Introduction

A little more than a year before his death, Edmund Burke published one of his most powerful works of political rhetoric. His *Letter to a Noble Lord*, which appeared in February 1796, was a response to assaults by the Duke of Bedford, a Whig aristocrat of radical persuasions, on parliament's decision to grant Burke a pension for services to his country. Those services included, primarily, Burke's attacks on the ideology of the revolutionaries in France, and Bedford's underlying claim was that Burke had fashioned his antirevolutionary writings to secure his financial future: "At every step of my progress in life," Burke argued in response, "(for in every step was I traversed and opposed), and at every turnpike I met, I was obliged to shew my passport, and again and again to prove my sole title to the honour of being useful to my Country, by a proof that I was not wholly unacquainted with it's [*sic*] laws, and the whole system of it's interests both abroad and at home."[1] A number of scholars have used this text to illustrate Burke's lifelong, barely repressed frustration at being the eternal outsider in his adopted country.[2] Dogged "in every step" by his social background, his Irish ethnicity (he was born in Dublin of "Old Irish" or "Anglo-Norman" stock), and his Catholic sympathies (his maternal family were Irish Catholic landowners in County Cork), his survival at the heart of the British Protestant Establishment seems to have depended, according to this reading, upon repressing his national loyalties and religious sympathies. The price of such repression—ironic, given Burke's later conservative credentials—was a "Jacobin flame" that ran through his rhetoric and burst out finally in this scorching attack on the ingratitude of the system he had spent his career defending.[3]

There is, however, an alternative way of interpreting the *Letter to a Noble Lord*. It is one that reads the language of the text out of, rather than into, the strategies and circumstances by which Burke established himself in the literary and political circles of mid-century London. Indeed, as Frans De Bruyn has pointed out, Burke's *Letter* was not the first such defense by a *novus homo*, a man with no pedigree for his elevated position, against the aspersions of his social superiors.[4] Alexander Pope had penned a similar stylistic broadside, against Lord Hervey in 1733, and Burke's self-description is heavily influenced by his intention of portraying his own enemies as paradigmatic dunces in the Scriblerian mode.[5] Approached from this angle, the *Letter* is not a revelation of the deeply suppressed anger of an outsider: rather, in borrowing that ironically deferential tone to ridicule its target, it is the invocation by an ailing man of an earlier literary and political world in which he had once felt at home, to which he had been readily admitted, and out of which he had forged a remarkable career.

For Burke, that world, in the decade that followed his migration to London in 1750, had centered upon the publisher Robert Dodsley, epitome of the *novus homo* himself, who had been set up in business by the poet Alexander Pope, and the network of writers and politicians that Dodsley had drawn to his bookshop, Tully's Head, in Pall Mall. Burke had moved to London to study for the bar at the Middle Temple, but he appears shortly to have spent at least as much time pursuing literary interests that he had developed during his student days in Dublin. By 1756, the year Dodsley published his first book, *A Vindication of Natural Society*, Burke had evidently been fully received into the Tully's Head circle and, as a consequence, had become a part of a literary network that owed its origins to Pope and to the cultural and political critiques of Robert Walpole's government that had flourished in the 1730s. After Walpole's fall, in 1742, and Pope's death two years later, this network had continued to prosper and develop through Tully's Head, nurturing and reinterpreting Pope's legacy as poet and critic, particularly as that legacy had evolved within the broader movement of political opposition known as Patriotism. Alongside this process of critical reinterpretation came a broader reconsideration of Patriotism itself, incorporating the experiences and preoccupations of a new generation of writers and politicians. This was the world of the young Edmund Burke: his "title to the honour of being useful to my Country" was that of one such new-generation Patriot, the "Country" in question was the constitutional union of Great Britain and Ireland, and his usefulness that of the critic, whose Patriot duty was to raise public spirit in the cause of liberty and "natural order" in society.

The chief aim of this study is to recover, as far as is possible, the authentic intellectual and professional contexts of Burke's early career as a writer—contexts freed from anachronistic terminology or retrospective interpretations drawn from his later political thought. Such an exercise entails a more nuanced and complex picture of Burke's early intellectual development and of the literary profession that he joined, and therefore a sharper understanding of the term "Patriotism" as it informs the critical literature of early- and mid-eighteenth-century Britain.[6]

"Patriotism" is a term that first appeared in the 1720s, but the combination of ideas and rhetoric with which it became associated is rooted in the new political realities that emerged from the Glorious Revolution of 1688–89, and in the new vocabulary of civic virtue and public duty shaped by that constitutional upheaval. The Patriot of the early eighteenth century wished to be seen to transcend the religious, dynastic, and constitutional divisions left by the Revolution Settlement—unresolved issues of dynastic right, religious toleration, and qualifications for participation in public office—and secure the liberties recovered in that revolution by promoting civic virtue and the constitutional rights of the country's propertied elite. In this endeavor, the vocabulary and philosophical assumptions of Patriotism owed much to late-seventeenth-century Latitudinarian religiosity, which emphasized the moral and social praxis of faith within a broad though still distinctly Trinitarian soteriology, to Lord Shaftesbury's vigorous attacks on religious enthusiasm and priest-craft and his critiques of John Locke's political and moral philosophy, and also to the subsequent adaptation of Shaftesbury's moral and natural philosophy by thinkers such as Francis Hutcheson.[7] In particular, Patriots associated their rights and duties with the nurturing of a "publick-Spirit" (however narrowly the "public" might be defined) that animated the "amicable collision" of ideas by which liberty in polite society was guaranteed, and was itself, by some implanted moral sense, oriented toward a reverence for true, natural order.[8] The first recorded definition of "Patriotism," indeed, includes the term "public Spiritedness," and it was only by the recovery of this quality, Patriots believed, that the debilitating party and ecclesiastical divisions exacerbated by the Revolution Settlement could be overcome.[9] Public spirit was also seen as the antidote to the growth of corruption and venality that Patriots argued was fostered by entrenched, often foreign, interests through the systematic exclusion of sections of the propertied elite from public office. Here, Patriotism could draw on a tradition of "Country" opposition to "Court" factions, and critiques of a culture of credit-financing and stock-jobbing that

included anything from Commonwealth political thought to High Church theology and Jacobite dynastic loyalism. These critical strains became all the more prominent and comprehensive with speculation over the potential implications of the national debt incurred in the War of Spanish Succession (1701–14) and then the all-too-real consequences of the "South Sea Bubble" crisis of 1720.

These Patriot roots left plenty of room for divergence and disagreement among promoters of public spirit, not least because no accepted interpretation had emerged of what had, in fact, been the constitutional and legal import of the Revolution Settlement or the accumulated parliamentary legislation passed over the years from 1689 to 1701. (Burke was famously to return to this debate in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* and his subsequent *Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs*, in the early 1790s.) Indeed, the development of Patriotism is in many ways the history of successive attempts to find a workable, broadly acceptable balance in the religious and political apparatus of the state between access and inclusion, on the one hand, and the re-establishment of security and order on the other. More bluntly, with the failure to strike such a balance in the reigns of William and Mary and Anne and the bitter and enduring proscription of the Tories after the election of 1715, it became the history of successive attempts by the excluded to regain purchase on the levers of patronage.

Such an amorphous movement—at the same time an evolving mode of public rhetoric and a political strategy hanging onto the coat-tails of events—could, and did, embrace Whigs and Tories, High Churchmen and Latitudinarians, Jacobites and committed Hanoverians. Necessarily, then, any overarching claim of a self-styled Patriot had to rest on a coherent but broad program that claimed to unite men of virtue in opposition to a system that would exclude them for their very qualities of public spirit, and this design provided the sharpest and most memorable definition of Patriotism in the years of Walpole's political dominance, from 1726 to 1742, when the former Whig, Jacobite, and Tory Henry St. John, first Viscount Bolingbroke, applied his charismatic leadership and learning in the Classical rhetoric of civic virtue and constitutional liberty to a sustained literary and political assault on the "Robinocracy." Bolingbroke's greatest achievement was to gather under the banner of Patriotism a talented and heterogeneous group of writers and politicians, from the Anglican Jonathan Swift and the Catholic Alexander Pope to the Whig poet James Thomson, and from the Tory William Shippen to Opposition Whigs such as George Lyttelton and the "Boy Patriots" who frequented Frederick, Prince of Wales' "court-in-

waiting" at Leicester House. Ultimately, though, his task defeated him, and Walpole's eventual fall revealed not the alliance that Patriotism had come, briefly, to represent, but the earlier diversity of its political and intellectual roots. As this study will show, it was that diversity, rather than Bolingbroke's programmatic Patriotism, that energized the literary and critical environment of Burke's Tully's Head a decade later.

By the time Edmund Burke arrived in London, in 1750, Alexander Pope had been dead six years and Bolingbroke's political influence had faded; but a loose network of writers associated with Dodsley had been strongly influenced by their years of collaboration under the label of Patriotism and was now engaged in their own revision of that term in the light of two developments in particular. The first was disappointment at the lack of political change in the years after 1742 under the patronage of the former Patriot Whig William Pulteney, 1st Earl of Bath. The second was the uncomfortably brittle sense of national security and order exposed by the progress of the Jacobite rising in 1745–46, a signifier of the durability of the divisive issues of allegiance opened up in 1689 and 1701.[10] Through that Tully's Head network we can see how Patriot writers sought answers to the problem of why a rejuvenated, unifying public spirit had not emerged in the 1740s and what questions that failure raised about the Patriot understanding of political and religious order. Had Patriot rhetoric been constructed upon false foundations, or had it been appropriated by false speakers? How far should religious affiliation determine civic inclusion? Was civil liberty a matter more of constitutional or of moral order, and what implications did this hold for the historical and philosophical models upon which Patriotism might lean?

Burke's own reception into this revisionist critical nexus was facilitated by the fact that, since the Treaty of Limerick in 1691 and the subsequent imposition of the Williamite settlement on Ireland, public figures such as William Molyneux, Robert Molesworth, and Jonathan Swift had contributed to an Irish Patriot discourse that was both closely related to, and distinct from, their associates in Britain. Those issues under scrutiny at Tully's Head in the 1740s had their own parallels in Ireland, but they were parallels that gained particular color and urgency through the constitutional ambiguities of the Anglo-Irish connection and the political vulnerabilities of the minority Protestant Irish elite exposed by the revolution and its subsequent legal settlements. Working within a context that was fraught with issues and assumptions of exclusion played out in a bitterly sectarian religious context, many Irish Patriots of the early eighteenth century employed the language

of liberty to justify the exclusion of a majority of a country's population on grounds of religion rather than property or social status. The contradictions attending this attempt to conjure public spirit and national prosperity out of a mix of liberty and exclusion were not only ingrained in Burke's own religiously divided family but were painfully evident in Dublin's political and cultural scene during Burke's youth and undergraduate years, and it is within such Irish Patriot discourse that we should trace the formation of Burke's own political and cultural perspectives.[11]

This study, then, will explore Burke's early writings within the context of related reformist Patriot debates as they were played out in Dublin in the 1740s and through the mid-century literary network of Robert Dodsley's bookshop. But before we can fully appreciate the richness and complexity of the Patriot influence in Burke's early writings and career, we need to address some persuasive historical perspectives that have persistently militated against a clear view of such contexts and relations.

There is, first, the temptation to absorb the concept of "Patriotism" and "Patriot" texts into looser patriotic themes of national distinctiveness, exclusivity, and bellicosity as part of the scholarly concern to explain the intellectual roots of English and British nationalism. Working back from the openly nationalist aspirations of patriots in Revolutionary France, researchers have combed the literature of mid- and early-eighteenth-century Britain for a similarly assertive language of cultural and constitutional superiority. Anything from the anti-French writings and anti-Jacobite literature of Whig Patriots to the ridiculing of early-eighteenth-century pantomime and jests upon Italian opera might serve as plausible evidence of what Gerald Newman called "the low flame of eighteenth-century English patriotism, of irrational 'local attachments' . . . fanned into the consuming fire of nationalist 'demands and actions,' 'anger and self-assertion,'" and although Linda Colley may have redeemed patriotism from Newman's charges of irrationalism by linking it to the more systematic construction of British identity supposedly instigated by the British political elites after the Union of Scotland and England in 1707, much work has still to be done in addressing the terminological ambiguities raised by importing nationalism into the early part of the century.[12]

Patriot writers undoubtedly turned out material that would seem familiarly jingoistic to later generations. In times when international tensions were heightened by dynastic and religious conflict, foreign countries served to externalize the issues dividing the population at home; but the focus of such literature was on the relation of public spirit to national characteristics,

and the duties, generosity, and inclusiveness anticipated in the former were assumed achievable only through the validation of a prior—not superior—affection for the local and familiar. That affection, or web of affections, was teased out of national memories of the inheritance of property, constitution, and religion: in their manipulation of dynastic and religious ties, these early- and mid-century Patriot writers harbored, indeed, *could* harbor, no conception of the "nation" as the prime mover or historical repository of that public spirit in any way that would make sense to "nationalists" later in the century. Thus, when Burke, in the *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), made his famous reference to venerating "the little platoon we belong to in society," he was not, as is now often assumed, placing the little platoon as the culmination and sublimation of our social loyalties and identity, "an assertion of British difference, even superiority."[13] He was arguing that public spirit had to draw its energy from local affections in order to be transformed into that respect for universal principles of social order, without which those local affections could never be perfected.[14] Similarly, since it was precisely in this paradoxical reconciliation of particular local affections with universal benevolence that Patriots claimed to discover the natural order that underlay true moral and political liberty, "cultural protectionism" served as a medium through which the universal virtues of "publick Spiritedness" could most effectively and efficiently be transmitted to an increasingly broad citizenry.

A second distortion in our understanding of Patriotism arises, ironically, when the concept does retain a distinct historical context but its meaning is bundled too tightly with the career of its most prominent exponent, Lord Bolingbroke. Then it appears less in the diversity and shades that we have noted above than as an ideology instantiated, most famously, in the noble lord's "Letter on the Spirit of Patriotism" (1736) and his privately circulated "Idea of a Patriot King" (1738). To some degree, as we have seen, this prominence is justified. From his exile in France and his estate at Dawley, and through his associations with the *Craftsman* and, later, Leicester House, Bolingbroke invested Patriot thought with greater coherence and weight than hitherto through a combination of high political experience, eclectic political, philosophical, and historical learning, and extraordinary personal charisma. It is no surprise, then, that the narrative of Patriotism as a movement of political opposition has come largely to follow the contours of Bolingbroke's turbid career, and his shifting strategies for breaking up the exclusionary royal and parliamentary network that had driven him into exile through the threat of impeachment and proscription in 1715.[15] But just

as this powerful concoction of shifting intellectual ideas and political strata-
gems was to leave Bolingbroke open to charges of insincerity and disingen-
uousness, so, when his former associates, including Pulteney and Chester-
field, entered the corridors of power in 1742 only, it appeared, to continue
the discredited system of their enemy, Walpole, Patriotism could be held
out to mirror that very insincerity and divest itself of any lingering preten-
sion to principles. All that remained, it appeared, was for Samuel Johnson
to issue the coup de grace when, during its short-lived Pittite revival of the
1760s, he famously labeled Patriotism "the last refuge of a scoundrel."[16]

The chief weakness of this Bolingbrokean narrative of Patriotism is that
it loses sight of the ways in which the meaning and praxis of that term were
constantly under renegotiation as shifting social, political, cultural, and
even commercial factors demanded changes to the rhetoric of political op-
position or strained the philosophical assumptions of a passing generation
of thinkers. Consequentially, and crucially for our purpose, it fails to en-
gage with the ways in which Bolingbroke's own appropriation of the term
came swiftly under renegotiation and criticism. If we consider, for example,
that significant phase in Patriot political opposition when the "Letter on
the Spirit of Patriotism" and the "Idea of a Patriot King" were circulated
around the court of Frederick, Prince of Wales, while we may reasonably
be struck by the skill with which Bolingbroke systematized powerful cri-
tiques of Walpole and the "Robinocracy" to promote a broad union of the
excluded and expose the dual threat of isolated or antagonistic Whig and
Tory party politics, we should not assume that his essentially atavistic ap-
peal to "superior spirits" and a "Patriot King" represented the only possible
Patriot strategy for restoring virtue and liberty to the sphere of govern-
ment. Indeed, even as Walpole's position was crumbling, the efficacy of
Bolingbroke's critiques as devices for respectable critical or opposition rhet-
oric was under question in Patriot circles. The lofty attacks on priest-craft
and superstition could be deemed a backdoor to irreligion and secularism;
the methodology employed to identify a genealogy of constitutional settle-
ments as the repository of inherited English liberties seemed unsupportable
historically; and the rhetoric of lofty social elitism and esoteric skepticism
sounded dry and inadequate for galvanizing a critical but orderly public
spirit in the burgeoning, rapidly expanding public sphere of the 1740s. This
process accelerated with the political uncertainties and disappointments of
that decade, and came into sharp focus, at least temporarily, with the pub-
lication of Bolingbroke's philosophical and political works in the years im-
mediately after his death in 1751. The Patriot writings associated with Tully's

Head reveal the degree to which Bolingbroke's significance by that time was largely as a convenient shibboleth for those members of the Republic of Letters, including Burke, who had concluded that philosophical skepticism, deism, and a reliance on natural reason had had a corrosive rather than strengthening effect on social stability and public spirit. While this study of the Patriot context of Tully's Head and of Burke's early literary career will certainly place a focus on Bolingbroke, then, it will resist interpreting Bolingbroke's eclipse as more of a break in the evolution of Patriotism than it really was.

This reconfiguration of the Patriot legacy for fresh social, cultural, and political circumstances can be traced over time in the publishing list of Dodsley's business and reconstructed with some precision in the debates that surrounded Edmund Burke's early writings, both in London and in Dublin.[17] It involved establishing fresh commentaries on the relationship between religion, history, and the rhetoric of criticism that played off the waning influence of Bolingbroke, even to the point of considering whether this most eloquent Patriot spokesman had betrayed the cause he espoused. The aspects of that debate which will form the focus of discussion in this book include the following: the reassertion of the religious underpinnings of natural order and civil society in a way that drew heavily on earlier Latitudinarian thought and sought to distinguish "respectable" critiques of enthusiasm and superstition from veiled religious skepticism and atheism; the recovery of simple allegory as a mode of conveying universal principles of the natural moral order; a fresh engagement with the concept of the "sublime" and a related consideration of the perversion of public spirit through the workings of a "false sublime"; and finally, an attempt to reconcile legitimate modes of historical skepticism with the upholding of central tenets of sacred history and of the role of providence in particular.

One further perspective that may hinder a full appreciation of these Patriot dynamics concerns the term "Enlightenment" as it has generally been applied to the goals and central principles of the intellectual classes in this period. Significantly, each of those reforming Patriot positions, in their moral, religious, and social underpinnings, cuts across the current of our well-entrenched teleological assumptions about the progress of "Enlightenment" thought in Western Europe during the eighteenth century. As a result, it has proved difficult to situate Dodsley, Tully's Head, and Burke comfortably within the broader frame of "Enlightened" ideas. Just as Burke's own career suffers from the apparent denouement that was his campaign against Jacobinism, so the eighteenth-century Republic of Letters is viewed primarily

through the gap that had opened up between the *philosophes* and the political and religious establishments by the end of the century. From this perspective, secularization, rationalism, and growing alienation from the norms of ancien regime society continue to constitute the identity of "Enlightened" critics, forced to repress, disguise, or encode their opposition to prevailing power as a means of avoiding censorship, censure, and penury. Measured against such a standard, Dublin and London in the mid-eighteenth century appear parochial and tame intellectual environments. Admittedly, a burgeoning reading market was fueling innovations in book design and journals in this period and taking the Restoration coffee house into a host of new urban and domestic sites. But what are we to make of a Republic of Letters that never spawned a Republic of Virtue?

Such questions, which hinder an appreciation of the dynamics and longer-term significance of Burke's Patriot relations with Dodsley's Tully's Head, are testimony to the enduring influence of Peter Gay's narrative of the triumph over superstition and prejudice of a "coalition of cultural critics, religious skeptics and political reformers" united by "a program of secularism, humanity, cosmopolitanism, and freedom."[18] Gay's "Enlightenment" is still, in Roy Porter's phrase, the "point of departure" for our use of the term, and, while the "stormy" family of *philosophes* may have been expanded and diversified since, their kinship remains defined (rather paradoxically) by a shared "political strategy" centered upon "the right of unfettered criticism."[19] That last phrase, in particular, extracted from Kant's 1784 tract *Was ist Aufklärung?*, still awaits unpacking. Porter himself has rightly drawn attention to Gay's crucial identification of philosophy with criticism in the Enlightenment, only to leave hanging the whole question of why, when, and where the art of criticism became synonymous in the minds of intellectuals with the promulgation of programs for social, political, and cultural reconstruction. True, historians have recently employed imaginative approaches in exploring the practical and personal dynamics that constituted the Republic of Letters to pry open our assumptions about Gay's "Enlightenment" or break away from the defining presence of the French Revolution and focus more sharply on an Enlightenment that was almost complete by 1740.[20] But thickened contexts have not entirely shaken off the teleology of eighteenth-century history, where nineteenth-century political radicalism is somehow seen as the historic destiny of the movement, or quite breached Gay's deeply embedded Kantian assumptions. Burke and Tully's Head remain on the periphery, and Burke's career still awaits liberation from that narrative.[21]

Perhaps the closest to such a recovery in recent years has come in the voluminous works of J. G. A. Pocock. Dissatisfied with the reasoning that renders figures such as Gibbon and Burke "either not English or not Enlightened," Pocock has presented a Burke "who saw himself defending Enlightened Europe against the *gens de lettres* and their revolutionary successors" and who "stands for Counter-Enlightenment, in Isaiah Berlin's phrase, only in the sense that his is one kind of Enlightenment in conflict with another."[22] Pocock's strategy relies upon constructing a "history of Enlightenments," whereby an eclectic collection of thinkers, including conservatives and churchmen, can be incorporated into intellectual networks through the particularities and peculiarities of their own national circumstances. These networks are then, at a deeper level, given a shared identity through the common goals of extricating the world from religious wars and developing a "series of programmes" for redefining Church authority and Church-state relations. The latter point was the ground upon which national Enlightenments competed, and where, in his British corner, Burke played out a lifelong contribution.[23]

Pocock's treatment of Burke's position within the dominant strands of "Enlightenment" thought in the eighteenth century has proved highly valuable to the intellectual historian and to Burke studies. Multiplying Enlightenments, however, does not necessarily surmount the teleological issues involved here, especially when recourse is still made to unifying factors that remain entirely abstract and programmatic. At the same time, nationalizing Enlightenments risks overlooking the cohering influence exerted by the sheer practical mechanics of a functioning Republic of Letters (or *république des lettres*), including the economics of book production and the exploitation of market demand, from at least the early and middle part of the century—and, one might add, by the very dislocation and migration consequent upon the religious and political upheavals that beset Europe in the latter half of the seventeenth century. We need only consider Bolingbroke's philosophic exiles in France, John Toland's European wanderings, Voltaire's *Lettres philosophiques*, the Huguenot diaspora after 1685, the generations of Irishmen forced to seek education in France and Spain, the astonishing popularity of universal histories and of fictionalized accounts of exotic travelers to and from the Orient, and even the rise of public subscription lists across national boundaries, to appreciate that writers and readers *did* see themselves as participating in an international dialogue that shared certain principles and practices, though not programs or ideologies. Despite the advances that Pocock's research contains, the central problem remains: as

with nationalism and Patriotism, we are faced with a concept, "Enlightenment," that has been stretched back anachronistically to appropriate a fluid and diverse, mid-eighteenth-century intellectual milieu, the "Republic of Letters." How might this situation be corrected?

J. C. D. Clark has argued recently that historians should jettison talk of "the Enlightenment" altogether, pointing out that the term emerged as a description of an historical period only toward the end of the nineteenth century. Clark's exercise in historicization, like his similar assault upon "eighteenth-century radicalism," does much to recover a sense of how the intellectual discourse of Europe before 1789 must be approached on its own terms.[24] Yet contemporaries such as Burke himself, while they may not have settled on a label, recognized strains of thought that were secular, rationalist, programmatic and politically virulent. The *Reflections* itself was, to some degree, an exercise in conceptual retrospection, of imaginative historical reconstruction, where Burke marked the growth over time of a system of metaphysical reasoning that he believed had invaded and perverted the *république des lettres*. That Burke identified such a system with atavistic religious enthusiasm rather than with benevolent liberalism is not, in itself, sufficient argument for denying the usefulness of a term such as Enlightenment tout court.[25]

The position adopted by this study offers an alternative strategy to all of the above, addressing the limits set down in the approaches of Pocock and Clark while acknowledging a debt to their critical insights. It involves recovering the narrower connotations of the term "Enlightenment," including its secularizing and programmatic aspirations, but simultaneously situating it as just one, competing (though ultimately dominant) movement within the wider intellectual community. That community described itself as a "Republic of Letters," a functioning society where academics, writers, and booksellers consciously discovered a convergence of social identity, habits, and intellectual engagement, rather than of particular intellectual programs, and as such I employ "Republic of Letters" rather than "Enlightenment" as a tool for historical analysis in this study. As Donald Kelley reminds us, it is also, significantly, a term that originated in a desire for order above innovation, at a time when scholars were striving to impose procedural norms upon what appeared almost a surfeit of new ideas.[26]

The strategy employed in this study, then, aims to achieve three goals. First, it will enable us, freed from the accretion of later, anachronistic imputed motives and interpretations, to understand how the concept of public spirit contributed to a variety of reflections and revisions within an

enduring and distinctive tradition of early-eighteenth-century Patriotism. Second, it will broaden awareness of the diversity, tensions, and vibrancy that constituted the mid-century Republic of Letters. Beneath the veneer of Georgian stability and confidence, British and Irish politicians shared Continental concerns in that they remained haunted by the specter of disorder, of dynastic, denominational, or imperial rivalries, and against this background Burke's involvement with Tully's Head brings to light a community of writers in London more socially diverse, cosmopolitan, and religiously grounded than has generally been assumed.

Finally, reconsidering the key concepts of Patriotism and Enlightenment along the lines described above will lead, in its turn, to a deeper appreciation of the problems raised by traditional historiographical and methodological approaches to Edmund Burke's own intellectual biography. Burke's early writings, those penned between his admittance into Trinity College, Dublin, in 1744, and his engagement as personal secretary to the politician William Gerard Hamilton in 1759, have received increasing attention in recent years, in line with growing interest in the author's aesthetic thought and Irish background. Whether that interest has been focused on the rhetoric of the sublime or on repressed conflicts of national identity and colonialism, or both, these researches have undoubtedly opened up interesting psychoanalytical and rhetorical perspectives on their subject, enriching our understanding of the complexity of Burke's thought by nudging discussion beyond his dominant identity as the anti-Jacobin icon of modern conservatism. They have also, however, left certain blind spots in our understanding of Burke's thought.

From the end of the Second World War until the early 1990s, attention to Burke's thinking focused largely upon whether his campaign against the French Revolution had been driven by a commitment to Classical and Christian natural-law beliefs or was, rather, the final rhetorical flourish of an inveterate but eloquent political pragmatist. While the former position, largely owing to Peter Stanlis's seminal work *Edmund Burke and the Natural Law* (1958), constituted the core of a scholarly "revival" in the 1950s and 1960s that invigorated Burke studies in the United States at least to the end of the century, the latter view of Burke, as a writer more accomplished in political propaganda than political philosophy, gained traction from the earlier groundwork of Sir Lewis Namier and John Brooke, whose studies of parliamentary politics in the eighteenth century reduced the significance of principles and ideology in the formation of public policy in favor of an analysis of networks of personal patronage. Indeed, in the charged context

of the Cold War, the "Burke revival" was often reduced by unsympathetic scholars to an appropriation of Burke's work by new conservative and neo-Thomist American writers—those to whom J. H. Plumb referred, in the 1960s, as Burke's "Cult," and whom Conor Cruise O'Brien warned were using their hero's writings "to validate the policy of American counter-revolutionary imperialism."[27]

O'Brien, however, differed significantly from Plumb in holding the political thought of his fellow Irishman in high regard.[28] His powerful work *The Great Melody: A Thematic Biography of Edmund Burke* (1992), brought to the forefront a subject well suited for the post–Cold War world, establishing an interpretative shift of its own by presenting a crypto-Jacobite Burke whose Irish Catholic sympathies stayed with him to his deathbed and fired not only his anti-Jacobinism but also his reformist campaigns against British colonial injustices in Ireland, the American colonies, and India. This maneuver served to reinvest Burke's rhetoric with a passionate sense of social justice. At the same time, the romance of Burke's Irish Catholic roots and his imputed Jacobitism cleared the path for Burke scholars to make their mark on the burgeoning field of nationalist and postcolonial studies.[29]

These fresh historical perspectives have stimulated a re-examination of the significance of Burke's "pre-political" writings. By applying the latest methods of textual criticism, they have found in their author's divided ethnic and religious identities the source of the tension he exhibited in his life between a conservative reverence for tradition and a radical yearning for social justice. Of these writings, most attention has been focused on the *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, which some commentators believe Burke was composing ten years before its eventual publication in 1757.[30] Here, an existing body of rich research on Burke's aesthetic thought has been imaginatively reconfigured into a system of politicized aesthetics where social affections and structures of exploitation and domination are camouflaged in a conceptual grid stretching from affective "beauty" to fearsome "sublimity."

Other of Burke's early texts have recently been incorporated into this analytical paradigm. They include, primarily, a short-lived journal, the *Reformer*, with which Burke was closely involved after he graduated from college, Burke's own private correspondence as an undergraduate, and his first published book, *A Vindication of Natural Society*, which appeared in 1756. All can be dated with precision and have been mined for what they might reveal of the impact of his eclectic upbringing and education (he spent

some time in his early youth in the Cork countryside with his Nagle rela-
tives, and then attended a Quaker-run school before entering Trinity Col-
lege, Dublin) on his later career in parliament. On this textual foundation,
Michel Fuchs composed a fascinating study for the bicentenary of Burke's
death entitled *Edmund Burke, Ireland, and the Fashioning of Self*, and Luke
Gibbons, in *Edmund Burke and Ireland*, has provocatively incorporated this
collection of texts into the aesthetics of the *Philosophical Enquiry* to trace
how Burke negotiated the imputed stresses of colonial and religious per-
secution in his own family background.[31] This research has, in turn, served
to connect Burke and the Dublin of his youth more firmly to wider intel-
lectual currents such as the Scottish Enlightenment and trends in aesthetic
theory in France, as well as to deepen our awareness of Irish rhetorical and
pedagogical theory in the early eighteenth century.[32]

Whatever their uses and shortcomings, though, the great majority of
these approaches to Burke's early writings have remained tethered to a rig-
idly linear perspective on their significance, which has meant valuing them
not for what they tell us about the intellectual and social climate of their
time but for how they might illuminate their author's later political cam-
paigns. Consequently, they acquire purchase only insofar as they can be
fitted into narratives laden with teleological assumptions—nationalism,
Imperialism, postcolonialism—or located within established intellectual
currents, such as Lockeanism, or Neo-Aristotelianism, Court Whiggery, or
romanticism. Either way, the horizontal contexts referred to above, includ-
ing the practical processes of bookselling, the commercial demands of a
constantly changing readership market, and the networks of collaborative
literary associations, remain on the periphery. Even the so-called New Cul-
tural Turn, with its emphasis upon the interdependence of text and context,
has generally failed to reflect the vital interaction between publications and
the multifaceted sites of their reception, largely because poststructuralist
criticism privileges the constructive or imaginative agency of the text's au-
thor above the objective, diverse, and unpredictable pressures that make
the text, in reality, a product of negotiation between a number of interested
parties. Such privileging of the text allows researchers the room to insert
their own ideological assumptions or contemporary concerns between au-
thor, publisher, reader, and patron in a way that perpetuates reductionist
expectations about those relationships.

This study aims to recover the leverage of those horizontal contexts by
exploring them, as far as is possible, in their own terms. The emphasis is
not on constructing a tapestry of intellectual biographies from figures in

Dodsley's circle and then applying the sum as a norm for the mid-century Republic of Letters, but on juxtaposing cross-sections of biography to provide "points of entry" into the wider currents and "interactive experiences" shaping social and cultural identities. Thus, in the chapters that follow, a number of sites and personal associations will be examined for how they overlapped and interacted to shape the contours of Burke's early career and writings as a Patriot critic. The resulting nexus or cross-section of this intellectual and commercial milieu will address the gaps that have opened up between subsections of the historical field, such as the history of the book and the history of ideas, by recovering the symbiotic relationship between the aspirations of writers and the personal, institutional, and commercial networks within which they had to maneuver and through which they shaped their critiques. By interrupting the vertical, teleological approaches that inject both stasis and anachronism into the analysis of intellectual movements, this study will help us to restructure our understanding of expectations, pressures, status anxieties, and multiple "professional" identities in a way that reflects more authentically the experiences and perceptions of historical figures such as Burke. It will also help us to appreciate more fully the interaction of such perceptions with preexisting mentalities, accumulated expectations, and defined experiences. This, after all, is both the warp and weft of the Republic of Letters.

The first chapter of this study explores Robert Dodsley's bookselling business at Tully's Head as an illustrative segment of a cross-section of the British Republic of Letters mid-century and, as such, as a formative influence upon Burke's early career as an author and critic. Dodsley was not only an accomplished talent-spotter but also an active contributor to the market of ideas. Rising from footman to bookseller through the patronage of Alexander Pope, his early professional years in publishing were spent in the service of Pope's own literary career and the wider cause of the Patriot literary assault upon Robert Walpole's system of government, the so-called Robinocracy. But Dodsley really proved his professional acumen in the renegotiation of that Patriot polemical tradition, as he tuned his output in the 1740s and 50s to revised modes of criticism that he felt conveyed Patriot principles more effectively and judiciously to an ever growing and more diverse readership. At the same time, Dodsley was mindful that any reconfiguring of Patriot criticism in the cause of public spirit also had to be pursued in a way that overtly engendered order and eschewed, or at least contained, unstable mixtures of esoteric ideas and a briskly expanding "public" market. In the collaborative publishing ventures that secured the reputation of

Tully's Head in the 1750s, we can see the fruits of a commercial and informal intellectual network that set about transforming and updating the critical legacy of Pope's art and Bolingbroke's political philosophy. The result was a refashioned discourse of orderly criticism that drew its strength from native aspects of the civic inheritance—the genius of the Anglican settlement, a fresh constitutional historiography, and an imaginative deployment of the inheritance of Elizabethan allegorical writers such as Edmund Spenser. This was the environment from which Burke's first book-length publication, *A Vindication of Natural Society*, emerged in 1756.

Chapter 2 is devoted to an examination of how a collaborative network of writers at Tully's Head came to view Lord Bolingbroke's influence upon Pope in the light of his contested intellectual legacy, and of how that collaborative process shaped the composition of the *Vindication*. This contextualization of Burke's text will serve both to reaffirm (but in a new way) the traditional, satirical reading of that problematic text and challenge its recent appropriation as evidence for Burke's imputed angst over injustices in British-controlled Ireland. It will also show how the *Vindication* can provide a valuable window onto a wider debate within the Republic of Letters about the role of the critic in detecting and exposing delusive or dishonorable appeals to public spirit.

The third chapter explains Burke's successful penetration of Tully's Head by showing how his upbringing and education in Ireland had already infused his writing with Popeian imitations and had prepared him for the salient aspects of Patriot debate in London. It challenges notions, accepted all too uncritically today, that Burke's "Irishness" would have been a severe handicap in an increasingly assertive and nationalistic England, and shows how the vibrant exchange of ideas and personnel in publishing and literary circles across the Irish Sea contributed to his identity as a writer and critic. Indeed, the urgency of reconsidering the place of religious toleration, national history, and public rhetoric in shaping the identity of a free, prosperous, Protestant Ireland was made particularly evident by two episodes that disrupted Dublin society during Burke's student days: reaction to Thomas Sheridan's reform program for the Dublin theater in 1747–48 and Charles Lucas's populist, demagogic campaign for election to the Irish parliament the following year. Both campaigns, it is argued here, heightened Burke's awareness of the potentially catastrophic effect on order and liberty of a rhetoric of public spirit based on erroneous historical and religious reasoning, or practiced by men of insincere or perverted affections. In this way, they contributed to Burke's idea of the proper responsibilities of the public

critic and formed a vital aspect of his transition to London; but their significance in this regard has been misdirected to various degrees by attempts to make them the backdrop of Burke's supposed initiation into an Irish protonationalist mentality.

In the fourth chapter, the findings and contexts crystallized in the previous chapters are applied to a reading of Burke's second published book, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. This text has received considerable attention over recent years (and it is not the intention here to question matters of aesthetic interpretation and theory); but the precise context and timing of its publication have still been only narrowly limned, being contained, by and large, within a narrative of the development of the terminology of the "sublime," or passed over in the desire to make sense of the work in relation to Burke's later political polemics. Here, the stress will be upon appreciating the shape and content of Burke's contribution to the development of aesthetics by situating its appearance more tightly within the context of the reconfiguring of Patriot ideas mid-century.

The chief importance of Burke's Irish upbringing was, in fact, that he experienced first-hand, and as a self-professed *insider*, divisions over the Hibernian and Protestant Patriot legacy of William Molyneux and Jonathan Swift, fought out between figures such as Lucas, who held to a tight Bolingbrokean paradigm in their propaganda, and other Patriots, such as Sir Richard Cox, who saw necessary reform as proceeding from within the existing constitutional arrangement with Britain. Burke's own position within a contested "British Patriot" tradition has not been explored by scholars to date, and it forms a significant part of the final chapter of the book where Burke's writing career after the success of the *Vindication* and *Philosophical Enquiry* is considered, particularly in respect of his unfinished "Abridgment of the English History." The "Abridgment," which was never published during Burke's lifetime, remains understudied and undervalued to this day; but it shows us crucially that Burke had made considerable advances in the development of an accessible style of Patriot history that was designed to promote the public-spiritedness he believed led to liberty through a mixture of religious providentialism and allegorical style. Burke's failure to complete his project, and the appearance of histories by Hume and Robertson, have unfortunately marginalized this episode in Burke's formation as a critic. In many ways, Burke's historical mind, inclined toward recovering a workable paradigm of comprehension and toleration, was his greatest contribution to the reconceptualizing of Patriotism at Tully's Head

in the late 1750s, and it still has much to reveal about the sophistication and variety of British intellectual life at that time.

The picture of Burke that emerges from this book is intended to capture those dominant personal and intellectual influences that have been marginalized by current historiographical and methodological orthodoxies. It will stress, in particular, the reformist Patriot goals and the Latitudinarian spirit that infused the network within which Burke found his early literary and intellectual bearings. It is not designed to prefigure or highlight positions that Burke was to adopt in his later political career, although this is not to say that its reconsideration of the "prepolitical" Burke offers no clues to explaining important aspects of his later career. Burke's justly famous rhetoric in defense of prescription and providence, in support of justice for Imperial subjects, against programs of social or political innovation, all sprang from insights into the nature of religious, historical, and poetic truth anchored in the Republic of Letters that he knew as a young man. The role of critic that he formulated there continued to dictate his approach as a member of parliament, rendering him much more effective as an opposition spokesman than he ever was holding the levers of power.

And the *Letter to a Noble Lord*? That powerful work may strike us now as, more than anything, the great curtain call of the Tully's Head critic. Summoning the genius of Pope, our author raises his pen to defend public-spiritedness and public order against a new strain of disorder and chaos. The bovine Lord Bedford, an unwitting betrayer of his lordly class, has sealed an unholy alliance with the Enlightened betrayers of their art—"Pleas'd to the last, he crops the flow'ry food, / And licks the hand just rais'd to shed his blood."[33] It is in this charge of a double-betrayal of the Patriot legacy, not spurned loyalty, ethnic resentment, or repressed radicalism, that the *Letter* most truly reflects the experience of its author and his world. When read as such a Patriot critique, even its swan-song, it shows how urgently the mid-eighteenth-century milieu deserves re-evaluation, not just among Burke scholars but among intellectual historians of the eighteenth century.