barbarise or refine us, by a constant, steady, uniform, insensible operation, like that of the air we breathe in. They give their whole form and colour to our lives. According to their quality, they aid morals, they supply them, or they totally destroy them. Of this the new French legislators were aware; therefore ... they settled a system of manners, the most licentious, prostitute, and abandoned, that ever has been known, and at the same time the most coarse, rude, savage, and ferocious.¹²

Manners may therefore operate in various senses of the supplement -- as an aid, as a supplier of wants, or as a destroyer. And they do so through subtle rhetorical strategies which seek to disguise their artifice and so allow them to appear natural: manners are naturalized ('like ... the air we breathe in') through similitude, and they affect us by an 'insensible operation.' It is this which allows manners to have their positive effect, but it

is also one of their most dangerous qualities -- i.e. that they may affect (or infect) us without our awareness. In his writings on the Revolution, then, Burke attempts to distinguish habits, customs and manners into two quite separate kinds in ways which accord with the different inflexions of the supplement; this process is also a political one in that 'benevolent' supplementation characterizes English culture, while the 'dangerous' supplement is assigned to revolutionary France. That this reductive scheme is politically necessary for Reflections, and that the logic of the supplement 'deconstructs' Burke's ideological 'certainties,' is part of the argument of this thesis -- as is the claim that Burke gets himself into this tight corner not out of stupidity but because he is engaging with some of the crucial paradoxes of his century. One of the purposes of the present chapter is to try to demonstrate how Burke's aesthetics represents a significant articulation of these problems which forces us to rethink attempts to interrelate culture and politics in Burke's discourse.

Wood's article signals the beginnings of a new interest in the possible interrelation between Burke's aesthetics and politics.¹³ This attention is nevertheless anticipated by Burke's first readers. In Part II, we will see that Mary Wollstonecraft, in one of the first responses to Reflections, points to an interplay between politics and aesthetics in Burke and makes it the central lever of her critique. Boulton's introduction to his 1958 edition of Burke's Enquiry -- to which Wood acknowledges his debt -- points out that contemporary critics 'frequently accused [Burke] of trying to reproduce the terror and obscurity of the sublime' in Reflections (p.xxv). Boulton himself compares the techniques Burke uses in his apostrophe to Marie Antoinette in Reflections (pp.168-70) with those he praises thirty years earlier in Homer's description of Helen's 'fatal beauty' in The Iliad (p.lxxxii, Enquiry, pp.171-72). Although he resists the

conclusions which an 'unkind' critic might reach, Boulton's remarks make it possible to see Burke attempting to exploit the effective power of the sublime and the beautiful for political purposes in Reflections. In his later Language of Politics in the Age of Wilkes and Burke (1963), Boulton expands upon this suggestion¹⁴ -- though, as we saw in the introduction to this thesis, Burke's strategies are seen in a positive rather than a negative light.

In his introduction to the Enquiry, Boulton suggests that in that text 'Burke is consistently interested in strong emotional responses and clearly prefers, on grounds of intensity, the sublime to the beautiful' (p.xl). Burleigh Taylor Wilkins, in The Problem of Burke's Political Philosophy (1967), qualifies this observation: 'The chief difference between Burke's aesthetic and his political philosophy is that while it is correct to say that Burke preferred "on grounds of intensity the sublime to the beautiful" in art, he greatly feared and respected, on grounds of intensity, the sublime in society and politics' (p.151). Wilkins warns against the supposition that Burke's later political works are merely an application of principles developed in the earlier aesthetics (p.120), yet claims that the distinction between the sublime and the beautiful is 'fundamental' to Burke's political theory (p.123). The theory of 'sympathy' developed in the Enquiry is said to provide 'an important link between Burke's aesthetics and his political philosophy in that it is one of the mainsprings of human reactions regardless of whether they be in art or in politics' (p.145). But if Burke argues in the Enquiry that 'the three principal links in ['the great chain of society'] are *sympathy*, *imitation*, and *ambition*' (p.44), a close reading of the text at this point poses a number of problems which raise the question of the social utility of Burke's aesthetics generally. Firstly, 'society' here means '*general society*' as opposed to the 'society of the

sexes' (p.40); the latter is problematic for Burke in that its pleasures are 'of a lively character, rapturous and violent' (p.40), akin to the mere 'lust ... evident in brutes,' and only redeemed as social because men's attraction 'to the sex in general' is made discriminate through attachment 'to particulars of personal beauty' (p.42). Burke's beautiful is at best, then, an unstable mode of social adhesion. A second point is that sympathy and ambition function differently in the Enquiry, and that neither promote the social good as unambiguously as Burke seems to claim. Wilkins quotes part of the following in support of his argument:

sympathy must be considered as a sort of substitution, by which we are put into the place of another man, and affected in many respects as he is affected; so that this passion may either partake of the nature of those which regard self-preservation, and turning ^{up} on pain may be a source of the sublime; or it may turn upon ideas of pleasure; and then, whatever has been said of the social affections ... may be applicable here (Enquiry, p.44).

Sympathy is, then, supposed to be the means of operation of both the sublime and the beautiful. But if sympathy is 'a sort of substitution' in which the self takes the place of the other, is it not both a fictional or rhetorical move and, potentially, a negation of the other? Sympathy, whether with the other's pain or pleasure, is perhaps more 'antisocial' than Burke is willing to admit. Burke suggests that we always have 'a degree of delight' as well as pain when regarding the misfortunes of others (p.45), and tries to argue that 'our Creator' has 'designed' us in this way so that, rather than shunning those who suffer, we can attend them and so 'relieve ourselves' of the pain we inevitably feel at the sight of suffering (p.46). Burke clearly needs to insist that such delight does not arise from our own immunity from the pain or danger experienced by the other (pp.47-48), otherwise his

aesthetics might seem at once vicarious and self-centred. And yet, in these same passages, the sublime's principal characteristic -- the experience of delight 'when we have an idea of pain and danger, without being actually in such circumstances' (my emphasis) -- is reiterated three times (p.40, p.46, p.51).

I would therefore suggest that the social value of the sublime is uncertain or unstable in the Enquiry. Burke tries to soften it here in order to make it one of the bonding experiences of society, and yet its basis in self-preservation as opposed to the social passions points to the problematic nature of such an effort. In fact, the sublime's socially ambiguous nature is brought out in the discussion of ambition. Having praised the social virtues of sympathy and imitation, Burke curiously adds that these alone would never lead to social improvement and would leave men at the level of 'brutes' (p.50) -- and therefore, in his terms, at the level of the 'society of the sexes' rather than the 'society of men.' Progress comes, rather, through individual ambition and the 'satisfaction [a man feels] arising from the contemplation of his excelling his fellows' (p.50). Burke clinches his argument by suggesting that such a feeling is precisely that described by Longinus as the characteristic experience of the sublime -- producing 'a sort of swelling and triumph that is extremely grateful to the human mind' (p.50). The sublime, then, is experienced not through sympathy with, but at the expense of, or in competition with, other human beings. As such, it seems to be at once a spur and a threat to civilization. One of the aims of this chapter is to insert Burke's philosophical speculations into their social, political, and economic context in order to suggest that they participate in eighteenth-century capitalism's project to legitimize its values. The implicit claim in this discussion of ambition is that bourgeois processes of individuation are the only means by which social 'progress' (a catchword whose modern

figurative sense originates in the early seventeenth century) could occur. In this schema, as we will see, the beautiful becomes associated with aristocratic values.

Wilkins claims that even if the Enquiry had never been written many of the principles developed there could 'be inferred from the political writings' (p.148). And yet the problem the sublime's role and effects seems to pose for Burke's political theory is perhaps registered in Wilkins's need to qualify his remark:

One partial exception to this occurs, however, in Burke's treatment of those passions that attend the sublime and are concerned with self-preservation. In none of his other works is there so great an emphasis upon self-preservation or so sharp a contrast between the passions of self-preservation and those of society (p.148).

Wilkins concludes his chapter -- and this is the reason why he qualifies Boulton's statement that Burke prefers the sublime to the beautiful -- by suggesting that the discussion of power in the Enquiry helps to explain Burke's ambivalence towards governmental power, which is always 'capable of giving more pain than it could ever give pleasure' (p.149). At the same time, Wilkins contends that the Enquiry's hierarchical arrangement of human virtues in terms of sublimity and beauty reveals why Burke came to 'exalt wisdom and justice over reliefs, gratifications, and indulgences. Political wisdom and justice involve, Burke thought, matters of life and death and are therefore of ultimate concern in a way that easiness of temper, compassion, kindness, and liberality are not' (pp.150-51). But although such a 'philosophical' reading of Burke indicates (and attempts to resolve) the political questions raised by Burke's aesthetics, its presuppositions prevent it from investigating how the aesthetics is implicated within a set of perhaps irresolvable political and economic problems which confronted the eighteenth century. Wilkins's schematic

arrangement of sublime and beautiful political virtues in late Burke fails to register what I take to be the peculiar interest of Reflections -- that it strenuously attempts to resolve problems endemic to eighteenth-century society precisely in the moment of that society's greatest crisis.

Isaac Kramnick suggests that the different historical conditions which obtain between the Enquiry and Reflections might redistribute the relative values of the sublime and the beautiful in Burke's psychic economy:

the question is whether Burke's response to the sublime thirty years later will be the same as in his essay of 1757. Will he be so partial to the masculine principle? Will he still experience a certain delight in the horror, a certain joy and pleasure in the terror? Will he approve then ... of masculine ambition unleashed and of awesome masculine terror inflicted on gentle and delicate beauties. ... perhaps Burke would rethink his attitudes to the lesser virtues of grace and beauty of affect ... represented by such as Marie Antoinette, the humiliated queen of the Reflections (Kramnick, p.98).

In other words, there might be an inherent problem in Burke's aesthetics -- however it is formulated -- which resists the notion that it is simply at the beck and call of a controlling consciousness. In my own discussion, I will replace the idea that Burke is at the mercy of the collusions and collisions between history and the unconscious by arguing that his discourse engages in particularly urgent ways with unstable paradigms in unprecedented historical upheavals. This is not to find Burke wanting, or out of touch, but to see him wrestling with political and cultural paradoxes within bourgeois thought and practice which continue to perplex, though in different ways, the late twentieth century.

(iii) Physiological Speculations

For Burke the experience of the sublime is one of simultaneous terror and delight -- 'delightful horror' being 'the most genuine effect, and truest test of the sublime' (Enquiry, p.73). The problem of how terror and delight might be experienced at one and the same time was a theme pursued by Burke's contemporary critics, who argued that fear and exultation were mutually exclusive feelings.¹³ But this is a question which Burke himself explores, and in doing so articulates his theory most fully: 'But if the sublime is built on terror,' he writes, 'or some passion like it, which has pain for its object; it is previously proper to enquire how any species of delight can be derived from a cause so apparently contrary to it' (p.134). In this 'enquiry' delight is rigorously distinguished from the pleasure of beauty: 'Delight [as opposed to 'positive pleasure' is] ... the sensation which accompanies the removal of pain or danger' (p.37). Since the pain and danger which threaten the self 'are the most powerful of all the passions,' and death is regarded as the 'king of terrors' (p.38 and p.40), self preservation and the sublime become intimately related. At the same time, the distinction between terror and the sublime has to be maintained if the sublime is not to be subsumed by terror: 'When danger or pain press too nearly, they are incapable of giving any delight, and are simply terrible; but at certain distances, and with certain modifications, they may be, and they are delightful, as we every day experience' (p.40). The 'distance,' 'modification,' or 'removal' is therefore important in differentiating the sublime experience from unmitigated terror. The notion of 'removal' can imply that the danger is 'removed' (at a certain distance, or at one remove) and that delight may arise simultaneously with fear because the danger is not quite adjacent. 'Removal' can also imply that the delight succeeds the terror after the removal of the threat -- the

sublime experience being akin to the great relief felt at the cessation of pain or the escape from danger. Finally, 'removal' can mean that the act of removal is itself the source of the delight which 'accompanies' it -- the sublime therefore being the experience of the threatened self seeming to overcome or *master* danger through *effort*. The sublime may be read, then, variously as a moment or synchronic structure, a succession of alternating states, or as a concerted action or movement.

Burke's Enquiry goes on to discuss 'How the Sublime is produced,' saying that 'whatever is fitted to produce such a tension [of the nerves], must be productive of a passion similar to terror, and consequently must be a source of the sublime, though it should have no idea of danger connected with it' (p.134). Since a 'passion *similar to terror*' (my emphasis) may equally be a source of the sublime as terror itself, it seems that figurative processes are already at work within Burke's aetiology of the sublime. Rhetoric is seemingly deeply implicated, in one way or another, in the very genesis and structure of the sublime moment. The 'removal' which is a necessary condition for the sublime might be precisely a removal effected through metaphor -- the removal that is, etymologically, the very *modus operandi* of metaphor. In this way, critical arguments that the sublime undergoes a transition in the middle of the eighteenth century from a rhetorical practice to a psychological response to natural phenomena need to be rethought. In Burke's Enquiry, despite his protests to the contrary, the response to 'natural' terror seems always already rhetorical.¹⁴

Burke appears to mark the transition from rhetoric to nature or natural response by grounding his aesthetics in physiology: 'pain and fear consist in an unnatural tension of the nerves; that ... is sometimes accompanied with an unnatural strength, which sometimes suddenly changes into an extraordinary weakness.' And, in a phrasing which anticipates his reactions to the French Revolution, 'these

effects often come on alternately, and are sometimes mixed with each other. This is the nature of all convulsive agitations, especially in weaker subjects, which are the most liable to the severest impressions of pain and fear' (p.132). We might ask here, in a provisional way, whether the 'convulsive agitation' that the French Revolution represents for Burke is a staging of, or a source for, his own psychological convulsion -- ask, in other words, which 'convulsion' produces which. Yet we should also note, in anticipation, that weakness in the Enquiry is characteristic of the beautiful and/or its effect on the beholder. I would want to ask, therefore, whether Burke's strenuous efforts to differentiate the sublime from the beautiful by distinguishing between 'delight' and 'positive pleasure' (see Enquiry, pp.32-37) might mask and mark a more implicated relation between the sublime and the beautiful. This distinction underlies Burke's whole aesthetics and is therefore worth dwelling on. We have seen that the former is the feeling accompanying or succeeding the removal of pain -- which Burke says 'has no name' (p.35) but will call 'Delight' in contradistinction to 'Pleasure' (pp.36-37). Burke claims to ground his distinctions in differences that actually exist as positive entities rather than as 'mere relations' (p.33), because that is the only way he could justify 'the least alteration in our words' (p.36). Delight is distinguished from pleasure as action is from passivity. In subjects (or political states such as the *ancien régime*) which are themselves weak, the alternating effects of fear -- unnatural strength followed by weakness -- are most accentuated. In face of danger, the weak may experience moments of convulsive strength, but they are also susceptible to extraordinary weakness or passivity. They are likely to remain transfixed at the overawed stage of the sublime without the strength necessary to remove the pain or danger. In this state, their weakness resembles that of the beautiful in all but degree (beauty 'unmans'

the subject in a more gentle yet equally effective manner).¹⁷ It would seem, then, as Weiskel suggests, that the sublime is an aesthetic only for the strong -- those capable of reversing their subjection before the object, text, or other being: 'The best defence against fear is a strong superego, which the sublime both requires and nourishes' (Romantic Sublime, p.94). To be fixated in the 'second phase,' as Weiskel terms it, is to submit to a kind of 'madness' characterized by a repetition compulsion (p.97, see Enquiry, p.74), whereas the 'third phase' is a moment of vaunting joy in which the mind appropriates to itself the power of that towards which it had trembled.¹⁸ And yet the disturbing thing for the strong -- and this is perhaps the motive force of Burke's definitive labours -- is that their strength is constituted through a moment of 'feminized' weakness or passivity overcome only through an extraordinary ruse or metaphor. The sublimity of the victorious subject is perhaps more of a fiction, a moment of theatre, than a genuine transcendence.

I will return to these issues in discussing the role the sublime plays in constituting the bourgeois ethic of individuality. At the moment, I wish to concentrate on the problems raised by Burke's physiological models. Burke wants to ground all aesthetic experience in eighteenth-century conceptions of the body-mind relation:

The only difference between pain and terror, is, that things which cause pain operate on the mind, by the intervention of the body; whereas things that cause terror generally affect the bodily organs by the operation of the mind suggesting the danger; but both [agree] ... in producing a tension, contraction, or violent emotion of the nerves (Enquiry, p.132).

'Fear or terror,' then, 'which is an apprehension of pain or death, exhibits exactly the same effects [as those of a 'man who suffers under violent bodily pain'], approaching in violence to [them] in proportion to the nearness of the

cause, and the weakness of the subject' (p.131). That the origins of the nervous 'tension' produced by terror might be an 'operation of the mind' suggestively opens up the problem of whether the sublime is a condition of the object or of the perceiving, perhaps creating, subject (Burke tries to argue, often with ridiculous results, that the effects of natural phenomena strictly accord with their physical properties [see Enquiry, pp.129-60]). This also raises the question about what kind of 'operation' it is that the mind performs. But whether the cause of the sublime is mental (terror) or physical (pain), Burke seems interested primarily in the experience which results -- the 'tension, contraction, or violent emotion of the nerves.' This effect depends upon a reciprocal interplay of body and mind -- involving either physiological pain affecting the mind, or psychological terror affecting the body. In this way, Burke seems to theoretically justify the fact that the bulk of the Enquiry treats the aesthetic effects of art as if they were no different from those which arise from nature.

Burke's sublime, then, seems bound up with an effort to valorize pain and labour as beneficial and to repudiate the notion of 'luxury' associated with aristocratic society. He presents 'labour' as an antidote to the 'relaxation that not only disables the members [of the body] from performing their functions, but takes away the vigorous tone of fibre which is requisite for carrying on the natural and necessary secretions.' Labour is needful because 'in this languid inactive state, the nerves are more liable to the most horrid convulsions, than when they are sufficiently braced and strengthened' (p.135). The consequences of this relaxed state are 'melancholy, dejection, despair, and often self-murder' (p.135). But if beauty affects the body 'with an inward sense of melting and languor,' and 'acts by relaxing the solids of the whole system. ... [resulting in] a relaxation somewhat below the natural tone' (pp.149-50), then the sublime can

be seen as a 'remedy' to the dangerous effects of beauty itself.¹⁹ The mode of defence or 'antidote' against such consequences is the labour of the sublime: 'The best remedy for all these evils is exercise or labour; and labour is a surmounting of difficulties, an exertion of the contracting power of the muscles; and as such resembles pain, which consists in tension or contraction, in everything but degree' (p.135). Yet the paradox of this remedy is that, if the beautiful is characterized as that which offers no sense of difficulty or resistance (*Enquiry*, pp.119-20), then the mind is left with no difficulties to 'surmount.' The sublime, then, in revolt against aristocracy and/or beauty must invent its own tasks. To anticipate somewhat, we may ask whether this labour is more a way out of difficulties or a reaction against a feminized weakness, than productive bodily labour. Burke's body-mind model seems to allow us to read this as a celebration of subjective labour (a labour of the subject) as much as a labour of the subjected worker.²⁰ This ambiguity may also be used, we may surmise, to at once promote the division of labour between the mental and the manual, and to blur the radical split which such a distinction implies.

Having arrived at the analogy (however dubious or politically problematic) between 'the exercise of the finer parts of the system' and 'common labour,' Burke can at last answer his critics and explain how pain or terror can cause or be associated with delight:

In all these cases, if the pain and terror are so modified as not to be actually noxious; if the pain is not carried to violence, and the terror is not conversant about the present destruction of the person, as these emotions clear the parts, whether fine, or gross, of a dangerous and troublesome incumbrance, they are capable of producing delight; not pleasure, but a sort of delightful horror, a sort of tranquillity tinged with terror; which as it belongs to self-preservation is one of

the strongest of all the passions. Its object is the sublime (Enquiry, p.136).

Weiskel concludes that, for Burke, 'terror is the labour of the mind; the sublime, a purgative therapy of the "finer parts" of the imagination' (p.97). He goes on, however, to argue that to figure the sublime as a 'homeopathic therapy, a kind of physiological catharsis ... will hardly do' (p.88) and rushes to a Freudian reading. But I would like to dwell on Burke's model and tease out its metaphors, since they seem to anticipate the medical figures through which Burke, in Reflections, attempts to constitute the notion of England as a body-politic whose preservation depends on keeping at bay revolutionary contagion and expurgating it wherever it may have already infected the system. The sublime is said to be the experience of clearing away or purging a dangerous and troublesome incumbrance from 'the parts, whether fine, or gross;' it is an active response to an internal and/or external danger where passivity would be fatal. Today, we might call it a rush of adrenalin which energizes an extraordinary defensive response; it is at once an energy which empowers exertion, and an exertion which releases energy. It is the labour of removal -- the removal of a threat that has temporarily paralyzed the organism. As Weiskel puts it, 'the sublime is not the feeling of terror itself; it is a response to terror' (p.87). The delight is that of the saved self, but it is also the experience of self-preservation per se. It is a delight which succeeds the removal of danger, but which also accompanies the act of removal. As such, it is at once a sense of relief and a sense of mastery, of mastering danger through effort, through performance. Yet the power of the threat might be that it cannot be unambiguously located -- that it transgresses the threshold between inner and outer, between object and representation, and might therefore be, disturbingly, already at work within the

human/textual/political body. This is further complicated by the suggestion that what threatens 'the person' -- what is potentially 'noxious' -- is also, when suitably 'modified,' the most efficacious remedy against such a danger.

This is perhaps why Burke reiterates, time and again, that the delight is produced when the threat is safely at one remove:

Now whatever either on good or upon bad grounds tends to raise a man in his own opinion, produces a sort of swelling and triumph that is extremely grateful to the human mind; and this swelling is never more perceived, nor operates with more force, than when without danger we are conversant with terrible objects, the mind always claiming to itself some part of the dignity and importance of the things which it contemplates. Hence proceeds what Longinus has observed of that glorying and sense of inward greatness, that always fills the reader of such passages in poets and orators as are sublime (pp.50-51).

Enquiry

It is notable that this reference to Longinus is one of only two that Burke makes in the whole of the Enquiry. The threat becomes, or is analogous to, the rhetorical 'terror' instilled in us by 'poets and orators' and enables a fantasy of the creative, originating self: 'by some innate power,' Longinus writes in a modern translation of the passage Burke alludes to, 'the true sublime uplifts our souls; we are filled with a proud exultation and a sense of vaunting joy, just as though we had ourselves produced what we had heard' (On the Sublime, p.107). As Weiskel puts it, 'the prior text is introjected; its power becomes our own' (p.97). The above passage contrasts the sublimity of 'Ambition' with 'Imitation' -- which, as 'one of the strongest links of society' (p.49), is 'feminine' and passive, and therefore associated with the beautiful. The distinction is also, of course, bound up with the bourgeoisie's project, in the eighteenth century, to displace reverence for tradition

through an emphasis on originality: 'the sublime of nature or of text,' Weiskel comments, 'offers an occasion for the mind to establish its superiority or originality' (p.99). As in Harold Bloom -- whose work underpins Weiskel's -- the mind involved in this master-slave struggle is a 'masculine' one -- a gendering which Longinus's and Burke's tumescent metaphors serve to reinforce.

Yet the above passage also reaffirms the suspicion raised throughout the Enquiry that this sense of 'danger' necessary to the sublime experience is something of a sham. Kant too, Weiskel points out, 'emphasizes as a precondition of the sublime that we not be in physical danger. He postulates a defensive reaction of the mind which will give us "courage" when there is no danger' (p.84).²¹ Burke's description of the sublime moment as capable of being produced by a passion 'similar to terror,' or through a labour whose effects resemble pain, therefore relies upon a sleight of hand, removing the danger when it is seemingly most fearful: 'When danger or pain press too nearly, they are incapable of giving any delight, and are simply terrible; but at certain distances, and with certain modifications, they may be, and they are delightful' (p.40). That the sense of originality which arises out of the sublime is a fictional one seems most clearly registered by its appropriation of a prior text (or natural feature) as a vehicle; at the same time, this sense seems to be a necessary fiction, one which the self needs to believe in. This paradox is perhaps endemic to the modern condition which, Weiskel suggests, is to be incurably ambivalent about authority, to be caught up in the unavoidable opposition 'between imitation, the traditional route to authentic identity, and originality, impossible but necessary' (p.8). Significantly enough, Burke apparently pivots between the two 'ancient adversaries' of authority and originality in the 'wrong' chronological order. For if the Enquiry both champions the aesthetics of originality and individual

experience and is itself a strong bid for originality,²² in Reflections thirty-three years later we will see Burke apparently revert to arguments from authority, from precedent, and from the documents of the dead.

In 1757-59, Burke seems committed to his theory and swayed by its metaphors. He twice refers to death as the 'king of terrors' (p.40, p.59), and tells us that the most 'delightful horror' properly 'belongs to self-preservation ... [as] one of the strongest of all the passions' (Enquiry, p.136). We have seen that the sublime is less a moment of actual danger than an occasion when the self is convinced, or convinces itself, of its danger while somehow knowing that it is not actually threatened. If the sublime is therefore a fiction which the self passes upon itself, an auto-affective ruse powerful enough to suspend disbelief, we might ask why Burke, like so many theorists of the eighteenth century, was so committed to it. A summary of what we have 'discovered' leads towards a response to that question. That which modifies terror, rendering it neither proximate nor literal, is a rhetorical displacement or substitution -- a labour of metaphor or metaphorical labour. Terror, metaphorized into the sublime, may seem to threaten the self but actually arms it against a literal threat (or perhaps the threat of the literal).²³ The sublime flight is occasioned by, and occasions, the illusion of creativity; the self's 'creation,' and mastery, of what it has heard or seen, raises it in its own opinion and produces 'a sort of swelling and triumph.' The self responds to the perhaps always already fictional threat with the creative labour of metaphor-making, reaffirming or perhaps *constituting itself* as originating subject. Such a reaffirmation of the self's power might be less a moment of reassurance than a gesture which retrospectively constitutes that which it appears to defend. The self is 'born,' then, through its own sublime labour or the labour of the sublime. Although the sublime's terror seems a

mere dumb show, it may nevertheless be a dramatic production whose denouement -- the emergence of the 'self-made man' -- bears an important ideological load. Suggestively enough for the present argument, the sublime moment reads like a power struggle: as Weiskel puts it, 'hypsos brings "power and irresistible might to bear" (1.4); it aims at transport (*ekstasis*) and is always cloaked in metaphors of aggression. Discourse, in the Peri Hypsous ..., is a power struggle' (p.5). Although the eighteenth-century sublime (and the Romantic sublime which develops from it) seems to naturalize or personalize this power struggle, I want to suggest that such an emphasis on the natural and the personal is precisely a clue to its ideological import.

(iv) 'Self begot, self raised / By our own quickening power'

The problem which faced the rising middle class in the eighteenth century was to justify individual ambition by making it seem both socially beneficial and natural. That the sublime plays a part in this project may be seen by examining Weiskel's account of its philosophical burden in the eighteenth-century. Despite his structuralist and Freudian premises, Weiskel's discussion of the eighteenth century's 'approach' to the Romantic sublime allows us to insert it into a socio-economic context. He suggests that 'we hear in the background of the Romantic sublime the grand confidence of a heady imperialism ... a kind of spiritual capitalism, enjoining a pursuit of the infinitude of the private self' (p.6). Robinson Crusoe and Milton's Mammon, 'preferring / Hard liberty before the easy yoke / Of servile pomp. ... [working] ease out of pain / Through labour and endurance' (Paradise Lost, II, 255-62), are seen as exemplars of capitalist individualism who demonstrate that 'the founding gesture of the ego was

becoming the requisite for success' (pp.9-10). As a complication to this, the natural sublime may be read, Weiskel argues, as 'a response to the darker implications of Locke's psychology' (p.14) which, by emptying out the soul (p.15), had 'undermined the doctrine of the will' and put anxiety and uneasiness in its place 'as the principle of individuation' (p.18). Putting Weiskel's two observations together, I would suggest that the sublime functions as an aesthetic means through which bourgeois thought establishes its ideology of individual effort in face of the challenge posed by aristocratic values and by Locke's inadvertently debilitating model of the self. Curiously enough, if Locke codifies the political practice embodied in 1688 -- placing final political power in the will of the people and providing a philosophy and structure for the nascent bourgeois individual -- he also *undermines* the individual will that comes to be the datum point of political liberalism and of the desire to labour. Behind the 'heady imperialism,' then, lies a profound anxiety -- as a reading of late eighteenth-century accounts of the 'springs of action' implies.³⁴ Adam Smith, for example, in a passage which turns on the distinction between 'expense' and 'conservation,' suggests that anxiety is an almost relentless spur to labour and the deferral of immediate pleasure:

the principle, which prompts to expence, is the passion for present enjoyment; which, though sometimes violent and very difficult to be restrained, is in general only momentary and occasional. But the principle which prompts to save, is the desire of bettering our condition, a desire which, though generally calm and dispassionate, comes with us from the womb, and never leaves us till we go into the grave. In the whole interval which separates those two moments, there is scarce perhaps a single instant in which any man is so perfectly and completely satisfied with his situation, as to be without any wish of alteration or improvement, of any kind (Wealth of Nations, I, p.341).

This passage allows us to read both aesthetics and economics through each other's discursive terms: the often violent but momentary desires occasioned by beauty (as lust and/or the desire to 'spend') are deferred through sublime fortitude (the self and/or money is 'saved' from ruinous expense). We might therefore posit that the sublime operates as an indispensable fiction through which the 'self-made man' (in philosophical and/or economic terms) is constituted.

The problems outlined here continue to preoccupy a range of discourses into the nineteenth century and beyond. A reading of Hegel's master-slave dialectic in Phenomenology of Spirit (1807), for example, reveals a remarkable set of correspondences with Burke's treatise and enables me to situate the Enquiry in its discursive context. The emphasis on fear of death and on labour in Burke's sublime -- and on their metaphorical yet efficacious role -- seems to anticipate similar emphases in Hegel's account of the processes involved in the advent of self-consciousness. This is to underline how Burke's Enquiry seems to articulate a series of ideas and problems which become central for European philosophy.²²⁵ If Burke is an influence upon, and does the fieldwork for, Kant's 'Analytic of the Sublime' (1790) (Boulton, pp.cxxv-cxxvii), I suggest that Hegel's master-slave scene may be read as a rewriting of the three-phase Kantian sublime. The first phase would be consciousness before its confrontation with another consciousness. The second phase is entered in the initial moment of confrontation when each trembles before the other -- a rehearsal (or audition rather) which assigns the provisional roles of lord and bondsman. The lord's role is that of fall-guy; in Derrida's reading, he is a paper lord whose demise risks provoking laughter ('From Restricted to General Economy,' p.255). The bondsman's role is more 'serious,' for it is the bondsman who experiences the 'true' sublime

in its third phase and therefore 'acquires a mind of his own' (Phenomenology, p.119).

It is well known that the final accession to Hegelian self-consciousness is achieved through a life-or-death encounter with another being in which the 'successful' protagonist overcomes the other through effort. Each consciousness in this struggle proves itself and each other since 'it is only through staking one's life that freedom is won' (pp.113-14). The Hegelian stage might seem set for tragedy were it not for the comic ruse of the *Aufhebung* -- i.e. that which negates and conserves in one and the same gesture. This is not, therefore, a 'real' death -- which would do away with 'the truth which was supposed to issue from it' -- but 'the negation coming from consciousness, which supersedes in such a way as to preserve and maintain what is superseded, and consequently survives its own supersession' (Hegel, pp.114-15). As in Burke, then, the sense of self-elevation is achieved through an encounter with an 'other' which seems to endanger the self while at the same time posing no real threat. The labour of the *Aufhebung* is that which conserves the self in the very moment it seems most threatened; as in Burke, death is shown to be a ruse, a sleight of hand, a subtle metaphor.²⁶ (We will see, in Chapter 6, that the sublime, under certain conditions, may be read as a kind of joke.)

If Hegel's scene may be read as a revolutionary moment in which the slave (or worker) overthrows the lord, the slave's experience of this strikingly echoes Burke's account of the physiological processes of the body-mind undergoing the sublime crisis. The slave achieves pure 'being-for-self' because it/he/she

has been fearful, ... its whole being has been seized with dread; for it has experienced the fear of death, the absolute Lord. In that experience it has been quite unmanned, has trembled in every fibre of its being, and everything solid and stable has been shaken to

its foundations. ... [and has known] the absolute melting-away of everything stable Furthermore, his consciousness is not this dissolution of everything stable merely in principle; in his service he actually brings this about. Through his service he rids himself of his attachment to natural existence in every single detail; and gets rid of it by working on it. ...

Through work ... the bondsman becomes conscious of what he truly is (pp.117-18).

Hegel's emphasis on the trembling fibres of the worker's being, and on the 'melting-away of everything solid and stable,' corresponds to Burke's attempt to provide a physiological basis for the sublime experience. The experience of Hegel's bondsman in face of the 'absolute Lord' is particularly analogous to Burke's description of the experience of the soul contemplating the Deity: 'whilst we contemplate so vast an object,' Burke writes, 'we shrink into the minuteness of our own nature, and are, in a manner, annihilated before him' (Enquiry, p.68). And yet, as in Hegel, the soul emerges even from this encounter with a new sense of self-awe: 'When the prophet David contemplated the wonders of wisdom and power, which are displayed in the economy of man, he seems to be struck with a sort of divine horror, and cries out, *fearfully and wonderfully am I made!*' (Enquiry, pp.68-69, misquoting Psalms: 139).

In Hegel, the lord's relation to the world is an aristocratic one, achieving its satisfaction through the instantaneous fulfillment of desire which is yet -- like the 'momentary duration' which characterizes the pleasures attendant on Burkean beauty (Enquiry, p.116) -- 'only a fleeting one, for it lacks the side of objectivity and permanence.' On the other hand, the work of the bondsman

is desire held in check, fleetingness staved off; in other words, work forms and shapes the thing. The negative relation to the object becomes its *form* and something *permanent*, because it is precisely for the worker that the object has independence. ... It is in this

way, therefore, that consciousness, qua worker, comes to see in the independent being [of the object] its own independence (p.118).

It is not clear whether this should be read as an account of the capitalist's or of the worker's labour -- whether, that is, it can be read as aimed principally at legitimizing the activities of the former or idealizing those of the latter. In either account, it is work which raises consciousness from the diminished state to the moment of self-congratulatory delight:

Without the formative activity, fear remains inward and mute, and consciousness does not become explicitly *for itself*. If consciousness fashions the thing without that initial absolute fear, it is only an empty self-centred attitude If it has not experienced absolute fear but only some lesser dread, the negative being has remained for it something external, its substance has not been infected by it through and through (p.119).

Marx criticizes Hegel for presenting a false portrait of the worker's condition in a capitalist state where, against Hegel, 'the worker relates to the product of his labour as to an alien object the more the worker externalizes himself in his work, the more powerful becomes the alien, objective world that he creates opposite himself, the poorer he becomes in his inner life and the less he can call his own' ('Alienated Labour,' pp.78-79). But though this criticism needs to be borne in mind, it might be that Marx limits the metaphorical play of Hegel's text. For the relation between lord and bondsman is not a univocal narrative but may be read as an inscription of a series of metaphors: the 'historical' moment of the Roman Empire; a mythological struggle between two beings; a description that can be equally applied to capitalist and feudal labour relations; a reworking of contemporary debates on the slave trade; and a moment in the emergence of self-consciousness. In the

latter reading, the lord and bondsman are not separate individuals but metaphors for a division within consciousness itself -- 'opposed shapes of consciousness' which emerge in the dissolution of the 'simple unity' that is 'immediate self-consciousness' (Phenomenology, p.115).

It is nevertheless revealing to juxtapose Marx's critique of labour in a capitalist economy with eighteenth-century attempts to justify work under such conditions. For Marx, such work is unquestionably the opposite of sublime activity; for Smith, on the other hand, however much he laments the effects of repetitious labour, it can be seen in terms which anticipate Hegel:

the labour of the manufacturer [a term which can refer both to the manufacturing capitalist and the worker employed in manufacturing industry] fixes and realizes itself in some particular subject or vendible commodity, which lasts for some time at least after that labour is past. It is, as it were, a certain quantity of labour stocked and stored up to be employed, if necessary, upon some other occasion. ... The labour of the menial servant, on the contrary, does not fix or realize itself in any particular subject or vendible commodity. His services generally perish in the ^{very} instant of their performance, and seldom leave any trace or value behind them (Wealth of Nations, I, p.330).

The difference here could be read as that between capitalist and feudal labour relations in that the worker in the former centres on production, while the servant in the latter panders to aristocratic luxury. The distinction between the sublime and the beautiful might therefore find its economic equivalent in the difference between eighteenth-century conceptions of manufacturing labour and the humiliating effects of feudal service. More striking still in the present context is Smith's equation of the servant with the sovereign:

The labour of some of the most respectable orders in the society is, like that of menial servants, unproductive of any value, and does

not fix or realize itself in any permanent subject, or vendible commodity The sovereign, for example, with all the officers both of justice and war who serve under him, the whole army and navy, are unproductive labourers. They are the servants of the publick, and are maintained by a part of the annual produce of the industry of other people (I, pp.330-31).

Thus it is possible to see how energetic capitalist economics can bracket servants, kings, aristocracy, slaves, and women by conceiving them as unproductive 'parasites.' In a striking way, the socio-economic context of the aesthetics of the sublime and the beautiful enables a critique of aristocratic society. Given this, Wollstonecraft's and Paine's emphasis on the revolutionary force of labour and effort seems calculated to banish once and for all the debilitated and debilitating institutions and aesthetics of the *ancien régime* (while at the same time underlining their own commitment to the work ethic of the capitalist process). In Part II, we will see that Burke's radical protagonists therefore attempt to appropriate and transform the Burkean sublime by making it (and revolution) a collective performative utterance effected by a whole nation, as opposed to the deceptive rhetoric which the aristocracy pass upon the people. The 'people' thus move -- as in the sublime moment -- from passive to active, from victims of rhetorical persuasion to performative speakers.

That Burke theorizes the sublime and the beautiful suggests that the Enquiry might be seen as developing an aesthetics which corresponds to the pact struck in 1688 between bourgeoisie and aristocracy (upon which, after all, Burke's political outlook seems to rest). And yet, if the beautiful is associated with traditional characterizations of the aristocracy (luxury, effeminacy, and so on), we have seen that the sublime may be read as its *antidote*. We may therefore interpret the relation between 'the sublime and the beautiful' as dramatizing the

struggle in eighteenth-century England between the newly-emerging bourgeoisie and the cultural and political institutions of established aristocracy. The 'natural' sublime in Burke therefore appears to be a cultural mode which bourgeois ideology needs in its attempt to dislodge the aristocracy's hegemony in mid-eighteenth-century England. It effects this in two ways: firstly by promoting or being the aesthetic correlative of the labour-ethic;²⁷ and secondly by suggesting that the individual can 'make himself' rather than rely on accidents of birth. A society organized around the sublime would therefore be a meritocracy (in which individuals might achieve eminence through self-effort) rather than an aristocracy. By grounding the sublime in nature and physiology, Burke makes it open to all in a way which potentially cuts across social strata, leaving avenues for the rise of 'men of ability without property.' Yet the disconcerting aspect of Burke's sublime -- which becomes even more troubling with the advent of the French Revolution -- is that the very way it is constituted makes it a cultural form at least equally available to the 'mob' as to the upwardly mobile. As a corollary, the problem the sublime poses for bourgeois society is that it can only be problematically harnessed for social stability, since it seems always to bear the marks of its origins in the disruption of the habitual and the regular.²⁸ It is a principle at once of commonality and individual ascendancy, of stability and insurrection.

In Reflections, amid the crisis of the social order he is committed to, Burke appears to respond to the ungovernable instabilities of his early aesthetics by attempting to weld the beautiful to custom and seeking to discredit the sublime's new guise as revolutionary radicalism. Thus the beautiful is given increased emphasis as Burke turns to aristocratic forms in order to rejuvenate the alliance between aristocracy and bourgeoisie in order to resist the French Revolution. At

the same time, he is driven to recruit the sublime as a mode of resistance against the Revolution and as a way of defending the English constitution. But in attempting to manipulate the sublime's effective power Reflections seems unable to constrain its potentially radical impetus or govern its destabilizing effects. Reflections thus becomes itself an ungovernable text having unpredictable effects in the already critically unstable context of England in the early 1790s. A partial account of these phenomena might be sought in an analysis of the different phases of the sublime in terms of their ideological potential and implications. It would be possible to read the fearful and vaunting moments of the sublime respectively as 'radical' and 'reactionary' phases: by exposing structures of power, the moment of fear and trembling might be potentially revolutionary; the moment of recovery would then constitute a counter-revolutionary rapprochement. This reading could be reversed, however: the abjection before power or authority would then be a reactionary relation, while to brave out that adversary in the name of individual freedom would constitute a revolutionary response. But each scheme proves inadequate to the complexities of the sublime, since it can be read as a sequence only provisionally; simultaneously a moment and a movement, it seems to deconstruct the very opposition of diachrony and synchrony. In an intriguing and complex way, then, the sublime seems potentially reactionary and revolutionary at *one and the same time*. Although the sublime is always in reaction, it is not always reactionary; it may even be the revolutionary moment *par excellence*. This is far from claiming, as Weiskel does, that the sublime can, in ideological terms, "'mean" just about anything' (p.28). Although its structure is ungovernably unstable, the terms which it makes unstable are intrinsic to that structure. And although its effects are unpredictable it always functions in specific historical contexts. Burke's shift between

1757-59 and 1790 may be read in terms of the different impetus his aesthetic categories seem to have in radically different moments. In the Enquiry the master-slave relation is to be overturned; in Reflections that reversal has become a new stability which is in turn threatened by the sublime's inexorable logic. Burke's terror is that, just as the aristocracy has been forced to relinquish its sublime role by the bourgeoisie, the people might -- through collective effort -- overturn traditional/bourgeois institutions by seizing the (sublime) initiative. From refusing to relinquish his theory in 1759, Burke comes to resist all theory in 1790.

1. All references to the Enquiry are to this edition (which is based on the second and much revised edition of 1759); references to the informative introduction (pp.xv-cxxvii) are indicated as 'Boulton' (to distinguish from Boulton's Language of Politics). For a discussion on the composition and publication of the Enquiry, see pp.xv-xxvi.

2. Boulton suggests that 'the division of the "leading passions" into those of "self-preservation" and "society" perhaps recalls the discussion of "self-love" and "benevolence" in Butler, Hutcheson, and others, and reminds us of the attempt on the part of eighteenth-century philosophers and poets to reconcile a legitimate self-interest with a regard for the general good.' But he goes on to contend that 'Burke's use of the categories is otherwise. For him they are directly connected with the central problem: the distinction between the sublime and the beautiful' (p.xxxix). My subsequent argument, however, questions the idea that Burke's aesthetics is somehow aloof from the political and cultural preoccupations of the eighteenth century. In fact, my contention is that Burke defends his theoretical 'innovations' precisely because they are so embedded in his political 'revolution.' For a discussion of the uneasy but necessary attempt to reconcile self-interest and social utility in the eighteenth century, see Barrell, An Equal, Wide Survey, pp.21-50.

3. Boulton shows that for the Literary Magazine, II, p.183, this unbending association of the sublime with terror was 'false philosophy;' in the second edition, Burke replies by inserting more examples in support of the same point (p.39). For a discussion of the early critical reception of the Enquiry, see Herbert A. Wichelns, 'Burke's Essay on the Sublime and its Reviewers,' where Wichelns shows that critics generally attacked Burke's 'fundamental separation of the sublime and the beautiful on the basis of pain and pleasure' (p.651), and that Burke's revisions in the second edition reveal that he was 'so keenly sensitive to the public reception of his work as to regard almost every objection raised against him as a challenge to defend his position' (p.661).

4. Boulton points out that the first English translation of Longinus appeared in 1652, but that 'Boileau undoubtedly played a major part in establishing the popularity of Peri Hupsous, both in England and France' (pp.xliv-xlv).

5. Monk is quoting from Richard Hurd's commentary in his edition of Horace's Epistola ad Augustum (London, 1749), p.98.

6. John Baillie, An Essay on the Sublime (1747), pp.31-33, quoted by Monk, p.76.

7. Akenside, The Pleasures of the Imagination (London, 1744), I, 372-76 and 278-80, quoted by Monk p.71.

8. 'This indifference to the beautiful, of course, draws a certain authority from prominent eighteenth- and nineteenth-century accounts of the sublime and the beautiful Yet it is somewhat startling to find that critics influenced by structuralist and deconstructive approaches ignore the neat binarism of "the sublime and the beautiful" in their rush to the "real" subject, the sublime. Strangely, we find that the beautiful all but disappears as Thomas Weiskel multiplies binary oppositions within the sublime' (Ferguson, 'Sublime of Edmund Burke,' p.69). As we will see in Chapter 6, Ferguson goes on to deconstruct this binary opposition; in doing so, however, she tends to conflate various versions of the beautiful whose differences are historically important.

9. Dugald Stewart, Philosophical Essays (Edinburgh, 3rd edition, 1818), p.297 n, quoted in Boulton, p.lxxv.

10. In thus distancing beauty from Renaissance and neo-classical ideals I would suggest that Burke's aesthetic intersects with the primarily French and Italian Rococo movement in eighteenth-century painting. For an account of the principle features of the rococo, see Michael Levey, Rococo to Revolution. I return to this to suggest that Burke's beautiful, which he later embodies in the figure of Marie Antoinette, seems best exemplified in the visual arts through the work of Francois Boucher (see Levey, pp.89-111).

11. Wood quotes from Werner Jaeger, Paideia: the Ideals of Greek Culture, translated by Gilbert Highet (New York, 1943), III, p.122. To think of the sublime as built on a fear of intemperate pleasures has important resonances for my argument, in which the sublime is thought of as a bourgeois aesthetic in revolt (in more than one sense) against the luxuries of aristocratic society.

12. Letters on a Regicide Peace, quoted by Boulton, Language of Politics, pp.100-101.

13. For discussion of the interplay between Burke's aesthetics and politics, see Chapman, Practical Imagination, Burleigh Taylor Wilkins, Problem of Burke's Philosophy, pp.119-51, and R.T. Allen, 'The State and Civil Society as Objects of Aesthetic Appreciation.' The most exciting and promising work in this field, however, is that by Ferguson: 'The Sublime of Edmund Burke, Or the Bathos of Experience,' and 'Legislating the Sublime.'

14. Boulton, Language of Politics, pp.109-10, p.112, p.120, pp.130-31.
15. These critics included Payne Knight and Dugald Stewart (Boulton, pp.lxxxviii-xc).
16. Ferguson also argues, though in different ways to my own discussion, for the 'rhetoricity' of Burke's natural sublime ('Sublime of Edmund Burke,' pp.67-69).
17. This point is developed by Ferguson, 'Sublime of Edmund Burke,' pp.75-77; for my use of this, see Chapter 6.
18. A description of Kant's sublime in terms of three 'phases' is developed by Weiskel. The first phase is the state of normal or habitual perception; the second is effected through a sudden crisis in this 'habitual relation of mind and object' resulting in 'surprise or astonishment' in face of 'a natural phenomenon [which] catches us unprepared and unable to grasp its scale' or a moment of text 'which exceeds comprehension.' The third phase is a defensive reaction in which the mind attributes to itself the qualities of that which had threatened to overwhelm it (Weiskel, pp.23-24).
19. This point derives from Ferguson's discussion of the relation between the sublime and the beautiful ('Sublime of Edmund Burke,' pp.75-77); I return to her discussion in Chapter 6.
20. 'Whereas Kant will later insist on the importance of detaching the aesthetic object from any thought of the labor that went into its production, Burke sees the aesthetic object as valuable not for the labor that produced it but for the labor it will produce' (Ferguson, 'Legislating the Sublime,' p.134).
21. See 'Analytic of the Sublime,' pp.109-14.
22. See Boulton, pp.lv-lx, and Weiskel, p.8 and pp.85-86.
23. In Weiskel's reading, the sublime is characterized as, and produced through, the operation and effect of metaphor: in its 'largest perspective, it was a major analogy, a massive transposition of transcendence into a naturalistic key; in short, a stunning metaphor.' The literal and the sublime seem antithetical, for 'we cannot conceive of a literal sublime' (Weiskel, p.4).
24. Of particular interest to a study of Burke's formulations in the Enquiry are the extracts in Nature and Industrialization, edited by Alasdair Clayre, especially those from Bentham's A Table of the Springs of Action (pp.200-202) and Smith's Wealth of Nations (pp.190-98).

25. Boulton informs us that the Enquiry made an 'immediate and forceful impact' in France (for example on Diderot) and in Germany (where a German translation [1773] influenced Kant and Lessing) (pp.cxx-cxxvii). Rod Preece, in his 'Edmund Burke and his European Reception,' concentrates exclusively on the impact of Reflections (which seems to have been considerable in Germany) and the tendency of European readers to misunderstand it. J.F. Suter, in 'Burke, Hegel, and the French Revolution,' concentrates on the parallels and differences between Hegel's and Burke's responses to the Revolution. My suggestion that the master-slave dialectic might be read in terms of the sublime seems not to have been investigated, at least by Burke scholars.

26. Derrida's reading of the master-slave text concentrates on the nature of death and work in this centrepiece of Phenomenology. The risk that the lord takes turns out to be not very impressive: 'the master must stay alive in order to enjoy what he has won by risking his life' ('From Restricted to General Economy,' p.254). But for Derrida the bondsman's accession to lordship is equally unimpressive, since 'the slave become a master remains a "repressed" slave' (p.255). The values of master and slave, even in the 'revolutionary' moment when their roles are reversed, remain the same, remain 'servile': 'To stay alive, to maintain oneself in life, to work, to defer pleasure, to limit the stakes, to have respect for death at the very moment when one looks directly at it -- such is the servile condition of mastery and of the entire history it makes possible' (pp.254-55). To risk literal death, 'death pure and simple,' would be to risk 'losing the effect and profit of meaning which were the very stakes one hoped to win' (p.255). Thus both Burke and Hegel try to constrain their speculations by fixing the odds -- by having their protagonist only seem to confront death in order to experience the delight of self-preservation and aggrandizement.

27. Reading the discussion of 'Power' in the Enquiry, Ferguson suggests that 'power is ... conceived as awesome but also as a guarantor of society, because it fosters the work ethic. ... the sublime contributes to our productivity in society, and ... is preferable to the beautiful inasmuch as it represents a labor theory of aesthetic value' ('Legislating the Sublime,' p.134).

28. Ferguson records the apparent 'paradox' of the fact that the sublime in Burke is both 'of particular social utility' and 'clearly represents what is humanly ungovernable' ('Legislating the Sublime,' p.133); she goes on, however, to stress its social utility at the expense of its 'ungovernability.'

Chapter 2: The Political Economy of Taste

(i) Supplementing the Sublime

If part of the 'revolutionary' thrust of Burke's sublime is articulated through the stress on personal experience rather than the aesthetic norms of tradition (the physiological rather than the customary), the Enquiry also expresses the need to verify the sublime experience through its being repeatable and generally available: 'danger or pain ... at certain distances ... are delightful, as we every day experience' (p.40, my emphasis). But this appeal to common experience would seem, as Ferguson points out, *precisely to endanger* an aesthetic that depends on its singularity and difference ('Sublime of Edmund Burke,' pp.70-72). The sublime, then, appears to encourage the individual to transgress the constraints of custom, but at the same time the 'truth' of that escape is guaranteed by an empirical sensationism which claims that 'the pleasure of the senses ... is the same in all, high and low, learned and unlearned,' and that 'the true standard of the arts is in every man's power' (Enquiry, p.16, p.54). In this way, the sublime encapsulates a political and cultural paradox which cannot be resolved in any simple way. Clearly, the possibility of the sublime emerging as a critical fashion is already potential here, yet at the same time, as Ferguson points out, that very fashionableness threatens to render it 'factitious': a 'major dilemma of the sublime is that of preserving its *difference* from ... custom, habit, and fashion' ('Sublime of Edmund Burke,' pp.70-71). Ferguson suggests that Longinus, Kant, and Wordsworth attempt to solve this seemingly inherent contradiction by snatching 'the sublime from within the habitual ... for all of these writers, the sublime involves the recognition of the

habitual and the familiar as especially remarkable not in spite of their familiarity but because of it: the familiar is, thus, always being defamiliarized and rehabilitated.' In contrast, 'Burke's denunciations of custom, habit, and the familiar are particularly striking' ('Sublime of Edmund Burke,' p.71). In Burke, then, the sublime is caught within a theoretical and ideological impasse: its initial attitude of revolt against custom or habit is made problematic in that such a revolt needs to be authenticated -- through an appeal to 'every man' and 'every day' -- by that which it seems to repudiate. Given this, that Reflections should come to champion the politics of custom and habit is as striking as their denunciation in the Enquiry. The aggression towards custom in 1757-59 and the appeal to custom in 1790 cannot be explained away by characterizing Burke as aesthetically radical and politically conservative, but demands that we recognize both a logical and an ideological contradiction within the very structure of both the aesthetics and the politics.¹

As the aesthetic of individualism (straining against the trammels of custom), the sublime promotes individual aggrandizement; yet it nevertheless requires the introduction of a new standard of conformity guaranteed by 'nature' (everyone, high or low, has the same physiological constitution which responds in the same way to natural phenomena). Thus the sublime seems to exploit the distinction between nature and custom -- or, as Burke puts it in a passage inserted in 1759, the distinction between nature and 'second nature':

so far are use and habit from being causes of pleasure, merely as such; that the effect of constant use is to make all things of whatever kind entirely unaffecting. For as use at last takes off the painful effect of many things, it reduces the pleasurable effect of others in the same manner, and brings both to a sort of mediocrity and indifference. Very justly is use called a second nature; and our natural



and common state is one of absolute indifference, equally prepared for pain or pleasure. But when we are thrown out of this state, or deprived of any thing requisite to maintain us in it; when this chance does not happen by pleasure from some mechanical cause, we are always hurt. It is so with the second nature, custom, in all things which relate to it (Enquiry, p.104).

The contrast which this attitude affords to Reflections, where second nature could be said to characterize all that Burke defends and the means by which he attempts to defend it, is crucial.² In the Enquiry, Burke's aesthetics are irreconcilable with custom because of the physiological and sensationist theory he adopts, and this theory cannot be revoked because it is fundamental to the treatise's implicit ideological project. This can be brought to the fore, along with its irresolvable problems, by looking at the 'Introduction on Taste' (pp.11-27) which Burke added to the Enquiry in 1759. To append a disquisition on 'taste' to an aesthetic treatise was an eighteenth-century commonplace (Boulton, p.xxvii), and yet I contend that the way Burke's essay negotiates certain issues reveals both the politics of his aesthetics and its instabilities, and shows that although Burke could not but add the essay in an attempt to limit those instabilities he ends up by more clearly delineating the parameters of the problem.

In classical, Renaissance, and neo-classical discourse the nature-culture pairing is at once fundamental and unstable. Attridge shows how nature and art exist in the Renaissance in a kind of see-saw antithesis which can never be balanced: when one of the terms is held to represent the zenith of human activity, the other becomes its nadir; yet that inherently unstable condition will have cultural, political, and logical consequences which induce a reversal of these relative evaluations (Peculiar Language, pp.17-21). Attridge demonstrates that attempts to escape from this oscillating system, by variously claiming that the best art is like

nature, or that nature is the best art, introduce the problem of distinguishing between good nature and bad nature, good art and bad art (pp.29-30). Thus a third term needs to be introduced into the polar opposition which will enable 'proper' distinctions to be made and maintained. In George Puttenham's Arte of English Poesie (1589), this third term is referred to in a variety of ways, of which 'decorum' can serve as a generic term (Peculiar Language, pp.29-30). Decorum is a kind of second nature which prevents the courtier and/or the poet from straying into the evils of unnatural artifice or displaying the infirmities of nature. It is 'precisely that aspect of the poet's art which is not reducible to rule ... [and as such] is usually called "natural"' (p.30). In Puttenham, as in the Renaissance generally, decorum played a political role: it 'is what comes "naturally" not to all humanity but to an elite [while] [w]hat comes naturally to the majority, who are ignorant and inexperienced, is not truly natural' (pp.33-34). In this way, decorum at once distinguishes itself from artifice (by both disguising its own artifice and claiming it as natural anyway) and places itself 'at a distant remove from universal human nature or instincts' (p.34). Politically crucial to the period, decorum nevertheless carries with it a train of irresolvable contradictions for the courtier-poet which can be understood as a supplementary logic: 'you need to supplement your own natural inadequacies by the exercise of decorum, that "natural" art, so that you may artificially rise to the status of perfect and self-sufficient nature' (p.43).

Burke's introduction of the notion of 'taste' into the second edition of his Enquiry is both similar to and significantly different from the introduction of 'decorum' into the cultural politics of the Renaissance. Although Burke mourns the passing of the age of chivalry in Reflections, the Enquiry participates in quite a different

political context to Puttenham's manual for poets.³ I have suggested that Burke's treatise may be seen as developing an aesthetics for the newly-emerging bourgeois consciousness in a number of ways: by throwing off the trammels of custom through which the previous political and social order maintained hegemony; by placing authority not in tradition but in the immediate, sensory experience of the individual; by cultivating not the virtues of order and rationality, but those of passion; by validating universal human nature through a theory of physiological response; through theoretical speculations which cut across traditional social strata, making aesthetic experience open to all willing to undergo the 'effort;' and by grounding that experience not in refined activity, but in the experience of pain and labour. And yet, of course, this opens up aesthetic experience to an extent which leaves no possibility of discriminating between the relative value of experiences (or, we will see in the section on 'Words' [Enquiry, pp.161-77], between the sublime and madness or bombast). This is especially paradoxical for an aesthetic category which is constituted as a mode of distinction -- of the elevation of the individual in relation to nature, to past texts, or to other human beings. Thus Burke needs to be able to show how the sublime is at once available to all (through a notion of 'common nature') and yet somehow the means of establishing 'natural' hierarchical relations. We will see that this perhaps impossible project is intrinsically bound up with the need, in the eighteenth century, to replace aristocratic distinctions with a social structure which can appear as at once open to all and as instituting 'natural' distinctions between human beings and social classes.

In the 'Introduction on Taste,' Burke insists, perhaps even more than in the body of the text, on the commonality of human faculties as the basis of aesthetic experience and taste. If we once suffered ourselves to

doubt, with Hume, 'that their senses present to different men different images of things, this sceptical proceeding will make every sort of reasoning on every subject vain and frivolous' (p.13). Taking the metaphor of 'taste' literally (and so naturalizing a cultural acquirement), Burke discusses the phenomenon that people can acquire a taste for some substances which they found repugnant in the beginning; but even though 'custom, and some other causes, have made many deviations from the natural pleasures or pains which belong to these several Tastes ... the power of distinguishing between the natural and the acquired relish remains to the very last' (p.14). (We call anyone who loses this power of discrimination not wrong, says Burke, but 'absolutely mad' [p.14].) This unerasable memory of the natural causes of pleasure and pain forms a 'standard' against which all feelings and opinions may be regulated, and allows Burke to claim that 'the pleasure of all the senses, of the sight, and even of the Taste, that most ambiguous of the senses, is the same in all, high and low, learned and unlearned (p.16).

Such sensory experience forms the first element of taste (which, for Burke, is a complex of different faculties). The second, the imagination, is also common to all, since it is limited to recombining and imitating those same sensory impressions; these functions of the imagination 'operate pretty uniformly upon all men, because they operate by principles in nature, and ... are not derived from any particular habits or advantages' (pp.16-17). Differences in aesthetic response arise from the third element which goes to make up taste -- knowledge. The difference which this introduces -- which Burke wants to claim is a difference without a distinction -- is 'accidental, as it depends upon experience and observation, and not on the strength or weakness of any natural faculty' (p.18). Moving the discussion on to taste in poetry (he slides over any alterations to the argument which this might introduce) he claims that there

is only a very small difference in taste between those who prefer popular or children's literature and those who appreciate the Aeneid (pp.20-21). The imaginary 'energy' of both is of the same kind, and 'so far as Taste belongs to the imagination, its principle is the same in all men' (p.21). What distinguishes people is therefore said to be 'accidental,' while what unites them is fundamental.

Yet Burke does need to introduce a controlling distinction, otherwise he verges on defining all literary works as adventure stories, and relinquishing the possibility of discriminating the response of the learned from that of 'the vulgar.' Without something which functions like Puttenham's decorum he risks instituting a situation, unthinkable to the Renaissance and the bourgeois epoch alike, which makes human instincts the standard of aesthetic experience. The theory of the sublime has to be supplemented, then, by the notion of taste, otherwise there is no way of preventing the exaltation of those classes of people completely untrammelled by custom and rationality. This allows me to suggest that Burke's response to the French Revolution can be seen in terms of the contradiction inherent in his bourgeois aesthetics; the Revolution can be seen as the political and social extrapolation of possibilities already latent in Burke's early aesthetics. Implicit in Burke's bourgeois revolution as a kind of irrepressible internal momentum is a democratic revolution which threatens from within the social order he seeks to institute. Burke's reaction is as curious as it is necessary: in face of an event which foregrounds those aspects of his theory which he attempts to contain in 1757-59, he tries to apply the ballast of custom grounded in aristocratic property and reinvents his aesthetics to meet the crisis he most feared (precisely because it seems implicit in his own revolt against the aristocracy).⁴

Burke needs, then, in the Enquiry, to be able to make distinctions without abandoning the 'natural' ground of

his theory -- to which he is heavily committed, since he wants to maintain the principle that aesthetic experience, and hence individual development, is especially open to those uncorrupted by aristocratic culture. He is led to argue, therefore, that although there are no differences in kind between people there are differences in 'degree' which arise 'from two causes principally; either from a greater degree of natural sensibility, or from a closer and longer attention to the object' (p.21).⁵ That 'natural sensibility' might vary seems to compromise Burke's egalitarian argument, and I will return shortly to Burke's account of why it should vary. The second qualification refers back to the remark about knowledge and experience: in 'nice cases [where distinctions need to be finely discriminated], supposing the acuteness of the sense equal, the greater attention and habit in such things will have the advantage' (p.22). This is because 'Taste' (and here Burke partially abandons the link with sensory taste which enabled him to ground all distinctions in common nature) is a composite faculty made up of 'a perception of the primary pleasures of sense, of the secondary pleasures of the imagination, and of the conclusions of the reasoning faculty' (p.23). This reasoning faculty is supposed to make a difference without a distinction; and yet the difference it makes is all-important, not only for Burke's ideological project, but also because of the ways it complicates it. Although it still allows taste to be acquirable, as Ferguson puts it, 'in exactly the same way that muscles can -- by exercise' ('Legislating the Sublime,' p.132), the facilities for such 'exercise' -- made available in a 'liberal' education -- are not common to all in the same way that the nervous system is. At the same time, and this is the measure of the irreducible problem Burke wrestles with, such exercise is precisely that which threatens to render the observer insensitive to sensory stimuli and unmoved by imaginative activity; for if the judgement 'is improved by ... the

habit of reasoning' (p.23), both habit and reason, Burke insists repeatedly, are antithetical to the sublime and the beautiful. The 'Introduction on Taste' admits as much:

it frequently happens that a very poor judge, merely by force of a greater complexional sensibility, is more affected by a very poor piece, than the best judge by the most perfect; for as every thing new, extraordinary, grand, or passionate is well calculated to affect such a person, and that the faults do not affect him, his pleasure is more pure and unmixed; ... the judgment [on the other hand] is for the greater part employed in throwing stumbling blocks in the way of the imagination, in dissipating the scenes of its enchantment, and in tying us down to the disagreeable yoke of our reason: for almost the only pleasure that men have in judging better than others, consists in a sort of conscious pride and superiority, which arises from thinking rightly (Enquiry, p.25).

Thus the contradictory demands of Burke's treatise have brought him to a kind of impasse, where the man of judgement is left experiencing an impoverished parody of the sublime sense of vaunting joy. Yet Burke is driven to make one more twist in the argument which, since it seems to flatly contradict the 'egalitarian' principles upon which the treatise is founded, exposes the difficulties his project involves him in. In a flourish reminiscent of Puttenham, he asserts that 'so far as the imagination and the passions are concerned, I believe it true, that the reason is little consulted; but where disposition, where decorum, where congruity are concerned, in short wherever the best Taste differs from the worst, I am convinced that the understanding operates and nothing else' (p.26). Burke's notion of 'Taste' therefore functions as a necessary but troublesome supplement. Brought in as a standard with which to regulate a new set of social and cultural distinctions, it yet needs to appear different from the 'artificial' or 'arbitrary' measures employed in

aristocratic societies. It is therefore presented as a natural acquirement open to all willing to work for it. The difference between this kind of work and productive labour must therefore appear to be one of degree rather than kind. But although the sublime seems to be grounded in labour, it is a metaphorical labour, not the labour of the masses. This aesthetics, like the politics it forms the counterpart to, is based on a division of labour into the physical and the mental. And yet the melancholy aspect of the above passage seems to indicate that 'taste,' brought in to supplement the sublime to make sure that it functions in the way Burke wishes, renders the sublime unavailable to the 'best judges.'

The irresolvable contradiction of the Enquiry, and of much eighteenth-century thought, is most acutely brought to the fore in its response -- at once nostalgic and aloof -- to the myth of an uncorrupt past and/or childhood in which the senses were vitally alive to nature and the arts:

In the morning of our days, when the senses are unworn and tender, when the whole man is awake in every part, and the gloss of novelty fresh upon all the objects that surround us, how lively at that time are our sensations, but how false and inaccurate the judgments we form of things (p.25).

The most powerful effects of poetry and music have been displayed, and perhaps are still displayed, where these arts are but in a very low and imperfect state. The rude hearer is affected by the principles which operate in these arts even in their rudest condition; and he is not skilful enough to perceive the defects. But as the arts advance towards their perfection, the science of criticism advances with equal pace, and the pleasure of judges is frequently interrupted by the faults which are discovered in the most finished compositions (pp.25-26).

These passages underline the perplexity of a class attempting to constitute an aesthetic for itself which is

distinguished at one and the same time from the polished artifice of the court and the 'rude' vigour of the child or the savage. Wishing to retain 'natural sensibility,' bourgeois thought nevertheless perceives its limitations; irrevocably committed to its own 'natural' arts and critical skills, its nostalgia inevitably sees them as impairing precisely what it yearns for (but also fears) in the 'natural' state. 'Taste' therefore works to supplement the acute sensibility experienced by the 'rude' in the 'state of nature': it supplies the judgement and discrimination which they lack (which makes them dangerous), and yet it supplants those 'natural' qualities which make them enviable.

I would like to return to Burke's second qualification to his otherwise egalitarian theory. That sensibility might vary is a curious comment to make in a treatise which repeatedly stresses the uniformity of our physiological mechanisms. Especially disturbing for bourgeois thought is the hint, which the Enquiry barely gives, that the life-style and the work patterns of the bourgeois manufacturing classes might precisely unfit them for both the sublime experience and the cultivation of taste:

There are some men formed with feelings so blunt, with tempers so cold and phlegmatic, that they can hardly be said to be awake during the whole course of their lives. Upon such persons, the most striking objects make but a faint and obscure impression. There are others so continuously in the agitation of gross and merely sensual pleasures, or so occupied in low drudgery of avarice, or so heated in the chace of honours and distinction, that their minds, which had been used continuously to the storms of these violent and tempestuous passions, can hardly be put in motion by the delicate and refined play of the imagination. These men, though from a different cause, become as stupid and insensible as the former (p.24).

In this way, the 'chace' for 'distinction' or the 'low drudgery of avarice' -- which can be seen as the reduced counterparts of Burke's sublime aesthetic -- seem to blunt the capacity to experience the sublime and the beautiful. The habits which result from the bourgeois ethic become like second nature to bourgeois subjects, making them 'as stupid and insensible' as those whose feelings have been made 'blunt' by nature itself.

(ii) Aesthetics and the Division of Labour

Burke's Enquiry can be seen as an early formulation of problems which have preoccupied western thought from the eighteenth through to the late twentieth century. In a number of ways, Burke's 'sensationalist' account of the nervous mechanisms of the sublime reaction is curiously analogous to Freud's attempt to ground psychoanalytical theory (especially the 'repetition compulsion') in biological terms, while Burke's polarized distinctions between tension and relaxation, self-preservation and sexual reproduction, and perhaps the sublime and the beautiful, seem to anticipate Freud's own polar oppositions.⁶ It is even more striking, however, to explore how Burke's text engages with problems in the eighteenth century whose 'resolutions' still affect the late twentieth century.

Boulton points out that 'the pleasure-pain principle had been a common point of discussion for Shaftsbury, Locke, and Hume, among others' (pp.xl-xli). But more importantly, the treatment of this principle in Burke's Enquiry allows it to be understood in terms of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century debates about the nature and effects of labour. Jeremy Bentham, for example, seems to translate Burke's sublime moment into the experience of the manual labourer:⁷

Cessation from labour presents, it is true, upon the face of it no more than a negative idea; but when the condition of him by whom repose after corporeal labour is experienced, is considered, the enjoyment will be seen to be a positive quantity; for, in this case, not merely a cessation of discomfort, but a pleasurable feeling of a peculiar kind, is experienced. In the case of the labourer, it may indeed be said, that before the time of repose, with its enjoyment, arrives, the labour is pushed to a degree of intensity of which pain ... has been produced. But the greater the degree of the pain of suffrance, the greater the degree of the pleasure of expectation -- the expectation of the pleasure of repose -- with which it has been accompanied ('The Psychology of Economic Man,' p.445).

The difference between this discussion of labour and Burke's seems merely terminological -- Burke insisting on the distinction between 'pleasure' and 'delight' (which results from the cessation of pain or labour) (Enquiry, pp.35-37, pp.134-35). Yet there is an important difference: Bentham is writing about physical labour, while Burke seems to translate that activity and experience into metaphorical or mental terms.

Twenty-one years after the publication of Burke's aesthetics, Adam Smith finds that the the division of labour has negative as well as positive effects in an advanced society in which new modes of production had radically changed the nature of work; in a discussion of the consequences of the state not providing education for working people, Smith suggests that

The man whose ^{whole} life is spent in performing a few simple operations ... has no occasion to exert his understanding, or to exercise his invention in finding out expedients for removing difficulties which never occur. He naturally loses, therefore, the habit of such exertion, and generally becomes as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to become. The torpor of his mind renders him, not only incapable of relishing or bearing a part in any rational

conversation, but of conceiving any generous, noble, or tender sentiment, and consequently of forming any just judgment concerning many even of the ordinary duties of private life. Of the great and extensive interests of his country, he is altogether incapable of judging; and unless very particular pains have been taken to render him otherwise, he is equally incapable of defending his country in war. . . . His dexterity at his own particular trade seems, in this manner, to be acquired at the expence of his intellectual, social, and martial virtues (Wealth of Nations, II, p.782).

Although not necessarily 'natural,' the division of manual and mental labour becomes 'second nature' to the industrial revolution, since the very processes and conditions of manufacture reinforce the distinctions between people and classes upon which it relies. In this account, the manufacturing worker's labour unfits him for rational conversation, respect, private duties, political judgement, and the military defence of his country. In this he joins women and the aristocracy who are equally unfitted or 'unmanned' -- equally debarred from sublime activity and experience. In addition, however, he loses the ability to love -- to respond to the tender sentiments of the beautiful. The 'universal' experience which underlies Burke's aesthetics might not, then, extend down to the working classes; their labour is not uplifting but degrading, its repetitious, habitual nature dulls their capacity to participate in the sublime. Although the restorative effects of labour and of terror are made analogous in the Enquiry ('as common labour, which is a mode of pain, is the exercise of the grosser, a mode of terror is the exercise of the finer parts of the system' [p.136]), the forging of such an analogy, in face of developing analyses of the effects of manufacturing labour, seems symptomatic of the paradoxical relation the bourgeois manufacturing classes have, in both economic and aesthetic terms, towards the working classes.

In Wealth of Nations, Smith suggests that the division of mental and manual labour is an inevitable part and effect of industrial progress: 'In the progress of society, philosophy or speculation becomes, like every other employment, the principal or sole trade and occupation of a particular class of citizens.'

Improvements in machinery are made by workers themselves, by those for whom the making of machinery has become their peculiar trade, but more importantly by 'those who are called philosophers or men of speculation, whose trade it is not to do anything, but to observe everything' (I, p.21). That philosophy -- the speculative science -- should be a separate 'trade' seems indispensable given the debilitating effects of all other trades. Barrell argues, however, that if philosophical speculation has become a trade like any other, it gains in acuity through specialization, but loses the capacity -- which the 'gentleman' was once thought to have -- of a 'wide' and 'equal' survey precisely because it has taken on the limited perspective of a trade (An Equal, Wide Survey, p.49). No one, perhaps, can remain immune from the contradictions implicit in the capital-labour relation since it limits the faculties and perspective of worker and 'philosopher' alike.

While Smith seems to suggest that a hierarchized society is inevitable given the division of labour necessary for 'progress,' his discussion of the debilitating effects of repetitious work leads to an argument for the education of the people in order to mitigate, as far as possible, such effects. And yet, as Barrell shows, bourgeois political economists remained ambivalent towards the idea of educating manufacturing workers:

It may seem that by education 'the great body of the people' can be taught to 'see through' the 'interested complaints of faction and sedition' and so to arrive at a view of the balance of interests by which the unity of a

modern state is necessarily composed; or, on the other hand, it may appear that to teach the ability to read, and especially to write, is to facilitate the communication of such 'interested complaints', as well as to relax the habit of industry necessary to economic progress 'Ignorance', writes Ferguson, 'is the mother of industry as well as of superstition' (pp.29-30).

A major question which 'men of speculation' faced, therefore, was whether the needs of the nascent socio-economic order were best served by the ignorance or the education of its work force. That both solutions introduce dangers as well as benefits perhaps points to inherent instabilities in capitalist relations of production akin to those in aesthetics we have just traced.

In a ubiquitous comparison in the late eighteenth century (which seems a nostalgic response to this series of problems), Smith suggests that exertion in more 'primitive' societies has quite opposite effects than labour in 'civilized' nations. The differences are analogous to those between Burke's sublime labour and the debilitating labour of manufacturing capitalism:

It is otherwise in the barbarous societies, as they are commonly called, of hunters, of shepherds, and even of husbandmen In such societies the varied occupations of every man oblige every man to exert his capacity, and to invent expedients for removing difficulties which are continually occurring. Invention is kept alive, and the mind is not suffered to fall into that drowsy stupidity, which, in a civilized society, seems to benumb the understanding of almost all the inferior ranks of people (II, pp.782-83).

Such passages -- which seem to yearn for a set of conditions in which the body of the people was capable of the exertion and invention involved in 'removing difficulties' -- perhaps mark an ambivalence towards 'civilization' and the advance of the 'manufacturing'

industry in its most subtle philosopher. It is almost as if bourgeois thought is troubled from the first by the impossibility of balancing the gains and losses involved in progress. If the sublime represents an aesthetic category based upon the bourgeois work ethic, it also seems to be an index of the bourgeoisie's apprehensions about the blunting effects of its own life-style. But if its fantasy about 'barbarous societies' is peopled with sublime beings who present a damaging contrast with the body of the people in a manufacturing society, the latter society can yet, it claims, produce an elite whose members surpass the general attainments of the former. For although, in barbarous societies, every individual is capable of a variety of occupations, Smith continues, 'no man can well acquire that improved and refined understanding, which a few men sometimes possess in a more civilised state.' And although 'every man [in barbarous societies] has a considerable degree of knowledge, ingenuity, and invention ... scarce any man has a great degree.' In contrast to this, Smith concludes that

In a civilised state ... though there is little variety in the occupations of the greater part of individuals, there is an almost infinite variety in those of the whole society. These varied occupations present an almost infinite variety of objects to the contemplation of those few, who, being attached to no particular occupation themselves, have leisure and inclination to examine the occupations of other people. The contemplation of so great a variety of objects necessarily exercises their minds in endless comparisons and combinations, and renders their understandings, in an extraordinary degree, both acute and comprehensive (II, p.783).

At first, this passage seems about to argue that although bourgeois society has relinquished the conditions in which most individuals could attain a degree of sublimity it has nevertheless produced a system whose variety of activity and energetic momentum renders society itself sublime.

Yet since this would be to abandon its basis in individualism, a select few are presented as attaining a level of sublimity not thought of in pre-bourgeois societies. This elevation of an elect is acknowledged to be at the expense of the degradation of the many:

'Notwithstanding the great abilities of those few, all the nobler parts of the human character may be, in a great measure, obliterated and extinguished in the great body of the people' (II, pp.783-84). Yet this enormous cost, in human and aesthetic terms, purchases only an ambiguous eminence for the few. For, as Barrell suggests, the problem remains of conceiving exactly who these elevated 'few' might be; if 'philosophy' or political economy is also a trade it might be 'incapable of producing such a philosopher as Smith himself, apparently able to grasp from the perspective of one determinate occupation, the relations between all others' (An Equal, Wide Survey, p.49).

That these economic speculations are conducted in the same terms as Burke's Enquiry reveals how eighteenth-century economics and aesthetics not only employ the same paradigms but are concerned with the same set of problems. In a society dominated by the bourgeoisie, the majority are unfitted for intense aesthetic experience by the very nature of their daily labour. The limited and repetitious nature of that labour has rendered them incapable of engaging in the activities which characterize sublime labour. Only the philosopher or political economist is deemed able to escape from this and does so by an 'exercise' of the mind which *contemplates* the labour of others (while cultivating an ambivalent nostalgia for the more rugged and adventurous conditions experienced by barbarous societies). The philosopher, then, becomes equivalent to the man of taste -- able to contemplate or aestheticize the labours of the present and the past without being able to participate in them. The sublime, then, perhaps arises as a symptom of a profound disquiet

within the bourgeois project. I have argued that the sublime functions as the aesthetic ground of bourgeois enterprise; yet it can also be seen as a measure of the way bourgeois thought represents to itself the cost involved in that enterprise. If, as Weiskel contends, the sublime is an episode in melancholy, a remedy for the boredom so prevalent in the eighteenth century (p.18), it can be read as the resort of the 'civilized' classes whose lives no longer present sufficient mental and physical exertion or variety to prevent their degeneration into 'effeminacy.' The labour and pain which formed the daily experience of the majority provides the material ease which at once allows and makes it necessary that the ruling classes transform labour and pain into aesthetic experience. If 'the sublime appears as a remedy for the languid melancholy, the vague boredom that increased so astonishingly during the eighteenth century' (Weiskel, p.97), it is possible to argue that Burke's sublime first appears as an antidote against, but also a symptom of, a disease *already internal* to eighteenth-century bourgeois England.

For Kant, in 1790, even war can become a necessity in settled and prosperous societies:

War itself, provided it is conducted with order and a sacred respect for the rights of civilians, has something sublime about it, and gives nations that carry it on in such a manner a stamp of mind only the more sublime the more numerous the dangers to which they are exposed, and which they are able to meet with fortitude. On the other hand, a prolonged peace favours the predominance of a mere commercial spirit, and with it a debasing self-interest, cowardice, and effeminacy, and tends to degrade the character of a nation ('Analytic of the Sublime,' pp.112-13).

Significantly enough, then, the bourgeois enterprise is not inherently sublime; although its great energy in replacing the aristocracy might be initially awe inspiring, once established it becomes subject to the same

infirmities as the regime it displaces -- infirmities from which no class seems exempt. The bourgeois notion of 'progress' seems incurably haunted by a sense of loss; striding forward in the name of nature, it yet suspects that its progress is founded on the supplanting of nature itself. If its very success renders it vulnerable to the revolutionary potential of the classes it exploits, one of its central problems, therefore, is whether it is more effective to educate the work force or keep them in ignorance.

This complex of problems is exposed and dramatized in the Revolution controversy, where Smith's tentative suggestions about how to mitigate the effects of repetitious labour on the working classes -- through education for example -- are taken up by Burke's radical opponents, who also argue that it is those who do no labour at all -- such as kings and aristocracy -- who are most benumbed by civilization (and hence incapable of acute aesthetic or physical response). In radical thought of the 1790s, right exertion is a sublime remedy not only for that majority subjected to misery by the existing order of things, but also for those (aristocrats and middle-class women) whose luxurious, debilitating life perpetuates the suffering of the majority (in Reflections, the majority are presented as 'destined' to be 'unmanned' by manual occupations while the few enjoy the culture their efforts make possible). For Burke, that the 'disease' might be inherent within England and/or the bourgeois condition makes the lesson of the French Revolution -- brought on in his view by the languid inattention of the French aristocracy -- all the more urgent. But that Burke is caught by history within an inextricable double bind is perhaps revealed by the way his texts on French affairs produce rapidly alternating and contradictory representations of the revolutionaries. Burke's writings on France variously admire radicalism as able and energetic and express contempt for its

'femininity;'[Ⓜ] its danger to the English constitution is figured both as its vigorous and unceasing activity, and as the negative example it sets of shunning all exertion (and thus being all the more dangerous):

In England we *cannot* work so hard as Frenchmen. Frequent relaxation is necessary to us. You are naturally more intense in your application. ... At present, this your disposition to labour is rather increased than lessened. ... This continued, unremitted effort of the members of your Assembly, I take to be one among the causes of the mischief they have done. They who always labour can have no true judgement. You never give yourselves time to cool.[¶]

Their purpose every where seems to have been to evade and slip aside from *difficulty*. ... Difficulty is a severe instructor, set over us by the supreme ordinance of a parental guardian and legislator He that wrestles with us strengthens our nerves, and sharpens our skill. Our antagonist is our helper. This amicable conflict with difficulty obliges us to an intimate acquaintance with our object, and compels us to consider it in all its relations. It will not suffer us to be superficial. It is the want of nerves of understanding for such a talk; it is the degenerate fondness for tricking short-cuts, and little fallacious facilities, that has in so many parts of the world created governments with arbitrary powers. They have created the late arbitrary monarchy of France. They have created the arbitrary republic of Paris. ... The difficulties which they rather had eluded than escaped, meet them again in their course; they multiply and thicken on them; they are involved, through a labyrinth of confused detail, in an industry without limit, and without direction; and, in conclusion, the whole of their work becomes feeble, vitious, and insecure (Reflections, pp.278-79).

In a revealing way, therefore, the same terms are used to criticize France both after and before the Revolution. Both aristocrat and revolutionary seem bent on avoiding labour and by doing so involve themselves in a labyrinth of confused detail which enfeebles both their work and

themselves. At the same time their activity becomes 'an industry without limit' -- exceeding (like the sublime itself) all bounds and pre-empting 'true judgement.' The term 'French' itself therefore comes to signify, variously and unpredictably, 'feminine' debility and irresistible strength. Both beauty and labour function -- according to a textual logic that has its own imperatives -- sometimes as a 'remedy' to the dangers that France holds and sometimes as its most dangerous quality.

1. For a discussion of the political meanings of custom during the eighteenth century, see John Barrell, An Equal, Wide Survey, pp.110-75).

2. Although I disagree with Chandler's reading of this passage in the Enquiry as directly transferable into Reflections, his reading of the later text in terms of second nature is admirable (Wordsworth's Second Nature, p.76-77, pp.64-74). My major difference with Ferguson's readings of the Enquiry is that she conflates the beautiful with custom and is therefore unable to register the implications of Burke's doing just that in Reflections.

3. Barrell points out that 'the renaissance ideal of the courtier was being transformed in England into that of the gentleman of civic virtue' during 'the last years of the seventeenth century and the early years of the eighteenth.' Although he still carries some of his 'courtly baggage,' some definitions of 'the gentleman' omit the requirement that he be a man of landed property, while others insist that whether or not he be a 'born gentleman' he must be a 'bred gentlemen.' The main problem confronting the discursive construction of the gentleman was that although he had to develop his knowledge and taste, he could not be allowed to put his understanding to work. This is because all trades were thought to give their practitioners a 'partial' view (in both senses). Even the landed interest came to be perceived, precisely, as an interest (An Equal, Wide Survey, pp.37-39).

4. Ferguson develops a similar argument about the way Burke saw the French Revolution as an instance 'of the sublime functioning in an unanticipated direction The ungovernability of the mob turns out to represent rather too much sublimity for Burke's taste when that ungovernability ceases to contribute to the orderly functioning of a productive society' ('Legislating the Sublime,' p.136).

5. There are remarkable parallels between the 'Introduction on Taste' and Wordsworth's Preface to the Lyrical Ballads -- principally, I suggest, because they are engaged very similar projects (see Derek Attridge's discussion of the Preface in Peculiar Language, pp.46-89).

6. Relations between Burke and Freud have been importantly explored by Weiskel (p.92); one of Freud's most relevant texts here is Beyond the Pleasure Principle. For a discussion of parallels between Burke's aesthetics and Freud's psychological theories, see Pamela Kaufman, 'Burke, Freud, and the Gothic.'

7. Strictly speaking, the notion of mental labour or labour as an abstraction is a development of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; before that labour referred primarily to working the land (as well as, through its alternative meaning of pain, the labour of childbirth); thus Smith's use of labour as a term in political economy can be seen as an index of the mutation from agrarian feudalism to bourgeois capitalism (see Raymond Williams, Keywords, pp.176-79).

8. That Burke oscillates undecidability in his representation of the Revolution in these terms can be seen in the fact that Williams and Paulson sum up his attitude to the revolutionaries in apparently opposite ways; for Williams, Burke identifies the danger of revolutionary thought in its avoidance of difficulty (Culture and Society, pp.25-26), while for Paulson, Burke fears the revolutionaries for their uncontrollable entrepreneurial and sexual energy (p.64).

9. A Letter from Mr. Burke, to a Member of the National Assembly (1791), Works, VI, pp.67-68.

Chapter 3: The Arbitrary Power of Language

We have seen that standard accounts of the development of the sublime through the eighteenth century suggest that it undergoes a significant transition -- epitomized in Burke's Enquiry -- from rhetorical technique to psychological response in face of natural phenomena. We have also seen, however, that what appears to be an immediate response to nature in the raw turns out to involve a strategy which may be described as rhetorical. Given this continued, if covert, relation between the sublime and rhetoric, and given the fact that -- as we will see -- so much of the Revolution controversy turns around issues of language, the present chapter devotes specific attention to the last section of the Enquiry which concentrates on language as a source of aesthetic affect. This will enable me to further investigate the distinction between reactionary and revolutionary aesthetics and show how both are already potential in the Enquiry. Such a discussion of Burke's theory of language will allow an insight into the rhetorical processes of Reflections and offer a way of accounting for Burke's 'rage' against radical rhetoric.

(i) The Divorce of Language and Nature

For Burke, even before the Enquiry's concluding section on words, the sublime often seems more an effect of language than of nature. Although he shifts, in a seemingly indiscriminate fashion, between the sublime in nature and the sublime in art, most of his examples of sublimity come from literature.¹ However, in the section demonstrating how 'Obscurity' can be a source of the sublime, and after praising Milton's description of Death as 'dark, uncertain, confused, terrible, and sublime to the last degree' (p.59), Burke underlines the distinction between

the pictorial and the literary arts precisely in terms of their different relation to 'natural reality,' and their correspondingly very different capacities to create sublime effects:

It is one thing to make an idea clear, and another to make it affecting to the imagination. If I make a drawing of a palace, or a temple, or a landscape, I present a very clear idea of those objects; but then ... my picture can at most affect only as [they] ... would have affected in the reality. On the other hand, the most lively and spirited verbal description I can give, raises a very obscure and imperfect idea of such objects; but then it is in my power to raise a stronger emotion by the description than I could do by the best painting (p.60).

Even potentially sublime objects, then, achieve their full sublimity not in the 'reality' but through verbal description, not in their presence but in their absence. Indeed, the above passage might even imply that verbal description cannot help but convey imperfect and obscure ideas of objects -- cannot help, therefore, but affect us in sublime ways by supplementing (supplanting) nature or its image. Thus the description of 'Death' in Paradise Lost derives much of its power not through any image of death it might convey, but through the 'judicious obscurity' created by Milton's language (p.59). Burke presents a similar argument in the section on 'Power,' where objects are not so much sublime in themselves but become sublime according to how they are perceived or described.² The horse, for example, can be seen in 'two distinct lights;' as a 'useful beast' it has 'nothing of the sublime,'

but it is thus that we are affected with him, whose neck is clothed with thunder, the glory of whose nostrils is terrible, who swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage In this description the useful character of the horse entirely disappears, and the terrible and sublime blaze out together (pp.65-66, misquoting Job 39: 19-24).

But although it might therefore be appropriate that the Enquiry should end with a discussion of 'Words,' Burke's theory of poetic power seems to expose a set of tensions within his argument. Burke argues that words 'affect us in a manner very different from that in which we are affected by natural objects, or by painting or architecture' (p.163), and this difference can be seen as having a number of consequences for Burke's thought. Natural objects are said to affect the human subject through 'the laws of that connexion, which Providence has established between certain motions and configurations of bodies, and certain consequent feelings in our minds' (p.163). Thus there are natural and motivated laws which mean that certain kinds of objects will necessarily affect human beings in characteristic ways. Burke goes on to argue that words, on the other hand, which have the capacity to affect human beings to a much greater extent than natural objects, achieve their effects not through motivated or providential connections but through habitual associations, not through nature but through culture. Burke's theory of language, then, seems to represent somewhat of a divergence within the Enquiry in that it is concerned not with the individual alone with nature but with cultural meanings in society, and is based not on a sensationist but an associationist theory.²³

Although he recognizes that Burke's theory of language relies on associationist premises and depends on the processes of habitude (p.lxxix), Boulton considers the section on words to be 'organic to the whole treatise' (p.lxxxix), and finds it surprising that so little attention has been given to the theory of language it develops (p.lxxvii). Like the bulk of the Enquiry, the last section is held to represent somewhat of a break with contemporary views:

Burke's principle contention is, if not entirely original, phrased and argued in an

audacious and revolutionary manner. He represents a reaction against the distrust of language among post-Baconian writers in the previous century, against their desire to evolve a language in which words would simply be marks of things and in which emotional and historical associations would be non-existent' (p.Ixxvii).

We will see, in later chapters, that the idea that words are inextricably bound up with emotional and historical associations rather than being rational counters for things forms one of the terrains on which the struggle between Burke and radicalism takes place. For 1790s' radicalism, language can potentially shed its emotional and historical accents -- which are associated with the aristocracy and arbitrary repression -- in order to emerge as clear, virtuous, and 'manly.' But for Burke, more than thirty years before such a theory of language became part of a political movement which seemed to disregard both history and feelings, 'a clear idea is ... another name for a little idea' (p.63).

We have already seen that, to be truly sublime, nature needs to be metaphorized, to be placed at one remove, if it is not to impinge too violently on the perceiving subject; in the Enquiry, perception itself becomes a rhetorical act, figuring nature and deceiving the self. In Burke's model of poetry, language reveals and revels in its rhetorical status and effect. Indeed, that effect either depends upon a pact between reader and text, suspending disbelief, or it *pre-empts* the literalizing drive of rational enquiry. This is because the sublime, as that which 'anticipates' reason (p.57), can also be deflated if reason gets there first: a 'literal' reading of sublime passages may make them seem 'ludicrous' (p.63), 'ridiculous' (p.64), or a product of madness; rational analysis might expose a composition's 'first principles,' but in doing so would completely dissipate its effect (p.164). Reading an 'admirably

sublime' passage of the Aeneid (VIII, 429-32), Burke says that 'if we attend coolly to the kind of sensible image which a combination of ideas of this sort must form, the chimeras of madmen cannot appear more wild and absurd than such a picture' (p.171). A literalizing reason can therefore turn the sublime into madness and absurdity -- as, indeed, Burke tries to do with the French Revolution.

Once again, then, the Aeneid is used as an example of the importance, and the problem, of keeping up distinctions; if, as we have seen, Burke's sensationist theory problematizes the difference between Virgil and popular literature, then his associationist model raises the issue of differentiating between Virgil and 'the chimeras of madmen.' Yet it may be that Burke's theory makes it impossible to tell the difference between madness and the sublime. In a reading of Burke's use of a passage from Homer in which spectators 'All gaze, all wonder!' when witnessing 'a wretch, who conscious of his crime, / Pursued for murder from his native clime, / Just gains some frontier, breathless, pale, amaz'd,' Weiskel suggests that Pope mistranslates Homer's 'ate' as guilt rather than as 'confusion' or 'temporary insanity.'⁴ Weiskel goes on to posit that for Burke 'the word is likely to have fused the meanings of insanity, punishment, disaster, and guilt -- the last not from Homer but from Pope' (p.89). But whether we can know what the word was 'likely' to have meant for Burke is of less interest to me here, as is Weiskel's move towards a psychologized reading, than the idea that the sublime might be an escape from temporary insanity which is itself virtually indistinguishable from insanity. And if the syntax of Burke's reading of the Homeric passage 'makes obscure the relation between the feelings of the spectator and those of the fugitive' (Weiskel, p.89), I would not want, as Weiskel does, to neatly sort out that relation because the sublime seems to be precisely that moment in which the spectator,

confronted with an overwhelming spectacle, believes himself or herself to be in the *midst* of a great crisis.

I will return to the question of whether it is possible to distinguish between the sublime and its 'perversions' via a more extended examination of Burke's theory of language. His thesis about the sublime effects of poetry is grounded in Locke's model of the relations between language and ideas;⁵ in a division of words into three classes akin to Locke's classifications of complex ideas into 'modes,' 'substances,' and 'relations,'⁶ Burke defines '*compounded abstract*' words, such as 'liberty' and 'virtue,' as the clearest examples of words that do not raise precise notions or pictures in the mind: 'I am convinced that whatever power they may have on the passions, they do not derive it from any representation raised in the mind of the things for which they stand' (p.164). 'Such words,' Burke argues, 'are in reality but mere sounds' which have been imbued with certain connotations through 'being used on particular occasions,' and which subsequently have 'effects similar to those of their occasions' 'whenever they are afterwards mentioned.' Eventually, 'they at last utterly lose their connection with the particular occasions that gave rise to them; yet the sound without any annexed notion continues to operate as before' (p.165). The effects and meanings of these words are therefore generated and accrued through the habitual associations created by their original context, and have no natural or motivated relation to that which they are held to refer to.

If words are to have 'all their possible extent of power,' it is necessary that 'three effects arise in the mind of the hearer': the sound itself, the 'picture, or representation of the thing signified by the sound,' and the '*affection* of the soul produced by one or both of the foregoing' (p.166). This is at once to anticipate Saussure's distinction between signifier and signified (and the arbitrary, conventional relation between them)⁷

and, through considering the *affective* capacity of words, to posit a politics of language only latent in Saussure. Burke's 'compound abstract' words '(honour, justice, liberty, and the like,) produce the first and the last of these effects, but not the second' -- that is, their sounds have effects but do not represent any 'thing' to the mind. '*Simple abstracts*,' on the other hand, such as 'blue, green, hot, cold, and the like ... are capable of affecting all three of the purposes of words.' So too are the '*aggregate*' words, such as 'man, castle, horse &c. ... in a yet higher degree' (pp.166-167). A logical consequence of Burke's theory of compound abstract words, then, might be that 'liberty' can never refer to an actual state of affairs but conjures up an unanalysed and unanalysable emotive state; revolutionary radicalism can therefore be made to seem grossly in error when it tries to institute a political structure which would make 'liberty' a political 'reality.'

Burke's theory of language is even more 'radical' than this suggests, since he claims that 'simple abstract' and 'aggregate' words might work in the same way as 'compound abstract' words: 'I am of opinion, that the most general effect even of these words, does not arise from their forming pictures of the several things they would represent in the imagination' (p.167). Burke therefore suggests that language in general works independently of referents or concepts -- that it is a *non-representational* mode: 'it is not only of those ideas which are commonly called abstract, and of which no image at all can be formed, but even of particular real beings, that we converse without having any idea of them excited in the imagination' (p.170). Burke seems to use 'idea' here to refer both to abstract ideas, which are, by definition, divorced from pictorial images, and to the pictorial images which might be expected to be 'excited' in the imagination at the mention of 'particular real beings.' Burke is therefore arguing that all language works

independently of mental images; indeed, it derives its power from that independence. Contradicting his earlier claim, Burke's theory suggests that language is most powerful when only two of its three possible effects are present in the mind -- the sound and the 'affection of the soul' which it induces -- since the pictorial or representational effect seems to work as a dampener to the affection of the soul. But if this is so, then language is loosed from external constraints and becomes a mode of producing certain effects independently of representational concerns or truth claims. The distinction between 'good' and 'bad' rhetoric, therefore, may only depend upon the political vantage point of the reader. That there is an arbitrary relation between word and idea seems to leave no means, save through appeals to convention, by which one relation may be preferred over another; attempts to restrain linguistic meanings therefore begin to look like arbitrary political acts. For the Burke of Reflections, as we will see, the possibility of establishing distinctions between conventional and merely arbitrary relations in language becomes particularly urgent; the criteria he introduces is to ask whether a usage has become 'naturalized' within a community (through a process analogous to prescription in property law), or whether it violates such customary practices.⁶ While revolutionary radicalism becomes sublime precisely through violating custom and tradition, Burke attempts to represent custom and tradition as sublime exactly because they are customary and traditional. Both positions are potential within the Enquiry, but their apparently mutually interdependent relation seems to complicate the straightforward distinction into reactionary and revolutionary which each position in the Revolution controversy requires. A close reading of the argument about language in the Enquiry reveals that if language achieves its sublime effects by transgressing the notion that words have motivated

relations to things it can only do so through the theory that language accrues affect through context. This means that sublimity in language is achieved through the fact that words carry over their affect into admittedly novel situations and combinations through *habitual associations*. The aesthetic which seems to arise in revolt against custom thus turns out to depend for its very power on a 'revolutionary' relation to custom.

(ii) The Semantics of the Sublime

In his 'search for a structure beneath the vast epiphenomena of the sublime' (p.11), Weiskel contends that the 'breakdown' in representation which a theory of language such as Burke's entails, or the sudden confrontation with it, allows us to understand the characteristic features of the natural sublime in terms of a semiotic structure:

The 'difficulty' so central in Burke, Kant, and others is the affective correlative of a semiotic discontinuity in the inexplicable passage between one order or discourse and another. A general semiotic of the sublime would find ... the same discontinuity between sensation and idea as between idea and word (p.17).

As Weiskel points out, Burke's theory of language 'is intimately tied to the chief philosophical obsessions of the age, the relations between ideas (reflections) and sensation':

We properly associate the divorce of *res* and *verba* with the program of the scientific moderns, to which Locke is responsive, but this divorce lies at the base of the sublime too. Scientific thinking and the aesthetic of the sublime are correlative expressions of an episteme in which order is arbitrary, a matter of hypothesis, or as Burke says, of custom (Weiskel, p.16).

The sublime, then, is the moment and the mode when the disruption between sound and sense ordinarily or habitually operative in language -- which nevertheless rarely impedes its functional use -- suddenly and disturbingly opens up as an abyss to the reading or writing subject, temporarily suspending the passage between sound and sense, and confronting the subject with the urgent task of *making sense*. Such a self is suddenly unsituated in and by a language it thought itself master of. If the 'ordinary' or habitual reading process (or response to nature) and its sudden disruption correspond, respectively, to Weiskel's first and second phases of the sublime, the third or reactive phase in Burke is, as we have seen, an energetic forcing through or removal (through a labour of language) of this disruption or difficulty. This third phase, as the counter to a crisis in representation, is perhaps epitomized by the Romantics' discovery, as Weiskel has it, of 'excitement in the *making of meaning*' (p.22). For the Romantics, as for Longinus and Burke in different ways, the solution and the terrifying delight of this moment is to metaphorize absence of signification into a new signifier, to figure terror as the sublime.

In the early eighteenth century, the sublime's implicit semiotic has far-reaching ramifications; for Weiskel, its potential consequences stimulate the work of the Tory satirists:

In their conceptions of order and of signification, Pope and Swift appealed implicitly to a scheme older than what we have called the classical or Lockean semiotic. In the traditional rhetorical doctrine of the humanists from whom Pope and Swift descended, words *did* imitate or participate in things; the authority of language, as of social order, was not arbitrary but natural. To confound words was to confound reality and to disturb nature as well as the social order (Weiskel, p.19).

The sublime may tamper with 'natural' meanings by 'opening a gap between word and thing,' or by violating the decorous, 'natural' order in which words are used (Weiskel, p.19). Burke's theory of language therefore distances his aesthetics and politics from Pope's and Swift's 'natural' conservatism (though he nevertheless has much in common with these early eighteenth-century figures), and identifies him as one of those who threaten nature and the social order. To sever language from nature by suggesting that meanings are customary is, in one reading, to expose the possibility that *other* meanings, and *other* social orders, might be equally or even more valid than existing ones. We can glimpse here some of the contradictions Burke involves himself in when attacking the 'indecorous,' 'unnatural' language of 1790s radicalism. For despite arguing, in his early work, that language is arbitrary rather than natural, Burke's attacks on the French Revolution invoke the fear, precisely, that to confound words 'was to confound reality and to disturb nature as well as the social order.'⁹ Ironically enough, as a cautionary model to Burke, Pope's crusade against the nascent sublime's embracing the discontinuities in culture in the 'wrong way' -- i.e. in a revolutionary way -- reinscribes, for Weiskel, 'the very discontinuities in the structure of signification whose illegitimate confusion it protests.' This is so because irony and the mock heroic are themselves modes which exploit discrepancies between language and 'reality': 'When irony falters,' Weiskel observes, 'Pope is in danger of lapsing (or rising) to the evocative writing of the true sublime, as in the nightmare of the last lines of the *Dunciad*' (pp.19-20). We will see that Burke's strategy of attacking the discontinuities he sees as characteristic of revolutionary thought itself exploits shifting relations between language and reality, and that, like Pope, his discourse is continually in danger of lapsing or rising (of opening himself to

ridicule or of figuring the Revolution as truly sublime). For Burke's irony often reads ironically.

The severing of word and occasion, without loss of effect, means that effects may be exploited in both 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate' ways. Burke seeks to guard against the misuse of language which his theory makes possible by claiming that when emotive words

are put together without any rational view, or in such a manner that they do not rightly agree with each other, the stile is called bombast. And it requires in several cases much good sense and experience to be guarded against the force of such language; for when propriety is neglected, a greater number of these affecting words may be taken into the service, and a greater variety may be indulged in combining them (p.166).

It is important to notice that Burke concentrates here not on the relation of language to 'reality' or 'nature,' but on relations internal to language itself. This is a question of distinguishing between different 'stiles,' not between good and bad mimesis. Burke's response -- the only response his theory leaves open to him -- is to argue that the sublime can be discriminated from bombast according to notions of 'propriety.' The ability to make such judgments is available only to those capable of adopting a 'rational view' and possessing 'much good sense and experience;' without these safeguards, language threatens to overwhelm the listener or reader. Burke's linguistic theory therefore requires that it be possible to distinguish 'bombast' from the sublime, false from true rhetoric, the language calculated to manipulate the reader improperly from the language of the heart. But if, as we have seen, the sublime is precisely that aesthetic mode which relies upon or brings about the preclusion of reason, good sense, and experience, it becomes impossible to discriminate, according to Burke's own theory, between the sublime and bombast. Both are antipathetic to reason and experience, and both appear, to a 'rational' reading,

as an uncoordinated series of inappropriate figures or emotions, 'a strange chaos of levity and ferocity' (as Burke would call the French Revolution). One person's sublime, or transcendent truth, might well be another's hot air or political persuasion -- depending only, it would seem, upon the prior adoption of a 'rational' viewpoint or political stance. 'Propriety,' in fact, turns out to be not wholly distinguishable from bombast but simply a partial reading which refuses to rationally enquire into the rhetorical strategies which a discourse -- or a socio-political custom -- employs.

There is a class aspect to this which bears upon the politics of the later Reflections, and is also of interest in relation to Wordsworth's early poetic experiments. The 'common sort of people' are found to be particularly susceptible to the effects of poetry and rhetoric: 'it is most certain, that their passions are very strongly roused by a fanatic preacher, or by the ballads of Chevy-chase, or the children in the wood, and by other little popular poems and tales that are current in that rank of life' (Enquiry, p.61). This is so because 'it is our ignorance of things that causes all our admiration, and chiefly excites our passions. Knowledge and acquaintance make the most striking causes affect but little.' This justifies not only a patrician attitude towards 'the common people' -- who need the guidance of men of learning and experience -- but also allows the exclusion of alternative viewpoints from within the ranks of their 'betters': 'It is thus with the vulgar, and all men are as the vulgar in what they do not understand' (p.61). There is, however, an ambivalence in Burke's position here because, as Ferguson points out, knowledge in Burke's Enquiry 'is purchased only by the loss of power and the loss of sublimity' ('Sublime of Edmund Burke,' p.72). The man of taste is precisely excluded from the sublime experience he seeks to understand and control. From such an aloof position, it becomes at once possible and impossible to observe the

differences between 'popular poems and tales' and truly great literature -- impossible because rational enquiry can make even Virgil appear like the chimeras of madness.

As in Wordsworth, what on the one hand can be seen as a patronizing attitude, is also a common eighteenth-century nostalgia for the essentially 'poetic' nature of 'primitive man.' Burke's text thus seems to contradict itself, to be troubled by its own logic; for if the people's 'ignorance' renders them more liable to 'admiration,' then they are precisely more capable than the cultured classes of rising as a sublime force. This ambivalence is especially politicized in the Revolution controversy since 'the people's' susceptibility to the sublime is at once the condition which enables their repression within the traditional order and that which makes them responsive to what I want to call the 'republican' or 'radical' sublime offered by the Revolution or by revolutionary discourse. The repression and disenfranchisement of the people -- that they are motivated and manipulated by power rather than knowledge -- is precisely what makes them dangerous. (We will see Burke profoundly discomfited by the people's susceptibility to a 'fanatic' preacher's enthusiasm for the French Revolution.) The founding contradiction of the emerging social and economic order -- that it represses and fears that class which it depends upon -- therefore seems to find its expression in the ambiguities of the sublime aesthetic.

(iii) The Sublimity and the Beauty of Language

We have seen that Burke's aesthetics entails an ambivalence towards the 'primitive' and the 'civilized' alike; this can be seen in his distinction between 'polished' and 'unpolished' languages:

It may be observed that very polished languages, and such as are praised for their superior clearness and perspicuity, are generally deficient in strength. The French language has that perfection, and that defect. Whereas the oriental tongues, and in general the languages of most unpolished people, have a great force and energy of expression; and this is but natural. Uncultivated people are but ordinary observers of things, and not critical in distinguishing them; but, for that reason, they admire more, and are more affected with what they see, and therefore express themselves in a warmer and more passionate manner (p.176).

'Uncultivated people' are therefore both more responsive to the sublime and more capable of a sublime activity epitomized by their 'great force and energy of expression.' In contrast to this, French polish might produce a beautiful clarity but it marks a deficiency in strength. In a later chapter we will see that it is precisely this deficiency in strength which makes aristocratic France, in Burke's reading, unable to mount an effective defence against the sheer energy of the middle and lower classes acting in concert. At the moment, it is germane to note how different kinds of language, or language use, are characterized in the gendered terms of the sublime and the beautiful. If French has at once the 'perfection' and the 'defect' characteristic of polished languages, it is instructive to compare this with an earlier description of beauty in the Enquiry: 'so far is perfection ... from being the cause of beauty; that this quality, where it is highest in the female sex, almost always carries with it an idea of weakness and imperfection.' Women are said to realize this and so, to heighten their beauty, 'learn to lisp, to totter in their walk, to counterfeit weakness, and even sickness' (p.110). In this way, the Enquiry seems to devalue those civilized mores which make weakness the height of fashion, and appears to empathize, rather, with the 'great force and energy' of an uncultivated life and

language (even while being wary of its deficiency of judgment).

Yet Burke also attests that beauty itself has a power which derives from a process akin to that of sublime discourse. In an insertion to the 1759 edition of the Enquiry, Burke answers a criticism in the Literary Magazine objecting to his claim that poetry does not raise 'pictures' in the mind: 'Indeed,' Burke responds, 'so little does poetry depend for its effect on the power of raising sensible images, that I am convinced it would lose a very considerable part of its energy, if this were the necessary result of all description' (p.170). In support of this, Burke quotes from Homer's description of Helen and argues that the passage's effect is achieved not through particularizing her 'fatal beauty,' but through presenting the effect it has on the speaker. Burke concludes from this that 'in reality poetry and rhetoric do not succeed in exact description so well as painting does; their business is to affect rather by sympathy than imitation; to display rather the effect of things on the mind of the speaker, or of others, than to present a clear idea of the things themselves' (p.172). The beautiful, then, at least in its highest degree, seems to work in a similar way to the sublime in that both are determined by their effects rather than through details of their objects. Indeed, attention to such details, while not necessarily lessening the beauty of the object itself, does reduce the aesthetic experience of the beautiful. In their linguistic manifestations, then, neither aesthetic mode achieves its impact through the clarity of pictorial representation. Both display or induce the effect of things rather than presenting a clear idea of things themselves.

Burke's claim that Homer's presentation of Helen 'affects me much more than the minute description which Spenser has given of Belphebe' (Enquiry, p.172), as well as the nature of the technique under discussion, invites

comparisons with Burke's presentation of Marie Antoinette in Reflections. Boulton finds it

perhaps not surprising ... that the demand he makes of poetry should fairly describe the achievement of one of his own celebrated prose passages: the apostrophe to the Queen in the Reflections. While it might be argued unkindly that some of his remarks on bombast in the Enquiry should be applied to parts of the apostrophe, it remains true that his comments on Homer's description of Helen are applicable (with a change of name only) to his own evocation of Marie Antoinette (Boulton, p.lxxxii).

Although Boulton would not 'unkindly' raise the possibility that Burke's most well-known passage strays into bombast, we have seen that Burke's own theory problematizes the distinction between great literature and inflated language. The following chapters in Part II of this thesis will develop a reading of Burke's apostrophe to Marie Antoinette which will raise this question in order to pose a further series of questions about the shifting political value of the beautiful in Burke's texts. This will focus particularly on the ways in which Helen's beauty might be 'fatal,' and ask whether the French queen is also in some ways a *femme fatal*.

For Burke, the beauty and the sublimity of language is that a person using words,

can not only convey the subject to you, but likewise the manner in which he is himself affected by it [or, I would add, the manner 'he' wants it to affect 'you']. Certain it is, that the influence of most things on our passions is not so much from the things themselves, as from our opinions concerning them; and these again depend very much on the opinions of other men, conveyable for the most part by words only (p.173).

Chains of affective discourse may therefore be produced and opinions influenced without any reference to 'things,' save via the influence and opinions of other men, which

are themselves conveyed by discourse. The greatest influence can be achieved by following Burke's theory of the sublime (which can be as much an art of persuasion as a defensive mode) through taking advantage of the difference 'between a clear expression, and a strong expression': 'The former regards the understanding; the latter belongs to the passions. The one describes a thing as it is; the other describes it as it is felt. ... We yield to sympathy, what we refuse to description' (p.175). Indeed, one of the reasons for Burke's study of aesthetics in the Enquiry is precisely because 'a consideration of the rationale of our passions seems ... very necessary for all who would affect them upon solid and sure principles' (p.53). In Reflections, as I will show in the following chapter, Burke was not so much concerned with what the Revolution was but with how his countrymen *felt* it -- not so much disturbed by the event itself but by the way it was beginning to be perceived and represented by major parliamentary figures as well as by radical writers. To intervene in this discursive activity, Burke's Reflections is compelled to adopt a hybrid discourse -- one which can both deflate the revolutionary sublime through rational enquiry and maintain the sublimity and beauty of the institutions which radicalism would pry into (the British constitution, for example, is presented as originating in the mists of time and is of too mysterious a nature to allow rational enquiry into its workings). In De Quincey's terms, Burke's text weaves a literature of power -- risking all its problematic and unpredictable effects -- with a literature of knowledge in order to employ both emotive effects and epistemological clarity according to expediency.¹⁰ However, I will show that, by the logic developed in the Enquiry, such a textual weave produces not a coherent but a clashing pattern whose unpredictable and contradictory effects seem quite beyond the 'intentions' we ascribe to Burke.

1. In showing how much the Enquiry relies on ordinary language and literature as evidence, Ferguson's points out that 'it would ... be rather churlish to observe that Burke's empiricism is undone by its dependence on language ... for the Enquiry has itself preceded us in this gesture' ('Sublime of Edmund Burke,' pp.67).
2. This point is derived from Ferguson, 'Sublime of Edmund Burke,' p.68.
3. In pointing out this distinction, Paul Lucas suggests that there is a link between Burke's early associationist theory of language and his later politics which attempt to justify existing institutions on the grounds of their accumulated associations ('Burke's Doctrine of Prescription,' p.60).
4. Iliad, 24, [480-82], Pope's translation, 24, 590-93; Weiskel draws here on E.R. Dodds, The Greeks and the Irrational (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1951), p.5.
5. See Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Book III, pp.402-524 (pp.402-408). For a discussion of Burke's use of Locke in the Enquiry, see Boulton, p.lxxix and Weiskel, p.16; the pioneering essay in this field (which suggests that Berkeley is also an important influence on Burke's treatise) is Dixon Wecter, 'Burke's Theory of Words, Images and Emotions;' in 'Burke on Words,' Wilkins follows Wecter in showing how the Enquiry draws upon Locke in order to make a 'distinctly unLockean' emphasis on the power of obscurity.
6. See Essay, II, pp.288-328; the fullest discussion of Burke's use of Locke here is Wecter, pp.170-71.
7. For Saussure's discussion of the linguistic sign as made up of an arbitrary link between a sound image (signifier) and a concept (signified), see Course in General Linguistics, pp.65-70.
8. Paine claims to talk an open and manly language which deals with substantial things; Burke's social and linguistic order, on the other hand is criticized and made vulnerable precisely because it is thought to be arbitrary: titles represent nothing 'real,' and therefore 'if a whole country is disposed to hold them in contempt, all their value is gone, and none will own them. It is common opinion only that makes them anything, or nothing, or worse than nothing' (Rights of Man, p.103).
9. Steven Blakemore suggests that Reflections 'is concerned with the radical split between word and thing' exhibited in revolutionary action and rhetoric, while at the same time being aware 'of the power of the written word, the power of human language to change and affect

human lives' ('Burke and the Fall of Language, p.290); Blakemore fails to see, however, that the radical split he ascribes to radicalism is already inscribed within Burke's theory and practice as both their enabling ground and their ongoing problem.

10. See De Quincey, 'Letters to a Young Man,' pp.46-52. De Quincey says that the distinction was arrived at through 'many years' conversation with Mr. Wordsworth' (p.48), but we can see that Burke anticipates the idea by more than fifty years. De Quincey develops the distinction in 'The Poetry of Pope' in ways that importantly rework Burke's thought: 'The function of the first [the literature of knowledge] is -- to teach; the function of the second [the literature of power] is -- to move. ... there is a rarer thing than truth -- namely, power, or deep sympathy with truth. ... What do you learn from Paradise Lost? Nothing at all. What do you learn from a cookery book? Something new, something that you did not know before, in every paragraph. But would you therefore put the wretched cookery book on a higher level of estimation than the divine poem? What you owe to Milton is not any knowledge ... what you owe is power -- that is, exercise and expansion to your own latent capacity of sympathy with the infinite, where every pulse and each separate influx is a step upwards, a step ascending as upon a Jacob's ladder from earth to mysterious altitudes above the earth. All the steps of knowledge, from first to last, carry you further on the same plane ... whereas the very first step in power is a flight -- is an ascending movement into another element where earth is forgotten. Were it not that human sensibilities are ventilated and continually called out to exercise by the great phenomena of infancy, or of real life as it moves through chance and change, or of literature as it recombines these elements in the mimicries of poetry, romance, etc., it is certain that, like any animal power or muscular energy falling into disuse, all such sensibilities would gradually droop and dwindle. It is in relation to these great moral capacities of man that the literature of power, as distinguished from that of knowledge, lives and has its field of action' (Confessions of an English Opium Eater, pp.330-32).

Part II: Language, Aesthetics, and Gender in Burke's
Response to the French Revolution

The second part of this thesis concentrates on the genesis of Reflections and on Burke's response to the events at Versailles on 5-6 October 1789. Chapter 4 suggests that Burke's apprehensions about the Revolution result not from the nature of the event itself but from the way it began to be figured in radical discourse in England. This is particularly provocative for Burke since such representations seem to exploit a democratized version of his own aesthetics. Chapter 5 concentrates on the central 'scene' of Reflections, in which Burke presents his version of the events at Versailles, in order to investigate how Burke's attempt to recruit his aesthetics for reactionary ends involves him in a series of ineradicable contradictions. Chapter 6 looks at the ramifications and resonances of the Versailles passage as Burke has recourse to a series of supplementary devices in order to defend the uneasy pact in England between the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie against a more vigorous alliance in France between bourgeoisie and 'the lower orders.'

Chapter 4: Struggling with the Sublime: The Genesis of
Reflections

(i) Resisting the Irresistible Voice of the Multitude

In the Enquiry, the causes of the sublime might be various -- vastness, solitude, silence, obscurity, power -- but its characteristic effect (in its highest degree) is an astonishment which pre-emptively disables reason:

The passion caused by the great and sublime in nature, when those causes operate most powerfully, is Astonishment; and astonishment is that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror. In this case the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason upon that object which employs it. Hence arises the great power of the sublime, that far from being produced by them, it anticipates our reasonings, and hurries us on by an irresistible force. Astonishment, as I have said, is the effect of the sublime in its highest degree; the inferior effects are admiration, reverence, and respect (Enquiry, p.57).

The sublime 'anticipates' our reasonings -- at once prefiguring and pre-empting, looking forward to and forestalling, reason's powers and insights. This implicit, though perhaps ambivalent, attack on reason suggests that, in Burke, the sublime is constituted in resistance to the Enlightenment (whereas Kant seeks to reconcile reason and the sublime [see 'Analytic of the Sublime,' pp.101-109]). But in anticipating reason, it seems that the sublime might have two contradictory social effects: if, in its highest degree, the sublime induces an astonishment which 'hurries us on by an

irresistible force,' then it seems to unleash potentially disruptive, unpredictable energies; on the other hand, its inferior effects, such as admiration, reverence, and respect, seem to promise and promote social stability. In the present chapter, I would like to explore how Burke comes to perceive or figure the French Revolution, or its discursive representation in England, as a sublime event of the highest degree, whose irresistible effect on its English 'audience' makes it particularly dangerous to England's inherently unstable alliance between aristocratic and bourgeois interests. At the same time, rather than conceding the sublime ground to radicalism, Burke seeks to employ its lesser mode in order to foster admiration, reverence, and respect for the English constitution. In attempting to distinguish the benevolent from the dangerous sublime, however, we will see that Burke is forced into a series of ineradicable contradictions which may, perhaps, account for his 'rage.'

One particular cause of the sublime in Burke's treatise is 'the shouting of multitudes' which, 'by the sole strength of the sound, so amazes and confounds the imagination, that in this staggering, and hurry of the mind, the best established tempers can scarcely forebear being borne down, and joining in the common cry, and common resolution of the croud' (p.82). Accruing affect from the apocalyptic 'voice of a great multitude' announcing the last things in Revelation, this moment -- once more one of sound (the substance of the signifier) usurping sense (the signified/reason) -- seems to reveal a potentially democratic aspect of the sublime aesthetic. Boulton says that the passage might be 'an allusion to [Burke's] experiences during a student attack on the Black Dog prison which provoked the constable of the Castle of Newgate gaol to fire his cannon. The riot, on 21 May 1747, occurred during the period when the first draft of the Enquiry was probably

being written' (Boulton, p.xvii). At the same time, this description of the 'democratic' or 'radical' sublime reads like an ambivalent reaction in that the staggering, hurrying movement of the mind, blending with or borne down by the crowd's surge, represents a *loss* of individual power. In this analysis of crowd psychology, the power of the multitude is gained at the expense of individual will; the individual is perhaps more diminished than exalted. The crowd becomes an irresistible force, but at the cost of its reverence and respect for institutional edifices. Burke's ambivalence here seems characteristic of his relation to the sublime; it may be measured by contrasting an apparently similar passage in Blair's Lectures, where 'the burst of thunder or of cannon, the roaring of winds, the shouting of multitudes, the sound of vast cataracts of water, are all *incontestably* grand objects.'¹

Burke's ambivalence may also be registered in his insistence that the crowd's cry works differently to the way words operate. The shouting of multitudes comes as an example of the sublime effects of 'Sound and Loudness': 'I do not mean words, because words do not affect simply by their sounds, but by means altogether different. Excessive loudness alone is sufficient to overpower the soul, to suspend its action, and to fill it with terror' (Enquiry, p.82). In the section on 'Words,' on the other hand, 'compound abstract' words are said to be 'in reality but mere sounds' which accrue their power through custom (p.165). Furthermore, in discussing 'Obscurity,' Burke suggests that 'so far is a clearness of imagery from being absolutely necessary to an influence upon the passions, that they may be considerably operated upon without presenting any image at all, by certain sounds adapted to that purpose' (p.60). Burke therefore tries to have it both ways -- insisting that words do not

achieve their effect merely through their sounds and that they are most effective because their sounds work independently of images. We can therefore see how the Enquiry is fissured by the contradictions of the aesthetic category it tries to frame. In fact, the concluding paragraph of the Enquiry attempts to withdraw the text's more 'radical' conclusions about the (non-) relation between language and nature by reverting to the less challenging notion that the sublime and the beautiful are primarily concerned with natural objects and only secondarily with rhetoric:

It was not my design to enter into the criticism of the sublime and beautiful in any art, but to attempt to lay down such principles as may tend to ascertain, to distinguish, and to form a sort of standard for them; which purposes I thought might be best effected by an enquiry into the properties of such things in nature as raise love and astonishment in us; and by shewing in what manner they operated to produce these passions. Words were only so far to be considered, as to shew upon what principle they were capable of being the representatives of these natural things, and by what powers they were able to affect us often as strongly as the things they represent, and sometimes much more strongly (pp.176-77).

But that final clause, stepping once more beyond the prescribed bounds and end of Burke's treatise, seems to reaffirm language's power in the very act of subordinating it to nature -- at once re-anchoring language to a representational function and admitting that it does more (or less) than simply represent. This *ab extra* which is language is therefore perhaps both its terror and its delight; the Enquiry seems discomforted by its own drift, inadvertently producing 'radical' as well as 'reactionary' readings of its privileged aesthetic category.

Thirty-three years after the Enquiry was published Richard Price, an aging dissenting minister, delivered a sermon, 'A Discourse on the Love of Our Country,' which was to transform Burke's perception of the French Revolution. In the text of the sermon, which Burke read in early 1790, Price's radical representation of the French Revolution invokes a similar range of imagery to that employed in Burke's description of the shouting of multitudes:

What an eventful period is this! I am thankful that I have lived to it; and I could almost say, *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.* ... I have lived to see the rights of men better understood than ever; and nations panting for liberty, which seemed to have lost the idea of it. - I have lived to see THIRTY MILLIONS of people, indignant and resolute, spurning at slavery, and demanding liberty with an irresistible voice; their king led in triumph, and an arbitrary monarch surrendering himself to his subjects. ... And now, methinks, I see the ardour for liberty catching and spreading

Be encouraged, all ye friends of freedom, and writers in its defence! The times are auspicious. ... Behold, the light you have struck out, after setting AMERICA free, reflected to FRANCE, and there kindled into a blaze that lays despotism in ashes, and warms and illuminates EUROPE!

Tremble all ye oppressors of the world! ... Call no more (absurdly and wickedly) REFORMATION, innovation. You cannot now hold the world in darkness. ... Restore to mankind their rights; and consent to the correction of abuses, before they and you are destroyed together (Discourse on the Love of Our Country, pp.49-51).

In this apocalyptic passage Price appropriates, in a number of ways, Burke's sublime aesthetic for radical ends. The people are figured as becoming active -- overthrowing their own slavery -- through the strength of a voice able to reverse the power relation between subjects and arbitrary monarch.² Thus it is the

oppressors' turn to tremble to the very core of their being at the rise of the people as an irresistible political force. The Enlightenment is figured as fire and light, consuming the old order and illuminating the new with a momentum which gathers exponentially. Light becomes a liberating sublime, driving out the false, oppressive sublime of darkness and obscurity through which kings terrorize the people. In this latter image, Price is only slightly turning Burke's aesthetics: 'such a light as that of the sun,' Burke writes in the Enquiry, 'immediately exerted on the eye, as it overpowers the sense, is a very great idea.' At the same time, however, in a way which might provide provisional distinctions between 'radical' and 'reactionary' sublimines, Burke finds that 'darkness is more productive of sublime ideas than light.' In fact, in an image he might easily have made ironic use of in Reflections, Burke goes on to suggest that 'extreme light, by overcoming the organs of sight, obliterates all objects, so as in its effect exactly to resemble darkness' (p.80).

Burke's perception of the potential effects -- on Price's immediate congregation and on the English people -- of that 'irresistible voice' of thirty millions seems grounded in his early aesthetics. Price presents the 'voice' of the multitude, ushering in God's 'salvation' for the world, as at once effecting the Revolution and representing its most characteristic impulse. The Revolution is *performed* by the unified voice of the people -- a performative voicing that is at once democratic and sublime. Price represents himself, and the peoples of Europe, as fervently aroused by, and caught up in, a spirit of emulation of what Wordsworth would call the 'verity' of 'a whole nation crying with one voice' (Prelude, 1805, X, 211-12). Price's sermon seems calculated, according to Burke's own theory, to likewise stimulate his

congregation, and his readers, to participate in, or emulate, that revolutionary cry. Burke's first response to the storming of the Bastille was that it evidenced a 'spirit it is impossible not to admire' (Correspondence, VI, p.10), while in his aesthetic treatise, the shouting of multitudes -- perhaps in the storming of another prison -- almost compels the bystander to join in its common cry and common resolution. According to his own past theory and experience, then, Burke might recognize that the image of an irresistible voice of thirty millions storming the feudal edifice could be expected to compel others to join the Revolution. Of all people, Burke would be aware of Price's oratorical techniques and their potential effects; when Burke writes that 'we yield to sympathy, what we refuse to description' (Enquiry, p.175) he points to the subtle power rhetoric has over the individual or collective will. The point is developed in a way which seems uncannily apt for an understanding of Burke's response to Price:

all verbal description, merely as naked description, though never so exact, conveys so poor and insufficient an idea of the thing described, that it could scarcely have the smallest effect, if the speaker did not call in to his aid those modes of speech that mark a strong and lively feeling in himself. Then, by the contagion of our passions, we catch a fire already kindled in another, which probably might never have been struck out by the object described (Enquiry, pp.175-76).

Price's impassioned use of the sublime might therefore summon the people of England to admire and partake in the event -- or even to emulate the French example -- much more effectively than the event itself. This transforms the Revolution from an aesthetic spectacle at a safe distance across the English Channel into a

political threat to England's socio-economic order, a 'contagion' active within the country's body politic.

In Reflections Burke therefore needs to undermine the 'verity' of this democratic sublime and contrast it with the 'true' sublime of the English constitution.

The metaphors in Reflections are revealing:

Formerly your affairs were your own concern only. We felt for them as men; but we kept aloof from them, because we were not citizens of France. But when we see the model held up to ourselves, we must feel as Englishmen, and feeling, we must provide as Englishmen. Your affairs, in spite of us, are made a part of our interest; so far at least as to keep at a distance your panacea, or your plague. If it be a panacea, we do not want it. We know the consequences of unnecessary physic. If it be a plague; it is such a plague, that the precautions of the most severe quarantine ought to be established against it (p.185).

Both panacea and plague are resisted as equally dangerous here. In refusing the Revolution's offer to cure all ills with a single dose of 'physic' (Burke considers England's constitution to be healthy enough not to need a radical cure) Burke's text operates at both a personal and a political level by conflating the human body with the body politic.³⁵ But Burke's fear of (England) catching the revolutionary plague seems haunted by the possibility that the disease might already have taken effect -- that his proposed quarantine against ideas crossing the Channel might be wisdom after the event.

In order to achieve his reinterpretation of the Revolution as a false sublime, Burke had to delimit the ideological possibilities of his own aesthetic category. In 1757-59, although the sublime was already implicated in politics, it was not reducible to any single ideological position. In the Enquiry's section on 'Power' the sublime is presented as potentially a

mode of tyranny: 'Those despotic governments, which are founded on the passions of men, and principally upon the passion of fear, keep their chief as much as may be from the public eye. The policy has been the same in many cases of religion' (p.59).⁴ Reading a speech Burke delivered in the Commons on 11 April 1794, Paulson argues that for Burke 'the true sublime in government is a mixture of fear and awe or admiration, whereas the false sublime, a perversion of this ... generates only fear and a grotesque energy' (Paulson, p.66). But in the Enquiry, the strategies of 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' government become difficult to tell apart: 'The power which arises from institution in kings and commanders, has the same connection with terror [as other forms of power, such as the 'natural' power of certain animals]. Sovereigns are frequently addressed with the title of *dread majesty*' (p.67). The sublime cannot, therefore, be unproblematically resorted to as a way of distinguishing between authentic and inauthentic political power, nor can it be easily divided into the 'true' sublime and its 'perversion.'

To complicate Burke's attempt, in 1790, to recruit and constrain the sublime for a single political position, there are passages in the Enquiry which seem to celebrate an overtly revolutionary sublime. One such celebration comes in an analysis of Satan as Milton's sublime revolutionary -- for Burke suggests that one of the most sublime passages in literature is Milton's presentation not of God but of Satan. In support of this, he quotes from the description of Satan immediately prior to his 'revolutionary' speech to the fallen angels:

He above the rest
 In shape and gesture proudly eminent
 Stood like a tower; his form had not yet lost
 All her original brightness, nor appeared
 Less than archangel ruin'd, and th'excess

Of glory obscured: as when the sun new ris'n
 Looks through the horizontal misty air
 Shorn of his beams; or from behind the moon
 In dim eclipse disastrous twilight sheds
 On half the nations; and with fear of change
 Perplexes monarchs (Paradise Lost, I, 589-99;
Enquiry, p.62).

'Here is a very noble picture,' Burke writes, 'and in what does this poetical picture consist? in images of a tower, an archangel, the sun rising through mists, or in an eclipse, the ruin of monarchs, and the revolutions of kingdoms. The mind is hurried out of itself, by a croud of great and confused images; which affect because they are crouded and confused' (p.62). Burke is illustrating the sublime effect of obscurity here, and the way it pre-empts rational enquiry; he claims that this is achieved through the crowding and confusion of the images, and that to separate them out would deflate much of their greatness. But at the same time, as the *ne plus ultra* of the sublime, the passage clusters together particular images -- height, obscurity, eclipsed light -- each one of which is a characteristic source of the Burkean sublime (see pp.57-81). But the last images -- of revolution and the perplexing of monarchs -- are most pertinent here. In fact, the political connotations of this passage were not lost on Milton's contemporaries. In his edition of Paradise Lost, Alastair Fowler notes that 'the comparison [made in I, 596-99] is ironically double-edged; for the ominous solar eclipse presages not only disaster for creation, but also the doom of the Godlike ruler for whom the sun was a traditional symbol. (Thus Charles II's Licensor for the Press is said by Toland ... to have regarded these lines as politically subversive.)' (p.79). It seems, then, that in 1757-59 the ruin of monarchs and the revolution of kingdoms were potentially sublime images, while in 1790 Burke goes to great lengths to prove that they are a

perversion of the sublime. In addition, we can see that Burke's sublime was ideologically flexible in 1757-59; in his reading of Paradise Lost, the contest there between Christ and Satan is played out between one sublime and another, not between 'true' and 'false' sublimes. Long before Blake and Shelley, Burke suggests that Satan is an attractive and powerful figure, both poetically and politically.

The sublime's inherently unstable ideological position carries over into Burke's attempt to employ it in Reflections. He often presents himself there as the representative figure of the English state, yet there are suggestions that he too, even as one of the 'best established tempers,' might have been particularly susceptible to that 'irresistible voice' but for the implications it had for England and the threat it held to his lifetime's work. Wollstonecraft addresses Burke directly on this and suggestively brings out the ambiguities in his political stance: 'had you been a Frenchman, you would have been, in spite of your respect for rank and antiquity, a violent revolutionist Your imagination would have taken fire.' Or, she continues, sketching a different scenario, 'had the English in general reprobated the French revolution, you would have stood forth alone, and been the avowed Goliath of liberty' (Rights of Men, pp.109-10). Wollstonecraft attributes Burke's idiosyncrasies to 'envy' of Dr Price's sermon, and to the fact that, since so many had already hailed the Revolution and partaken of its fame, Burke could not have gained sufficient distinction by simply following the general trend. Wollstonecraft therefore suggests that Burke reacts to the Revolution not solely in political ways, but in terms (such as the anxiety about self-esteem and reputation) which can be explained via his aesthetic category of sublimity.

It is possible, however, to transform Wollstonecraft's suggestion through a reading of the sublime not in terms of personal aggrandizement but as involving anxieties produced through discontinuities in the ideological position around which Burke's various discourses are organized. This is to see Reflections as structured, and deconstructed, through the unpredictable interplay between an historical moment in which social structures are in the throes of an unprecedented crisis and a set of discursive paradigms drawn from Burke's aesthetic treatise which are themselves deeply implicated within the origins of this crisis. The medical metaphors we have met with in previous passages -- 'contagion,' 'plague,' 'panacea,' 'physic,' 'quarantine' -- operate throughout Burke's discourse on the sublime and on England's response to revolutionary doctrine. That the relation between France and England should be figured in terms of disease and health is not surprising, since the very ideology of Englishness was partly defined in the eighteenth century through constructing a sense of social, political, and linguistic difference with France.²⁵ We have already seen that when, in Reflections, Burke finds that the Revolution is being offered as a model for England to imitate, he urges that 'we must feel as Englishmen, and feeling, we must provide as Englishmen' by resisting the Revolution whether it be plague or panacea. These figures become overdetermined when we remember the terms in which Burke's aesthetics of the sublime and beautiful are constituted in the Enquiry, where the sublime's reactive, 'therapeutic' phase comes as an antidote to the debilitating effects of the beautiful and/or the 'noxious' possibilities of the sublime itself in its second phase (see Enquiry, p.136).

Derrida's meditations on the supplement and, more particularly, the '*pharmakon*' provide a model for

understanding the complexities of Burke's discursive dilemma at this point. Derrida's notion of the 'pharmakon' arises from his reading of Plato, in whose texts it functions in a somewhat similar way to the supplement in Rousseau (or the sublime in Burke). 'Pharmakon' is usually translated as 'remedy,' but to do so is to limit the 'textuality' of Plato's texts, where it functions, unpredictably, as remedy and as poison (much as our own concept of 'drug' is variously seen as humanity's greatest boon and most ineradicable vice):

when the textual centre-stage of the word *pharmakon*, even while it means *remedy*, cites, re-cites, and makes legible that which in the same word signifies, in another spot and on a different level of the stage, *poison* (for example, since that is not the only thing *pharmakon* means), the choice of only one of these renditions by the translator has as its first effect the neutralization of the citational play ... and ... of the very textuality of the translated text ('Plato's Pharmacy,' p.98).

We will see that Derrida's dramatic metaphors here are particularly revealing in analysing the role Burke's sublime plays in his staging of the Revolution. Of especial interest too is Derrida's suggestion that *hubris* works as a *pharmakon*:

The *pharmakon* is always caught in the mixture ... mentioned in the Philebus (46a), [an example] of which [is] *hubris*, that violent, unbounded excess of pleasure that makes the profligate cry out like a madman This type of painful pleasure, linked as much to the malady as to its treatment, is a *pharmakon* in itself. It partakes of both good and ill, of the agreeable and the disagreeable (Dissemination, p.99).

If this seems an apt description of the contradictory effects of the sublime, then Derrida's suggestion that, in Plato, 'even beyond the question of pain, the

pharmaceutical remedy is essentially harmful because it is artificial' (p.99), helps us understand the effort, in Burke, to emphasize the *natural* status of the 'good' sublime as against the *artificial* and dangerous sublime of revolutionary radicalism. Articulating Reflections with the Enquiry, and attempting to produce the 'citational play' which emerges between them, or the intertextuality of their interplay, is to see the sublime as at once a source of pain and a relief from that pain, at once a plague and a necessary panacea, at once the healthy habit of the English constitution, and the dangerous disease of revolutionary radicalism, at once the threat of revolution and its preventative. We can therefore begin to see how Burke's discourse about apparently discrete domains of the human sciences -- physiology, language, politics, economics, aesthetics -- turns out to be organized around and by a common set of paradigms and anxieties. Burke would keep England immune from France through thwarting any attempt by the latter to export its ideas -- through an emphasis on the defensive agency of English *customs* (habitualized practices and/or economic barriers at a state's borders). Nation is isolated from nation, body from body.

And yet Burke's cathartic response to the Revolution implies that the danger it represents has already infiltrated the English body politic, infecting it through and through. Burke's purgative resistance might therefore figure as the 'heroic' action of the sublime's third phase offered as an exemplary model to England's ruling classes. Burke represents himself as standing aloof from the sublime effect of Price's rhetoric -- in particular contrast to the 'common sort of people' who, in Burke's theory, are thought particularly susceptible to the rhetoric of such 'fanatic preachers' as Richard Price. Burke does this by attempting to transvalue the Revolution into a

wholly terrible and/or ridiculous event, and thereby produce either recoil or ironic distance in his more sophisticated readers. To deflect or deflate his readers' tendency to admire the Revolution, Burke would turn it from the sublime to the ridiculous, from a 'high' to a 'low' dramatic genre. He does this, for example, by representing the National Assembly, as acting out 'the farce of deliberation' before the people like 'the comedians of a fair before a riotous audience' (Reflections, p.161). But it may be that the sublime and the ridiculous are not opposites, but different readings of the same; the need to ridicule might be precisely a measure of an adversary's sublimity.

(ii) Gazing with Astonishment at a French Struggle for Liberty

Burke's response to the Revolution is never static but an activity of reading which changes with shifts in the ways the Revolution is discursively produced. I want to trace these shifting responses in order to register more clearly Price's impact on Reflections. Burke's earliest known reference to the Revolution comes almost three months before Price's sermon in a letter to Lord Charlemont, dated 9 August 1789:

As to us here our thoughts of every thing at home are suspended, by our astonishment at the wonderful Spectacle which is exhibited in a Neighbouring and rival Country -- what Spectators, and what actors! England gazing with astonishment at a French struggle for Liberty and not knowing whether to blame or applaud! The thing indeed, though I thought I saw something like it in progress for several years, has still something in it paradoxical and Mysterious. The spirit it is impossible not to admire; but the old Parisian ferocity has broken out in a

shocking manner. . . . What will be the Event it is hard I think still to say. To form a solid constitution requires Wisdom as well as spirit, and whether the French have wise heads among them, or if they possess such whether they have authority equal to their wisdom, is to be seen; In the mean time the progress of this whole affair is one of the most curious matters of Speculation that was ever exhibited (Correspondence, VI, p.10).

The Revolution is presented here as a sublime event with characteristic features and effects: the thoughts of those who gaze upon it are 'suspended' by 'astonishment;' it is paradoxical and mysterious, a moment of theatre or 'Spectacle,' a matter 'exhibited' for 'Speculation' which leaves its spectators not knowing whether to blame or applaud.⁶ Burke seems to adopt a double role, simultaneously gazing with astonishment and taking up the stance of a man of taste, speculating on the outcome of this 'curious matter' and attempting to distinguish between what is admirable and what 'shocking' (notably 'the old Parisian ferocity' -- presumably that of the 'mob' who had stormed the Bastille). There are many parallels between the images and strategies of this letter and those of the famous passage in Reflections which it seems to anticipate. Yet before moving on to that passage, I want to stress that, in representing it as 'impossible not to admire,' and as suspending 'thoughts of everything at home,' Burke's letter constructs the Revolution in ways which he would soon present as its principal danger. In the letter 'England' and 'us here' are figured as astonished spectators hesitating whether to blame or applaud, whereas in Reflections Burke fears that English spectators might become active participants in an English revolution while the ruling classes stand by bemused. While the early response is at once admiring and speculative, the later and more

agitated reaction refuses to admire or speculate and seems calculated to alert England's ruling classes to actively resist the spectacle's dangerous power. Such a shift from passive admiration to active resistance (rather than active participation) is vital if revolutionary impulses originating from either side of the Channel are to be successfully resisted; in this new scenario, Burke will represent hesitation as fatal. I want to show that this shift in Burke's attitude is precipitated not by the course of revolutionary events in France, but by shifts in the way the Revolution is represented not only in radical discourse but even in the House of Commons itself. We will see that Burke's desperate remedy is that of attempting to divide the sublime into remedial and poisonous aspects utterly opposed to one another.

The personification in Burke's letter of the 'nation' as an individual 'gazing with astonishment' at France's travails will take on added significance. For the processes of individuation in which the sublime functions can be transposed into nationalist terms; reinforcing a notion of Englishness in the coming crisis involves, or will involve, not only keeping the Revolution's plague or panacea at bay, but excluding or disenfranchising internal dissenting voices (such as that of the Revolution Society, a club which met annually to celebrate the English Revolution and which, through such figures as Richard Price, made what was for Burke a dangerous equation between 1688 and 1789). I therefore suggest that Burke's successive representations of the Revolution increasingly work to (re)constitute a consciousness of bourgeois nationhood (on the model of the bourgeois self) through the process of gazing on the dramatic spectacle of a neighbouring nation in crisis. The nearer the Revolution presses (through being admired in the House of Commons as well as by English radicals) and the more

England participates in that crisis, the more urgent this individuation becomes (since what functions as an impetus to individuation can destroy the individual if it presses too near). If, as I have argued, the eighteenth-century sublime is both the means through which the bourgeois self is ambiguously reassured after Locke's emptying out of the soul and one of the precarious agencies through which its political structures are sustained, the approach of the French Revolution precipitates a crisis in bourgeois politics and aesthetics which might yet, by the paradoxical logic of the sublime, be exploited to rejuvenate the aristocratic-bourgeois alliance.

Working towards a re-examination of the passage in Reflections, of which the letter to Lord Charlemont can seem a first draft, I will continue to trace the turns in Burke's response as the Revolution itself, and its perception in England, shifts from moment to moment. Since, as the editors of the Correspondence claim, 'Burke's reply to Depont's letter of 4 November ... is his first important judgement on the French Revolution' (VI, p.39), and since its recipient is also the nominal addressee of Reflections, it is important to pay the letter some attention. In its early paragraphs, Burke seems to rehearse once more the 'astonishment' he would exhibit in Reflections. But in this letter to a Frenchman active within the Revolution the sublime metaphors are transposed into the decorous language of polite correspondence:

You may easily believe, that I have had my Eyes turned with great Curiosity to the astonishing scene now displayed in France. ... Things indeed have already happen'd so much beyond the scope of all speculation, that persons of infinitely more sagacity than I am ought to be ashamed of any thing like confidence in their reasoning upon the operation of any principle (Correspondence, VI, p.41).

Whether Burke's decorous reserve is meant or not -- and he does go on to reason at some length about the forming of a constitution in France -- the astonishment and the temporary inadequacy of reason characteristic of the sublime are transposed here into (perhaps ironic) gestures of polite manners. And that the majority of the letter is an informed attack upon the National Assembly's structure and actions, via a calmly worked-out account of his own philosophy of 'Liberty,' suggests, again, that the Revolution has not yet pressed too close for comfort. Burke's criticisms of the proceedings across the Channel are not stimulated by their potential threat to England but by the likelihood that the French have not 'recover'd freedom' -- that they 'may have made a Revolution, but not a Reformation' (VI, p.46).⁷

Two recent accounts of the transition between this letter and Reflections are instructive for my own thesis. Boulton finds 'the germ of the Reflections' in the letter to Depont in that it anticipates the conceptions, if not the passion, of the published work (Language of Politics, pp.75-76), while O'Brien argues that the 'sagacious and memorable admonitions' of the letter, are 'in no way inconsistent with the Reflections -- which contain several passages in the same strain -- but the fire of that great tract has not yet been kindled. Nor is there yet any note of alarm' (O'Brien, p.15). For Boulton, that fire would be kindled by the rhetorical descriptions of the Revolution's own kindling flame in the sermon Price delivered to the Revolution Society on 4 November 1789, while the 'final incentive' was that society's 'congratulatory letter to the National Assembly' (Language of Politics, p.76).⁸ Boulton informs us that Burke's 'first opportunity to declare his views' after reading the sermon and the letter 'came in the parliamentary debate on the Army Estimates, on 9

February. In this speech he was concerned with the French example to England. The comparative calm and rational approach to the subject in the letter to De Pont ... gives way to an impassioned denunciation of the chaos and barbarism in France, on lines which exactly foreshadow the Reflections' (pp.76-77).

O'Brien writes a similar scenario: 'Up to the end of 1789 ... [Burke] remains detached, and little moved.' O'Brien quotes from a letter, written in December, in which Burke seems able to think of the French Revolution as a pleasant distraction from the more painful situation within England: 'perhaps the follies of France, by which we are not yet affected may employ ones curiosity more pleasantly, and as usefully, as the depravity of England which is more calculated to give us pain' (O'Brien, p.16, quoting Burke to Francis, Correspondence, VI, pp.55-58). Thus the condition of England, rather than France, seems to be Burke's main source of anxiety through this period -- as, indeed, it would be in the 'crisis' itself. For O'Brien, the transition between this letter and Reflections is registered in the letter to an unknown correspondent (who, according to the editors of the Correspondence, might have been Paine) which was probably written in the latter half of January 1790. In other words, the letter's composition may well have been interrupted by Burke's reading of Price's Discourse on the night he came up to London for the meeting of Parliament on 21 January.⁹ 'In that letter,' O'Brien writes, although 'he is more philosophical, or teleological, about the situation in France than he is ever to be again,' it ends on 'a new note of concern' (O'Brien, p.17): 'I see some people here are willing that we should become [Voltaire's and Rousseau's] scholars and reform our state on the French model. They have begun; and it is high time for those who wish to preserve *morem majorum*, to look about them' (Correspondence, VI, p.81). The

new note of concern, then, arises because 'some people here . . . have begun' to spread revolutionary principles in England itself, threatening the manners and customs inherited from the past. Those who would preserve this inheritance ought therefore to be on the alert, to hesitate no longer.

Burke's first public stance against the French Revolution is made all the more urgent because prominent and influential Whigs and Tories alike had admired or expressed hope for the future of the French example in Parliament -- Fox saying that he 'exulted in it from feelings and from principle,' and Pitt that he looked forward to the new France 'as one of the most brilliant powers in Europe.'¹⁰ Suddenly the danger is at work not only in the Revolution Society (which included Members of Parliament in its numbers), but even in the House of Commons. In the Speech on Army Estimates Burke therefore warns the House, in a flood of adjectives, that the danger 'is one of being led through an admiration of successful fraud and violence, to an imitation of the excesses of an irrational, unprincipled, proscribing, confiscating, plundering, ferocious, bloody, and tyrannical democracy.' He asks the members to consider 'how they would like to have their mansions pulled down and pillaged, their persons abused, insulted, and destroyed; their title deeds brought out and burned before their faces.'¹¹ This is the stuff of Reflections. The risk for England has become one of admiring the Revolution too uncritically -- which would be dangerous on two counts: either through the possibility that spectators might be so carried along by the Revolution that they begin to think of imitating it in England; or that their admiration of events across the channel might distract attention from similar revolutionary movements nearer to home -- i.e. that their 'thoughts of every thing at home [might be] suspended.' The members of the House

are therefore 'brought to their senses' by having the Revolution figuratively and graphically introduced into their own homes as a threat to both their property and their 'persons.' From finding it 'impossible not to admire' the spirit of the Revolution in the letter to Lord Charlemont in August, Burke now warns against 'an admiration of successful fraud and violence;' from treating the Revolution as a distraction from thoughts at home, he now attempts to make his audience aware precisely of the dangers the Revolution represents to the Englishman's 'home.' The Revolution, until now a sublime event because kept at one remove, is suddenly treated as if it presses too close; becoming variously sheer terror or a perversion of the sublime, it is no longer delightful but noxious. Or, rather, the danger is that Englishmen are beginning to perceive the Revolution as a sublime event worthy to be admired and imitated. Burke's perspicuity here is perhaps heightened by the suggestion that he too seems capable of seeing the Revolution in these terms -- there seems to be a certain relish in these images of what revolution would mean in England which suggests that his discourse is somehow implicated within and attracted by it in ways he would be reluctant to admit.

To turn to the famous passage in Reflections is to see how this new context radically transforms the responses we have seen in the letters to Lord Charlemont and Depont:

It looks to me as if I were in a great crisis, not of the affairs of France alone, but of all Europe, perhaps of more than Europe. All circumstances taken together, the French revolution is the most astonishing that has hitherto happened in the world. The most wonderful things are brought about in many instances by means the most absurd and ridiculous; in the most ridiculous modes; and apparently, by the most contemptible instruments. Every thing seems out of nature in this strange chaos

of levity and ferocity, and of all sorts of crimes jumbled together with all sorts of follies. In viewing this monstrous tragicomic scene, the most opposite passions necessarily succeed, and sometimes mix with each other in the mind; alternate contempt and indignation; alternate laughter and tears; alternate scorn and horror (pp.92-93).

This is an important but difficult passage for readers of Burke. Even though he is one of Burke's modern admirers, Boulton interprets it as betraying a certain persuasive strategy or positioning of the reader: 'There is little doubt that Burke intended the reader to be assaulted by opposing sets of values from the outset until the climactic illustration, the barbarous treatment of the royal family, preceding the apostrophe [to Marie Antoinette]' (Language of Politics, p.106). It is possible, however, to read this passage as symptomatic of the way Burke's project is impelled to figure the Revolution as something to be rejected (literally) from the body politic, kept at one remove as a noxious or perverse version of the sublime. In the letter to Lord Charlemont, 'astonishment' is triggered by the 'wonderful Spectacle' of 'a French struggle for liberty;' in Reflections, the Revolution is astonishing because it violates the principles of cause and effect: 'wonderful things' are brought about -- in a disruption of political and aesthetic order -- by 'means,' 'modes,' and 'instruments' that are 'absurd,' 'ridiculous,' and 'contemptible.' Such a disparity between cause and effect, appearance and reality, suggests that these relations, rather than being naturally motivated, are not only conventional but appallingly arbitrary. This is more than a philosophical crisis; it is also a socio-political one, because it challenges and overturns traditional social hierarchies. It demonstrates that representative figures are not always 'naturally' fitted to represent

a country and that people traditionally considered unfit to participate in political processes are capable of having significant effects on the state. Burke would have his readers perceive the enormity and the absurdity of this and so displays it as a 'monstrous tragi-comic scene,' a 'strange chaos of levity and ferocity, and of all sorts of crimes jumbled together with all sorts of follies.'¹² At once monstrous and tragi-comic, terrible and ridiculous, the Revolution is presented as violating aesthetic categories. Burke therefore condemns the Revolution in Aristotelian terms as bad drama, as a breach of propriety which necessarily has chaotic and unpredictable effects on nations and individuals alike.¹³ Without precedent, abusing established genres, the Revolution is a chaotic jumble of the terrible and the ridiculous -- an event to recoil from or laugh at, but certainly not one to admire or imitate. The ambivalence of the sublime moment -- its 'delightful horror' -- is temporalized as a *succession* of the 'opposite' passions of terror and contempt which 'sometimes mix' but which are not suspended in ambivalence and do not cohere: contempt, laughter, and scorn alternate with indignation, tears, and horror.¹⁴ Nevertheless, if, as we have seen, the sublime is a motion as well as a moment, a temporal movement from fear to contempt, then Burke's attempt to separate two distinct notions of sublimity -- the healthy sublime and its perversion -- unwittingly shows that such a distinction is self-defeating. Indeed, Weiskel's formulation of the sublime experience, via Kant, as 'a rapidly alternating repulsion and attraction produced by one and the same Object' (p.105), is remarkably akin to Burke's attempt here to identify the Revolution as a perversion of the sublime. It seems impossible, in the sublime's own terms, to distinguish the unimaginable from the nonsensical save by a recourse to questions of propriety which are

themselves problematized by the aesthetic category they are brought in to constrain. If the Revolution opens up an appalling rift between cause and effect, appearance and reality, then we have seen that the sublime's 'semiotic' structure is, precisely, the conventional nature of such relations. In this complex juncture, the sublime accounts both for the wholesome and its perversion, the cure and the disease, the counter-revolution and the revolution itself. I would therefore argue that in presenting the Revolution in this way Burke's risk is precisely that the Revolution might emerge as a sublime *movement*, an ongoing process which threatens, against Burke's best intentions, to mobilize what he notoriously refers to as 'a swinish multitude' (Reflections, p.173). And yet Burke cannot help but take this risk; he is forced to contest the sublime ground, even though it cannot help but undo his project.

If the 'mob,' however contemptible, has somehow been able to effect 'the most wonderful things' and has revealed itself as capable of overthrowing political states, this might be 'out of nature' but it is precisely immanent within Burke's theory of the sublime. Burke presents himself as terrified by the enactment on the political stage of the most extreme of the possible denouements of his own political and aesthetic plot. As in the earlier letter, he adopts a double role in this passage. As a critical spectator, he represents this jumble of crime and madness as if he were an aloof judge; and yet in doing so he adopts the part of the man of taste whose experience and habit of reasoning precisely prevent him from knowing whether what he views is truly sublime or mere madness. Like the rational view which cannot differentiate between Virgil and the chimeras of madness, Burke is left unable to know whether this is the most sublime or most insane event that has ever happened. His own

aesthetics, in fact, make it impossible to make such a distinction, while, in political terms, there is no absolute or disinterested position from which to argue that a bourgeois revolution is admirable while a democratic revolution (which is how Burke perceived the French Revolution) is lamentable. At the same time, of course, Burke has to try to make a distinction, and needs to present it as an absolute one. He does so by the introduction of a third term, a supplement which is supposed to guarantee the difference between the natural and the monstrous, the panacea and the plague, beneficial reform and dangerous revolution. In the following chapters we will see that it is to *custom* that Burke turns in an attempt to fuse the sublime and the beautiful with traditional forms and practices in order to ward off the extreme possibilities of the sublime, resisting its democratic momentum by attempting to reforge an alliance between the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy, the ('true') sublime and the beautiful. That this might be an uneasy alliance is, of course, implicit in his early political aesthetics as well as in the socio-economic context of late-eighteenth-century Britain. The second role which Burke plays in this scene, however, is apparently quite the reverse of the first, since he represents himself as *participating* in this 'great crisis, not of the affairs of France alone, but of all Europe, perhaps of more than Europe.' The possibility of distinguishing between 'actors' and 'spectators' posited in the letter to Lord Charlemont no longer applies. No one is immune from the Revolution, whether it be infection or inspiration.

Rather than writing the same psychologized drama we have seen O'Brien and Boulton pen, and rather than repeating the psychoanalytical trauma Paulson maps, I have sought to demonstrate that the shifting configurations in Burke's texts participate within

changes not of 'the event itself' but of discursive productions of that event. We have seen that what has become Burke's most famous response to the Revolution is by no means his initial one but appears with this sudden transformation, within and through discourse, of a distant political curiosity into an enemy which threatens the very substance of England's socio-political order. The problem that this 'infectious' influence poses, I suggest, is that it transgresses the boundaries between political bodies and between scene and spectator, stage and house (both the audience of a theatre and the House of Commons), revealing that the danger is within the 'house' or 'body' itself -- that it is both *heimlich* and *unheimlich* at one and the same time.¹⁵ From this point on Burke figures the Revolution in certain ways that seem intended to achieve certain effects, but Burke's text is itself affected and infected by the discursive representations it seeks to intervene within. Burke himself takes on the role of script writer, director, and principal protagonist against this infectious revolution. According to Peter Hughes, he thereby becomes 'the embodiment of his own notion of the sublime, a dynamic performer we are meant to respond to with fear and wonder. He becomes the chief actor in a drama that he has also staged and written' ('Originality and Allusion in the Writings of Edmund Burke,' p.41). He also takes on, I have suggested, the role of drama critic; as such, he seems to relinquish, paradoxically, the possibility of discriminating whether the Revolution, or his own production of it, is good or bad drama, truly or falsely sublime. And yet, his participation within this drama belies the idea that, as a man of taste, he can hold it at one remove; indeed, the very attempt to do so seems to indicate the Revolution's sublime power. But Hughes's suggestion can be taken a step further; if Burke becomes the chief actor in this

drama, he stages and writes it not with complete artistic freedom, but at the behest of the double play of his own sublime category. Although, in the Enquiry, that aesthetic category is constituted as being at one *and the same time* the noxious threat and the defensive reaction, Burke is forced by historical circumstances to try to separate those moments into villain and hero, plague and panacea. As such, his textual discourse is directed and produced by the paradoxical logic of the *pharmakon*. Burke emerges as directed by the textual play of his own text in its interplay with its historical moment; Burke's attempt to limit this play is precisely symptomatic of the possibility that his text is infected through and through by, in Derrida's metaphors, the 'citational play' of the *pharmakon*; however centre-stage he tries to make the good sublime its own logic means that it 'cites, re-cites, and makes legible that which in the same word signifies, in another spot and on a different level of the stage, *poison*' (Dissemination, p.99).

(iii) The Democratic Sublime

Having sought to establish in his readers' minds how 'monstrous' the Revolution is, Burke attempts to position their reactions to those representations, such as Price's, which construct the Revolution as a 'true' and 'democratic' sublime: 'It cannot however be denied [he writes after the passage just examined], that to some this strange scene appeared in quite another point of view. Into them it inspired no other sentiments than those of exultation and rapture' (p.93). For Burke the idea of a democratic sublime would have been as unthinkable as the trend he was witnessing of Whig aristocrats and politicians increasingly embracing radical ideas. And yet, as we have seen, the

democratic sublime is an inescapable reading of his own formulation of the aesthetic category.

The most obvious and influential examples of the 'democratic sublime' are to be found in Paine's Rights of Man, which consistently figures the Revolution in sublime terms:

In the declaratory exordium which prefaces the Declaration of Rights, we see the solemn and majestic spectacle of a Nation opening its commission, under the auspices of its Creator, to establish a Government; a scene so new, and so transcendently unequalled by anything in the European world, that the name of a Revolution is diminutive of its character, and it rises into a Regeneration of Man (Rights of Man, p.136).

The Revolution -- or the scene of its writing -- is therefore a dramatic moment in which human beings are raised to a genuinely sublime stature which will overturn the reign of terror perpetrated by traditional governments. And yet, in a striking fashion, this attempt to displace Burke's 'reactionary' representation of the Revolution can also be read as in many ways *repeating* Burke's central terms. Paine's emphasis, for example, on the *unprecedented* nature of the Revolution -- which is one of the conditions of its sublimity -- already has its precedent in Reflections. The emphasis, too, on the Revolution as a 'spectacle' and a 'scene' shows how Paine shares Burke's conception of it as a dramatic moment. That he repudiates Burke for doing precisely this shows how Paine works within the same theatrical paradigms as his adversary and tries (like Burke but in reverse) to construe the Revolution as good rather than bad drama. Paine's refutation of Burke therefore turns out to be curiously dependent upon Burke's own terms; their apparently polarized interpretations of the Revolution use, invoke, or are informed by, a set of aesthetic

paradigms which find their focal point in Burke's mid-eighteenth-century aesthetic treatise. In other words, the democratic or radical sublime seems to be caught up within the same perplexing logic as Burke's; to differentiate between the 'true' sublime of the Revolution and the 'false' sublime (the arbitrary terror) of traditional governments is to repeat Burke's central dilemma. In Paine's reading, Reflections is at once an expression of personal fear and an attempt to instil that fear into as many influential readers as possible in order to energize a defensive counter-revolution; his suggestion that 'certain ... persons ... dread the example of the French Revolution in England' therefore seems particularly acute -- as does his description of Reflections as 'Mr Burke's tribute of fear' (Rights of Man, p.68). Terror becomes at once a subjective emotional reaction and a rhetorical device calculated to achieve a certain effect. Radical thought seems to concur in figuring the Revolution in sublime terms (though it is also offered as a beautiful event) but attempts to minimize its terrible or noxious aspect. Paine's intervention attempts to transvalue the Revolution's political and aesthetic status by stressing that while it is a terror to courts and courtiers, it is a blessing to people in general (Rights of Man, pp.160-61). Thus Paine would distribute the terror and the delight of the sublime moment between different class positions or political interests, making the Revolution terrible to courtiers alone and both sublime and beautiful to ordinary people. These exchanges between Burke and Paine, then, show them struggling not only over different representations of the Revolution but over different conceptions of the sublime. In this textual encounter, the sublime is apparently split, however problematically, into its radical and reactionary

aspects -- each aspect being constituted through viewing the other as a perverted version of itself.

(iv) Immunizing the System

In the attempt to neutralize the effects of Price's sermon, Burke accuses the dissenting minister of affecting himself with his own rhetoric -- of passing an emotive fiction upon himself -- and implicitly warns Price's readers not to be similarly seduced (Reflections, pp.156-59). Burke grafts part of the passage from Price's sermon quoted above into his own text in order to contest and neutralize it. It is said to be at once an outbreak of 'rapture,' and a 'stage effect' calculated to arouse the imagination of the old preacher 'grown torpid with the lazy enjoyment of sixty years security' (pp.156-57). In effect, Burke presents Price's Discourse as an auto-affective practice, intended to 'tone up' its author's torpid imaginative fibres. But this makes the effects of Price's sermon exactly like those of the sublime in the Enquiry. To criticize a discourse as a 'stage-effect' cannot be used to discredit its aspirations towards the sublime. In discrediting Price's Discourse in these terms, Burke's comments seem an equally apt critique of his own sublime aesthetic in 1757-59, as well as of his own use of it in 1790. It is impossible to tell, however, whether Burke's criticism of Price operates to discredit the 'radical' sublime as a counterfeit of the 'authentic' sublime, or whether it marks a rejection (unconscious or otherwise) of the sublime itself. This is partly because Burke seems, at various points, to do both these things, and partly because, as we have seen, the problem of distinguishing between authentic and inauthentic sublimity is precisely inherent within the discourse of the sublime itself.

The insertion (or inoculation) of Price's text into the 'body' of Reflections -- as a supposedly controlled dose of that which it at once fears and would overcome or become immune to -- is perhaps dangerously to repeat the internalization of the revolutionary impulse in the body politic (and in the textual body) which Burke is trying to expel.¹⁶ Although Burke says elsewhere in Reflections that whether revolutionary doctrine be panacea or plague, Englishmen will have nothing to do with it, his text nevertheless supplements itself, fortifies its constitution, through inoculating or grafting portions of that doctrine into its own body, resorting to a *pharmakon* which is at once panacea and plague. Burke's problem is that he is compelled to do this -- he needs to neutralize Dr Price's dangerous physic -- but is thereby caught up within the supplement's or *pharmakon*'s perplexing drama. Such an 'inoculation' -- internalizing the alien infection in order to become immune to it -- is precisely a sublime dynamic, an injection and/or introjection of the 'external' danger. But this is not a chance inclusion of that which Burke would exclude, for I am arguing that the revolutionary impulse is always already within Burke's text and that his attempt to repress and control 'Price' is a figure for insurrections at work 'within' Reflections as well as within English society. For we have seen that the 'deconstruction' of the opposition between within and without is the very structure of the sublime moment: 'This ambiguity of participation in an ideal which is greater than the psyche -- beyond and at the same time within -- may be met on every page of Kant's account' (Weiskel, p.93). It is not, then, that Burke 'chooses' to represent the Revolution as sublime (or as a false sublime), but that its historical and textual moment necessarily precipitates the sublime's distinctive, disturbing, and deconstructive momentum.

The effects of these textual manoeuvres in Reflections are therefore paradoxical and potentially opposite to what are assumed to be Burke's intentions. If the recoil from terror is equivalent to the self-defensive action of the sublime moment, there is a danger for Burke that his text will make the Revolution seem sublime -- that he will provoke admiration rather than terror. Burke's rhetoric -- at once horrified and fascinated by the terror it figures -- may therefore inadvertently produce a fascinated horror in its readers. Paulson analyses the strange double movement of Burke's rhetoric by suggesting that 'Burke could come to terms with the Revolution by distancing it as a sublime experience, even while denying its sublimity and realizing that it might not keep its "distance"' (Paulson, p.67). The French Revolution could be admired at a distance during its first few months, but after Price it suddenly seemed to press too close, literally, to the 'body' and 'constitution' of the organic state. Indeed, since the enemy was already an enemy within, Burke's late texts are far more concerned with the Revolution's implications for England than for France. Thus Burke's full title, Reflections on the Revolution in France, and on the Proceedings in Certain Societies in London Relative to that Event, indicates how his text is as much concerned to engage with those 'proceedings' as with the French Revolution itself. Indeed, in October of 1790, while Reflections was in press, Burke could write of it to a French counter-revolutionary as 'the little Book which I have written on the Revolution Society' (Correspondence, VI, p.141).

The same anxiety about the precise location or origin of the revolutionary impulse -- whether it can be kept at a comfortable distance or whether it already infects the body politic -- is presented even more 'histrionically' in the first Letter on a Regicide Peace (1796): 'I certainly should dread more from a

wild cat in my bed chamber, than from all the lions that roar in the deserts behind Algiers. But in this parallel it is the cat that is at a distance, and the lions and tigers that are in our ante-chambers and our lobbies.'¹⁷ It is evidence of the power of Burke's imagery that these revolutionary predators reappear not only in Blake, but perhaps more significantly in Wordsworth's attempt to conjure up dread in himself at the scene of the September massacres -- which becomes 'a place of fear ... / Defenceless as a wood where tigers roam' (Prelude, 1805, X, 80-82).¹⁸ Paulson reads this passage in Letters on a Regicide Peace as evidence of 'the sublime in which Burke himself is participating,' rather than his use of the sublime for ideological ends:

While regarding the Revolution as a false sublime, Burke sees the terrors of something like the sublime experience as a warning to Englishmen who might see the Revolution as beautiful. ... He does not want the Revolution to produce 'delighted horror' because he intends for its 'pain and terror to be so modified [by contact with reality] as to be actually noxious.' He does not want his reader to feel safe: the tiger is not in Pegu but in London. In terms of Longinus's definition of the sublime, Burke has failed if he 'carries his hearer ... not to persuasion but to ecstasy,' since he seeks to convince him that the Revolution is a clear and present danger (p.71; the parenthesis is Paulson's).

This is to posit that a text's effects are a matter of calculation, and that they can be known and recognized by author and reader. As a 'psychoanalytical' reader, Paulson is supposedly qualified to recognize the difference between defence and persuasion, and to be able to situate himself outside the reading effect. But it is perhaps significant that Paulson misreads and misquotes Burke here: in the Enquiry, the sublime is a

'delightful' not a 'delighted' horror and is clearly distinguished from the beautiful (whereas Paulson seems to confuse them). The passage Paulson quotes actually reads as follows: 'if the pain and terror are so modified as not to be actually noxious ... they are capable of producing ... a sort of delightful horror' (Enquiry, p.136, my emphasis). In other words, as we saw in an earlier chapter, it is an *unmodified* or *unmediated* contact with 'reality' that makes terror noxious rather than sublime. At the same time, we have also seen that this same passage in the Enquiry can be read as suggesting that the noxious or unwholesome aspect is a necessary spur to the sublime's purgatory response and that it is therefore problematic to attempt to extricate the sublime from 'something like the sublime.'

Recasting Paulson's account, then, it is possible to map how, in 1790, Burke counters the delight and admiration which might be stimulated by the radical use of his own aesthetic category by figuring the Revolution as a false sublime -- as variously a savage terror or a ridiculous fraud. Terror would be expected to stimulate readers' anxiety, keeping the Revolution at one remove, and repressing the revolutionary spirit within England itself, while ridicule would help maintain a certain ironic distance. At the same time, Burke's representation of the Revolution often reads like the 'true' sublime -- perhaps because he seeks to provoke admiration for Reflections. One of the problems which his rhetoric exposes him to is therefore how to *impress* his readers while denigrating his subject matter. To figure the Revolution as a sublime experience in order to distance it might easily have the political effect, precisely, of encouraging revolution in England through admiration. This would be to foster revolution as an internal threat to England -- and hence to Burke as England's

representative man. But to deny the Revolution's sublimity, to make it sheer terror because it will not keep its 'distance,' would spur Burke's readers to 'recoil' and work to remove it -- which is precisely the labour of the sublime. It seems, then, that the unstable dynamics of the sublime moment problematize the distinction between defence and persuasion; Burke's text seems caught up in an inescapable double-bind in which defence and persuasion have contrary effects to those 'intended,' each of which seems implicated within and makes urgent the other. Reflections can therefore be read as if caught up in the same repetitive cycle it would attribute to the Revolution, alternating confusedly between terror and the sublime, delight and ridicule, each immediately compelling its opposite. Reflections begins to read like a self-sustaining oscillating system in perpetual motion. Forced by Price's text to figure the Revolution in his own aesthetic terms, Burke has to respect a precarious threshold: playing with terror is dangerous precisely because it is so close to the sublime and can therefore have unpredictable effects. If Burke fails if he 'carries his hearer ... not to persuasion but to ecstasy,' it often seems difficult to tell the difference. In the House of Commons, as well as in Reflections, Burke's own language can often and unpredictably 'sink' to the ridiculous or 'rise' to the sublime.

(v) Fanning the Conflagration

In terms of his own theory of language, Burke has learnt to fear the power of words because they can be used for any political end or effect. But in attempting to control the effects of emerging radical discourse, Burke's own text turns out to be a part of

that effect, drawing attention to it and fanning the conflagration. In the Introduction I pointed out that the immediate effect of Reflections was, paradoxically, to become, as Chandler puts it, 'the occasion of [the English Jacobin movement's] greatest flowering' (Wordsworth's Second Nature, p.17). The positive stimulus of Reflections is referred to by many contemporary radical writers, who suggest that it enabled them to perceive the rhetorical strategies of reactionary politics for the first time. Olivia Smith notes, for example, that John Thelwall 'claimed that he did not consciously hold a political position until he read the Reflections' (Politics of Language, p.36). In saying that Burke had written 'the most raving and fantastical, sublime and scurrilous, paltry and magnificent, and in every way most astonishing book ever sent into the world,' Thelwall appropriates Burke's own formulations about the Revolution and makes Reflections itself that astonishing event which produces, simultaneously or in rapid succession, 'the most opposite passions.'¹⁹ In this way Reflections is made analogous to the Revolution -- or at least to Burke's representation of it -- through their common paradoxical effects; both are guilty of impropriety, both violate the proper confines of genre. Burke's rhetoric is turned back upon itself; the effect of his text is said to parallel the effect Burke claims the Revolution had on him. These effects inevitably run beyond Burke's control -- for as Thelwall goes on to claim, Reflections 'made more democrats, among the thinking part of mankind, than all the works ever written in answer to it.'²⁰

This paradoxical and contradictory effect is registered in other examples of radical responses to Reflections. On 14 July 1791, at a dinner to celebrate the second anniversary of the French Revolution, the Revolution Society, together with the Society for

Constitutional Information, toasted 'Mr Burke, to thank him for having provoked the great discussion that occupies all thinking beings' -- the toast being followed by 'universal applause, which lasts for a full half hour.'²¹ And indeed, another radical club, the Norwich Society, prefigures Wordsworth's representation of the Revolution's effect on him when young by praising Burke for initiating the debate 'by which he has opened unto us the dawn of a glorious day.'²² For its radical readers, then, however ironically, Reflections may even be equated with the French Revolution itself, since both have a common liberating effect. Employing his own theory that it is politically more effective to evoke feelings than to invite reason, Burke loses control of that effect and only amplifies, at least at first, the feelings he would deflate. In setting out to have the last word on what English people feel about the French Revolution and the English constitution, Burke actually opens and energizes a dialogic struggle that would only be closed off by terror in France and terror at home.

That Burke's representation of the Revolution does have these contradictory effects is not a matter of chance but a matter of radical readers responding to contradictions already inscribed within Reflections. We have seen that these contradictions are implicit within the aesthetics of the Enquiry; in Reflections there is a massive attempt to repress them precisely because of the demands of the historical moment. But the paradoxical logic of the sublime as it is formulated in the Enquiry renders attempts to repress or make it univocal especially problematic -- particularly in times of revolutionary crisis. Burke emerges as at once the great director of the way the Revolution came to be figured in dominant discourse, and as strangely implicated within it. In the following chapter, I want to analyse the central

'scene' of Burke's dramatization of the French Revolution in order to investigate the ways in which Reflections might be more 'revolutionary' than at first appears and so able to make more democrats than any of the works written in answer to it.

1. Hugh Blair, Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres (1783), p.31, quoted by Boulton, p.lxxxviii (my emphasis).
2. The UEA English Studies Group, on the other hand, argue that the 'underlying passivity of the "People" is evident [in this passage]; they are joined to no concrete verbs of action' ('Strategies for Representing Revolution,' p.95). But not to see linguistic acts as themselves concretely political is to overlook the politicization of language which is especially characteristic of this period (see Olivia Smith, Politics of Language 1791-1819).
3. For a discussion of Burke's figuration of the state as a body, see Walter D. Love, 'Edmund Burke's Idea of the Body Corporate;' interestingly enough for my own discussion, Burke is said to be wary of the implications of the metaphor since it introduces the possibility of the 'death and destruction' of political states (p.193).
4. Paine, in criticizing the English state and church for using obscurity and mystery to repress the people, attempts to expose its tyranny as a manipulative use of the sublime in precisely this way (see Rights of Man, pp.91-92, p.204, ff.).
5. Elements of this process can be gleaned from Barrell, An Equal Wide Survey, pp.139-56. Lock reminds us of 'the status of France [in the eighteenth century] as England's hereditary enemy. Since the wars against Louis XIV, France had been identified with the double political bogey of popery and arbitrary power' (Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France, p.48); the popular imagination in England, Lock continues, represented to itself 'the moral and dissolute habits of [the French] clergy' (p.49).
6. Similar theatrical imagery is to be found in early reports of the Revolution in English newspapers, as well as being characteristic of the Revolution's own self-dramatization (see The Times Reports the French Revolution, p.10, and Lynn Hunt, Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution, pp.19-51). Marx analyses the series of bourgeois revolutions from 1789 to 1848 as theatrical reenactments of the inauguration of republican Rome (Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, pp.146-48). Burke's treatment of the French Revolution as a moment of theatre was perceived by his first radical readers: Paine wrote that 'I cannot consider Mr Burke's book in scarcely any other light than a dramatic performance' (Rights of Man, p.81). Richard McGee, in 'Tragicomedy in Burke's Reflections,'

barely develops the potential of this topic; Peter H. Melvin's, 'Burke on Theatricality and Revolution,' also fails to exploit its interesting possibilities; more challenging is Peter Hughes, 'Originality and Allusion in the Writings of Edmund Burke;' Mary Jacobus, in '"That Great Stage Where Senators Perform,"' is particularly stimulating; she concludes that Burke 'hesitates ... between the excesses of the Revolution and the excesses of his own rhetoric, uncertain whether he prefers the rhetorical to the revolutionary sublime; the threat to the poetry. That uncertainty is the common point of instability on which his discussion of the theatre and his representation of revolution both rest' (p.374).

7. We will see that this distinction, between 'revolution' and 'reformation,' becomes of central importance in Reflections and to its major critics.

8. The importance of Price's sermon on Burke's decision to write Reflections is stressed by Frederick Dreyer, 'The Genesis of Burke's Reflections,' who points out that Burke remained remarkably quiescent at the fall of the Bastille, the Great Fear, and the events of October 5-6, and even waited 'for a full three months after Marie Antoinette suffered her humiliation at the hands of the Paris mob. What prompted him [to react in condemnation of the Revolution] was the publication of Richard Price's Discourse' (pp.462-63). Albert Goodwin argues, in 'Political Genesis of Edmund Burke's Reflections,' that Reflections was primarily aimed at intervening in the political situation in England, where the drift in the Whig party towards radical ideas was thought by Burke to betray and threaten the principles of the settlement of 1688. That Price should attempt to interpret 1688 in radical terms represented a challenge to all Burke's fundamental political beliefs (pp.349-51); his main concern was that his party colleagues seemed to concur with Price's sentiments. Reflections is intended, therefore, as 'a salutary warning to the Whig magnates against the dangers of imitating the political example set by the French Liberal aristocracy' (p.360).

9. See Correspondence, VI, p.55 n.2 and p.81. Cobban and Smith suggest that the passages which make up this letter 'may not all have been from a single letter, or even addressed to a single correspondent, [but that] it is worth noting that the first passage [of the letter] reads like an answer to the closing paragraphs of Paine's letter of 17 January' (p.78).

10. Quoted by O'Brien, p.17; see Parliamentary History of England (1816), XXVIII.

11. Quoted by Boulton, Language of Politics, p.77; see Parliamentary History, XXVIII, 351 ff.

12. In an important and provocative article, Gary Kelly suggests that 'figures of crime and madness are the presiding ones in all of Burke's "reasonings" on the revolutionaries and their British sympathizers' ('Revolution, Crime, and Madness: Edmund Burke and the Defense of the Gentry,' p.17). According to Kelly, one of the Revolution's principal dangers was that it 'makes its admirers resemble itself' (p.24); Burke's figuration of the Revolution as criminal insanity can be seen primarily as an ideological ploy for 'putting it in a kind of intellectual quarantine' (p.27). This is similar to my own argument, save that I contend that Burke is attempting to protect, not the 'gentry,' but the 1688 alliance between capitalism and aristocracy from the revolutionary plague.

13. Burke's concept of the sublime clearly draws on Aristotle's descriptions of tragedy (the Enquiry makes few overt references to Aristotle, yet the idea that an event or drama can be both painful and pleasurable seems to derive from The Poetics [see Enquiry, p.44]). Burke's response to the Revolution in Reflections seems to make specific use of Aristotle's discussion of 'Fear and Pity.' Aristotle argues that although fear and pity 'may be excited by means of spectacle,' it is more 'artistic' to achieve these effects through the plot alone; he goes on to assert that 'those who employ spectacle to produce an effect, not of fear, but of something merely monstrous, have nothing to do with tragedy, for not every kind of pleasure should be demanded of tragedy, but only that which is proper to it' (On the Art of Poetry, Classical Literary Criticism, p.49). In presenting the Revolution as 'monstrous,' then, Burke seeks to score an aesthetic point; but it could be argued that it is Burke himself who breaches propriety here by employing a spectacle of something merely monstrous to achieve certain effects. But, as in Burke, Aristotle's attempt to differentiate between the tragic and the monstrous relies, in the end, on a notion of 'propriety' which resists formulation.

14. Paulson attempts to explain Burke's 'spreading out this ambivalence into the consecutive stages of a plot' as an instantaneous detection, or perhaps 'prophecy,' of the Revolution's immanent 'pattern' -- its 'inevitable' movement from the initial destruction of the father-king to an internalization and emulation of the father in order to become 'more the tyrant than he was' (Paulson, p.71). But there are problems with such a reading, apart from the fact that Reflections was written before the Revolution looked like turning to

regicide; to move from patricide to being more repressive than the father seems quite different to a shift between the terrible and the ridiculous, while Burke's description here is of an alternation not a single, irreversible 'plot.'

15. For Freud's discussion of this paradoxical structure, see 'The Uncanny,' Complete Psychological Works, volume XVII.

16. For a fascinating account of the theory and practice of inoculation in the eighteenth century, see Peter Razzell, The Conquest of Smallpox. For a meditation on the implications and effects of 'grafting' 'scions' from previous texts onto or into a textual 'stock,' see Derrida, 'Grafts, a Return to Overcasting,' Dissemination, pp.355-58.

17. 'Letter I on the Overtures of Peace,' p.200, quoted by Paulson, p.67.

18. Feline predators also appear in Goya's 'The Sleep of Reason produces Monsters' -- one of the Caprichos series (1796-98) -- in which 'it is not too wild to suppose that the actual cat, with its startlingly large ears, has suggested the cluster of owl-like creatures who in turn seem to blend into long-eared bats,' Levey, Rococo to Revolution, p.12.

19. John Thelwall, The Tribune (1795-96), ii, p.220, quoted by Smith, p.36.

20. Thelwall, p.220, quoted by Smith, p.36.

21. Quoted by Chandler, p.18. These passages from the report of the dinner are retranslated by Chandler 'from the French translation that appeared in the official organ of Revolutionary France, the Gazette nationale ou Le moniteur universal, no.202 (21 July 1791); reprinted in Réimpression de L'Ancien Moniteur (Paris: Henri Plon, 1863), 9:174' (Wordsworth's Second Nature, p.271 n.12).

22. 'Resolutions of the United Constitutional Societies of Norwich,' cited during the trial of Thomas Hardy, in Complete Collection of State Trials, XXIV, p.292, quoted by Smith, pp.36-37. Compare Wordsworth, Prelude 1805, X, 692-93.

Chapter 5: 5-6 October 1789: Stripping the Queen

Thus far we have looked at some of the contradictory effects of Reflections as revealed in contemporary and twentieth-century readings, together with the instabilities introduced by Burke's attempt to distinguish between the good sublime and its perversion in revolutionary radicalism. In this and subsequent chapters I will go on to examine Reflections as an inherently unstable text whose internal struggles may help account for the almost two hundred years of formulations, resolutions, and reformulations of 'the Burke problem.' I want to show that these instabilities and struggles are most dramatically manifested in the sequence of early passages in Reflections which link Burke's attack on Richard Price with his representation of the events of 5-6 October 1789, his reflections on their implications, and his eulogy of Marie Antoinette. In order to assist the reader's understanding of what follows, and to provide a 'ground' against which to measure the contending representations of the events of 5-6 October, I will quote from Alfred Cobban's representation of them:

On 5 October women gathered before the Hôtel de Ville demanding bread: this was quite normal. Getting no satisfaction the cry was raised -- by whom? -- that they should make their way to Versailles to appeal to the king. Several thousands set out, gathering numbers as they went. ... At four o'clock in the afternoon the Municipal Council authorized La Fayette to move off with the National Guard, and now there appeared for the first time a definite objective: the king was to be brought back to Paris. With a mixed body of National Guards and others La Fayette set out. ... That evening the main body of the Parisians arrived, settled down for the night as best they could or ranged about the streets of Versailles and the courts of the palace. At

early dawn on the next day a few hundred of the demonstrators found a way into the palace, slaughtered some of the royal bodyguard whom they encountered and penetrated nearly to the queen's apartments before they were repulsed.

Morning saw serried masses in the courtyard before the palace, now with one cry, 'To Paris!' ... In the afternoon of 6 October the triumphal procession set out on the muddy march back to Paris -- National Guards armed and royal bodyguard disarmed, wagons laden with corn and flour lumbering, market men and women straggling along, ... La Fayette riding alongside the carriage bearing the royal family, also beside them the heads of two of the Royal Guards on pikes, ... and trudging along in the rapidly falling twilight the dark shapes of thousands of nameless Parisians. At ten o'clock ... the royal family ... at last reached the Tuileries ... and camped down in hurriedly cleared rooms as best they could for the night (History of Modern France, pp.161-62).

(i) Setting the Scene: Burke's Triumph over Richard Price

That Burke's response to the incident at Versailles on 5-6 October 1789 was a belated one can be derived from the previous discussion of the genesis of Reflections, in which we saw that his hostility against the French Revolution was primarily aroused by reading Price's sermon in January.¹ An examination of the ways this sermon influenced Burke's eventual representation of the events of 5-6 October will allow us to understand the urgency of Reflections and will underscore the argument that Burke's aestheticized politics are not directly mappable onto his earlier politicized aesthetics. In brief, if Burke's aesthetics of 1757-59 involves an uneasy relation towards custom and habit and attempts to celebrate the striking and original possibilities of the sublime and the beautiful, his politics in 1790 champions habitude as constituting a set of values not to be yielded to those who would strip away the customs of the traditional order.

Whereas in the Enquiry Burke repudiates convention because of its deadening effects, he seems to embrace it in Reflections as an array of imposing and pleasing illusions necessary to defend society against radicalism. That these supplementary modes of defence turn out to be potentially more dangerous to the body politic than the insurrections he attempts to resist, indicates how Burke's attempt to utilize 'second nature' surrenders his text to the ungovernable insurrections of supplementarity.

In the present chapter I wish to trace the ways these contradictions are foregrounded in Burke's struggle with Price, and to then move on to examine the implications of Burke's adoption of a modified version of his notion of the beautiful. This comes, I will argue, in response to radicalism's attack on aristocratic beauty and its attempt to construct a revolutionary concept of the beautiful. That Marie Antoinette comes to embody Burke's reinterpretation of the beautiful is forced upon him by historical contingency, and yet there is an aptness to this given the gendered nature of Burke's aesthetic categories in the Enquiry. In Chapter 6, which looks at Burke's representation of the October days (in which the problem of gender is paramount), I draw on Wollstonecraft's Vindication of the Rights of Men (1790); one of the most prompt of the many 'replies to Burke,' we will see that Rights of Men criticizes Reflections by deploying Burke's early aesthetics against his late politics precisely in order to expose its exploitation of conventional representations of gender.

Although Burke's eulogy of Marie Antoinette consists of only a single paragraph of about a page in length, it functions as the culmination of all that comes before it, and serves as an emotional touchstone for the various arguments which Burke mounts in the more than two hundred pages which follow. For Boulton,

The apostrophe is central to the work as a whole. At the risk of being censured by some

for excessive emotionalism, Burke provides a memorable centrepiece which, in symbolic terms, focuses the philosophical significance of all that goes before it and acts as a seminal passage for what follows. ... after the apostrophe [although] Burke is more and more concerned with the detail of governmental organisation ... this passage remains in the mind by its imaginative force and persuasive suggestiveness (Language of Politics, p.132-33).

To understand its importance and impact, the eulogy needs to be read as the emotional and political climax of Burke's version of the events at Versailles which functions to condemn the democratic movement. Out of context, it appears as a quixotic vignette in praise of a figure regarded by most of 'the world' as a 'fallen woman.'² Indeed, the passage was one of those most frequently reprinted in contemporary newspapers and became the butt of many caricatures (see Lock, pp.138-43). In its context, it can be seen as systematically juxtaposing aristocratic beauty with the democratic terror which Burke constructs in his account of the events at Versailles -- indeed, as we will see, Burke exposes that beauty to that terror. In other words, these passages seem to concentrate the points which have been developed in my thesis thus far, showing how Burke conceives revolutionary radicalism as a perversion of the sublime and how he turns to aristocratic beauty as, paradoxically, both the most threatened category of the *ancien régime* and a potential defence against revolutionary terror. At the same time, however, we will see in Chapter 6 that in doing this Burke both refashions his earlier category of the beautiful and avails himself of the most dangerous remedy he could have chosen.

Although it takes up only twenty pages in O'Brien's edition (pp.156-79 -- though it is curiously difficult to say where it begins and ends), the account of 5-6 October is therefore the moment when both the anxieties and the

strategies of Reflections are most powerfully focused. As the most 'dramatic' scene of his attack on the Revolution it has received great critical attention, not least among Burke's contemporaries. It comes as a direct response to Price's celebration in Discourse on the Love of Our Country of the French people leading their king in 'triumph;' it is that part of Reflections which most preoccupies Wollstonecraft's reply in Rights of Men; and it stimulates a powerful counter-representation in Paine's Rights of Man (pp.81-86). For these reasons, the dialogic struggle of the Revolution controversy is most concentrated in the relations between these passages in Price, Burke, Wollstonecraft, and Paine.³

Although Reflections is animated by discursive and historical confluences which precede it, it powerfully channels them in ways which establish the terms and concepts which organize radical discourse. I will show that Burke's text is at once dominant, caught up within its textual-historical context, and driven by a set of internal fractures and 'abrasive frictions'⁴ formed in struggle with discursive formations exemplified by Price's Discourse. If Reflections derives its energy from those fractures and frictions, I argue that they, in turn, enrage, enable, and compel its radical antagonists. Reflections is, in all senses, the representative text of its moment -- so much so that if Wollstonecraft's and Paine's replies 'represent' a class of people which Burke figures as unrepresentable they are forced to do so through a redefinition of representation in both political and rhetorical terms. Both the *ancien régime* and the Revolution, as each sees the other, operate with a rhetoric which reprehensibly severs the relation between signifier and signified and between sign and referent in ways which appear to violate representation in politics and in language. And yet, since the sublime and the beautiful (in Burke) is founded upon and operates through a resistance in the passage from signifier to signified

or, in eighteenth-century terms, between word and idea, then the attempt by each faction to employ the sublime for its own ends undercuts its ability to condemn the other. When each confronts the other -- in what is one of the most significant and influential struggles in modern culture over the nature of representation and meaning -- each seems to be presented with a 'mirror' of its own fear or desire, locked in a speculative abyss of reflections upon reflections.

In order to be able to understand why achieving a dominant representation of the Versailles affair was so important to Burke, we need to turn again to Price's sermon. While regarding England as one of the few countries to enjoy even a relative degree of freedom, Price suggests that the example of the French Revolution shows that England should not rest on its laurels but continue to improve upon the basis established in 1688. To be able to love a country, it must be one in which truth, virtue, and liberty are continually improving (Discourse, pp.11-20), and Price implies that this is no longer the case in England. This is exemplified by the way the people had recently addressed 'the King, on his recovery from the severe illness with which God has been pleased to afflict him' as if they were 'a herd crawling at the feet of a master' (p.22). Instead of this they ought to remember that 'a King is no more than the first servant of the public,' from whom he derives his 'majesty' (p.23-24). Rather than the terms of the late address, Price would have honoured George III 'as almost the only lawful King in the world, because the only one who owes his crown to the choice of his people' (p.25). This choice derives, Price argues, from the Revolution of 1688, which introduced an 'aera of light and liberty ... among us, by which we have been made an example to other kingdoms' (p.32). But Price suggests that if the people of England are not to forfeit the advantages gained in 1688, they must maintain its principles and extend and

improve the blessings it bestowed. He then lists what he considers the chief of those principles:

First; The right to liberty of conscience in religious matters.

Secondly; The right to resist power when abused. And,

Thirdly; The right to chuse our own governors; to cashier them for misconduct; and to frame a government for ourselves (p.34).

Surveying the contemporary state of political life in England, Price is apprehensive that the gains of 1688 are in the process of being lost, primarily because of an imperfection in the English constitution inherited from the Revolution -- i.e. 'the INEQUALITY OF OUR REPRESENTATION' (p.39). This is why the example of France, with its promise of a 'pure and equal representation' (p.41), is so timely for a country whose condition 'renders it an object of concern and anxiety' because 'it wants ... the grand security of public liberty' (p.46). Price represents the English state as crippled by 'a monstrous weight of debt' and as rousing God's displeasure by its 'vice and venality' (pp.46-47). To secure English liberty, Price implores his congregation to be ready to do its 'utmost to save it from the dangers that threaten it' (p.47), and encourages it by claiming that the French Revolution proves 'the favourableness of the present times to all exertions in the cause of public liberty' (p.49). He concludes the sermon with the declamation we have already considered, in which, having lived to see the French king 'led in triumph, and an arbitrary monarch surrendering himself to his subjects,' he feels that he could almost say '*Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation*' (p.49).

Burke spends almost the first hundred pages of Reflections -- which culminate in his account of 5-6 October -- wrangling, directly or indirectly, with this sermon. He considers it the most typical production of

the Revolution Society -- a club which he regards as revolutionary and treasonable not only for the opinions it disseminates in England, but for having assumed the responsibility for communicating its congratulations to the new French government; for Burke, this is to act as only governments are authorized to act and to claim for itself an unmerited representative role (Reflections, pp.88-89). In contradistinction to the Revolution Society, Burke would suspend his congratulations (pp.90-91), claiming that he needs to consider France not in 'the nakedness ... of metaphysical abstraction' but in its actual circumstances (pp.89-90); this is because although liberty might be a good thing in the abstract, there are many instances (such as the liberation of madmen or murderers) where it might be an evil in actual affairs (p.90). (Although they might appear to merely furnish an argument, Burke's examples and metaphors are never 'innocent': he will go on, as we have seen, to indict the Revolution as criminal madness, and we will see him condemn it precisely for *stripping* both social institutions and the French queen.)

Burke goes on to claim that events have enabled more circumspect observers 'to discern, with tolerable exactness, the true nature of the object held up to our imitation' (p.92). This is the cue for the passage we have examined at length in which Burke declares that 'all circumstances taken together, the French revolution is the most astonishing that has hitherto happened in the world' (p.92). Price then becomes the subject of a satirical attack as one of those to whom 'this strange scene appeared in quite another point of view' (p.93). His sermon is, like the revolution, a witch's miscellany -- 'a very extraordinary miscellaneous sermon, in which there are some good moral and religious sentiments ... mixed up in a sort of porridge of various political opinions and reflections: but the revolution in France is the grand ingredient in the cauldron' (p.93). In an attitude coming

back into fashion in the late 1980s, Burke condemns Price for delivering politics from the pulpit, suggesting that politics ought to be left to those acquainted with its world and experienced in its affairs (p.94).

Burke dwells at such length on Price's sermon because, as he points out, 'his doctrines affect our constitution in its vital parts' (p.96); this is partly so because English monarchs inherit their crown 'not by election, but by the law' (p.108). Price's assertion that 'his majesty' is 'the only lawful king in the world, because the only one who owes his crown to the choice of his people' (quoted by Burke, p.96), is said to be 'either ... nonsense, and therefore neither true nor false, or it affirms a most unfounded, dangerous, illegal, and unconstitutional position' (p.97). Quoting the three principles which Price suggests originated in 1688, Burke refers to them as a 'new, and hitherto unheard-of bill of rights,' and claims to speak for 'the body of the people of England' in saying that 'they utterly disclaim it' (p.99). Burke then works to develop an alternative interpretation of 1688, suggesting that it is utterly different from 1648 and 1789 (he accuses Price of confounding all three). Burke does this by referring to and quoting from parliamentary documents and statute law at some length (pp.99-119) -- 'referring,' in Paine's words, 'to musty records and mouldy parchments to prove that the rights of the living are lost, "renounced and abdicated for ever," by those who are now no more' (Rights of Man, p.67). In doing this, Burke exposes himself to caricature, but also constructs himself as a knowledgeable and experienced statesman able, in contradistinction to Price, to discourse about matters not fully discernible to men of other professions.⁵

I will examine the paradoxes and perplexities of Burke's forays into these ancient texts (which turn out to be more textual than Burke might have wished) in Chapter 7. At the moment, I wish to concentrate on the way Burke

engages with Price. To reinforce the principles he has sought to establish in his legal researches ('to fortify the fallible and feeble contrivances of our reason'), he shifts to a more emotive language which figures the threatened English constitution in sublime terms:

Always acting as if in the presence of canonized forefathers, the spirit of freedom, leading in itself to misrule and excess, is tempered with an awful gravity. ... By this means our liberty becomes a noble freedom. It carries an imposing and majestic aspect. It has a pedigree and illustrating ancestors. It has its bearings and its ensigns armorial. It has its gallery of portraits; its monumental inscriptions; its records, evidences, and titles (p.121).

Having been, in the Enquiry, an aesthetic category in revolt against tradition and authority, with a theoretical ground in the everyday experience of pain and labour, the sublime is now associated with tradition itself. Developing the implications of the section in the Enquiry on words, Burke exploits the accumulated associations of history to give the notion of English liberty an aspect it is almost impossible to enquire into or contest. Liberty is no longer experienced through bursting the confines of custom but is embodied and 'tempered' by custom itself.⁶ Rather than straining against aristocratic tradition, the sublime finds its concrete emblem in an aristocratic mansion complete with portraits, library, and monuments. Thus Burke constructs a notion of liberty quite at odds with radical democracy; aristocratic liberty becomes precisely that which is *threatened* by radicalism's 'monstrous fiction' (p.124) about liberty and equality. The invasion of Versailles can therefore be presented as the inevitably monstrous consequence of such a fiction. And yet the fact that English liberty is construed as a *tempering*, through 'an awful gravity,' of the 'spirit of freedom' is perhaps indicative of a uneasy compromise. One aspect of the sublime impulse of 1757-59 is mixed with

another kind of grandeur in order to moderate or tone down its tendency towards misrule and excess. But if traditional liberty is a tension between, or mixture of, misrule and rule, excess and its curb, there is, perhaps, always the sense that tradition can never fully contain liberty's unruly impulse. Burke's construction of English liberty seems unable to escape the consequences of its oxymoronic, contradictory ideological burden.

In contrast to his canonization of English liberty, democratic processes such as those in France are presented as a 'fond election of evil' (p.127). Against Price's image of 'thirty millions of people ... demanding liberty with a single voice,' the National Assembly is presented as a 'profane burlesque and abominable perversion' (p.161) of what ought to be the 'aweful image ... of the virtue and wisdom of a whole people collected into a focus' (p.127). Analysing the composition of the Assembly, which had given the reins of France to the Third Estate, Burke presents it as an example to be rejected rather than imitated -- a 'confusion [which], like a palsy, has attacked the fountain of life itself' (p.137). With power in the hands of the petty bourgeoisie ('the artificers, and clowns, and money-jobbers, usurers, and Jews'), even the nobility will quickly degenerate; by levelling society, the radicals combat not 'prejudice' but 'nature' and 'pervert the natural order of things,' (p.138). Thus the social relation which radicalism attempts to expose as an arbitrary convention is construed as nature itself; what has become customary to a particular socio-political order is presented as the natural order of things. Revolutionary thought, even though it refers to 'natural' rights and equality, is 'an usurpation on the prerogatives of nature' (p.138). Etymologically, revolution cannot help but be a perversion of the natural order, since to pervert is to 'turn round,' 'overturn,' 'ruin,' 'corrupt' (OED).

That revolutionary radicalism might be a 'palsy' attacking 'the fountain of life itself,' threatening the English constitution in 'its vital parts,' allows us to understand why Burke is so preoccupied with Price's sermon. Abandoning argument, Burke's most emotive reaction is to the passage in which Price surrenders himself to God after having lived to see the French king 'led in triumph.' Burke engages Price in a discursive struggle between opposed representations of the events of 5-6 October in order to secure the future well-being of the English constitution -- to protect the natural order of things from its perversion. To this end, he employs all the rhetorical devices available to him to discredit and defame what he takes to be Price's triumphal representation of the march from Versailles with the royal family. He finds Price -- 'a preacher of the gospel' -- guilty of

prophaning the beautiful and prophetic ejaculation, commonly called '*nunc dimittis*,' made on the first presentation of our Saviour in the Temple, and applying it, with an inhuman and unnatural rapture, to the most horrid, atrocious, and afflicting spectacle, that perhaps ever was exhibited to the pity and indignation of mankind (p.159).

The '*nunc dimittis*' occurs in Luke, where Simeon, 'waiting for the consolation of Israel,' was told by the Holy Ghost, 'that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.' Brought 'by the Spirit' to the temple as the child Jesus enters, Simeon takes the child into his arms saying 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, / According to thy word: / For mine eyes have seen thy salvation' (Luke, 2: 25-30). Thus Price is accused at once of the misuse of a sacred text and of a misapplication of aesthetic terms (certain members of the National Assembly are said to have called 6 October 'un beau jour' [p.162]). Having admonished Price for straying from his trade by introducing politics into the pulpit,

Burke now implies that the dissenting minister does not even know his own trade and sets out to correct him. Yet although he criticizes Price's 'prophanation,' Burke's presentation of it as exploiting the affective connotations of one context by applying them to another is curiously similar to his own account of how 'compounded abstract' words may be used to powerful effect: 'These words, by having no application, ought to be unoperative; but when words commonly sacred to great occasions are used, we are affected by them even without the occasions' (Enquiry, p.166). Burke's early aesthetics therefore makes the discrimination between appropriate and inappropriate uses of sacred texts awkwardly problematic. The only recourse open to Reflections is to invoke notions of propriety; Price errs not in his rhetorical technique, but in 'applying' sacred words to the wrong place, and in so doing, he reveals himself as unfit to be a preacher of the gospel -- unfit because by 'prophaning' the most sacred of texts he declares himself outside the temple, 'not initiated into the religious rites or sacred mysteries' (OED).

Burke's recourse to notions of religious decorum reveals that he can only differentiate his own textual processes from Price's through an appeal to custom. And yet if custom itself is arbitrary, this distinction becomes not one of spiritual substance (if there could be such a thing) but a question of ideological hegemony. Burke is struggling for a particular set of customs as practiced in a particular socio-religious system. That his representation of Price's sacrilegious techniques is also an accurate description of his own rhetorical processes suggests how crucial yet precarious Burke's critique of Price is. The canonical and the evil, the pious and the sacrilegious, the constitutional and the revolutionary, exist not as opposites but as a peculiarly complicit and mutually dependent system. And yet the constitutional position needs to aggressively define

itself by repudiating its 'other' -- and this is especially so in times of revolutionary crisis. Burke's text, then, seems both energized and compromised by the contradictions of the terms it is compelled to wield in this battle of books.

Burke enters into a theological-cum-political contest with Price, striving to identify him as a false prophet. He 'visibly triumphs' over the dissenting minister (as O'Brien puts it [p.384, n.50]) by exposing parallels between him and the Reverend Hugh Peters, who had ridden, Burke tells us, '*triumphing*' before Charles I in 1648, and had said 'after the commencement of the king's trial . . . , " . . . now I may say with old Simeon, *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation*"' (p.158).⁷ But in this struggle, Burke is not adverse to employing the same tactics -- the application of words commonly sacred to great occasions for ideological effect -- for which he condemns Price. The latter's representation of the people's 'triumph' at the leading of their monarch is replaced in *Reflections* by what Hughes calls a 'sacred parody' of the *via dolorosa*:⁸

After they had been made to taste, drop by drop, more than the bitterness of death, in the slow torture of a journey of twelve miles, protracted to six hours, they were, under a guard, composed of those very soldiers who had thus conducted them through this famous triumph, lodged in one of the old palaces of Paris, now converted into a Bastille for kings (p.165).

Leading this procession, Burke has the heads of 'two gentlemen' 'stuck upon spears' (pp.164-65), and the whole train 'slowly [moving] along, amidst the horrid yells, and shrilling screams, and frantic dances, and infamous contumelies, and all the unutterable abominations of the furies of hell, in the abused shape of the vilest of women' (p.165).⁹ Thus Price's *nunc dimittis* is shown to

have been applied to a scene more appropriate to demonic or pagan rituals:

Is this a triumph to be consecrated at altars?
to be commemorated with grateful thanksgiving?
to be offered to the divine humanity with
fervent prayer and enthusiastick ejaculation?
-- The Theban and Thracian Orgies, acted in
France, and applauded only in the Old Jewry, I
assure you, kindle prophetic enthusiasm in the
minds but of very few people in this kingdom
(p.165).

Ostensibly addressing Depont in order to assure him that Price does not represent English opinion, Burke actually seeks to establish in his English readers' minds the proper response to this 'triumph' by making it impossible to concur with Price's profane, inhuman, and unnatural enthusiasm for the Revolution.

The very energy with which Burke repeatedly returns to this scene, and the range of imagery employed, is striking. After condemning Price for prophaning the *nunc dimittis*, he goes on to say that

This '*leading in triumph*,' a thing in its best form unmanly and irreligious, which fills our Preacher with such unhallowed transports, must shock, I believe, the moral taste of every well-born mind. Several English were the stupified and indignant spectators of that triumph. It was (unless we have been strangely deceived) a spectacle more resembling a procession of American savages ... after some of their murders called victories, and leading into hovels hung round with scalps, their captives, overpowered with the scoffs and buffets of women as ferocious as themselves, much more than it resembled the triumphal pomp of a civilized martial nation
(p.159).

Once again, the correct -- the tasteful or 'English' -- response is underlined. Utterly 'other' than martial civilization, the naked terror of the 'savage' is therefore figured as quite distinct from the sublime. While being in one sense nostalgic for the 'savage,' the

sublime emerges as a mode by which bourgeois society defines itself through the exclusion of the savage. That this triumph must shock the well-born mind, reminds us that the sublime, though it may seem to hark back to the rigours and dangers of pre-civilized life, is pre-eminently an aesthetic of highly 'civilized' societies and of the leisured classes within them. But if, according to Burke's own aesthetics, terror is the very basis of the sublime, and if the sublime is the mode in which the bourgeois state and individual is constituted and reconditioned, then the 'savage' becomes not 'other' to the bourgeois but the very ground of its being. The difference between 'civilized' and 'savage' war is reduced, against the interests of Burke project, to a set of arbitrary conventions. If, in later texts on France, Burke preaches 'total' war against the revolutionary republic -- a warfare which, as O'Brien puts it, 'will be more cruel than any past warfare' (p.61) -- he justifies this because, 'having destroyed ... all the other manners and principles which have hitherto civilized Europe, [the Revolution] will destroy also the mode of civilized war, which more than anything else, has distinguished the christian world.'¹⁰ In a curious and revealing way, then, Burke becomes a prophet and an advocate of a mode of warfare he seeks to associate with the savage and the revolutionary. Burke is also, of course, appealing to a class interest: the 'well-born,' blessed with 'moral taste,' are shown what 'the people' are capable of if they were given their liberty. The enemy is, Burke stresses, within as well as without. Compounding the horror is an 'unnatural' blurring of gender -- we will meet these 'savage' women, indistinguishable from men, again. 'Liberty' and 'equality' are not sublime concepts for Burke but recipes for terror, while 'fraternity' -- if it is to involve the transgression of gender roles -- represents a dangerous fraternization with the enemy.¹¹ The 'correct' response to this 'triumph,' then, is defined

ideologically in terms of a definition of the 'proper' subject -- properly gendered, civilized rather than savage, Christian rather than profane, well-born rather than of the lower orders, and, we will see, English rather than French.

In defining the civilized subject's reaction to this 'triumph,' Burke not only dictates the fitting response of English men and women to the Revolution, but seeks to divide the National Assembly against itself and from the people it is supposed to represent:

This, my dear Sir, was not the triumph of France. I must believe that, as a nation, it overwhelmed you with shame and horror. I must believe that the National Assembly find themselves in a state of the greatest humiliation, in not being able to punish the authors of this triumph, or the actors in it (p.159).

The members of your Assembly must themselves groan under the tyranny of which they have all the shame, none of the direction, and little of the profit. I am sure many of the members who compose even the majority of that body, must feel as I do, notwithstanding the applauses of the Revolution Society (pp.161-62).

If the Revolution Society is supposed to represent the extreme French spirit within England, these moderate members of the National Assembly represent an 'English' tendency within revolutionary France. One of the disturbing aspects of the October insurrection for Burke is therefore that, in George Rudé's analysis, it destroyed 'the influence of [this] conservative "English Party" within the Assembly' (Crowd in the French Revolution, p.61).¹² For Burke, then, the events of 5-6 October appear to act out in miniature, or rehearse in a particularly pointed fashion, the consequences of such a revolutionary movement for the English constitution were it to be countenanced in England.

The National Assembly, impotent to control or even properly investigate such outrages as those of 5-6 October, emerges as the 'captive' of a 'monstrous' portion of the public rather than as a representative assembly of the French nation. Those declarations which it compels the king to issue as 'royal edicts' are actually, 'at third hand, the polluted nonsense of their most licentious and giddy coffee-houses.' The National Assembly, being 'under the terror of the bayonet, and the lamp-post ... are obliged to adopt all the crude and desperate measures suggested by clubs composed of a monstrous medley of all conditions, tongues, and nations' (p.160). The National Assembly is thus not governing but governed -- subjected to the same popular terror as the king and queen. In these Babel-like clubs all proper distinctions between ranks, languages, and national boundaries are monstrously subverted. Such a dissolution of feudal distinctions leads, in Burke's text, not to better government, but to the terror of the crowd and to radical disorders in political and discursive representation. Given such a situation, where a certain section of the populace have illegitimately usurped power, the National Assembly's role can only be, as we saw in the previous chapter, a theatrical one:

The Assembly, their organ, acts before [the people] the farce of deliberation with as little decency as liberty. They act like the comedians of a fair before a riotous audience; they act amidst the tumultuous cries of a mixed mob of ferocious men, and of women lost to shame, who, according to their insolent fancies, direct, control, applaud, explode them; and sometimes mix and take their seats amongst them; domineering over them with a strange mixture of servile petulance and proud presumptuous authority. As they have inverted order in all things, the gallery is in place of the house (p.161).

All the conventional codes of politics and theatre are 'inverted' here: the electorate direct the elective body,

the audience take their seats upon the political stage and subvert the customary relation between gallery and house. Given this, the Assembly's 'deliberations' cannot be any thing other than a 'farce.' As bad theatre, then, the Revolution perverts both natural and artistic decorum.

(ii) Mr Burke's Magic Lantern Show

Although he represents himself as having been 'at a loss ['at first'] to account for [Price's] fit of unguarded transport,' Burke claims that by taking 'one circumstance' into consideration,

I was obliged to confess, that much allowance ought to be made for the Society, and that the temptation was too strong for common discretion; I mean, the circumstance of the Io Paeon of the triumph, the animating cry which called 'for all the BISHOPS to be hanged on the lampposts,' might well have brought forth a burst of enthusiasm on the foreseen consequences of this happy day. ... I allow this prophet to break forth into hymns of joy and thanksgiving on an event which appears like the precursor of the Millenium, and the projected fifth monarchy, in the destruction of all church establishments (p.165-66).

Thus, for the second time in a few pages, Burke draws on English memories of the fusion of political radicalism and unorthodox religious sects (the Fifth Monarchists, by attempting to overturn Cromwell's parliament and so reduce England to anarchy, had sought to induce the long-awaited Second Coming¹³). Exploiting the emotive power of yet more religious allusions, Burke suggests that Price's congregation, 'in the midst of this joy,' have something 'to try the long-suffering of their faith' (i.e. in waiting for Christ's second appearance):

The actual murder of the king and queen, and their child, was wanting to the other auspicious circumstances of this 'beautiful day.' The actual murder of the bishops,

though called for by so many holy ejaculations, was also wanting. A group of regicide and sacriligious slaughter, was indeed boldly sketched, but it was only sketched. It unhappily was left unfinished, in this great history-piece of the massacre of innocents (p.166).

In this passage Burke reverses the story of Herod, a king who slaughtered the new-born babies of the populace as an unwitting sign of the birth of Christ, by suggesting that what was lacking from the events at Versailles was the final sign of the Second Coming -- i.e. the murder of the king by the populace. By exploiting the affective connotations of sacred texts in this way, Burke therefore participates in the rhetorical 'perversions' and 'prophanities' he condemns.

Burke supports his account of the 'Io Paeon' by referring to 'a letter written upon this subject by an eyewitness' (p.166, see pp.166-68), but for Paine this mention of the call to hang the bishops is the concluding evidence that Burke's account is spectacle rather than history: 'Mr Burke brings forward his bishops and his lantern like figures in a magic lantern, and raises his scenes by contrast instead of connexion' (Rights of Man, p.86). There is further cause, however, to doubt Burke's veracity in his attack on Price since he was soon made aware that the latter claimed, in prefatory remarks added to subsequent editions of the sermon, to have been referring not to the events of 6 October but to the quite different 'triumph' over the king in July. What might have been a mistake in the first edition of Reflections, became a deliberate misreading of the Discourse in ensuing editions; as Boulton notes,

It is of interest to remember Price's rejection of Burke's charge, since it may prove Burke guilty of calculated misrepresentation. Price claimed that his use of the *Nunc Dimittis* referred to the events of 14 July and not 6 October 1789: 'I am indeed surprised that Mr. Burke could want candour so

much as to suppose that I had other events in view.' The protest becomes more damning when Price continues: 'The letters quoted by [Burke in supporting his attack] ... were dated in July 1789, and might have shewn him that he was injuring both me and the writer of those letters' (Language of Politics, p.128, n.2).¹⁴

For Wollstonecraft, this was not a mistake on Burke's part but 'grossly to misrepresent Dr. Price's meaning' -- Burke having chosen 'the mobbing triumphal catastrophe in October ... to give full scope to [his own] declamatory powers' (Rights of Men, p.55 and n.g). Burke's rhetoric here is therefore said to be not simply a self-conscious and politically motivated misreading but an instance of his being swept away by his own oratorical flight. At the same time, however, Wollstonecraft's own representation of the latter event -- as a 'mobbing triumphal catastrophe' -- broadly agrees with Burke's and might therefore be seen as bearing witness to her adversary's 'declamatory powers.'

But that he might have been wrong about the details of revolutionary events would not have worried Burke; he seems not to have been concerned with verisimilitude but with establishing a dominant representation, and such clarity and attention to detail finds no place in his own aesthetic theory of how language works and of how, consequently, to most effectively influence opinion.¹⁵ Reflections, then, emerges as a representation of the Revolution which abandons the 'reflection' theory of representation, relinquishing any direct relation between representation and 'object' or 'event' represented. As Paine puts it, 'it suits his purpose to exhibit the consequences without their causes. It is one of the arts of the drama to do so' (Rights of Man, p.82). That Burke never withdrew or qualified his attack on Price indicates how important it was for him to 'triumph' over the dissenting minister. Burke is not concerned with veracity but with winning the struggle for English opinion; in

Reflections -- which makes very little mention of the fall of the Bastille -- the events of 5-6 October are the Revolution and Burke's case succeeds or fails according to his success or otherwise in persuading the English public to accept his representation of them rather than Price's. To withdraw his attack on Price would have involved withdrawing Reflections itself, because the whole text pivots around this central scene. This is the moment where Burke establishes the horror of the Revolution and the unthinkability of countenancing its imitation in England; everything else in Reflections depends upon this unanswerable attack on the Revolution and the Revolution Society.

Burke's representation of these events is also crucial to his politics and aesthetics, since it enables him to juxtapose the terror of revolution with the vulnerable beauty of the 'natural order of things.' For having established the barbarity of the triumphal procession to Paris, Burke switches attention to the preceding events at Versailles, where, according to his account, the king and queen had been 'forced to abandon the sanctuary of the most splendid palace in the world, which they [the royal family? the mob?] left swimming in blood, polluted by massacre, and strewed with scattered limbs and mutilated carcasses' (p.164).¹⁶ Although 'the king of France will probably endeavour to forget' the events of 5-6 October, 'history, who keeps a durable record of all our acts ... will not forget, either these events, or the aera of this liberal refinement in the intercourse of mankind' (pp.163-64). 'History will record,' and Burke is compelled to relate, that the queen of France was 'startled' from her sleep on the morning of 6 October 1789,

by the voice of the centinel at her door, who cried out to her, to save herself by flight -- that this was the last proof of fidelity he could give -- that they were upon him, and he was dead. Instantly he was cut down. A band

of cruel ruffians and assassins, reeking with his blood, rushed into the chamber of the queen, and pierced with an hundred strokes of bayonets and poniards the bed, from whence this persecuted woman had but just time to fly almost naked ... to seek refuge at the feet of a king and husband, not secure of his own life for a moment (p.164).

In fact, 'history' would record a quite different scene -- one much closer to Paine's corrective account.¹⁷ For, to mention just a few details, the murder of the 'centinel' is a fiction (one which Burke never withdrew, even though it was pointed out to him several times [Language of Politics, p.129]), none of the demonstrators penetrated beyond the queen's anti-chamber, and there is 'no evidence of Marie Antoinette's fleeing "almost naked"' (Paulson, p.60).¹⁸ But Burke's account is fictional in another, more interesting way. For the curious manner in which he presents the last words of the 'centinel' in indirect speech allows him to dramatize an event which, by definition, there were no witnesses to. But Burke claims that he is writing 'history' and so needs to disguise his theatrical techniques; hence the use of indirect speech can at once appear like history (direct speech would have read like melodrama) and yet retain some of the affective power of theatre. And yet that final statement -- 'and he was dead' -- can be read as either an indirect representation of the centinel's last words or as narratorial comment. The succeeding description of his being 'cut down' unambiguously registers the switch back to the narrative voice and, by the temporal logic of narrative, seems to establish that 'he was dead' is a rhetorical flourish supposedly spoken by the murdered man. Yet the very theatricality of that flourish -- these words can only be said rhetorically -- betrays the dramatist at work in the historical account. In fact, those last words -- which, in their direct form, Barthes calls 'a staging of words impossible as such' ('Textual Analysis of Poe's

"Valdemar,"' p.153) -- foreground Burke's strategy through alluding to the most famous stage death of all in which Hamlet says to Horatio 'I am dead' (Hamlet, V, ii, 334). Thus Burke's distinctions between his own historical veracity and the theatricality of revolutionary rhetoric -- a distinction vital to his ideological project -- threatens to collapse.¹⁹

In Paulson's account of this passage, which relies in part on Kramnick's (see Rage of Edmund Burke, pp.151-57), Burke produces this scene through a horror of the event's oedipal connotations which map directly onto his ideological concerns: 'we see Burke opposing a vigorous ("active"), unprincipled, rootless masculine sexuality, unleashed and irrepressible, against a gentle aristocratic family, patriarchal and based on the bonds of love' (p.62). But what Kramnick misses, in Paulson's reading, is that this psycho-ideological motive force is combined, as we have seen, with a use of 'extremely conventional literary elements ... which derive from the polemics of the English Civil War and its aftermath, in which religious enthusiasm leads to the unleashing of sexual drives and/or the overturning of government' (Paulson, p.65). Exactly what the relation might be between psychological trauma and conventional literary elements is left as a problem to be investigated, while oedipal connotations are more easily underlined: 'When you strip the queen, you expose the principle of equality, but you also prove your masculinity in relation to the king (the "father" of his people ...). You pierce the queen's bed "with an hundred strokes of bayonets and poniards" as a surrogate for the queen herself' (Paulson, p.61). Burke therefore exposes his terror here -- but also his delight -- in this re-enactment of a primal scene. But this is perhaps a too beguilingly 'obvious' reading. For if the 'brutal sensuality of the ragged mob derives, of course, from memories of the sexual license traditionally detected under the idealistic claims as the real motivating force

of the radical Protestant sects' (Paulson, p.61), whose 'memories' are referred to? and how are they constructed? If this is a 'traditional' notion, 'generally' held at least by particular sectors of English society, how can we distinguish between Burke's 'trauma,' the effect on his rhetoric of certain ideological clichés, and his own exploitation of those clichés?

But although there might be no evidence of the queen fleeing 'almost naked,' Burke is influenced by, and exploits, an already existing reactionary account of the incident at Versailles. The Times of 13 October reports that 'in the dead of the night a party of the troops and mob forced their way into the Palace to the Antichamber of the QUEEN'S apartment: The noise was so sudden, that her Majesty ran trembling to the KING'S apartment with only her shift on.' The first draft of Burke's central and 'primal' scene is here and in the report of the day before; while Burke was still coolly observing the Revolution and reasoning about its outcome, The Times was preparing the materials for his later 'outburst': 'At this moment, the fate of Europe depends on the actions -- of A BARBAROUS and UNRESTRAINED MOB! -- a mob which has shown itself so licentious, that the country which claims it, blushes at its cruelties. The MURDER of the QUEEN has been attempted in the dead of night' (12 October 1789).²⁰ When he does come to represent the Revolution negatively, Burke simply exaggerates and dramatizes, for the most part, these already histrionic counter-revolutionary reports. In the 'rape' scene, for example, the queen 'in her shift' becomes 'almost naked,' while the assassins get beyond the antichamber and penetrate to the queen's bed chamber -- the structure of Burke's sentence giving the illusion that she is still in her bed as they begin to pierce it with repeated strokes of their weapons. Burke's 'historical record' of 5-6 October emerges, then, as a theatrical scene in which one set of discursive interpretations is put in contest with another.

Reflections reworks not the event itself but a prior representation of that event; rather than undergoing a psychic convulsion, Burke refashions a discursive construction of 5-6 October which is already cast in oedipal figures. However, we will see that the fact that these accounts do exploit oedipal images means that Burke can never fully constrain his own text or the effects it might have.

(iii) The Rise and Fall of Marie Antoinette

Burke's narrative of this day's events seems peculiarly compelled and unsettled by its own figurations. He claims in one moment that 'I knew, indeed, that the sufferings of monarchs make a delicious repast to some sort of palates,' but that there 'were reflexions which might serve to keep this appetite within some bounds of temperance' (p.165). And yet, far from desisting, Burke represents himself to Depont as driven to continue his narrative:

But I cannot stop here. Influenced by the inborn feelings of my nature, and not being illuminated by a single ray of this new-sprung modern light, I confess to you, Sir, that the exalted rank of the persons suffering, and particularly the sex, the beauty, and the amiable qualities [of the French queen] ... instead of being a subject of exultation, adds not a little to my sensibility on that most melancholy occasion (p.168).

Burke's comic irony here should not be allowed to mask the ways this response draws on his aesthetic treatise. In refusing to exult over the fall of the exalted -- the slave's triumph over the master/mistress -- Burke appears to refuse the sublimity of revolution and take refuge in sensibility. In fact, his text 'oversteps the bounds of temperance' in the very moment when it has set those bounds; the impulses of 'the inborn feelings of [his] nature' drive Burke to indulge in the 'appetite' which,

implicitly, offends against 'good taste.' In effect, these passages seem to whet the appetites he condemns. In the famous apostrophe which this 'confession' announces Burke rejoices to hear

that the great lady ... has borne that day (one is interested that beings made for suffering should suffer well) ... and the insulting adulation of addresses, and the whole weight of her accumulated wrongs, with a serene patience, in a manner suited to her rank and race, ... that she feels with the dignity of a Roman matron; that in the last extremity she will save herself from the last disgrace, and that if she must fall, she will fall by no ignoble hand (p.169).

If Burke's inborn feelings 'naturally' present Marie Antoinette's situation in conventional stage images, he presumably relies on readers' own inborn feelings to distinguish these images from the Revolution's perversion of the dramatic arts. Yet the language's very decorum (rape is 'the last disgrace') plays upon the possibility of the queen's rape in the moment it pays her decorous homage (pays court to her). Burke's effect depends upon a shared set of social customs whose violation is calculated, here, to produce universal horror. However, not only are these conventions 'shared' in radically different ways (to the 'lower orders' such an account of the queen's demise might well prove delightful), but Burke's exploitation of the emotive possibilities of rape is perhaps symptomatic of an implicit aggression towards (aristocratic) women operating within decorum itself.

The apostrophe continues with Burke recalling his personal experience of meeting the French queen. As we have noted, his eulogy follows the example of Homer's presentation of Helen, evoking Marie Antoinette's beauty not through minute description but through its effect on himself (which, according to his own aesthetic, is the best way to affect readers):

It is now sixteen or seventeen years since I saw the queen of France, then the dauphiness, at Versailles; and surely never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision. I saw her just above the horizon, decorating and cheering the elevated sphere she just began to move in, -- glittering like the morning star, full of life, and splendour, and joy. Oh! What a revolution! and what an heart must I have, to contemplate without emotion that elevation and that fall! (p.169).

For Boulton, 'the Queen ... embodies some of the fundamentals of Burke's thought,' and the apostrophe concentrates them 'in a memorable literary achievement' (Language of Politics, p.130). It is curious, then, that this literary achievement is rife with puns that may intensify, but may equally puncture, the effect Burke is supposed to aim at, ridiculing the queen and all she stands for. When Burke, elevating his lady, writes that 'surely never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision,' a series of puns compound, or perhaps refract, the effect: 'lighted on' is at once 'landed on' and 'illuminated;' 'this orb' is both 'this earth' and 'this eye;' 'a more delightful vision' is at once an *object* of vision and vision as *perception*. Burke seems to opt for the first of each of these possibilities, producing a comically absurd image, when he continues: 'I saw her just above the horizon, decorating and cheering the elevated sphere she just began to move in, -- glittering like the morning star.' That 'elevated sphere' may be both the social or political sphere of the court and the 'heavenly sphere' -- the second option placing her just above the horizon, like a planet or 'morning star,' the first having her literally 'floating' above the floor of the French court, once domain of the 'sun king.' The then dauphine becomes an alternative source of illumination to the Enlightenment (on the previous page Burke refers disparagingly to 'this new-sprung modern light'); but as a 'morning star' she is also

associated with Lucifer -- the planet Venus (a suggestive allusion) in its matutinal guise, but also the revolutionary protagonist of Paradise Lost. This latter association, curiously enough, is reinforced in an unexpected way: if one of the clearest signs that there has been a revolution in manners in France is that previously 'ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened [the queen] with insult' (p.170), at the conclusion of Satan's revolutionary speech in hell, 'to confirm his words, out flew / Millions of flaming swords, drawn from the thighs / Of mighty cherubim' (Paradise Lost, I, 663-65). (These references to swords leaping from their scabbards and drawn from thighs seem to reawaken the phallic connotations of weapons evoked in the 'rape' scene.)

'Oh! What a revolution!' Burke laments, referring to the political revolution embodied in the overthrow of the queen, but also allowing the planetary dauphine her own celestial change. Burke's pun therefore emphasizes how the revolutionaries' treatment of Marie Antoinette represents the subversion of natural, cyclical patterns of change by violent overthrow or fall -- a revolution which the term 'revolution' was itself undergoing at this historical moment.²¹ Paulson suggests that Burke was the first writer in English to use 'revolution' in its modern sense and that he 'carried the day with his redefinition' (Paulson, p.51). In his eulogy of Marie Antoinette, then, Burke seems intent on pointing up the contrast between the beauties of celestial cycles and the terrors of the French Revolution. Dramatizing his own response, Burke exclaims 'what an heart must I have, to contemplate without emotion that elevation and that fall!' -- having the queen literally 'fall' from her 'elevation' above the horizon/floor. Yet the reference to that 'fall' leads back again to the ambiguous images of rape and suicide -- 'if she will fall, she will fall by no ignoble hand' -- taken from the Roman, Shakespearean, and chivalric stage:

'Little did I dream ... that she should ever be obliged to carry the sharp antidote against disgrace concealed in that bosom; little did I dream that I should have lived to see such disasters fallen upon her in a nation of gallant men, in a nation of men of honour and of cavaliers' (p.169). Burke fantasizes that the queen carries her own 'sharp antidote' against the Revolution's threatened breach of decorum -- a weapon concealed, suggestively, in 'that bosom.' The 'disasters' that threaten her develop both the cosmological and the sexual imagery, yet such 'disasters' were thought to have already 'fallen' upon the queen at the hands of the French court -- Marie Antoinette being rumoured to have taken lovers from among those 'gallant men' and 'men of honour.'²²

Thus these textual tensions in Reflections need to be seen in relation to those discourses of the period in which Marie Antoinette's sexuality was constructed. Reflections decorously excludes these constructions, perhaps because they would complicate the clear-cut distinctions Burke seeks to delineate between revolutionary terror and aristocratic beauty. And yet that exclusion leaves its traces and produces its own tensions. Phillip Francis (who was allowed to see the Reflections as it progressed in manuscript and was, in Burke's opinion, 'the only friend I have who will dare to give me advice' [Correspondence, VI, p.88]) reminds Burke that the 'opinion of the world [about the French queen's virtue] is not lately but has been many years decided' (Francis to Burke, VI, p.86-87). The queen was therefore thought to have already 'fallen' at her own hand long before the Revolution; if she 'will' fall may therefore be read as suggesting that she falls 'willfully.' It is not, then, that the Revolution comes to despoil a chivalric reality but a 'dream' of chivalry. Burke's text -- like Don Quixote -- seems only able to maintain that dream by excluding the sexual intrigue and the implicit fear of women which structures the chivalric code. And yet this

intrigue and fear seem to return uncontrollably within the language of Burke's most chivalric moment, since the courtly apostrophe, couched in the language of decorum, is precisely that moment in Reflections in which Burke's language -- through uncontrolled puns, through the play of *double entendre* and innuendo -- most explicitly exploits, and is exposed to, the radical disjunction between language and 'event' or 'object.' This is necessarily to expose the duplicitous grounds of the 'rococo' ideology and aesthetics being 'celebrated' here.²³ Burke's language reveals itself as an 'inflated' or bombastic prose whose index is precisely the disjunction between the figure he celebrates and the earth she floats above.

In advising Burke, Francis's main apprehension was that the apostrophe to Marie Antoinette might endanger the principal object of Reflections -- which he saw as undertaking 'to correct and instruct another Nation, and ... appeal in effect to all Europe' (VI, p.86). (In this Francis failed to see that Burke's appeal was not to France or to Europe but to England, and that the apostrophe was central to that appeal; his apprehensions allow us to see, however, how Burke's text at once depends upon and is endangered by the eulogy to the French queen.) Because of the high seriousness of this end, Burke ought not to leave himself vulnerable to attacks from 'Doctor Price':

Let every thing you say be grave, direct and serious. ... all manner of insinuation is improper, all jibe and nickname prohibited. In my opinion all that you say of the Queen is pure foppery. If she be a perfect female character you ought to take your ground upon her virtues. If she be the reverse it is ridiculous in any but a Lover, to place her personal charms in opposition to her crimes. ... On this subject, however, you cannot but know that the opinion of the world is not lately but has been many years decided. ... are you such a determined Champion of Beauty as to draw your Sword in defense of any jade upon Earth provided she be handsome? ... The

mischief you are going to do to yourself is, to my apprehension, palpable. It is visible. It will be audible. I snuff it in the wind. I taste it already (Francis to Burke, VI, p.86-87).

Burke responds to Francis by saying that he is 'astonish'd' that he could have thought that Marie Antoinette's beauty, by then 'I suppose pretty much faded,' was his only reason for condemning her treatment at Versailles: 'What, are not high Rank, great Splendour of descent, great personal Elegance and outward accomplishments ingredients of moment in forming the interest we take in the Misfortunes of Men?' (Burke to Francis, VI, pp.89-90). As to the queen's reputation, Burke says that he cannot suspend his 'Natural Sympathies ... until the Tales and all the anecdotes of the Coffeehouses of Paris and of the dissenting meeting houses of London are scoured of all the slander' (pp.89-90). His main object had been 'to excite an horroir against midnight assassins at back stairs, and their more wicked abettors in Pulpits' (p.90), and to 'expose them to the hatred, ridicule, and contempt of the whole world' (p.92). In order to achieve this he had endeavoured 'to interest others' in the suffering of the king and queen in the same way that he had himself given way to the sentiments Euripides had wished to excite in the readers of the tragedy of Hecuba (p.90). In answer to Hamlet's question about why the Player can be so passionate over Hecuba's death (Hamlet, II, ii, 569-70), Burke says

Why because she was Hecuba, the Queen of Troy, the Wife of Priam, and suffered in the close of Life a thousand Calamities. I felt too for Hecuba when I read the fine Tragedy of Euripides upon her Story: and I never enquired into the Anecdotes of the Court or City of Troy before I gave way to the Sentiments which the author wished to inspire; nor do I remember that he ever said one word of her Virtues (p.90).

In effect, Burke is suggesting that sympathy and compassion ought to be aroused not by a consideration of the person's character, nor by the fact that they share the human condition, but by their social and political position, by their 'high Rank, great Splendour of descent, great personal Elegance and outward accomplishments.' These considerations not only outweigh all others, but preclude any enquiry into character or virtue. His unquestioning admiration of and sympathy for the queen of France is therefore emblematic of the attitude he is trying to foster towards political institutions -- which should also be venerated and loved without the kind of enquiry which might strip them of their splendour and discover their defects.

And yet Burke's rejoinder to Hamlet is particularly apposite and revealing. If Burke says that 'the minds of those who do not feel' as he feels 'are not even Dramatically right' (VI, p.90), Shakespeare uses the tragedy of Hecuba in order to discuss the emotive power of drama. In Hamlet's assessment, Hecuba can mean 'nothing' to the Player; that the Player can work himself up into a passion is a 'monstrous' witness (II, ii, 561) of the power of dramatic language to effect human passions in an arbitrary fashion. Hamlet, on the other hand, who has a genuine 'motive and ... cue for passion' (571), can find no 'authentic' means of expressing them because language is always already theatrically prostituted (597-98). While Burke wants to suggest that there is a direct correspondence between our response to suffering in the theatre and in reality, in the passage which he refers to in Hamlet there is an inverse relation. To ask that his readers respond to the suffering of Marie Antoinette as if she were a dramatic character is consistent with Burke's theory of the theatrical nature of political figures and institutions,²⁴ but the particular example he chooses to justify this challenges his argument that there is a correspondence between ('proper') political theatre and

authentic emotions or the natural order of things. More serious still for Burke, however, is that Hamlet's insight into the arbitrary yet powerful effects of words is precisely Burke's own argument in the Enquiry. If Burke allowed himself to dwell upon the consequences of this for his own ideological position he would become as perplexed as Hamlet himself in trying to untangle authentic from inauthentic theatre, constitutional from revolutionary words. That is perhaps why, unlike Hamlet, Burke judiciously avoids and deflects attempts to enquire into the natural order of things.

Since, according to the Enquiry, the most effective way of evoking a woman's beauty and of moving a reader is to represent one's own emotions towards it (no matter that the emotion and the beauty were those of sixteen or seventeen years previously), Burke can answer Francis's criticism of the passage as follows:

I tell you again that the recollection of the manner in which I saw the Queen of France in the year 1774 and the contrast between that brilliancy, Splendour, and beauty, with the prostrate Homage of a Nation to her, compared with the abominable Scene of 1789 which I was describing did draw Tears from me and wetted my Paper. These Tears came again into my Eyes almost as often as I lookd at the description. They may again. You do not believe this fact, or that these are my real feelings, but that the whole is affected, or as you express it, 'downright Foppery' (VI, p.91).

If Burke claims that he is repeatedly affected to tears by his apostrophe to the queen, O'Brien informs us that 'a correspondent of Burke's later reported to him that the passage had been brought to the attention of Marie Antoinette in her captivity: "who before she had read half the Lines she Burst into a Flood of Tears and was a long Time before she was sufficiently composed to peruse the remainder."¹²⁵ If we accept these statements -- and Burke gains no public advantage by lying to Francis -- then we can speculate on the idea that the writing and re-reading

of the apostrophe moved Burke to tears, and that it had a similar effect on its central protagonist when she read of her own suffering. This says nothing, however, about Burke's feelings for Marie Antoinette outside the writing and reading of the apostrophe. In fact it seems that in these passages, Burke is moved by his own rhetoric (just as the Player is moved to tears by his own rendition of a speech about Hecuba) to sentiments quite at odds with those of other discursive moments. For as the editors of Burke's Correspondence point out,

One effect of Burke's contact with the *émigrés* [from France] was to intensify his private criticism, which did not appear in his published works, of the unhappy King and Queen of France. His correspondence shows that his public eulogies of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette were far from representing his true opinion. . . .

Burke's distrust of Marie Antoinette, despite the rhapsody in the Reflections, was profound. He had been touched to know that when the famous passage about her was read to the Queen she burst into a flood of tears, but he shared the prejudices of Coblenz [where the *émigrés* had their headquarters] about her (VI, p.xvi).

Both author and protagonist are therefore affected by the dramatic reproduction of these scenes -- by identifying (like the Player) with the 'part' rather than the 'reality.' Whatever his 'true opinion' or feelings were, Burke interestingly emerges here as a sentimental victim of his own dramatic spectacle; for, despite his attempt to anticipate the question, what is Marie Antoinette to him, or he to Marie Antoinette, that he should weep for her? Like Wordsworth attempting to feel and touch the dread of the September Massacres after the event, Burke seems to have 'wrought upon' himself through the labour of a rhetoric 'conjured up from tragic fictions' (Prelude, 1805, X, 38-82). This, indeed, is the opinion of Burke's first critics; for Paine (echoing Burke's criticism of Price), Reflections is a series of 'tragic paintings by

which Mr Burke has outraged his own imagination, and seeks to work upon that of his reader' (Rights of Man, p.71).

In Reflections, Burke rhetorically asks why he feels so differently to Dr. Price and his flock in order to claim that his own response is a natural one:

For this plain reason -- because it is *natural* that I should; because we are so made as to be affected at such spectacles with melancholy sentiments upon the unstable condition of mortal prosperity, and the tremendous uncertainty of human greatness; ... because in events like these our passions instruct our reason; because when kings are hurl'd from their thrones by the Supreme Director of this great drama ... we behold such disasters in the moral, as we should behold a miracle in the physical order of things. We are alarmed into reflexion; our minds (as it has long since been observed) are purified by terror and pity; our weak unthinking pride is humbled (p.175).

Burke invokes the authority of Aristotle's theory of tragic drama, but he is equally drawing on his own Enquiry. If the aesthetic experience of the sublime is based on a physiological theory, we necessarily respond to the king of France's deposition in the same way Burke does because *that is how we are made*. Such terror ought therefore to inspire us with fear for our own mortality and 'purify' our minds; our passions instruct (or anticipate) our reason, and we are alarmed into reflection. It seems that the second phase of the sublime moment is now indulged in its own right and gleaned for moral instruction (there is no proud flight here but rather a humbling of our pride). But to point to Burke's dramatic metaphors in order to suggest that he is talking about art not nature is to be anticipated by Burke himself. For Burke, there is, or ought to be, no difference between our response to theatre and reality: 'Some tears might be drawn from me, if such a spectacle were exhibited on the stage. I should be truly ashamed of finding in myself that superficial, theatric sense of

painted distress, whilst I could exult over it in real life' (p.175). The difference between theatre and real life is collapsed in the text's very language:

Indeed the theatre is a better school of moral sentiments than churches, where the feelings of humanity are thus outraged. Poets, who have to deal with an audience not yet graduated in the school of the rights of men, and who must apply themselves to the moral constitution of the heart, would not dare to produce such a triumph as a matter of exultation. There, where men follow their natural impulses, they would not bear the odious maxims of a Machiavelian policy, whether applied to the attainment of monarchical or democratic tyranny. They would reject them on the modern, as they once did on the antient stage No theatric audience in Athens would bear what has been borne, in the midst of the real tragedy of this triumphal day; a principle actor weighing, as it were in scales hung in a shop of horrors (p.176).

Burke, then, attempts to ground the proper response to theatre in nature -- in 'the moral constitution of the heart' and in our 'natural impulses.' In a suggestive way, however, the theatre becomes one of the best *schools* 'of moral sentiments;' the moral constitution of the heart knows how to respond to the theatre because it has been schooled there. The difference between good and bad drama, then, can only be decided in theatrical terms, and the appeal to nature can only be an appeal to one school of theatre rather than another. In my discussion of the sublime in Part I, it emerged that the sublime, however much Burke tries to ground it in the physical properties of the object and the physiological make-up of the nervous system, is always a moment of theatre. Indeed, it is a drama that has to be believed in or it may collapse into comedy or madness. What is more, it becomes impossible, in its own terms, to discriminate between the sublime and madness. Burke seeks to secure the possibility of making such a distinction, as he does here, through an appeal to human physiology; yet since the sublime is always already

a labour of metaphor, and since the natural object only becomes sublime through particular kinds of verbal description, then the criteria of sublimity are not physiological but rhetorical. But if, as we have seen, the sublime resources of language derive from its arbitrary relation to ideas and/or to (natural) reality, then the only way of discriminating between genuine and false sublimity is through convention, propriety, decorum. But since these are themselves arbitrary -- the constructions of particular classes used to promote an historically specific hegemony as 'natural' -- then Burke's attempt to distinguish between his own and Price's dramatization of the events of 5-6 October reduces to the question of who controls the criteria.

The ironic aspect of this, however, is that Burke cannot control the effects of his own theatrical account of 5-6 October. Various producing admiration, irritation, laughter (or ridicule), and tears, the effects of Burke's apostrophe -- supposedly the centrepiece of his Reflections and of his political philosophy and aesthetic theory -- thus come to resemble his own representation of the French Revolution's contradictory and incongruous effects. Attempting to deflect the revolutionary urge through contrasting the queen's beauty with the unlicensed terror of the revolutionary mob, Burke's text turns out to be unexpectedly complicit with the exposure of that beauty to that terror. At the same time, Burke exposes himself, or is exposed, as a ridiculous lover of a queen and ideology that are themselves exposed to ridicule through his equivocal overtures.

1. Although Goodwin argues that 'Burke's rejection of the new French model of liberty stemmed partly from his emotional response to the violent excesses of the Paris mobs during the transference of the French court from Versailles to the capital in the October days' ('Political Genesis of Burke's Reflections,' p.345), my own account of this genesis in Chapter 4 shows that it was Price's representation of the October days which triggered Burke's response. Cone's discussion of the 'Challenge to Civilization' which animated Burke broadly agrees with my contention that Burke's response to the events of 5-6 October were far from immediate: 'into November, 1789 [he writes], Burke neither hated nor feared the Revolution' (Age of the French Revolution, pp.289-313 [p.296]).

2. Both Vincent Cronin, in Louis and Antoinette, and Desmond Seward, in Marie Antoinette, show that Marie Antoinette, far from epitomizing the corruption of the *ancien régime*, actually initiated a 'naturalness' and simplicity in the French court. Both argue that her reputation for sexual license was constructed by political intrigue in the French Court.

3. I use the Bakhtinian term 'dialogic' (developed in The Dialogic Imagination) rather than Barthes's 'intertextuality' here not in order to disregard the idea that all texts necessarily refer to other texts without possibility of acknowledgement (Burke's own theory of how language accrues power might be thought of as relying on a notion of intertextuality), but in order to suggest how texts might be more specifically related within a relatively limited series. Volosinov -- who shares Bakhtin's ideas, or who may even have been a pseudonym for Bakhtin -- allows us to see how texts can be orientated as readings of specific prior texts and as anticipating and setting the terms for their being engaged by subsequent texts. Thus a 'printed verbal performance engages, as it were, in ideological colloquy of large scale' (Volosinov, p.95). If Barthes shows us that writing, reading, and textual production is only possible within an intertextual system, Volosinov allows us to develop readings which suggest how texts might be produced by, as well as being interventions within, a specific ideological struggle already inscribed within the discourse of particular historical moments. (For Roland Barthes's discussions of intertextuality see 'The Death of the Author' and 'From Work to Text'.)

4. Barthes uses this term in 'The Struggle with the Angel' as a metaphor for a text's 'breaks' and 'discontinuities of readability' (pp.129-31 and p.140).

5. Barrell suggests that one of the central problems which the eighteenth century faced, given the increasing complexity of society and the specialization of each

individual trade, was the question of whether anyone could be qualified to see or understand society as a whole (An Equal, Wide Survey, pp.17-52). Burke at once adopts this as an argument against interfering with things as they are, and uses it to disqualify those who do not practice (as he does) the 'trade' of government.

6. Barrell shows that custom undergoes a political transformation between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in a way which places Burke's recourse to it in later life in perspective: 'what had been a libertarian watch-word in the seventeenth century came to serve as effectively as a repressive and reactionary one in the eighteenth. The free genius of the English people, expressing itself in the custom of the language, was defined and codified by the grammar and the dictionary, and used as a standard by which future freedoms claimed ... could be shown to offend against the rules by which freedom was protected and confirmed, and so could be shown to be, if you like, unconstitutional' (p.142).

7. 'Hugh Peters (1598-1660), independent minister, and chaplain in the Parliamentary army; at the restoration executed on a charge of concerting the king's death' (O'Brien, p.379, n.8).

8. For Hughes, this passage represents 'an attempt to transform the incidents at Versailles and during the return to Paris into a parodied allusion, but a sacred parody, of Christ's *via dolorosa*, of the Way of the Cross' ('Originality and Allusion in the Writings of Edmund Burke,' p.39).

9. For Paine, Burke's 'account of the expedition to Versailles' employs all the devices of the theatre to produce 'a stage effect' (Rights of Man, p.81); in place of 'Mr Burke's drama' (p.86), Paine offers 'the sober style of history' (p.83), and claims, with some exaggeration, that 'not less than three hundred thousand persons arranged themselves in the procession from Versailles to Paris, and not an act of molestation was committed during the whole march' (p.86).

10. Letter to a Member of the National Assembly (1791), Works II, pp.542-3.

11. Fraternity seems to run counter to the contestual, competitive impulse of the sublime; it disarms the self's defensive isolation, undermining individual vigour in the guise of a beautiful co-operation.

12. For a detailed account of the episode of 5-6 October 1789, see Crowd, pp.61-79.

13. For a brief discussion of the Fifth Anarchists, see Christopher Hill, Century of Revolution, pp.144-45.

14. Boulton quotes from the preface to the 6th edition of Price's Discourse (p.vi). For Burke's use of the letters in support of his attack on Price see Reflections, p.157 n and p.182 n. It should be noted that the first 'triumph' occurred not on 14 July, as Boulton has it, but on 17 July -- the king seemingly being unaware that a 'revolution' had occurred at all on the 14th, writing in his diary, after a day's hunting, '14 July, nothing' (quoted by Cobban, p.150). The king made two 'escorted' journeys from Versailles to Paris in 1789, the first on 17 July 'escorted by fifty deputies' when, on being 'received by the victors at the City Hall,' he 'donned the red, white and blue cockade of the Revolution' 'in token of acquiescence in the turn of events' (Rudé, Revolutionary Europe, p.98).

15. Cone argues that Burke, rather than attempting historical accuracy, was 'faithful to the teaching of the Sublime and the Beautiful, ... [and so concentrated on] the feeling of his readers' (Age of the French Revolution, p.308).

16. For a textual source of these images and incidents, see The Times, 13 and 14 October 1789.

17. See Rights of Man, pp.81-86. At the same time, 'history' has not had much more to go on than Burke, Wollstonecraft, or Paine had. The Châtelet inquiry, published March 1790, 'far from throwing a bright light into dark corners, ... served effectively as a smokescreen to divert attention from the real authors of the October "days".' Although 'fresh light' has been brought to the episode by recent historians it remains 'in some respects, ... more shrouded in mystery than any other similar event of the Revolution' (Rudé, Crowd, pp.61-63).

18. Kramnick cites the eyewitness account of Madame de la Tour du Pin which is at variance with several of the most emotive details of Burke's passage (Kramnick, p.152, referring to Memoirs of Madame de la Tour du Pin, edited by Felice Harcourt (London, 1970), pp.131-37). Hughes reveals how Burke's account of 5-6 October draws on the report in the Gazette Nationale ou Le Moniteur Universel of 12 October 1789, but notes that 'his most brilliant and theatrical touches, the phallic thrusts into the queen's bed and her near naked and hair's breadth escape,' are his own inventions. When he presents the mob's orgiastic defilement of the palace, he actually reverses the Moniteur account, which had referred to the royalists' behaviour in these terms ('Originality and Allusion in the Writings of Edmund Burke,' p.39).

19. Paine perceptively writes that 'Mr Burke should recollect that he is writing History, and not Plays' (Rights of Man, p.72).
20. For a useful though selective collection of the Times's reports of the Revolution, see The Times Reports the French Revolution, edited by Neal Ascherson.
21. 'The original naming of the word ['revolution'] was astronomical, referring in both Latin and the vernacular to the rotation of bodies In his Dictionary (1755) Samuel Johnson was still defining *revolution* in its astronomical sense, and when he turned to its political sense, "Change in the state of a government or country," he connected it to the regularity of all his other senses The basic struggle over the word *revolution* came in the seventeenth century with its trial revolutions/rebellions, each in its way a rehearsal for the great one a century later. The conflict lay between the strictly astronomical sense of repetition, a full circle, and the sense of a single *revolution* as an overthrow, a half-circle, a disruption, and so an irreversible change' (Paulson, pp.49-50). Williams points out that 'Cromwell's revolution was called, by its enemies, the *Great Rebellion*, while the relatively minor events of 1688 were called by their supporters the ... *Glorious Revolution*.' 'Revolution' was thus 'still the more generally favourable word' because the cyclical sense which it carried 'implied a *restoration* or *renovation*' of, rather than a complete break with, traditional authority (Keywords, pp.270-74 [pp.271-72]).
22. For an example of the way such beliefs were constructed, see Seward's account of the affair of the Diamond Necklace, 'A nice little smear of dirt,' in Marie Antoinette, pp.87-107.
23. A recent art historian's celebrations of rococo paintings of women reveals how Burke's aesthetics is implicated within its historical context (and, incidentally, how that aesthetic may still affect the [male] gaze). Women are central to rococo art, and are represented in ways which recall Burke's 'memory' of Marie Antoinette; whereas in Watteau women 'were natural beings, they have become goddesses to the high rococo' (Levey, p.90). In Giovanni Battista Tiepolo's Madonna del Carmelo, the Virgin is 'borne aloft, tall and calm in the heart of the agitation, ... effortlessly [holding] ... the Child -- weightless, equally aerial This concept of woman, which can be disconcerting in religious work, found perfect expression in Tiepolo's profane decorations, where every woman becomes a queen, and queens themselves acquire a new aura' (p.95). But it is in Levey's descriptions of Francois Boucher's work that the parallels with Burke emerge most suggestively: 'His mythological world was more

frankly feminine ... than Tiepolo's; it hardly tries to astonish the spectator, and its magic is no exciting spell but a slow beguilement of the senses, a lulling tempo' (p.103). Just as Burke strips Marie Antoinette, so Boucher strips Tiepolo's women 'to complete nudity, warmed by love or lust;' in The Birth of Venus he blends 'the natural and the artificial to make a completely enchanted scene, exuberant yet relaxed, an aquatic frolic and yet also an air-born, sea-born vision ... [in which] the goddess remains a ravishingly pretty, demure girl, half-shy of the commotion of which she is the centre ... divinely blond and slender, touched with a voluptuous vacancy, a lack of animation, which perhaps only increase her charm' (pp.104-105). The high rococo was to be replaced, by the end of the century, by an art form which emphasized 'education' and 'the dignity of labour' (pp.140 ff.) -- a shift which seems to find its ideological pivot in the exchange between Burke and Wollstonecraft over the events of 5-6 October 1789.

24. For the fullest discussion of this aspect of Burke's thought, see Paul Hindson and Tim Gray, Burke's Dramatic Theory of Politics.

25. O'Brien, Reflections, p.385; see Edward Jerningham to Burke, ante 18 January 1791, Correspondence, VI, pp.203-204 (O'Brien refers to the correspondent as 'Jeringham').

Chapter 6: A Revolution in Manners

The fact that Marie Antoinette could be treated as Burke tells us she was on 6 October in a nation which once tutored all Europe in manners -- that 'ten thousand swords' failed to leap from their scabbards to revenge her insult -- is proof for Burke that

the age of chivalry is gone. -- That of sophisters, oeconomists, and calculators, has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever. Never, never more, shall we behold that generous loyalty to rank and sex, that proud submission, that dignified obedience, that subordination of the heart, which kept alive, even in servitude itself, the spirit of an exalted freedom (Reflections, p.170).

This is a well-known passage and can be used to present Burke as hopelessly anachronistic and quixotic in wishing to resist the advance of capitalism through a return to ancient chivalry. Yet I want to show the ways in which it forms a logical corollary to the eulogy which sets the pattern for Burke's attempt to press into service a whole series of supplementary devices meant to support a traditional order which, Macpherson argues, had been a (landed) capitalist one for a hundred years (Burke, p.63). It should also be remembered that, as Macpherson points out, 'when in one of his flights of rhetoric he inveighed against the age of "sophisters, oeconomists, and calculators" ... [Burke] allowed himself to forget his own quite valid claims as a political economist' (p.5). I would like to suggest, however, that rather than being a moment of deliberate forgetfulness this 'centrepiece' of Reflections may be read as crucially participating in the socio-economic project which Macpherson sees Burke involved in. At the same time, the complexities of the passages which present the invasion of Versailles, the

'triumphal' return to Paris, the eulogy of Marie Antoinette, and the lament for the age of chivalry, show that Burke's project, and his text, are more perplexed and contradictory than Macpherson allows.

(i) Tailoring Tradition: A Terrible Beauty is Born

Burke seeks to impress on his readers that the 'atrocities' enacted at Versailles represent a revolution not only in politics but in manners: 'among the revolutions in France, must be reckoned a considerable revolution in their ideas of politeness' (pp.162-63). This is the 'occasion,' Burke declares, 'of the most important of all revolutions, which may be dated from that day, I mean a revolution in sentiments, manners, and moral opinions' (p.175). This revolution has unsettling consequences for England because

It is not clear, whether in England we learned those grand and decorous principles, and manners, of which considerable traces yet remain, from you, or whether you took them from us. But to you, I think, we trace them best. You seem to me to be -- *gentis incunabula nostrae* [i.e. 'the cradle of our people']. France has always more or less influenced manners in England; and when your fountain is choaked up and polluted, the stream will not run long, or not run clear with us, or perhaps with any nation. This gives all Europe ... but too close and connected a concern in what is done in France (pp.174-75).¹

It is for this reason that Burke begs to be excused for having 'dwelt too long on the atrocious spectacle of the sixth of October 1789' (p.175). We need to ask, therefore, what it is that is so crucial about manners. We saw in Chapter 1 that manners in Burke's late writings may either exalt or debase human beings, and variously 'aid,' 'supply,' or 'totally destroy' morals. Manners are

said, then, to operate in two utterly distinct ways which accord with those of the benevolent and the malign inflexions of the supplement. This distinction is made, as our previous readings of this process might lead us to expect, on the basis of our 'common nature': 'As things now stand,' Burke reflects, 'with every thing respectable destroyed without us, and an attempt to destroy within us every principle of respect, one is almost forced to apologize for harbouring the common feelings of men' (p.175). I want to show, however, that such a distinction breaks down in ways which are endemic to Burke's very attempt to recruit his early aesthetics to serve his late politics.

Submission to 'rank' and submission to 'sex' would appear to be quite different. We have seen that, in Hegel, servitude to the lord is the route to freedom, but this remains unconvincing in an aristocratic context where structures of subordination persist. In Reflections, such a notion of freedom in servitude is endorsed as contributing to the maintenance of social structures rather than being a political force which might challenge them. Servitude to women, however, though part of the chivalric code, is quite at odds with the sexual politics of Burke's Enquiry, which suggests that 'we submit to what we admire, but we love what submits to us' (p.113). If Reflections apparently comes to endorse the chivalric ideal of submission to women and admiring them from a distance, in the Enquiry such behaviour would be a dangerous folly since the love which women are supposed to inspire -- through weakness and flattery -- is quite different to the admiration usually reserved for sublime objects (pp.110-11). In Burke's early aesthetics, the beautiful necessarily submits to the sublime -- indeed, that power relation often seems to constitute those aesthetic qualities. In Reflections, however, submission to rank and sex is said to have once been 'the nurse of manly sentiment and heroic enterprise,' inspiring 'courage

whilst it mitigated ferocity' (p.170). In 1790, then, chivalry is presented as that code of behaviour which harmonizes two aesthetic impulses which were considered incompatible in 1757-59 where, in the presence of the sublime, 'the qualities of beauty [lie] either dead and unoperative; or at most exerted to mollify the rigour and sternness of the terror' (Enquiry, p.157, also see pp.114, 124-25, 160). In Reflections, therefore, Burke's recommendation that the powerful submit to the lovely is quite at odds with what the early aesthetics presents as inevitable power relations. What emerges in Reflections is that members of a chivalric society experience, in 'that proud submission, that dignified obedience,' an oxymoronic and necessarily precarious conflation of the sublime and the beautiful.

By stripping and abusing Marie Antoinette, the Revolution has symbolically cast aside a chivalric code which formed 'the unbought grace of life, [and] the cheap defence of nations,' which 'inspired courage whilst it mitigated ferocity ... and under which vice itself lost half its evil, by losing all its grossness' (p.170). Burke therefore emphasizes how chivalry is both outside the realm of economists and calculators (it is an 'unbought grace') and, as a 'cheap defence,' a bargain they ought not to discard. Distinguishing the character of modern Europe from that of Asia and the antique world,

It was this, which, without confounding ranks, had produced a noble equality, and handed it down through all the gradations of social life. It was this opinion which mitigated kings into companions, and raised private men to be fellows with kings. Without force, or opposition, it subdued the fierceness of pride and power; it obliged sovereigns to submit to the soft collar of social esteem, compelled stern authority to submit to elegance, and gave a domination vanquisher of laws, to be subdued by manners (pp.170-71).

Like beauty in the Enquiry, chivalry (if it is not 'slain' by the sublime) may work to mollify the stern rigour of otherwise terrible political institutions.² Chivalry is offered as a 'noble' egalitarian code which yet maintains distinctions of rank. Although it serves as a defence against the killing of the king and the rape of the queen, chivalry also presents an alternative to the 'unnatural' levelling of revolutionary radicalism: 'It was this opinion which mitigated kings into companions, and raised private men to be fellows with kings.' This is, at first sight, an unabashed attempt to disguise the institutional hierarchy between king and commoner. As such it may be read as a way of maintaining repressive power structures without inconvenient unpleasantness (preventing the 'slave' recognizing his/her own subservience to the sovereign and being driven to revolutionary self-awareness). The 'beauty' of feudal relations may, then, gloss over their political barbarity and ward off potential outbursts of the democratic sublime. Conflicting material, social, or political interests are repressed in favour of a well-mannered harmony (yet those tensions seem to be reproduced in paradoxical formulations such as 'noble equality').

But beauty may also be a defence against or disruptive of a king's dominant power; in some circumstances, it might even be offered as a usurping alternative to an overbearing monarchy.³ For Burke's text here may be read as a masked or unintentional critique of aristocratic structures, since it goes on to describe chivalrous manners as 'pleasing illusions':

All the pleasing illusions, which made power gentle, and obedience liberal, which harmonized the different shades of life, and which, by a bland assimilation, incorporated into politics the sentiments which beautify and soften private society, are to be dissolved by this new conquering empire of light and reason. All the decent drapery of life is to be rudely torn off. All the super-

added ideas, furnished from the wardrobe of a moral imagination, which the heart owns, and the understanding ratifies, as necessary to cover the defects of our naked shivering nature, and to raise it to dignity in our own estimation, are to be exploded as a ridiculous, absurd, and antiquated fashion (p.171).

Whether or not Burke's pleasing illusions may challenge as well as disguise sublime political power, Burke concedes that his socio-political system functions through employing a set of supplements 'necessary to cover the defects of our shivering nature.' Without these 'super-added ideas,' we inevitably 'fall' from dignity in our own estimation, and our 'defects' are exposed for all to see. In King Lear, which these passages seem to allude to, the human being may become 'a poor, bare ... animal' (Lear, III, iv, 109-10), and kings may be treated as 'infirm, weak, and despised' old men (III, ii, 19-20); but whereas, for Lear, this represents an access of knowledge, Burke works to prevent such insights. Burke's 'second nature' -- the basis of his political thought -- emerges as a 'civilizing' supplement necessary to hide and repress unaccommodated nature. This supplement becomes both especially indispensable as a defence against the Revolution and particularly vulnerable to it, since revolutionary thought, in Burke's analysis, undermines the structures of traditional belief and so *exposes* society to the anarchic impulses of our naked nature. This apparently clear-cut distinction between Burke and radicalism becomes more complex, however, in an analysis of the means by which radicalism is supposed to strip the human and political body. In Burke's view, although radicalism proceeds in the name of nature, it does so towards what he regards as unnatural ends -- rendering traditional supplements ineffective through an unremitting use of supplementary artifice. Burke therefore presents himself as involved not in a simple struggle between

second nature and naked nature but between an artifice which has become second nature and an artifice which will destroy it.

One of the 'sub-texts' of Burke's eulogy to the French queen is that a woman stripped reveals an animality 'not of the highest order':

On this scheme of things, a king is but a man; a queen is but a woman; a woman is but an animal; and an animal not of the highest order. All homage paid to the sex in general as such, and without distinct views, is to be regarded as romance and folly. Regicide, and parricide, and sacrilege, are but fictions of superstition, corrupting jurisprudence by destroying its simplicity. The murder of a king, or a queen, or a bishop, or a father, are only common homicide (p.171).

The events of 5-6 October have shown Rousseau's 'nature' in the raw and too close for comfort. It has to be kept at one remove or metaphorized as a 'second nature' by the 'decent drapery of life.' Burke's 'second nature' is the fostering of tradition, a custom which is a costume (both share the same etymology), and a set of habits that are at once habitual responses and items of dress. Being 'furnished from the wardrobe of a moral imagination,' these pleasing illusions are presented as simply the outward garb of an authentic moral order and so quite different from those revolutionary manners and fictions which 'totally destroy' morals. These are the supplementary devices which civilization uses to defend itself whenever nature presses too close -- whenever radical principles reveal themselves as threatening the political body from without and from within. For, in addition to forming a protective barrier against the elements, clothes conceal the body from itself as well as from prying eyes.

Coming as a conclusion to be drawn from the events of 5-6 October, this emphasis on clothing as a necessary supplement works at both a literal and a figurative level.

Burke has the Revolution strip Marie Antoinette because her fate, as the representative figure of the *ancien régime* (she is the aristocratic beauty), graphically illustrates the implications of the Revolution for all the institutions and customs which uphold traditional society.⁴ This analogy between the French queen and the body politic allows Burke to counter Price's Discourse on the Love of our Country by suggesting that 'to make us love our country, our country ought to be lovely' (p.172). Yet 'lovely' describes an *appearance* not necessarily related to the quality of being 'lovable.' Burke's 'loveliness,' then, is explicitly offered as a benevolent rhetorical gesture:

On the principles of this mechanic philosophy, our institutions can never be embodied, if I may use the expression, in persons; so as to create in us love, veneration, admiration, or attachment. But that sort of reason which banishes the affections is incapable of filling their place. These public affections, combined with manners, are required sometimes as supplements, sometimes as correctives, always as aids to law (p.172).

For Burke, then, institutions ought to be 'embodied' in 'persons' in order that they may affect the public in a range of ways theorized in Burke's aesthetic treatise; they work best, Burke implies, if they can be made to seem beautiful or sublime. Yet if such figures *stand for* the nation as the focus of emotional attachment, they also *stand in the place of*, or supplant. Such a negative notion of supplementation is repressed in the relation described between these public affections and the law -- the law is never *displaced* by public affections only 'aided.' Yet this passage admits that the law in itself, without the super-added illusions which foster 'public affections,' is inadequate. The 'defects' which the Revolution would expose might therefore turn out to be those of the law itself, which manifestly cannot justify existing social arrangements without calling in the aid of

chivalric manners. In Burke's representation of revolutionary thought, reason, rather than operating to support public institutions and affections, works instead to undermine them; thus reason is used to supplant those supplements and rhetorical figures which have been found vital to the maintenance of the social order. Since the Enquiry suggests that there is a mutually antagonistic relation between Burke's aesthetics and reason (the sublime depends upon pre-empting reason, while reason makes the sublime appear mere madness), then rational enquiry is fatal to Burke's concept of the state. Although radical reason demonstrates its devastating ability to 'banish' public affections, it is said to be unable to *supply* their place. It therefore supposedly works in the opposite way to manners: reason is a force which works to *supplant* the very means which have been found necessary to *supplement* the law. 'Public affections,' on the other hand, 'combined with manners,' have been found to be benevolent 'supplements' which cooperate with the law in establishing love and reverence for public institutions. In the brave new world of the Revolution, on the other hand, Burke's fear is that society will be deprived of this necessary resource, leaving 'laws ... to be supported only by their own terrors' (p.171). Such is the inevitable result of allowing 'mechanic' reason to go unchecked by nature, since mankind thrives not only by arranging its 'artificial institutions' (p.121) 'after the pattern of nature' (p.120), but 'by calling in the aid of her unerring and powerful instincts, to fortify the fallible and feeble contrivances of our reason' (p.121); thus nature becomes the ultimate resource, the supplement of art and society. Both revolutionaries and conservatives, then, appeal to nature, but the former identify it with reason while the latter oppose it to reason. But the nature which comes, for Burke, to supplement reason is an 'image' of nature (p.120) which has to heal the

irremediable flaw in 'primary' nature. At the same time, however, Burke cannot *admit* that this supplementary nature is not the same as primary nature -- otherwise it would be indistinguishable from the 'bad' supplement. In this way, as in Derrida's reading of Rousseau, the moment when nature itself is called in as a supplement 'is the moment when evil seems incurable' (Of Grammatology, p.147).

The Revolution is figured as terrible because it threatens the beautiful *appearance* of a country, and Burke seeks to employ images of revolutionary terror in order to alarm readers into the reflection that pleasing illusions are essential to political and private life. The Revolution thus emerges, in Reflections, as a kind of costume drama for the instruction and benefit of English spectators. Yet I will go on to show that if the pleasing illusions of beauty work in a supplementary fashion, then a sense of the dangers of supplementation might account for the anxiety variously at work throughout Reflections that the beautiful is somehow *fatal* to the constitution as well as necessary. In Part III, we will see that Burke is driven, in his struggle with a political philosophy which contests the 'natural' ground, to employ the supplement to 'solve' a wide range of interrelated problems which radicalism poses. Throughout this struggle, Burke is forced to distribute the negative and positive connotations or effects of supplementation between constitutional and revolutionary positions, while in each case this problematic labour is repeatedly undermined in ways such as the one we have just traced.

For Chandler, in an idea gleaned from the Enquiry, Burke's late emphasis on habit and custom, as 'second nature,' is paradigmatic of his conservatism and the clue to reading Wordsworth's own 'conservative' poetics and politics (Wordsworth's Second Nature, pp.69-92). But this is to pass over a shift in the valuation of habit and custom between 1757-59 and 1790; for we have seen that both the sublime and the beautiful were *subversive* of the

habits and customs of early eighteenth-century neo-classicism, while 'second nature' is presented in the Enquiry as a state of 'mediocrity and indifference' (p.104), antipathetic to sensations of sublimity and beauty alike. Although the similarity between 'first' and 'second' nature is that both are a state of 'indifference,' they differ in that while 'first' nature is equally prepared for pain or pleasure (its senses are 'open and tender'), the second nature arrived at through use is equally unresponsive to both (p.104). But what was a state of staleness in 1757-59 becomes transvalued in Reflections into the mark of civilization -- a *shield* against the energetic insurrection of the sublime, and precisely that which the sublime threatens. The difference between 1757-59 and 1790 might be summarized as follows: in the Enquiry, Burke pits the sublime (and the beautiful) against the habit and custom which bolsters a reactionary society, whereas in Reflections he pits habit and custom (as the 'true' sublime and beautiful) against the ('false') sublime and beautiful of revolutionary radicalism. Whereas in the Enquiry beauty apparently -- though ambiguously -- comes as a counter to habitual aesthetics, in Reflections it becomes allied to or analogous with custom or the pleasing illusions of life. In the later text, beauty seems less the effect of smooth skin and a gradually varying line epitomized by the exposed neck and breasts of a 'beautiful' woman (Enquiry, p.115), than precisely that which would cover up the human body in order to disguise the basic equality of human beings -- a mode of defence against a sublime, revolutionary energy that would strip social conventions and the queen in one compounded intrusion. Following Rousseau, who claimed to have 'demolished the petty lies of mankind; [and have] dared to strip man's nature naked,'³ radical discourse of the 1790s makes the exposure of institutional defects hidden by costume, customs, and language a political imperative. Burke's response is to

conveniently 'forget' the debilitating effects of habit and custom so meticulously mapped in the Enquiry, in order to make habit and custom the supplement *par excellence* of civilized society -- perhaps because habitual manners are at once under the greatest threat and, paradoxically, one of the most effective means of pre-empting rational enquiry.

It is important to remember that in the Enquiry the sublime and the beautiful are differently valued and figured as men and women are in the eighteenth century. We have seen that, in a fundamental distinction, the sublime is concerned with 'manly' self-preservation, while beauty is a social quality -- especially of the society between the sexes, where it 'excites in the soul that feeling, which is called love' (p.160). But if 'love approaches much nearer to contempt than is commonly imagined' (p.67), beauty is also, in 1757-59, open to contempt: 'where it is highest in the female sex, [beauty] almost always carries with it an idea of weakness and imperfection' (p.110). As we have seen, Burke's articulation of the concepts of the sublime and the beautiful may therefore be read as reinforcing a particular set of power relations: 'There is a wide difference between admiration and love. ... we submit to what we admire, but we love what submits to us' (p.113). Implicit within Burke's delineation of the beautiful, then, is a contempt which is apparently absent in Reflections. We are beginning to see, therefore, the extent to which Burke is here recommending the institutionalization of an aesthetic category which in his earlier treatise is felt to be 'fatal' to the body and the body politic precisely because it disarms opposition and wakefulness. The pleasing illusions Burke recommends in 1790 function, like beauty in the Enquiry, by subduing 'without force or opposition, ... the fierceness of pride and power' (Reflections, p.170, see Enquiry, pp.119-20). In other words, the apparent 'beauty' of this necessary

supplement inevitably carries with it the subtlest of terrors.

In her perceptive reading of Burke's aesthetics Ferguson notes how the beautiful has been neglected in recent discussions of the sublime -- a neglect that parallels Burke's own apparent devaluation of the beautiful in the Enquiry: 'recent discussions ... all but delete the beautiful and present the sublime as functioning in supreme isolation from its companion and counterpoise, the beautiful [while] Burke ... has repeatedly been observed to droop in his discussion of the beautiful' ('Sublime of Edmund Burke,' p.69). (We will see that Ferguson's sub-text here -- figuring the relation between the sublime and the beautiful in traditional 'male-and-female' terms, while Burke's approach to the beautiful renders his prose impotent -- anticipates her argument.) Ferguson cites Martin Price's claim that the sublime marked 'a revolt against the tyranny of beauty' (To the Palace of Wisdom, p.362), but says that he 'failed to elaborate on why one should revolt against beauty,' and that 'the question we must ask of Burke's Enquiry is what is tyrannical about the beautiful, or, why must it be resisted? For we cannot understand the force of the sublime unless we understand what it is an alternative to' (p.69). The problem with Ferguson's answer to her own question, which I will explore at some length, is that, in treating Burke's Enquiry as a self-enclosed system containing a struggle entirely interior to itself, it ignores the historical and political dimensions of the question -- ignores, I would argue, precisely that which the sublime was an alternative to. For, as we saw in Chapter 1, Price does answer the question: historically, the early eighteenth-century 'natural' sublime may be seen as a revolt against the political and aesthetic restraints of neo-classical order embodied in its notion of beauty (an aesthetic which Burke's early concept of the beautiful also departs from). Ferguson ignores this context in

order to read Burke's sublime as a resistance not to neo-classical beauty but to his own, what Wollstonecraft calls 'gothic,' beauty (Rights of Men, p.10). Nevertheless, Ferguson's speculations have important resonances for the relation between the sublime and the beautiful in the Enquiry and in Reflections. In her reading, Burke's beautiful is that which actually poses a more dangerous threat to the self than the sublime: 'For the beautiful ... figures in the Enquiry not just as the domestic and social or as that which submits to us, it is also the deceptive *par excellence*. In the case of the sublime, Burke says, "we are forced," while with the beautiful, "we are flattered into compliance"' (p.75, Enquiry, p.113).

In countering claims that the Revolution might be beautiful, Burke's appeal to an array of pleasing illusions introduces an aspect of the beautiful in the Enquiry which makes it both serviceable for his project in 1790 and potentially disruptive. If beauty is the 'deceptive *par excellence*,' it may seem apt for ideological manipulation, but it might also deceive those who seek to employ it. I would like to suggest that Burke's discursive struggle, with his own aesthetics as well as with the Revolution, might therefore be seen as organized around an anxiety about the beautiful which has haunted European culture at least since its collective childhood stories about witches and beautiful princesses. Spenser's Faerie Queene offers an influential example which weaves together a number of historical and cultural strands which are still operative for the Revolution controversy. As in all tales of chivalry, beauty is associated with truth and is embodied in the figure of a woman. Una's appearance and very name establish her lack of duplicity, her virtue and univocality, and bear witness to a motivated relation between appearance and reality. But that model of beauty is haunted by the fear that it might be a pleasing illusion, that there might not be a natural relation between beauty and truth, and that beauty

might be synonymous with deception; the horror for Spenser's chivalrous hero is that Duessa's appearance may be indistinguishable from Una's. This means not only that the Red Cross Knight can make mistakes and be led towards death without being aware of it, but that the appearance of Una herself might mask ugliness, duplicity, and evil. A 'nostalgia' for the age of chivalry is interesting in several ways here, for that age was imagined as an era when a *man's* word was his bond -- when there was supposed to be a motivated relation between speech, or at least certain oaths or vows, and idea or intention. But it was also when a man would be a 'vassal' to, and all his 'heroic' deeds would be done *for* (to win), *but not in the presence of*, a 'lady.' But the code also includes the notion that the lady's appearance and/or glance might disarm the knight more effectively than any male opponent -- that her presence would be *more dangerous than* heroic contest with another knight (in which, as in Hegel's master-slave confrontation, the young male could prove himself and earn a name). Apparently an attempt to win a lady's favour, the quest thus emerges as a strategy of avoiding the lady's 'unmanning' presence in order to achieve 'manhood' through heroic exploit. Fear of the negative, 'castrating' power of beauty is therefore inscribed within those codes which seem most devoted to the beautiful. Burke's celebration of 'heroic enterprise' in Reflections might therefore refer less to deeds done for the lady than in retreat from her.

Ferguson's first example of the disturbing effects of the beautiful comes from one of the most famous passages on beauty in Burke's aesthetic treatise:

Observe that part of a beautiful woman where she is perhaps the most beautiful, about the neck and breasts; the smoothness; the softness; the easy and insensible swell; the variety of the surface, which is never for the smallest space the same; the deceitful maze, through which the unsteady eye slides giddily,

without knowing where to fix, or whither it is carried (Enquiry, p.115).

The eye -- and the 'I' -- is deceived, destabilized, sliding giddily and carried away without a place to stand firm; beauty offers no resistance, it seduces without arousing force or opposition and presents no friction against which the 'I' might test itself; it gives the 'I' no place upon which to 'fix' and leaves it unable to locate itself, unable to tell 'wither it is carried.' Beauty's threat to the 'I' is indicated by 'an inward sense of melting and languor' (Enquiry, p.149), or what Ferguson calls 'bodily entropy' (p.75). Ferguson's discussion of one of the Enquiry's examples of this dissolution of strength is perhaps the most significant of all for my present purpose: 'the Trojan War itself,' she notes, referring to Burke's observation that Homer makes his Greeks sublime and his Trojans beautiful, 'appears in illustration of beauty's disastrous consequences not only for the body but for the body politic as well' (p.75). Helen's beauty is 'fatal' (Enquiry, pp.171-72) to the Trojans (who present an exemplary warning to all political states) not merely because her residence in Troy draws the avenging Greeks but, Ferguson argues, because 'the danger in beauty is that its appearance of weakness does not prevent its having an effect, which is always that of robbing us of our vigilance and recreating us in its own image.' Ferguson concludes that,

After the beautiful has been joined with physical and political entropy issuing in death, the importance of the sublime in exciting the passions of self-preservation becomes apparent. For although the sublime inspires us with fear of our death, the beautiful leads us towards death without our awareness (p.76).

The beautiful therefore appears as the most dangerous of 'infections' for the body and the body politic. In the Enquiry, Ferguson remind us, 'the sublime acts as the

antidote to the dissolution produced by the beautiful' (p.76). This is because the sublime, as we have seen, produces a *tension* in the fibres: 'The best remedy,' Burke writes, 'for all these evils is exercise or labour; and labour is a surmounting of *difficulties*, an exertion of the contracting power of the muscles' (Enquiry, p.135). Beauty's most pernicious quality of all, however, is that, as I suggested in Chapter 1, if it operates by arousing or offering no sense of difficulty or resistance, then it gives the sublime nothing upon which to exercise itself or labour.

If, as Ferguson points out, 'all [the sublime's] strivings [in the Enquiry] follow the dictates of the work ethic' (p.76), then it seems appropriate less to heroic than to bourgeois enterprise. We need to ask of Reflections, then, if its celebration of chivalry represents a rejection or a masking of capitalism. Wollstonecraft assumes the former and, in attacking Burke in terms drawn from an acute reading of his early treatise, reveals her own political allegiances; she seeks to replace what she describes as a 'beauty [which] relaxes the *solids* of the soul as well as the body' with a virtuous beauty 'which necessarily implies exertion' (Rights of Men, pp.115-16). I wish to dwell on Wollstonecraft's critique of Burke because it illustrates the importance of reading Reflections through Burke's early aesthetics and underlines the ideological implications of the shifts his aesthetics undergoes. Addressing Burke directly, Wollstonecraft claims to 'hold up the glass which will shew you your partial feelings' (p.34), and to 'shew you to yourself, stripped of the gorgeous drapery in which you have enwrapped your tyrannic principles' (p.88). When she writes that 'truth, in morals, has ever appeared to me the essence of the sublime; and, in taste, simplicity the only criterion of the beautiful' (p.2) she at once rewrites the sublime and the beautiful and claims ~~them~~ for radical ends; this enables

her to implicitly point to the 'defects' of Burke's 'theatrical attitudes' and 'sentimental exclamations' which 'cover a multitude of vices' (p.5). Following Burke but transvaluing his assessments, political forms are associated with aesthetic categories: 'Liberty, in [its] simple, unsophisticated sense, I acknowledge, is a fair idea that has never yet received a form in the various governments that have been established on our beauteous globe' (p.8). Wollstonecraft perceives that 'respect and love are antagonist principles' in the Enquiry, but suggests that in a society in which liberty and equality flourished, 'experience [might] prove that there is a beauty in virtue, a charm in order, which necessarily implies exertion' (pp.115-16). Should this take place, and she looks forward with optimism to the achievements of the National Assembly, 'a depraved sensual taste may give way to a more manly -- and melting feelings to rational satisfactions' (p.116). In contrast, Burke's pleasing illusions, which blind citizens to a country's defects, 'are gothic notions of beauty' -- an 'ivy' which, although it might be 'beautiful,' parasitically undermines what it adorns: 'when it insidiously destroys the trunk from which it receives support, who would not grub it up?' (p.10). The system of manners and habitual, unthinking affections towards traditional institutions which Burke recommends in Reflections are, in a re-examination of the Enquiry, the very things which are most dangerous to human and political constitutions: 'those who, born in the lap of affluence, have never had their invention sharpened by necessity are, nine out of ten, the creatures of habit and impulse,' and are therefore unfitted for 'self-preservation ... the first law of nature' (p.28). It is not blind habit which raises us above the brutes, but the exercise of reason, which can only be acquired through exertion (pp.70-71, p.77).⁴ Her emphasis on reason as the most important faculty in directing human affairs means that the society she envisages is a meritocracy rather

than an aristocracy: 'those men who are obliged to exercise their reason have the most reason, and are the persons pointed out by Nature to direct the society of which they make a part, on any extraordinary emergency' (pp.96-97). Above all, for Wollstonecraft, 'the exercise of our faculties is the great end' (p.29); truth should be demonstrated by reason, 'and not determined by arbitrary authority and dark traditions, lest a dangerous supineness should take place' (p.37). In fact, the debilitating effects of the very system Burke wishes to perpetuate are already to be seen in young men and women of fashion (pp.47-49), in 'the noble families which form one of the pillars of our state' (pp.51-52), in the sexual behaviour of husbands and wives (pp.52-53), and in the language of contemporary discourse (pp.64-66). In Rights of Woman (1792), Wollstonecraft focuses these insights in the realization that the problem with Burke's late aesthetics, as with aristocratic culture generally, is concentrated in its construction of the feminine: if Burke sees the events of 5-6 October as initiating a 'revolution in sentiments, manners, and moral opinions' (p.175), Wollstonecraft counters by urging that 'it is time to effect a revolution in female manners ... and make them, as a part of the human species, labour by reforming themselves to reform the world' (Rights of Woman, p.132).

Given that Burke seems to realize the political danger of his notion of the beautiful in 1757-59, it is curious that he should defend it in Reflections -- where Paris and Marie Antoinette seem figured as contemporary equivalents of Homer's Troy and Helen. It seems clear that, despite his eulogies, France's *ancien régime* is far from embodying Burke's political and aesthetic ideals -- its system seems, in fact, according to the principles developed in the Enquiry, precisely that most calculated to endanger the political organism. For the last example Ferguson discusses of the pernicious effects of the

beautiful seems to link what Burke fears in 1757-59 with what he uses as a mode of defence in 1790:

to Burke it must have seemed no accident that Satan's initial sublime overstatement [in his attempt to deceive Eve] aroused Eve's suspicions as his later chivalrous politeness did not. For in the terms of Burke's account, a paradigmatic instance of the beautiful must certainly be Genesis 3:4: 'And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die,' in which the mere ordonnance of the words converts an outright lie into the kind of polite deceit upon which Burke's version of social discourse sustains itself (p.77)

Transforming Burke himself into a chivalrous satanic figure, what Ferguson's acute reading glides over is the difference in positions between the Enquiry and Reflections. For while Ferguson argues that, in the Enquiry, the beautiful is 'the arena of custom' (p.72), my own reading of Burke's treatise has dwelt on its claims that 'beauty is so far from belonging to the idea of custom, that in reality what affects us in that manner is extremely rare and uncommon' (Enquiry, p.103). Burke therefore raises the deceitful -- that which undermined neo-classical ideas of reason and virtue -- into the necessary habit of the political system he seeks to defend. That this is what he does, however, does not fully explain why he should either defend the *ancien régime* in the first place, or why he should do so in this particularly hazardous way.

Taking it for granted, for the moment, that he has to defend the *ancien régime*, Burke's most immediate problem is radicalism's presentation of its manners as artificial and corrupt. This problem is compounded in that, as we will see, Burke apparently shares this view. And yet he is driven to extol aristocratic manners, otherwise his position becomes indistinguishable from his revolutionary opponents. The *ancien régime* is therefore presented as itself corrupting good manners, the principles of which

remain basically sound. And yet Burke continually struggles to distinguish this perversion of manners (characteristic, in different ways, of both the *ancien régime* and the Revolution) from those manners which are intrinsic to the aristocratic system. In this way, that which would cover up the 'defects' of aristocratic society becomes discomfotingly similar to its most pernicious characteristic.

If Burke, in 1790, has recourse to a customary beauty in order to ward off the revolutionary plague, then that *pharmakon* is, in terms drawn from his own aesthetic treatise, perhaps the most dangerous remedy he could have chosen. And yet, again in his own aesthetic terms, since what Burke wishes to prevent above all is rational enquiry into traditional social structures, there could have been no more apt prescription than a mixture of custom and beauty, each of which dampens and disarms both reason and the sublime. At the same time, in the strange logic we are unravelling here, it is precisely the sublime which, in the *Enquiry*, is an antidote to the subtle threat which the beautiful imposes. What had been the antidote in 1757-59 becomes the infection in 1790, and conversely the earlier infection transmutes into the later antidote. Burke would not have been surprised by such a diagnosis, since it is crucial to his argument that the efficacy of political measures could not be predicted independently of 'circumstances.' This is precisely the error which led to the French Revolution:

What a number of faults have led to this multitude of misfortunes, and almost all from this one source, -- that of considering certain general maxims, without attending to circumstances If we do not attend scrupulously to . . . these, the medicine of to-day becomes the poison of to-morrow. . . . see the consequences of not attending to critical moments, of not regarding the symptoms which discriminate diseases, and which distinguish constitutions, complexions and humours the potion which was given to strengthen the

constitution, to heal divisions, and to compose the minds of men, became the source of debility, phrensy, discord, and utter dissolution' (Letter to a Member of the National assembly, Works, VI, p.57).

Yet this appeal to 'circumstances' seems analogous to Puttenham's recourse to 'decorum' which we met with in Chapter 2, and brings with it a set of contradictions akin to those which it is brought in to resolve. Thus Burke, caught in a characteristic bind, tries to dissociate the double effect of the beautiful into benevolent and dangerous supplements; the pleasing illusions of life are separated out from that kind of beauty which, he perceived, held the greatest threat of all to the state. The difference between them is at once absolute and contingent, discernible only to those fully versed in the diagnosis of circumstances. But despite all precautions, the *pharmakon* he chooses -- and he could have chosen no other -- is precisely that which most endangers the system he endeavours to protect. Thus Burke's text is at once reactionary and revolutionary -- at once the remedy and the poison of the *ancien régime*.

(ii) The Sublime as a Risqué Joke

From the previous discussion, it would seem that Burke could not but be ambivalent towards the *ancien régime*, and especially towards Marie Antoinette who becomes its aesthetic embodiment. He presents the civilized subject as recoiling from the queen's 'rape,' and yet his text seems fascinated by it and dwells, as it were, over the queen's 'almost naked' body. But whether or not the ambiguities of the rape scene dramatize his own oedipal and political ambivalences, its effect may be theorized both as a moment of terror, produced by images of the usurpation of a king and the rape of a queen, and as an

obscene joke shared by male protagonists over the abused sexuality of a woman; for as Kramnick observes,

When the Jacobins uncover the particular nakedness of the queen, they discover the principle of equality. . . . Contemplating the naked queen is to penetrate all the mystery of the aristocratic principle. In discovering that in her nakedness Marie is but a mere woman, Burke joins Jacobin ideology to the crudity of an obscene joke. 'On this scheme of things, a king is but a man, a queen is but a woman; a woman is but an animal, and an animal not of the highest order' (Kramnick, p.153).

But it might also be that Burke joins with or even scripts Jacobin ideology's breach of taste in the telling of this 'obscene joke.'⁷ If to strip the queen is to 'expose the principle of equality' as well as to prove one's 'masculinity in relation to the king,' the revolutionary urge combines the transgression of sexual and social boundaries. But if, as we have seen, it is not the revolutionary 'mob' but Burke's text which strips the queen, then this passage both describes and enacts the 'revolutionary' moment, both recoils in horror from, and actively engages in, the penetration of those mysteries which maintain aristocratic distinction.⁸ And in doing so, it repeats or, more precisely, initiates, the queen's -- and the king's -- humiliation. For although we have seen him suggest that 'the king of France will probably endeavour to forget these events' (p.163), Burke's seemingly impersonal 'history' re-exposes -- and at the very least exaggerates -- that which the king would forget. The text that seeks to condemn the Revolution in fact produces a scene which itself enacts the revolutionary impulse; Burke's passage lingers voyeuristically over the woman it strips, and itself pierces her bed 'with an hundred strokes.' Reflections therefore emerges as less a representation of the Revolution than the textual production of a revolution which it itself imagines and stages.

The passage therefore combines, in a structure similar to that which Freud identifies in the 'dirty joke,' obscenity and aggression towards a woman made unavailable through social constraints.⁹ But if the effect of such a joke, which seeks to expose the woman's sexuality, depends, as Samuel Weber puts it, upon a 'voyeuristically inclined third person, "corrupted" (*bestochen*) by the promised "gift" of pleasure,' then Burke's reader becomes positioned as that third person, and the inhibited seduction of the woman is redirected as an attempt to produce laughter in the reader -- the 'other man' who 'embodies the moral code and its interdictions' (Legend of Freud, p.102, p.104). The rivalry between the first and third person is therefore 'replaced by a kind of complicity in which the aggressive tendency is displaced onto "the female," who remains inaccessible' (Weber, p.104). That complicity which Reflections establishes here, between Burke and his readers, has strange affinities with the supposed actions of the revolutionary 'mob.' Burke may even be read as entering into complicity with his radical readers' aggression towards the female emblem of aristocratic society. The reactionary position, in its treatment of women, therefore turns out to be curiously similar to its own representation of revolutionary transgression. Once again, those devices of recoil also register an attraction, and that which strives to turn readers away from the Revolution seduces them into a *complicity* with it.

For Weber, this shift from rivalry to complicity 'is also the structural "resolution" of the Oedipus complex.' But, as he says, 'whether this implies that the dirty joke is oedipal in structure, or conversely, that the Oedipus complex is a "dirty joke," is a question that will hardly permit a univocal response' (Weber, p.108). But who laughs at the oedipus complex? Certainly not the father (who, in Weber's analogy, is the 'third person' who embodies the moral code), and certainly not the king in

Burke's anecdote -- for the joke is 'on' the king (as Burke repeatedly stresses): 'I hear that the august person, who was the principle object of our preacher's triumph ... felt much on that shameful occasion' (Reflections, p.168). I have suggested that if anyone might laugh it is the listener-reader; for this passage, like much of Burke's late rhetoric, prompted a wide variety of response. But it may be that a person's response -- whether laughter, tears, or anger -- might be unforeseeable, for as Freud says, laughter cannot be predicted; the teller takes a certain risk that the joke might fail -- that the burst of laughter will not arise (Jokes, p.204). Or the converse might be possible in this case -- the tale of terror might be read as a joke and might therefore, unexpectedly, produce laughter, pleasure, or delight. Terror may always induce the sublime -- or the sublime might always involve the risk of operating as a joke. For if, as Weber writes, the success or failure of a joke depends on momentarily breaching a set of shared social inhibitions and conventions, the joke is situated (like the sublime itself) in an ambiguous relation towards 'custom' -- at once dependent upon and disruptive of tradition -- at once, and unpredictably, 'reactionary' and 'revolutionary.'¹⁰ As such, the joke shares the political ambiguities of the 'carnival': 'In producing laughter,' Weber writes, 'the joke thus represents a collective if temporary transgression of shared prohibitions. Jokes therefore are always specific to certain groups, which may be more or less extensive, but which are never simply universal' (Weber, p.110).¹¹ For these reasons, Freud's 'discovery' might be read as a theory of the socially determined formations of rhetoric, rather than of the neurotic turns of a personalized 'unconscious.'

If Burke's passage has a similar structure to the dirty joke or to the carnival, who is it, again, who laughs? Or if there is any delight in this terror, whose is it, and on what does it depend? For if Burke's

'oedipal scene' is more of a dirty joke that fails to provoke laughter, its politicized form and content yet allow for a revolutionary delight in the exposure of the queen and humiliation of the king. And that delight depends precisely on the social and political inhibitions which Burke defends and which the bulk of his anecdote plays upon. For, as we have seen, it is the *institutional majesty* of the royal couple, and the consequent *untouchable beauty* of the queen, which form the particular social 'set' of this narrative; these customs and pleasing illusions condition both the reactionary horror and the 'revolutionary' delight. This is not, however, to speculate upon Burke's 'real' or 'covert' intentions; the present analysis suggests that it is this scene's *structure* and *effects* which are contradictory and unpredictable, regardless of what Burke was actually trying to do. Burke's scene may be read as at once reactionary and revolutionary -- as both a tale of horror calculated to arouse indignation, and as a tendentious joke potentially arousing laughter. For, while neither effect can be calculated in advance, the forms and social conditions are the same for both.

Burke's tale of horror which unexpectedly produces delight, may also be read as a joke which rouses not laughter but indignation. Weber asks an important question about the joke which has intriguing consequences for the way we might read Wollstonecraft's response to the passages in Reflections which accrue around the account of 5-6 October: 'In what way does he [the third person, the addressee of the joke] participate in the Schaulust [the desire to see], and to what extent is he exposed to, or by, the joke? And what if this "he" were a "she"?' (Weber, p.111). I suggest that both Wollstonecraft's *Vindications* may be read, if not as 'participating' in Burke's particular *schaulust*, at least as being significantly shaped as responses to the way the Reflections strips the queen. Wollstonecraft's texts

contend with and attempt to overturn Burke's narrative precisely through a rhetoric of stripping away the oppressive customs and costumes through which the old order is thought to imprison its subjects (particularly women). As a 'third person feminine,' Wollstonecraft deflates Burke's irony by making it literal, agreeing with it, and turning it back upon its teller: 'On this scheme of things,' she quotes, noting Burke's irony, but adding her own emphasis, 'a king is but a man; a queen is but a woman; a woman is but an animal, and an animal not of the highest order.' However, for Wollstonecraft, women's animality is not anatomical but cultural; this is 'all true, Sir,' she counters, 'if she is not more attentive to the duties of humanity than queens and fashionable ladies in general are' (p.54). For Wollstonecraft, then, fashionable manners, by displacing morals, reduce women to animals, whereas for Burke, women need such customs and costumes to conceal their animality. The joke thus rebounds back on Burke and his politics (the teller is exposed by his own aesthetics): 'fashionable ladies' -- ladies constituted through fashion and emblematic of Burke's 'beautiful' ideology -- are indeed, she suggests, animals 'not of the highest order.' Although Wollstonecraft's reading recognizes the 'non-sense' of Burke's rhetoric, it takes seriously its historical moment and political implications. Her response is to ridicule Burke, but her very passion -- 'I glow with indignation' (p.9, also p.5) -- seems indicative that her text is deeply *affected* by Reflections. Burke's narrative of the events at Versailles seems, then, to combine the tendentiousness of the dirty joke with the paradoxically enabling effects of the 'shaggy-dog story' -- one of which is to coerce the listener-reader to channel the indignation it produces 'by resolving to become a storyteller' in turn (Weber, p.114, quoting Jokes, p.190). Wollstonecraft is therefore spurred to tell a different story, one which aggressively rewrites Burke's, wrestles

with his politics, exposes his manipulations of his own aesthetic categories and, most breathtakingly of all, radically reworks and transvalues those categories for an alternative politics. Wollstonecraft's strategies are concentrated in a joke at Burke's expense: 'Judgement is sublime, wit beautiful; and, according to your own theory, they cannot exist together without impairing each other's power. The predominancy of the latter, in your endless Reflections, should lead hasty readers to suspect that it may, in a great degree, exclude the former' (p.142). Burke, then, unwittingly provides the formula for his later condemnation by suggesting that 'a perfect union of wit and judgement is one of the rarest things in the world' (Enquiry, p.17).

(iii) Cross-Dressing and Disrobing: Undoing Differences

If the decent drapery of life seems to soften but also maintain often brutal hierarchies, the disrobing intrusions of revolutionary thought reveal for Burke not simply an anatomical equality between ranks but a frightening difference between the sexes. In Burke, revolution leaves the king a man, but the queen's 'fall' -- from queen to woman, to animal, to animal not of the highest order -- is much more precipitous and disturbing. Burke's unspoken assumption seems to be that clothes make the woman -- that a woman is always in need of supplementation in order to raise her nature from beneath to beyond the human. Yet the interrelated social system of supplements -- codes, manners, customs, costumes -- which guarantees her 'womanhood' is at the same time that which points to woman's ungovernable instability in the aristocratic patriarchal order. But although Marie Antoinette's 'fall' becomes an analogue for the vulnerability of the *ancien régime*, it is not immediately clear why the removal of her clothes should not simply

reveal her as a woman rather than transforming her from more to less than human. Such a 'fall' is precipitated within and by Burke's text -- for if she is stripped within that text, it is there too that she is at once eulogized and made into an animal. I will demonstrate that, rather than being accidental, the queen's fate in Reflections is already implicit within Burke's aesthetics and within his chivalric text. For the implications of the queen's fall are most powerfully realized by juxtaposing it with the other references to women which cluster around the description of 5-6 October. Two very different ranks of women are given roles in this scene -- the 'celestial' queen of France and a mob of women variously represented as the squaws of 'American savages' (p.159), 'women lost to shame' (p.161), and 'the furies of hell' (p.165).¹² If the chivalric code necessarily refers only to the *ladies* it constitutes, it is thus based on the *exclusion* of those women who, through reasons of class, race, manners, or appearance, do not fit the code. There is no place, in Burke's aesthetics and politics, for the disturbingly 'masculine' women who led the queen and king in 'triumph' from Versailles. If, as Paulson suggests, these women 'in effect are the Revolution' (p.81), they seem the very antitype, politically and aesthetically, of Marie Antoinette. Yet it might be that this exclusion depends upon the erasure of that within the 'lady' which precisely relates her to those other women and so cuts across the differences in rank which Burke seeks to maintain.

This possibility can be explored by re-examining Burke's account of the Versailles incident precisely in terms of gender and dress. George Rudé's modern discussion of the episode shows that in the days leading up to the march to Versailles 'it was [the women] rather than the men that played the leading role in the movement' (Crowd, p.69): 'As they set out, in the early afternoon,' he tells us, quoting a contemporary account, 'they ...

compelled every sort and condition of woman that they met -- "même des femmes à chapeau" -- to join them' (p.75). The detail of dress is important because it signals that there were aristocratic women -- or at least women dressed like aristocrats (prostitutes also dressed in high fashion) -- taking part in the march. The revolutionary movement therefore involves, undecidably, either a real collusion of the classes, or a transgression of the differences between them through the exploitation of sartorial conventions. The Times of 10 October 1789 reports that the women of Paris, under fear of famine, 'have even taken up arms, some with bludgeons, some with firelocks, and are hourly joined by large numbers of their sex.' It further reports (on 12 October) that most of the crowd that marched to Versailles were 'chiefly Fisherwomen,' but that many of those who forced their way into the palace were guards 'habited in women's dresses.' Although Natalie Z. Davis writes that such a disguise was 'surprisingly frequent' in riots and rebellions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, her account of its advantages make it seem not at all surprising. Such a disguise served the practical purpose of concealment, released men from full responsibility, and exploited 'the sexual power and energy of the unruly woman and ... her license (which they had long assumed at carnival and games) ... to tell the truth about unjust rule' (Society and Culture in Early Modern France, pp.147-50).

In Reflections, however, there are yet more subversions of differences in this intriguing moment and movement. For Burke's text refers not simply to 'masculine' women, but to 'furies of hell, in the abused shape of the vilest of women' (my emphasis). It is not only that men may have assumed the garb of women, or even that women have taken on the attributes of men, but that it becomes no longer possible to tell the difference -- no longer possible to assign a fixed gender to either of the revolutionary sexes. These fiendish beings might be women

with an 'abused' shape brought on by 'unfeminine' labour or 'masculine' behaviour, but they might equally be men making use of -- i.e. 'abusing' -- women's 'shape' for disguise. There is no telling what one would find if these 'furies from hell' were stripped of their garb -- an anxiety perhaps registered in Burke's emphasis on their 'infamous contumelies' (not only their insulting language, but their insolent swellings or tumescence). For what seems to disturb Burke is not only that these 'women' do not adopt the pleasing illusions that aristocratic ladies clothe and paint themselves with, but that the garb they do wear, and their behavioural habits and mannerisms, have neither a 'natural' nor a traditional relation to their gender. The revolutionary mob disrupts, at one and the same time, the neat hierarchy between men and women and the stability of social signs -- disrupts, that is, Burke's aesthetics and politics in one and the same moment. Indeed, this is brought out in Burke's reference to those 'women lost to shame' who 'direct, control, applaud, [and] explode' the members of the National Assembly 'and sometimes mix and take their seats amongst them' (p.161). These unrepresentable women (women did not have the vote even in revolutionary France) shamelessly transgress the proper distinction between the people and their representative assembly; by not keeping to their place they emblematically unsettle representative structures *per se*.

Burke, of course, makes great efforts to distinguish Marie Antoinette -- his embodiment of aristocratic ideology, aesthetics, and womanhood -- from what even Wollstonecraft calls 'the lowest refuse of the streets, women who had thrown off the virtues of one sex without having power to assume more than the vices of the other.'¹³ That the virtues and vices characteristic of each gender and class may be thrown off or assumed in this way suggests that they function more like clothes than natural properties.¹⁴ But, curiously enough, when she is

stripped of the clothes that seem simply to mark her distinction -- when bereft of all 'the decent drapery of life' -- the queen turns out to be 'but a woman,' and therefore, in Burke's book, 'an animal not of the highest order.' In some uncanny way, then, she turns out to be horrifyingly akin to those yelling, screaming furies in the shape of 'the vilest of women' (p.165) -- as well as to those 'women lost to shame' who domineer over the National Assembly (p.161), and to those American Indian women 'as ferocious' as their 'savage' men 'after some of their murders called victories' (p.159). Further differences upon which order depends -- that between classes and that between savagery and the epitome of civilization -- are suddenly and terrifyingly undercut in the revolutionary moment.¹⁵ Not only is the natural motivation of social signs shown to be disturbingly arbitrary at the lower end of the scale, but so too is that of the sign *par excellence* of aristocratic and monarchic order; the difference between the queen and the 'vilest of women' turns out to be merely a matter of dress and manners. But Burke's text does not stand outside this process and simply watch or record it in horror, because it is precisely Reflections which brings together those kinds of women it endeavours to distinguish;¹⁶ as the agent of those violations (of women, of class and gender distinctions) it would have its readers recoil from, Burke's text again emerges as uncannily revolutionary in its most reactionary moments.

Thus the complex array of inter-dependent distinctions vital to the maintenance of the aristocratic order is violated by radicalism's intruding interlopers. But most disturbing of all for Burke, it appears that the revolutionary disruption between sign and referent cannot be discarded as something extraneous to aristocratic economy because it is precisely its founding principle. Both kinds of women are symptomatic products of the *ancien régime*: aristocratic woman embodies the deceptive ideology

and aesthetics of the old order (in which women are both loved and despised because of their precarious and dangerous beauty), while 'the lowest refuse of the streets' represent her inverse image. As the 'barricade' of civilization, custom forms one of its central defences; and yet it may also function in a revolutionary way because it allows the 'natural' concourse between word and idea to be impeded and exposed as merely arbitrary. The revolutionary moment is not 'other' to the 'natural' or the chivalric order but simply, and more disturbingly, the foregrounding and overturning of its arbitrary structure. The revolutionary is not 'outside' Burke's text, but uncontrollably repeated and foregrounded in the very gesture of its recoil. If both Burke's aesthetic categories, in different ways, depend upon a rift between signified and signifier, in Reflections that rift emerges to potentially undermine conventional differences of dress which are vital to the upkeep of a certain social order. The sublime, as we have seen, is something of a sham -- a metaphor which can subdue some and inflate others only so long as it is believed in or as long as the suspension of disbelief can be maintained; in a similar way, the beautiful also turns out to be a fraud -- a set of pleasing illusions which can be assumed or discarded. Such a context enables us to understand radicalism's attempt (and in this Wollstonecraft is a pioneer) to develop a 'virtuous' aesthetics in which aesthetic and political signs are divested of those conventions that have accrued to them in aristocratic societies, and in which the relation between signifier and signifier is once again (or for the first time in history) made 'natural' and motivated.¹⁷

The slippage of conventional signs which Burke's account of the Versailles incident sets in motion may be seen as the quintessential revolutionary paradigm for Burke because it unsettles what Ferguson reads as the unifying analogical ground of his aesthetics and politics.

For if much of the Enquiry tries to account for aesthetic responses in terms of 'the *properties* of external objects,' Ferguson writes, so political legitimacy is derived, in Reflections, 'from its basis in *property*':

Property produces legitimate government for him, just as the properties of aesthetic objects command responses to their beauty or sublimity. The difficulty that appears with the French Revolution, however, is that the very possibility of a drastic change registers the unnaturalness of nature by laying bare the fact that the properties of things, as well as the property belonging to any particular group in power, do not necessarily compel assent ('Legislating the Sublime,' pp.137-38).

Given this, I would suggest that if women's 'properties' (their appearance, dress, manners) are found to bear no necessary relation to their 'reality' -- that they might have effects quite at odds with their 'true nature' -- then a dizzying chasm opens up at the centre of Burke's aesthetic ideology. That women's properties seem arbitrary might imply that men's property over them -- and consequently the 'legitimacy' of their own titles and title deeds -- can never be authentically grounded. And yet I would argue that this possibility is not antithetical to Burke's thought but already potential within it. For the Enquiry not only explores the aesthetic effects of natural objects but also of words -- which, as we have seen, 'affect us in a manner very different from that in which we are affected by natural objects' (Enquiry, p.163). In Burke's theory of language, words have no essential or natural properties; their power derives entirely from conventional associations which become 'legitimate' through long usage; in Part III, I will show that Burke can only establish the right to property through the analogous process of 'prescription,' which attempts to justify its ownership, however it was attained, through longevity of possession. In other words, despite his protestations to the contrary, Burke's

texts suggest that political, linguistic, and aesthetic power can arise solely through convention and have no basis in natural properties or property. Thus Marie Antoinette emerges, precisely, as a conventional *sign* of aristocratic authority the instabilities of which are not accidental but a logical extrapolation of Burke's political and aesthetic system. The disturbing thing about her fall is that it exposes for all to see the principle that political power is grounded not in landed property itself but in a set of conventional codes whose force depends, solely, on the fact that they are conventional. This problem is compounded in a historical moment in which political power is in the process of shifting from an economic basis in agrarian production to a more modern capitalist system in which the arbitrary status of wealth is not only more prominent but intrinsic to its system. This is a 'defect' which cannot be removed but which it is crucial to conceal if the people are to be successfully conditioned to regard the signs and codes of political power as *natural*.

(iv) The *Mésalliance* Between Aristocracy and Capitalism:
Capitalizing on Traditional Principles

Conor Cruise O'Brien occasionally exemplifies that reading of Burke which regards him as the insightful spokesperson of the aristocracy:

Burke provides ... some of the best examples of that aristocratic critique of the bourgeoisie, to which the Communist Manifesto allows a provisional and sardonic welcome. Burke and Marx both sought to understand the revolutionary principles at work in France -- Burke in order to stop them spreading, and to destroy the nucleus of infection; Marx in order to hasten the victory of a new revolution (p.11).

But despite Burke's sustained aggression towards the bourgeoisie in France, Macpherson can yet argue that he is himself a (landed) capitalist and that the traditional order he defends had been a capitalist one since 1689. Macpherson claims that Burke's project is not just to protect a traditional aristocratic order against the infectious doctrines of the French Revolution, but also to uphold an already capitalist order against the 'egalitarian propaganda of the French Revolutionists and their English supporters' (Burke, p.61). But if this is so, Macpherson himself poses the crucial question:

Why should [Burke] have opposed [the French Revolution] so vehemently, since in the view of most nineteenth-century historians, liberal as well as Marxist, it was essentially a bourgeois revolution, intent on clearing away feudal and absolutist impediments to the emergence of a capitalist order? (p.63).

For Macpherson, 'the short answer is that Burke was not a nineteenth-century historian' (p.64). From his perspective in 1790, the members of the National Assembly 'were not the *haute bourgeoisie* who in England, easily intermarrying with the aristocracy, dominated the House of Commons: they were a *petite bourgeoisie*, who could not be relied on to uphold established property' (p.64). Burke either does not see the the upheaval in France as a bourgeois revolution, or he sees it as bungling the bourgeois cause through stripping away feudal institutions without having anything to replace them with. Macpherson argues that Burke saw that the transition from aristocracy to bourgeoisie depended on the continuation of class distinctions 'which rested on nothing more than habit and tradition With no more solid basis than that, it could easily be undermined. Burke, recognising that fragility, had no recourse except to enlist Christian Natural Law in its aid' (p.69). Burke is thus driven to disguise the politics and economics of capitalism by

utilizing 'old [social and political] forms', and putting 'a new bourgeois content into Natural Law' (pp.69-70):

Burke needed the natural and divine law because he had to show not only that the capitalist order was just but also that it was naturally acceptable to the working class. The whole structure of society, Burke insisted, depended on their submissiveness. And he estimated that they would remain submissive if they were protected from the 'rights of man' principles by a counter-barrage of Christian Natural Law principles (p.62).

Burke's hatred of French revolutionary principles can therefore be traced to two related reasons: if the doctrine of the equality and rights of man were widely accepted in England it would undermine that 'natural' subordination of the working classes necessary for capitalist production; while in France, since the transfer of power was not to a substantial or respectable bourgeois order, 'the Revolution might well be as damaging to commerce and industry as he expected it would be to the civilized arts and learning' (Burke, p.66).

While finding Macpherson's argument useful, I would suggest that readings such as O'Brien's, which see Burke as developing an aristocratic critique of a bourgeois revolution, cannot be wholly dismissed as misunderstandings of the nature of the traditional order Burke upholds. For we have seen that Burke, even if only for rhetorical reasons, does defend the *ancien régime*. It is possible, however, to take Macpherson's suggestion that Burke utilizes feudal forms to help sustain a quite different social regime a stage further by suggesting that Burke's fear of the Revolution was that it cast off those old forms and sent capitalism naked into the world. For Macpherson the lament over the age of chivalry would therefore be a lament for the probable fate of commerce in a society where notions about the rights of man have rooted out all principles of subordination. Burke

costumes capitalism in traditional garb because otherwise it has no defences against those radical doctrines which would irresponsibly expose its 'defects.' This is why Burke's attacks on the Revolution, with an obvious change of emphasis, often read like Marx's description of the bourgeoisie as that class which 'substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation' 'for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions.'¹⁶

Certain passages in Reflections, where Burke explores the ramifications of the events at Versailles, both support and complicate this argument. It is striking to read -- shortly after the lament that the age of chivalry has been displaced by that of 'sophisters, oeconomists, and calculators' -- that

Even commerce, and trade, and manufacture, the gods of our oeconomical politicians, are themselves perhaps but creatures; are themselves but effects, which, as first causes, we choose to worship. They certainly grew under the same shade in which learning flourished [i.e. under the nobility and the clergy]. They too may decay with their natural protecting principles. With you, for the present at least, they all threaten to disappear together. Where trade and manufactures are wanting to a people, and the spirit of nobility and religion remains, sentiment supplies, and not always ill supplies their place; but if commerce and the arts should be lost in an experiment to try how well a state may stand without these old fundamental principles, what sort of a thing must be a nation of gross, stupid, ferocious, and at the same time, poor and sordid barbarians, destitute of religion, honour, or manly pride, possessing nothing at present, and hoping for nothing hereafter? (p.174).

Bereft of aristocratic and Christian sentiment, 'unaccommodated' capitalism will reduce all human beings to the level of those who stormed Versailles or to the condition in which they left Marie Antoinette. Burke apparently rejects the idea that economic arrangements form the basis of society; on the contrary, its 'old

fundamental principles' are constituted by 'the spirit of nobility and religion,' and economic well-being is but their 'creature' or 'effect.' Unbridled commerce is presented as that which has supplanted or threatens to supplant nobility and religion; the 'creature' therefore imperils its 'creator.' At the same time, should commerce be 'wanting' 'sentiment' is strangely said to be able to 'supply' its place. This makes bad economic sense, but it seems to epitomize the strange economy of supplementarity which structures and deconstructs Burke's textual project. The 'forms' and 'drapes' of this text seem to take on a life of their own in that they serve not merely as a disguise but to unpick the very opposition between form and content, disguise and disguised. Problems of rhetoric (as drapery) and sexuality form not merely a mode of persuasion, or even of defence, in Reflections but are at once and indistinguishably its language and its subject.

If the sublime in the Enquiry follows the dictates of the work ethic, its implicit relation with commercial enterprise necessarily discomforts Reflections in transformed historical circumstances. The example of France, where commerce appears to have displaced all other principles and, in so doing, to have undermined the very traditions necessary for its own survival, inevitably points to the importance, but also the precariousness, of accommodating capitalism to the aristocracy in England. If, in the Enquiry, the body should be ever on the alert against the debilitating affects of relaxation, ever ready to save itself through exertion, in Reflections the body politic should avoid becoming over-relaxed and inattentive towards the 'tigers' of energetic capitalism. Such lack of attention was one reason for the success of the Revolution; the French aristocracy had become weak and 'effeminate' and so was not prepared to ward off or accommodate the vigorous innovative energies of an unprecedented alliance between radical thought and manufacturing capitalism. A related error was that the

bourgeoisie in France had been kept quite distinct from the landed aristocracy -- had been prevented from intermarrying or 'intergrafting' with them -- and hence had no stake or stock in the *ancien régime*:

A foolish imitation [by the French nobility] of the worst part of the manners of England, which impaired their natural character without substituting in its place what perhaps they meant to copy, has certainly rendered them worse than formerly they were. Habitual dissoluteness of manners continued beyond the pardonable period of life, was more common amongst them than it is with us; and it reigned with the less hope of remedy, though possibly with something of less mischief, by being covered with more exterior decorum. They countenanced too much of that licentious philosophy which has helped to bring on their ruin. There was another error amongst them more fatal. Those of the commons, who approached to or exceeded many of the nobility in point of wealth, were not fully admitted to the rank and estimation which wealth, in reason and good policy, ought to bestow in every country; though I think not equally with that of other nobility (p.244).

The idea that 'exterior decorum' might mitigate the 'mischief' of the French nobility's habitual dissoluteness of manners -- which accords with Burke's notion that under chivalry 'vice itself lost half its evil, by losing all its grossness' (p.170) -- is complicated by the possibility that such 'decorum' might also prevent the 'remedy.' Good customs limit but also uphold bad ones. The suggestion that the French nobility might have imitated the manners of their English counterparts (and Burke can also say that France had once provided the model of manners for Europe) raises the question of who imitates who in the strange and proximate relation between the two countries. Given the fact of the French Revolution, however, and the turn it has taken, Burke's whole effort is to prevent England following suit. England and France seem less opposites than mutually constitutive -- or sometimes mutually subversive -- models for each other,

each potentially impairing the other's 'natural character,' but each seemingly in need of its neighbour. Britain's constitution is thus particularly vulnerable to the potentially infectious disease from across the narrow channel. This is particularly so because the dissolute manners of the French nobility which helped bring on the Revolution are said to have been *imitations* of 'the worst part of the manners of England' which operated like dangerous supplements, impairing 'their natural character without substituting in its place what they perhaps meant to copy.' Even 'more fatal' to the *ancien régime*, however, was the failure to accommodate the young and upwardly mobile energies of the new moneyed class; to prevent revolution, the lesson suggests, the old order should absorb the new with a badge and a name lest it overturn the old. The alien graft should be transformed into native stock otherwise it will destroy the plant. The new money should thus be 'bought' by the old, while 'licentious philosophy' -- unsound speculation -- should not be countenanced. In Chapter 9, I will show how this forms part of Burke's attempt to divide and defuse what he saw as a dangerous alliance between unaccommodated capitalism and a new kind of transgressive literature.

That the French aristocracy failed to rouse themselves from their supine condition and so proved unable to stave off revolution suggests that, in this historical moment, the *status quo* (which Burke is driven to defend) has become 'effeminate' and threatened by a masculinized capitalism. Although its greatest threat might be from capitalism itself, the aristocracy is almost equally imperilled by its own debilitating manners. The French nobility, in becoming habitually dissolute, have therefore perverted the chivalrous manners which, Burke wants to insist, are the only means by which capitalism might be civilized. One of the ways Burke attempts to negotiate a course between these contradictions is to differentiate -- within the *ancien régime* itself --

between 'good' chivalrous manners and their perversion. A second strategy is to devalue radical capitalism by implying that its 'feverish' energy has a ready facility for destruction but is doomed to confound its own schemes and end in torpor. Burke's text therefore traverses a precipitous path; its whole attention is focused on preventing the French Revolution from upsetting the 'complementary' balance, crucial to Britain's stability and prosperity, between capitalism and aristocracy. And yet this structure contains within itself the principle of its own dissolution, since the sublime and the beautiful work uneasily together and tend to interrelate less in complementary ways than as supplements to one another. The 'perversion' of the chivalrous state -- which leads to its incapacity to uphold and constrain capitalism -- comes not from radicalism, nor even from pre-revolutionary France, but from 'the worst part of the manners of England.'

In Burke's analysis, then, the danger of the Revolution is that, rather than accommodating itself to that which already exists (adapting, compromising, supplying what is requisite), it inevitably *substitutes* a bourgeois order *in the place of* traditional structures. But to do this under the aegis of 'the rights of man' would not only destroy the old order but render the new unworkable by striking at its very roots (i.e. the hierarchical capital-labour relation). Notions of equality and the rights of man are thus a set of 'monstrous fictions' with which an unaccommodated bourgeoisie would exploit the discontent of a 'swinish multitude' without being able to alleviate it. O'Brien's reading, which suggests that Burke sought to understand the Revolution's principles 'in order to stop them from spreading, and to destroy the nucleus of infection,' overlooks Burke's investment in the capitalist order and the possibility that his apprehensions are for capitalism's well-being in England rather than for a

bygone feudalism. And yet the disease metaphors -- taken from Burke -- allow me to argue that Burke's rhetorical strategy draws on medical or horticultural models in order to suggest that Britain's constitution should be protected against revolution by *inoculating* (or grafting) capitalism into its system and thereby strengthening, rather than destroying, the nature of the original organism, supplying its wants rather than supplanting it. This leads me to argue, in passing, that Burke perhaps understood the Revolution better than Paine did. Both, of course, saw its implications for Britain's constitutional order, and both, sharing Adam Smith's basic principles, were advocates of liberal economics; but although the strain in Burke's text is to accommodate new economics in old clothes, that implicit in Paine's arises between the freedom of man on the one hand and free trade on the other. For as Henry Collins notes, neither in the Crisis articles he wrote in America on the eve of the Revolution there, 'nor later did Paine see any cause for antagonism between capital and labour' (introduction to Rights of Man, p.22). Burke's whole effort, then, is to *unmask* the 'deceptions' of revolutionary politics, language, and economics, while *disguising* the exploitative social relations of production in Britain with a 'natural' and 'traditional' garb. Paine's, on the other hand, is to lay bare those mystificatory strategies of the traditional order in Britain which he sees exemplified in Burke's text.

That Reflections might be read as both involved in a more insightful promotion of capitalism than Paine's and as a text marshalled in defence of an old, traditional England against the encroachments of capitalist industrialization, is perhaps symptomatic of a certain internal discontinuity, or dis-ease, brought on by confronting a historical moment in which both aristocracy and radicalism seem inimical to the prosperous development of capitalism. I would therefore suggest that a

capitalist 'content' might not fit so neatly into an aristocratic 'form' as Macpherson suggests, that 'form' and 'content' are not so easily separated out, and that the struggle between capitalism and aristocracy was by no means over by 1789 (Wollstonecraft and Paine thought it was still centre stage). As Volosinov puts it, although a revolutionary crisis makes more urgent a dominant ideology's need to make yesterday's truth appear today's, it also makes it all the more difficult, since it is precisely then that the internal differences of the sign 'come out fully in the open' (Marxism and the Philosophy of Language, p.23). I would also question the suggestion implicit in Macpherson's model of textual production that Burke is fully cognizant of the complexities of his historical moment and fully able to exploit certain rhetorical and ideological forms for a particular end. As Volosinov's argument implies, during revolutionary crisis, no single individual, nor even the ruling class as a whole, can fully control the inflections of the ideological sign, whether as word, as political emblem, or as unit of economic exchange. Although concurring with Macpherson's general description of Burke's project, then, my reading of his dramatization of the Versailles affair suggests that the use of aristocratic dress to implement the covert transformation of the body politic into a bourgeois system, although it might be historically necessary, involves Burke's text in a series of irresolvable contradictions already theorized in the Enquiry.

In representing revolutionary action as an attempt to strip away the array of supplements with which the old order sustains its hegemony, Burke acutely diagnoses radicalism's threat not only to the aristocratic order but to the bourgeois system he seeks to introduce under an aristocratic garb. If Burke's defence of the French queen actually conceals, and thus upholds, capitalist interests, the 'drapery' he employs (to dress the queen as well as to

hide his 'true' motives) turns out to be a surreptitious threat to the constitution of his country and of his text. For if his use of the sublime in Reflections embroils him in an impossible double bind, the beautiful presents a similar but less tangible danger. It is not, then, that Burke's text is merely split between its capitalist object and its decorous homage (the more or less conscious difference between 'surface' gestures and 'deep' intentions), but that the decorous homage itself involves Burke's text in radical internal differences which cannot become 'conscious' but whose effects at once provide its motive power and threaten it with dissolution. This is to argue against standard readings of Burke's appeal to the 'decent drapery of life' by suggesting that it is animated by two distinct dynamics which seem far from compatible with each other. Indeed, it is almost as if Burke's text -- and the drapery it arranges in order to veil its 'real' object -- is torn in different directions and as if the strains it undergoes inevitably expose the contradictions of its historical dilemma. Burke's text is therefore focused on two quite different projects -- to uphold a capitalist order in England by making it appear a traditional order, and to defend a traditional order in France which (because it is a traditional order, and because its aesthetic correlative is *precisely* that which undermines and corrupts the capitalist virtue of labour) is antipathetic towards the English capitalist state and his own aesthetics. At the same time, Burke cannot praise the efforts of the potentially sublime Revolution that come, precisely, as a 'remedy' to the 'feminine tyranny' and debilitating beauty of the *ancien régime* because that would, in turn, pose a threat to the English capitalist order. In being constrained to take upon itself the role of champion of the 'beautiful' ideology and aesthetics of aristocratic France, Burke's text is caught up in a deceitful maze of its own making, and hardly knows where it is carried. In repeating and laying bare the monstrous

and unknown forms of the old order, both abroad and at home, Reflections seems to underline, and in some ways to prefigure -- against its 'intentions' perhaps -- the need for, and possibilities of, a revolutionary antidote.

1. O'Brien (p.386, n.68) supplies the translation from Virgil, Aeneid, III, 105.

2. I would suggest that Burke remains ambivalent towards the notion of relaxing monarchical power. Indeed, at the end of the passages celebrating the softening of monarchical authority, Burke obliquely suggests that Louis XVI's only fault was not to have been stern enough: 'I shall never think that a prince, the acts of whose whole reign were a series of concessions to his subjects, who was willing to relax his authority, ... to call his people to a share of freedom, not known, perhaps not desired by their ancestors ... deserves the cruel and insulting triumph of Paris, and of Dr Price. I tremble for the cause of liberty, from such an example to kings. ... But there are some people of that low and degenerate fashion of mind, that they look up with a sort of complacent awe and admiration to kings, who know to keep firm in their seat, to hold a strict hand over their subjects, ... and by the awakened vigilance of a severe despotism, to guard against the very first approaches of freedom' (pp.177-78). This is an ambiguous passage in that it seems impossible to draw from it the exact attitude Burke is recommending towards reform. The first sentence suggests a sympathy with Louis XVI and his enlightened measures; and yet there is the implication that the people who could treat such a liberal monarch as they did on 5-6 October are not fit for freedoms 'perhaps not desired by their ancestors.' The third sentence compounds this ambiguity, in that although it seems to condemn 'severe despotism,' it is especially contemptuous of those who, looking up to it with 'complacent awe and admiration,' seem to deserve their own subjugation. And in terms of Burke's aesthetics, what appears at first sight to be a preference for liberal reform over despotism, can be read in an exactly opposite way -- for in the Enquiry, Burke strenuously urges an 'awakened vigilance' against the dangers of relaxation. Thus this passage can read as both a lament for and criticism of Louis XVI -- and in turn as an object lesson for those members of England's ruling classes currently seeking liberal reform.

3. Kramnick can argue, for example, that Burke's theory of party politics can be seen as an attempt to substitute 'the beautiful virtues' of party government for 'the sublime virtues of Pitt's leadership, or of George III's for that matter' (Rage of Edmund Burke, p.114).

4. 'In this scene at the very heart of the Reflections the metaphoric stripping of society has become the literal stripping of the queen' (Paulson, p.61).

5. Confessions, p.362; Rousseau is referring to his Essay upon Inequality.

6. Wollstonecraft's analysis leads her to reverse Burke's assessment of manners: 'like every custom that an arbitrary point of honour has established, [the civilization of Europe] refines the manners at the expence of morals' (p.11). At the same time, in a revealing comment, 'the cultivation of reason is an arduous task happy is it for [the indolent] that some virtuous habits, with which the reason of others shackled them, supplies its place' (p.71). This is to curiously repeat Burke's formula, and suggests that the tangles in which the supplementary logic involves Burke's texts are not peculiar to Burke but endemic to the terms in which eighteenth-century discourse conceived and confronted its political and aesthetic problems.

7. It also emerges, however, that Burke's obsession with Marie Antoinette's sexuality is not simply the mirror image of that of the Jacobins, but that both derive from slanders originally circulated by certain factions of the French court (see Cronin, pp.198-99 and pp.402-405, and Seward, p.12, and pp.87-107).

8. The exposure of women becomes a paradigmatic moment of revolution in France, mobilizing equivocal political, psychic, and sexual connotations. Describing the 'June Days' of 1848, Victor Hugo writes that, at a certain crucial moment, with the National Guard advancing, 'a woman appeared on the crest of the first barricade, a young woman, beautiful, dishevelled, terrifying. This woman, who was a public whore, pulled her dress up to her waist and cried out to the guardsmen, in that dreadful brothel language that one is always obliged to translate: "Cowards! Fire, if you dare, at the belly of a woman!" Here things took an awful turn. The National Guard did not hesitate. A fusillade toppled the miserable creature. She fell with a great cry. There was a horrified silence at the barricade and among the attackers' (Victor Hugo, '*Chose vues*,' *Oeuvres completes*, 35 vols. [Paris, Martell, 1955], vol.31, pp.365-66, quoted [and presumably translated] by Neil Hertz, '*Medusa's Head: Male Hysteria under Political Pressure*,' p.163). 'The June uprising,' Hugo writes, immediately before this passage, 'right from the start, presented strange lineaments. It displayed suddenly, to a horrified society, monstrous and unknown forms.' Hertz argues that 'what the revolution is said to be doing figuratively is precisely what -- in a moment -- . . . the [woman] will be represented as doing literally' (p.164). Hertz reads this passage in psychoanalytical terms, suggesting that it invokes the male anxiety of castration; Catherine Gallagher's 'Response' (pp.194-96) displaces such male 'hysteria' with a more 'historical' reading by pointing out how patriarchal society depends upon the regulation of female sexuality in order to establish the 'satisfying confluence of self-representation and property' within the aristocratic name.

This means that female sexuality is a problem for such societies, since a breach of propriety may initiate a crisis in property and the proper name.

9. For Freud's account of what he calls the 'obscene joke,' see Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious, pp.140-45.

10. See chapter V of Freud's study of jokes -- 'The Motives of Jokes -- Jokes as a Social Process,' Jokes, pp.191-211.

11. For a discussion of the political and literary features of the carnival, see Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, pp.122-37.

12. Wollstonecraft seems discomforted by both kinds of women and by their violent juxtaposition in Burke's text. In fact, as she admits in Rights of Woman, she is primarily concerned with women 'in the middle class because they appear to be in the most natural state' (p.81). In Rights of Men, she reacts to Burke's portrait of the women who marched to Versailles by attempting to substitute an 'historical' account for Burke's 'hysterical' rhetoric: 'Probably you mean women who gained a livelihood by selling vegetables or fish, who never had any advantages of education; or their vices might have lost part of their abominable deformity, by losing part of their grossness' (pp.67-68). Thus, in one terse comment, Burke's 'histrionics' are punctured by giving an ironic twist to his lament that 'the age of chivalry is gone,' and along with it the 'unbought grace of life ... under which vice lost half its evil, by losing all its grossness' (Reflections, p.170). Both types of women Burke identifies are potentially recoverable, in Wollstonecraft's view, through the revolutionary process. If one type needs to be stripped of veils of illusion that foster and disguise vices degrading to humanity (and hence transformed from a debilitating to an invigorating emblem of the beautiful), the other might be educated from an undisciplined grotesque into a sublime force.

13. Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution, p.426; for Wollstonecraft's full account of the events of 5-6 October, see pp.420-69.

14. In Historical and Moral View, Wollstonecraft describes Marie Antoinette as a 'young and beautiful dauphine' arriving at a French Court characterized by its 'general depravation of manners': 'In such a voluptuous atmosphere, how could she escape contagion?' (Historical and Moral View, p.33). For Wollstonecraft, Marie Antoinette inevitably became the kind of woman 'with all those complacent graces which dance round flattered beauty, whose every charm is drawn forth by the consciousness of

pleasing' (p.131) (in this way she embodies everything which Rights of Woman is written to contest). Given the basic principles of her two Vindications, however, it might be thought that Wollstonecraft would have approved of Marie Antoinette's efforts to cast off the constraints of courtly etiquette in France in favour of a more 'natural' style of dress and behaviour. The Burkean terms she uses to criticize the French queen therefore indicate how important it is for Wollstonecraft to condemn her: 'Constrained by the *etiquette*, which made the principle part of the imposing grandeur of Louis XIV, the queen wished to throw aside the cumbersome brocade of ceremony, without having discernment enough to perceive, that it was necessary to lend mock dignity to a court, where there was not sufficient virtue, or native beauty, to give interest or respectability to simplicity. The harlot is seldom such a fool as to neglect her meretricious ornaments, unless she renounces her trade; and the pageantry of courts is the same thing on a larger scale' (Historical and Moral View, pp.34-35). Unexpectedly echoing Burke, Wollstonecraft suggests that the queen was in part responsible for 'destroying all reverence for ... majesty' in France by stripping it 'of the frippery which had concealed it's deformity' (p.35). Rather than receiving praise for this, Marie Antoinette becomes, in the slippage of images in these passages, a harlot who, not knowing the conditions of her own trade, divests herself and the French court of their 'meretricious ornaments' and so exposes their 'deformities.' Her action, then, becomes curiously akin to Burke's representation of her fate at the hands of the revolutionary mob; such a fate is therefore presented as both appropriate and her own doing.

15. Cora Kaplan argues that such instabilities, opened up by 'republican and liberal political philosophy,' became central to a range of nineteenth-century bourgeois discourses. In the novel, for example, 'the language of class ... obsessively inscribes a class system whose divisions and boundaries are at once absolute and impregnable and in danger of constant dissolution. Often in these narratives it is a woman whose class identity is at risk or problematic; the woman and her sexuality are a condensed and displaced representation of the dangerous instabilities of class and gender identity for both sexes' ('Pandora's Box: Subjectivity, Class and Sexuality in Socialist Feminist Criticism,' p.164). This meant that a notion of 'true womanhood' had to be constructed which was at once differentiated from masculinity and from subordinated races and classes: 'the difference between men and women in the ruling class had to be written so that a slippage into categories reserved for lesser humanities could be averted' (p.167). Yet patriarchy's need to subordinate women through ascribing to them a 'primitive' propensity for passion, means that 'the line

between the primitive and the degraded feminine is a thin one' (p.167).

16. Craig Howes discusses Burke's account of 5-6 October precisely as an attempt to dissociate elements which it (paradoxically) brings together: 'the bedchamber scene from the Reflections ... sharply contrasts the mob's Satanic, violating power with the helpless, half-dressed, fleeing figure of the beautiful Marie Antoinette. When power does erupt in women, as in the march to Versailles, they become possessed harpies, desexed and foul' ('Burke, Poe, and "Usher": The Sublime and Rising Woman,' p.184).

17. William Godwin develops the beautiful as a radical aesthetic: at the end of Book II of Political Justice he writes that 'the universal exercise of private judgement is a doctrine so unspeakably beautiful that the true politician will certainly feel infinite reluctance in admitting the idea of interfering with it' (Political Justice, p.208). From the vantage point of 1793, Godwin's emphasis throughout Political Justice is on gradual progress rather than on the violent discontinuities of revolution; his system may thus be said to advocate a politics of the beautiful rather than the sublime. As such, he is distrustful of Paine's and Price's model of the universal performative voice: 'Too much stress has undoubtedly been laid upon the idea, as of a grand and magnificent spectacle, of a nation deciding for itself upon some great public principle, and of the highest magistracy yielding its claims when the general voice has pronounced.' Yet he will admit that this moment has a certain beauty: 'Within certain limits however the beauty of the exhibition may be acknowledged' (p.235). As in Rights of Men and Rights of Man, Godwin's concept of beauty differs from Burke's in that it is based on the notion of a virtuous language model, but unlike Wollstonecraft and Paine such language does not come about within a democracy but when all government has withered away.

18. 'The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his "natural superiors", and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous "cash payment". It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation. It has resolved personal worth into exchange value, and in place of the numberless indefeasible chartered freedoms, has set up that single, unconscionable freedom -- Free Trade. In one word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation' (The Communist Manifesto, p.223).

Part III: Politics, Language, and Economics in
'Reflections.'

The final part of this thesis extends the preceding analysis of Reflections by tracing the ways in which the characteristic response we have seen Burke make to the French Revolution governs his treatment of each of its aspects he turns to. The patterns, paradigms, and problems that have emerged in my articulation of the Enquiry and Reflections are features not only of his emotive response to the events at Versailles but of his discussions of economics, the law, political representation, and language. Chapter 7 concentrates on the links which emerge in Reflections between questions of writing, reading, and the law and the roles these are asked to play in revolutionary circumstances. Chapter 8 attends to the interrelations which Reflections develops between economic practices and political systems in order to differentiate between 'constitutional' and 'revolutionary' socio-economic forms. Chapter 9 concentrates on what Burke saw or tried to present as conspiratorial collusions between the new monied class and a new kind of literature no longer implicated within traditional political structures. In his treatment of each of these themes, however, Burke turns out to be wrestling as much with the 'revolutionary' aspects of his own thought and position as with the Revolution across the English Channel.

Chapter 7: Burke's Troubled Reflections: Language in Revolution

My reading of Burke's Reflections has, in previous chapters, been largely confined to a limited number of paragraphs and passages. But although we have seen that Boulton thinks of the eulogy to Marie Antoinette as the 'rhetorical and philosophical centrepoint' of Reflections, and the account of the events of 5-6 October as a preparation towards it (Language of Politics, p.98, p.128), O'Brien can argue that the 'Gothic and pathetic' manner of these passages, 'which many have been taught to think of as typical Burke,' is only one of three fundamentally different styles employed in Reflections (p.43).¹ Gerald Chapman even argues that a too exclusive concentration on the Marie Antoinette passage has caused critics to misread Burke's overall position (Practical Imagination, pp.194-96). It is true that much the greater part of Burke's text is taken up not with confronting the queen's defenceless beauty with the terrors of the revolutionary mob but with discussions of British history, comparisons between British and French economics, and reflections on the relative merits of the systems of political representation on either side of the English Channel. It might therefore be argued that the present thesis has thus far offered a very partial reading of Burke's text. But one of the important things about those pages of Reflections which dwell on the events at Versailles and on Burke's memories of the French queen is precisely that they have obsessively engaged so many readers. I also intend to argue, however, that the complex of figures and problems which are so powerfully realized in these passages are in fact endemic to each issue which the Revolution raises for Burke. The purpose of this final section, then, is not only to make good the apparent omissions in my reading of Reflections by exploring some of the many themes which the text

addresses, but also to demonstrate that the treatment of those themes derives from Burke's early aesthetics and involves the text in contradictions analogous to those we have already traced. We will see that, regardless of Burke's manner or topic, the crisis he identifies himself as facing, as type of European man, affects every facet of the civilization he defends and each discursive manner he attempts to defend it with. There is certainly a wide thematic and stylistic variety in Reflections -- one which ought to be attended to -- but my argument is that the motive energy driving each of Burke's encounters with the French Revolution derives from the disquietude raised by the problematic yet crucial attempt to deploy the supplement for political ends. This is not to say that Burke explicitly identifies or theorizes the concept of the supplement, but that its contradictory logic underlies the structures of his thought. It is worth repeating, at greater length, Derrida's description of the relation between his reading of the supplement in Rousseau and Rousseau's own insight into the processes which mobilize and structure his texts, because it may equally apply to the reading of Burke developed throughout this thesis:

The way in which he determines the concept and, in so doing, lets himself be determined by that very thing that he excludes from it, the direction in which he bends it, here as addition, there as substitute, now as the positivity and exteriority of evil, now as a happy auxiliary, all this conveys neither a passivity nor an activity, neither an unconsciousness nor a lucidity on the part of the author. ... [My reading] is certainly a production, because I do not simply duplicate what Rousseau thought of this relationship. The concept of the supplement is a sort of blind spot in Rousseau's text, the not-seen that opens and limits visibility (Of Grammatology, p.163).

We have seen how Burke's thought on aesthetics and gender shares a characteristic set of presuppositions

brought into crisis by the French Revolution; I will demonstrate that his discourse on representation in politics, language, and economics is structured and 'deconstructed' in comparable ways. I will explore how the various 'excursions' in Reflections (into political representation, economics, and language) intersect in mutually constitutive and mutually subversive ways. These discourses interrelate not only in that they combine to re-form the political and cultural hegemony of an emerging middle class in conflict at once with the aristocracy and the working classes, but also in that they share a common paradigm (which presents second nature, custom, manners, and so on, as 'happy auxiliaries' to nature or reason). In each discipline of the 'human sciences' which Burke turns to in his 'crisis,' this crucial paradigm becomes critically unstable; the distinctions which Burke labours to make between his own happy auxiliaries and the exterior evils resorted to by revolutionary thought are undercut by the irrepressible mobility of his own rhetoric. Working to exclude revolutionary evil as exterior (to Britain, to his own text) through projecting it onto an 'other' variously identified as post-revolutionary France, the *ancien régime*, or British revolutionary factions such as the Revolution Society, Burke remains blind to, and yet troubled by, the possibility that it might already be interior to, or an incurable aspect of, his own poetics and politics -- that, in an unsettling way, radicalism might represent an uncanny mirror image of his own Reflections.

My use of Rights of Man will be restricted to showing how Paine's reading of Burke highlights these problems in Reflections by reversing Burke's comparative evaluations of 'constitutional' and 'revolutionary' thought; Paine therefore discovers 'deleterious' supplementary expedients within Burke's text and social order and argues that 'wholesome' forms can only be located in revolutionary social structures and discourse. This curious parallel

with Burke suggests that the relation between these famous antagonists is more complex and complicit than either would allow. Paine's discourse seems caught up within the same problematic as Burke's; revolutionary thought turns out to be equally driven and undone by the strange logic of the supplement, and as engaged in the same urgent but impossible labour, as the text usually considered as one of conservatism's most eloquent defences. To this extent, Burke and Paine are in collusion, forced to participate in the same game; each witnesses his own troubled reflections in the other's text. For it is possible to argue that Burke and Paine want the same thing -- i.e. to establish a capitalist economics that will recognize and reward merit (for Burke, merit should be recruited to support established society, while Paine strives for a meritocracy which will sweep away existing institutions). Thus the crucial question to be settled between Burke and Paine is how the new should relate to the old; Burke seeks to augment and revitalize the old order by 'ingrafting' up-and-coming capitalist energies, while Paine attempts to uproot the old and so clear the ground for new social and economic structures. We will see that Burke distinguishes these different approaches to one of the central questions raised by the Revolution -- how to respond to inevitable social, political, and economic change -- by identifying one as 'reform' and the other as 'revolution.' But although Burke's 'reform' and Paine's 'revolution' might seem to lead to quite different ends, the difference might be partly one of costume in that Burke wants capitalism in aristocratic dress, while Paine seeks to strip the traditional order naked in order to expose its defects and infirmities and thereby justify its being dismantled and replaced by a bourgeois order. Burke's discourse is therefore structured precisely in ways which can be described, and which describe themselves, in sartorial terms. 'Dress' in Burke's rhetoric is not merely the clothing of his thought but an organizing principle, and

an uneasy relation between body and dress becomes a recurrent metaphor in Reflections for a wide range of interrelated problems. That Burke might be at once the major critic of radicalism and something of a radical himself has interesting implications for a radicalism that seems to mimic and exploit certain 'reactionary' strategies in its critique of the Reflections. Thus one of the interests of the present chapter is to attend to the organizational metaphors and strategies of Reflections -- what they do, describe, declare, conceal, reveal -- and how they constitute the terms for subsequent radical discourse.

(i) The Necessary Resource of Superstition

In the wake of the 5-6 October passages in Reflections, Burke obsessively discusses the expediency of the supplementary resources of custom, habit, and tradition to ward off the apparently incurable evil revealed in those events. Arguing for the necessity of the church, for example, Burke writes that 'there is no rust of superstition, with which the accumulated absurdity of the human mind might have crusted it over in the course of ages, that ninety-nine in a hundred of the people of England would not prefer to impiety' (p.187). To throw off the Christian religion would be to 'uncover our nakedness' (p.187) and perhaps our lack of 'natural' piety for God or his hypostases; it would even, since 'the mind will not endure a void,' expose us to 'some uncouth, pernicious, and degrading superstition, [which] might take place of it' (p.188). Thus Burke prefers even the accumulated absurdity of the 'rust' of superstition to the impiety which would be a dangerous supplement to bring to religion: 'We shall never be such fools as to call in an enemy to the substance of any system to remove its corruptions, to supply its defects, or to perfect its

construction' (p.187). And yet 'rust' is a curious figure to use as a means of defending a body's 'substance,' since although it might appear to cover ferrous metals with a protective crust, it in fact marks a gradual dissolution. Thus while Burke is led to discriminate absolutely between one kind of supplement and another, the 'natural' and the 'unnatural' supplement, the very logic of supplementarity seems to resist such a distinction, since whatever is brought in to defend the state seems also to endanger, or expose the defects of, its various embodiments.

Burke's ongoing attempt to forge such a distinction, and the labour it involves, can be seen as the general organizational principle of Reflections. Addressing Depont on the Revolution's treatment of the Catholic Church, Burke admits that 'the institutions savour of superstition in their very principle; . . . but this ought not to hinder you from deriving from superstition itself any resources which may hence be furnished for the public advantage' (Reflections, pp.268-69). In order to justify what amounts to an extraordinarily ambiguous defence of a beleaguered Catholic Church,² Burke goes on to distinguish between advantageous and disadvantageous superstition:

But is superstition the greatest of all possible vices? In its positive excess I think it becomes a very great evil. It is, however, a moral subject; and of course admits of all degrees and all modifications. Superstition is the religion of feeble minds; and they must be tolerated in an intermixture of it, in some trifling or some enthusiastic shape or other, else you will deprive weak minds of a resource found necessary to the strongest. The body of all true religion consists, to be sure, in obedience to the will of the sovereign of the world; in a confidence in his declarations; and an imitation of his perfections. The rest is our own. It may be prejudicial to the great end; it may be auxiliary. . . . a prudent man . . . perhaps . . . would think the superstition which builds, to be more tolerable than that which demolishes - that which adorns a country, than that which deforms it -- that which endows, than that

which plunders Such, I think, is very nearly the state of the question between the ancient founders of monkish superstition, and the superstition of the pretended philosophers of the hour (pp.269-70).

The (beneficial) superstition of Catholicism is thus distinguished from the (veneficial) superstition of revolutionary thought in ways analogous to the distinction between the 'good' and the 'bad' inflexions of the supplement. Indeed, since the OED reveals that 'superstitious' could mean 'extraordinary,' 'excessive,' or 'superfluous' in the seventeenth century, and defines the prefix 'super' as 'in addition' ('superstition' derives from the Latin *superstare*, meaning stand upon or over), it is possible to see an etymological underpinning to the analogy. And if 'superstition' is defined by the OED as an 'unreasoning awe or fear of something unknown, mysterious, or imaginary,' 'a tenet, scruple, habit, etc. founded on fear or ignorance,' and was, in 1794, 'an unreasonable or groundless notion,' it is even possible to suggest an equation between superstition, the supplement, and the sublime. The important thing to note in the above passage is that in Burke's thought the state and/or the human mind is ever in need of some kind of superstition or supplement: superstition is 'a resource found necessary to the strongest.' Burke seems unable to opt out of the supplementary bind; he will not strip man's (or woman's) nature naked (though he seems obsessed and fascinated by the possibility); rather than throw off the supplement he is concerned to modify its 'degree' of usurping or undermining power in order to exploit it for 'the public advantage' (or perhaps to secure an advantage over the public). Thus the two aspects of the supplement are not wholly other to one another but different degrees and modifications of a 'superstition' which may be either 'auxiliary' or 'prejudicial,' may either 'build' or 'demolish,' 'adorn' or 'deform,' 'endow' or 'plunder.'

Burke impresses on his readers that the latter of each of these pairings will become nightmarishly real if the nobility and the clergy were to fall: 'Along with [these] natural protectors and guardians, learning will be cast into the mire, and trodden down under the hoofs of a swinish multitude' (p.173). Burke's constant emphasis on the *natural* status of his privileged supplements ought to be noted, since it reveals how he is driven to oppose constitutional and revolutionary thought and practice in terms of their employment of different kinds of supplementation distinguishable only in terms of contesting politicized definitions of 'nature.'

One of the points of making the distinction between these two kinds of superstition for Burke is that the one tends towards the maintenance of distinctions, while the other would destroy all distinction. For a few pages later, the same urgency is given to the difference between the republican legislators of the classical period (who implicitly represent Britain's legislators) and those in revolutionary France:

The legislators who framed the antient republics knew [that] they had to do with men, and they were obliged to study human nature. They had to do with citizens, and they were obliged to study the effects of those habits which are communicated by the circumstances of civil life. They were sensible that the operation of this second nature on the first produced a new combination ... which rendered [men] as it were so many different species of animals. From hence they thought themselves obliged to dispose their citizens into such classes, and to place them in such situations in the state as their peculiar habits might qualify them to fill, and to allot to them such appropriated privileges as might secure to them what their specific occasions required ... for the legislator would have been ashamed, that the coarse husbandman should well know how to assort and to use his sheep, horses, and oxen, and should have enough of common sense not to abstract and equalize them all into animals, without providing for each kind an appropriate

food, care, and employment; whilst he, the oeconomist, disposer, and shepherd of his own kindred, subliming himself into an airy metaphysician, was resolved to know nothing of his flocks, but as men in general. . . . As the first sort of legislators attended to the different kinds of citizens, and combined them into one commonwealth, the others, the metaphysical and alchemical legislators, have taken the direct contrary course. They have attempted to confound all sorts of citizens, as well as they could, into one homogeneous mass; and then they divided this their amalgama into a number of incoherent republics. They reduce men to loose counters merely for the sake of simple telling, and not to figures whose power is to arise from their place in the table (pp.299-300).

As we have come to see of Burke in Reflections (though not in the Enquiry), 'second nature' -- comprising 'those habits which are communicated by the circumstances of civil life' -- is both thematically central to his discourse and indicative of one of its textual and rhetorical ploys. But both theme and ploy work in ways that, characteristically, at once conceal and reveal their own gestures and projects. The 'operation of . . . second nature on . . . first [nature] produce[s] a new combination,' and from the various combinations produced by differences in circumstances arise the 'diversities amongst men.' Burke then figures these various kinds of 'men' -- 'men' in civil society -- as 'so many species of animals' (this is not a casual figure; it allows a certain rhetorical operation later in the paragraph). Oddly enough, though, Burke's narrative then suggests that the ancient legislators disposed these citizens into classes and 'situations in the state as their peculiar habits might qualify them to fill.' This is odd because those habits are precisely said to have arisen from their peculiar places in society and cannot therefore be the criteria by which they are allotted their place. That which was a product of context has now been seen, through a figurative transformation, as a pregiven quality which

allows the legislator to allot each citizen-animal to his or her 'destined' place. The appropriation of money, power, and rights by one class at the expense of another is thus said to arise from human nature and hence to be *appropriate* -- a textual finesse achieved by allotting 'appropriated privileges' to the citizens of the state. The legislator's action is justified by the parable of 'the coarse husbandman' who knows that his charges are not simply animals but particular kinds of animals with needs and functions peculiar to themselves. The logic of the analogy allows the legislator to be 'the oeconomist, disposer, and shepherd of his own kindred' -- giving the legislator power over his fellow beings as the husbandman has over his animals. Second nature has dislodged first nature, nurture substitutes for nature; the needs and functions of human beings -- created by their positions in society -- have displaced the fact that they are human beings (and therefore fundamentally equal); custom has made men and women into animals ('a swinish multitude') and legislators into their natural shepherds. On the other hand, the republicans of France, by implication, treat men and women as citizens precisely because they are human beings. Contrary to his rhetorical flourish, then, it is *Burke himself* who treats 'men' as already allotted their place in (or at) the 'table' (as so many species of animals whose place in the table is determined by inherent physical properties in the manner of the natural history of the eighteenth century), while the republicans, by allowing all 'men' to be equal, treat them as figures with the power 'to arise from their place in the table.' Burke's own figures, in contrast, both enable and undercut his simple telling of the origin of the division of labour; in seeking to appear as the advocate of a society whose (human) figures are given the possibility of upward mobility, the mobility of his (rhetorical) figures both enables and problematizes the grounds of that division and the possibility of that social mobility.

For Burke, then, certain distinctions -- that between capital and labour and those within the feudal order -- must be kept up; these distinctions are maintained precisely through establishing the difference between true and false art:

All this violent cry against the nobility I take to be a mere work of art. ... The strong struggle in every individual to preserve possession of what he has found to belong to him and to distinguish him, is one of the securities against injustice and despotism implanted in our nature. ... What is there to shock in this? Nobility is a graceful ornament to the civil order. ... He feels no ennobling principle in his own heart who wishes to level all the artificial institutions which have been adopted for giving a body to opinion, and permanence to fugitive esteem. It is a sour, malignant, envious disposition, without taste for the reality, or for any image or representation of virtue, that sees with joy the unmerited fall of what had long flourished in splendour and in honour. I do not like to see any thing destroyed; any void produced in society; any ruin on the face of the land (p.245).

One notes both the passivity with which the nobility simply *find* that something belongs to them, and the extension of 'nobility' to those excluded from aristocratic ownership who nonetheless dutifully shun the levelling principle. Different political attitudes to the state and *status quo* are said to correspond to quite different models of art and cultural understanding. The faction which plots to 'level all the artificial institutions' employs a rhetoric which is a 'mere work of art;' it has no appreciation of virtue either in the 'reality' or in 'any image or representation,' and fails to appreciate that nobility is 'a graceful ornament to the civil order.' In this way, Burke's whole project is founded on an aesthetic nuance -- on the possibility of discriminating between an art which ornaments, embodies, and images existing institutions and virtues and that

'mere art' which not only disdains 'reality,' but threatens to return the earth to the 'void' which existed before God's creative fiat or to 'ruin' the 'face' of the land in a manner akin to God's vengeful Flood (compare Genesis 1: 1-4, and 7: 21-24).

(ii) Investing Sovereigns with English Crowns

Couched in the form of a letter, Burke's Reflections seems to enjoy the spontaneity and lack of formal structure granted to the epistle. Indeed, this is the way Burke would have his original correspondent read it: 'Indulging myself in the freedom of epistolary intercourse, I beg leave to throw out my thoughts, and express my feelings, just as they arise in my mind, with very little attention to formal method' (Reflections, p.92).³ Responding to this style, and displaying his own stylistic resources, Paine describes Burke's book as 'all Miscellany': 'His intention was to make an attack on the French Revolution; but instead of proceeding with an orderly arrangement, he has stormed it with a mob of ideas tumbling over and destroying one another' (Rights of Man, p.138). But I want to ask whether part of the persuasive effect of Burke's prose actually depends on its creating an illusion of 'artlessness' -- on giving the impression of a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings which are 'naturally' shared by his readers and 'necessarily' correspond to the customs and conventions of the society he defends because his nervous system remains in 'a healthful state of association.'⁴ We have seen how Burke's text and political system explicitly employs figurative strategies to give 'a body to opinion,' or to 'embody' institutions in 'persons' in order to promote the public advantage. These figures are introduced with decorous hesitance -- Burke begs leave to 'use the expression' (p.172) -- in order to dissociate them from

any sense of rhetorical (or political) abuse; in addition, these tropes have gained sanction because they have a long tradition and are introduced by a mind whose 'constitution' is supposed to be a microcosm of the constitution it defends. In this way, the rhetorical figures Burke employs have become 'second nature' (to him and to the state). Burke thus relies upon the distinctions (and his readers' ability to distinguish) between the natural artifice of the traditional state and the 'mere work of art' of revolutionary thought. And yet we will see that, both politically and rhetorically, these distinctions are less straightforward than Burke would wish; Burke's representation of French politics and language often appear uncomfortably akin to his image of the British state and the language used to establish its legitimacy. We will see that Burke's only remedy against such a catastrophic collapse of differences is a 'revolutionary' use of the doctrine of 'prescription' (which the OED defines as the process by which an 'uninterrupted use or possession from time immemorial, or for a fixed period by law [gives] a title or right' to a property).

It is important to remember that Reflections was written at a period of crisis in political representation.⁵ Numerous attempts had been made to extend Britain's notoriously limited franchise -- Burke, indeed, had written and spoken against any such extension and had even urged that it be limited even further.⁶ In addition, the virtual overthrow of the monarchy in France necessarily intensified reflections upon the 'natural' or 'lawful' status of Britain's monarchy in the aftermaths of the American Revolution and Regency crisis. The supposedly democratic representation of the National Assembly in France inevitably drew attention to the inequalities in representation in the House of Commons and to the non-elective status of the House of Lords. The signs and anxieties of this crisis are at work in a number

of interrelated themes in Reflections: the need to authenticate the British monarchy, constitution, and system of representation; the need to discredit the newly created National Assembly by contrasting it with the British parliament; the effort utterly to distinguish English economic practice from the French government's issuing millions of pounds worth of *assignats* -- a paper currency based on the confiscation of Church property -- in order to resolve economic crisis; and the attempt throughout Burke's 'letter' to differentiate between the 'fraudulent' language of revolution and the 'immutable' language of, for example, British parliamentary documents. This is not a random series of concerns; one of the arguments of this final part of my thesis is that there is not a chance relation between an anxiety over a king's or a parliament's right to represent a nation, a concern that paper currency might not be convertible into 'real' money, and the desire that language's representative power might not be perverted or undermined in any way. And if Burke's Reflections may therefore be thought of as a reaction to a crisis in representation *per se*, it is significant that Paine responds to Burke on all these fronts, reproducing the anxieties of Reflections but locating their source in opposite textual and political places.

For Burke, as the self-elected representative of the people of England,⁷ it becomes 'a domestic interest of some moment' to consider the implications of the Revolution and its doctrines for the British state (p.96). The first concern is to establish the lawfulness of the English monarchy, because if that is found to be unlawful then 'that great body of statute law' which monarchs have passed over the centuries becomes invalidated, annulled, or called into question (pp.107-108). That it has suddenly become urgent, or at least expedient, to defend the monarchy is attested to by Burke himself: 'A few years ago I should be ashamed to overload a matter, so capable of supporting itself, by the then unnecessary support of

any argument; but this seditious, unconstitutional doctrine is now publicly taught, avowed, and printed' (p.110). That concern with sedition -- i.e. with 'conduct or language inciting to rebellion against the constituted authority in a state' (OED) -- can be theorized, as Michael Ryan has done in a reading of Hobbes, in terms of a political anxiety about the proper meaning of words.²⁴ Working through Burke's defence of the English monarchical system, we can begin to see a similar dynamic at work; while the legitimacy of the British monarchy had, prior to the crisis precipitated by the French Revolution, seemed self-evident (it had stood without the aid of argument), so too, Burke seems to suggest, had the meaning of words remained proper and stable before the recent promulgation of 'unconstitutional doctrine.' Thus Burke resorts to an analogy which operates throughout the eighteenth century between Britain's constitution and the English language 'properly so-called,'²⁵ in which defence of the one entails and is promoted by the defence of the other.

The argument which Burke brings to monarchy's aid asserts that its legitimacy is derived, not from the choice of the people -- nor, incidentally, from divine right -- but through a 'fixed rule of succession, according to the laws of this country' (p.98). These 'laws' are authorized by reference to the written records of the legislature -- particularly to what Burke calls the 'Declaration of Right' (p.100).²⁶ Writing against Richard Price's assertion that in 1688 the English people acquired the right to choose their own governors, Burke reads that Revolution quite differently as precisely precluding any such thing and supports his reading by quoting from the 'Declaration of Right': "'The lords spiritual and temporal, and commons, do, in the name of all the people aforesaid, most humbly and faithfully submit *themselves, their heirs and posterities for ever*"' (pp.103-104). Burke reads this as proving that in the act of the restoration of William and Mary 'the English nation did at

that time most solemnly renounce and abdicate [the right to elect its kings], for themselves and for all their posterity for ever' (p.104).¹¹ The assumption that the people who drew up this document represented the nation both at that time and 'for ever' (that they could speak 'in the name of' future generations¹²), together with Burke's fetishization of these 'mouldy parchments,' is skillfully criticized in Rights of Man, where Paine asserts that a constitution is not like a fixed piece of writing which binds succeeding generations to the will of the dead but a process, requiring the consent of each subsequent generation, that is continually being reread and rewritten according to the changing historical circumstances of the living.¹³

Contending readings of the Revolution of 1688, which exercised political thinkers throughout the eighteenth century, are therefore given new urgency by the French Revolution; indeed much of Burke's defence of Reflections in An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs (1791) is taken up with a comparison between Reflections and Whig documents from the Revolution in an effort to demonstrate their doctrinal uniformity.¹⁴ Burke therefore warns his correspondent (and all his readers) against Richard Price's interpretation of 1688:

If you are desirous of knowing the spirit of our constitution, and the policy which predominated in that great period which has secured it to this hour, pray look for both in our histories, in our records, in our acts of parliament, and journals of parliament, and not in the sermons of the Old Jewry, and the after-dinner toasts of the Revolution Society. -- In the former you will find other ideas and another language (p.117).

Thus the struggle for a dominant reading of 1688 -- and therefore of 1789 -- takes place through the confrontation of one language, set of texts, and readings with another, and Burke leaves his readers in no doubt as to which is the more 'authentic' and authoritative: 'histories,'

'records,' and parliamentary 'journals' are contrasted with 'impious' sermons and 'after-dinner toasts.'

Paine makes comparable links between politics and style in language; contrasting the 'free, bold, and manly' language of the National Assembly with the language and manners of the English Parliament, he finds the latter 'evidently of the vassalage class,' showing nothing 'of the style of English manners, which border somewhat on bluntness' (Rights of Man, pp.112-13). This is part of Paine's effort, via the radical myth of the 'Norman Yoke,' to show that those who make up the English government are not native to England and therefore govern by imposition: 'Since they are neither of foreign extraction, nor naturally of English production, their origin must be sought for elsewhere, and that origin is the Norman Conquest' (p.113).¹⁵ But unlike Price, Paine does not think 1688 at all equivalent to 1789; on the contrary, he accepts Burke's reading of the Whig revolution in order to reject it as a radical moment: 'That this vassalage idea and style of speaking was not got rid of even at the Revolution of 1688, is evident from the declaration of Parliament to William and Mary, in these words: "We do most humbly and faithfully *submit* ourselves, our heirs and posterities, for ever"' (p.113). For Paine, after the American and French Revolutions have fully illuminated the world, people will not account 1688 a Revolution at all:

Mankind will then scarcely believe that a country calling itself free, would send to Holland for a man, and clothe him with power, on purpose to put themselves in fear of him, and give him almost a million sterling a year for leave to *submit* themselves and their posterity, like bond-men and bond-women, for ever (p.113).

A number of themes and problems are set in contention in these exchanges between Burke and Paine: the question of the representative status of the authors of the 'Declaration of Right' and the consequent authority of

that declaration (which leads on to more general questions about the representative status of various modes of government); indications that reading and language have become urgently political in the aftermath of the French Revolution;¹⁶ and the suggestion that power might be a form of *clothing* rather than something inherent and immutable (for Paine, ever alert to the price of things, William and Mary can be seen as a bad investment at 'almost a million sterling a year').

The potential paradox within Burke's argument for the legitimacy of the monarchy, however, is not only that the document on which it is based emerged from an English revolution and was, as Macaulay points out, strictly speaking a revolutionary document (see O'Brien, p.380, n.15), but also that, as Burke himself emphasizes, 'in the person of King William,' 'there was at the Revolution ... a small and a temporary deviation from the strict order of a regular hereditary succession' (p.101). Although he represses the 'revolutionary' status of the 'Declaration of Right,' and keeps out of sight the fact that, like his earlier namesake from Normandy, William of Orange actually invaded England in November 1688,¹⁷ this 'small' and 'temporary' deviation preoccupies Burke at some length. Interpreting the 'Declaration of Right' he notes that,

it is curious to observe how Lord Somers, who drew the bill called the Declaration of Right, has comported himself on that delicate occasion. It is curious to observe with what address this temporary solution of continuity is kept from the eye; whilst all that could be found in this act of necessity to countenance the idea of an hereditary succession is brought forward, and fostered, and made the most of, by this great man, and by the legislature who followed him. Quitting the dry, imperative style of an act of parliament, he makes the lords and commons fall to a pious, legislative ejaculation, and declare, that they consider it 'as a marvellous providence, and merciful goodness of God to this nation, to preserve their said majesties royal persons, most happily to reign over us

on the throne of their ancestors, for which, from the bottom of their hearts, they return their humblest thanks and praises' (p.102).¹⁰

Burke finds Lord Somers's actions 'curious' -- presumably in the sense of something worth seeing and taking note of. But Burke's comments are curious in a double sense in that they draw attention to those problems which the Declaration of Right would keep 'from the eye.' In observing how 'curious' it is to see Lord Somers comporting himself 'on that delicate occasion,' Burke points to these decorous efforts to keep the break in continuity from the eye as something worth seeing. But that it is a 'temporary solution of continuity' which must be concealed is also worth noticing, since a 'temporary solution' may have meant two quite opposite things for Burke's first readers: either that the problem was temporarily solved, or that the continuity was briefly dissolved (Locke wrote of 'Easie and frequent Solutions of Conjugal Society' [OED]). Burke, we assume, wants to assert that the Revolution solved the problems of the English succession, but he admits that the 'solution' represents its temporary dissolution. Burke therefore allows his readers to observe how Somers decorously keeps this dissolution in the succession from the eye of the beholder or reader. We are shown how the 'idea of an hereditary succession is brought forward' and 'made the most of' by Somers in switching from a 'dry' parliamentary style to a 'pious, legislative ejaculation' (whatever that might be). Pious rhetoric here becomes a kind of theatrical gesture to draw attention from the anomalies of the British constitution -- as we saw in Chapter 6, the law is never adequate in itself and is always in need of supplementation from sentiment or superstition.

It is possible to account for Burke's manoeuvres here by suggesting that if he tried to *completely* conceal the problems raised by 1688 he would leave his position vulnerable to radical criticism. Thus he makes a virtue

of necessity by showing that the 'people's' (or Somers's) intention was to establish a continuity which transcended the break represented by the investment of William and Mary. This idealist position was perhaps the only one Burke could take up in the circumstances. Just as a dressing draws attention to a wound as well as protecting it, Burke praises the skill Lord Somers displays in this critical juncture, and the efforts of parliament in following him: 'The two houses, in the act of king William threw a politic, well-wrought veil over every circumstance tending to weaken the rights, which in the meliorated order of succession they meant to perpetuate' (pp.102-103). It is impossible to decide whether Burke is being ironic here or not (one presumes he is not), but these passages do invite an ironic reading. This is one of the ways in which *Reflections* foregrounds the principles and ideology it was apparently meant to disguise and perpetuate, and hence, as we have seen, became the occasion of radical discourse's greatest flowering.¹⁷ But there is a second possible reading of Burke's sustained attention to the difficulties raised by the 'Glorious Revolution' which I will develop over the following pages.

Given the anxieties and themes that we have seen associated with the Burkean sublime, it is fascinating to see Burke's rationale for the procedures of the Whig politicians at the English Revolution:

Accordingly, that they might not relax the nerves of their monarchy, and that they might preserve a close conformity to the practice of their ancestors, as it appeared in the declaratory statutes of queen Mary and queen Elizabeth, in the next clause they vest, by recognition, in their majesties, all the legal prerogatives of the crown, declaring, 'that in them they are most fully, rightfully, and intirely invested, incorporated, united, and annexed' (p.103).

The investment of William and Mary here -- achieved through acts of recognition and declaration -- is couched in a way to bolster up the nerves of their majesties, and the language used is perhaps indicative of the Whigs own attack of nerves: 'most fully, rightfully, and intirely invested, incorporated, united, and annexed.' None of these last terms are synonymous, but instead of serving to cover all expediencies, they seem rather to at once bolster and undermine each other. The OED defines to invest as to 'clothe, cover, adorn;' 'to clothe with or in the insignia of an office or rank with the customary rites or ceremonies;' 'to endow or furnish with power, authority, or privilege.' But none of these meanings suggest that the figure being invested might have, or receive, any sovereignty in their own right; investment is, precisely, a supplement which brings into question the substance or adequacy of that which is being invested by seeking to strengthen the 'nerves' of a monarch otherwise susceptible to being disconcertingly relaxed. As if to anticipate this, the document adds 'incorporated,' suggesting that, rather than being merely a clothing, the investiture combines or unites the position and the man or woman into one body or substance -- that the monarch embodies the monarchy. But, not simply for good measure, the document adds 'united, and annexed' -- again an uneasy pairing: if to unite is to make one, to annex is to unite as an accessory, to append, to attach as an attribute, condition, or consequence (OED; to annex is also to affix a seal or signature, while an annex came to be used in 1861 as a supplementary building). The investiture of a monarch may therefore be seen as a *rhetorical* and *supplementary* gesture -- stratagems which suggest a certain misgiving about the status of monarchy in just those moments when they most strongly affirm it.²⁰

In fact, the 'Declaration of Right' which Burke makes so much of here employs performative utterances of the kind influentially discussed by J.L. Austin in How to do

Things with Words. Rather than simply describing or reporting what is true or what exists, the performative utterance is an action -- typically an act of declaration. Barbara Johnson develops a searching critique of Austin's category which has bearing on Burke's attempts to enlist these declarations of the dead in a contemporary crisis. Austin stresses that the performative must take place in a conventional manner, that it has a conventional effect (p.14), and that the 'circumstances' must be 'appropriate' (p.8). (It seems no coincidence that these are crucial catchwords for Burke.) Thus the declaration of right and the investment of William and Mary take place, as the OED puts it, with all the customary rites and ceremonies. But Austin's, and Burke's, emphasis on the importance of such forms -- and on the authority (p.28) and sincerity (p.15) of the utterer -- points to an ongoing problem for both. If, as Johnson argues, the performative is a self-referential speech act, it is also, she suggests, 'the production of a new referent into the world' (Critical Difference, p.57). Whether or not the speaker means what he or she says, therefore, the performative can have legal and political effects and must be strictly governed. In Burke's instance, 'The Declaration of Right' is effective as long as the people can be made to believe in it, while for Austin, it is crucial to differentiate between the performative and its theatrical reproduction on the stage (p.22). But the distinction between the performative and theatricality collapses, as Johnson points out, in Austin's crucial terms -- 'perform' and 'act' (Critical Difference, p.65). If this is so, Lord Somers's 'pious, legislative ejaculation' which Burke makes so much of appears to be merely the most explicitly theatrical moment of a costume drama meant to pre-empt rational enquiry into the defects of the English constitution.

Both Reflections and the 'Declaration of Right' call in earlier writings to authorize and bolster their claims

at crucial moments. Burke notes that in the wording of this document,

The legislature plainly had in view the act of recognition of the first of Queen Elizabeth, Chap.3rd, and that of James the First, Chap.1st, both acts strongly declaratory of the inheritable nature of the crown; and in many parts they follow, with a nearly literal precision, the words and even the form of thanksgiving, which is found in these old declaratory statutes (p.102).

The authority that would legitimate -- through 'declaration' -- the succession of the English monarchy therefore rests on precedent -- on a succession in language itself, 'repeating as from a rubric the language of the preceding acts of Elizabeth and James' (p.103). The preservation of the monarchical line becomes intimately bound up with that of the forms and meanings of language, and calls for proper readers and readings. But this is perhaps to undercut Burke's position, for what he calls 'the primitive language of the law' (p.115) becomes not the ground of authority but the scene where that authority continually shifts. These writings can never be original or authentic in their own right since their legitimacy is always founded in an earlier form:

Our oldest reformation is that of Magna Charta. You will see that Sir Edward Coke, that great oracle of our law, and indeed all the great men who follow him, to Blackstone, are industrious to prove the pedigree of our liberties. They endeavour to prove, that the antient charter, the Magna Charta of King John, was connected with another positive charter from Henry I. and that both the one and the other were nothing more than a re-affirmance of the still more antient standing law of the kingdom (pp.117-18).²¹

It seems that Burke would have it that these documents both introduced reforms and were no reforms at all, since English liberties derive from time immemorial and are recorded in documents emanating from a mythical and

unwritten past. Wollstonecraft attacks Burke precisely on this point: 'Will Mr. Burke be at the trouble to inform us, how far we are to go back to discover the rights of men ...? And is Magna Charta to rest for its chief support on a former grant, which reverts to another, till chaos becomes the base of the mighty structure' (Rights of Men, pp.13-14).²² But Burke's position may be read as a subtle version of one held by some of the principle legal thinkers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; for by at once employing written documents against radical thought and deriving their authority from an unwritten past, Burke presents statute law as supplementary to common law and gives precedence to unwritten customs supposedly practised time out of mind.²³

What Burke's history misses out, of course, is the invasion of William the Conqueror.²⁴ Burke does mention the conquest, but only in order to mention a complex legal argument about the principles of hereditary descent which arose 'some time after the conquest' (p.106); putting legal intricacies aside, he asserts, in an extraordinarily sophisticated way, that 'whoever came in, or however he came in, whether he obtained the crown by law, or by force, the hereditary succession was either continued or adopted' (p.107). In radicalism's own mythology, 1066 marked a break in English history between Anglo Saxon 'liberty' and the 'Norman Yoke' (whereas Burke affirms a continuity in the law before and after the invasion without actually confronting the problems of that invasion). That the glory of England's monarchy originates in invasion and usurpation is, for Paine, one of the '*shibboleths*' which Burke cannot pronounce, yet whose discontinuities nevertheless organize his text:

a monarchical reasoner never traces government to its source, or from its source. ... A certain something forbids him to look back to a beginning, lest some robber or some Robin Hood should rise from the long obscurity of time, and say, *I am the origin!* Hard as Mr

Burke laboured the Regency Bill and Hereditary Succession two years ago, and much as he dived for precedents, he still had not boldness enough to bring up William of Normandy, and say, *There is the head of the list! there is the fountain of honour!* the son of a prostitute, and the plunderer of the English nation (Rights of Man, p.140).²³⁵

His radical opponents therefore argue that Burke cannot trace the lineage of constitutional texts or kings to an original whose claim is indisputable -- William the Conqueror is said to be illegitimate in every sense.²³⁴ Hereditary succession originates, then, in a breach of succession. In fact, for Paine, usurpation is the general nature and origin of monarchy (and metaphor):

It could have been no difficult thing in the early and solitary ages of the world, while the chief employment of men was that of attending flocks and herds, for a banditti of ruffians to overrun a country, and lay it under contributions. Their power being thus established, the chief of the band contrived to lose the name of Robber in that of Monarch; and hence the origin of Monarchy and Kings.

...

As time obliterated the history of their beginning, their successors assumed new appearances ... but their principles and objects remained the same. What at first was plunder, assumed the foster name of revenue (pp.190-91).

In Rights of Man, then, the substitutive structure and effect of metaphor is not merely associated with monarchy but shares the same violent origin. For Burke, however, although we will see him admit that political institutions may have had violent beginnings, that is not a sufficient reason to overturn them. If Paine identifies the writings of the past as a violent usurpation of the rights of speech, there are parallels between Burke's advocacy of prescription in politics -- in which long and habitual usage is held to legitimize existing political arrangements and titles to property, however violent their

origin -- and his resistance to linguistic innovation.²⁷ That which was originally 'illegitimate' becomes a 'legitimate' order which it is then unlawful to overthrow. Hence to figure the state as a family and embody its institutions in persons has come to seem natural through custom; to represent it in more egalitarian ways can therefore be made to seem an alarming departure from habitual linguistic and political practices.

But for Paul Lucas (quoting Thomas Rutherford), Burke's use of the notion of prescription was itself a new departure in British thought; for most legal theorists prior to Burke, "No possession, though for a great length of time and without interruption, can give a right by prescription, if it began dishonestly." Length of time does not suffice to remove ignorance of fraud or fear of violence, for in such a case the owner did not intend to relinquish his right.²⁸ Lucas's argument as to why Burke should 'abuse' the meaning of 'prescription' in this way has a direct bearing on the previous discussion:

First of all, he wanted to legitimate certain historical facts -- large-scale violence and piecemeal usurpation -- within states as well as between them and yet keep peace within society: an argument from any conquest that was without a just cause could not do this job and, especially in England, the word 'conquest' bore the connotations of the 'Norman Yoke', which men might in a revolutionary way seek to overthrow. But if prescription could begin in violence and bad faith, then any historical fact could be legitimated by a wholesome passage of time ... and rights by conquest could be introduced within society without using the nasty word 'conquest' ('Burke's Doctrine of Prescription,' p.58).

We have seen that Burke virtually omits all mention of the Norman Conquest; at the same time, however, 1066 is so thoroughly 'disremembered' in the histories which Reflections employs to legitimate the British monarchy that there is no direct effort at all to meliorate it

through prescription. Instead, much is made of the rights of the Whig lawyers of 1688-89 to *prescribe* for (prescription can also mean that which prescribes or appoints beforehand) subsequent generations and of the grounding of the investiture of William and Mary in documents leading back into an immemorial past (prescription arose *in time* whereas custom was that which was thought to have existed since time immemorial ['Burke's Doctrine of Prescription,' p.58]). Thus although these documents do represent *prescriptions* to the future (their scripts pre-empt the rights of the English people to cashier their kings), they do not seem to be employed as examples of Burke's particular interpretation of the legal concept of prescription. We will see Burke attempt to use prescription as a flexible device; it is sometimes equated with custom (with procedures and beliefs existing since time immemorial), while at other times it refers to a process which takes place in time (and can thus mellow 'old' but rememberable violence into legality). In either case, Burke endorses the results of old violence by 'forgetting' it or by contrasting it with the new violence of the French Revolution. But prescription seems a double-edged resource since although it legitimates institutions which began in violence, it also draws attention to that violence. Rather than encouraging enquiry into 1066, then, Burke dwells at length on the 'prescriptions' of 1688 (the parliamentary documents it produced and is grounded in, and the legacy it left for the future). In emphasizing how Somers draws attention to the 'slight deviation' in succession in 1688 by keeping it from the eye, Burke effectively draws attention away from the violent genesis of the line which began in 1066.

(iii) Tending the Body Politic: Writing Prescriptions

One of the ways in which Burke seeks to distract attention from 1066 and discredit radical readings of 1688 is to fetishize the *forms* of monarchy and parliamentary language (fetishism being the worship of a representation in place of the represented²⁹); under the threat of revolutionary innovation the preservation of each depends on that of the other:

The law, which knows neither to flatter nor to insult, calls this high magistrate, not our servant, as this humble Divine [Richard Price] calls him, but 'our sovereign Lord the King;' and we, on our parts, have learned to speak only the primitive language of the law, and not the confused jargon of their Babylonian pulpits (p.115).³⁰

Associating the fall of language at Babel with the 'confused jargon' of revolutionary rhetoric, Burke has the British constitution defend itself against revolution and/or fallen language through recourse to its own pre-Babylonian writing -- the discourse of English law apparently having escaped that second fall.³¹ This traditional, if selective, reading of the Babel myth allows Burke to at once belittle radical aspirations and claim that the British constitution preserves and is preserved by an unfallen language.³² But this seems to mask what for Burke would be a more disturbing analogy between Babel and revolutionary Paris, for the confusion of languages at Babel comes as a *defence* of heaven against Babel's threat to 'the LORD' -- who perceives that if the people act as 'one' and with one language, 'nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do' (Genesis 11. 6-7). The fall of language at Babel can therefore be seen as God's intervention against a united social and linguistic community which threatens to usurp his authority and creative role. Burke's defence of a constitution perhaps similarly threatened, together with

the fiction of a primitive language prior to linguistic and sexual fall, is maintained by a certain reticence of interpretation: 'I never desire ... to read in the declaration of right any mysteries unknown to those whose penetrating style has engraved in our ordinances, and in our hearts, the words and spirit of that immortal law' (p.104).³³³ Prelapsarian discourse is thus figured as authoritarian, univocal, and not to be contended with (yesterday's truths are resurrected to serve as today's); it is therefore quite different to the generative and revolutionary language which the Babel myth at once announces and confuses. Burke's figuration of revolutionary language as a 'confused jargon of ... Babylonian pulpits' seems to reveal, then, in that very gesture, fear of an unrestrained people and of a language which seems capable of instituting whatever those people imagine to do.

Burke becomes the representative reader, reading for the people and never presuming 'to understand the principles of the Revolution better than those by whom it was brought about' (p.104). Such apparent humility, however, exposes a relation between language, reading, and political power; for Burke's law of reading is also a reading of the law:

the succession of the crown has always been what it now is, an hereditary succession by law: in the old line it was a succession by the common law; in the new by the statute law, operating on the principles of the common law, not changing the substance, but regulating the mode, and describing the persons. Both these descriptions of law are of the same force, and are derived from an equal authority, emanating from the common agreement and original compact of the state (p.105).

'Statute law' is therefore said to be continuous with, and part of, 'common law' -- which is itself derived from the original, unwritten and hence, presumably, 'natural' social contract. Burke therefore works to establish the

continuity in English law through the various political upheavals of British history. Through such long-lived continuity the law has become part of our nature, either through a process akin to prescription or because it retains traces of its 'natural' origins. Either way, Burke seeks to establish that English law has never deviated from nature; if it is a necessary supplement, it is a well-tried one which, on the whole, produces benefits for the social organism.

Burke strives, therefore, to discover continuity and unbroken succession in all aspects of the British state. Still worrying at the problem of the Restoration, his rhetoric can sound like Pythagorean sophistry: 'the inheritable principle,' he writes, 'survived with a sort of immortality through all transmigrations' (p.107). Succession itself succeeds; the way things are is therefore the way they 'should' be -- the way they always were.³⁴ To establish such continuity, Burke has recourse to a set of metaphors that have a long pedigree themselves: 'The crown was carried somewhat out of the line in which it had before moved; but the new line was derived from the same stock' (p.106). In evoking such horticultural metaphors, Burke argues that nothing alien has been added to the crown's line of succession, that even foreign scions are of 'the same stock': 'The Princess Sophia was named,' he writes, 'for a stock and root of inheritance to our kings' (p.109). Later, reworking the metaphor, Burke claims that

The very idea of the fabrication of a new government, is enough to fill us with disgust and horror. We wished at the period of the Revolution, and do now wish, to derive all we possess as an inheritance from our forefathers. Upon that body and stock of inheritance we have taken care not to inoculate any cyon alien to the nature of the original plant (p.117).

Burke's 'disgust and horror' at the fabrication of a new government is especially interesting here in terms of the alternative he proposes. The state is figured as a 'plant' which the people inherit from their forefathers; whenever any reform has been necessary the 'cyon' has been carefully selected -- care has been taken not to graft from alien plants or inoculate substances which might imperil the system (and by the second half of the eighteenth century inoculate meant both to bud or graft one part of a plant into, on, or upon another for the purposes of propagation, and to impregnate [a person or animal] with the virus or germs of a disease in order to render the subject immune [OED]). That grafting is an art, an artifice (horticulture and medicine are cultural practices), shows that Burke does not contrast revolutionary 'artifice' with 'nature' in a simplistic way; instead, he distinguishes between natural and unnatural (health-inducing and disease-provoking) artifice. But although Shakespeare -- who also wrote extensive reflections of the nature of the English monarchy -- has a character assert that the 'art' of grafting is 'itself ... Nature' (Winter's Tale, IV, iv, 97), the relation between art and nature would seem more complex than that (for Burke, 'Art is man's nature'³³). For grafting always introduces something from the outside, something alien, in order to propagate (or protect) an otherwise barren or endangered organism; the alien graft is the very condition of the original plant's healthy being and determines the nature of the fruit the union is expected to produce.³⁴ The danger for Burke -- as physician or gardener of the state -- is that, in grafting these figures into his discourse, he reveals how the monarchy he defends, and the language he defends it with, relies upon an artifice which can only problematically be distinguished from his description of revolutionary thought by calling the one 'natural' artifice and the other 'mere' artifice.

As one might expect, Burke's discussion of the action to be taken 'in cases of extreme emergency' conforms to his medical and horticultural prudence:

Even in that extremity (if we take the measure of our rights by our exercise of them at the Revolution) the change is to be confined to the peccant part only; to the part which produced the necessary deviation; and even then it is to be effected without a decomposition of the whole civil and political mass, for the purposes of originating a new civil order out of the first elements of society (pp.105-106).

Burke therefore seeks to avoid radical revolution at all costs -- never uprooting the plant, always grafting and clipping. He is horrified by the idea of a complete new beginning, and clings to the idea that the peccant (i.e. sinning, morbid, disease-inducing) part might be removed without affecting the whole. Thus disease is thought of in localized terms; the peccant part is not symptomatic of, or a metaphor for, a more radical malaise and may be removed without affecting the whole, just as a graft may be added from the outside without destroying the organism. In one sense, this contradicts Burke's organic view of the state; if parts may be added to or subtracted from the state without impairing or altering it in any essential way, then the state must be organized differently than an organism. Political 'disease' in this model comes from the outside and affects only the 'extremities' of the state; the remedy likewise is brought in from without as a fortifying supplement. Thus Burke's attempt to allay the fear that disease or deviation (or conquest) might lie at the 'heart' or 'origin' of his 'healthy' state undoes the organicist model he seeks to promote.

But it is possible to read Burke's text as suggesting that the 'legitimacy' of any government's 'birth' might always be in question -- that prescription is all that differentiates Britain from revolutionary France:

If they had set up this new experimental government as a necessary substitute for an expelled tyranny, mankind would anticipate the time of prescription, which, through long usage, mellows into legality governments that were violent in their commencement. All those who have affections which lead them to the conservation of civil order would recognize, even in its cradle, the child as legitimate, which had been produced from those principles of cogent expediency to which all just governments owe their birth, and on which they justify their continuance. But they will be late and reluctant in giving any sort of countenance to the operations of a power, which has derived its birth from no law and no necessity; but which on the contrary has had its origin in those vices and sinister practices by which the social union is often disturbed and sometimes destroyed (p.276).

Paul Lucas suggests that Burke's use of prescription is, paradoxically, an important aspect of his 'originality;' despite his claims to the contrary, Burke's 'conception of prescription ... attacked the natural and common laws,' and 'revolutionized the meaning of prescription' ('Burke's Doctrine of Prescription,' pp.35-36). This is because, as we have seen, Burke breaks with the idea that prescription could only make possession legitimate if it had began in good faith:

Only once, early in his career, in 1772, did Burke clearly concede that 'prescription can only attach on a supposed *bona fide* possession'. Even then, he qualified his concession out of existence, and the principles of good faith and just title as the basis of prescription never again appeared in Burke's writings, except to deny the good faith of the French revolutionists. With respect to property, Burke wrote:
 'Prescription ... gives right and title. It is possible that many estates were obtained by arms; ... but it is old violence; and that which might be wrong in the beginning is consecrated by time and becomes lawful'
 ('Burke's Doctrine of Prescription,' p.40).

Conceived in vice, in peccancy, the National Assembly is said to be illegitimate and deserving of no recognition from those governments which, though their own birth might have been similarly violent or dubious, have mellowed 'into legality' through time. Yet although his interpretation of prescription seems tailor-made to preemptively disable radicalism's use of 1066 as a means of questioning the legality of the British monarchy in 1790, Burke, as we have seen, completely evades the issue of 1066. Instead, his emphasis centres on 1688 which, in substituting a benevolent monarchy for a 'tyranny,' is said to be in no way similar to the unjustifiable removal in France of a benevolent monarchy by what promises to be a tyrannical regime. By focussing on 1688, then, Burke draws attention from the 'old violence' of 1066 as if to avoid having to confront the idea that England's constitution originates not in an unbroken line which recedes into the mists of the past but in a historical discontinuity even more radical than the French Revolution. Burke needs to do this because the Norman Conquest was effected through an invasion by an alien force which placed a monarch on the throne of England whose 'illegitimate' birth seems to 'embody' the notion that England's royal line began 'in those vices and sinister practices by which the social union is often disturbed and sometimes destroyed.' As 'physician of the state' (p.284), Burke prescribes prescription (a direction or formula written by a physician) against a French disease England had suffered in its 'infancy': 'An irregular, convulsive movement may be necessary to throw off an irregular, convulsive disease. But the course of succession is the healthy habit of the British constitution' (p.109). Yet 1066 remains a blind spot in Reflections -- an irregular, convulsive movement which, rather than throwing off an irregular, convulsive disease constitutes both a rupture in, and the origin of, 'the healthy habit of the British constitution.'

(iv) Burke's Prescription Against Nature and the Rights of Men

For Burke, one of the inherent contradictions of revolutionary thought which would render whatever they attempted to establish unworkable, was implicit in the very doctrine by which it disestablished the *ancien régime*. By instructing the people 'that almost the whole system of landed property in its origin is feudal; that it is the distribution of the possessions of the original proprietors, made by a barbarous conqueror to his barbarous instruments' (p.346), Burke believes that the Revolution has armed the people with a doctrine which can and will be turned against it when it tries to implement any measures, such as the collection of rents and taxes, which the people might wish to resist. The political insight given to the people of France will render them intractable:

they find that men are equal; They find, that by the laws of nature the occupant and subduer of the soil is the true proprietor; that there is no prescription against nature; and that the agreements (where any there are) which have been made with their landlords, during the time of slavery, are only the effect of duress and force They will tell you that they see no difference between an idler with a hat and a national cockade, and an idler in a cowl or in a rochet (p.346).³⁷

If, as Burke says earlier in the text, 'there can be no prescription' against 'the rights of men' (p.148), he reveals in these passages the absolute danger the Revolution represents, not only to its own efforts to reconstruct France but to any social system grounded in prescription. By exposing prescriptive property and institutions to nature and the rights of man, the Revolution has not only destroyed the *ancien régime* but

the very means by which the institutions it creates and the property it distributes might have mellowed into legality. More immediately, for Burke, the French Revolution has also exposed those 'vices and sinister practices' which form the very origin of the political system he defends, leaving him with no alternative but to occlude them ⁱⁿ the mists of time or make them 'legitimate' (even though he realizes that there is no prescription against the radical 'disease' emanating from the National Assembly) through invoking his revision of the concept of prescription.

As in the Enquiry and throughout Reflections Burke once again struggles with the irresolvable confrontation of reason and aesthetics, and once again the sublime is used to fend off that which has the power to most thoroughly deflate it. For the effectiveness of prescription relies on the deflection of rational enquiry through sentiment, imagination, and accumulated associations through time. Lucas shows how prescription draws on and revises the early aesthetics:

To any reader who has reflected upon the Reflections, it comes as a surprise to discover that nowhere does Burke's early aesthetic theory treat of the relationship between time and the sublime: nowhere does duration form an element of the intensity, awe, reverence, and respect ... of the sublime. The early Burke clearly related the sublime to infinite eternity; the later Burke, seemingly to prescriptive duration ('Burke's Doctrine of Prescription,' p.60).

Despite his misgivings, and although there is no prescription against radical reason, prescription, prejudice, and custom -- which are now incorporated into the sublime rather than being inimical to it -- remain the only preventatives in Burke's pharmacy. There are two ways in which Burke modifies his own formulation of prescription to meet the emergency. He reaffirms the principle of inheritance -- of continuity with the past --

not only with regard to kingship and language but to all facets of the British constitution: 'We have an inheritable crown; an inheritable peerage; and an house of commons and a people inheriting privileges, franchises, and liberties, from a long line of ancestors' (p.119). These 'liberties' are treated as 'an *entailed inheritance*' of the people as a whole rather than of a privileged few: they are 'an estate specially belonging to the people of this kingdom without any reference to any other more general or prior right' (p.119); hence Burke makes it seem against the people's own interests to enquire any further into abstract theories of prior or general rights. He also strays from the letter of the law in order to preserve its spirit by conflating prescription with custom: 'Our constitution is a prescriptive constitution; it is a constitution whose sole authority is that it has existed time out of mind.'³⁰ By putting the violent origins of the English constitution 'out of mind' Burke characteristically chooses to invoke the 'healing' forces of faith, love, and reverence rather than risk provoking rational enquiry.

Succession becomes the constitutive principle of the state: 'By this means our constitution preserves an unity in so great a diversity of its parts' (p.119). But this is not, Burke argues, merely a principle of internal consistency, but demonstrates 'a conformity to nature in our artificial institutions' (p.121) -- placing 'our political system ... in a just correspondence and symmetry with the order of the world' (p.120). This is because, guided 'by the spirit of philosophic analogy,'

By a constitutional policy, working after the pattern of nature, we receive, we hold, we transmit our government and our privileges, in the same manner in which we enjoy and transmit our property and our lives. ... In this choice of inheritance we have given to our frame of polity the image of a relation in blood; binding up the constitution of our country with our dearest domestic ties; adopting our

fundamental laws into the bosom of our family affections (p.120).

Michael Freeman has pointed out the problematic grounds of one part of this 'philosophic analogy' by reminding us that 'the manner in which we enjoy and transmit our property is a matter of law and tradition,' and that Burke therefore justifies 'one tradition by another' rather than by nature. Yet Freeman finds that the extension of the analogy to the way in which we transmit 'our lives,' makes 'this appeal to nature ... not vacuous' because that manner 'is biological, not traditional' (Critique of Political Radicalism, p.19, p.20). But what this endorsement fails to ask is whether the analogy has any validity, and what the politics are of equating the laws of property inheritance with biological reproduction -- especially given the distribution of wealth in Burke's particular historical context. Biological reproduction in any society, though it might be 'natural,' receives its meanings and significance through the cultural figurations it receives -- which in turn depend on the ideological function it fulfills. Burke's claim needs, rather, to be read as a certain rhetorical move -- *giving* 'to our frame of polity the *image* of a relation in blood,' and 'adopting' (and we should recognize that this figure undercuts the emphasis on genetic relationship) 'our fundamental laws into the bosom of the family affections.' Although these passages suggest that 'nature' is an a priori 'pattern' which artificial institutions simply conform to, we have seen that it is also resorted to, in the last extremity, as a supplement to reason (which is thought to be at once inadequate and particularly dangerous when it stands alone):

Through the same plan of a conformity to nature in our artificial institutions, and by calling in the aid of her unerring and powerful instincts, to fortify the fallible and feeble contrivances of our reason, we have derived several other, and those no small

benefits, from considering our liberties in the light of an inheritance (p.121).

Nature here -- both 'pattern' and 'aid' -- is at once the model for and the supplement of Britain's artificial institutions. At the same time it is admitted that the 'benefits' which ensue from this are gained through adopting a particular way of seeing or thinking -- through a rhetorical ploy which 'considers' liberties as inheritable property. Such 'natural instincts' alliteratively 'fortify the fallible and feeble contrivances of ... reason,' yet we can read that benign augmentation as working like the sublime to 'anticipate' reason and render it fallible and feeble. For although Burke suggests that to adopt inheritance as the unifying principle of political institutions 'appears to me to be the result of profound reflection,' he immediately qualifies this by saying that it is 'rather the happy effect of following nature, which is wisdom without reflection, and above it' (p.119).

(v) Reflections upon Revolution and Reform

The crisis in representation precipitated by the French Revolution seems most aptly exemplified by the problems that Burke claims to encounter when trying to represent the event itself. Burke found, or wanted his readers to believe, that the Revolution -- because it transgressed classical genres -- was literally unclassifiable. Although he claims that 'we are now in a condition to discern, with tolerable exactness, the true nature of the object held up to our imitation,' 'the French Revolution [remains] the most astonishing that has hitherto happened in the world' (Reflections, p.92). In the absence of any precedent -- the only sure ground of action for Burke -- discourse lacks a model upon which to form appropriate figures for this unforeseeable event. And yet Reflections

generates a plethora of memorable images of the Revolution's inexplicable nature. As a rebellion without a cause, without a ground in nature, it can only be accounted for in superstitious terms and takes on a mystical aura; it has elevated men from 'the humblest rank' 'as it were, by enchantment' (p.130). In a private letter the Revolution is 'this strange, nameless, wild, enthusiastic thing,' and in the second Letter on a Regicide Peace it has become, echoing Hamlet, a 'questionable shape.'³⁹ Like the ghost of Hamlet's father, the Revolution elicits questions (about what it is and how it came to be) which it never fully answers;⁴⁰ both inviting and resisting rational enquiry, it remains a questionable shape. By obscuring its origins and making it unknowable, then, Burke effectively takes the Revolution out of history and discourse through exploiting aesthetic categories developed in his Enquiry.⁴¹

We have seen that the one thing Burke seems confident the French Revolution is not like is the English Revolution of 1688, and it is revealing to examine the grounds of this distinction. 'The Revolution,' writes Burke, referring to the English event, 'was made to preserve our antient indisputable laws and liberties, and that antient constitution of government which is our only security for law and liberty' (p.117). Revolution in the English sense preserves and reforms, whereas 'the arbitrary assembly of France ... commence their schemes of reform with abolition and total destruction' (p.279). If these different kinds of reform are therefore distinguished as the different inflexions of the supplement are, it is striking that they also relate, as we saw in Chapter 2, to the way Burke's aesthetics differentiates between wholesome work and dissolute activity: avoiding that 'amiable conflict with difficulty,' which 'strengthens our nerves and sharpens our skill,' 'the arbitrary republic of Paris' is the inevitable result of the same 'degenerate fondness for

tricking short-cuts, and little fallacious facilities, that ... created the late arbitrary monarchy of France' (pp.278-79). That the Revolution has energy is granted, but in that it avoids the difficulty and sustained effort involved in building, it is feminized and likened to the arbitrariness of the monarchy it overthrew.⁴² To destroy, Burke warns, is all too easy:

Your mob can do this as well at least as your assemblies. ... Rage and phrenzy will pull down more in half an hour, than prudence, deliberation, and foresight can build up in a hundred years. The errors and defects of old establishments are visible and palpable. It calls for little ability to point them out; and where absolute power is given, it requires but a word wholly to abolish the vice and the establishment together. The same lazy but restless disposition ... directs these politicians, when they come to work, for supplying the place of what they have destroyed. To make everything the reverse of what they have seen is quite as easy as to destroy (pp.279-80).

In representing traditional political arrangements as disclosing their 'defects' for all to see, Burke contradicts his earlier emphasis on the necessity of concealing those defects. Yet in pointing to the fragility of old establishments he seems to make them both vulnerable and venerable. This enables him to emotively condemn destructive reform as being all too easy; in contrast, the kind of reform which at once preserves and improves calls for steadfast effort and skill:

At once to preserve and to reform is quite another thing. When the useful parts of an old establishment are kept, and what is superadded is to be fitted to what is retained, a vigorous mind ... and the resources of an understanding fruitful in expedients are to be exercised ... in a continued conflict with the combined force of opposite vices; with the obstinacy that rejects all improvement, and the levity that is fatigued and disgusted with every thing of which it is in possession (p.280).

This might be seen as an idealized characterization of Burke's own life-work; Burke sees himself as a reformer constantly in conflict with two sets of forces (those who resist all innovation and those who seek absolute innovation) which, he suggests, are in unwitting collusion. Thus the state has continuously to be shored up against the inevitable ruin which either or both these forces would entail; the only beneficial political activity is the expedient use of expedients, the continuous 'fitting' of carefully chosen supplements to preserve 'the useful parts' of the 'old establishments.' In Burke's own aesthetic terms, this is a masculine labour fending off the debilitating 'obstinacy' and 'levity' of those who would avoid all constructive effort and so destroy the state either through self-satisfied mediocrity or through envious malignity.

The French Revolution, on the other hand, provides an exemplary model of a reckless substitution of old establishments with arbitrary institutions; eager to effect changes which require 'but a word,' it destroys the body of the state along with its vices. A few pages earlier, Burke figures this as a kind of careless writing, finding himself unable to 'conceive how any man can have brought himself to that pitch of presumption, to consider his country as nothing but *carte blanche*, upon which he may scribble whatever he pleases' (p.266). Burke's conception of the state is quite different; rather than a *tabula rasa*, it is composed of the writings of the past which successive generations have worked upon and bequeathed to the present as a kind of family business: 'Society is indeed a contract. . . . a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born' (pp.194-95).⁴³

It is therefore of the utmost importance to differentiate that reform which is good for the business of the state from that which is destructive of all

political economy. Adapting Derrida, sound reform 'adds itself ... [as a] surplus, a plenitude enriching another plenitude,' participating in an ongoing 'cumulating' activity, while unsound reform 'intervenes or insinuates itself *in-the-place-of*; if it fills, it is as if one fills a void' (Of Grammatology, pp.144-45). The labour of Burke's text is, as we have seen repeatedly in various forms, utterly to distinguish between these different models of reform or revolution. In this, Burke seems to anticipate Macaulay's theory that the first kind of revolution protects the state against the second: 'because we had a preserving revolution in the seventeenth century ... we have not had a destroying revolution in the nineteenth.'⁴⁴ Thus while there are political and economic motivations behind Burke's distinction between the English and French Revolutions, the terms in which he is compelled to make them help us understand the peculiar contradictions of his text; for if, as Derrida argues, the 'second signification of the supplement cannot be separated from the first' (Of Grammatology, p.145), then we can see both significations surreptitiously at work within each of Burke's models of revolution. Revolution and reform become 'inflexions' of each other and confound Burke's attempt to geographically divide the 'preserving' from the 'destroying' concept of revolution by the 'slender dyke of about twenty-four miles' (p.180) which separates France and England.

Paine reads the relation between these two kinds of revolution in a similar way to Burke, but from a different stance: the Revolution of 1688 'is already on the wane, eclipsed by the enlarging orb of reason, and the luminous revolutions of America and France' (Rights of Man, p.113). Paine attempts to radically rewrite the connotations of 'revolution':

What we now behold, may not improperly be called a 'counter-revolution.' Conquest and tyranny, at some early period, dispossessed

man of his rights, and he is now recovering them. And as the tide of all human affairs has its ebb and flow in directions contrary to each other, so also it is in this. Government founded on a *moral theory, on a system of universal peace, on the indefeasible hereditary Rights of Man*, is now revolving from west to east, by a stronger impulse than the government of the sword revolved from east to west (pp.183-84).

Thus Paine seems uneasy with the notion of revolution as a radical break with the past; aristocratic government originates in a violent revolution which 'dispossessed man of his [original] rights,' and the revolutions of America and France simply restore those rights. Increasingly in Paine's discourse, it is government which has effects strikingly akin to the dangerous aspect of the supplement, undermining and debilitating that which it claims to uphold. In the opening chapter of the second part of Rights of Man, Paine moves on from a defence of revolutionary government to suggest that it would be best if there were no government at all. This is because human beings, through the diversity of their wants and through the social affections 'Nature' has implanted in them, are naturally social creatures and society is a natural organization composed of reciprocal wants and interests -- a self-regulating organism usually harmed by the unnecessary addition of government (pp.185-87):

But how often is the natural propensity to society disturbed or destroyed by the operations of government! When the latter, instead of being ingrafted on the principles of the former, assumes to exist for itself, and acts by partialities of favour and oppression, it becomes the cause of the mischiefs it ought to prevent (p.187).

What is at stake here is an ideological struggle between different concepts of revolution (and of government). For Burke, good revolution reforms and preserves, while bad revolution destroys that which sustains society by

replacing it with forms and practices inimical to the social fabric. For Paine, monarchical government is the original usurping revolution over the people, while republican revolution is a counter-revolution back towards nature and the original rights of man.

'Revolution' therefore takes its place among the 'essentially contested concepts' of the Revolution controversy of the early 1790s. At this historical juncture the term 'revolution' allows two significations at one and the same time: in the eighteenth century, 'revolution' retained its sense, taken from celestial motions, of rotation, of the recurrence or return of a point in time, and (in 1784) of the recurrence or repetition of a day, event, or occupation. But 'revolution' also had, early on, the meaning of a great change in affairs -- which came to mean 'a complete overthrow of the established government in any country or state by those who were previously subject to it' (OED). The sense of 'return' is politicized, as we have seen, in the idea that 1688 was a *renovation* (of the monarchy, of imperilled rights). Williams plots the shifts in the meaning of 'revolution' and shows that, 'the transfer ... from a circular movement to a rising' one began at least as early as the sixteenth century and was affected by the closeness of 'revolt' and by 'the important image of the Wheel of Fortune,' which provided a way of accounting for the rise and fall of the great (Keywords, pp.270-71). Although the radical sense of revolution, 'already well established in revolt, began to come through ... from eC17, ... there was enough overlap with older ways of seeing change to make most early examples ambiguous' (p.271). Williams allows us to see that Burke's understanding of 1688 was inherited from the 'old' Whigs's reading of the seventeenth century: 'Indeed the most fascinating aspect of this complex of words, in C17, is that Cromwell's revolution was called, by its enemies, the *Great Rebellion*, while the relatively minor events of 1688

were called by their supporters the Great and eventually the *Glorious Revolution*' (pp.271-72). But although this means that 'revolution ... was still the more generally favourable word' because it 'implied a restoration or renovation of an earlier lawful authority, as distinct from action against authority without such justification' (p.272), we have seen that Burke needs, in 1790, to redefine the distinctions between each kind of revolution:

These gentlemen of the Old Jewry, in all their reasonings on the Revolution of 1688, have a revolution which happened in England about forty years before, and the late French revolution, so much before their eyes, and in their hearts, that they are constantly confounding all the three together. It is necessary that we should separate what they confound (Reflections, pp.99-100).⁴⁵

For although 1688 dominated the sense of 'revolution' in the eighteenth century, Williams tells us that 'there was renewed cause for distinction between rebellion and revolution, according to point of view, in the rising and declaration of independence of the American states' (p.272):

It was in this state of interaction between the words that the specific effects of the French Revolution made the modern sense of revolution decisive. The older sense of a restoration of lawful authority, though used in occasional justification, was overridden by the sense of necessary innovation of a new order, supported by the increasingly positive sense of PROGRESS. ... Of course the sense of achievement of the ORIGINAL rights of man was also relevant. This sense of making a new human order was always as important as that of overthrowing an old order (p.273).

Ronald Paulson traces out some of the multiple accents of the term 'revolution' in the years immediately prior to and after the fall of the Bastille (see Representations of Revolution, pp.41-56). He refers to Napoleon's frustration at what he saw as the failure of

the English ever to clearly distinguish between reform and revolution, since they continued to see revolution as 'a mere reform of abuses,' rather than constituting 'all in itself, a complete social rebirth' (p.51).⁴⁶ But whether this was generally so or not, we have seen that both Burke and Paine, though from different perspectives, make clear distinctions between 1688 and 1789 and make them precisely in terms of reforming and radical revolution. For Paine, to reform is to disguise and reinforce a system that is already a revolutionary usurpation of the rights of men, while true revolution overturns the old order and replaces it with something 'original' (sometimes in the sense of something entirely new, sometimes in the sense of that which originally existed). The organizing anxiety of Burke's text is to privilege one kind of revolution over another and therefore to clearly differentiate 'preserving' and 'destroying' definitions of the term (he refuses to grant that the Revolution might regenerate society -- except in the sense that it will return human beings to barbarity). Burke's distinctions depend on the possibility that the different connotations of a word can be isolated from each other -- that there can be a reforming revolution apart from the upheaval or explosion of radical revolution. This is to yearn for a language, as well as a politics, which is natural and which adds itself to nature -- a language which can be distinguished from that usurping language which supplants and displaces nature. But if this represents a peculiarly apt dramatization of Derrida's production of the supplement's logic, then the attempt to preserve language from its subversive and seditious impulse seems a conservative dream to which the revolution gave a nasty turn.

One of the most suggestive aspects of this struggle is that it should be for this particular word. If 'trope,' coming from the Greek *tropos*, is figuratively 'to turn,' then an implicit analogy exists between 'trope' and 'revolution.'⁴⁷ In Burke, both revolution and radical

rhetoric overturn the benevolent artifice that has become 'second nature' in traditional societies and returns society to a pre-civilized state of nature. In Paine, both monarchy and metaphor are 'improper' impositions upon society, turning it against nature.⁴⁸ If Burke claims that the hereditary and hierarchical principle of the British state is patterned after nature (pp.120-21), Paine asserts that

[monarchy] is a mode of government that counteracts nature. It turns the progress of the human faculties upside down. It subjects age to be governed by children, and wisdom by folly.

On the contrary, the representative system is always parallel with the order and immutable laws of nature (Rights of Man, pp.204-205).

The 'conservative' model of the trope assumes that it turns away from that which is troped only in order to turn back towards it -- that it is a 'detour to truth' (Spivak, introduction to Of Grammatology, p.lxxiv), preserving meaning in a new form, presenting 'what oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed.' This would be an imitation of nature which never really deviates from that which it represents -- at once reforming and preserving the literal or the natural. A more 'radical' understanding of the trope is that it turns away from, or *overturns*, the literal -- or even, if 'there is no pure language that is free from metaphor' (Spivak, p.lxxiv), that it defers the very possibility of the literal. The difference between these two models of rhetoric might therefore be akin to that between a preserving and a destroying revolution -- which is itself analogous to the attempt to discriminate between different aspects of the supplement. But as in the case of the supplement, the distinction between proper and improper rhetoric is a problematic one: if a trope is 'a figure of speech which consists in the use of a word or phrase in a sense other than that which is proper to it'

(OED), then the very notion of proper language comes into question (and with it the related concepts of property and propriety⁴⁹). It might be -- as in Rousseau's Essay on the Origin of Languages -- that the figurative precedes the literal, that nature is not a pre-existing reality which language simply refers to (pp.12-13).⁵⁰ Neither Burke nor Paine would unreservedly subscribe to such an idea; neither abandons the notion of proper meanings, and neither wishes to confront the possibility that society cannot be arranged in a 'natural' manner. Both strive to eliminate such dark thoughts from their own system by locating them in the text of the other. In this sense, both texts remain 'conservative' in that they appear to shun the possibility of a radical disjunction between language and nature or the idea that language might constitute the way we perceive nature.

There is no space here to undertake the extended exegesis which would be necessary to investigate the interrelation of political and rhetorical structures in Rights of Man or to examine how Paine's employment of 'natural' metaphors is used to underpin, even as it undercuts, his attacks on the deceptive uses of metaphor in monarchical societies and on the 'unnatural' imposition which monarchy represents for him. I shall therefore limit my discussion to similar contradictions in Burke. We have seen in Chapter 3 that, in the Enquiry, while the sublime and beautiful in nature are supposed to affect the human subject through the senses and according to the physical qualities of the objects themselves, the sublime and the beautiful in literature are achieved because language's *conventional* quality allows it to exceed and negate nature and natural objects. In Reflections, however, Burke employs a seemingly different language model when expedient. The 'primitive language of the law' apparently seeks to equate the lawful and the natural, and sees the relation between words and things or ideas as fixed; the 'primitive' meanings of the past are inherited

whole and entire by each succeeding generation (whose duty is to conform to and preserve them for posterity). The difference between these two theories of how language operates corresponds to the difference in the way the Enquiry accounts for aesthetic responses in nature and in language. Natural objects are said to affect through the direct effect of their physical properties on the perceiving subject, while words achieve power through custom. In the Enquiry, then, as we began to explore in the conclusion of Chapter 6, the meanings and connotations of words (their properties) are not inherited in the same way that property is inherited; on the contrary, unlike landed property in particular, the properties of words -- connotations accrued from ritual or customary usages -- may be transferred to places and occasions quite alien to their 'original' context. Thus the power of words is made possible because their properties are, as Patricia Parker suggests, more akin to theatrical properties than to 'real property' (Literary Fat Ladies, pp.36-38). The language of power -- language at its most powerful -- therefore functions in an entirely different way than the power of the land (a disjunction which, as we will see, Burke finds exploited in radical discourse). This model of language seems disconcertingly similar to Burke's characterization of the radical rhetoric he would *deport* as alien to British soil and to his own textual strategies. The effects and implications of this uneasy kinship seem to emerge in those moments when Burke's text seeks most energetically to distinguish itself from and to condemn 'French' practices. Burke is therefore thrown back on two quite different expedients, sometimes invoking the primitive language of the law, sometimes having recourse to the notion of 'decorum.' Yet his own rhetorical theory and practice undercut both models of language which these expedients are based upon; for in the Enquiry, words have neither a motivated nor a decorative relation to nature -- neither natural nor an ornamental addition, they take the

place of, and improve upon, nature and the 'thing itself.' In Reflections, then, against its claims to the contrary, even (or perhaps especially) the primitive language of the law gains power and authority through exploiting associations accumulated through the centuries.

We will see that, just as his theory and practice of language entails something quite different from the presentation by words of a picture of reality, so in politics Burke understands by representation something quite different from the representation of the opinions or interests of the electorate. Burke discards this model of representation as an undue constraint on the politician-author -- limitations of political and poetic power which leave the politician dependent on the whims of the electorate, and the writer restricted to imitating 'the thing itself' rather than constituting the way the thing is perceived. Burke finds reason a limited and limiting political and poetic device compared to the emotive power accumulated in poetry and in traditional political symbols, rituals, and institutions. Although he reverses Paine by claiming that the British state (and, implicitly, the English language when 'properly' used) 'parallel[s] ... the order and immutable laws of nature,' a reading of, say, Milton's 'universe of Death' suggests to him that these 'two ideas' could not be presented 'but by language,' while their 'union' in this phrase becomes 'great and amazing beyond conception' (Enquiry, pp.174-75; Paradise Lost, II, 622). The power of language resides not in its imitation of things but in presenting ideas and combinations of ideas which exist only in language. The most powerful poetry and polity, then, confounds the disbelief of reason and soars beyond the trammels of the natural world.

But this feature of Burke's thought leads to a peculiarly complex situation in his writings on the Revolution. This is because Burke's attacks on radical politics, language, and economics repeatedly stress how

radicalism has severed all relation to reality -- that the political structures the National Assembly have created preclude any contact between representer and represented, that the rhetoric about the rights of man is a monstrous fiction, and that, as we will see, their paper currency has no basis in real wealth. That his representation of radical rhetoric bears little relation to radicalism's own conceptions of its practice suggests that Burke's text, far from developing a critique of radicalism, uses it to project the 'revolutionary' (i.e. non-representational) aspects of his own theory and practice. This is perhaps because the nuances which distinguish Burke's thought from revolutionary thought, and his own critique of the Revolution from radicalism's attack on traditional society, seem frail in practice (when pitted against the stampede of a 'swinish multitude') and theoretically problematic. Prescription seems a two-edged resource in that although it presents an argument of some kind to justify existing institutions which began in violence, it both draws attention to that violence and offers a precedent to justify further usurpations. Once again, Burke risks everything on the supposition that his distinctions are grounded in real differences -- that the supplementation of nature with 'second nature' by which the British constitution and constitutional rhetoric gains its power is palpably different from the supplementary expedients employed by the French republic and republican language; or perhaps Burke's risk involves the possibility that, however hard he strives, his necessary resources cannot be made to appear sufficiently different from those he needs to condemn.

The critique Reflections brings to radicalism therefore seems particularly fraught with problems since it may be read as damagingly apposite for its own political and poetic principles. But we have seen that the historical context of Reflections forces it precisely into those sites where it, and that which it defends, is

most vulnerable. The crisis of Burke's political and rhetorical system is most clearly articulated (in more than one sense) by the vicissitudes of revolution, both as word and episode. Burke strives to differentiate between a 'preserving' and a 'destroying' revolution precisely in order to employ the former against the latter. Yet the antithetical 'accents' of the term 'revolution,' activated by the complexities of the historical moment, operate in Burke's text as the supplement does in Rousseau's; though Burke meets his crisis by attempting to 'bend' the concept of revolution to suit his own ends by determining the 'proper' moment when each accent ought to be foregrounded (through 'forgetting' the other), that very expedient both limits and opens up his text to revolutionary crisis. In the same way, revolution is not something that is simply imposed from without (which Burke feared) but is necessarily an irruption from within, a convulsion of the system (a possibility which troubles Reflections even more). The dialogue between Burke and radicalism dramatizes a dialogic struggle already at work within the complex of ideas Burke brings to the Revolution. Reflections is already divided, reflecting back upon itself, propagating inverse and perverse images of its own political and 'poetic' stance -- excluding revolution yet enacting revolutionary motions.

1. The other two styles Burke employs are 'the Whig manner: rational, perspicacious, business-like,' and 'a peculiar kind of furious irony' (O'Brien, pp.42-43).
2. For a discussion of Burke's complex position in relation to religious issues at the end of the eighteenth century, see O'Brien, pp.22-30.
3. We have seen that Reflections began as a letter to his French correspondent, Depont; Burke feels it necessary to explain its strange form in a preface, saying that 'having thrown down his first thoughts in the form of a letter ... he found it difficult to change the form of address, when his sentiments had grown into a greater extent, and had received another direction' (p.84). For a discussion of the ways in which Reflections constructs the sense of an informal persona, see Lock, pp.114-20.
4. I allude, of course, to Wordsworth's Preface to the Lyrical Ballads, pp.246-47; a comparative analysis of the Preface and Burke's discussion of 'Taste' in the Enquiry, pp.11-27 (especially pp.21-27), would yield fascinating results.
5. For the notion that representation operates as a supplement to that which it is supposed to represent, see Derrida, Of Grammatology, pp.144-152, p.163, *passim*.
6. See Observations on a Late Publication Intituled the Present State of the Nation (1769), Works, II, p.136, quoted in Macpherson, p.22. For an account of the state of representation in England at the end of the eighteenth century, together with the impact of the French Revolution on the attempt to reform it, see Albert Goodwin, Friends of Liberty, pp.19-31; also see Michael Freeman, Edmund Burke and the Critique of Political Radicalism, pp.107-131.
7. Reflections is replete with such phrases as 'the people of England think' (see, pp.119-203 and *passim*).
8. Ryan shows that Thomas Hobbes's fear of sedition and of metaphor reveals how the two might be mutually constitutive. In Hobbes, 'the authority of the sovereign's law,' Ryan writes, 'depends on the establishing of unambiguous proper meanings for words.' Metaphor is excluded as 'the "illegitimate" and unsanctioned transfer of meaning, improper analogy' (Marxism and Deconstruction, pp.3-4). Metaphor therefore breaks the 'law of identity, which is the law of all sovereignty, be it of meaning or of the state;' furthermore, 'according to Hobbes, metaphors arouse passion by inciting feelings that may not be compatible with a political institution whose laws require a rational acceptance of unequivocal definition of words' (Ryan,

p.4). Ryan goes on to 'deconstruct' Hobbes's text by showing that sovereignty, rather than being the legitimate exclusion of sedition, is (as Paine argues) actually predicated upon that which it excludes -- that rather than being prior to, and protecting the state from, internal hostilities, sovereignty is itself a state of civil war (see pp.4-8). Hobbes's project is further problematized in that his 'entire theory ... rests on a linguistic form -- metaphorical displacement, transposition, and analogy -- that he will later exclude and banish as sedition.' This is because 'the analogy between the state and a natural being' is itself a metaphor: "For by art is created that great *Leviathan* called a *Commonwealth*, or *State*, in Latin *Civitas*, which is but an artificial man." (Ryan, p.4; see *Leviathan*, p.81, the rest of Hobbes's introduction, pp.81-83, and the section 'Of Speech,' pp.100-110). The example from Hobbes allows Ryan to make a general proposition about the relation between language and politics which is pertinent for my own reading of Burke's *Reflections*: 'Hobbes, then, permits us to see how language and politics, metaphor and sedition, an absolutist theory of meaning and an authoritarian theory of the state, a deconstructive critique of meaning and a political critique of absolute sovereignty, might be articulated' (p.7).

9. For a discussion of the comparison and interrelation between language and constitution in eighteenth-century Britain, see Barrell, *An Equal, Wide Survey*, pp.112-14.

10. O'Brien explains that 'the term Declaration of Right is more usually applied to the instrument by which William and Mary were declared King and Queen in February of 1689, which was, as Macaulay has pointed out, strictly speaking a revolutionary document, the Convention by which it was drafted and adopted being an extra-legal body and the Declaration itself never having received royal sanction. Its provisions were subsequently embodied in the Bill of Rights and became law at the end of the year. It is clear from the context that Burke is here referring to the statute' (p.380, n.15).

11. The radical reading of 1688, which claims that the revolution is not a once-only affair but repeatable in similar circumstances, derives from Locke's political theory developed in the *Two Treatises of Government* (1689-90) (see Barrell, pp.115-16, where the analogy in Locke between law and language -- both are based on the 'consent' of the people -- is developed).

12. Barrell points out that although Blackstone claims that the 'convention parliament' represented 'the whole society,' it 'was plainly representative only of the enfranchised owners of property' (p.118).

13. 'Every age and generation must be as free to act for itself, in all cases, as the ages and generations which preceded it. The vanity and presumption of governing beyond the grave, is the most ridiculous and insolent of all tyrannies. ... It is the living, and not the dead, that are to be accommodated' (Rights of Man, pp.63-64). Paine goes on to say that he is 'contending for the rights of the living, and against their being willed away, and controlled and contracted for, by the manuscript assumed authority of the dead' (p.64). The documents which Burke refers to for authority are dismissed as 'musty records and mouldy parchments' (p.67).

14. See An Appeal from the Old to the New Whigs, Works, VI, pp.69-267, especially pp.141-86; Burke specifically compares Reflections with the statements of the Whigs in the trial of Sacheverel.

15. For an account of the 'Norman Yoke,' see Christopher Hill, 'The Norman Yoke,' in Puritanism and Revolution, pp.58-125. For Paine's reference to William of Normandy, see Rights of Man, pp.100-102. Barrell points out that the effects of the Conquest, in terms of language as well as politics, could be read differently by different factions in the eighteenth century: 'The language, like the constitution, "breathed a spirit of liberty", a liberty traceable to the Anglo-Saxon origin of both, sometimes threatened, sometimes confirmed by "Norman innovation."' (p.113, also see p.121); Swift could even develop a myth which might be dubbed the 'Saxon Yoke' (see Barrell, p.127).

16. For a discussion of the political struggles over language in the period 1791-1819, see Olivia Smith, Politics of Language; for a wider survey of the politics of language in the eighteenth century, see Barrell, pp.110-75.

17. For an account of this, see Christopher Hill, Century of Revolution, pp.170-171.

18. 'John, Baron Somers (1651-1716), the Whig statesman, counsellor of William III and Lord Chancellor' (O'Brien, p.380 n.18).

19. Paine claims that 'had any one purposed the overthrow of Mr Burke's positions, he would have proceeded as Mr Burke has done. He would have magnified the authorities, on purpose to have called the *right* of them into question' (Rights of Man, p.66).

20. Paine proves an acute critic of Burke and of monarchy: 'But, after all, what is this metaphor called a crown, or rather what is monarchy? Is it a thing, or is it a name, or is it a fraud? ... Doth the virtue consist in the

metaphor or in the man? Doth the goldsmith that makes the crown, make the virtue also? Doth it operate like Fortunatus's wishing-cap, or Harlequin's wooden sword? Doth it make the man a conjuror? In fine, what is it?' (Rights of Man, pp.146-47).

21. 'Sir Edward Coke (1552-1634), judge and law writer. ... Sir William Blackstone (1723-80), judge and law writer, edited Magna Charta (1759)' (O'Brien, p.381, n.27.).

22. For Paine's alternative history of England, from 'William of Normandy,' through Magna Charta, to the 'Bill of Rights' and after, see Rights of Man, pp.214-15.

23. For a discussion of the relation between statute and common law in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Barrell, p.120.

24. Given the concerns which we are beginning to see emerge here, it is intriguing to remember that the usurpation of monarchy which William I represents also brought with it a mutation of the English language through the introduction of a form of French -- an innovation which could be interpreted either as a badge of servitude or as an enhancement of native English liberty (see Barrell, p.121).

25. For a discussion of Paine's and Burke's different attitudes towards the 'Norman Yoke,' see Hill, Puritanism and Revolution, pp.103-07.

26. Also see Rights of Man, pp.100-102; Paine had raised the question of William I's birth in Common Sense, pp.77-81.

27. Burke responds histrionically to the changes in language brought about with the Revolution: he scorns 'the new dictionary' of revolutionary language (Reflections, p.308), and comically assures his reader that 'I should hardly ... begin... to squall in their new accents, or to stammer in my second cradle, the elemental sounds of their barbarous metaphysics' (p.338). Hobsbawm begins his study of the period 1789-1848 by listing some of the many words 'which were invented, or gained their modern meanings, substantially in the period of sixty years with which this volume deals' (Age of Revolution, p.13; also see p.73). Although much of this change in vocabulary was brought about by the Industrial Revolution, the point remains that this age of revolutions was simultaneous with a revolution in language.

28. Paul Lucas, 'Burke's Doctrine of Prescription, p.45, quoting Thomas Rutherford, Institutes of Natural Law (1754-56).

29. In Freud, the fetish seems to have either a metonymic or a symbolic relation to the 'true' sexual object; fetishism is 'habitually present in normal love' and the fetish 'only becomes pathological when the longing for the fetish passes beyond the point of being merely a necessary condition attached to the sexual object and actually takes the place of the normal aim, and, further, when the fetish becomes detached from a particular individual and becomes the sole sexual object' ('The Sexual Aberrations,' pp.66-67, Freud's emphasis).

30. 'Let these gentlemen,' Burke writes, 'state who that representative public is to whom they will affirm the king, as a servant, to be responsible. It will be then time enough for me to produce to them the positive statute law which affirms that he is not' (Reflections, pp.115-16).

31. This passage also associates English and French radicalism with Roman Catholicism -- which, at the end of the eighteenth century was identified as synonymous with corruption superstition, and false oratory. As the Hebrew for Babylon, 'Bàbel' can refer both to the capital of the Chaldee Empire and the Babylon of the Apocalypse and thus combines the visionary scheme that was Babel with the 'whore of Babylon,' whose ostentatious clothing, the writing of 'mystery' on her forehead, and association with the papal power are all relevant to Burke's attack on English radicalism (OED, Genesis: 11, Revelation: 17).

32. For a full discussion of Burke's use of Babel in his writings on the French Revolution, see Steven Blakemore, 'Burke and the Fall of Language,' pp.302-305.

33. In the Appeal From the New to the Old Whigs, Burke writes of himself 'that he is resolved not "to be wise beyond what is written" in the legislative record and practice' (Works, VI, p.165).

34. Wollstonecraft distinguishes between conservative thought, regressive radicalism, and her own radical optimism: 'Rousseau exerts himself to prove that all was right originally: a crowd of authors that all is now right: and I, that all will be right' (Rights of Woman, p.95).

35. Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs (quoted by O'Brien, p.388, n.79).

36. For a contemporary and fascinating account of grafting, see William Cobbett, The English Gardener, pp.139-54. Cobbett reveals that, contrary to the expectations of 'some persons,' the nature of the fruit obtained from a graft is wholly determined by the nature

of the graft and that the stock simply provides 'a suitable quantity of wood' (pp.143-44).

37. In this way, the revolutionaries were more faithful to the traditional doctrine of prescription (in which no length of time could legitimize the possession of property gained through violence of fraud) than Burke (Lucas, p.36, p.47).

38. Speech on the Reform of Representation, quoted by Russell Kirk, 'Burke and the Philosophy of Prescription,' p.377.

39. Burke to John Trevor, January 1791, Correspondence, VI, p.218, and Letter on a Regicide Peace (1796), Works, VIII, p.235 (quoted by O'Brien, p.31).

40. Thomas Weiskel links Wordsworth's 'indisputable shapes' in The Prelude XII, 323 with the 'questionable shape' of Hamlet's father (Romantic Sublime, p.182), but Burke's allusion to Hamlet in the Letter on a Regicide Peace provides a more contemporary and politicized context.

41. For Paine, Burke's 'astonishment' shows that he does not understand the French Revolution: 'As Mr Burke has not written on constitutions, so neither has he written on the French revolution. He gives no account of its commencement or its progress. He only expresses his wonder. ... As wise men are astonished at foolish things, and other people at wise ones, I know not on which ground to account for Mr Burke's astonishment; but certain it is, that he does not understand the French revolution. It has apparently burst forth like a creation from chaos, but it is no more than the consequence of a mental revolution priorly existing in France. The mind of the nation had changed beforehand, and the new order of things has naturally followed the new order of thoughts' (Rights of Man, p.115). In proceeding 'to trace out the growth of the French revolution, and mark the circumstances that have contributed to produce it' (p.115), Paine seeks to undo Burke's mystification of the Revolution by locating its origins and progress in a material and discursive context.

42. We have seen that, in the Enquiry, difficulty is one of the conditions and characteristics of the sublime, while beauty evades it (p.77, pp.119-21). There is an affinity between Burke and radicalism in so far as the latter's criticism of the *ancien régime*, at least as Burke presents it, is couched in terms central to the Enquiry; the difference between them is in the remedy: 'If ['the most dangerous of all parties ... an extensive discontented monied interest'] find the old governments effete, worn out and with their springs relaxed, so as not

to be of sufficient vigour for their purposes, they may seek new ones that shall be possessed of more energy; and this energy will be derived, not from an acquisition of resources, but from a contempt of justice. Revolutions are favourable to confiscation; and it is impossible to know under what obnoxious names the next confiscations will be authorized' (Reflections, p.264).

43. Compare The Prelude, X, 967-70: 'There is / One great society alone on earth: / The noble living and the noble dead.' Wordsworth's own 'revolution in sentiments' can be measured by comparing this Burkean passage with his attack on Burke in the Letter to Llandaff: 'Mr Burke roused the indignation of all ranks of men, when by a refinement in cruelty superiour to that which in the East yokes the living to the dead he strove to persuade us that we and our posterity to the end of time were riveted to a constitution by the indissoluble compact of a dead parchment, and were bound to cherish a corse at the bosom, when reason might call aloud that it should be entombed' (Prose Works, I, p.48).

44. Macaulay, quoted by Asa Briggs, Social History of England, p.133.

45. In An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs we may see that the need to distinguish 1688 from 1649 was important from the very first defence of the 'Glorious Revolution.' In Burke's account of the trial of Sacheverel, the Secretary General, Sir Robert Eyre, is quoted as saying that the Revolution cannot 'bear any parallel with the execrable murder of the royal martyr, so justly detested by the whole nation' (Works, VI, p.171).

46. Paulson is quoting from The Mind of Napoleon, edited by J. Christopher Herold (New York, 1955), pp.251-56.

47. The idea of revolution as metaphor -- though not in the structural sense I use it here -- is researched by Melvin J. Lasky, Utopia and Revolution, especially in 'The Birth of a Metaphor,' pp.218-36 and pp.238-59: 'Revolution in the seventeenth century rarely went under its own name; and when it did, it suggested, at least in England, regress rather than progress, a restoration, a "turning backe to its first place." It is perhaps a sign of the genius of the English language and character that revolution, even at a time of violence and rebellion [i.e. the seventeenth century], should have gone by the name of reform' (p.240); thus 'Revolution' was 'the missing word' towards which the English tongue would gradually reach. That James Howell's translation of Giraffi's historical narrative of Masaniello's rebellion against the Spanish in 1647 propagates a number of natural metaphors for revolution suggests to Lasky that 'Revolution was born in metaphor, and the literary marks of its birth have been

ineradicable. Indeed, its whole political evolution as one of mankind's architypal concepts and mythological symbols has ... been dominated by what we might think of as a metaphorical imperative' (p.243). This metaphorical imperative has, from the advent of the first English Revolution, been manifest as ideological struggle: 'As the political concept of revolution bursts for the first time into the events of the 1650s, a conservative like James Howell, who could almost be said to have coined its ideological usage in English, employs it continuously in terms of monstrous calamity; a radical like Nedham [who, in his The Excellencie of a Free State (1656), 'emerged as literally the first "revolutionary" ideologue'] responds to the verbal opportunity with dozens of usages, all glowingly positive' (p.248). Lasky's discussion of the impact of the French Revolution on 'the English ideology' (pp.494-575) is also of interest.

48. In The Prelude, both models of revolution seem to vie with each other; when, in Book X, Wordsworth writes that 'To Nature then, / Power had reverted: habit, custom, law, / Had left an interregnum's open space / For her to stir about in uncontrolled' (609-12), it is impossible to decide whether this is being celebrated or lamented: 'Nature' could be read as the true seat of power, but the passage also contains some sense of Burkean terror at nature's untrammelled power. Further complexities in the eighteenth century's understanding of the relation between government and nature are brought out by Barrell's reminder that the contract theory implied that if those in power consistently infringed the trust placed in them then 'the compact on which society is based is dissolved, the state of nature is come again, and men are free to choose new governors, and even to make a fresh system of government on whatever terms they can agree to' (Barrell, p.115).

49. For a discussion of the interrelations between proper language, propriety, and property, see Terence Hawkes, Metaphor, pp.6-33, Paul Ricoeur, Rule of Metaphor, pp.17-19, and Patricia Parker, Literary Fat Ladies, pp.36-42.

50. For Isobel Armstrong, the Romantics' revolution consisted in turning 'Enlightenment priorities back to front by saying that everything begins with metaphor and we move from the metaphorical to the literal, not from the literal to the metaphorical' ('Transformation of Metaphor,' p.13).

Chapter 8: The Economics of Representation

We have seen that, in the 'crisis' occasioned by the French Revolution, Burke's Reflections is driven to defend and redefine representation in aesthetics, politics, language, and gender. In Burke's discourse on each of these issues it is possible to discern an 'economics' at work which centers on problems of labour, relaxation, distribution, investment, and we have constantly been able to draw parallels between the central assumptions of Burke's aesthetics and Adam Smith's political economy. In this way -- not only through Burke's concern with the problem of reconciling economic innovation with traditional power structures -- questions of economics are fundamental to Burke's thought. In this chapter I want to develop these questions by concentrating more explicitly on the interrelation in Reflections between representation (in politics and in language) and economics. This enquiry culminates in a reading of Burke's attack on the ways in which the National Assembly attempted to solve economic crisis through issuing a paper currency bound up with the sale of church lands. In this way we will see how Burke's understanding of economics is structured as a form of representation which undergoes its own crisis in the Revolution controversy.

(i) Exposing the Defects of our Representation

Authentic and fraudulent representation -- often contrasted as the wholesome and the diseased -- are continually presented in Reflections as morally distinct polarities. These polarities find their ultimate forms -- but also break down, I want to argue -- in the differences between English and French constitutions and their rhetorical and economic practices.¹ In contrast to the

safeguarded liberties of England, for example, Burke asserts that the promise of equality that the French Revolution offered was nothing more than a

monstrous fiction, which, by inspiring false ideas and vain expectations into men destined to travel in the obscure walk of laborious life, serves only to aggravate and embitter that real inequality, which it can never remove; and which the order of civil life establishes as much for the benefit of those whom it must leave in an humble state, as those whom it is able to exalt to a condition more splendid, but not more happy (p.124).

This is to argue that social inequality is inevitable and predestined, and that the 'swinish multitude' are naturally fitted to their place in life. It is also to remove their condition from the realm of discourse, for if their inequality is 'real,' or 'destined,' it is neither a product of, nor can it be affected or remedied by, modes of thought or perception. For Burke, when it becomes expedient for his argument, the 'real' cannot be changed -- it is a given, fixed, and knowable quantity, created not by 'prejudice' but by 'nature' (p.138).²² Any attempt to revise the real must therefore produce a distortion of things as they (really) are -- i.e. a 'monstrous fiction.'²³ The natural order of things, exemplified by the British state, is thus changed and perverted by a French system that admits men who have 'a moral and almost physical inaptitude' for government into the National Assembly (p.134). Some of these 'men formed to be instruments, not controls' (p.132) are, to Burke's astonishment, 'said not to be able to read and write' (p.131). Burke's analysis of the National Assembly's 'composition' (p.127) therefore turns upon the, to him, disturbing idea that those people deemed unfit (to write/to represent the country's interests) have been unnaturally elevated, as if by 'enchantment' (p.130), into representative positions. These people 'are good and useful,' Burke concedes, 'in the composition; they must be

mischievous if they preponderate so as virtually to become the whole' (pp.132-33).

That a subordinate part might stand for the whole is, of course, the structure of synecdoche. It is not, however, that Burke distrusts synecdoche *per se*, but the particular synecdoche which has prevailed in France. While he criticizes the Revolution for allowing the wrong part to represent the whole, he endorses the British system where the landed interest dominates the representation. Parliament should primarily represent traditional sources of power and prestige and therefore political representation is necessarily 'unequal':

Nothing is a due and adequate representation of a state, that does not represent its ability, as well as its property. But as ability is a vigorous and active principle, and as property is sluggish, inert, and timid, it never can be safe from the invasions of ability, unless it be, out of all proportion, predominant in the representation. It must be represented too in great masses of accumulation, or it is not rightly protected. The characteristic essence of property, formed out of the combined principles of its acquisition and conservation, is to be *unequal* (p.140).⁴

Burke actually admits the bogus motivation of his privileged synecdoche when one might have expected him to hide or deny that fact. Yet Burke does not regard this 'unequal' feature as a 'defect' of Britain's representative system but precisely its strength. This is so on two counts: firstly, because Burke regards landed property as the basis of economic and social order (it is a well-tried and trustworthy synecdoche, while the revolutionary synecdoche is unstable, unfit, and volatile); secondly, because Burke has an idealist conception of representation quite different, at least on the surface, to radicalism's theory of (limited) democracy.

Britain's reliance on a system of 'unequal representation' has been made all the more important in the crisis brought on by the French Revolution, for Burke identifies, and distrusts, a new source of power, allied in dangerous ways with radicalism, in the late eighteenth century. That which threatens property is not radicalism as such but 'ability': 'ability is a vigorous and active principle, [while] ... property is sluggish, inert, and timid'. Property has to predominate in the representation if it is to resist 'the invasions of ability' -- that fear of invasion associating ability with the Revolution across the Channel which threatens to export its doctrine and system, but also alluding to a threat of 'invasion' from the potentially revolutionary energies already active within Britain. But notice that Burke would not repress that ability: 'Nothing is a due and adequate representation of a state, that does not represent its ability, as well as its property.' Burke is not attempting to exclude the innovative forces of bourgeois, capitalist enterprise, but is trying to do something more complex and risky. He recognizes and endorses the new economics -- Adam Smith 'is reported to have said of Burke,' Macpherson informs us, '"that he was the only man who, without communication, thought on [economic reform] ... exactly as he did"'⁵ -- but tries to incorporate it into the existing social order. The innovative enterprise culture ought to be represented, but its vigour should be counter-balanced by the property interest 'in great masses of accumulation.'⁶ I have suggested that this is the crux of Burke's response to the Revolution, but also that this is a problematic enterprise, even in terms of Burke's aesthetics, where the sublime and the beautiful -- here the vigorous and the inert -- tend to subvert, rather than complement, each other. Those instabilities already present within Burke's aesthetics become increasingly unstable in the socio-economic crisis that the Revolution represents.

The foregoing analysis suggests that there are analogies between traditional rhetorical forms and different political structures of representation. It could be argued that Burke is driven to prefer one synecdoche rather than another, since any form of political representation might be seen as one part standing for the whole.⁷ But if property represents property and *governs* the rest of the populace, then the thing stands for itself and represents nothing other than itself; as Paine puts it in an analysis of the English parliament, 'it is *themselves* accountable to *themselves*' (Rights of Man, p.98). We will see that Burke seeks to present the English system as a perfectly 'adequate' structure of representation, but if the House stands for nothing other than itself it cannot be said to be a representational structure at all.⁸ If it were generally thought that the country was governed, as Burke puts the radical view, by 'an house of lords not representing anyone but themselves; and by an house of commons exactly such as the present, that is, as they term it, by a mere "shadow and mockery" of representation' (Reflections, p.147), then the allegiance that Burke is trying to forge, between king and people, between parliament and nation, might break down. But Burke can mock Price's discovery of this 'defect' because he propounds an utterly different theory of representation to democracy and finds its embodiment in Britain's political forms.

We have already seen that poetry, in the Enquiry, is regarded as a non-representational art form: 'Indeed so little does poetry depend for its effect on the power of raising sensible images, that I am convinced it would lose a very considerable part of its energy, if this were the necessary result of all description' (Enquiry, p.170). Instead of this, poetic language 'operates chiefly by *substitution*; by the means of sounds, which by custom have the effect of realities' (p.173, Burke's emphasis). I want to suggest that political power in Burke functions in

ways similar to this theory of poetic power: if poetry is not constrained by a mimetic imperative, we will see Burke disdain the notion that a political representative is accountable to the electorate; if poetry functions through disarming reason and disbelief, we will see that Burke's notion of the English constitution depends upon deflecting rational enquiry. Given this structural and theoretical analogy between poetry and politics, Burke seeks to recruit 'poetry' as a 'linguistic correlative' of his politics in order to form the kind of alliance between poetry and arbitrary 'aristocratical' power which Hazlitt finds all too appropriate in his essay on Coriolanus.⁹

It is therefore important to investigate how Burke's writings on political representation are informed by an implicit 'poetics.' In Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents (1770) (written in defence of the House of Commons against the encroachments of the Court, and introducing the idea of party into British politics), Burke says that 'in all disputes between ['the people'] ... and their rulers, the presumption is at least upon a par in favour of the people.'¹⁰ But as Macpherson points out,

[what] looks like an affirmation of a democratic principle ... turns out to be far short of that, for 'the people' are all those, but only those, who have enough property to make them an effective counterweight to the Court: they are 'the great peers, the leading landed gentlemen, the opulent merchants and manufacturers, the substantial yeomanry'.¹¹

Macpherson shows how Burke came to more precisely define his concept of 'the people': 'in England they amounted to about the upper 400,000,' while even then they are only a people 'when they exist in an organic unity of orderly ranks.'¹² To complement this, Barrell usefully demonstrates how the 'most approved writers and speakers' in eighteenth century Britain -- the 'enfranchised members of the language community' -- were required to have

similar but even more stringent qualifications than the politically enfranchised and were, as a consequence, 'far fewer in number than those of the political community' (An Equal, Wide Survey, pp.132-34). In this way, political power and power over or through language were deeply implicated with one another in late eighteenth-century England.

'One of Burke's most often quoted principles,' Macpherson tells us, was 'his insistence, in his speech to the electors of Bristol, that a Member of Parliament is not an instructed delegate but a representative empowered to exercise his independent judgement.' Macpherson goes on to quote from that speech, and it is worth reproducing it here:

Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment; and he betrays, instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion. ...

Parliament is not a *congress* of ambassadors from different and hostile interests; which interests each must maintain, as an agent and advocate, against other agents and advocates; but parliament is a *deliberative* assembly of one nation, with one interest, that of the whole; where, not local purposes, not local prejudices ought to guide, but the general good, resulting from the general reason of the whole. You choose a member indeed; but when you have chosen him, he is not a member of Bristol, but he is a member of *parliament*.¹³

Burke's notion of representation can be placed within a larger context of conflicting theories of representation. Burke employs the eighteenth-century concept of 'virtual' representation -- which claimed that the whole population was represented in essence or effect whether or not they had the vote (see OED, and Barrell, pp.110-11). Raymond Williams show how the term 'represent,' after its appearance in the fourteenth century, 'quickly acquired a range of senses of making present: in the physical sense of presenting oneself or another, often to some person of authority; but also in the sense of making present in the

mind' (Keywords, p.266). But a 'crucial extension' of these meanings was the early sense of 'standing for something that is not present' (p.267). Thus political uses might invoke one or other of these senses: 'Many early political uses have the sense of "symbolize" rather than "stand for"' (p.267). Burke's interpretation of parliamentary representation seems to draw more on the former than the latter meaning: 'we find Burke making a notorious distinction between a *representative* and a *delegate*, which in part relied on the symbolic sense of *representative* (standing for others, but in his own terms) rather than on the political sense (making present, *representing*, the opinions of those who elected him)' (p.268).

When Burke asserts that 'the will of the many, and their interest, must very often differ' (Reflections, p.141), he seeks to disqualify the majority on the grounds that they are not even aware of their own interests, and thereby attack Rousseau's perhaps equally idealist doctrine of 'the will of the people.' The import of his speech to his constituents is that, whatever local differences of interest might occur, at a more profound level Britain is unified as a single organism. Such 'representation' is not meant to reflect differences but to display unity at a higher level. Members of the House of Commons are not members *for* their constituencies, but *of* a parliament whose 'general reason' somehow seems be that of 'one nation' and able to intuit the 'general good.' This is effectively, I would argue, to give both parliament and 'nation' an aura meant to preclude enquiry into what they are and what relation they have to each other. Nation, government, constitution, state, are endowed with connotations from other contexts through metaphorical transportation -- from religion, nature, the family -- precisely to deflect enquiry: this is expedient since 'when you open [the Constitution] ... to enquiry in one part, where will the enquiry stop?'¹⁴

The moment of election in Burke seems to sever all direct connection between representative and electors, and to substitute in its place a mysterious communication between the Commons and a fictive, whole and indivisible nation. But Burke's idealist version of representation both disguises and draws attention to problems endemic to the concept of representation not only in the specific historical circumstances pertaining to Britain at the end of the eighteenth century, but on a more general theoretical level. For the idea that a representative *stands for* a group of people (whether regarded as a delegate, as a kind of embodiment or symbol, or as a typical member of the group) can always be read as *standing in-the-place-of* -- as *displacing* that which is supposed to be made present.¹⁵ In this way, political representation (like representation in art) works like the Derridean supplement -- both making present the thing itself and differing from and deferring it. Burke seeks to obscure this problem through aestheticizing the English constitution, while radicalism's attempt to overcome it through the idea of democratic representation (see Rights of Man, pp.199-203) can be seen as reiterating the problem in a new form.¹⁶ Certainly, radicalism aestheticizes the political form it seeks to inaugurate.

Apparently confident that his understanding of representation will be recognized and shared by his readers, Burke often presents the radical argument better than he would presumably want to. In a lengthy disquisition on political representation brought on by the Revolution Society's welcome of the 'fair and equal representation' in France for at once revealing the inadequacies of the British system and offering a model upon which it might be reformed, Burke reveals that 'Dr Price considers this inadequacy of representation as our *fundamental grievance*,' and quotes his assertion that

'nothing will be done towards gaining for us this *essential blessing*, until some great

abuse of power again provokes our resentment, or some *great calamity* again alarms our fears, or perhaps till the acquisition of a *pure and equal representation by other countries*, whilst we are *mocked with the shadow*, kindles our shame' (pp.146-47).¹⁷

For radical thought, the British representative system is a 'mockery' and a 'shadow' of something that ought to be 'pure and equal' -- a *misrepresentation* of representation itself. Burke's ironic and condescending response to this parries rather than answers Price's critique:

It would require a long discourse to point out to you the many fallacies that lurk in the generality and equivocal nature of the terms 'inadequate representation.' I shall only say here, in justice to that old-fashioned constitution, under which we have long prospered, that our representation has been found perfectly adequate to all the purposes for which a representation of the people can be desired or devised. I defy the enemies of our constitution to shew the contrary. To detail the particulars in which it is found so well to promote its ends, would demand a treatise on our practical constitution. I state here the doctrine of the Revolutionists, only that you and others may see, what an opinion these gentlemen entertain of the constitution of their country (p.146).¹⁸

Winning over his ruling class readers by the mocking tones in which he presents democratic thought, Burke also manages to jibe at the French (through Depont). But given the suffering and grievances of the working classes and the poor at this period,¹⁹ and given the limitations of the franchise, the distribution of seats, and the abuses at elections, this assertion of the adequacy of representation in Britain at the end of the eighteenth century seems peculiarly *inadequate*.²⁰ But since Burke grounds the legitimacy of the British government not in 'popular representation' but through legal prescription, the counter argument can be exaggerated, to discerning and partial (enfranchised) readers, without fear of its being

misread. If they 'consider our house of commons as only "a semblance,"' the 'gentlemen' of the Revolution Society, 'being systematic,'

must therefore look on this gross and palpable defect of representation ... as rendering our whole government absolutely *illegitimate*, and not at all better than a downright *usurpation*. Another revolution ... would of course be perfectly justifiable, if not absolutely necessary. ... for, if popular representation, or choice, is necessary to the *legitimacy* of all government, the house of lords is, at one stroke, bastardized and corrupted in blood. That house is no representative of the people at all, even in 'semblance or in form.' The case of the crown is altogether as bad (p.147).

Perhaps nothing could be calculated to better rouse the lords from their lethargy towards radicalism than the suggestion that its tenets (and their own tenants) would condemn them all as bastards and so confiscate their property. Yet this rhetoric works both ways in that, by extrapolating radical thought, it seems to put the radical position more clearly than the radicals had yet achieved themselves.²¹

Dismissing radical theories of democratic representation by insisting that 'the constitution of a kingdom ... [is not] a problem of arithmetic' (p.141), Burke develops what might be called a 'poetic' theory of political representation. In passages that anticipate Coleridge's theories of organic unity within literary texts, Burke criticizes the system of local and national representation that had been recently instituted by the National Assembly. As the conclusion of an analysis of the three ways in which the number of 'deputies' for each 'canton'²² is computed in the French republic (they even get their arithmetic, geometry, and metaphysics wrong), Burke writes that,

In this whole contrivance of the three bases ... I do not see a variety of objects,

reconciled in one consistent whole, but several contradictory principles reluctantly and irreconcilably brought and held together by your philosophers, like wild beasts shut up in a cage, to claw and bite each other to their mutual destruction (p.296).

Burke's concern that the political *composition* of France is not a unified whole -- and his view of the consequences of this fact -- seem clear. As we might have expected, the English state offers an exemplary contrast: 'We compensate, we reconcile, we balance. We are enabled to unite into a consistent whole the various anomalies and contending principles that are found in the minds and affairs of men. From hence arises, not an excellence in simplicity, but one far superior, an excellence in composition' (pp.281-282). If this excellence in composition can only be achieved over long periods, and through the interaction of mind with mind, Burke nevertheless stresses that individual members of a legislature (and in this he finds the lawgivers of the National Assembly wanting) should have qualities of mind which qualify them for their role: 'to form a *free government*; that is, to temper together these opposite elements of liberty and restraint in one consistent work, requires much thought, deep reflection, a sagacious, powerful, and combining mind' (p.374). Thus Burke's portrait of the ideal (acknowledged) legislators of the world anticipates Coleridge's figure of the poetic genius as an intentional self producing a self-consistent work which yet conforms to the great poetry of the past.²³³ Indeed, in the understated counter to Price's Discourse on the Love of Our Country already considered in Chapter 6, Burke explicitly likens the 'composition' of the state to that of a poem:

The precept given by a wise man, as well as a great critic, for the construction of poems, is equally true as to states. *Non satis est pulchra esse poemata, dulcia sunt* ['It is not enough for poems to be fine; they must

charm']. There ought to be a system of manners in every nation which a well-formed mind would be disposed to relish. To make us love our country, our country ought to be lovely (p.172)

In order to prevent dissidence and disaffection, then, a country ought to be 'lovely,' ought to 'charm' its citizens as poems (or women) do in Burke's Enquiry. Thus a complex, mannered, 'feminine' notion of beauty is offered as a 'conservative' alternative to that 'fair and open' system of representation which, for Burke, would be disastrous for the complex society he envisages (in which capitalist energies are reconciled to the landed interest).³⁴ It is therefore possible to suggest that a common denominator between Burke's theories of political and linguistic representation can be found in Burke's aesthetics of the sublime and the beautiful. It is not only, then, that poetic power is used to protect and perpetuate political power, but that both achieve their effects through analogous structures and modes of mystification.

(ii) The Traffic of Revolution

Given Burke's insistence on the political expediency of a continuity of linguistic forms, reinforced by a conservative model of reading and an implicitly limited enfranchisement of representative readers (and even more so of writers), we can begin to understand his unease with reference to the publications of the Revolution Society (especially Price's Discourse and the letter of congratulation to the National Assembly). 'We ought not,' Burke urges,

on either side of the water, to suffer ourselves to be imposed upon by the counterfeit wares which some persons, by a double fraud, export to you in illicit

bottoms, as raw commodities of British growth though wholly alien to our soil, in order afterwards to smuggle them back again into this country, manufactured after the newest Paris fashion of an improved liberty (pp.110-11).

Burke is anxious that these letters from the Revolution Society be recognized, in both France and Britain, as false representations from an unrepresentative body. As we saw in Chapter 4, the Revolution Society claims to base itself in the principles of 1688, while Burke seeks to impress on English and French readers alike that such interpretations of those principles are 'wholly alien' to 'the true principles of our domestic laws' (p.110). Burke's metaphors are revealing: these writings are not 'raw commodities of British growth ...[but] wholly alien to our soil,' while the writings 'manufactured' from them in France (the claims that 1789 was enacted in imitation of 1688 for example) are dismissed as a Parisian fashion (combining the senses of manufactured item and manufactured need). Horticulture is contrasted with manufacture, raw commodities with counterfeit wares, natural products with the spurious innovations of fashion, the English with the French or alien. Writing or thought may either be of native stock or an alien import or scion. Its traffic -- its improper trade -- is therefore a 'double fraud' in that it is both smuggled to and from across the English Channel and is a false understanding of 'English liberty' from an unrepresentative body insidiously at work within the political organism.

As 'counterfeit wares,' the discourse of political 'speculation' may become analogous not only to paper money and bills of exchange, but to the counterfeit money of contemporary forgers (which, in the view of some economic historians, actually stimulated rather than depleted the English economy at the end of the eighteenth century²³⁵). We will see later that the association between revolutionary writing and illegitimate or unsound business

practice -- and the implicit distinction in the above passage between agrarian and manufacturing capitalism is important -- forms part of a larger preoccupation in Reflections that there is a conspiratorial link between the new economics and a new kind of writing. Against this writing, Burke would oppose a different writing -- one of the 'raw commodities of British growth' forming a natural and native representation of British sentiments about the Britain's constitution and France's Revolution. Burke also implies that the fraudulent is something 'imposed' from without, something smuggled in or inexplicably present within the natural organism of the state. He cannot allow that the duplicitous -- which is, by inference, the revolutionary -- might be implicit, might sprout from British soil or be potential within the English language and people. But it is not, as we have seen, that Burke opposes the naked or the natural to these Parisian fashions -- according to Burke naked nature is itself a revolutionary mode (Reflections, p.171) -- but that he promotes a different model in which costume, custom, habit, the graft, are not alien to nature or the original but become part of it, become 'second nature.'

(iii) Funding the Revolution: The Strange Economy of the Supplement

One of the principle targets in Burke's criticism of the National Assembly was its issue of a paper currency on the strength of, and in order to finance, the confiscation of church property.²⁶ One of the most urgent problems facing the National Assembly was finance, since it inherited the economic crisis which contributed to the downfall of the *ancien régime*. On 10 October 1789 Tallyrand declared that the sale of church lands would raise two milliards of *livres*, and although the state would then be responsible for the maintenance of the clergy that could be done at a cost of

only 100 million a year (Cobban, History of Modern France, pp.171-72). Cobban shows how the new paper money was resorted to as the main solution to France's financial crisis:

Backed by the proceeds of the sale of Church lands, paper money, in the form of assignats, was issued. It was to be bought in and destroyed as money returned to the Treasury from the sales, and thus the fear of inflation, which had haunted France since the time of John Law, was dissipated. With the aid of the assignats ... a breathing space [could be] ensured in which the Assembly could bring into operation a new and reformed fiscal system (p.172-73).²⁷

In fact, although calling in the 'aid' of the assignats did give the Assembly two years' 'breathing space,' the Assembly had unknowingly 'primed the pump of continued revolution. Inflation was to be the root cause which perpetuated economic distress and so provided the raw material for future upheavals' (Cobban, p.173). George Rudé's discussion of the public auction of the church's estates as an 'exceptional remedy' employs a set of figures which modernize Burke's:

To finance the operation, interest-bearing bonds termed 'assignats' were issued, which gradually came to be accepted as bank-notes and, after 1790, suffered steady depreciation. The assignat was a salutary shot in the arm and saved the Assembly from its momentary difficulties; but the inflation that it eventually brought in its train -- under the impact of war and speculation -- was to exact a heavy toll in terms of human suffering and of popular disturbance (Revolutionary Europe, p.112).

The language of an early reference in Reflections to these 'assignats' is indicative of Burke's concerns; they are the 'unnatural,' but crowning consequence of revolutionary policies:

to crown all, the paper securities of new, precarious, tottering power, the discredited paper securities of impoverished fraud, and beggared rapine, held out as a currency for the support of an empire, in lieu of the two great recognized species that represent the lasting conventional credit of mankind, which disappeared and hid themselves in the earth from whence they came, when the principle of property, whose creatures and representatives they are, was systematically subverted (p.126).

That this currency 'became the only resource of all their operations in finance; the vital principle of all their politics' (pp.224-25), demonstrates Burke's belief that *assignats* are not an accident or mistake of the Revolution but systemic to it. The passage privileges gold and silver above paper money because the latter represents the former in a potentially fraudulent way -- it can come 'in lieu' of them. It must be recognized here that Burke is not rejecting paper money in itself, but that he is anxious (and in this he follows Adam Smith) that it be backed by real wealth -- that it be a 'proper' representative.²⁸ However, not only are gold and silver themselves said to be 'representatives,' but property too -- as the basis of 'lasting conventional credit' -- has value only through convention.²⁹ And if 'credit' means a belief or trust that wealth 'really' exists -- that at some point there is a solid backing, what emerges is that no form of wealth is 'the thing itself' but, inevitably, a conventional representation. One form of wealth turns out to be a representation of another, which is itself seen to be a representation: a 'slippage' of representation takes place that can never be anchored at a signified, 'real' wealth. The entire 'ground' of Burke's system of value begins to shift when the solid reality and meaning of property becomes questionable. Burke himself practically admits that land has a market rather than an absolute value when he points out that to bring all the church property 'at once into market, was obviously to defeat the

profits proposed by the confiscation, by depreciating the value of those lands' (p.223).

Given what we have seen of Burke's anxieties and duplicities about representation in politics and language, we may note similar patterns in his economic theory; his discourse on this 'fictitious wealth' of the French Republic begins to explore it as a form of (*mis-*) *representation*:

Even the clergy are to receive their miserable allowance out of the depreciated paper which is stamped with the indelible character of sacrilege, and with the symbols of their own ruin, or they must starve. So violent an outrage upon credit, property, and liberty, as this compulsory paper currency, has seldom been exhibited by the alliance of bankruptcy and tyranny, at any time, or in any nation (p.226).³⁰

Not any form of representation is being invoked here, however, but specifically that of a bankrupt writing: this 'paper' is 'stamped with the indelible character of sacrilege, and with the *symbols* of ... ruin.' Indeed, paper currency consists in, as Smith puts it, 'promissory notes' which should be at all times, if ruin is to be avoided, translatable into gold and silver -- i.e. into 'real' wealth.³¹ For Burke, then, *assignats* are false promises, ruinous symbols, robbing the church and profaning the sacred contract that is (written on) money.³² Its performative 'I promise' is, for Burke, like the 'monstrous fiction' of the promise of equality held out by false speculations about the rights of man. In this, Burke seems to exploit fears about fiduciary economics which Foucault shows became endemic to Europe after 'the great crisis of monetary signs ... that began fairly early in the seventeenth century' (Order of Things, p.180). At least since Locke, money was defined as a pledge whose effectiveness depended on custom or common consent; although it was, as Foucault puts it, 'a pure fiction,' it remained valid as long as all parties

retained their confidence in it (Order of Things, p.181). In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries paper and metal money had been found to both revive trade and expose the economy to inflationary spirals (Order of Things, pp.180-83). If money therefore operates in a supplementary fashion, we will see Burke attempt to exploit this by locating its trustworthy effects in England's economy while arguing that its inflationary promise characterizes the Revolution's finances.

For Burke, the complicit relation between the issue of *assignats* and the auction of church lands is a particularly destructive one; it has initiated 'a process of continual transmutation of paper into land, and land into paper,' thereby undermining and unsettling what is for Burke the very foundation of society and transferring political and economic power from country to city, from aristocracy to a capitalism loosed from the land:

By this means the spirit of money-jobbing and speculation goes into the mass of land itself, and incorporates with it. By this kind of operation, that species of property becomes (as it were) volatilized; it assumes an unnatural and monstrous activity, and thereby throws into the hands of the several managers, principal and subordinate, Parisian and provincial, all the representatives of money, and perhaps a full tenth part of all the land in France, which has now acquired the worst and most pernicious part of the evil of a paper circulation, the greatest possible uncertainty in its value. They have reversed the Latonian kindness to the landed property of Delos (p.308).³³³

Thus the National Assembly's remedy for its financial problems turns out to be the most 'evil' resource that could have been chosen. Landed property -- the ground upon and out of which all other wealth arises in Burke's agrarian economics -- is 'volatilized' into a 'monstrous' activity; a perverse transubstantiation, not of base metal into gold but of land into paper, results when capitalism devalues its own ultimate resource. In thus floating or

setting adrift the land itself through incorporating speculation into its very being, the legislators of France have transcended all precedent; they are

the very first who have founded a commonwealth upon gaming, and infused this spirit into it as its vital breath. The great object in these politics is to metamorphose France, from a great kingdom into one great play-table; to turn its inhabitants into a nation of gamblers; to make speculation as extensive as life; to mix it with all its concerns They loudly proclaim their opinion, that this their present system of a republic cannot possibly exist without this kind of gaming fund; and that the very thread of its life is spun out of the staple of these speculations (pp.309-10).

Speculation has insinuated itself into the 'vital breath' of the commonwealth; the Revolution draws its own 'life' out of the 'staple' of these airy speculations. 'Spun out of' speculation, the republic's very life thread is at once produced and unravelled by the circular turnings of this gaming economy (in contrast, perhaps, to England's basis in the weaving industry); the turns and chances of the play-table thus becomes the most apt, and damaging, image of the Revolution itself. Revolution turns out to be a gamble Burke, for one, is not willing to make.

For these reasons, the issues raised by the *assignats* seem to trouble Burke's text almost more than any other theme. He continually returns to it, contrasts it with the 'healthy' paper money in England, and devotes at least three major sections of Reflections to it (pp.223-26, pp.307-312, p.355-371). Given this evident concern, I want to explore the figures and strategies of some of these sections and to contrast Paine's own account of the respective financial well-being of each country in order to see on what terms the 'economic exchange' between Burke and Paine is organized. As one would expect, one reason for Burke's aggression towards these interest-bearing bonds is the part they play in the confiscation of church

lands. But the tendencies of the new funding system are destructive of more than the church: 'The service of the state was made a pretext to destroy the church. In their way to the destruction of the church they would not scruple to destroy their country: and they have destroyed it' (p.223). The National Assembly effected such radical destruction in the attempt to create 'a new landed interest connected with the new republic' (p.223), but this policy diverted too much of its 'circulating money from trade to land,' with the inevitable result that money 'was nowhere to be seen' and that the country 'panted for a currency of any kind' (p.224). In this way the Revolution was driven by its own policies to call in the fatal remedy of 'a new paper currency, founded on an eventual sale of the church lands' (p.224). Given the ramifications of this move, Burke indicates that 'those who consider the general tendency of their schemes to this one object as a centre; and a centre from which afterwards all their measures radiate, will not think that I dwell too long upon this part of the proceedings of the national assembly' (p.225). Thus the 'centre' of the revolution is a kind of chasm -- a 'great machine or paper-mill' which (in contradistinction to the mills of England) rolls off 'their fictitious wealth' (p.224). Yet this absence still 'radiates' effects and generates economic circulation and so becomes emblematic of Burke's representation of radical thought in general, since although there is nothing substantial behind it or at its hub it yet threatens to turn the world upside down.

But whereas, for Smith, 'the judicious operations of banking, by substituting paper in the room of a great part of [the gold and silver which, without paper money, would have to be kept always at hand], enables the country to convert a great part of this dead stock into active and productive stock' (Wealth of Nations, I, p.321), Burke predicts that the kind of speculation pursued in France will *unravel* the thread of the republic's 'life.' Such a

policy, when instigated by the law, effectively subverts the notion of law itself:

But where the law, which in most circumstances forbids, and in none countenances gaming, is itself debauched, so as to reverse its nature and policy ... a more dreadful epidemic distemper of that kind is spread than yet has appeared in the world. With you a man can neither earn nor buy his dinner, without a speculation. What he receives in the morning will not have the same value at night. ... Who will labour without knowing the amount of his pay? (pp.310-11).

Thus the Revolution has taken both economic and philosophical speculation too far; it has become a disease that strikes at law, land, and labour. If revolutionary speculation introduces an unprecedented and 'dreadful epidemic distemper' into the world which infuses itself into the 'vital breath' of all social values and relations, then Burke has at last diagnosed for us the nature of the disease he warns against throughout Reflections. As an epidemic distemper, France's injurious economic practice can derange both body and mind; it is a kind of contagious madness which traditional society is particularly susceptible to.

If it seems odd that Burke should include labour in his triumvirate of values which ought to remain stable -- especially given his argument in Thoughts and Details on Scarcity that 'labour is a commodity like any other, and rises and falls according to the demand'³⁴ -- it seems that in these passages from Reflections he is trying to suggest that capitalism is inimical to landed aristocrat and labourer alike if it is not anchored, as it were, to the land. Thus Burke's doctrine of prescription, brought in to protect existing titles to landed property, forms his remedy against the Revolution's epidemic economics. The importance of an alliance between land and capital is central to Burke's project, since he seems to believe that this is the only safe way to introduce capitalism into

British society without destroying its traditional institutions and values. Indeed, capitalism can only flourish if it maintains this alliance. That the Revolution has loosed capitalism from such restraints provides an exemplary warning:

Those whose operations can take from, or add ten percent to, the possessions of every man in France, must be the masters of every man in France. The whole of the power obtained by this revolution will settle in the towns among the burghers, and the monied directors who lead them. The landed gentleman, the yeoman, and the peasant have, none of them, habits or inclinations, or experience, which can lead them to any share in this the sole source of power and influence now left in France (pp.311-12).

Thus those who own and those who work upon the land have no defences against unbridled speculation; there is no prescription against this distemper if it is allowed to attack the immunity system itself. All political and economic power in France will be lodged with a capitalist class without any vested interest in the traditional order and without the checks and balances operative in England:

All these considerations leave no doubt on my mind, that if this monster of a constitution can continue, France will be wholly governed by the agitators in corporations, by societies in the towns formed of directors of assignats, and trustees for the sale of church lands, attornies, agents, money-jobbers, speculators, and adventurers, composing an ignoble oligarchy founded on the destruction of the crown, the church, the nobility, and the people. Here end all the deceitful dreams and visions of the equality and rights of men. In 'the Serbonian bog' of this base oligarchy they are all absorbed, sunk, and lost forever (p.313).

(iv) Ruinous Resources

Examining Necker's account of France's economic condition immediately before the Revolution, Burke finds it a flourishing state and takes this as proof that the country must have been well-governed and had a sound financial constitution (and therefore that there was no need for a revolution): 'Some adequate cause,' he writes, 'must have originally introduced all the money coined at its mint into that kingdom' (Reflections, p.235). The mistake of the Revolution's financial policy is to have severed any 'original' or 'causal' link between money issued and 'real' wealth, forcing 'a currency of their own description in the place of that which is real, and recognized by the law of nations' (p.261). Thus Burke posits that there are two quite different kinds of monetary surplus -- one which has an 'adequate cause' and which sustains the culture and productive life of the state (see pp.235-36), and one which differs from and depletes the 'real and lawful' wealth of a nation. The underlying assumptions of Burke's concept of money can therefore be seen as structured in terms of Derrida's notion of the supplement.

Derrida posits that, for Rousseau, the supplement, as writing or the representative image, is 'a menacing aid, the critical response to a situation of distress' (Of Grammatology, p.144). He draws attention to Rousseau's urging women to breast feed their children because the custom of wet nursing not only makes a bad mother of the wet nurse (who 'nurses another's child in place of her own'), but forever alienates the child from its 'real' mother (whose place has been taken by another, since 'use will overcome nature'). Rousseau seeks to extricate society from this first supplementary displacement of nature because 'more depends on this than you realize. ... Every evil follows in the train of this first sin; the

whole moral order is disturbed, nature is quenched in every breast' (Emile, p.13).

It is possible to see that Burke's uneasiness about the evil of revolutionary paper money follows similar patterns to Rousseau's identification of this 'first sin.' In a striking echo of the latter's emphasis on the importance of escaping the evils of the supplement, Burke stresses that France's sinful economics 'is not merely a money concern' (Reflections, p.308). But if, as Derrida argues, neither signification of 'supplement' can fully slough off the other (the supplement adds only to supplant or to underline an original lack which summoned it), it is fascinating to see how Burke, like Rousseau, nevertheless struggles to dissociate this double nature into wholly distinct domains. As with Burke's other attempts to prize apart the supplement, the English channel is conceived as the safeguarding frontier, and yet he is continually troubled by the possibility that fraudulent speculation may be illicitly smuggled across this divide; as Derrida might have put it, it seems that there is less of a frontier between England and France than an economic distribution.³⁵

In saying that, in revolutionary France, a fictional currency is forcefully put '*in the place of that which is real, and recognized by the law of nations*' (Reflections, p.261, my emphasis), Burke identifies the assignat as the supplement to real wealth or real estate: 'The sign,' Derrida claims, 'is always the supplement of the thing itself' (Of Grammatology, pp.145).³⁶ The real and the lawful are, as we would expect, embodied by, and to be found in, the English economy (which unifies the lawful and the real). Contrasting that economy with France's, Burke finds that 'at present the state of their treasury sinks every day more and more in cash, and swells more and more in fictitious representation' (p.357). Given their own impoverished condition, the French inevitably misunderstand the cause of England's prosperity:

When so little within or without is now found but paper, the representative not of opulence but of want, the creature not of credit but of power, they imagine that our flourishing state in England is owing to that bank-paper, and not the bank-paper to the flourishing condition of our commerce, to the solidity of our credit, and to the total exclusion of all idea of power from any part of the transaction. They forget that, in England, not one shilling of paper money of any description is received but of choice; that the whole has had its origin in cash actually deposited; and that it is convertible, at pleasure, in an instant, and without the smallest loss, into cash again (p.357).³⁷

The French cannot have read their Adam Smith, whose tenets on the relation between paper money and cash Burke reproduces here. But although Smith writes enthusiastically about the beneficial effects of paper money on British wealth and industry (Wealth of Nations, I, pp.292-99), he also reveals how the funding system is intrinsically subject to crises similar to that brought on by the National Assembly. The effectiveness of paper money depends on the 'confidence' people have in the banker's ability to exchange 'his promissory notes' for gold and silver money (Wealth of Nations, I, p.292). Promissory notes are therefore thought of as *conventional* tokens whose value is underwritten by 'real' wealth. It is this conventional nature which allows paper money to augment wealth (by freeing gold and silver for foreign trade), but it also renders it vulnerable whenever banks stray from the principle that 'the whole paper money of every kind which can easily circulate in any country never can exceed the value of the gold and silver, of which it supplies the place' (I, pp.300-301). Should paper ever exceed gold, Smith warns that the excess will 'immediately return upon the banks to be exchanged for gold and silver,' since people 'would immediately demand payment of it from the banks' (I, p.301). But if the banks 'showed any difficulty or backwardness in payment, ... the alarm

which this would occasion, [would] necessarily increase the run [upon the banks]' (I, p.301). Thus paper money should always exactly represent a bank's realizable gold and silver and therefore be capable of being exchanged into 'real' coin instantly and without mediation; any quantitative difference between representation and represented, or any deferral of payment, would immediately precipitate economic crisis with its consequent train of evils. Nevertheless, periodic gluts of 'superfluous paper' (I, p.301) do occur in Britain's economy because, Smith argues, 'every particular banking company has not always understood or attended to its own particular interest': 'By issuing too great a quantity of paper, of which the excess was continually returning, in order to be exchanged for gold and silver, the Bank of England was for many years together obliged to coin gold to the extent of between eight hundred thousand pounds and a million a year' (I, p.302). But if this coinage entailed a loss for the Bank of England, other banks were obliged to engage in more ruinous remedies:

The Scotch banks, in consequence of an excess of the same kind, were all obliged to employ constantly agents at London to collect money for them, at an expence which was seldom below one and a half or two per cent. ... Those agents were not always able to replenish the coffers of their employers so fast as they were emptied. In this case the resource of the banks was, to draw upon their correspondents in London bills of exchange When those correspondents afterwards drew upon them for the payment of this sum, together with the interest and a commission, some of those banks, from the distress into which their excessive circulation had thrown them, had sometimes no other means of satisfying this draught but by drawing a second set of bills either upon the same, or upon some other correspondents in London; and the same sum, or rather bills for the same sum, would in this manner make sometimes more than two or three journies; the debtor bank, paying always the interest and commission upon the whole accumulated sum. Even those Scotch

banks which never distinguished themselves by their extreme imprudence, were sometimes obliged to employ this ruinous resource (I, p.303).

This 'ruinous resource' (a paradoxical formulation which strikingly echoes Rousseau's description of the supplement as a 'menacing aid') was forced upon banks by unsound speculation: 'The over-trading of some bold projectors in both parts of the united kingdom was the original cause of this excessive circulation of paper money' (I, p.304). Smith's account therefore reveals that Britain's economy was itself periodically subject to the same inflationary spirals as those Burke locates in France, and that it too had no other remedy save the 'ruinous resource' of supplementing the shortfall of 'real' money originally produced by an excess of paper money with yet more paper money and bills of exchange. Burke's dismissive criticism of the Revolution's economics may therefore mark the apprehension that France's economic crisis might be a mirror image of Britain's own periodically 'revolutionary' economy, in which bills of exchange can circulate the country in an inflationary spiral or 'epidemic distemper.'

For Burke goes on to insist that although paper money represents 'not opulence' but want in France, in England it indicates a 'flourishing condition of ... commerce' and maintains a motivated relation to its 'origin.' Continuing his lesson from Smith, Burke claims that 'it might be easily shewn, that our paper wealth, instead of lessening the real coin, has a tendency to increase it; instead of being a substitute for money, it only facilitates its entry, its exit, and its circulation; that is the symbol of prosperity, and not the badge of distress' (pp.357-58; compare Wealth of Nations, I, pp.320-21). Paper money, then, is a ruinous, inflationary, and 'dangerous' supplement -- '*ce dangereux supplément*'³⁰ -- in France, where it is 'a badge of distress' indicating a 'want' or absence and supplanting

'real' wealth. But in England it is a benevolent 'symbol of prosperity,' having 'a tendency to increase' -- or supplement -- 'real coin.'

Thus Burke attempts utterly to differentiate emergent capitalism into 'good' and 'bad' forms analogous to the supposed differences between the 'plenitude' of the symbol and the 'dearth' indicated and effected by a decorative 'badge'. But we are beginning to see that Burke's own text problematizes such straightforward distinctions between 'symbol' and 'badge,' between the British state in which art and nature are blended and the French republic where artifice systematically destroys and exposes nature. Indeed, the struggle against radical practices -- or what Reflections figures as radical practices -- comes to seem driven by an *internal* struggle within that text to distinguish and exclude from its own system 'radical' forms which have come to seem dangerous to its own project. At the same time, however, it becomes impossible to differentiate between sound and unsound capitalist practices in absolute terms, since both operate through supplementing 'real' wealth and both need to periodically resort to a 'ruinous resource' which is not alien to but characteristic of its practice.

Paine's response to the discussion of paper money in Reflections is such an interesting re-working of Burke's own terms and anxieties that its very language insists on its inclusion here. In refutation of Burke's comparative analysis of French and English economics, Paine asserts that

the prejudices of some, and the imposition of others, have always represented France as a nation possessing but little money -- whereas the quantity is not only more than four times what the quantity is in England, but is considerably greater on a proportion of numbers. To account for this deficiency on the part of England, some reference should be had to the English system of funding. It *operates to multiply paper, and to substitute it in the room of money, in various shapes;*

and the more paper is multiplied, the more opportunities are afforded to export the specie; and it admits of a possibility (by extending it to small notes) of *increasing paper till there is no money left* (Rights of Man, p.155, my emphasis).

Paine, too, has read his Smith.³⁹ Immediately prior to this, he writes that the funding system 'is not money; neither is it, properly speaking, credit. It in effect creates upon paper the sum which it appears to borrow, and lays on a tax to keep the imaginary capital alive by the payment of interest, and sends the annuity to market, to be sold for paper money already in circulation' (p.154). Paine's analysis of paper money is at once more 'radical' than Smith's (the wealth which the funding system creates upon paper increases in inverse relation to 'real' wealth) and more 'conservative,' since Paine sees it as an entirely deleterious process; it augments wealth in an entirely imaginary way, while actually working to supplant 'real' money 'till there is [none] left.' His comparison between England and France is conducted entirely in terms of the gold and silver to be found in each, reverting repeatedly to the amount of money there ought to be in England considering its share of the gold and silver annually imported into Europe (pp.155-56), and can only account for England's 'deficit' by insinuating that covert corruption continually 'leaks' away the gold and silver which enters England and supplies its absence by paper (p.157 and note). In contrast, although France appeared to be bankrupt on the eve of the Revolution it was only the government, and not the nation, which became insolvent (p.158). The 'natural means' of 'a country of such vast extent and population as France ... cannot be wanting' (p.159), and the crisis experienced by the *ancien régime* arose simply because the nation lost confidence in the government and withheld the revenue (p.158). Contradicting Burke's analysis of the Revolution's finances, Paine claims that 'by lessening the expenses of

Government, and ... by the sale of the monastic and ecclesiastical landed estates,' 'the present Government has paid off a great part of the capital [of the national debt]' (p.159).

Although Collins points out that when Paine contrasted England's economic condition unfavourably with that of France he 'was indulging, for the most part, in wishful thinking' (introduction to Rights of Man, p.29), I am less concerned here with whether Burke or Paine was right than with their parallel anxieties, generated around the effects of the supplementary resources their texts, politics, and economics are compelled to resort to. My stress here is on the fact that Burke and Paine share a similar 'liberal' economics whose theory of paper money construes it as a conventional representational form which *supplements* 'real' money or wealth -- the 'realities' of which turn out themselves to be supplementary representations. Each participant in this crisis of representation labours to separate the negative from the positive connotations and effects of the supplement and to distribute them, according to political interest, on either side of the English Channel. But that Burke and Paine share paradigms and pursue analogous labours is not to suggest that they are in 'collusion' with each other (in the usual sense of the word) or using these paradigms to deliberately obscure or disarm the 'real' conflicts of the period.⁴⁰ I would argue, rather, that there is a genuine struggle *between* them, but that this struggle is a symptom of structural crises *within* each of their texts and characteristic of shared paradigms of the historical moment.

But Paine emerges as in many ways a more 'conservative' thinker than Burke. He appears to reject the possibility that paper money might stimulate the production of wealth (its creations are imaginary fictions) and sees it as an entirely ruinous resource. In addition, he appears to believe that intermediary

representations can and ought to be eliminated from economic transactions by reverting to gold and silver in every facet of the economy. Thus Paine seeks to relinquish both the disadvantages and the advantages of paper money's supplementary operation in favour of 'real' and 'natural' wealth. That gold and silver are, in their turn, conventional representations of wealth is not considered; nor, in celebrating the National Assembly's financial 'miracle,' does he consider Burke's criticism of the *assignats*. Burke, on the other hand, shares Smith's conviction about the benefits of a properly conducted paper currency based on the confidence of the people. In England, that confidence is nurtured by the fact that its paper money is accepted by 'choice' rather than through coercion, and by the conviction that it is backed by 'cash actually deposited,' and can be converted 'at pleasure, in an instant, and without the smallest loss' (Reflections, p.357). But unlike Smith, Burke refuses to countenance the intrinsic liability of the paper money system to periodic inflationary crises, perhaps because that might reveal that England's system is not so different from the National Assembly's operations and that, as in the latter, the resource which appears to uphold an economy may suddenly transform itself into a dreadful epidemic distemper. But as we have seen from Derrida's reading of the economy of the supplement in Rousseau, that Burke labours to dissociate one 'inflexion' of the supplement from the other is the clearest indication that the supplement's irresolvable contradictions are at work within his own text; the effort to exclude the undesirable effects of supplementation by identifying and castigating them in the 'evil' republic across the channel is the surest sign that Burke's recourse to a range of 'benevolent' supplements carries its own hazards. Rousseau, indeed, offers a curious but significant role model for Burke, exhausting himself 'in trying to separate, as two exterior and heterogeneous forces, a

positive and a negative principle' (Of Grammatology, p.212). That is, like Rousseau and against his better judgement, Burke risks his constitution in order to save it (compare Derrida's reading of Rousseau's dilemma, Of Grammatology, p.177).

1. Barrell allows us to see that the French people and language were regarded with suspicion and hostility throughout the eighteenth century (Barrell, pp.120-21, p.155, pp.160-61); Burke's response to the Revolution therefore exploits prejudices already endemic.

2. In proposing that the majority of those elected to the National Assembly are unfit for such a position, Burke argues that 'no name, no power, no function, no artificial institution whatsoever, can make the men of whom any system of authority is composed, any other than God, and nature, and education, and their habits of life have made of them' (p.128). Paine writes against Burke's aetiology of inequality by arguing that 'such vast classes of mankind as are distinguished by the appellation of the vulgar, or the ignorant mob, [and who] are so numerous in all the old countries ... arise, as an unavoidable consequence, out of the ill construction of all old governments in Europe It is by distortedly exalting some men, that others are distortedly debased, till the whole is out of nature' (Rights of Man, pp.80-81).

3. In the early twentieth century, 'equality' has been seen by conservative thinkers as an impossibly abstract, and hence visionary, term for speakers of English: 'Saxon is not strong in abstract and general ideas, which do not stir our emotions as they do those of the Latin races. For instance, "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity" would never make a revolution here. The Saxon equivalents, "Freedom" and "Brotherhood," are much more concrete, hardly ideas. Freedom is being let alone. Brotherhood is a fact of kinship. Equality has no Saxon expression, it is too abstract; it would never occur to one looking at men' (Walter Raleigh, On Writing and Writers, pp.26-27).

4. In contrast, Paine argues that the 'landed interest' is not the same as the interest of the land: 'It is difficult to discover what is meant by the *landed interest*, if it does not mean a combination of aristocratical land-holders, opposing their own pecuniary interest to that of the farmer, and every branch of trade, commerce, and manufacture. In all other respects it is the only interest that needs no partial protection. It enjoys the general protection of the world. Every individual, high or low, is interested in the fruits of the earth; men, women, and children, of all ages and degrees, will turn out to assist the farmer, rather than a harvest should not be got in; and they will not act thus by any other property. It is the only one for which the common prayer of mankind is put up, and the only one that can never fail for want of means' (p.248).

5. Quoted by Macpherson, pp.21-22; for the proposition that 'As contemporary political economists ... Smith and

Burke demonstrate a substantial agreement,' see William Clyde Dunn, 'Adam Smith and Edmund Burke: Complementary Contemporaries,' p.345.

6. For a perceptive discussion of property in Burke's writings on the Revolution, see George Fasel, 'The Role of Property in Burke's Thought.'

7. If Burke's notion of 'unequal' political representation can be seen as structured like a synecdoche, representation on the principle of common franchise, on the other hand, might be viewed in terms of metaphor. I am indebted for a clarification of this idea to Professor Klaus Hoffmann of the University of Frankfurt who, while teaching at Southampton University, kindly read and commented upon the text of a lecture I gave on the relation between Burke and Paine.

8. That which represents itself and nothing else may only come to have a referential value through convention. This insight forms one of the cornerstones of Paine's criticism of the aristocratic system of government and of the kind of language used to maintain its hegemony; his critique of 'titles' gives an insight into the political and linguistic alternative offered by the radicalism of the 1790s: 'What are they? What is their worth, and "what is their amount?" When we speak of a *Judge* or a *General*, we associate with it the ideas of office and character; we think of gravity in the one, and bravery in the other: but when we use a word *merely* as a title, no ideas associate with it. Through all the vocabulary of Adam, there is not such an animal as a Duke or a Count; neither can we connect any certain ideas with the words. Whether they mean strength or weakness, wisdom or folly, a child or a man, or the rider or the horse, is all equivocal. What respect then can be paid to that which describes nothing, and which means nothing? Imagination has given figure and character to centaurs, satyrs, and down to all the fairy tribe; but titles baffle even the powers of fancy, and are a chimerical non-descript' (Rights of Man, p.103). Paine's alternative language would be one where words have a measurable (moral and/or economic) worth, and his social system a meritocracy within a bourgeois capitalism. Unlike Burke's theory of the associative processes of language, in which connotations can be imported to a thing or idea from a quite different context, Paine proposes that the connotations of a word should be, and are, *motivated* -- here, the associations we have of 'judge' and 'general' are metonymically based in their office and character, while 'duke' or 'count' refer to neither office, character, or any other substantial 'thing' or idea. That titles lack a basis in the 'real' world offers the possibility of exposing their meaninglessness through the collective decision of the people: 'It is common opinion only that makes them anything,' and therefore 'if

a whole country is disposed to hold them in contempt, all their value is gone, and none will own them' (p.103). But despite their being offered as examples of prelapsarian, motivated systems, the associations of 'gravity' with 'judge' and 'bravery' with 'general' are themselves abstract and conventional. Paine does not necessarily offer a completely different linguistics to Burke -- despite the gestures towards substance, worth, and Adamic naming, his theory does not go as far as Tooke's position that, as Aarsleff puts it, 'all words can be reduced to names of sensation' (Hans Aarsleff, Study of Language in England, 1780-1860, p.73).

9. For Hazlitt's argument that poetry is an 'aristocratical' medium (while reason is a 'republican faculty'), see 'Coriolanus.'

10. Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents, Works, II, p. 224.

11. Macpherson, p.24, quoting Present Discontents, p.270.

12. Macpherson, p.25, referring firstly to First Letter on a Regicide Peace, Works, VIII, pp.140-41, and Appeal, p.216.

13. Macpherson, p.25, quoting 'Speech to the Electors of Bristol at the Conclusion of the Poll,' Works, III, pp.19-20. The principles expressed in Burke's speech to his constituents should be compared with his criticism of the system being implemented in republican France, where he discovers a fundamental 'defect' in its representation: 'Your new constitution is the very reverse of ours in its principle; and I am astonished how any persons could dream of holding out any thing done in it as an example for Great Britain. With you there is little, or rather no, connection between the last representative and the first constituent. ... There is no way to make a connection between the original constituent and the representative [who is rather 'an ambassador of a state ... (than) the representative of the people within a state'] but by ... circuitous means' (Reflections, p.304). My interest here is not whether Burke was right or wrong in his comparison of the two political structures, but to ask what implications can be drawn from the way those differences are represented.

14. Observations on a Late Publication Intituled the Present State of the Nation (1769), Works, II, p.136, quoted by Macpherson, p.22.

15. This problem was certainly confronted by radicals of the late eighteenth century. In Letter to Llandaff, Wordsworth writes that, since 'much of human misery ... proceed[s] from the governors' having an interest distinct

from that of the governed,' and since 'at the moment of election an interest distinct from that of the general body is created,' 'it should seem a natural deduction that whatever has a tendency to identify the two must also in the same degree promote the general welfare. As the magnitude of almost all states prevents the possibility of their enjoying a pure democracy, philosophers, from a wish, as far as is in their power, to make the governors and the governed one, will turn their thoughts to the system of universal representation, and will annex an equal importance to the suffrage of every individual' (Prose Works, I, pp.36-37). Owen and Smyser's commentary on this passage is important here in that it reveals a difference between Paine and Rousseau on representation: 'That a "pure democracy" is an impossibility in a large State was a view held both by Rousseau ... and by Paine In proposing representation as the best form for the government of a large State, Wordsworth is closer to Paine: "the original simple democracy ... is incapable of extension, not from its principle, but from the inconvenience of its form. ... Retaining, then, democracy as the ground ... the representative system naturally presents itself; remedying at once the defects of the simple democracy as to form"' (Prose Works, pp.56-57, quoting Rights of Man, p.202). Rousseau, on the other hand, opposes representation as destructive of liberty: 'Quoi qu'il en soit, à l'instant qu'un peuple se donne des Représentants, il n'est plus libre' (Du Contrat social, quoted in Prose Works, p.57).

16. Williams shows that the ambiguities in the term 'representative' which Burke exploits, are retained in the notion of representative democracy (see Keywords, p.268).

17. Price, Discourse pp.41-42; the emphases are Burke's and the passage is misquoted.

18. In his own comparison between France and England, Paine takes Burke to task precisely for not having written the treatise on the English constitution he seemed to promise: 'I readily perceive the reason why Mr Burke declined going into the comparison between the English and French constitutions, because he could not but perceive, when he sat down to the task, that no such thing as a constitution existed on his side the question' (Rights of Man, p.94). In Paine's eyes the English constitution is a fiction constituted by being endlessly talked about (see p.153), while the French is a written document which can be produced and read: 'The French constitution says, That the number of representatives for any place shall be in a ratio to the number of taxable inhabitants or electors. What article will Mr Burke place against this? ... [Paine then gives some examples of the absurdities of the distribution of seats in England, and concludes,] No wonder, then, Mr Burke has declined the comparison, and

endeavoured to lead his readers from the point by a wild unsystematical display of paradoxical rhapsodies' (p.96). Barrell points out that 'England has no written constitution -- when the English, or a few of them, had the opportunity, in 1688, of writing one, they chose not to do so. The English constitution is instead a dispersed body of common and statute law, of precedents judicial and institutional, of institutions and their customary relations to one another' (An Equal, Wide Survey, p. 120).

19. See, for example, the documentation assembled by Thompson in 'The Curse of Adam,' Part Two of Making of the English Working Class, pp.207-488.

20. Burke was not, of course, unaware of the anomalies of the distribution of seats. In the course of a critical comparison between French and British governmental systems, he writes the following: 'When did you hear in Great Britain of any province suffering from the inequality of its representation; what district from having no representation at all? Not only our monarchy and our peerage secure the equality on which our unity depends, but it is the spirit of the house of commons itself. The very inequality of representation, which is so foolishly complained of, is perhaps the very thing which prevents us from thinking or acting as members for districts. Cornwall elects as many members as all Scotland. But is Cornwall better taken care of than Scotland?' (pp.303-04). Burke's analysis of the French republic can be impressive; his defence of Britain's mixed bag is often nonsense.

21. For Thompson, radical discourse before Paine never threw off the yoke of the tradition that the English constitution was fundamentally a guarantor of liberty (Making of the English Working Class, p.95). What Thompson misses out is that Burke saw and voiced the iconoclastic tendencies implicit in the early radical response to the Revolution before Paine.

22. A 'canton' was a division of the new political map of France and contained 'four square leagues' (Reflections, p.294).

23. For Coleridge's 'organic' definitions of poetic genius and poetry, see Biographia Literaria, pp.173-74; for the idea that Wordsworth's 'imagination' allows his poetry to be at once akin to the great poetry of the past and yet be entirely new, see p.271. A good example of Coleridge's organicist thought is his definition of the 'tautegorical symbol' as a figure which 'always partakes of the Reality which it renders intelligible; and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as the living part in that Unity, of which it is the representative' ('The Statesman's Manual,' Collected Works, 6, p.30). It would be possible to trace

numerous parallels between Burke and Coleridge; if Burke refers to the thinking behind the French Revolution as 'this mechanic philosophy' (Reflections, p.172), Coleridge accounts it 'among the miseries of the present age' that its metaphors are a 'counterfeit product of the mechanical understanding' ('Statesman's Manual,' p.30). Coleridge makes his distinctions with an urgency equal to Burke's: 'Repeated meditations led me first to suspect (and a more intimate analysis of the human faculties ... matured my conjecture into full conviction), that fancy and imagination were two distinct and widely different faculties, instead of being, according to the general belief, either two names with one meaning, or at furthest the lower and higher degree of one and the same power' (Biographia Literaria, pp.49-50). Good sense, claims Coleridge, invoking metaphors we have seen politicized in the Revolution controversy, 'is the body of poetic genius, fancy its drapery, motion its life, and imagination the soul that is everywhere, and in each; and forms all into one graceful and intelligent whole' (p.174). If fancy is the drapery, the aggregative power, then it might be likened to the ambiguous and paradoxical custom and costume of Burke's text -- through which life comes to have its only charm. Although it differentiates his poetics from the Augustan tradition of language as 'the Dress of Thought,' Coleridge's distinction between imagination and fancy is perhaps given its urgency through the way the body-dress relation becomes so pressingly politicized in the Revolution controversy. Wordsworth, as might be expected, came to have a similar superstition in a slightly different context: 'If words be not ... an incarnation of the thought but only a clothing for it, then surely will they prove an ill gift; such a one as those poisoned vestments, read of in superstitious times, which had the power to consume and to alienate from his right mind the victim who put them on' ('Essays Upon Epitaphs,' p.85). The need for a language that becomes (incarnated) like second nature therefore becomes urgently necessary for the conservation of both the state and the self. As a defensive strategy, the imagination provides not only the alternative of a wholesome poetics but attempts to recuperate the drapery of fancy into 'one graceful and intelligent whole.' The imagination shapes and modifies perception into Art, while the fancy is palpable artifice -- an accumulative process that adds one capricious and distorting image to another without a unifying principle. The distinction which becomes so central to Wordsworth and Coleridge and to subsequent ways of reading literature might therefore be seen as emerging from Burke's attempts to prize apart the different connotations of the supplement in order, eventually, to conserve the state. Coleridge goes on to stress that 'in all societies there exists an instinct of growth, a certain collective unconscious good sense working progressively to desynonymise those words originally of

the same meaning' (p.50). The process by which Coleridge's distinction becomes naturalized is strikingly Burkean: in a footnote, he talks about a process of usage and time by which the distinction becomes 'so naturalized and of such general currency that the language does as it were think for us ... we then say, that it is evident to *common sense*' (p.52, n.3 continued from p.51). For a reading of Coleridge which shows how virtually all the concerns which this thesis traces in Burke are concentrated in The Friend, see Jerome Christensen, Coleridge's Blessed Machine of Language).

24. If Burke perceives a dangerous though unstable alliance, in the French Revolution, between emergent capitalism and 'the lower orders,' his writings on France might be seen as entrenching what is now thought of as an endemic conflict of interests between labour and capital.

25. For an account of English economics in the eighteenth century -- including the relations between gold and silver money, paper money, bills of exchange, forgery, and clipping -- see T.S. Ashton, An Economic History of England: The Eighteenth Century, pp.167-200.

26. The most comprehensive discussion of the *assignats* can be found in S.E. Harris, The Assignats.

27. John Law was a Scot called in after the death of Louis XIV by the Duke of Orleans in order to solve a financial crisis not unlike that which precipitated the Revolution at the end of the the century. Law advised, in Cobban's words, that 'the issue by a royal bank of paper money, guaranteed on the king's credit, could remedy [the] deficiency [of currency]' (Cobban, pp.22-23). To back the paper money, a trading venture was undertaken in Louisiana accompanied by talk of a 'new Eldorado.' Shares in the company rose to forty times their face value only to crash when the public lost confidence. The system became bankrupt in October 1720 and Law fled to London (Cobban, pp.24-26). Considering Burke's reactions to the Revolution, it is intriguing to read Montesquieu's observations on France's earlier experience of paper money: "'All those," wrote Montesquieu, "who were rich six months ago are now in the depth of poverty, and those who had not even bread to eat are swollen with riches. Never have the two extremes of society met so closely. The foreigner turned the state inside out as a tailor turns a suit of clothes"' (quoted by Cobban, p.26). The most searching analysis of the implications of Law's venture can be found in Foucault, Order of Things, pp.180-83.

28. See Wealth of Nations, I, pp.286-329. For a discussion of Burke as a 'bourgeois political economist,' see Macpherson, pp.51-70 (especially, pp.55-60).

29. For an account of the complex function of fine metal in mercantile economics, which shows that gold and silver were thought of not as wealth in themselves but as peculiarly apt representations of wealth, see Order of Things, pp.174-77.

30. Such practice is not quite so unprecedented as Burke makes out, since his language and sentiments closely follow Adam Smith's reaction to a similar situation in America before its revolution: 'The paper currencies of North America consisted, not in bank notes payable to the bearer on demand, but in a government paper, of which the payment was not eligible till several years after it was issued; and though the colony governments paid no interest to the holders of this paper, they declared it to be, and in fact rendered it, a legal tender of payment for the full value for which it was issued. But allowing the colony security to be perfectly good, a hundred pounds payable fifteen years hence, for example, in a country where interest is at six per cent, is worth little more than forty pounds ready money. To oblige a creditor, therefore, to accept of this as full payment for a debt of a hundred pounds actually paid down in ready money was an act of such violent injustice as has scarce, perhaps, been attempted by the government of any other country which pretended to be free. It bears the evident marks of having originally been ... a scheme of fraudulent debtors to cheat their creditors' (Wealth of Nations, I, p.326).

31. See Wealth of Nations, I, pp.298-303; Harrap's French-English Dictionary defines assignat as a 'promissory note (as issued by the Revolutionary French Government, 1790-96).'

32. 'Inscription on coinage is most often the intersection, the scene of the exchange between the linguistic and the economic' (Derrida, 'White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy,' p.216); for an illuminating discussion of the metaphorical interchange between economics and language in English Romanticism, see Mary Jacobus, 'The Art of Managing Books,' pp.225-26; this essay is especially good on Burke's impact on the major Romantic essayists. Armstrong, in 'The Transformation of Metaphor,' attends to the shifts in the metaphorical relationship between language and money in the eighteenth century, in Romanticism, and in Ezra Pound. The most extensive analysis of the analogic relation between money and language comes in Order of Things, pp.166-211.

33. 'Delos ... had been a floating island until Latona there gave birth to Apollo and Diana, and Jupiter made the island fast' (O'Brien, p.395, n.152).

34. Thoughts and Details on Scarcity (1795), Works, VII, p.379.

35. In Rousseau, onanism functions as a ruinous, imaginary displacement of 'real' relations with women; reading this supplementary relation, Derrida suggests that 'between auto-eroticism and hetero-eroticism, there is not a frontier but an economic distribution' (Of Grammatology, p.155).

36. Derrida's emphasis coincides with the emphasis I would wish to make in relation to Burke's description of the effects of a paper money not fully 'backed' by real wealth.

37. Hobsbawm informs us that paper money remained relatively stable in Britain through the 1790s, though in 1797 the Bank of England suspended 'gold payments to private clients ... and the inconvertible banknote became, *de facto*, the effective currency: the £1 note was one result' (Age of Revolution, p.121).

38. Rousseau, quoted in Of Grammatology, p.150.

39. The OED's entry on 'funding' -- i.e. the conversion of a floating debt into a permanent one -- cites Smith's disapproval of 'the ruinous expedient of perpetual funding.' Isaac Kramnick's introduction to Common Sense, shows that Paine arrived at his liberal economics and politics independently of Smith (Common Sense and Wealth of Nations were both published in 1776): 'Smith's and Paine's is the basic liberal vision. ... Both Paine and Smith had read their Locke' (Common Sense, pp.39-40).

40. In their perceptive discussion of the 'collusions of discourse' between Burke and Paine, the UEA English Studies Group suggest that this 'species of collusion' 'does not imply self-conscious conspiracy or simple identity,' but is based on 'shared paradigms, basic systems of representation' ('Strategies for Representing Revolution,' Reading Writing Revolution, pp.85, 90, 91). To a certain extent, however, this insight leads the group to obfuscate the possibility that Burke and Paine *struggle* with these paradigms in analogous but significantly different ways.

Chapter 9: The Republic of Letters

According to Foucault, one of the problems which faced physiocratic economic thought in the second half of the eighteenth century concerned the creation of value; although all commodities may have their origin in the land, those commodities only assume the status of wealth through being exchanged. Wealth, then, is construed out of those goods which exceed the agricultural capitalist's immediate needs. This excess has to be derived from a source which will not be depleted by the process of continually yielding a profit. In Foucault's analysis of physiocratic thought, neither trade nor industry is capable of providing 'this necessary supplement' -- on the contrary, entrepreneurial activity creates wealth only at the expense of others, and the value it creates 'arises only where goods have disappeared' (Order of Things, pp.193-94). Foucault's use of the term 'necessary supplement,' in the year before the publication of Of Grammatology, seems unaware of its contradictory possibilities, and yet we can already see how it is peculiarly apt; manufacturing capitalism creates value by depleting 'natural' wealth, while agricultural capitalism (since 'agriculture is the only sphere,' for the Physiocrats, 'in which the increase in value due to production is not equivalent to the maintenance of the producer' [p.194]) draws on nature as 'an inexhaustible source of the goods that exchange transforms into values' (p.195). Nature is inexhaustible because backing it is 'the Author of nature, the Producer of all goods and all wealth' (Order of Things, p.194, quoting Mirabeau, Philosophie rurale); the agricultural labourer or farmer becomes a 'Co-Author,' in partnership without knowing it (Order of Things, p.194). In this way, and the metaphors Foucault draws from the discourse are indicative,

agriculture shares the general paradigm of creativity developed in the Renaissance, in which human agency had been endowed with the capacity of creation in the image of God -- a capacity which was ambiguous, however, since at its most daring the poet could claim to imitate God's creativity while the more timid interpretation was that the poet imitated or counterfeited the world that God had created (Williams, Keywords, p.82).

At the same time, however, the second half of the eighteenth century is the scene, for Foucault, of an epistemological mutation which, in economics, displaces the physiocratic concentration on representations of the 'real' good 'which exists prior to the system of wealth' (Order of Things, p.195), in order to focus, in Smith, on representations of labour (p.223). Exchanges are no longer organized by needs, but 'by the units of labour that have been invested in the objects in question' (p.224). By including labour in the equation, Smith's analysis 'represents an essential hiatus' (p.224), since he 'formulates a principle ... that is irreducible to the analysis of representation' (p.225). In analysing the implications of the division of labour, Smith identifies the process in which the object produced no longer represents the worker's immediate need, and anticipates 'the possibility of a political economy whose object would no longer be the exchange of wealth (and the interplay of representations which is its basis), but its real production: forms of labour and capital' (p.225). If, in what Foucault calls the Classical period, monetary signs and words function in analogous ways in that both are thought to signify or designate real objects -- or, more precisely, real needs (pp.202-03) -- the break with representation in which Smith figures has its parallels in theories of language in which words no longer gain their meaning through representing objects, but are endowed with representational possibilities through the language system (pp.232-43). I would like to explore, in this final

chapter, the ways in which Smith's economics are inextricably bound up with a theory and practice of language whose break with classical notions of representation is both enabling for Smith and unnerving.

For Burke, whose parallels with Smith we have constantly witnessed, this mutual hiatus in economics and language is both intrinsic to his own linguistic and economic theories and practices and disturbingly akin to those he wishes to identify with revolutionary radicalism. Burke, too, forms a transitional figure whose physiocratic economics shares Smith's analysis of labour and the market,¹ and whose rhetorical theory both invokes the primitive language of the law and perceives that language's power arises from its non-representational status. In a sense, then, Burke tries to limit rhetorical 'profit' -- which certain uses of language might yield over and above 'the thing itself' -- to a particular class and to the promotion of certain socio-economic ends; it is this which organizes Burke's reiterated attempt to distinguish between natural art and mere art. In such social thought, the majority are encouraged in the 'primitive' belief that language conforms to what Burke presents as natural laws, the transgression of which produces monstrous and sacrilegious fictions. Burke therefore seeks to control the effects of what Foucault might identify as an all-pervasive epistemological shift. For if Foucault underlines the hiatus between the analysis of wealth in terms of representations of objects of need and a political economy which theorizes the production of value, then Williams reminds us that, in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the terms 'create' and 'creation' acquired their modern senses of artistic and imaginative activity which stress human *innovation* rather than mere imitation. Briefly (and hence reductively), literature begins to be conceived of not as the imitation of God's creation but ^{as} exemplifying *human* creativity (Keywords, p.83); the author is no longer in partnership

with the author of nature but seeks to emulate Him (a possibility, however, that is already potential within Renaissance theories).

It is possible, then, to extend the analysis of Burke's and Paine's 'exchange' on money matters in Chapter 8 to include the way they explore problems about language and literature in terms which reveal both how they might be analogous to monetary forms and how collusive alliances might develop between certain kinds of wealth and certain kinds of literature. For the notion of literature itself undergoes a transition at this point -- shifting from its role (in the sense of 'letters') of underpinning social divisions towards the more narrow sense of imaginative literature bound up with a developing 'self-consciousness of the profession of authorship, in the period of transition from patronage to the bookselling market' (Keywords, pp.184-85). This means that literature, like economic enterprise, begins to break with its traditional ties with landed power. In Reflections, 'false' representation in money is made analogous, through the pun on 'speculation,' to 'false' representation in writing, and this allows Burke to suggest that a conspiratorial link exists, inevitably, between speculative, imaginative writing and a capitalism not properly grounded in, associated with, or ballasted by, a sound landed interest. In this, Burke seeks to limit capitalism and literature at one and the same time -- both in the sense of constraining their impulse and limiting them to a specific social order. This is, then, yet another problematic in which Burke's struggles with radicalism are also attempts to come to terms with the implications of his own thought in the unprecedented historical moment of the French Revolution.

(i) Taking to the Air on Paper Wings

I have suggested that Adam Smith attempts to follow a narrow course between celebrating the positive effects of paper money and warning of its integral risks. This complex perspective is figured in a memorable image:

The gold and silver money which circulates in any country may very properly be compared to a highway, which, while it circulates and carries to market all the grass and corn of the country, produces itself not a pile of either. The judicious operations of banking, by providing, if I may be allowed so violent a metaphor, a sort of waggon-way through the air; enable the country to convert, as it were, a great part of its highways into good pastures and corn fields, and thereby to increase very considerably the annual produce of its land and labour. The commerce and industry of the country, however, it must be acknowledged, though they may be somewhat augmented, cannot be altogether so secure, when they are thus, as it were, suspended upon the Daedalian wings of paper money, as when they travel about upon the solid ground of gold and silver (Wealth of Nations, I, p.321).²³

This is a fascinating passage in that the two kinds of economic practice it refers to are figured precisely in terms of their relative degree of contact with the land. Gold and silver are 'highways' which, though they are solid enough, produce nothing themselves and take up some of the land which could otherwise produce food and wealth. The wise use of paper money, however, increases the overall produce of the land by allowing those 'highways' to be converted 'into good pastures and corn-fields.' But although such a 'judicious' use of paper money does augment commerce and industry, it also makes them less secure; it is a somewhat dangerous augmentation, because it becomes detached from 'the solid ground of gold and silver.' What particularly interests me in the passage are the implicit relationships it develops between different kinds of economic and rhetorical practices and

theories, and the different attitudes Smith reveals towards them. When on the 'solid ground' of gold and silver, Smith feels secure with his 'proper' comparisons; but suspended upon the 'Daedalian wings of paper money' he is at once more bold and more anxious with his 'violent metaphor' of 'a sort of waggon-way through the air.' The two economic systems are thus linked through analogy and in practice with different kinds of rhetoric; while the economics of 'real' money (and 'real' property) is associated with 'proper' language use, even the 'judicious' use of paper money is implicitly likened to a more violent and imaginative linguistic practice -- one less grounded in solid reality yet at the same time more 'productive.'³ In this concluding section, I will explore how these different alliances of language and economics contend with each other in the pages of Reflections; Burke attempts to marshal first one and then the other according to the expediencies of the moment, yet his project becomes compromised by the problematic distinction between them. I argue that the implicit relationship, in Wealth of Nations, between the new economics and a 'violent' rhetorical practice and theory -- together with the ambivalent attitude towards new practices which at once augment and threaten 'real' wealth or 'real' meaning -- forms one of the major sites of struggle between Burke and Paine at a critical juncture in the transition from agrarian to bourgeois capitalism.

Figuring assignats as 'symbols of their speculations' (p.261), Reflections makes analogous the financial speculations of the new economic order in France and the speculative writings that are supposed to have prefigured the Revolution. We have seen Burke's antagonism towards the kind of economic speculation which undermines even the value of land itself; such speculation is associated with the 'shallow speculations' of revolutionary 'philosophy': 'although hereditary wealth, and the rank which goes with it, are too much idolized by creeping sycophants, and the

blind abject admirers of power, they are too rashly slighted in shallow speculations of the petulant, assuming, short-sighted coxcombs of philosophy' (p.141). Speculation -- in philosophy and in economics -- introduces an element of 'gaming' into 'the very thread of ... [the republic's] life' (p.310), which, to introduce a term from his aesthetic treatise, Burke finds unnerving. It privileges chance above motivation, and, like the imaginary representations of the Revolution's paper money, its discourse has an at best dubious relation to 'reality.'

In this, Burke participates in the eighteenth century's identification of a mutually constitutive relation between speculation and madness. Foucault writes that, for this mode of thought, 'abstract speculations, the perpetual agitation of the mind without the exercise of the body, can have the most disastrous effects. ... The more abstract or complex knowledge becomes, the greater the risk of madness' (Madness and Civilization, p.217). From Europe's perspective, this speculative madness was a peculiarly English disease, brought on by England's economic enterprise: '"The English,"' Foucault quotes Spurzheim, '"are a nation of merchants; a mind always occupied with speculations is continually agitated by fear and hope"' (p.214). Burke's attacks on revolutionary philosophy and finance therefore reverse the European perspective, discovering evidence of unsound philosophy, political economy, language, and minds in the proceedings of the National Assembly and identifying England as the site of all things sound. If madness was understood as the 'astonishing revolutions [of] weak minds' (Foucault, quoting the Encyclopédie), Burke's early sublime might be thought of as an attempt to develop an antidote to 'la *maladie anglaise*,' and his writings on the French Revolution as a continuation of that effort to immunize minds and states against such internal revolutions. Thus Burke seeks to steer between the debilitating milieu of a

complacent aristocratic society, and the frantic madness of unbridled commercial speculation. Warding off dangers from both sides, it is easy to see how Burke is variously perceived as a defender of the aristocratic *status quo* and as 'an out-and-out vulgar bourgeois.'⁴ Yet neither reading seems to account for the complexities of Burke's project or for the ways that project is at once formulated by his own aesthetics and undercut by the attempt, necessary but impossible, to exploit supplementary forms both as a mode of defending Britain and as a means of characterizing the most serious of the Revolution's threats to civilization.

The fraudulent representation that is republican paper money has a constitutive relation, in Reflections, with the republic's fraudulent language. In Burke's narrative of the origins of the Revolution, the shift in the distribution of wealth and power from landed property to a more free-floating capital is paralleled by the rise of a new kind of writing: 'Along with the monied interest,' Burke writes, 'a new description of men had grown up, with whom that interest soon formed a close and marked union; I mean the political Men of Letters' (Reflections, p.211).⁵ We saw in Chapter 6 that one of the causes of the Revolution in France for Burke was the failure to properly incorporate and recognize the monied interest; Burke develops this by suggesting that 'ancient usages . . . had kept the landed and monied interests more separated in France, less miscible, and the owners of the two distinct species of property not so well disposed to each other as they are in this country' (pp.209-10). Such an 'unconnected' economic power has a 'natural' tendency towards *political* innovation:

The monied interest is in its nature more ready for any adventure; and its possessors more disposed to new enterprizes of any kind. Being of a recent acquisition, it falls in more naturally with any novelties. It is therefore the kind of wealth which will be

resorted to by all who wish for change
(p.211).

In the same way, 'Men of Letters, fond of distinguishing themselves, are rarely averse to innovation' (p.211). Since literature was not encouraged by the French court after the decline of 'Lewis the XIVth,' the men of letters in France joined 'a sort of corporation of their own' which produced the Encyclopédie and became a 'literary cabal,' monopolizing 'all the avenues to literary fame' (pp.211-12).⁴ Because their 'narrow, exclusive spirit [was] not ... less prejudicial to literature and to taste, than to morals and true philosophy,' 'nothing was wanted but the power of carrying the intolerance of the tongue and the pen into a persecution which would strike at property, liberty, and life' (p.212). The men of letters acquire that power by cultivating the monied interest; in return, literature becomes propaganda for the *nouveaux riches*:

Writers, especially when they act in a body, and with one direction, have great influence on the publick mind; the allegiance therefore of these writers with the monied interest had no small effect in removing the popular odium and envy which attended that species of wealth. These writers, like the propagators of all novelties, pretended to a great zeal for the poor, and the lower orders, whilst in their satires they rendered hateful, by every exaggeration, the faults of courts, of nobility, and of priesthood. They became a sort of demagogues. They served as a link to unite, in favour of one object, obnoxious wealth to restless and desperate poverty (pp.213-14).

The new money and literature (revolutionary and revolting⁷), are both detached, as it were, from the land -- from 'real' wealth, value, and meaning. Literature is used for political persuasion, propagating false and novel opinion; its zeal for the poor is a pretence, its portrait of courts, nobility, and priesthood a politically

motivated exaggeration. Pretending to offer an alternative reality, the literary imagination is scandalously loosed from the earth and made radically independent of proper grounds (landed property). In the second Letter on a Regicide Peace, this 'correspondence' between the men of letters and the new monied class -- united through the power of the press -- is seen as the prime mover of the Revolution (O'Brien, p.52). And yet we have seen that Burke is both all too aware of the power of propaganda and something of a propagandist himself. Even if the alliance between new wealth and poverty is a problematic one, it is precisely what he fears and relentlessly writes to undo.

That the eighteenth century considered 'men of letters' to be the most vulnerable to madness (see Madness and Civilization, p.217) underlines the issues at stake in Burke's attack on those men of letters who have abdicated their traditional role in society. Barrell shows that to enter the ranks of 'men of letters' in eighteenth century England was more difficult than qualifying for the vote. To become an 'authorized' user of the language, it was thought that a man (it was usually a man) had to reside in 'London, the Universities, or at Court' (in order 'to preserve their language from provincial vulgarity'), and have 'a private income substantial enough to free them from the need to work for a living, so that their vocabulary could be protected from contamination from the terms of particular arts and occupations' (Barrell, p.133-34).⁴⁹ In this way, Barrell argues, if it was any longer possible to have a detached overview of society and thereby speak for the whole, that prerogative had shifted from the gentleman to the writer (p.134). The writer and the gentleman still, of course, overlap to a great extent, since the qualifications for both were virtually the same. This means that for traditional eighteenth-century society, as we have seen, letters and land are -- or ought to be -- deeply implicated with one another.

Throughout the eighteenth century, however, and especially in France, a new kind of writer (Rousseau was one of them) began to hold sway independently of traditional social qualifications, and the power of the press began to challenge the power of the land. Part of the concern of the present chapter will be to examine the terms of Burke's particular aggression towards these new men of letters, and to explore how Paine presents himself as a representative figure of this new 'republic.' There was also, clearly, an exclusion of women from the privileged 'men of letters.' If great care was taken in the eighteenth century to prevent the majority from acquiring writing skills (though a need was also felt that the rising middle classes should be taught to read and write in order to fit them for trade), women were bracketed off with children and 'the ignorant' (Barrell, pp.139-40). Rousseau's education of Sophy concurs in this by suggesting that she is constitutionally averse to writing (*Emile*, pp.331-32). Wollstonecraft, of course, by becoming 'the first of a new genus', a woman who is a professional writer,⁹ constituted a double infringement on traditional conceptions of the role of writers in society.

(ii) Exploding Upstart Theory¹⁰

Much of Burke's effort, as we have seen, is directed at shoring up England's institutions against the ruin threatened by the revolutionary thought and activity of English radicalism. Discussing 'the high-bred republicans' of his own time, most of whom became 'the most decided, thorough-paced courtiers' when they realized the difficulties of reform, and left 'the business of ... practical resistance to those of us whom, in the pride and intoxication of their theories, they have slighted, as not much better than tories,' Burke proposes that radical

speculation is severed from the realities of everyday politics:

Hypocrisy, of course, delights in the most sublime speculations; for, never intending to go beyond speculation, it costs nothing to have it magnificent. . . . Some indeed are more steady and persevering natures; but these are eager politicians out of parliament, who have little to tempt them to abandon their favourite projects. They have some change in the church or state, or both, constantly in their view. When that is the case, they are always bad citizens, and perfectly unsure connections (pp.154-55).

Produced without effort, and costing nothing, these 'sublime speculations' are utterly distinguished from the Burkean sublime, whose characteristic feature, we have seen, is mental and/or physical labour. Indeed, in its effortless production of theoretical systems, and in its threat to sound statesmanship, this kind of speculation more nearly resembles Burke's conception of the beautiful than the sublime. Although these 'eager politicians out of parliament' have energy and ability, their lack of investment in the landed interest or in established institutions means that, for Burke, they undermine rather than promote civil society. Attacking 'the kind of anniversary sermons, to which a great part of what I write refers,' Burke confesses to his correspondent that

I never liked this continual talk of resistance and revolution, or the practice of making the extreme medicine of the constitution its daily bread. It renders the habit of society dangerously valetudinary: it is taking periodical doses of mercury sublimate, and swallowing down repeated provocatives of cantharides to our love of liberty.

This distemper of remedy, grown habitual, relaxes and wears out, by a vulgar and prostituted use, the spring of that spirit which is to be exerted on great occasions (p.154).

Hughes suggests that although 'the venereal allusions here may no longer be so clear to us (cantharides is, for example, the pharmaceutical name for Spanish Fly) ... they would have been both plain and startling to their first reader' ('Originality and Allusion in the Writings of Edmund Burke,' p.34). Thus revolution is identified as a 'distemper of remedy,' a supplement or *pharmakon* whose deleterious effects Burke stresses in order to differentiate them from the healthy habits which shore up the British constitution against revolution. Though revolution might be resorted to as a medicine for the most extreme of cases it becomes wearisome, or worn out, like the sublime itself, if habitually resorted to. It thus effects the state not like the 'good' sublime, which would work towards its self-preservation in a life-or-death emergency, but precisely like the perversion of the sublime, or like the beautiful grown habitual, whose effects, we have seen, surreptitiously recreates the self in its own image, relaxing its nerves and rendering it unable to exert itself 'on great occasions.' We have seen that Burke's ongoing remedy against this 'distemper of remedy' is to distinguish both his aesthetic categories into remedy and disease, or 'good' and 'bad' habit. And yet, as these passages suggest, the good 'habit of society' is threatened by making its 'extreme medicine' habitual -- which would necessarily render the good sublime and beautiful ineffectual against their perversions. But in a reversal symptomatic of his necessary recourse to supplementarity, Burke has repeatedly suggested that the English state retains its health through making the sublime and the beautiful habitual or customary in order to prepare it to meet the sudden emergency of revolution. In other words, Burke's repeated efforts to stimulate the nervous system of English society in order to keep it up to the mark emerges as precisely that which promises to wear out the spring of its spirit.

The difference between England and its neighbour across the channel -- and we can see why Burke works to keep up the distinction, while also seeing that it seems to collapse -- is that in France such 'eager politicians out of parliament' who prescribe such daily doses to the state have been elevated to the National Assembly. They are the 'philosophers' who have, for Burke, misread the *philosophes* by attempting to apply their speculative theories to real life -- 'men of theory' (p.128) who misunderstand the relation between art and reality:

the paradoxes of eloquent writers, brought forth purely as a sport of fancy, to try their talents, to rouse attention, and excite surprize, are taken up by these gentlemen, not in the spirit of the original authors, as means of cultivating their taste and improving their style. These paradoxes become with them serious grounds of action, upon which they proceed in regulating the most important concerns of the state. ... Mr Hume told me, that he had from Rousseau himself the secret of his principles of composition. That acute, though eccentric, observer had perceived, that to strike and interest the public, the marvellous must be produced ... [and] that now nothing was left to a writer but ... the marvellous in life, in manners, in characters, and in extraordinary situations, giving rise to new and unlooked-for strokes in politics and morals. I believe, that were Rousseau alive, and in one of his lucid intervals, he would be shocked at the practical phrenzy of his scholars, who in their paradoxes are servile imitators (pp.283-84).¹¹

Nothing could be more mad than the attempt, in a practical phrenzy, to institute Rousseau's flights of madness in actual political forms. Republican 'theorists' are said to take 'an unjustifiable poetic licence' in attempting to translate the 'metaphysically true, [but in proportion] ... morally and politically false' rights of men into the practical politics of the state (pp.153-54). By taking it literally and acting upon it, they *misread* speculation through 'servile' imitation (or by understanding it as an

imitation of how things are or might be). And yet, in a way which may no longer seem paradoxical, Burke responds to Rousseau in ways which anticipate the response we have seen Paine and Wollstonecraft make to Reflections. In that text, Burke himself becomes a man of letters attempting to exploit the marvellous in extraordinary situations in order to promote a particular ideological position. If Hughes emphasizes the shock value of Burke's allusions to venereal disease in a discourse about political states, he goes on to present an interpretation of such strategies which is remarkably similar to Burke's own description of revolutionary discourse:

What Burke produces through his unrestrained use of allusion is a form of originality we have since come to recognize as a demagogic tradition; it is the freedom of the imagination to create out of shifting structures and events an esthetic effect that then becomes an actual cause of future events. This can easily come about when the imagination is applied to politics. 'For in the imagination,' as one of Burke's contemporaries put it, 'everything loses its natural shape, and everything is altered, and within it we create liberties as our eyes create shapes in the clouds' -- words addressed by Saint-Just to the Convention in 1793 (p.34).

Although Burke's letters do not record his immediate impressions of the *philosophes* when he visited Paris in 1773, his portrait of their conversation in Reflections, indicates that, were it not that they had a political programme (one which, moreover, would come to terrify him), he would have been delighted with their language:

The issue of the whole was, that what with opposition, and what with success, a violent and malignant zeal, of a kind hitherto unknown in the world, had taken an entire possession of their minds, and rendered their whole conversation, which otherwise would have been pleasing and instructive, perfectly disgusting (pp.212-13).

'Men of Letters' are therefore political writers without any representative responsibility or commitment to actual everyday politics. Burke, on the other hand, writes from a representative and accountable position; he is a member of parliament as well as a political writer, and his texts are, for the most part, written upon specific, practical problems. Men of letters are (like) those men of ability without property who have no stake (or, rather, only a speculative stake) in the way things are. Consequently, their language, like speculation, has no motivated relation to fact, and their literature flourishes independently of established government. But although we have seen that Burke fulfilled his ambition to own land, we have also seen that it did not buy him full entry into England's ruling elite; he was, for Wollstonecraft, somewhat of an exception in British politics -- a man who had 'raised [himself] by the exertions of abilities, and thrown the automatons of rank into the back ground' (Rights of Men, p.107). His recommendations that France ought to have imitated England in accommodating men of ability in order to rejuvenate the existing order may also be read, then, as an attempt to promote such a model in England. Burke's 'ability' was, of course, precisely the ability to mobilize language for political ends. His attack on the men of letters and the men of abilities without property also includes an insight into what they are capable of; he repudiates them not for *inability* but for their all too effective *ability*.

In a move characteristic of Reflections, Burke tries to contrast and counter speculative language with the written documents of constitutional history bequeathed to 'Englishmen' like landed property:

In the famous law of the 3d of Charles I. called the *Petition of Right*, the parliament says to the king, 'your subjects have *inherited* this freedom,' claiming their franchises not on abstract principles 'as the rights of men,' but as the rights of

Englishmen, and as a patrimony derived from their forefathers. Selden, and the other profoundly learned men, who drew this petition of right, for reasons worthy of that practical wisdom which superseded their theoretic science, . . . preferred this positive, recorded, hereditary title to all which can be dear to the man and the citizen, to that vague speculative right, which exposed their sure inheritance to be scrambled for and torn to pieces by every wild litigious spirit (p.118).¹²

The 'rights of Englishmen,' therefore, are like 'real' property and wealth and are guaranteed by written documents themselves inherited as artifacts; 'the rights of men,' on the other hand, are vague, speculative, and merely abstract. These different 'rights' are promoted by, and are akin to, different kinds of writing -- that of profoundly learned and practical politicians like Selden, whose writing conforms to constitutional documents written in 'the primitive language of the law,' and that of politicians out of parliament like Rousseau, whose writings, according to Burke, were never meant to refer to reality. These differences may be summed up as those between the practical 'statesman' (which is how Burke sees himself) and the speculative '*philosophe*'¹³ -- between practical work 'on the ground' and theoretical flights of fancy.

Criticizing the National Assembly for acting as if the *ancien régime* had bequeathed nothing to France, Burke figures the state as a trading corporation: 'you chose to act as if you had never been moulded into civil society, and had every thing to begin anew. You began ill, because you began by despising very thing that belonged to you. You set up trade without a capital' (*Reflections*, p.122). In England, philosophical speculation is pursued for a different end, and proceeds upon a different economic model:

We are afraid to put men to live and trade each on his own private stock of reason;

because we suspect that this stock in each man is small, and that the individuals would do better to avail themselves of the general bank and capital of nations, and of ages. Many of our men of speculation, instead of exploding general prejudices, employ their sagacity to discover the latent wisdom which prevails in them. If they find what they seek, and they seldom fail, they think it more wise to continue the prejudice, with the reason involved, than to cast away the coat of prejudice, and to leave nothing but the naked reason Prejudice is of ready application in the emergency; it previously engages the mind in a steady course of wisdom and virtue, and does not leave the man hesitating in the moment of decision, sceptical, puzzled, and unresolved. Prejudice renders a man's virtue his habit; and not a series of unconnected acts. Through just prejudice, his duty becomes a part of his nature (p.183).

Each individual, therefore, has a limited stock of reason. But instead of entering into company with others and pooling their collective reason, each speculative subject -- to guard against emergency -- ought rather to supplement individual reason with the general bank and capital of prejudice and precedent. Thus what appears like good capitalist practice turns out to be a mode of accommodating enterprise to the traditional order.¹⁴ English speculation reinforces precedent; reason in England does not cast away the coat of prejudice, but is 'involved' in it; custom is not cast off, but insinuates itself into man's nature. Proper speculative writing does not overturn the old order but, on the contrary, reinforces it; it proceeds as capitalism does (or as Burke would have it do) in England, not as it does (or as Burke claims it does) in France. For Burke, 'good' prejudices, rather than being prejudicial to the state or the mind, offer ramparts against the sudden emergency (the revolution of mind or state). In contrast, radical 'reason' is a misleading rhetorical mask whose pernicious effects render self and society naked; bad habits and speculations drive out good habits and leave body, mind,

and state without defence. But to achieve this distinction, Burke has to bring forward one understanding of 'prejudice' and allow a second, which he elsewhere exploits, to become 'effaced or discreetly vague.'¹³ In England, 'just prejudice' becomes a 'coat' which protects, and protects against, an otherwise naked reason; it is of 'ready application in the emergency;' it fosters habits which condition the mind to act in decisive moments, when reason might be prejudicial to action. In other words, it works both as a supplement and as a kind of habitual sublime (a contradiction in terms for the early Burke). For if 'prejudice' is formed from a combination of the prefix 'pre-' (before [in time, place, order, degree, or importance]) and *judicium* (Latin for judgement), then prejudice is a previous or premature judgement, an *anticipation* of judgement; like the sublime, prejudice anticipates and pre-empts reason (*Enquiry*, p.57); it does not add itself to reason but displaces it. Thus prejudice may be thought of as injurious (prejudicial) to reason and to the rights of men and women; for prejudice is also 'injury, detriment, or damage, caused to a person by judgement or action in which his [or her] rights are disregarded' (*OED*).

(iii) Men of Letters Making the World Move

The context of Burke's misgivings about the up-and-coming men of letters may be understood through reading Paine's celebration of this new phenomenon; Paine favourably compares 'the republic of letters' with hereditary society:

As the republic of letters brings forward the best literary productions, by giving to genius a fair and universal chance; so the representative system of government is calculated to produce the wisest laws, by collecting wisdom from where it can be found. I smile to myself when I contemplate the

ridiculous insignificance into which literature and all the sciences would sink, were they made hereditary; and I carry the same idea into governments. An hereditary governor is as inconsistent as an hereditary author (Rights of Man, p.198).

Neither writing, politics, nor economic and scientific enterprise would flourish if they were organized by an hereditary system; thus Paine seeks to promote a society based on merit rather than birth. Writing cannot be monopolized by the aristocracy -- it is by 'nature' a republican activity not merely analogously related to the ability of the rising manufacturers and capitalists. In a long footnote, Paine points out that 'it is chiefly the dissenters who have carried English manufactures to the height they are now at, and the same men have it in their power to carry them away [to France or America, where they would enjoy all the rights of citizenship]' (p.110). It was the dissenters who, via their academies and pulpits, and through such figures as Dr. Priestley and Dr. Price, had challenged the established cultural hegemony through constructing an alternative intellectual tradition (mainly in science, politics, religion, and letters).¹⁶ In another footnote, in Part 2, Paine writes that,

In England the improvements in agriculture, useful arts, manufactures, and commerce, have been made in opposition to the genius of its government, which is that of following precedents. It is from the enterprise and industry of the individuals, and their numerous associations, in which, tritely speaking, government is neither pillow nor bolster, that these improvements have proceeded. No man thought about the government, or who was *in*, or who was *out*, when he was planning or executing those things; and all he had to hope, with respect to government, was, *that it would let him alone*. Three or four very silly ministerial newspapers are continually offending against the spirit of national improvement, by ascribing it to a minister. They may with as much truth ascribe this book to a minister (p.219).

In other words, and this is Burke's anxiety, the alliance between aristocracy and bourgeois capitalism is much more inherently unstable than that between aristocracy and agrarian capitalism; bourgeois capitalism is inevitably less dependent upon landed power, and is even, for Paine at least, identifiable with those classes and religious denominations who form the most radical elements of English society.

A few pages later, Paine writes his own 'biographia literaria'¹⁷ precisely to demonstrate how 'this book' (i.e. Rights of Man) was produced entirely independently of the established world of letters:

Speaking for myself, my parents were not able to give me a shilling, beyond what they gave me in education; and to do this they distressed themselves: yet, I possess more of what is called consequence in the world, than anyone in Mr Burke's catalogue of aristocrats (p.251).

I have not only contributed to raise a new empire in the world, founded on a new system of government, but I have arrived at an eminence in political literature, the most difficult of all lines to succeed and excel in, which aristocracy, with all its aids, has not been able to reach or to rival (p.241).

Another long footnote here (pp.241-44) describes Paine's life in letters, including an account of a scheme he formed while in America of entering England 'without being known,' and of getting out a publication that would 'open the eyes of the country with respect to the madness and stupidity of its government' (p.243). Writing thus becomes unabashed subversion, silently and anonymously undermining England's establishment from within. Revolution, indeed, is the most advantageous milieu for new talents in politics, business, and letters: 'It appears to general observation,' Paine writes, 'that revolutions create genius and talents; but those events do no more than bring them forward' (p.198). Paine therefore

offers himself -- a 'self-made' author brought forward by the Revolution -- as the representative man of the new republic of letters.¹⁶

But one of the ironies which unsettles any easy distinction between revolutionary and traditional literature and economics, however, is that Burke himself is both a man of letters and an advocate of capitalistic enterprise. Burke's perplexed affinity with radicalism is compounded in that, as we have seen in the Enquiry, he is not at all, at a theoretical level at least, an adherent of the view that literature should keep faith with things as they are:

Now, as words affect, not by any original power, but by representation, it might be supposed, that their influence over the passions should be but light; yet it is quite otherwise; for we find by experience that eloquence and poetry are as capable, nay indeed much more capable of making deep and lively impressions than any other arts, and even than nature itself in very many cases. ... there are many things of a very affecting nature, which can seldom occur in the reality, but the words which represent them often do; and thus they have an opportunity of making a deep impression and taking root in the mind, whilst the idea of the reality was transient; and to some perhaps never really occurred in any shape, to whom it is notwithstanding very affecting, as war, death, famine, &c. Besides, many ideas have never been at all presented to the senses of any men but by words, as God, angels, devils, heaven and hell, all of which have however a great influence over the passions. ... by words we have it in our power to make such *combinations* as we cannot possibly do otherwise. By this power of combining we are able, by the addition of well-chosen circumstances, to give a new life and force to the simple object (Enquiry, pp.173-74).

This passage develops a complex concept of representation; although words are said to be representations, this clearly does not mean that they imitate the concrete world. On the contrary, words *constitute* ideas (about

objects or events -- or even about that which does not exist at all). Certain combinations of words are said to be able to 'give a new life and force to the simple object,' but the passage describes the complete redundancy of the object. Words are independent of, more effective than, and so displace, nature and reality. Burke's theory of language, as we have seen, therefore turns out to celebrate the same supplementary effects Reflections would condemn in its presentation of radical language, economics, and political forms.

What is scandalous for Burke about the language of the men of letters, therefore, is perhaps not so much that it is a 'sport of fancy' 'giving rise to new and unlooked for strokes in politics and morals' (p.284), but that 'servile imitators' should have taken it for 'serious grounds of action;' or, rather, that the discourse of the *philosophes* should have helped elevate such servile imitators to places of political power and thus demonstrate that literature no longer serves to *maintain* or *reform* the *status quo* but to *displace* it. For the dangerous and scandalous thing about this new literature is that it has an *effect* on the world -- that it makes 'the world move.'¹⁷ Indeed Paine likens the operation of 'Reason and Liberty' to Archimedes's theory of leverage: "'Had we," said he, "a place to stand upon, we might raise the world"' (p.181). And although this corresponds to Burke's own theory in his Enquiry, it is precisely what disturbs him about Rousseau -- that a discourse which (as Burke would have it) was never intended to be anything other than a play of imagination should have made the world move by precipitating a revolution. In Burke's own practice, on the contrary, an 'inflated' prose is used to promote a stable relationship between land and capital in such a way that capital will respect the 'solidity' of landed money and recognize that aristocratic social relations offer the most secure basis for capitalism's

success. If revolutionary prose attempts to overturn the world, Burke's seeks to reform and yet keep it the same.

Burke's adopted role of linguistic conservative, then, is inextricably bound up with his resistance to political innovation. But if his language theory is based on the notion that there are only conventional relations between words, things, and ideas, Burke's defence of property rights and political forms has similar foundations. We have seen that the primitive language of the law will admit the violent origins of that which it upholds: 'things as they are' are sanctioned, not by divine or natural right, but by 'prescription, which, through long usage, mellows into legality governments that were violent in their commencement' (p.276). However 'violent' a form's origin might be, custom blunts and disguises that violence until the form comes to seem natural and inevitable. Burke's resistance to linguistic innovation is not merely analogous here; conserving the language and the constitution become mutually constitutive aspects of one another.³⁰ One can think here of Adam Smith's discomfort with the 'violent' metaphors he finds necessary to describe the new economics he would introduce, but also of Nietzsche's argument that 'truths', which seem 'fixed, canonic, and binding', are simply 'worn-out metaphors' whose metaphorical status is forgotten through 'long usage' (On Truth and Lie in an Extra Moral Sense, pp.46-47). I am not necessarily arguing, therefore, that Burke has detected entirely new linguistic models across the Channel (he might have endorsed them if they had been long continued), but that he is alarmed at unprecedented alliances between innovative linguistic, political, and economic practices. One of the dangers for Burke, however, is that the only difference between his own theories and those he gives to or perceives within radical practice -- the only thing which prevents Burke's and the radicals' models being

imitations of one another -- is his own adaption of the legal fiction of prescription.

(iv) How Money Talks: the Language of Assignats

We might therefore surmise that Burke's obsessive deflation of radicalism's 'inflated' language -- in what for Paine and Wollstonecraft is itself an inflated rhetoric -- perhaps indicates that it concerns him more intimately than might be imagined. In Burke's vision of France, republican language has become as ineffectual as its paper money; the leaders of the National Assembly, faced with the insurrection of the army, and having heard that the soldiers of the Revolutionary army pay no heed to the proclamations and oaths previously sent by the Assembly, 'propose -- what? More oaths. They renew decrees and proclamations as they experience their insufficiency, and they multiply oaths in proportion as they weaken, in the minds of men, the sanctions of religion' (p.335). Such an inflationary glut of language only serves, for Burke, to mark its devaluation. This description of revolutionary language in crisis closely resembles Burke's account of revolutionary economics in the crisis of its own making:

Is there a debt which presses them -- Issue assignats. -- Are compensations to be made ... -- *Assignats*. Is a fleet to be fitted out -- *Assignats*. If sixteen millions sterling of these *assignats* ... leave the wants of the state as urgent as ever -- issue, says one, thirty millions sterling of *assignats* -- says another, issue four-score millions more of *assignats*. ... They are all professors of *assignats*. Even those, whose natural good sense and knowledge of commerce, not obliterated by philosophy, furnish decisive arguments against this delusion, conclude their arguments, by proposing the emission of *Assignats*. I suppose they must talk of *assignats*, as no other language would be understood (pp.359-60).

Revolutionary language, therefore, is the language of assignats -- an inflationary language/money which displaces meaning and value in proportion to the 'amount' issued. Yet, since we have seen Burke both celebrate and be suspicious of the possibility that language (and perhaps money) is not necessarily 'grounded' in the natural or the real, his comic dismissal of revolutionary linguistic and economic endeavours might mask the anxiety that, although they might be meaningless in one sense, they threaten to turn the world upside down. Belying his own most characteristic rhetorical strategies, Burke urgently contrasts the primitive language of the law, and his own 'plain speaking,' with those 'writings and sermons [which] have filled the populace with a black and savage atrocity of mind, which supersedes in them the common feelings of nature, as well as all sentiments of morality and religion' (p.262). But the attempt to deflate the rhetorical and superstitious nature of revolutionary language seems to attest to its power -- a power which, through its supplementary effects, haunts Burke's Reflections precisely because it is so close to his own theories of language and culture.

(v) Sanctifying Surplus: Hot Air

I have argued in these pages that Burke's irresolvably ambiguous relation both to the new and the old order forces him at once to have recourse to the supplement and to distribute its good and bad effects, according to political interest, on either side the stretch of water which both divides and serves as a means of communication between Britain and France. We have also seen, however, that Burke's own distinctions and figures fissure his text and undermine his own ground. Burke fears the effect of French ideas on the people of England: 'The body of the people must not find the principles of natural

subordination by art rooted out of their minds' (Reflections, p.372). This familiar opposition between art and nature is intimately woven in with another, equally familiar opposition in British history -- that between classes. For Burke goes on to make it clear that such subordination is essential if the people are to 'respect that property of which they cannot partake,' and 'labour to obtain what by labour can be obtained' (p.372). The capital-labour relation can only flourish through adopting, and calling natural, artificial distinctions developed in feudal society. Yet the 'laws' of grammar and syntax themselves point to the contradictions and exclusions that we have seen Reflections rely upon. For in the quotation above, 'art' may be the agent of 'rooted' -- as Burke seems to have intended -- but it might equally be that of 'natural subordination.' In other words, the syntax allows 'natural subordination' to be (radically) 'rooted out' 'by art,' but it also allows 'natural subordination' to be *effected* by art -- 'natural subordination by art.' The laws of language, in other words, do not always comply with the law of the land.

I would argue that this is more than a chance of language -- or rather that chance in language is more meaningful than we often allow. For this passage gives us the chance to encapsulate the textual-political strategies we have seen at work throughout Reflections, and to underline their inherent contradictions. Prior to the French Revolution it was at least possible to authenticate the old order through 'nature,' but the revolutionary analysis is itself grounded in 'nature' and seeks to expose the artifice of tradition. It now becomes expedient for traditionalists at once to reaffirm the naturalness of the old order and to attack radicalism's notion of nature; Burke's text therefore needs to develop and deploy different models of nature -- the false and defective nature of radicalism, deleterious to human nature, and the second nature of natural subordination

which both shores up and displaces the naked shivering nature exposed by radicalism. 'Artifice' itself gets split into that which strips our nature naked and that which chivalrously utilizes second nature to defend, and defend against, nature in the raw. Burke therefore celebrates the rhetorical ploys through which traditional culture maintains its hegemony:

He who gave our nature to be perfected by our virtue, willed also the necessary means of its perfection -- He willed therefore the state [The] oblation of the state itself, as a worthy offering on the high altar of universal praise, should [therefore] be performed as all publick solemn acts are performed, in buildings, in musick, in decoration, in speech, in the dignity of persons, according to the customs of mankind, taught by their nature It is the publick ornament. It is the publick consolation. It nourishes the publick hope. The poorest man finds his own importance and dignity in it It is for the man in humble life, and to raise his nature, and to put him in mind of a state in which the privileges of opulence will cease, when he will be equal by nature, and may be more than equal by virtue, that this portion of the general wealth of his country is employed and sanctified (pp.196-97).²¹

That 'to sanctify' may mean 'to impart real or apparent sacredness to; ... to give a colour of morality or innocence to,' as well as 'to consecrate (a thing); to set apart as holy or sacred' (OED), emphasizes the suggestion in this passage that 'the publick ornament' is constructed out of a set of stage properties which give a cloak of sanctity to -- which sanction -- existing structures of subordination. Against Burke's expressed intentions, his language undercuts the distinction he strives to make between natural and artificial art, between supplements which console and nourish and those which distract and destroy, between the ceremonies and symbols of public life in England which 'raise' the 'humble' and those superficial 'ribbons, and laces, and national cockades'

(p.273) employed by the Revolution which deceive but for a moment and raise all distinctions to the ground.

In the course of his critique of the economics of revolutionary France, Burke contrasts it with a properly grounded capitalism:

In every prosperous community something more is produced than goes to the immediate support of the producer. This surplus forms the income of the landed capitalist. It will be spent by a proprietor who does not labour. But this idleness is itself the spring of labour; this repose the spur to industry (p.270).²²

This excess, and the suffering upon which it is founded -- 'the innumerable servile, degrading, unseemly, unmanly, and often most unwholesome and pestiferous occupations, to which by the social oeconomy so many wretches are inevitably doomed' (p.271) -- is presented as 'the natural course of things' which it is 'generally pernicious to disturb' (p.271). But the natural course produces a surplus that comes to exceed and perhaps oppose nature itself:

Why should the expenditure of a great landed property, which is a dispersion of the surplus products of the soil, appear intolerable to you or to me, when it takes its course through the accumulation of vast libraries ... through great collections of antient records, medals, and coins, which attest and explain laws and customs; through paintings and statues, that, by imitating nature, seem to extend the limits of creation ... through collections of the specimens of nature, which become a representative assembly of all the classes and families of the world (p.272).

It is possible to read an extended pun running through this passage; in contrast to the National Assembly, the expenditure of great landed property produces a true 'representative assembly of all the classes and families of the world.' In its primary sense, this refers to the project of eighteenth-century natural history to

comprehensively classify and tabulate the natural world (see The Order of Things, pp.125-65). Yet the fact that Burke's conception of a member of parliament's representative role is analogous to the persona he adopts in Reflections -- i.e. he is not a delegate (see the disclaimers on p.85 and p.180) but typical of the English mind (p.175, pp.180-83) -- allows us to posit that, for Burke, the 'typical' is the most authentically representative form. That the collections amassed by the cultural activity of landed property therefore represent all the world's 'classes and families' (of nature and of society) is not only Burke's cultural but his political credo.

One could not wish for a clearer testimony that 'culture' depends upon the exploitation and exclusion of those classes whose labour makes it possible.²³ But there are further and analogous exclusions at work here. The excess produced by the culture of the soil becomes the culture that would differentiate itself from the soil. In contrast to the excesses of the French republic, this surplus becomes a paradigm of representation -- an 'imitation' of nature that seems 'to extend the limits of creation.' Culture poses as natural by adopting the metaphors of horticulture, while nature itself -- as 'creation' -- becomes a divine art which the products of capitalist surplus piously imitate. But the problem for Burke is that all models of representation seems both to promise and defer that which they would re-present. Such a double reading of representation, whose supplementary logic operates throughout Reflections in various manifestations, is especially apparent in ways of thinking about artistic and political representation.²⁴ Even the culture based on landed property, which claims to authentically imitate nature, seems also to exceed or 'extend' its limits; the surplus products of the soil dissociate themselves from that soil and supplement their landed origin. Burke's text, then, juggles two models of

representation and brings forward each according to expediency. But his own theory of the mobility of metaphor from context to context, and his practice of this theory in Reflections, seems repeatedly to undermine his own project -- despite O'Brien's claim that Burke had a 'superb command over the resources of the language (p.49). Once metaphors are mobilized in politically critical contexts it seems that, like the people Burke claims to speak for, they prove difficult to govern: they have their own resources, their own 'mobility.'²⁵

What neither Burke (invoking the primitive language of the law) nor Paine (claiming to 'speak an open and disinterested language' [p.250]) seem willing to admit is that language might always be constitutive of the real or of the way the real is perceived. One exchange, in which each accuses the other of an inflated politics and language, recalls the metaphors in Smith's account of the differences between new and traditional economics, and allows us to see the ways in which Burke and Paine might be fellow travellers: 'Let us imitate,' Burke writes, '[our forefather's] caution Let us add, if we please, but let us preserve what they have left; and standing on the firm ground of the British constitution, let us be satisfied to admire rather than attempt to follow in their desperate flights the aeronauts of France' (p.376).²⁶ 'Even his genius is without a constitution,' Paine counters; 'It is a genius at random, and not a genius constituted. But he must say something -- He has therefore mounted in the air like a balloon, to draw the eyes of the multitude from the ground they stand upon' (p.97). However, the very effort of each to discredit the 'inflationary' rhetoric of the other seems precisely to indicate its power; both share the same anxiety that a discourse not anchored to the 'ground' might yet make the earth move -- in revolutionary or in counter-revolutionary ways. The difference between them is that Burke, as we have seen, is all too aware that language constitutes

perceptual and political 'reality' and is therefore anxious that it be constituted in ways conducive to his own political position, whereas Paine, aware that language can be used to distort, still believes that it might be authentically representative in a new political and economic order. If radical economics threatens to displace the old order, Burke would defend it by prescribing a more cautious supplementation, adding in order to preserve. An enthusiast for the new economics, Burke yet seems to feel that the only way to maintain the conditions necessary for its success is to introduce it in a form ballasted by landed property in great masses of accumulation. Burke's text, unlike Smith's, would efface the violence of its metaphors and appear to keep both feet on the ground; in representing the British constitution as 'firm ground,' his metaphor seems to naturalize a constitution biased towards the landed interest, while French experimentation, since 1783, in hot air balloons, seems to justify figuring the French system as an unproven aeronautics to be admired, perhaps, but not to be imitated.

(vi) Pulling the Threads Together

I have endeavoured throughout this thesis to rethink 'the Burke problem' not in terms of identifying and solving a particular 'inconsistency' in the man or in the writings, but by trying to ask what problems Burke's Enquiry and Reflections confronted. This has been to investigate the ways Burke's texts engage with discursive paradigms which play crucial ideological roles in specifically revolutionary contexts. We have seen that what appear to be stable figurations with 'obvious' political meanings turn out, in such contexts, to be unstable precisely because the ideological load they bear has to lean in different directions at one and the same time. We have

seen that a series of paradigms connect the various discourses we have examined, and that a particular logic powers each one of them. Burke is caught (like his radical antagonists) between two desires or needs: he has to establish an authentic foundation (origin, nature, land, the real), but he is also compelled to have recourse to a system of conventions (artifice, representation, laws [other than natural law], and so on). Either of these alone is politically and philosophically dangerous in the revolutionary crisis he confronts, but a middle ground is impossible (even though he claims to occupy a middle ground), since each is all or nothing (there is no half-way house between nature and custom). Burke is therefore forced again and again to switch his emphasis, bringing in nature to supplement custom and custom to supplement nature; each recourse, however, against his own 'intentions,' *supplants* what it was supposed to support. Burke's clearest attempt to resolve this undecidability is developed in the concept of 'second nature,' but we have seen that this formulation, by oscillating undecidably between nature and custom, presents the clearest symptom of Burke's problem.

If this has been to 'deconstruct' Burke -- or to show how Burke's texts deconstruct themselves -- this has not been carried out in an anarchic spirit; the purpose has not been to deploy deconstructive tools to try to prove the inadequacy of Burke's thought, nor has it been to suggest that Burke inevitably gets into tangles because 'all language is like that anyway.' If the notion of the primitive language of the law offers an over-simplistic account of the relation between words and reality and demands that reading is simply a process of recognition and 'obedience,' it would be relatively easy to point out, from Burke's own theory, that language and reading are not like that. Although it might be a popular version of deconstruction, to claim that language is always unstable and that metaphors always undo themselves is not, in the

end, particularly interesting. Instabilities in Burke are not due to the inevitable 'free floating of the signifier,' but arise because Burke is engaged, in a number of related discourses, with a specific problem and structure which have political origins. Burke (like Paine) is committed to a contradictory ideology which his rhetoric attempts to disguise; this ideology, and the need to disguise it, arises out of a specific historical moment. Burke's early aesthetics may be seen as the cultural correlative of the socio-economic alliance between aristocracy and bourgeoisie which emerged from 1688. Yet the way that aesthetics is construed seems to betray the possibility that the settlement instituted by 'The Glorious Revolution' is inherently unstable -- that, in Derrida's terms, it contains within itself 'the "principle" of its own opening, dislocation, disintegration' ('Questions and Responses,' p.262). This principle, which already has effects in 1757-59, is precipitously foregrounded in 1789, where an apparent alliance, in France, between bourgeoisie and 'the people' sets an example which threatens to dislocate from within the fragile structure of English society.

Notwithstanding his apparent antipathy towards it, however, the French Revolution was, in a number of ways, Edmund Burke's Revolution. Not only are its principles already embedded within his aesthetics of 1757-59, but those aesthetics provide a model through which radicalism came to represent the Revolution. In addition, although Burke made the Revolution his own through producing its dominant representation, that representation both constrained and enabled subsequent radical narratives about France (including those of the 'Romantic' poets). Thoroughly implicated within the Revolution, Burke's texts attempt both to exploit and contain instabilities of the sign -- in aesthetics, gender, economics, political representation, and language -- which have become central issues in post-structuralism's analysis of culture and

politics. Because of this, Reflections can seem more modern, more 'revolutionary,' than Wollstonecraft's Rights of Men or Paine's Rights of Man.

In these ways, Burke's discourse allows us to see the complex ways in which text and history intersect during the particularly crucial 'mutation' which the late eighteenth century -- on the threshold of the 'modern' period -- represents. The problems Burke confronts contain the seeds of our own, and Burke's texts therefore demand that we develop new ways of reading which challenge received categories and methodologies and open up hitherto closed-off relations between different kinds of discursive practice. To have read Burke in post-structuralist ways -- or, rather, to have developed a set of implications between them -- has been to underline the political nature of deconstructive reading; it has also been to produce an understanding of Burke as a more significant figure than the lonely figure defending anachronistic social forms or undergoing oedipal convulsions which more traditional readings produce.

1. Burke's clearest discussion of his physiocratic, *laissez-faire* economics comes in Thoughts and Details on Scarcity (1795), Works, VII, pp.373-419. This is Burke's most sustained disquisition on economics in which government is warned away from any interference in the market or in the condition of the labouring classes. Speaking as a 'farmer' -- an agricultural capitalist who is also the 'representative' of the 'landed gentleman' (p.393) -- Burke asserts that, far from being opposed, the interests of 'the farmer and the labourer ... are always the same' (p.383), and that 'therefore the first and fundamental interest of the labourer, [is] that the farmer should have a full incoming profit on the product of his labour' (p.384). Labour is a 'commodity' like any other, and the labourer's 'extreme want' 'is totally beside the question' in negotiations about wages: 'The only question is, what is [labour] worth to the buyer?' (p.386). Government ought therefore to refrain from interfering in the labour market, especially when times are hardest, because to interfere would be to 'break the laws of commerce, which are the laws of nature, and consequently the laws of God' (p.404). In fact, for government to attempt to intervene in the condition of the working classes is the shortest route to revolution: 'Tyranny and cruelty may make men justly wish the downfall of abused powers, but I believe that no government ever yet perished from any other direct cause than its own weakness. My opinion is against an over-doing of any sort of administration, and more especially against this most momentous of all meddling on the part of authority; the meddling with the subsistence of the people' (p.419).

2. Pope addresses paper money as 'Blest paper-credit! last and best supply! / That lends corruption lighter wings to fly!' ('Epistle III, To Allen, Lord Bathurst,' 39-40.

3. This mutual implication of economics and language in Smith, together with the way the passage hovers ambiguously between two wholly different kinds of paradigm, enables the suggestion that Smith's economics -- in making a decisive though tentative 'leap' towards a new understanding of the nature of money -- is the equivalent to the transition in language witnessed in Romantic poetry and poetics. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries metaphor was distrusted as an abuse of language and attempt were made to confine it to an ornamental function. The corollary of this view was the notion, embodied in the attempt to promote the 'Plain Style,' that language could be stripped of its metaphors; Thomas Sprat praises the members of the Royal Society for their 'constant Resolution, to reject all the amplifications, digressions, and swellings of style: to return back to the primitive purity, and shortness, when men delivered so many things, almost in an equal number of words. They have exacted

from all their members, a close, naked, natural way of speaking' (History of the Royal Society, 1667). Wollstonecraft's and Paine's attacks on Burke's style are clearly influenced by this tradition -- as is Burke's attack on radical rhetoric. At the same time, even though Wollstonecraft claims to be 'employed about things, not words' (Rights of Woman, p.82), and Paine can attack Burke's 'gay and flowery' language (Rights of Man, p.71), they do not eschew metaphor as such but distinguish between metaphor as ornamentation and as the embodiment of genuine feeling. Wollstonecraft and Paine can therefore be seen as anticipating and influencing Wordsworth's Preface to the Lyrical Ballads. But if Romanticism can be seen as theorizing and celebrating the creative possibilities of figurative language rather than seeing metaphor as merely substitutive (see Isobel Armstrong, 'The Transformation of Metaphor,' pp.12-18), then Smith's embarkations upon 'a sort of waggon-way through the air' in order to 'augment' commerce and industry seems to be the economic equivalent. At the same time, and this is perhaps why he is so tentative, by soaring from the solid ground, Smith opens his system up to the dangers of inflation. Thus we will see Burke mock Paine, and Paine mock Burke (each in 'inflated' metaphors), for being unable to keep their feet on the ground.

4. Karl Marx in a footnote to volume one of Capital, quoted by O'Brien, p.9.

5. Williams reminds us that 'men of letters' was a term in use from the fourteenth century (Keywords, p.184); Burke's emphasis on the *political radicalism* of the men of letters he attacks seems to underline how they have abandoned their traditional political role.

6. The last part of this quotation, and the whole of the one following, come from sentences which, Burke tells us, 'were inserted, on his reading the manuscript, by my lost son' (p.212 -- note to the seventh edition [1803], from Burke's marginalia in his copy of the 1792 Works [see O'Brien's 'Bibliographical Note,' p.399]). If this is so, the language and sentiments are inherited whole from father to son.

7. In his discussion of the term 'revolution,' Williams notes that the words 'revolt and revolting had acquired, from mC18, an application to feeling as well as to action: a feeling of disgust, of turning away, of revulsion' (Keywords, p.272).

8. For a discussion of the ways Reflections breaks with received notions of refined discourse precisely by exploiting terms from a range of 'vulgar' occupations, see Olivia Smith, Politics of Language, pp.36-39.

9. Miriam Brody Kramnick, introduction to Rights of Woman, p.14, quoting C. Kegan Paul, William Godwin, p.191.

10. This is how Wordsworth characterizes Burke's project in the forty or so lines in praise of his former enemy inserted into The Prelude between 1820 and 1828 (The Prelude, 1850, VII, 512-43); for a revealing discussion of this passage, see Chandler, Wordsworth's Second Nature, pp.25-30.

11. O'Brien tells us that 'Rousseau was helped by Hume in England, 1766-7, and quarrelled with him' (p.394 n.140).

12. 'John Selden (1584-1654), jurist, counsel for Hampden, and M.P. for Oxford University in the Long Parliament' (O'Brien, p.382, n.28.)

13. This distinction is explored by Anne Marion Osborn, in Rousseau and Burke, pp.238-48 (especially, pp.246-47).

14. Contrast Paine's account of how he came to write Common Sense: 'I neither read books, nor studied other people's opinions. I thought for myself.' (Rights of Man, p.241)

15. This is Derrida's formulation of how both significations of the supplement operate simultaneously in Rousseau's texts (Of Grammatology, p.145).

16. For information about the dissenters' alternative intellectual tradition, see Thompson, Making of the English Working Class, pp.28-29, and pp.55-58.

17. One might recall Coleridge's advice (contrary, it must be noted, to his own life's example) to aspiring authors in Biographia Literaria: '*never pursue literature as a trade. . . . Money and immediate reputation form only an arbitrary and accidental end of literary labor. . . . Be not merely a man of letters! Let literature be an honourable augmentation to your arms, but not constitute the coat or fill the escutcheon!*' (Biographia Literaria, pp.127-32). The language of Coleridge's warning, coming forty years after Smith's cautious enthusiasm for *laissez-faire* economics (tempered partly by the violence of its analogy in a certain rhetorical usage), underlines the terms of the reaction against radical thought and the way the new economics (and literature) was being incorporated into the traditional order in a characteristically Burkean way. It would seem that Burke has triumphed over radicalism and over the inherent contradictions of his own position. Literature and trade must be clearly differentiated; the 'gentleman' of letters receives money only as an 'accidental end of literary labor;' literature and labour have only a metaphorical relationship. Literature -- unlike Smith's 'paper money' -- should be merely an

'augmentation' of, and not a substitute for, traditional sources of value. Coleridge anachronistically figures literature as an aristocratic pastime, warning his readers against the republic of letters. Yet the very figure meant to ward off such danger seems to repeat the supplementary structure which Smith, Burke, and Paine grapple with. For literature seems to have the potential to constitute the coat and fill the escutcheon, and so displace or fill the place of the very signs and symbols of aristocracy -- its 'arms,' 'coat,' and 'escutcheon.' For a discussion of the rise of the 'man of letters,' with Coleridge as the representative example, see Marilyn Butler, Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries, pp.69-93.

18. In making analogous the republican author and governor, however, Paine's text seems to indicate that literature's transgressive role under aristocracy will be replaced by one more allied with the bourgeois *status quo* it helps to inaugurate. Clause xi of the National Assembly's 'Declaration of the Rights of Man,' which confers freedom of speech and press, also empowers the law to punish the abuse of this freedom: 'The unrestrained communication of thoughts and opinions being one of the most precious rights of man, every citizen may speak, write, and publish freely, provided he is responsible for the abuse of this liberty in cases determined by the law' (quoted in Rights of Man, pp.133-34). For Foucault, 'texts, books, and discourses really began to have authors (other than mythical, "sacralized" and "sacralizing" figures) to the extent that authors became subject to punishment, that is, to the extent that discourses could be transgressive. . . . Once a system of ownership for texts came into being, once strict rules concerning author's rights, author-publisher relations, rights of reproduction, and related matters were enacted -- at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century -- the possibility of transgression attached to the act of writing took on, more and more, the form of an imperative peculiar to literature' ('What is an Author,' p.148). The republic of letters, then, once situated within the republic it is supposed to have prefigured, is placed ambiguously; freedom of speech becomes at once a right, an imperative, and subject to the law. Hazlitt came to see the French Revolution and its reception in England as firstly the radical triumph, and then the reactionary exploitation of, the printing press (see Life of Napoleon, volume 1, in Complete Works, 12, pp.38-42). After the example of the French Revolution, the power of the press was seized in England by forces of reaction: 'Thus, in the year 1792, Mr. Burke became a pensioner for writing his book on the French Revolution, and Mr. Thomas Paine was outlawed for his Rights of Man. Since that period, the press has been the great enemy of freedom' ('The Times Newspaper' [1817], Complete Works, 7, p.145). This legal action against Paine might therefore

be seen as marking a divergence, in the world of letters, between its conservative and transgressive imperatives, leading to two mutually antagonistic categories of 'men of letters' -- the one (such as Hazlitt) taking Paine for its model, the other (such as Coleridge) modelling itself on Burke. Each accuses the other of the same abuse: Hazlitt finds Burke at the head of 'a merely speculative' school of politics for whom 'liberty and slavery, peace and war, plenty and famine, are matters of perfect indifference ... and it is perhaps to his example, in this respect, that we owe the prevailing tone of many of those newspaper paragraphs which Mr. Coleridge thinks so invaluable an accession to our political philosophy' ('Character of Mr. Burke' [1817], Complete Works, 7, p.229).

19. 'The scandal is that the sign, the image, or the representer, become forces and make "the world move"' (Of Grammatology, p.147, quoting Rousseau).

20. Johnson's 'Preface to a Dictionary of the English Language' (1755) prefigures Burke's apprehensions for the English language and constitution. Not being faced with a crisis of the kind which confronted Burke, Johnson considers the most radical threat to English as thing of the past: 'Total and sudden transformations of a language seldom happen; conquests and migrations are now very rare' ('Preface to a Dictionary of the English Language,' p.256). There are, however, 'other causes of change, which, though slow in their operation, and invisible in their progress, are perhaps as much superiour to human resistance, as the revolutions of the sky, or intumescence of the tide' (p.256). Johnson remains ambivalent towards each of these subtle yet irresistible causes of change in language, each one of which bears upon Burke's own thought. These causes comprise 'commerce' (p.256); the 'polish' and 'speculation' which one part of the community is enabled to pursue when 'sustained and accommodated by the labour of the other' (p.256); 'the cultivation of various sciences' which introduces 'words deflected from original sense' (p.257); 'the tropes of poetry' which 'make hourly encroachments' (p.257); and intercourse with foreign languages through education and translation (pp.257-58). This last is 'the greatest pest of speech' and shows how Burke's anxieties about the Revolution are, in part, intensifications of eighteenth-century England's misgivings about France and the French language: 'If an academy should be established for the cultivation of our stile, which I, who can never wish to see dependence multiplied, hope the Spirit of *English* liberty will hinder or destroy, let them, instead of compiling grammars and dictionaries, endeavour, with all their influence, to stop the licence of translatours, whose idleness and ignorance, if it be suffered to proceed, will reduce us to babble a dialect of *France*' (p.258). Johnson concedes that change in language is irresistible, yet it is nevertheless of

crucial importance that such changes be resisted: 'It remains that we retard what we cannot repel, that we palliate what we cannot cure. Life may be lengthened by care, though death cannot be ultimately defeated: tongues, like governments, have a natural tendency to degeneration; we have long preserved our constitution, let us make some struggles for our language' (p.258).

21. Osborn points out that when Burke suggests that the state is the means through which individual virtue may be perfected 'he gives the fundamental tenet not only of his own political thought, but of Rousseau's as well' (Rousseau and Burke, p.vii).

22. Burke's panegyric on the benefits of riches echoes Pope's advice to the Earl of Burlington 'On the Use of Riches' (1731), Moral Essays, 'Epistle IV,' 169-204, Collected Poems, pp.251-52.

23. 'There is no cultural document that is not at the same time a record of barbarism.' (Walter Benjamin, 'Eduard Fuchs, Collector and Historian,' in One Way Street and Other Writings (London, 1979), p.359).

24. For a discussion of the similarities and differences between representation in art and in politics, see Williams, Keywords, pp.266-69.

25. '"Mobility" was a term proudly adopted by nineteenth century Radicals and Chartists for their peaceable and well-conducted demonstrations' (Thompson, pp.78-79).

26. Burke is not, of course, responding to Paine's as yet unwritten text but to the practices of the National Assembly; at the same time it is productive to see Burke as participating in a dialogic struggle with Paine and so constituting the issues and the language of his most searching critic.

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