

## Burke, Biomedicine, and Biobelligerence

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When Edmund Burke launched his searing attack on the French Revolution in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), he proceeded by asserting the human eye as the model par excellence of clear observation, proper judgment, and panoramic insight. Burke told readers, for instance, that the French Revolution played on “many passions of the human mind, which are as doubtful a colour in the moral eye, as superstition itself.”<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere, he remarked that the Revolution’s perverse political rationale was “like rays of light which pierce into a dense medium . . . [only to be] refracted from their straight line” (152). His entire project of political critique was to put the spectacle of France’s dysfunction, as he put it, “under our eyes”—or, alternately, on what he several times called the “public stage” of European political life (207, 88).

The eye’s moral and political prominence in Burke’s analysis reflects his general empiricist conviction that all human knowledge, no matter how abstract, must be sensational in the basic sense of being mediated by human sensory reception. That philosophical register also supports Burke’s more broadly “sensational” portrayal of modern international relations, since, here, vision serves as the perceptual framework for what has been called his “dramatic” or “theatrical” political imagination—his characterization of Revolutionary politics as morbid spectacle.<sup>2</sup> What underlies both these registers, however, is Burke’s crucial gambit to invoke the human eye in order to make eighteenth-century medical science a natural, material foundation upon which to establish a viable transnational solidarity for British and French citizens opposing the Revolution’s excesses. In Burke’s hands, that is, the eye serves as a specific physiological anchor for his repeated directive that all Europeans should be “following nature” in conducting the necessarily “experimental science” of forming sound political order (199, 152).<sup>3</sup>

While several critics have examined the role of Burke’s knowledge of medical science in his description of aesthetic response in *A Philosophical Enquiry Concerning the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, published over

three decades before the *Reflections* (1757; 2nd edition 1759), no effort has yet been made to explore in detail the importance of human physiology to Burke's political arguments regarding the Revolution. Aris Sarafianos has provided an admirably detailed account of how Burke applied his understanding of physical trauma, nervous response, and muscular agitation to his description of sublime experience as a more refined form of "exercise" with both physiological and mental benefits.<sup>4</sup> Taking a Marxian tack, Tom Furniss has discussed many of the same elements in the *Enquiry*, arguing that, for Burke, the sublime constitutes an ambivalent means for establishing a robust, specifically masculine, form of bourgeois individuality able to purge itself of weakness—an analysis whose physiological details he links briefly to Burke's attack on the new French government in 1790.<sup>5</sup> The aim of this essay is to reframe and extend these arguments to Burke's *Reflections* by focusing more specifically on the importance of the eye's physiology for his political thesis, and by examining the peculiar way that Burke combines an ocular with an immunological model in his diagnosis of what ailed revolutionary France. In the *Reflections*, it becomes quickly apparent that the eye, like readers' own acts of political witnessing, cannot remain at a safe distance, since Burke also represents such witnessing as susceptible itself to body-like forms of moral and intellectual contamination. In this regard, then, while Burke relies implicitly on his understanding of ophthalmological function drawn from the *Enquiry*, the scenario he describes loses the assurance of safe distance from the threatening phenomenon in question, a factor crucial, according to Burke, for producing the sublime's edifying effects. The result is that in Burke's political analysis, a logic of tactility converges with a logic of detached visual observation, but in the end, that tactility powerfully destabilizes the process of secure visualization because the form of "touch" in question brings with it the threat of lethal contamination. In what could be called Burke's physio-politics of vision, therefore, sublime perception becomes overdetermined by both observation and infection, without the guarantee of complete protection or purgation. As we will see, the outcome of that potential impasse turns out to be a violence that is physiological, emotional, and explicitly political.

We begin with the second model of infection and disease. Given Burke's endorsement in the *Reflections* of the analytic power of what he calls "philosophic analogy," it is not surprising that his discussion of France's revolutionary body politic introduces a cornucopia of metaphors comparing the French national condition to all kinds of disease, sickness, and ill health (120). We therefore hear about France's "distempered state"; the "confusion, like a palsy, [that] has attacked the fountain of life itself"; the "infectious stuff" of revolutionary rhetoric; the ravages of "epidemic fanaticism"; the "calenture" or fever exhibiting social malfunction; and the "plague" of overweening reform that must be prevented from reaching English shores (116, 137, 187, 262, 219n, 185). In these terms, Burke raises substantially the stakes for the prospect of personal

and national stability: if in his earlier description in the *Enquiry*, the human subject must confront the volatile onslaught of sublime phenomena before ultimately reaching an enhanced physiological and emotional condition, here subjective vulnerability proves a constant source of potential threat, contagion, and putrefaction. As part of Burke's political diagnosis, there are moments of prognosis as well, couched in the terms of "cure," "physic," or "remedy," but notwithstanding Burke's avowed faith in what he calls "the medicine of the state" (126), his overall sense is that what afflicts France is almost past fixing.

Burke was not, of course, the only late eighteenth-century political commentator to deploy the terminology of illness or contagion, which was used across the political spectrum. While one anonymous author of a 1798 pamphlet entitled *Loyalty Necessary to Self Preservation*, for example, sided with Burke regarding "the convulsive Disease of France," Mary Wollstonecraft countered by denouncing the machinations shoring up royal sovereignty as a "baneful lurking gangrene."<sup>6</sup> Burke's rendition of such tropes, however, occurs far more often than in most contemporaneous publications, thereby gathering far more textual significance and ultimately generating a substantial network of corporeal semantics. No mere panoply of rhetorical flourish, in other words, Burke's accumulated bodily metaphors—more than thirty related to disease, more than twenty to cures, more than thirty to the heart, and so on<sup>7</sup>—project an arc that moves from analogy to virtual system to literal materialization. This is to say that instead of simply drawing on or re-presenting contemporaneous medical concepts of contagion, Burke's text produces eventually its own virtualization of infectious process, a simulation whose very abstraction serves as the mutual ground where the system of physiology could be provisionally mapped onto that other important "system" in Burke's critique: France's thoroughgoing scheme of revolutionary reform.<sup>8</sup>

This abstraction occurs first because of the multiplicity of invoked diseases or ailments whose pathologies form no single pattern, and second, because at a broader level, Burke draws equally on two primary models of infection considered incompatible by eighteenth-century medical experts: the so-called "contagionist" model, which postulated that infection occurred by direct physical contact, and the "miasmatic" model, which described the transfer of disease by way of particles in polluted air, fogs, or miasmas. This apparent representational inconsistency or incompatible diversity does not mark Burke as a pragmatic rhetorician who reaches willy-nilly into his bag of tropological tricks;<sup>9</sup> instead, it is an indicator of the logic of virtuality, in which, as Brian Massumi puts it, the body is "real but abstract," a "lived paradox where what are normally opposites coexist, coalesce, and connect."<sup>10</sup> In these terms, without abandoning the aim to represent accurately France's political scenario, the *Reflections* relies on a virtualization of contagion and pathological development in order then to link them—however tentatively—to the Revolution's dysfunction and its threat to Britain.

One of the first clues to the trajectory of virtual approximation appears when Burke describes the depravity of the members of the French National Assembly by remarking that “the evil of a moral and *almost physical* inaptitude of the[se men] to the function [of the state] must be the greatest we can conceive to happen in the management of human affairs” (134, emphasis added). In the phrase “almost physical,” we can detect the logic of virtual simulation, in which the increasing approximation of human conditioning to the body’s reality almost reaches its original, and the substance of morality verges on the threshold of literal, bodily incorporation, while retaining its own abstract character. For Burke, however, as a measure of his continued commitment to truthful representation, virtuality also needs to become palpable *reality*. It needs, that is, to reach a third stage of political corporealization, one that complements his earlier conviction that physiology forms the material foundation of aesthetic response. Ultimately, Burke’s argument proceeds by finding ways that his descriptions of political sensibility might be able to leap across the gap between the constructed and the literally physiological.

The most remarkable case in point occurs when Burke narrates in extensive detail the moment when the royal family was seized at Versailles and forced to march through the streets to their confinement in Paris. While many critics have focused on the psychosexual implications of Burke’s fascination with the queen’s bedchamber,<sup>11</sup> in fact the most important moment regarding political incorporation comes shortly thereafter, when Burke quotes at length from the description of Gérard de Lally-Tollendal, a royalist sympathizer who was the Parisian nobility’s deputy to the Estates General and who witnessed the royal family’s distressing humiliation by the city’s crowds. The spectacle of the royal family’s forced exodus from Versailles, Lally-Tollendal declares, deteriorated powerfully his physical health, since “it was beyond my abilities to endure for very long the horror” of the mob’s heartless catcalls and behavior (167n).<sup>12</sup> But for him, as a member of the National Assembly, the worse outrage is the Assembly’s conduct that includes sanctioning such treatment. Taken together, these momentous indignities produce in Lally-Tollendal a dramatic bodily response. As he tells it, in the Assembly

I no longer had the power to raise my voice, where for six weeks I raised it in vain. . . . No thought of fear has crossed my mind. I would blush to have to combat it. I have again received on the part of those people, who are less culpable than those who have intoxicated them with rage, some acclamation and applause, which for others would be flattering, and which caused me to quake [*frémir*]. It is to the indignation, the horror, the physical convulsions brought on by the overwhelming sight of blood [*aspect du sang*], that I succumbed. One faces death bravely on a single occasion; one faces it bravely many times when doing so is of any purpose. But no power under heaven, no opinion public or private has the right to condemn me to suffer helplessly a thousand torments a minute . . . at a scene of triumphs, and a crime that I was powerless to stop. (quoted in Burke, 167–78)<sup>13</sup>

Lally-Tollendal may well feel powerless here, but in fact his physical quaking accomplishes a remarkable transformation in Burke's formula of physiology's relation to politics, because, here, the degrading distress of political chaos can be *both registered and reordered profoundly* by the natural, physical response of empathy attached to proper national feeling. The logic of that transformation, furthermore, relies on Burke's account in the *Philosophical Enquiry* of how the eye's physical trauma in the grip of the sublime can ultimately produce an improved physiological system. In examining the sublime effect of darkness, for instance, Burke explains that

[w]hen the eye lights on one of these vacuities [or black objects], after having been kept in some degree of tension by the play of the adjacent colours upon it, it suddenly falls into a relaxation; out of which it as suddenly recovers by a convulsive spring. . . . [W]hen any organ of sense is for some time affected in some one manner, if it be suddenly affected otherwise there ensues a convulsive motion. . . . And though it may appear strange that such a change as produces a relaxation, should immediately produce a sudden convulsion; it is yet most certainly so, and so in all the senses.<sup>14</sup>

These kinds of convulsions, Burke explains, occur because the eye's inability to articulate the sublime's specific features produces prolonged, increasingly strained, attempts to do so. By his account, these convulsions appear first in the muscles controlling the aperture of the eye's pupil, before being communicated to the brain and to the entire body via tensile reverberations in the nerves. While drawing on new accounts of the nerves offered during the 1740s and 50s by medical analysts including Albrecht von Haller and Robert Whytt, Burke also improvises on these descriptions for his own purposes, since, in his view, such convulsions not only registered shock, but also served as a form of crucial systemic purge. As he remarks, for instance, sublime agitation can "clear parts, whether fine, or gross, of a dangerous and troublesome incumbrance" (136). Furthermore, as Sarafianos points out, by Burke's description, sublime-induced convulsions could strengthen the perceiving subject's physiological and cognitive well being, performing a kind of exercise that translates into the individual's greater sense of emotive and mental potency.<sup>15</sup>

In this context, Lally-Tollendal's bodily shaking produces an explicit political index for Burke's earlier aesthetic argument by playing on the double meaning of "convulsion" as either literal physical seizure or destructive socio-political upheaval, a dual sense that registers in both French and English. While Burke makes frequent reference to the economic, moral, and social "convulsions" in France, his ultimate goal is to articulate a way by which those kinds of disturbances can be sublimated into the second register of a naturalized politics whose literal embodiment can be documented as part of authenticating citizens' correct political commitments. This is precisely what Burke aims to signal

in his own case when he reports, for instance, "I tremble for the cause of humanity, in the unpunished outrages of the most wicked of mankind" (177). This trembling is no weak submissiveness; it is instead a gentler kind of convulsion equally capable of "clearing" the political sensibility of the person who originally feels it, as well as of those readers who suffer along with him vicariously.

In the broad view of things, while a similar model of physiological convulsion underlies Burke's analyses in both the *Enquiry* and the *Reflections*, each of these texts comes at the dynamic of sublime or traumatic experience from what seem to be opposite directions. In the case of the *Enquiry*, Burke begins with elemental physiological components such as nervous agitation and muscular response in order to extrapolate from them the projected consequences for social and political life. In the *Reflections*, by contrast, Burke starts with the complexities of modern politics in France in order to track the virtual route by which to arrive at the body's model for a contrasting natural sociopolitical order. These differences make good sense because, generally speaking, Burke's aim in the *Enquiry* is to aestheticize bodily responses, while, in the *Reflections*, his goal is to affix English politics to what he calls "the laws of nature" (346).<sup>16</sup> But there is also something more here: viewed comprehensively, Burke's two accounts of politico-aesthetic life are oppositional, performing at the discursive level a version of the eye's own operation by way of strenuously opposed movements captured by convulsive action. That pattern suggests, then, why Burke's aesthetic and political discussions, when taken as a whole, converge without forming neat syntheses, and why, ultimately, his view of how England should resist revolution's contagion is vexed at its foundation.

In many ways, the problem of constructing an effective anti-revolutionary strategy revolves around the difficulty of determining just where the boundaries of the body politic's resistance really lie. In one example, Burke aims initially to characterize the French threat as an external one when he comments to his French reader: "Your affairs, in spite of us, are made a part of our interest; so far at least as to keep at a distance your panacea, or your plague. If it be panacea, we do not want it. We know the consequences of unnecessary physic. If it be a plague; it is such a plague, that the precautions of the most severe quarantine ought to be established against it" (185). The claim for a purely external threat, however, proves elusive: on the one hand, this passage evokes an image similar to that when Burke remarks elsewhere that the English and French are separated by "a slender dyke of about twenty-four miles"; on the other, it suggests the erosion of even slender boundary lines when Burke acknowledges that "your affairs . . . are made part of our interest" (180). This speculative uncertainty takes on very concrete terms when Burke considers the case of Francophile activism in England by the English themselves—including Richard Price, the Earl of Stanhope, and, more generally, the members of the Revolution Society—since their agitations signaled that the nation was threatened by a danger both within and without its borders. Burke's efforts, then, to

identify and cordon off the internal threat—enacting a version of what he calls “severe” political quarantine—follow the logic that the Italian philosopher Roberto Esposito has identified as political immunization. According to Esposito, immunization aims to neutralize an apparently alien danger by the method of internalizing the negative, an introjection that emulates the physiological process by which the human body can be induced to resist opportunistic diseases. In his words, the body politic proceeds by “introducing within it a fragment of the same pathogen from which it wants to protect itself, by blocking and contradicting natural development”; further, “as in every medical immunization, immunization here too injects an antigenic nucleus into the social body.”<sup>17</sup>

As I will suggest in a moment, Esposito’s perspective offers a useful way to approach the complex physio-political logic by which Burke correlates visual function with immunological threat and political responsiveness. It can, for instance, flesh out Furniss’s passing observation that, in the *Reflections*, “plague and panacea, disease and antidote are often hard to tell apart” despite Burke’s effort “to immunize England.”<sup>18</sup> At the same time, however, Burke’s case indicates at least two theoretical and historical points where Esposito’s argument should be reformulated in order to account more precisely for how eighteenth-century authors uniquely affiliated biology and politics. Esposito’s focus on the emergence during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries of what he calls the “immunitary paradigm” provides a versatile framework in which both historical continuities and discontinuities can be tracked regarding the various ways that political governance could be imagined as protecting the lives of its citizens. In these terms, therefore, Esposito offers a more nuanced historical narrative than Michel Foucault’s account of what he calls the seventeenth century’s “reason of state,” or Giorgio Agamben’s application of classical definitions of biological and political life to twentieth- and twenty-first-century practices.<sup>19</sup> That said, Esposito shares with Agamben a strong interest in describing an eventual collapse of biology into politics during the twentieth century, a historical trajectory that is less productive for eighteenth-century contexts, in which the alliance between biology and politics was by no means automatic or even readymade. Instead, during early modernity, that liaison often had to be forged in piecemeal or experimental fashion, with a third category serving to mediate between the distinct orders of “life” and politics—and, as we have already seen, for Burke that mediating category was aesthetics. Furthermore, with respect to the relation of political and legal conceptions of immunity to those offered by medicine, Burke’s *Reflections* provides a counterpoint to Esposito’s largely unilateral description, in which the new seventeenth-century stress on “preserving life” inevitably biologized what had earlier been only juridical or legal definitions of immunization.<sup>20</sup> By contrast, Burke’s adaptation of eighteenth-century physiology to his political analysis indicates just one of the many ways by which concepts of immunity were also shaped actively by medical science—including its descriptions of functions such as nervous response, as well as its

explicit explorations of techniques for inoculation, which was one of the most active areas of debate in eighteenth-century medicine.

Although in the *Reflections* Burke does not cite explicitly any eighteenth-century medical sources on the emerging science of inoculation, given his avid interest in medicine, he would no doubt have been fully aware of the innovations and controversies that had developed over the course of the century, especially concerning the potential control of smallpox long before Edward Jenner's landmark breakthrough with a cowpox vaccination in 1796. In the early 1700s, for instance, Peter Kennedy expressed support for the technique of variolation in *An Essay on External Remedies* (1715), shortly before Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's well publicized efforts, on returning from Turkey, to convert the English populace, including King George I, to using the method as she had already done with her own children. Increasing support for variolation and other methods of inoculation appeared soon after, in the work in Great Britain of Jurin James and John Gasper Scheuchzer during the 1720s and Daniel Sutton during the 1760s, as well as in accounts by others, such as Cadwallader Colden and John Holwell, of successful inoculation campaigns in the East Indies and the American colonies.<sup>21</sup> Despite expressed doubts and clinical setbacks in ensuing decades, inoculation continued to gain strenuous defenders, such as John Watkinson in *An Examination of a Charge Brought Against Inoculation* (1777). By the time Burke was writing his diagnosis of France's revolutionary turn, the promise of immunity—for the individual body and for the English nation at large—had already generated a substantial and diverse body of medical discussion, statistical analysis, clinical practice, and public dialogue.<sup>22</sup>

In this context, Burke's *Reflections* creates its own virtualized immunitary logic, one that also tracks the rationale for homeopathic treatment, which aspires to use a difference *in degree*—a weakened pathogenic agent, for instance—in order to produce a difference *in kind*, that is, the full health of the body politic. As Esposito also suggests, however, the mechanism of negation can continue to turn: once internalized, the dangerous agent can persist in transforming itself to the point that the host loses its original protection and acquires the socio-political equivalent of autoimmunity. A similarly ambiguous predicament also emerges for Burke, and it produces two destabilizing results: first, it becomes more and more difficult to distinguish France's political disorder from England's own version of contentious politics; and, second, repelling the threat posed by the Revolution verges increasingly on using tools that seem more and more like abject revolutionary tactics themselves. In the first case, Burke sets in motion an entire chain of associated terminology meant to distinguish the French from the English scenarios. By his particular semantics, French political "faction," "contention," or "counteraction," for example, is the negative version of English "remonstrance," "conflict," or "opposition." And yet some terms Burke uses—including "mixture" and "opposition"—appear in both national contexts, suggesting that the distinction can be hard to sustain.<sup>23</sup> Perhaps

the best example of this difficulty appears when Burke offers a description of the older, pre-Revolutionary dynamics of France's political system, which he also associates with the healthiness of England's politics. What's striking here is that for most of the passage that follows, the terms would seem to describe France's current chaos rather than a kind of beatific stability. As Burke tells his French reader, in "all that combination, and all that opposition of interests, you had that action and counteraction which, in the natural and in the political world, from the reciprocal struggle of discordant powers, draws out the harmony of the universe" (122). It is only in the last phrase—"the harmony of the universe"—that we finally know we are somewhere other than in Revolutionary France, somewhere other, that is, than in a situation where the sheer accumulation of "discordant" elements would seem to militate against producing anything as sublime as the universe's "harmony." To the extent that such harmony is feasible, it seems to follow the well-worn logic of *concordia discors*, the harmonization of otherwise dissonant elements. But this assertion could also form a kind of magical thinking, which suggests that *opposition itself* can provide the key to stable political order. And that scenario makes all the more pressing the problem of knowing exactly when in fact French "contention" can be genuinely separated from English combativeness.

Burke nonetheless persists in his efforts to identify the orderly potential of what seems patently disordered in order to champion the English version of politics. The nuances of immunological remedy, however, will prove tricky to disentangle. In some instances, for example, he attacks as nonsensical what seems a homeopathic way of thinking, as when he characterizes the morass of the French military as one in which "the [national] assembly attempts to cure the [military's] distempers by the distempers themselves" (339). Later, however, Burke describes English politics as taking a tack that comes perilously close to this pattern, when he takes particular pains to explain why the Glorious Revolution of 1688 was nothing like the French Revolution because it avoided the pitfalls of overzealous reformism. By preserving as best they could the royal lineage from previous decades, he declares, the English proved in 1688 that "an irregular, convulsive movement may be necessary to throw off an irregular, convulsive disease" (109). In many ways, this remarkable aphorism captures the entire spectrum of tensile logic that we have been tracking in Burke's yoking together the aesthetic, physiological, and political orders. The convulsions he cites here recall both the agitations of the eye's muscles as well as Burke's frequent term for the upheavals of revolutionary politics. In immunological fashion, that is, they combat the dread disease with a modified mechanism of the disease itself.

Predictably, then, the result is anything but mere enclosure or self-containment, because, in Burke's hands, the strategy of immunization proves ultimately insufficient to the full task of national preservation, indicating the need to locate a political supplement that revises the terms of Esposito's analysis. That supple-

ment appears in the logic of the purge: in this case, the “convulsive movement” that supplies the necessary impetus for ejecting the hazard of sociopolitical disease. In these terms, England’s political (self-)constitution is accomplished by the action of “throwing off”—expelling or driving out the noxious entity that will then supposedly be successfully vanquished. This is the exact effect Burke intends when, throughout the *Reflections*, he invokes the power of visceral repulsion, including Lally-Tollendal’s, as a means of repelling France’s contaminating political spectacle. In the end, however, the political scenario Burke describes entails a perpetual cycle of influx and expulsion of revolution’s infection, each phase incomplete and therefore requiring another iteration. Put another way, despite his wrestling with this problem after the *Reflections* in the seven-hundred-plus pages that came to be called *Letters on a Regicide Peace* (four separate publications issued between 1795 and 1797, the last volume appearing after Burke’s death), Burke fails to identify a successful way to produce a form of “standing” or passive immunity for England. As a result, the only good biopolitical defense proves to be a good offense. That logic comes to the fore in the *First Letter*, where Burke concludes that the proper response to France’s threat must be prolonged, manly, and vigilant, in the form of what he called “a long war.”<sup>24</sup> It was the only way, Burke argues, in terms persistently charged with the language of contagion, nervous enervation, and immunological collapse, to avoid succumbing completely to France’s implacable menace.

The imperative of war with France will increasingly become the emphasis of Burke’s arguments in the ensuing *Letters*. By the fourth installment, toward that book’s end, Burke asks his readers to imagine the scenario in which the British decide to engage peacefully with France, with normalized trade relations, typical diplomatic interactions, and the exposure of traveling for business, education, and leisure. Predictably, however, young men traveling (probably on a Grand Tour) will be particularly susceptible, since “no young man can go to any part of Europe without taking this place of pestilential contagion in his way.”<sup>25</sup> Those engaging in trade in France will be equally affected: “the minds of young men, of that description, will receive a taint in their religion, their morals and their politicks, which they will in short time communicate to the whole kingdom.”<sup>26</sup> In the pages that follow, Burke nearly plays out things to their logical end—England’s utter ruin. The “Jacobin faction,” he asserts, will “grow in strength and audacity,” producing corruption and ineffectiveness in the ministry and Parliament. “Both Houses will be in perpetual oscillation between abortive attempts at energy, and still more unsuccessful attempts at compromise. You will be impatient of your disease, and abhorrent of your remedy.”<sup>27</sup> At this point, however, Burke draws back, unwilling to complete his Francophobic vision of epidemic apocalypse, and returning instead to his theme of outright military aggression. He urges that only “measures of vigour”—in the context of this passage, including outright warfare—can “precipitate a crisis” in order to save, and ultimately cure, the English nation.<sup>28</sup> Sensational though it was in

tone and substance, Burke's prescription no doubt struck a sympathetic chord soon after, during the early 1800s, when the English felt compelled to muster a new political policy and military campaign against the imperial ambitions of Napoleon Bonaparte.

## NOTES

1. Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* [1790], ed. Conor Cruise O'Brien (New York, 1969), 269. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.

2. For discussions of the function of theatricality in Burke's political writing, see, for example, Frans De Bruyn, *The Literary Genres of Edmund Burke: The Political Uses of Form* (Oxford, 1996), 165–208; Tim Gray and Paul Hindson, *Burke's Dramatic Theory of Politics* (Aldershot, 1988); Gillian Russell, "Burke's Dagger: Theatricality, Politics and Print Culture in the 1790s," *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 20, no. 1 (1997): 1–16; and Elizabeth D. Samet, "Spectacular History and the Politics of Theater: Sympathetic Arts in the Shadow of the Bastille," *PMLA* 118, no. 5 (2003): 1305–19.

3. On following nature, see also Burke, *Reflections*, 120, 121, 128, 141, 175, 182.

4. Aris Sarafianos's discussions—in "Pain, Labor, and the Sublime: Medical Gymnastics and Burke's Aesthetics," *Representations* 91 (2005): 58–83, and "The Contractility of Burke's Sublime and Heterodoxies in Medicine and Art," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 69 (2008): 23–48—link Burke specifically to the eighteenth-century history of medicine.

5. Tom Furniss considers the *Enquiry's* treatment of physiology in *Burke's Aesthetic Ideology: Language, Gender and Political Economy in Revolution* (Cambridge, 1993), 24–34; he briefly relates it to the *Reflections* on 122–23. Frances Ferguson also makes some quick remarks on physiology in the *Enquiry in Solitude and the Sublime: Romanticism and the Aesthetics of Individuation* (New York, 1992), 40, 51–52. Vanessa Ryan provides a broader philosophical discussion of Burke's distinctly physiological approach to the sublime, as a contrast with Immanuel Kant's position, in "The Physiological Sublime: Burke's Critique of Reason," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 62 (2001): 265–79.

6. [Anonymous], "Loyalty Necessary to Self Preservation" [1798], *Political Writings of the 1790s*, ed. Gregory Claeys (London, 1995), 8:280; and Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* [1792], *Vindications: The Rights of Men, The Rights of Woman*, ed. D. L. Macdonald and Kathleen Scherf (Peterborough, 1997), \*\*–\*\*, 125. See also Wollstonecraft's acerbic comments on Burke's own brain being afflicted by mounting "fumes" and on his overly delicate "nervous system" in *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* [179\*], \*\*–\*\*, 37, 46.

7. For additional citations of disease or illness in Burke's *Reflections*, see, for example, "contagion" (201), "disease" (116, 125), "distemper" (116, 137, 151, 154, 310, 337, 339), "infirmities" (192, 251), "sores" (201), and "ulcer" (163). For cure, see, for example, "cure" (219, 234), "physic" (185), and "remedy" (116, 154, 234, 244, 336, 338, 339, 375). Burke's frequent references to the heart as the metaphorical seat of profound feeling (e.g., 104, 133, 142, 143, 149, 156) become literalized when he declares, for instance, that in England, "we have real hearts of flesh and blood beating in our bosoms" (182).

8. Although in the *Reflections* Burke at times uses "system" neutrally to designate any organized network of relations, the term increasingly functions to characterize France's revolution as inherently dangerous; see, for example, 147, 212, 237, 338. See also his relevant remarks on the Revolution's rationalization by "theory": 97, 107, 118, 128, 145, 147.

9. Certainly there are other possibilities for Burke's rhetorical intentions or methods. F. P. Lock's "Rhetoric and Representation in Burke's *Reflections*" (*Edmund Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France: New Interdisciplinary Essays*, ed. John Whale [New York, 2000], 18–39) offers the most recent and comprehensive argument for Burke as effective rhetor, while providing a cogent survey of views on representational versus "expressive" elements in his political texts.

10. Brian Massumi, *Parables of the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham, 2002), 21, 30. My characterization of the virtual as a principle that forms a nonrepresentational abstraction eliding a strict opposition between the real and the discursive (or the natural and the human-made) is informed by several perspectives. Michael McKeon has argued convincingly for the importance of virtual abstraction to eighteenth-century contexts regarding how the private was related to the public in Britain; see *The Secret History of Domesticity: Private, Public, and the Division of Knowledge* (Baltimore, 2005), 48, 55, 69–70, 82–83, 106–9, 372–74. Although they approach virtuality from very distinct philosophical standpoints, both Jacques Derrida and Gilles Deleuze describe the virtual as operating in a continuum between the actual and its image (Deleuze, *Dialogues II*, rev. ed., trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam [New York, 2007], 148–52) or “presence [and] its representation” (Derrida, *Spectres of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf [New York, 1994], 147–76, 169). While keeping in mind Derrida’s points regarding virtuality’s crucial political ramifications, I highlight here Massumi’s more Deleuzean viewpoint because of its greater attention to the specifics of embodiment.

11. See, for example, Furniss, 151 ff.; Isaac Kramnick, *The Rage of Edmund Burke: Portrait of an Ambivalent Conservative* (New York, 1977), 152; Ronald Paulson, *Representations of Revolution, 1789–1820* (New Haven, 1983), 60 ff.; and Christopher Hibbert, *The Days of the French Revolution* (Harmondsworth, 1989), 100–5.

12. My translation, with thanks to John Ireland for his assistance. Burke quotes the French from Gérard de Lally-Tollendal’s *Extrait d’une Lettre de M. de Lally Tolendal à Mme la Comtesse de \*\*\**, *Pour servir à sa justification* ([Paris, 1789], 4), whose text he alters slightly in some places.

13. Burke quotes from Lally-Tollendal’s *Extrait*, 5–6. Although Lally-Tollendal’s royalist sympathies moved him initially to embrace Burke as an ally, he became increasingly dissatisfied with Burke’s analysis of the Revolution’s tendencies and therefore distanced himself substantially from Burke in publications such as his *Lettre Ecrite au Tres-Honorable Edmund Burke* (Florence, 1791; London, 1792) and *Seconde Lettre de M. de Lally Tolendal a M. Burke* (London, 1792).

14. Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* [175], ed. James T. Boulton (Notre Dame, 1958), 147–49. Burke comments further on the eye “vibrating in all its parts” (137) and regarding the agitation of the nerves (132, 145).

15. On these points see Sarafianos, “Pain, Labor,” 67–70, and “Contractility,” 39–44.

16. See also Burke, *Reflections*, 260.

17. Roberto Esposito, *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy*, trans. Timothy Campbell (Minneapolis, 2008), 46, 92.

18. Furniss, 123.

19. See especially Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–1978*, trans. Graham Burchell, ed. Michel Senellart (New York, 2007), 239–48, 255–67; and Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, 1998), 1–12, 119–88.

20. Since the writing of this essay, Esposito’s newest work to appear in English, *Immunitas: The Protection and Negation of Life*, trans. Zakiya Hanafi (Cambridge, 2011) has altered that tendency by surveying the role of medical knowledge in influencing political thinking from the sixteenth to the twenty-first century, with brief attention given to eighteenth-century contexts (121–77).

21. See Jurin James, *An Account of the Success of Inoculating the Smallpox in Great Britain, for the Year 1726* (London, 1727); John Gasper Scheuchzer, *An Account of the Success of Inoculating the Smallpox in Great Britain, for the Years 1727 and 1728* (London, 1729); Daniel Sutton, *The Inoculator; or, Suttonian System of Inoculation* (London, 1796); Cadwallader Colden, *An Account of the Practice of Inoculation among Negro Slaves in America in Medical Observations and Inquiries*, vol. 1 (London, 1757); and John Zephaniah Holwell, *An Account of the Manner of Inoculating for the Smallpox in the East Indies* (London, 1767).

22. For historical accounts of inoculation's development during the eighteenth century, see John Z. Bowers, "The Odyssey of Smallpox Vaccination," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 55 (1981): 17–33; Burroughs Wellcome Company, *The History of Inoculation and Vaccination for the Prevention and Treatment of Disease* (London, 1913); Ed Cohen, *A Body Worth Defending: Immunity, Biopolitics, and the Apotheosis of the Modern Body* (Durham, 2009); Genevieve Miller, *The Adoption of Inoculation for Smallpox in England and France* (Philadelphia, 1957); and Arthur M. Silverstein, *A History of Immunology* (New York, 1989), especially "Theories of Acquired Immunity" (11–16), and "The Royal Experiment on Immunity, 1721–1722" (24–37).

23. For French contexts in Burke's *Reflections*, see "faction" (259, 323, 326, 327, 340–42); "contention" (377); and "counteraction" (321, 322). For English contexts, see "remonstrance" (327–28); "conflict" or "conflicting" (244–45, 278); "opposite" elements (374); and the similarly resonant terms "counterpoise" (133) and "equipoise" (377). These last two terms capture especially Burke's stress on English "correctives" (327) that produce "balance" (227, 326, 327, 372). The apparent distinctions in Burke's terminology become ambiguous, however, given several negative, French versions of "opposition" or "opposite" forces (92, 110, 115, 277, 341), as well as Burke's reference to "counteraction" as a positive activity during the French *ancien régime* also reflected in England's current politics (122; also included here are "opposition" and "opposed and conflicting interests"). Similarly, the salutary English versions of "mixed" socio-political arrangements (170, 202, 227) have their counterparts in degenerative French "mixed" social, military, and political relations, including "mixing" or "mixture" (161, 310, 336, 339–40).

24. Burke, *Letters on a Regicide Peace* [1795–97], ed. R. B. McDowell, *Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, gen. ed. Paul Langford (Oxford, 1991), 9:229.

25. Burke, *Letters*, 9:115

26. Burke, *Letters*, 9:115

27. Burke, *Letters*, 9:116.

28. Burke, *Letters*, 9:117.