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Burke and the *Aisling*: 'Homage of a Nation'

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On hearing the name 'Edmund Burke', the first thing that many people remember is his most frequently anthologised passage from the *Reflections on the Revolution in France* about Marie Antoinette, which begins with the words: 'It is sixteen or seventeen years since last I saw the Queen of France...' ¹ His contrasting vision of Marie Antoinette sees her shimmering in the air of Versailles and then fleeing, stripped nearly naked, while Jacobins pierce her with bayonets and poniards. Since the initial publication of *Reflections*, Burke's presentation of Marie Antoinette has been considered strange, fanciful, overly sentimental and vaguely salacious. This article proposes that Edmund Burke's often overlooked immersion in the culture of the elite Gaelic Catholics of North Cork left a strong imprint both on his politics and the expression of his political positions and compares Burke's evocation of Marie Antoinette with the Gaelic political-vision poetry known as the *Aisling*. The curiosities and extravagances of Burke's depiction of Marie Antoinette disappear when it is read as a traditional *Aisling* and is another example of the strong affinity in terms of the depiction of key political concepts between the Gaelic Jacobites and Burke's speeches.

Burke's maternal family, the Nagles, was one of the greatest surviving Catholic families in eighteenth-century Ireland, having managed to escape the confiscation of property after the fall of the Stuarts at the Battle of the Boyne. Four branches of Nagles were settled in the Blackwater Valley of North Cork, an area still known as 'Nagle Country', and the leadership of the region's Gaelic Catholic interest remained in their hands for the first half of the eighteenth century. The survival and prosperity of minor Catholic families in the area, such as the Hennessys, depended on the security of the Nagles, who leased land to them on advantageous terms. Younger sons were provided with estates on low rents and continued to found collateral branches of the family. The security of this Catholic enclave was strengthened by marriages to the Tipperary Catholic gentry. There was no other region in Munster or Leinster that had a comparable network of Catholic and nominally apostate, crypto-Catholic landowners. The affluent Catholic landowners of Galway are the only other group anywhere in Ireland to succeed in protecting the old Gaelic Catholic landed class under the restrictions of the Penal Laws and the encroachment of increasingly thriving middle class interests. In the 1750s the Nagles married into this affluent Galway society and into the Catholic gentry of the greater Dublin area, achieving a position of influence and connection unequalled by any other Catholic family in Ireland.²

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Paradoxically, the Nagles were surrounded by the largest Protestant gentry presence in the country. Breandán 'O Buachalla aptly describes the extended Nagle stronghold in the Blackwater as 'an island of Catholic hegemony in a sea of Protestant ascendancy'.³ The heart of the Blackwater Valley is about six miles from Mallow, which was a large centre of English settlement in the eighteenth century, with sporting attractions and spa waters which drew many more to visit the area. Within five miles of Mallow there were no fewer than 50 seats, many small but a few great, such as the Brodericks and the Kings. Perhaps inevitably, the Nagles attracted the wrath of the politicised

Protestants of the area, and the bitter sectarian politics of Cork, which flared in the 1730s, 1750s and 1760s, were focused on the Nagles and their dependents. Joseph Nagle, who had been a lawyer before the 1704 proscription on Catholics entering the profession, was most astute in defending and maintaining both the local hegemony of the Nagle family and even in making interventions on behalf of the landed Catholic interest on a national scale. Burke's cousin, Nano Nagle, founder of the teaching order of Presentation Nuns (in flagrant disregard of the Penal Laws), wrote that her uncle Joseph was: 'the most disliked by the Protestants of any Catholic in the kingdom.'⁴

Conversion to the Protestant religion and subsequent 'discoveries' by these converts of land illegally held by Catholics, became a routine part of conveyancing in eighteenth-century Ireland. It was in this context that Burke's father conformed to the state church in 1722, when he was named executor to the estates of two uncles, and because his father had converted before his sons were born, the young Burkes were considered Protestant. His mother remained a Catholic and, as was the custom at the time, his sister, Juliana, followed her mother's religion.⁵ Kevin Whelan argues that these 'conversions' strengthened rather than weakened the Catholic position – prominent converts such as Anthony Malone, Lucius O'Brien and John Hely-Hutchinson could express their sympathy for Catholics in Parliament – and that Edmund Burke must be understood in this tradition.⁶

Burke's association with Catholic Ireland went deeper than most of his fellow converts: O'Connell argues that it is likely that he was born in his uncle James' house in the Nagle country at Shanballymore, in the townland of Ballywalter. James Nagle was married to a cousin of Burke's father.⁷ When he was six the young Edmund went to live with the family of his uncle Patrick Nagle in the house in Shanballyduff where his mother grew up. It was here in Shanballyduff in the parish of Monanimy, near the village of Killavullen in the townland of Ballymacmoy, the last region of Co. Cork in which a group of comfortable, propertied Catholics survived in the eighteenth century, that Burke lived until he was eleven. In one of those rare personal letters that have survived, Burke remembers this Uncle Patrick with the greatest affection and respect:

One of the very best men, I believe, that ever lived, of the clearest integrity, the most genuine principles of religion and virtue, the most cordial good-nature and benevolence that I ever knew or, I think, ever shall know [...] for all the men I

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have seen in any situation I really think he is the person I should wish myself, or anyone I dearly loved, the most to resemble.⁸

Burke attended a hedge-school (an unlicensed academy that provided education for Gaelic Catholics in contravention of the Penal Laws) in Monanimy in the ruins of the great Nagle castle, where Edmund Spenser's son Sylvanus married Eileen Nagle, one of the seven daughters of Burke's great-grandfather, David Nagle.⁹ The hedge-school master was a Mr O'Halloran:

Richard Hennessy, a year older than Edmund and later to establish the renowned Cognac house, was a classmate. Further instruction was supplied by the Jacobite poet and Liam Inglis/English, who was the hedge-school master at nearby Castletownroche before he became an Augustinian friar in Cork city.¹⁰

The Nagle house at Ballyduff is still standing, situated high on a recessed slope of the Nagle Mountains. It is a typical seventeenth-century Gaelic-style building: two storeys high, enclosing a cobbled courtyard, or Bawn, on three sides, with large buttresses and just a few narrow windows.¹¹ It is likely that Burke's own marriage came about through his association with the Blackwater Valley. He spent his early twenties based in England and did not complete his studies at the Middle Temple but spent about five years leading a dissolute life in the disreputable company of William Burke. William

Burke was no blood relation of Edmund, though they both claimed they were kinsmen and they shared a common purse and home all their lives. Following a severe physical and psychological breakdown, Burke recovered at the home of Dr Nugent, an Irish Catholic physician, and subsequently married his daughter, Jane, in 1757. A few years later, Dr Nugent's son, John, married cousin Garret's daughter, Lucinda. Nagles and Nugents had been connected through marriage at least since the seventeenth century, when James Nagle of Annakissy married Honora Nugent of Aghanagh.¹²

The Nagles and Burkes had been at the centre of national political movements for generations before Burke was born. Both his maternal and paternal forbears were supporters of the Stuarts. His paternal great-grandfather, John Burke, was Mayor of Limerick in 1646. John Burke tried to garner support for Ormonde's attempt to make an alliance between the Gaelic forces inspired by Owen Roe O'Neill and the Old-English Royalists who supported the Stuarts. He followed Ormonde in believing that such an alliance was the only combination capable of overthrowing Cromwell and his Parliamentary Army. Mayor Burke read a proclamation from the Lord Lieutenant announcing friendship and toleration for Irish Catholics in the hope of rallying them to support King James. The Limerick citizens who supported O'Neill rose in fury at the suggestion of an alliance; they tore up the cobble-stones and flung them at the city magistrates; the ensuing riot is still remembered in Limerick as 'Stony Thursday'.¹³

The Nagles' Jacobite credentials were equally impeccable. Richard Nagle, head of the family in the 1680s, was advisor to King James in the War of the Two Kings; James had stayed at the Nagle castle while on his way to

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Dublin. (Burke could see the tops of the towers of this great Nagle house from the hedge-school at Monanimy.) Richard Nagle became the attorney general for the Jacobite government in Ireland, Speaker of the House in the Jacobite Parliament, and reputed author in 1689 of the famous act that sought to return to the original owners the lands confiscated and settled in the seventeenth-century plantations. He followed James to France where he was Chief Secretary for Ireland at the court in St Germain.¹⁴

Burke's own father, Richard, lived just over the county line in Bruff, Co. Limerick. He represented James Cotter, the son of the Jacobite commander Sir James Cotter, at his ill-fated trial.¹⁵ L. M. Cullen describes Cotter's trial and subsequent hanging in 1720 as 'easily the most traumatic political event of the first half of the century in Ireland, having no parallel in the rest of Ireland and providing in recollection on both sides the spark which set alight the sectarian tensions in Munster in the early 1760s'.¹⁶ It is likely that Richard Burke got the task of providing counsel to Cotter through the connection of his wife's family to Cotter. Besides being a neighbour of the Nagles in the Blackwater Valley, Cotter was married to a sister of Garrett Nagle's wife. Whelan finds it remarkable that political involvement of the old Gaelic and Anglo-Norman families such as the Nagles and Burkes can be traced, almost as an inheritance, through so many movements: from Jacobite to Catholic Committee to the United Irishmen, to the O'Connell and the Tithe agitations and on to the Young Irelanders.¹⁷ In the words of Roy Foster: 'Family alliances from the early eighteenth century often provide the subtext to political associations in later generations.'¹⁸ It is not difficult to see Edmund and his own son Richard continuing this family tradition of political involvement.

Whelan describes how the old Catholic gentry families such as the Nagles 'enjoyed immense social prestige, especially in areas distant from Dublin, where the tendency persisted to regard personal and territorial claims as more legitimate than impersonal state ones'.¹⁹ According to Foster, 'deference

was as influential as dependence', and 'geography, tradition, kinship, [and] gratitude' were instrumental in establishing and maintaining gentry status and power in eighteenth-century Ireland.²⁰ Burke's own correspondence reveals his deferential attitude to the Catholic nobleman Lord Kenmare, owner of a vast estate in Kerry, in his efforts to secure the social and political position of the Nagles. He is constantly recommending his Nagle cousins to the protection of Lord Kenmare and thanking him for favours shown to the Nagles.

While Burke lived in North Cork, the Nagles performed their role as Gaelic gentry, sponsoring music and poetry, dispensing profuse hospitality, and patronising popular sports such as hunting, horse-racing, hurling and cockfighting.

In the 1760s the last great Irish language poet of eighteenth-century Ireland, Eoghan Rua 'O Suilleabh'ain, was tutor to the Annakissy Nagles.

When Charles Fox visited Burke's cousin Garret at his lodge in Killarney in 1777, Burke teased Garret: 'You are now become a man of the Lough;

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and must be admitted to be the true *Garroit Iarla*, who is come at last.' The reference is to Garrett Fitzgerald, third Earl of Desmond, who according to legend was sleeping beneath Lough Gur and would one day rise. Burke was delighted when Fox reported that 'the old spirit and character of the country is fully kept up which rejoices me beyond measure'.²¹ He was eager to assure Garret that Fox was one of the first men in England, and even if he did not think much of Fox on first meeting him, he was sure he would like him very much on further acquaintance. Burke's assurances to this member of the obscure Gaelic Munster Catholic gentry might appear remarkable but it must be remembered that the Nagles were very conscious of their own aristocratic heritage and were also more accustomed to looking towards France rather than England for aristocratic counterparts.

A month previously, in another letter to Garret, which had been concerned mainly with farming matters, Burke expressed his grief 'that the old stock [of the Gaelic gentry] is wearing out. God send that their successors may be better.' He assures Garret 'that nothing can do you all so much good, as keeping up your old union and intercourse, and considering yourselves as one family. This is the old burthen of my song. It will answer infallibly, at one time, or in one way or other.'²² As the eighteenth century progressed, the status of the Gaelic gentry was increasingly undermined by middlemen and mercantile interests and they slowly withdrew from their role as patrons of Gaelic culture. Burke was acutely aware of this phenomenon, and in a letter to his son Richard in 1792 he warns him that the Blackwater Nagles who are still alive 'and not quite ruined there', must not 'show [him] any honours, in the way, which in old times was not unusual with them, but which since are passed away'.²³ He is fearful that the 'mischievous' newspapers would pick up on the traditional Gaelic celebrations which might be occasioned by Richard's visit to the area. Being so clearly associated with such old-style neo-Jacobite Catholics could unsettle the young man's position as secretary for the Catholic Committee in delicate negotiations on repeal of the Penal Laws. This particular letter to Richard is full of his memories of past oppression and Protestant conspiracies. He urges Richard to collect more evidence for discrediting the Protestant version of that 'pretended Massacre in 1641' and to inquire (discreetly, of course) into the 'shameful rage in Munster' in the 1760s. (Cullen details his crucial work on behalf of his relatives and other Munster Gaelic Catholics who were being prosecuted as Whiteboys in the 1760s.²⁴ Burke's political manoeuvring and legal intervention was too late to save his distant relatives, Fr Nicholas Sheehy and Edmund Sheehy, from being hanged, but he managed to save many other lives.) He asks Richard to give money to two daughters of his beloved uncle, Patrick Nagle, 'without

any other reference to me, than that you know how much I loved them'. He tells Richard:

I have long been uneasy in my Mind when I consider the early obligations, strong as debts, and stronger than some Debts, to some of my own family – now advanced in Life, and fallen, I believe, into Great Penury. Mrs. Crotty is daughter

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of Patrick Nagle, to whom (the father) I cannot now tell you all I owe; she has had me a child in her arms.

The cryptic phrase 'I cannot now tell you all I owe' points to Burke's debt to the once vibrant outpost of the Catholic gentry.

In tandem with the demise of the old-style Catholic gentry class which was gradually submerged during the long eighteenth century by the interests of middlemen farmers and the developing mercantile sector, Irish and the closely related Scots Gaelic also declined as the languages spoken by the vast majority in Ireland and Scotland. However, in 1726, just three years before Burke was born, there were at least 26 Irish language scholars and composers working in Dublin, the most Anglicised part of Ireland.²⁵ In the Munster province of his boyhood and the western province of Connaught where his sister settled, Irish remained the dominant language throughout the eighteenth century.

In 1731 two-thirds of the entire population used Irish as their first language, and two years after he died, in 1799, about half spoke Irish for everyday use and conversation.²⁶ Over 90 per cent of the population still spoke Irish in North Cork as late as 1781.²⁷ Even by the end of the century Irish was still the predominant language in that region. In his book, *Travels in Ireland*, Edward Wakefield says that in 1812 'The Irish was so much spoken by the common people of Cork city and its neighbourhood, that an Englishman was apt to forget where he was; and to consider himself in a foreign city'. In his memoir, *Mo Scéal F'ain*, Fr O'Leary says that when he was curate in Bweeng, in the Ballyhouras, in 1868, Irish was still the spoken language of most of his parishioners and of the majority of the people in the townlands along the Blackwater. Even as late as 1906, when a Gaelic League organiser visited the Mallow area, he found that Irish had lingered on with a few of the older generation in remote places.²⁸

According to one of Burke's earliest biographers, Dr Bisset, he was still fluent in Irish after many years of living in England. Bisset describes Burke's visit to the Scottish Highlands in 1785 and says that near Inverary Burke and his companion, William Windham, met with a local celebrity, Dr McIntyre: 'Burke who understood the Gaelic, spoke to Dr McIntyre in that tongue. He was answered in Erse; and they understood each other in many instances, from the similarity of these two dialects of the ancient Celtic.'²⁹ Burke's library provides us with the most direct evidence of his preoccupation with the Irish language: he had a copy of *The Catechism in Irish and English* published in Paris in 1742, *Tracts relative to the Celtic Language* by Cleland, and the *Irish-English, English-Irish Dictionary* published in Paris in 1768 (which was the work of Conor Begley and Hugh Mac Curtin). This dictionary is one of the very few books in which Burke made annotations. He collected Irish manuscripts and did much to encourage the use of Irish language sources in the writing of Irish history. He arranged for Charles O'Connor of Belangare (the model for Lady Morgan's 'Prince of Coolavin' in *The Wild Irish Girl*) to be granted access to Trinity College's library, he encouraged Vallency to publish Irish annals in the original and with translations, and he persuaded Sebright to donate the

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Irish manuscripts which he had bought from Lhuyd to the library at Trinity College. These invaluable texts became the basis of Trinity College's Irish manuscript collection.³⁰

While at Trinity, Burke admitted to Dick Shackleton that he was gripped

by a '*furor historicus*', and for the rest of his life he maintained a keen interest in Irish history and historiography. His library contained all the Irish histories written by those who supported the Gaelic cause, including O'Halloran, Vallency, Curry and O'flaherty. He had Campbell's *Ecclesiastical and Literary History of Ireland*, a copy of Lhuyd's *Archaeologia Britannica*, and *Histoire Monastique d'Irlande* published in Paris in 1690, as well as many other publications and manuscripts which were of direct Irish historical and topographical interest, including Beaufort's 1792 *Memoir of a Map of Ireland* with handwritten annotations by Burke.³¹ He had a number of famous Jacobite trials in his collection, including the trial of Oliver Plunkett, but it was the rebellion of the Irish Jacobites in 1641 that was the prime focus of Burke's historical interest. He was adamant that the insurrection of 1641 was not a rebellion against government but was a display of loyalty to the Royal House of Stuart who were the rightful Kings of England but who had been temporarily deposed by the disloyal Puritans. Bisset gives a long and entertaining account of Burke's quarrel with Hume on this matter. Bisset is unsympathetic to Burke's position: 'The genius, wisdom and learning of Burke did not prevent him from entertaining some opinions totally unfounded [...] He most strenuously denied the Irish massacre.' In arguing with Hume, Burke affirmed that on the banks of the Shannon thousands of Irish people had witnessed the ghosts of numbers of Catholics who had been killed and thrown into the river. Bisset reports that Burke could not speak on 'the Irish massacre' without being 'transported into a rage'.³²

The Catholic, Gaelic, Royalist gentry world of Burke's youth in North Cork was a vibrant culture of oral performance and scribal activity. Burke's political career has been characterised as a long defence of traditional societies. He argued for conciliation with the Americans because Britain had broken the long-established contract with the colonists. India, according to Burke, had a culture more ancient and venerable than anything in Britain and should be honoured as such, and he deplored the French revolutionists who were destroying their inheritance for the sake of ideals. In seeing Edmund Burke among the faded remnants of Catholic, Gaelic, Royalist gentry stock, it is clear that his political career was fuelled by a desire to protect the riches of traditional culture and societies from the arrogance of greed and from persecution based on a hatred fuelled by myths, savage caricatures and colonial stereotypes. At an early stage of his composition of *Reflections*, Burke sent a draft to Philip Francis. In response to Burke's passages about the Queen, Francis wrote: 'In my opinion all you say about 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.'³³ He replied immediately, declaring that

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his 'recollection of the manner in which [he] saw the Queen of France' and the contrast 'between that brilliancy, Splendour, and beauty, with the prostrate Homage of a Nation to her' and 'the abominable Scene of 1789' made him cry as he was writing. 'These Tears came again into my Eyes almost as often as I looked at the description. They may again.' He concludes with a startling claim for his *fantasia*, his rhetorical visualisation, of Marie Antoinette: 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'. My friend, I tell you it is truth – and that it is true, and will be true, when you and I are no more, and will exist as long as men – with their Natural feelings exist. I shall say no more on this Foppery of mine.³⁴

Francis has the last word on the subject, writing to Burke on the publication of *Reflections* he says: 'Once for all, I wish you would let me teach you to write English.'³⁵

Burke's fellow-Irishman had a point: Burke's evocation of Marie Antoinette

drew on the Gaelic tradition rather than the English canon. The Burkean vision of Marie Antoinette is the earliest English version of the *Aisling*, which has a long lineage in Irish poetry. In the old Celtic tales it was a common theme that the hero saw a beautiful maiden, in either a dream or a mystical vision, fell in love with her, and on his waking or after she vanished from his sight, began to travel the world in search of this *sp'airbhean* (literally 'skywoman').³⁶ The eighteenth-century *Aisling'í na Mumhan* (Munster Aislings) are especially renowned in the Gaelic tradition and are associated with the Jacobite songs and literature in the wider realms of Ireland, Scotland, England and Wales. The *sp'airbhean* in the Munster poet's vision is the personification of Ireland, and she is waiting for her lover, sometimes identified as a Stuart, to come from over the seas to rescue her from defilement by a boorish master. The *Aisling* had a well-rehearsed plot, which started with a description of the sudden appearance of the maiden as she seems to hover in the sky, shining in loveliness; then she flees and the poet follows her, to see her being abused by louts and boors. She bemoans her misfortunes and tells of her trust in her absent deliverer and lover, her belief in his speedy arrival and the fidelity with which she clings to his love. The poem ends with the poet 'coming to earth', out of his reverie, but desirous to be still in that intangible communication. Burke's vision of Marie Antoinette is a perfectly formed *Aisling*.³⁷ She is a *sp'airbhean*, hovering on the horizon: '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.' A comparison between 'O Rathaille's 'Gile na Gile', perhaps the most famous of the Munster *Aisling'í*, and Burke's vision of Marie Antoinette demonstrates how faithful Burke remained to the Gaelic tradition:³⁸

*Gile na Gile do chonnarc ar slighe i n-uaigneas;
Criostal an chriostail a guirmruisc rinn-uaine;*

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*Binneas an bhinnis a friotal n'ar chr'ion-ghruamdha;
Deirge is finne do fionnadh n-a gr'ios-ghruadhnaibh.
Brightness most bright I beheld on the way, forlorn.
Crystal of crystal her eye, blue touched with green.
Sweetness most sweet her voice, not stern with age.
Colour and pallor appeared in her flushed cheeks.
Caise na caise i ngach ruibe d'a buidhe-chuachaibh
Bhaineas an ruithneadh den chruinne le rinn-scuabaidh;
Iorradh ga ghlaire 'n'a gloine ar a bruinn bhuacaigh,
Do geineadh ar gheineamhain di-se 'san t'ir uachtraigh.
Curling and curling, each strand of her yellow hair
as it took the dew from the grass in its ample sweep;
a jewel more glittering than glass on her high bosom
created, when she was created, in a higher world.³⁹*

There is a lot of movement in the *Aisling'í* as the *sp'airbhean* takes the poet into themagical realm of symbol and reveals herself as Nation; she tries to flee the clutches of the usurpers and looks for redemption from abroad:

*Fios fiosach dom d'inis, is ise go f'ior-uaigneach,
fios filleadh don duine don ionad ba r'i-dhualgas,
fios milleadh na droinge chuir eisean ar rinnruagairt,
's fios eile n'a cuirfeadh im laoihibh le f'ior-uamhan.
True tidings she revealed me, most forlorn,
tidings of one returning by royal right,
tidings of the crew ruined who drove him out,
and tidings I keep from my poem for sheer fear.
Leimhe na leimhe dom druidim 'na cruinntuairim,
im chine ag an gcime do snaidhmeadh go f'iorchrua me;
ar ghoirm Mhic Mhuire dom fhortacht, do bh'og uamise,
is d'imigh an bhruinneal 'na luisne go bru'in Luachra.*

Foolish past folly, I came to her very presence
bound tightly, her prisoner (she likewise a prisoner...)
I invoked Mary's Son for succour: she started from me
and vanished like light to the fairy dwelling of Luachair.
Rithim le rith mire im rithibh go cro 'i-luaimneach,
tr 'i imeallaibh corraigh, tr 'i mhongaibh, tr 'i shl 'imruaitigh;
don tinne-bhrugh tigim – n 'i thuigim c 'en tsl 'i fuaras –
go hionad na n-ionad do cumadh le dra 'iocht dhruaga.
Heart pounding, I ran, with a frantic haste in my race,
by the margins of marshes, through swamps, over bare moors.
To a powerful palace I came, by paths most strange,
to that place of all places, erected by druid magic.

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In Burke's vision of the *sp'eirbhean*/Marie Antoinette, she is presented as fleeing from a 'band of cruel ruffians and assassins, reeking with [...] blood'. This band '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, and through ways unknown to the murderers had escaped to seek refuge'. As in the *Aisling 'i* the 'elevation and fall' of Marie Antoinette is the elevation and fall of an ancient order, she is undefended by armed protectors, degraded, sorrowful and left in desolation: 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 honor and cavaliers! I thought ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened her with an insult. But the age of chivalry is gone.⁴⁰

The boors who hold the *sp'eirbhean* Queen captive cannot see her in her emblematic role as the personification of the nation; in their eyes she is merely available for their crude sexual gratification:

Brisid f 'a scige go scigeamhail bu 'ion ghruagach
is foireann de bhruinnealaibh sioscaithe dlooi-chuachach;
i ngeimhealaibh geimheal me cuirid gan puinn suaimhnis,
's mo bhruinneal ar broinnibh ag broinnire broinnstuacach.

All in derision they tittered – a gang of goblins
and a bevy of slender maidens with twining tresses.
They bound me in bonds, denying the slightest comfort,
and a lumbering brute took hold of my girl by the breasts.

D 'iniseas di-se, san bhfriotail dob fh 'ior uaimse,
n 'ar chuibhe di snaidhmeadh le slibire sl 'imbhuartha
's an duine ba ghile ar shliocht chine Scoit tr 'i huair
ag feitheamh ar ise bheith aige mar chaoin-nuachar.

I said to her then, in words that were full of truth,
how improper it was to join with that drawn gaunt creature
when a man the most fine, thrice over, of Scottish blood
was waiting to take her for his tender bride.

Ar chloistin mo ghutha di foileann go f 'ior-uaibhreach
is sileadh ag an bhfliche go life as a gr 'iosghruannaibh
cuireann liom giolla dom choimirc 'on mbu 'in uaithi-
's 'i gile na gile do chonnarc ar sl 'i in uaigneas.

On hearing my voice she wept in high misery
and flowing tears fell down from her flushed cheeks.

She sent me a guard to guide me out of the palace.

– that brightness most bright I beheld on the way, forlorn.

Burke derides the revolutionaries in whose scheme of things 'a king is but a man, a queen is but a woman; a woman is but an animal, and an animal

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not of the highest order'.⁴¹ The boorish revolutionaries cannot appreciate the emblematic role of the monarchs but reduce the Queen to a position where she is nothing more than an animal. The calamitous fate of the *sp'eirbhean*/mother nation in Burke's *Reflections* is also a call to arms and the same is true of

the *Aisling*'t, where the plight of the *sp'airbhean* is presented as an appeal for collective redemption:

An Ceangal

Mo threighid, mo thubaist, mo thurainn, mo bhr'on, mo dh'uth!

an soilseach muirneach miochairgheal beoltais caoin

ag adharach foireann dubh mioscaiseach c'oirneach bu't,

's gan leigheas 'na goire go bhfillid na leoin tar toinn.

The Knot

Pain, disaster, downfall, sorrow and loss!

Our mild, bright, delicate, loving, fresh-lipped girl

with one of that black, horned, foreign, hate-crested crew

and no remedy near till our lions come over the sea.

The speakers who narrate the *Aisling*'t adopt the stance of a lone witness, in the twilight world between wakefulness and sleep, who has a vision of the shimmering goddess/motherland and her sexual debasement, enslavement and her calls for revenge and liberation: they recite the poem to awake others to action. They evoke the pathos of nostalgia – in its original literal meaning of a pathological pining for home. This is precisely the same uncanny narrative stance deployed by Burke in his depictions of Marie Antoinette.⁴² As John Whale describes it, Burke in the *Reflections* 'figured as the hero of a national romance'.⁴³ In writing about his efforts on behalf of bringing France back to itself he describes himself thus: 'Viewing things in this light, I have frequently sunk into a degree of despondency and dejection hardly to be described. [...] Yet out of the profoundest depths of this despair and impulse which I have in vain endeavoured to resist had urged me to raise one feeble cry against the unfortunate coalition with France.'⁴⁴ Burke strikes the posture of a chivalric hero, 'who watch day and night by the bedside of their delirious country, – who, for their love to that dear and venerable name, bear all the disgusts and all the buffets they receive from their frantic mother'.⁴⁵

Yeats's refrain describing the Irish Revolution of the early twentieth century as 'A terrible beauty is born' is a line with a long history in Irish poetics. The oscillation of terror and beauty, *An Aisling Ghear*, / The Beautiful Vision of Political Terror, was a genre with a rich pedigree but was in many respects a clichéd trope in Gaelic poetry when Burke was writing his *Reflections* or indeed when he was writing his aesthetic treatise, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas on the Sublime and Beautiful*, a work that seems to prophesy the advent of Gothic or Romantic aesthetics, decades before they make their appearance in English literature or art. L'aszl'o Kontler is one of the more recent critics who comments on the interplay of the sublime and beautiful in the *Enquiry* as 'essential categories for the stability of any society'.

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Kontler points out that in *Reflections*: 'The mutual counterpoising effect of the sublime and the beautiful in the civilization of the old regime finds expression in the paradoxical adjective-noun compounds and more complex phrases in Burke's summary of the standards of manners guiding this civilization.' The examples he gives include: 'proud submission [...] dignified obedience [...] even in servitude itself the spirit of an exalted freedom' and the 'noble equality [...] mitigated kings into companions'.⁴⁶ Adjective-noun compounds were stock in trade of the Gaelic poets and the paradox of *An Aisling Ghear* was their long-standing encapsulation of the Irish nation.

Burke depicts the Revolution as beginning, not with the fall of the Bastille on 14 July but on the 6 October when the mob that had travelled to the palace at Versailles the day before made an attack on the apartment of Marie Antoinette. This characterisation of the Revolution is significant as the Queen had been the focus of an effective and sustained campaign of pornographic slander: the body of the Queen was frequently depicted as an insatiable (lesbian) whore. Indeed, it has been argued that: 'In retrospect, Burke committed a strategic

error by focusing on Marie Antoinette, as if the real significance of 6 October was her potential violation, since she was widely believed to have been an insatiable, orgiastic adulteress.⁴⁷ Philip Francis emphasised this point to Burke after he read a draft of the fantasia of Marie Antoinette and pointed out that his idealisation of the widely reviled Queen was undoubtedly leaving himself open to attack,⁴⁸ and it is true that Burke's contemporary critics, most notably Tom Paine and Mary Wollstonecraft, seized on his depiction of Marie Antoinette and on his description of her 'near naked' flight from the mob and derided them as a melodramatic, sentimental tragedy – a fiction rather than a factual account.⁴⁹ Literary historians credit Burke's *Reflections* as less of a historical account and more the work of a radically original writer who is a prophetic forerunner of Romanticism.⁵⁰ Burke's relatively short account of Marie Antoinette in his *Reflections* continues to be a prime focus of analysis and criticism of that work, if only to closet it as a 'literary' extravaganza in an otherwise cogent political treatise.⁵¹ Recent forensic history on the events of the 'October days' conclude that: 'Burke's account of the invasion of the queen's bedroom was neither an invention nor a falsification: it was historically grounded and closer to the actual primary sources than many critics have realized.'⁵² However, choosing to anchor his argument in defence of the loathed Marie Antoinette still remains a strange, anomalous decision unless we take into account the power of the *Aisling* on Burke's imagination. As Burke was writing his *Reflections* and casting his thoughts back to the spring of 1773, when he saw Marie Antoinette, the memory of the Irish Jacobite Count Patrick Darcy must have come strongly to mind. Burke and his son Richard spent several weeks in Paris, being introduced to society by Count Darcy. Burke probably made the acquaintance of Darcy through his connection with the Frenches of County Galway.⁵³ Count Darcy was just the kind of man to impress him. He was only four years older than Burke, born into a prominent Irish Jacobite family, and had joined the flight of the Wild Geese to

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gain glory as a soldier in France. Darcy fought at the Battle of Fontenoy, where the Irish Brigade was instrumental in forcing the massive Anglo-Hanoverian infantry formation to retreat with heavy losses. He was also a physician, a mathematician and an engineer, and he made a significant contribution to weapon design.⁵⁴ While in the company of the chivalrous Count Darcy, and perhaps other Irish Jacobite exiles, Burke saw Marie Antoinette, 'then the dauphiness', at Versailles. It is no surprise then, that Burke's memory of Marie Antoinette presented itself in the quintessential Jacobite form of the *Aisling*. The intensity that could produce such a vision of Marie Antoinette/France is surprising in an English context but not in an Irish one.

There is further evidence for reading Burke's *Aisling* in an Irish context in Burke's own acknowledgment that the *Reflections* was directly inspired on reading the pamphlet of the proceedings of the Revolution Society, though he does not make explicit that the Society carried a resolution reiterating the anti-Catholic impetus in the Glorious Revolution that delivered England 'from Popery and Arbitrary Power'. It also passed a 'Congratulatory Address to the French National Assembly', and these congratulations, which were warmly welcomed in Paris, were conveyed in the same month that the property of the Catholic Church was annexed by the Assembly. The bulk of the pamphlet contained a sermon by Dr Richard Price, who was a protégé of Lord Shelburne, the man whom Burke held responsible for fomenting the anti-Catholic Gordon Riots. In his writings and speeches on the violent excesses of the French Revolution, Burke frequently refers to the Gordon Riots.⁵⁵ According to Conor Cruise O'Brien:

The Revolution Society's proceedings had to impinge painfully on the buried 'Irish layer' of Burke's psyche. In particular, the language of the resolution carried by the Society immediately after Price's sermon reminded him of just

how anti-Catholic the Glorious Revolution, which he was committed to revere, had actually been. It made his Jacobite ancestors walk, and reproach him for having betrayed his people.⁵⁶

Frank Turner concurs that the moves by the French revolutionaries against the Catholic Church and its property were interpreted by Burke as enshrining ‘three destructive political tendencies – bigotry, anticlericalism, and arbitrary government’, which were analogous to the policy of the English government toward Roman Catholicism in Ireland. Turner writes: ‘The one had and the other would produce political tyranny and human degradation all in the name of rationality.’⁵⁷

In his *Reflections* Burke is careful not to mention explicitly the Catholicism of the French monarchy; instead he styles himself as a protector of Christian monarchs against atheistic revolutionaries. Anti-Catholic sectarianism was a powerful force in all segments of English society in the late eighteenth century and Burke would do his cause no good to draw attention to the Roman Catholicism of the Bourbons. The French aristocracy had given refuge to the ‘emigré’ Gaelic elite over many generations and the *Aisling* poets

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conventionally looked to France to come to the aid of Gaelic Ireland. Price’s sermon was entitled *Discourse on the Love of our Country*, and the impetus to assert a counter-narrative of national love combined with the pressure to speak in a coded way in defence of the French Catholic monarch finds ready expression in Burke’s *Aisling*. Steven Blakemore points out the Burke was ambivalent about the Reformation. In *Thoughts on French Affairs* he expressly compares the spirit of the Reformation and French Revolution to argue that they both share a spirit of sectarian ideology which split Europe: ‘the spirit of proselytism expanded itself [...] upon all sides; and great divisions were everywhere the result’. Blakemore argues that the rhetoric of Burke’s *Reflections* as it relates to Catholicism works on two distinct levels:

Burke is, on one level, appealing to the prejudice of his British audience by attacking the revolutionaries and their British supporters with an anti-Catholic vocabulary that had been dominant in England since the sixteenth-century, and which had been used by the British to define themselves against the Catholic ‘other.’ But, on another level, he is subtly suggesting that the Catholic oppression caricatured by Protestants, the imaginary spirit of the hostile, alien ‘other’, did really exist in the rhetoric and practices of the revolutionaries and their admirer.

The *Reflections* and the *Aisling* ‘i’ are political visions, conceived on the brink of a dramatically envisioned descent into disaster, concerned to make an outcry against colonial domination of the many by the few. Burke does not view the French Revolution as a popularly inspired political movement but as a pernicious system designed by a small cabal of intellectual ideologues, and in his last letter to Hercules Langrishe written in May 1795 Burke again returns to the point that ‘the principles of Protestant ascendancy’ justify the ‘establishment of the power of the smaller number, at the expence of the political liberties of the whole’. He writes:

I think I can hardly overrate the malignity of the principles of Protestant ascendancy, as they affect Ireland; or of Indianism, as they affect these countries, and as they affect Asia; or of Jacobinism as they affect all Europe, and the state of human society itself. This last is the greatest evil. But it readily combines with the others, and flows from them.⁵⁸

Seamus Deane persuasively reads Burke’s *Reflections* as the ‘first of Ireland’s national narratives’.⁵⁹ It is propelled by a nostalgia that presents the national character as being formed through a kinship with a historical community that lives in a defined (national) territory; a nostalgia that also pervades the *Aisling* ‘i’. In the same manner as the *Aisling* ‘i’ *naMumhan*, the national narrative of Ireland has traditionally been a story impelled and checked by the historical narrative of the marginalised and defeated. The emphasis is on recurrence and renewal and the repetitive or prophetic quality of events is spoken of in

sacred or folk terms; a mythic or remote historical era is glorified to lament its passing and praise its return. In contemporary Ireland telling and retelling history is quite literally a vital action for Irish and for British nationalists, as

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it is in the expression of a pride in past achievements and prophecy for future glories, that a present identity can be structured.⁶⁰

Until recently then national literature of Ireland has often been quite narrowly defined, the historical community has been read as consisting of just 'two traditions', and the territory of the Irish has been defined as the island of Ireland. In the early decades of this century W. B. Yeats claimed Burke as a liberal member of the Protestant Ascendancy:

... people that were
Bound neither to Cause nor to State,
Neither to slaves that were spat on,
Nor to the tyrants that spat,
The people of Burke and of Grattan
That gave, though free to refuse —⁶¹

Scholars such as Seamus Deane, Luke Gibbons and Conor Cruise O'Brien have dislodged this Yeatsian version of Burke and presented him as a more complex and intriguing figure, and there can now be heard a new proliferation of Irish voices, of many ethnicities, of different races, from different parts of the world, with varying experiences of economics, gender and sexuality. It remains to be seen how Burke's voice will sound amidst this new Irish cacophony. A relatively recent manifestation of Burke's words is to be found spoken by the character Gar O'Donnell in Brian Friel's play *Philadelphia Here I Come*. Gar quotes the opening lines of Burke's *Aisling* on Marie Antoinette as a mantra, a valve through which he releases his confusion, rage and grief, on the night before he emigrates to America. The comfort that Gar takes in reciting Burke's lines is the comfort of chanting a traditional refrain, an indigenous tragic genre, an old hackneyed formula, that somehow can still bear the weight of an inexpressible pain.

NOTES

1. *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke in Twelve Volumes*, vol.3, Beaconsfield edn (Boston 1901), p.331. This is the reading edition I use although the standard academic edition is *French Revolution 1790-1794*, ed. L. G. Mitchell (Oxford 1989), vol.8 in the series: *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, gen. ed. Paul Langford.
2. Burke's sister Juliana (also Julia) married Pat French of Loughrea in 1766. L. M. Cullen, 'The Blackwater Catholics and County Cork Society and Politics in the Eighteenth Century', *Cork History and Society*, ed. Patrick O'Flanagan and Cornelius G. Buttimer (Dublin 1993), p.541.
3. Breandán 'O Buachalla, 'A Cork Jacobite', *Cork History and Society*, p.472.
4. Quoted by L. M. Cullen, 'The Blackwater Catholics', p.559. See also Elizabeth Lambert, 'The Law, the Nun, and Edmund Burke', *An Imaginative Whig: Reassessing the Life and Thought of Edmund Burke*, ed. Ian Crowe (Columbia and London 2005), p.158-74.
5. Basil O'Connell, *Edmund Burke (1729-1797): A Basis for a Pedigree*, repr. from *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society* 61 (1956), p.72-73.
6. Kevin Whelan, *The Tree of Liberty: Radicalism, Catholicism and the Construction of Irish Identity 1760-1830* (Cork 1996), p.6.
7. O'Connell, *Edmund Burke*, p.119.
8. *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke*, ed. Thomas W. Copeland *et al.*, 10 vols (Cambridge 1958-1978), i.346. It is tempting to speculate that perhaps it was Patrick Nagle who inspired

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Burke's observation that 'The authority of a father [...] hinders us from having that entire love for him that we have for our mothers, where the parental authority is almost melted down into the mother's fondness and indulgence. But we generally have a great love for our grandfathers, in whom this authority is removed a degree from us, and where the weakness of age mellows it into something of a feminine partiality' (*A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, III.x, ed. James T. Boulton, South Bend 1968, p.62).

9. William O'Brien says he was better known as 'Sylvy' (*Edmund Burke as an Irishman*, Dublin 1924, p.17ff).

10. See also Eamon Ó Ciardha, 'A Voice from the Jacobite Underground: Liam Inglis (1709-1778)', *Radical Irish Priests 1660-1970*, ed. Gerard Moran (Dublin 1998); Cornelius G. Buttimer, 'Gaelic Literature and Contemporary Life in Cork, 1700-1840', *Cork History and Society*; Risteárd Ó Foghludha, *Cois na Bríde: Liam Inglis* (Baile Átha Cliath 1937).

11. Half of the house was still inhabited by a family named Barry until 1991. This information was provided by the farmer, Mrs Barry, who lives in Ballyduff Lodge (conversation, July 1997).
12. Cullen, 'The Blackwater Catholics', p.553, and Basil O'Connell, *The Nagles of Annakissy*, repr. from *The Irish Genealogist* 2.11 (n.d.), p.1.
13. O'Brien, *Burke as an Irishman*, p.3.
14. O'Brien, *Burke as an Irishman*, p.20.
15. W. Hogan and Se'an 'O Buachalla, 'James Cotter's Papers', *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society* 68 (1963), p.71-95. Among James Cotter's Papers we have a letter from him to a Nugent cousin, which might prove to be a further intriguing connection between Cotter and Burke if this Nugent should prove to be a forebear of Jane who married Burke. There are also a number of Nugents who were members of the Jacobite parliament: See J. G. Simms, *The Jacobite Parliament of 1689*, Irish History Series 6 (Dundalk 1974).
16. L.M. Cullen, *Emergence of Modern Ireland 1600-1900* (London 1981), p.199-200, and also F. J. Froude, *The English in Ireland* (London 1881), p.432-33.
17. Whelan, *The Tree of Liberty*, p.18.
18. Roy Foster, *Modern Ireland: 1600-1972* (London 1988), p.232. See also Breand'an 'O Buachalla, 'Irish Jacobite Poetry', *The Irish Review* 12 (Spring/Summer 1992), p.40-49, for a discussion of how Gaelic Jacobite poetry employed the traditional literary mode of describing the king as spouse of Ireland to impart innovative political messages.
19. Whelan, *The Tree of Liberty*, p.15.
20. Foster, *Modern Ireland*, p.236.
21. *Correspondence*, iii.391-92.
22. *Correspondence*, iii.371-72.
23. *Correspondence*, vii.102-106.
24. Cullen, 'The Blackwater Catholics', p.535-83.
25. Breand'an 'O Buachalla, 'Seacaib'iteachas Thaidhg U'1 Neachtain', *Studia Hibernica* 26 (1991-1992).
26. That is 1,340,808 Gaelic speakers in 1731 from a population of 2,011,219, and 2,400,000 speakers in 1799 from a population of 4.75 million. See Brian 'O Cu'iv, 'Irish Language and Literature: 1691-1845', *A New History of Ireland*, ed. T. W. Moody and W. E. Vaughan, 9 vols (Oxford 1986), iv.383, and Brian 'O Cu'iv, *Irish Dialects and Irish-Speaking Districts* (Dublin 1951), p.19.
27. Garret Fitzgerald, 'The Decline of the Irish Language 1771-1871', *Origins of Popular Literacy in Ireland*, ed. Daly and Dickson (Dublin 1990), p.70.
28. Quoted by John J. Kavanagh, 'Kilshannig – The Changing Times', *Mallow Field Club Journal* (1990), p.89-90.
29. Robert Bisset, *The Life of Edmund Burke, Comprehending an Impartial Account of his Literary and Political Efforts and a Sketch of the Conduct and Character of his Associates, Coadjutors and Opponents* (London, George Cawthorn, 1798), p.447-48.
30. William B. Todd, *Bibliography of Burke* (Godalming 1982), p.273, and William O'Sullivan, 'The Irish Manuscripts in Case H in TCD', *Celtica* 11 (1976), p.229-50.
31. Burke also had a two-volume manuscript entitled *A List of Payments to be Made for Civil Affairs, to Begin from the First Day of April, 1684*, tracts in reply to the treasury Pamphlet on Irish Trade; a *Letter from an Irishman on the Proposed System of Commerce*, 2 vols in 1, with a few (rare for Burke) ms corrections; *Proceedings upon the Claims to the Titles of Viscount Valentia* bound in red morocco (Dublin 1773); the *Collection of Protests* from 1737, which are protests by the Protestant interest in Ireland against various measures proposed by the English administration, including the Drapier's letters and an intriguingly titled *Munsteri Cosmographia Universalis* with *Burke and the 'Aisling'* 421 woodcuts published in Basil in 1559. Burke was also well versed in the work of Keating, see *Correspondence*, v.208-209.
32. Bisset also reports that Burke never forgave Hume for making it known that it was to Burke that he was alluding in his *History of England* when he wrote about the 'Irish Catholic, who denies the massacre in 1641'. According to Hume, this Irish Catholic was like the English Whig who believes in the Popish plot, and the Scots Jacobite who believes in the innocence of Queen Mary: they are all 'party men' and should be considered as 'men beyond the reach of argument, and must be left to their own prejudices' (Bisset, *Life of Burke*, p.195-97).
33. *Correspondence*, vi.87.
34. *Correspondence*, vi.90.
35. *Correspondence*, vi.147.
36. J. E. Caerwyn Williams and M'air'in N'1 Mhuir'10sa, *Traidisi'un Liteartha na nGael* (Baile A' thaCliath 1979), p.269ff.
37. Since Wollstonecraft, feminists have criticised Burke's elision of the material conditions of actual women in his glorification of Marie Antoinette as emblem of France. For a detailed feminist analysis of the depiction of women in Burke's *Reflections*, see Linda M.G. Zerilli, *Signifying Women: Culture and Chaos in Rousseau, Burke, and Mill* (Ithaca and London 1994), p.60-94. It has been argued that the stereotypic reproduction of the nation as woman and the woman as national muse, so evident in the national literature of Ireland, erases the complexities of real pasts and occludes the lives lived by Irish women, and that the appropriation of women's bodies as cultural media through which the desire for a nation could be expressed left a heavy legacy for Irish women (Gerardine Meaney, *Woman: Symbol & Nation*, Dublin 1990). The potent figure

of woman as national muse, as the object of poetry, proved to be a bind on Irish women's own creativity, as Eavan Boland describes it: 'it seemed to me, I had been an element of design rather than an agent of change' (*A Kind of Scar: The Woman Poet in a National Tradition*, Dublin 1989, p.14).

38. Comparisons might also be made with one of the best loved of the *Aisling* poets, Eoghan Rua 'OS'uilleabh'ain, who was a tutor with the Nagles of Annakissy during the Whiteboy arrests of the 1760s. It is possible that he and Burke may have met during that time. L.M. Cullen thinks it very likely that 'O S'uilleabh'ain's awareness of political events was sharpened by his stay with the Nagles at that time of crisis. According to Cullen, some of 'O S'uilleabh'ain's most celebrated lines are 'almost a paraphrase of thoughts that come up in Burke's writings. His language and views are those of the Blackwater, as are Burke's own' ('The Blackwater Catholics,' *Cork History and Society*, p.574). Though the Battle of Culloden was 30 years past, 'O S'uilleabh'ain composed about 20 Jacobite *Aisling*'s. Se'an 'O Tuama says that 'some of Eoghan Rua O'S'uilleabh'ain's *Aisling* or vision poems, with all their extraordinary metrical virtuosity, live on into the present day in Irish-speaking communities in Munster as a type of highly-structured folk *lieder*' (*An Duanaire 1600-1900: Poems of the Dispossessed*, ed. Se'an 'O Tuama, with translations into English verse by Thomas Kinsella, Baile A' tha Cliath 1994, p.xxv).

39. 'O Tuama and Kinsella, *An Duanaire*, p.150-53.

40. *Writings and Speeches of Burke*, iii.331.

41. *Writings and Speeches of Burke*, iii.333.

42. John Barrell argues that Burke could be seen to employ the language of sentiment in his *Reflections*, and we might see a sentimental touch in his figuring of the British Constitution, as a father whose wounds must be tended with 'pious awe and trembling solicitude'. However, it is difficult to read his depiction of Marie Antoinette as sentimental in the manner that Barrell defines the language of sentiment: that is a process whereby men are feminised through sympathy and all virtues are private domestic virtues, and that it is used to draw a veil of weakness over the frightening face of power. Burke's fantasia is a call to men to take up weapons, and the 'family' images that Burke paints are not so much private as public images, a 'lofty sentiment' of 'rank and race' – the image of Marie Antoinette (hardly a powerful figure given the popular depiction of her as a slut) is conflated both with her mother, Maria Theresa, who had a reputation for piety and courage and that quite (re)public(an) characteristic of the 'dignity of a Roman matron'. Burke's invocation of family is more accurately rendered as a sense of a clan (*clann* being the Gaelic word for family) or tribe than household. See John Barrell, 'Sad Stories: Louis XVI, George III, and the Language of Sentiment', *Refiguring Revolutions: Aesthetics and Politics from the English Revolution to the Romantic Revolution*, ed. Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker (Berkeley and London 1996), p.75-98.

43. John Whale, 'Introduction', *Edmund Burke's 'Reflections on the Revolution in France'*, *New Interdisciplinary Essays*, ed. John Whale (Manchester and New York 2000), p.5.

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44. 'Letters on a Regicide Peace', Letter II, *Writings and Speeches of Burke*, v.358-59.

45. 'Letter to a Member of the National Assembly', *Writings and Speeches of Burke*, iv.38-40.

46. L'aszl'o Kontler, 'Beauty or Beast, or Monstrous Regiments?: Robertson and Burke on Women and the Public Scene', *Modern Intellectual History* 1.3 (Cambridge, November 2004), p.305-30 (p.323). Neal Wood, 'The Aesthetic Dimension of Burke's Political Thought', *Journal of British Studies* 4.1 (1964), p.41-64, might be seen as the first to explicitly make the connection between Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) and his political speeches (most notably *Reflections*). Reading Burke's politics through the *Enquiry* has now become a staple methodology in Burke studies. For a recent magisterial example, see Luke Gibbons, *Edmund Burke and Ireland* (Cambridge 2003).

47. Steven Blakemore and Fred Hembree, 'Edmund Burke, Marie Antoinette, and the *Proc'edure criminelle*', *The Historian* 63.3 (2001), p.509.

48. *Correspondence*, vi.87.

49. See Frans De Bruyn, 'Theater and Counter theater in Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*', *Burke and the French Revolution: Bicentennial Essays*, ed. Steven Blakemore (Athens and London 1992), p.69-96, and Whale, *Burke's Reflections*, p.5-6.

50. See, for example: Peter Hughes, 'Originality and Allusion in the Writings of Edmund Burke', *Centrum* 4:1 (1976), p.32-43; Tom Furniss, *Edmund Burke's Aesthetic Ideology: Language, Gender and Political Economy in Revolution* (Cambridge 1993); Ronald Paulson, *Representations of Revolution (1789-1820)* (New Haven and London 1983).

51. For an example of evaluations of the *Reflections* that seek to bracket the marked rhetorical flourishes, see Francis P. Canavan, *The Political Reason of Edmund Burke* (Durham, NC 1960), esp. p.40-41. For a succinct example of the argument that Burke became undone in his literary rhapsodising of the Queen, see Tom Furniss, 'Stripping the Queen: Edmund Burke's Magic Lantern Show', *Burke and the French Revolution*, p.69-96.

52. Blakemore and Hembree, 'Burke, Marie Antoinette', p.520.

53. Cullen, 'The Blackwater Catholics', p.537. The marriage of Juliana to Pat French gave Burke an entr'ee to the County Galway circle in Paris and London. According to Cullen: 'Burke's actions in the late 1760s and early 1770s both in speculation and in East India affairs have to be seen in the context of the Irish interest in the French East India company which had close ties

with the Colebrooke group.' See also Cullen, 'Burke's Irish Views and Writings', *Edmund Burke: His Life and Legacy*, ed. Ian Crowe (Dublin 1997), p.72-73.

54. *Correspondence*, iii.228-29; Cullen, 'The Blackwater Catholics', p.538. I am indebted to Professor D'Arcy, Emeritus, Magee College, University of Ulster, Derry, for information on Count Darcy.

55. Conor Cruise O'Brien, *The Great Melody* (London 1993), p.395-96.

56. Cruise O'Brien, *The Great Melody*, p.396.

57. Frank M. Turner, 'Introduction: Edmund Burke: The Political Actor Thinking', *Reflections on the Revolution in France, Edmund Burke*, Rethinking the Western Tradition Series, ed. Turner (New Haven and London 2003), p.xxii.

58. *Correspondence*, viii.254.

59. Seamus Deane, *Strange Country: Modernity and Nationhood in Irish Writing since 1790* (Oxford 1997), p.25.

60. Elizabeth Tonkin, *Narrating our Pasts: The Oral Construction of Oral History* (Cambridge 1992), p.92.

61. W. B. Yeats, 'The Tower', *Collected Poems* (London 1985), p.247. See also 'The Seven Sages', p.355.