ONE

Burke's Tragic Muse: Sarah Siddons and the "Feminization" of the *Reflections*

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We ne'er can pity what we ne'er can share

Nicholas Rowe, Prologue to *The Fair Penitent* (1703)

In a celebrated passage in *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Edmund Burke allows the polemic to pause for a moment in order to explain and justify his melancholy response to the fall of the ancien régime.[1] Beginning with the apparently guileless assertion that "it is *natural*" that he should be affected as he is, he goes on to compare the feelings excited in him by the events of October 1789 to the moral and emotional effects of the tragic drama and concludes, "Some tears might be drawn from me, if such a spectacle were exhibited on the stage." In developing this analogy, Burke refers fleetingly but intriguingly to his own experience of tragedy in performance, as he recalls "the tears that Garrick formerly, or that Siddons not long since, have extorted from me." The passage as a whole has excited very different kinds of attention. For Burke's opponents of the 1790s, and most prominently for Thomas Paine, it was confirmation of the empty theatricality and emotional display which, according to their strictures, disfigured the discourse of the *Reflections*. Recent commentary on the passage has placed it more positively within a complex but coherent pattern of images which, according to one interpretation, provides the key to Burke's whole conception of politics.[2]

Paine's contempt for the "weeping effect" of Burke's "tragic paintings" is a useful point of departure because in expressing it he alerts us, albeit through caricature, to a specifically Restoration and eighteenth-century idea of tragedy in which pathos is the defining element.[3] It will be my argument here that this historically specific conception of the genre informs the ideological world of the *Reflections* and shapes its status as a text. It lies behind some of that work's most memorable configurations: its highlighting of the distress of a woman of high rank and its elevation of the family as a symbol of the attachments and obligations of civil society. Furthermore, it clarifies the rhetorical status of the *Reflections* as a mode of performance which, by positioning the reader in a situation of spectacle, works on the sympathies in order to produce intense emotional effects. And finally, through its rapprochement with bourgeois manners and the associated "feminization" of its values, the tragedy of the period acquired a complex social meaning in which the *Reflections* is deeply implicated.

Siddons and Distressed Womanhood

In order to develop this argument, it will be necessary to consider something of the theory and practice of Restoration and eighteenth-century tragedy, including the rhetoric of tragic performance as Burke would have witnessed it. The theatrical presence and style of Sarah Siddons (1755–1831), to whose powers of emotional arousal Burke, as we have seen, pays a passing tribute in the *Reflections*, will be given particular attention in my account. The greatest tragic actress of her generation, she would have been for Burke, in the decade leading up to the publication of the *Reflections*, the most striking dramatic representation of the female distress which is generally regarded as its rhetorical centerpiece. Beyond the brief allusion in the *Reflections*, evidence from other sources supports the suggestion that Burke regularly attended her performances. In her own *Reminiscences*, for instance, Siddons recalls with pride some of the luminaries who saw her plays: "Sir Joshua [Reynolds] often honoured me by his presence at The Theatre. . . . He always sat in the Orchestra, and in that place were to be seen (O glorious constellation!) Burke, Gibbon, Sheridan, Windham, and, 'though last not least,' the illustrious Fox . . . and these great men would often visit my Dressing Room after the Play, to make thier [*sic*] bows and

honour me with thier applauses."[4] While it is not always easy to determine with precision particular performances at which Burke may have been present, we do know from contemporary accounts that he saw her as Zara in *The Mourning Bride*, as Lady Macbeth, as Elwina in Hannah More's *Percy*, and in the title role of Robert Jephson's *Julia; Or, The Italian Lover*.[5] The strong probability is that during the period of "Siddons-mania" which followed her triumphant return to Drury Lane in 1782 Burke saw her perform many of the roles in which she enraptured polite society. From a review of such roles, of the kinds of drama in which she appeared, and from contemporary impressions of her style as an actress, there emerges a powerful image of the suffering female virtue to which Burke was to pay homage in his portrait of Marie Antoinette.

Although she occasionally played comic parts, Siddons is generally thought to have lacked Garrick's extraordinary versatility, and it was exclusively as a tragic actress that she achieved her astonishing success. Her repertoire in the 1780s included a number of Shakespearean roles, some of them eighteenth-century adaptations, but she was for the most part engaged to play in Restoration and eighteenth-century tragedies, many of them now half-forgotten.[6] Despite the relative neglect into which it has fallen, the main contours of the tragic literature of that period are well enough known. The emergence of the female protagonist as the dramatic focus, usually in the role of a victim, is one of its most prominent features. This development is associated with a change in emotional expectation, whereby a pitying response takes precedence over the Aristotelian duality of pity and fear. A third and related characteristic which deserves mention here is the use of scenes of pathos for the formal expression of correct moral sentiments.

The history of these developments, and especially of their social significance, is a complex one. The elements I have identified appear with varying degrees of emphasis in the plays in which Siddons performed, and which Burke would have known, from the heroic dramas of Dryden, to the pathetic tragedies of Thomas Southerne, Thomas Otway, and Nicholas Rowe, to the explicitly bourgeois tragedies of George Lillo and Edward Moore, and to the melodramas which passed for tragedy in the later eighteenth century. But the tendency toward what may be described, in accordance with the gender categories of the time, as a "feminization" of response is marked, even in the most academic attempts at the tragic drama. A mid-century example, William Mason's

Elfrida, A Dramatic Poem. Written on the Model of the Antient Greek Tragedy (1752), may serve as an illustration. The play is prefaced by a series of letters in which Mason explains how he has attempted to adapt the "antient method" so as to conform to "the genius of our times." He insists that "the three great Unities" have been strictly observed, but this neoclassical rigor is qualified by his willingness "to follow the modern masters in those respects wherein they had not so faultily deviated from their predecessors." Thus, in particular, "a story was chosen, in which the tender, rather than the noble passions were predominant, and in which even love had the principal share. Characters too were drawn as nearly approaching to private ones, as Tragic dignity would permit; and affections rais'd rather from the impulse of common humanity, than the distresses of royalty, and the fate of kingdoms."[7]

In Mason's account of these innovations in the tragic drama, there is an important connection between the kinds of emotion sought and the spheres of life to be represented. In addition to following "the modern masters" in their preference for "tender" passions rather than "noble" ones—a division of the emotions which follows from stock ideas of gender—he is able to acquiesce in their choice of the private dimension of character rather than "the fate of kingdoms" as an appropriate realm for tragedy. As Mason develops this second point, the emphasis shifts slightly but significantly from a distinction between general conditions of life ("private" as opposed to "public") to a more specifically social reference to matters of rank ("the distresses of royalty"). His play *Elfrida*, to which his remarks are prefaced, and in which Siddons, at royal command, played the title role in 1785, exemplifies this common ambiguity. While his decision to appeal to "the impulse of common humanity" may appear to suggest a resolution to extend the social range of tragedy, the cast of *Elfrida* is in fact largely composed of characters of high rank. On the other hand, the promised tender and private elements are abundantly supplied by a plot which turns on elevated trials of love in which Elfrida, daughter of the Duke of Devonshire, is the virtuous object of desire. Elsewhere in eighteenth-century drama there are, of course, examples of tragedy in which the status of the leading characters is explicitly bourgeois: the plays of Lillo and Moore project a genuinely new tragic voice in which prose is preferred as the medium appropriate to the bourgeois content. More generally, however, the pattern is closer to Mason's, where the rejection of the court as the locus of the tragic action indicates a diminishing interest in the "public" dimension of characters' lives without necessarily requiring a transformation of the social milieu. The important stress falls on the *private* nature of an action with which, it is contended, and as a direct consequence of that privateness, the audience will be able to sympathize, whatever the rank of the participants.

Perhaps the most important element in this literary history was the breaking of the link between tragedy and the state. The royal protagonist was either displaced altogether or presented in an essentially domestic role.

> No princes here lost royalty bemoan,
> But you shall meet with sorrows like your own,

Rowe promises the audience in his prologue to *The Fair Penitent*, and this substitution of "private woes" for the supposed preoccupations of "the great" became a stock theme of such prologues throughout the century. Rowe's domestication of the tragic response is apparent, much later, in the prologue Edward Malone provided for Robert Jephson's *Julia*, a tragedy for which Burke apparently expressed some approval on its opening night in 1787:[8]

> From Thespis' days to this enlighten'd hour,
> The stage has shewn the dire abuse of power;
> What mighty mischief from ambition springs;
> The fate of heroes, and the fall of kings.
> But these high themes, howe'er adorn'd by art,
> Have seldom gain'd the passes of the heart:
> Calm we behold the pompous mimick woe,
> Unmov'd by sorrows we can never know.
> Far other feelings in the soul arise,
> When private griefs arrest our ears and eyes;
> When the false friend, and blameless, suffering wife,
> Reflect the image of domestick life:
> And still more wide the sympathy, more keen,
> When to each breast responsive is the scene;
> And the fine cords that *every* heart intwine,
> Dilated, vibrate with the glowing line.

Malone is more attentive to the physiology of sympathy than Rowe, whose prologue predates most of the theoretical literature on sensibility, but his argument is otherwise much the same. Their common aim,

to gain "the passes of the heart" through a spectacle of private woe, was one which Burke sought to achieve in some of the most celebrated scenes in the *Reflections*.

Burke's selection of the suffering queen as the principal object of his lament is consistent with the developments I have described. The literary history of Restoration and eighteenth-century tragedy throws much light on that celebrated portrait. In an important essay, Laura Brown has shown how the emergence of the "defenseless woman" as protagonist coincides with a major transition in the form of tragedy: "The serious drama of the early Restoration is distinctively, notoriously aristocratic; that of the eighteenth century is sentimental, moral, and implicitly or explicitly bourgeois. Between these two formal and ideological poles stands the female protagonist."[9] The mode of "pathetic tragedy" in which this protagonist appears is therefore in effect a compromise between conceptions of tragedy which are shaped by quite different values. Brown's subtle reading of this history allows for varying degrees of emphasis and stages of development within the transitional form, from the early examples of works by John Dryden and Nathaniel Lee, which "retain the trappings of heroic form" but present characters "whose dramatic significance is defined by their pathetic situation rather than their aristocratic merit," to Rowe, in whose "she-tragedies" she finds a new current of the "didactic ethical assertion" which characterizes the explicitly bourgeois drama of Lillo.[10]

Sarah Siddons, the foremost personator of female distress on the late-eighteenth-century stage, appeared in many tragedies of the "affective" or "pathetic" type described by Brown. From an examination of the defining features of the roles she performed in the 1780s, there emerges a certain congruence between the Siddonian projection of suffering womanhood and Burke's representation of the fallen queen of France. His portrayal of Marie Antoinette falls into two contrasting parts (*Refl.* 148–49). In the first, based on reports he has heard, she appears in her present character as a queen, wife, and mother, displaying a fortitude appropriate to her rank, amid the violence and humiliation of the "October Days" (5–6 October 1789). In the second, based on personal recollection, she is pictured in her former splendor as a seventeen-year-old dauphiness, as yet untouched by the world. For the most part, it was in the first of these roles that Siddons, born in the same year as the French queen, was cast. If she could be said to have had a typical

part it was that of a virtuous matron, often separated from her husband by force of circumstance and exposed to the threats of violent, lustful, and ambitious men. Even when she did not appear as a figure of exemplary virtue, her role was usually in some sense that of a victim: as Calista in Rowe's *The Fair Penitent*, for example, or, more decisively, in the title role of his *Tragedy of Jane Shore* (1714), the pity she excited as one brought low both by her own weakness and by the ill usage of heartless men outweighed the disapproval provoked by her misconduct. In this respect, her most celebrated role, that of Lady Macbeth, was not her most typical, though interestingly, in an analysis written after her retirement from the stage, she drew attention to the essentially "feminine nature" of that character, finding in her a delicate sensibility temporarily repressed by ambition.[11]

The pathetic tragedies which provided Siddons with most of her parts are preoccupied with shattered households and threatened personal ties. In these plays, the action turns on the complex and sometimes contradictory domestic relations which enmesh the female protagonist, and which constitute both her glory and her burden. In Arthur Murphy's *The Grecian Daughter* (1772), the protagonist is both a wife and a mother, but as the title indicates, it is the filial role that is stressed, though in a way which reveals the interconnectedness of women's functions within the household. In the play's defining moment, Euphrasia—the "Grecian Daughter" of the title—relieves her father, the captive king of Sicily who is expiring from hunger and thirst, by the most "natural" means within her power. A spectator on the sentimental scene applauds her

> Wonder-working virtue!
> The father foster'd at his daughter's breast!—
> O! filial piety!—The milk design'd
> For her own offspring, on the parent's lip
> Allays the parching fever.[12]

In other plays, the pathos is occasioned by a drama of choice, as the Siddons figure is forced to sever one kind of relation in order to preserve another (as in Hannah Cowley's *The Fate of Sparta; Or, The Rival Kings* [1788]), or to contemplate compromising her ideals of chastity in order to save a threatened child (Hall Hartson's *The Countess of Salisbury* [1767] and Bertie Greatheed's *The Regent* [1788]). Contemporary reports repeatedly remark on the emotional intensity with which Siddons real-

ized these domestic roles. Although the dramatic material with which she had to work was often unworthy of her talents, the sentimental possibilities of a character such as Lady Randolph, whose overwhelming love for her long-lost son forms the troubling emotional core of John Home's celebrated tragedy *Douglas* (1756), are still evident. The importance of this maternal aspect of her stage character was neatly and sentimentally confirmed when her eight-year-old son appeared alongside her at Drury Lane, playing Isabella's son (to Siddons's Isabella) in the performance of Southerne's *The Fatal Marriage*, which signaled the beginning of her success in London.[13]

In Siddons's repertoire of the 1780s, the main elements of a system of female virtue can be discerned. To employ categories suggested by Burke in his *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), the "feminine" qualities of tenderness and compassion are modified, but not superseded, by the "masculine" traits of fortitude, justice, and a dedication to duty. For although the female protagonist remained essentially isolated and exposed, some display of internal moral resources, lifting the spectacle above that of merely passive suffering, was thought necessary if truly tragic emotions were to be aroused. It was on these grounds that a witness to Siddons's interpretation of the role of Jane Shore in the mid-1780s expressed some dissatisfaction with the part, while acknowledging the powerful verisimilitude of her performance: "I absolutely thought her the creature perishing through want . . . shocked at the sight, I could not avoid turning from the suffering object; I was disgusted at the idea, that an event affecting our mortal frame only, should be capable of producing greater misery than the most poignant anguish of the mind.—We wish to have something exalted in the distress to interest us, and there is nothing of that kind in the famishing Shore, whose sufferings have no immediate reference to any but herself."[14] The "something exalted" which this commentator desired is just what Siddons exhibited in her more typical roles. Characteristically, Siddonian woman, while denied access to the apparatus of male power, was nonetheless an emblem of active as well as suffering virtue. Euphrasia, melting with compassion at the "spectacle of woe" presented by her father, asserts herself not only as his nurse but ultimately as his champion when she dispatches his adversary with a blow from a concealed dagger.

It was in roles of exalted distress, to which her dignified bearing and commanding presence on stage were particularly suited, that Siddons most deeply impressed her audiences. As Queen Katharine in her brother's adaptation of Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*, for example, the powerful feelings of pity she excited were significantly qualified by awe, a combination of emotions to which Katharine herself draws attention in her stately address to Wolsey:

> Sir,
> I am about to weep: but, thinking that
> We are a queen, (or long have dream'd so,) certain,
> The daughter of a king, my drops of tears
> I'll turn to sparks of fire,—[15]

The fortitude displayed here, as in Burke's account of the conduct of Marie Antoinette, is explicitly an attribute of rank. In view of her particular strengths as a tragic actress—her ability to inspire awe as well as to arouse compassion—it is not surprising that Siddons should have been especially noted for her portrayal of queens (including, in the 1780s, Margaret of Anjou and Mary, Queen of Scots, as well as Queen Katharine) and of women otherwise of high station.[16] Her friend, Hester Lynch Thrale, apparently concurred when the following observations concerning her range as an actress were put to her: "She so constantly acted the character of great personages in affliction, that, on the whole, she had a mournful visage, and an awful tone of voice, very detrimental to the success of her comic attempts; and indeed unfriendly to her efforts in the less impassioned scenes of tragedy; or when she played merely genteel women in middle life."[17] And in an agreeably understated account in her own *Reminiscences* of her reception by the royal family on her first visit to Buckingham House, she recalls being told that "Her Majesty had expressd [*sic*] herself surprised to find me so collected in so new a position, and that I had conducted myself as if I had been used to a Court," and she reminds us, by way of explanation, that "at any rate, I had frequently personated Queens."[18]

I suggested a little earlier that there is a certain congruence between Burke's idealized description of Marie Antoinette and the essential attributes of Siddonian woman. The main elements of that correspondence are now in place. In the famous paragraphs devoted to the events of 5 and 6 October 1789, Burke applies the stereotypes and conventions of pathetic and domestic tragedy to a scene of specifically royal distress

(*Refl.* 141–50). Already within the space of a few lines he has three times pictured Louis XVI, following his involuntary removal from Versailles to the Tuileries, as a "captive king" (*Refl.* 139). In his account of the October Days, he extends this familiar emblem of fallen greatness into a group portrait, as the "royal captives" are led on their forced march to Paris and the converted "Bastile for kings" which awaits them. Notoriously, however, the main emphasis of the passage falls on the figure of the defenseless queen. "Beauty in distress is much the most affecting beauty," declared the young Burke in his *Philosophical Enquiry*, and it was a principle to which he returned in fashioning the portrait of Marie Antoinette.[19] Her beauty as he had witnessed it in 1773 is still strong in Burke's recollection as he describes with indignation the present distress of "this persecuted woman" who has been forced "to fly almost naked" (*Refl.* 141) from the scene of outrage. In bringing to our view what is for him the very essence of the feminine, Burke also discloses to us the humanizing private face of royalty. For it is as a wife and a mother, as well as a queen and a daughter of a queen, that Marie Antoinette ornaments the pages of the *Reflections*. Escaping from the "ruffians and assassins" at her door, she seeks refuge "at the feet of a king and husband" (*Refl.* 142) who together with the "royal infants," of whose presence in the palace Burke is careful to remind us, completes the nucleus of this abused family.

Yet vulnerability is not the only quality attributed to Marie Antoinette in Burke's description: in paying his tribute, he gives almost equal prominence to the other and more active side of Siddonian woman. He is able to congratulate the queen for displaying the fortitude of one who "feels with the dignity of a Roman matron," who "in the last extremity . . . will save herself from the last disgrace; and . . . if she must fall . . . will fall by no ignoble hand" (*Refl.* 148). There is something insistently allusive and even iconographical about this part of the description. It is the product of a culture steeped in theatrical images of female distress. Siddons appeared in a number of roles which in some way involve the convention of suicide—threatened, if not ultimately performed—as a response to what is perceived as "disgrace." In February 1789, she first played Volumnia, arguably Shakespeare's most memorable portrait of female fortitude, in the adaptation of *Coriolanus* by her brother, John Philip Kemble. His understanding of the play is in-

dicated by the alternative title of *The Roman Matron* which he assigns to it. As this subtitle promises, and in conformity with the feminization of eighteenth-century tragedy, as well as in deference to Siddons's reputation, the role of Volumnia, striking enough in the original, is further accentuated. In adapting the tragedy, Kemble drew not only on Shakespeare but also on James Thomson's *Coriolanus* of 1749. It was Thomson's version that provided Volumnia's stately rebuke to her hitherto intransigent son in the final act:

> Let us no more before the Volscian people
> Expose ourselves a spectacle of shame.
> Hear me, proud man! I have
> A heart as stout as thine. I came not hither,
> To be sent back rejected, baffled, sham'd,
> Hateful to Rome, because I am thy mother:
> A Roman matron knows, in such extremes,
> What part to take.[20]

And the verbal threat is confirmed by gesture, as the Roman Matron draws out her dagger.

As an orator, Burke seems to have been particularly alert to the persuasive emotional possibilities of this kind of rhetoric of performance.[21] The portrait of Marie Antoinette suggests that this skill did not desert him when he chose to reach his audience through the medium of the written word. Much of the description is conceived in accordance with the system of actions and gestures which constituted the visual language of the tragic actress. We can see something of this, I think, in Burke's reference to an instrument of suicide when he laments that the queen "should ever be obliged to carry the sharp antidote against disgrace concealed in [her] bosom" (*Refl.* 149). According to his Victorian editor, E. J. Payne, Burke is here "alluding to the queen's carrying poison about with her."[22] I suspect, however, that most readers, taking their cue from the first word of the phrase "sharp antidote," understand it in more immediately visual terms as imaging a dagger.[23] In Burke's own audience, the phrase would have excited strong cultural associations with the contemporary stage. In particular, it would have called to mind the tragic tableaux in which the figure of Siddonian woman, threatened, like Marie Antoinette, with violation, prepared to defend her honor.

The *Reflections* as Performance

If, as I have suggested, Burke's presentation of the crisis of the October Days conforms to the central conventions of pathetic tragedy, then it follows that the response he seeks to arouse in his readers is one in which pity will predominate. In a famous exchange of letters with Philip Francis, who had read an early draft of portions of the *Reflections*, Burke sought to demonstrate the authenticity of the feelings expressed in his lament for the fallen queen by declaring that he had himself shed tears as he composed it (*Corr.* 6: 85–92). In the *Reflections* itself, as we have seen, he imagines the tears that a dramatic exhibition of fallen greatness might draw from him and goes on to speak exclusively of tears when he acknowledges his susceptibility to the tragic arts of David Garrick and Siddons. The model of tragedy which Burke seems to have in mind here is a Restoration and eighteenth-century one in which our feelings are cultivated rather than purged. The spectacle of suffering elicits tears which, as the tokens of a virtuous and benevolent heart, we can indulge with pleasure. In the very same passage, however, Burke clearly refers to an Aristotelian conception of tragedy as a model for our response to calamities such as the fall of kings. Hence he notes, "In events like these our passions instruct our reason. . . . We are alarmed into reflection; our minds (as it has long since been observed) are purified by terrour and pity; our weak unthinking pride is humbled, under the dispensations of a mysterious wisdom" (*Refl.* 157). With its criteria of purgation and the restoration of a proper balance of emotions within the logical context of a coherently structured plot, the Aristotelian model to which Burke here alludes seems at odds with the pathetic conventions which shape his response to the October Days.

The important discussion of the psychological effects of tragedy which Burke included in his *Philosophical Enquiry* is worth recalling here. At the heart of Burke's explanation is the faculty of sympathy which he describes as "a sort of substitution, by which we are put into the place of another man, and affected in many respects as he is affected" (*PE* 44). It is from this premise of the involuntary actions of sympathy that Burke develops one of the most striking features of his analysis: the exaltation of emotional over rational elements in the tragic response. The mixed passions of delight and uneasiness which we feel when contemplating both "real" and "fictitious" distresses operate "antecedent to

any reasoning, by an instinct that works us to its own purposes, without our concurrence" (*PE* 46). The delight with which we observe scenes of misery is not without a moral outcome. Indeed, Burke suggests that this "delight" is providentially ordained precisely in order that we should seek out such scenes, and by so doing be induced to feel the painful uneasiness with which delight becomes mixed, and which "prompts us to relieve ourselves in relieving others" (*PE* 46). This desirable moral outcome, however, is produced entirely at the level of the passions—arising, as Burke puts it, "from the mechanical structure of our bodies, or from the natural frame and constitution of our minds" (*PE* 45)—rather than through the judgment of the spectator.

This analysis has important consequences for Burke's conception of tragedy. For what interests him above all in the tragic drama is the psychological effect on the spectator of a sympathetic engagement with a suffering character. The Aristotelian concern with the working through of an entire tragic *action,* and the rational as well as emotional demands which this makes on an audience, is of little importance in Burke's account. In his celebrated argument that instances of actual suffering are always more compelling than their fictitious representations, the example he provides—the execution of "a state criminal of high rank" (*PE* 47)—itself illustrates his understanding of tragedy in terms of moments of spectacle. In W. P. Albrecht's study of the relation between theories of tragedy and ideas of the sublime, Burke is seen as a pivotal figure in a development which assigns "importance to the immediate emotional response rather than to the fable."[24] As we have seen, this emphasis on the affective capacities of tragedy does not imply a repudiation of its moral dimension. Rather, moral inferences are displaced from the audience's experience of a complete action to its appreciation of the intensity of the dramatic moment: "As strong excitement gained ground as the important ingredient in tragedy, plot was depreciated until what was valued most was not a closely knit sequence of events but a series of moments with emotional impact and moral force. The need for sympathetic identification made character more important than action."[25]

Some of the consequences of this preference can be seen in the dramatic writing of the period. Even in plays where a neoclassical doctrine of the dramatic unities is officially in force, the formal tendency is toward the highlighting of emotional tableaux, with the action per-

forming a largely secondary and supportive function. Increasingly the role of the spectator is that of a consumer of emotion and moral sentiment. A comparable, though perhaps even more pronounced development can be traced in the eighteenth-century novel, from *Clarissa*, with its formal principle of instructive and affective moments of sentiment taking precedence over the concatenation of plot, to the deliberately fractured narratives of Sterne and Mackenzie, where those moments are foregrounded and stylized as sentimental tableaux. And one might see the *Reflections* itself as participating unevenly in this literary history, shifting ground as it does from the conventions of rational argument, which characterize the political discourse of the eighteenth-century parliamentary establishment, to its use of focused moments of distress as a means of engaging the sympathetic emotions of the reader.

This unevenness is an important aspect of the textual character of the *Reflections*. Its discourse works at a number of different registers, and consequently it would be untrue to suggest that the passage on the October Days is typical of its method. But while not typical, it may nonetheless be decisive in its literary manner and ideological appeal. In seeking to engage the reader's sympathies, the passage not only is shaped by the conventions of pathetic tragedy but also enacts them. It is as if Burke were somehow seeking to transform the written text into a spoken one, to assert the orator's sincere and passionate presence, and to communicate an impression of the moment of delivery.[26]

As a mode of performance, Burke's effusive method is consistent with the essentially rhetorical conception of language which he elucidates in the *Philosophical Enquiry*. As we shall see, in its emotional intensity and effect it is also comparable to the style of acting associated with Sarah Siddons. In the final section of the *Philosophical Enquiry*, entitled "How WORDS influence the passions," Burke addresses himself to the use of language in "eloquence and poetry," but much of what he says would be equally applicable to the art of acting. In order to succeed, "the speaker"—and significantly it is to a "speaker" rather than a "writer" that he refers—must "call in to his aid those modes of speech that mark a strong and lively feeling in himself" (*PE* 175). This confirms his earlier statement that the business of "poetry and rhetoric" is "to affect rather by sympathy than imitation; to display rather the effect of things on the mind of the speaker or of others, than to present a clear idea of the things themselves" (*PE* 172). Developing this argument, Burke divides

words into two categories: "clear" expressions, which address themselves to the understanding and therefore he would presumably regard as appropriate to philosophical and scientific discourse, and "strong" expressions, which address themselves to the passions and therefore belong to poetry and eloquence. As he elaborates on the properties of this second class of words, the kinship between the poetic, rhetorical, and histrionic arts becomes clear: "Now, as there is a moving tone of voice, an impassioned countenance, an agitated gesture, which affect independently of the things about which they are exerted, so there are words, and certain dispositions of words, which being peculiarly devoted to passionate subjects, and always used by those who are under the influence of any passion; they touch and move us more than those which far more clearly and distinctly express the subject matter. We yield to sympathy, what we refuse to description" (*PE* 175).

As James T. Boulton has pointed out, the principles of discourse which Burke defines here are put into practice in the "apostrophe" to Marie Antoinette.[27] By adopting "those modes of speech which mark a strong and lively feeling in himself," he applies himself directly to the sympathies of his readers. For Burke, as for other eighteenth-century writers, sympathy is not a specialized faculty, confined in its operations to certain aesthetic events. On the contrary, it is, as he reminds us repeatedly in the *Reflections*, the very condition of moral being. There is, then, an important link between Burke's conception of the effects of eloquence (and consequently of acting) and the more general conduct of moral relations. In the *Philosophical Enquiry*, he describes the process by which sentiments are transferred from breast to breast as "the contagion of our passions." By means of a "strong" expression, "we catch a fire already kindled in another, which probably might never have been struck out by the object described" (*PE* 175–76). David Hume makes use of the same metaphor in his *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739–40), in which sympathy is the principle of social being, when he remarks, "The passions are so contagious, that they pass with the greatest facility from one person to another, and produce correspondent movements in all human breasts."[28] When Burke pronounces his feelings on hearing of the humiliations suffered by Marie Antoinette, we are not required to exercise our reason in order to form an opinion. Such a response would be to deny our humanity, in the manner of those cold-hearted rationalists of the school of the rights of man who "have perverted in

themselves, and in those that attend to them, all the well-placed sympathies of the human breast" (*Refl.* 130). Burke's insistence in the *Reflections* on the unimpeachable naturalness and rightness of his feelings about the events in France depends upon this notion of a sympathy which, by allowing a communication of sentiments, provides for the instantaneous conviction of moral truth. The theater is held up as a model for this process. For in the theater, unlike dissenting churches, the audience has not closed off its natural sympathies. It offers a genuine test of the truth of moral sentiment, a test of its communicability through sympathy, for dramatists "must apply themselves to the moral constitution of the heart" (*Refl.* 158). In the theater, Burke assures us, evil will be detected through "the first intuitive glance, without any elaborate process of reasoning" (*Refl.* 159).[29]

This demand for the immediate engagement of the audience's sympathies led, in the second half of the eighteenth century, to the development of a style of acting characterized by emotional intensity. In assessing the merits of the French actress Claire Josèphe Clairon, Garrick criticized her want of "those instantaneous feelings, that life-blood, that keen sensibility, that bursts at once from genius, and, like electric fire, shoots through the veins, marrow, bones and all, of every spectator."[30] This was not, by all accounts, a fault with which Sarah Siddons could have been charged. In his *Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons* (1827), James Boaden recalls the overpowering impression she made on her audience when she appeared in the title role of Rowe's *Tragedy of Jane Shore*: "I well remember (how is it possible I should ever forget?) the *sobs,* the *shrieks,* among the tenderer part of her audiences; or those *tears,* which manhood, at first, struggled to repress, but at length grew proud of indulging. We then, indeed, knew all the LUXURY of grief; but the nerves of so many a gentle being gave way before the intensity of such appeals; and fainting fits long and frequently alarmed the decorum of the house, filled almost to suffocation." By such means, we are told, Siddons inspired in her spectators "the sympathetic emotions of virtue."[31]

Boaden's account of this memorable performance could stand, almost without alteration, as a commentary on some of the more spectacular episodes in the impeachment of Warren Hastings. In delivering his impassioned denunciation of the depredations and physical abuse inflicted on the people of India, Burke engaged in a mode of discourse which may be characterized as histrionic in the strict sense.[32] He endeavored to reach

his audience by much the same means, and to move them in much the same way, as did the great performers on the late-eighteenth-century stage. Reports of the notorious third day (17 February 1788) of Burke's opening speech at the impeachment bear witness to the emotional effect his horrified narration had on members of the fashionable audience. Assembled at Westminster Hall, the highest court in the land, in social composition this audience was probably not dissimilar to that which would attend command performances at Drury Lane.[33] Among those reportedly listening to Burke's speech was Sarah Siddons, at whose performances Burke had confessedly wept. She, in turn, was similarly moved by his, finding that "every illusion of the stage paled into insignificance before the realities which Burke had conjured up before her eyes." Burke's "recitation of Hastings's crimes," we are told, "proved too much for some of the ladies. Mrs. Sheridan had to be carried out in a faint."[34] The same fate apparently befell Siddons herself a few months later when Sheridan delivered his famous speech on the sufferings of the Begums of Oude.[35]

Burke's *Reflections* and other counterrevolutionary writings bear the unmistakable imprint of this histrionic style. With its emotional insistence and pathetic imagery, the portrait of Marie Antoinette appealed to sensibilities which were being fed by performers such as Siddons on the Georgian stage. In this way, Burke makes his defense of tradition in accordance with contemporary tastes. From this synthesis, I would suggest, his most famous text derives both its peculiarity and its rhetorical strength.

The Modernity of the *Reflections*

In his demand that tragic drama should provide the spectator with an intensely emotional experience, Burke was not implicitly favoring pity over fear as a source of aesthetic pleasure. Indeed, in the *Philosophical Enquiry*, with its appreciation of the awe-inspiring power of the sublime, the reverse, if anything, is the case. Yet in the most memorable passage in the *Reflections*, pity is the emotion Burke most wishes to communicate to his readers. Accused by Philip Francis of "pure foppery," he casts himself unrepentantly as an anguished Man of Feeling. Burke's assumption and defense of this stance raise important questions about the historical status and function of the *Reflections*. To what extent, for

example, may it be characterized as a "sentimental" work? And if, at some of its most critical moments, this is indeed its manner, what then is the ideological meaning of this "feminized" mode of discourse?

The *Reflections* proceeds, and makes its point, by way of contrasts as much as through chains of reasoning. In the contrast which is at the core of the work, the whole weight of British tradition is thrown against the callow and confused innovation of revolutionary France. It is as a classic conservative defense of traditional forms of government, and more broadly of traditional social practices and institutions, that the *Reflections* has long been read, valued, and understood. It may seem strange, then, that the author of one of the shrewdest and earliest replies to the work should have found something irritatingly and even discreditably *fashionable* in Burke's literary manner. In her *Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790), Mary Wollstonecraft ridicules Burke's pamphlet as a farrago of fashionable feelings and attitudes. She compares his work to a piece of modish chinoiserie, denounces his "gothic notions of beauty," and objects to the frequency with which he "advert[s] to a sentimental jargon."[36] The *Reflections*, she argues, is the product of a shallow, mechanical, and artificial sensibility; as such, it is likely to find an audience among the circles of enervated women which gather in polite society: "Even the Ladies, Sir, may repeat your sprightly sallies, and retail in theatrical attitudes many of your sentimental exclamations. Sensibility is the *manie* of the day, and compassion the virtue which is to cover a multitude of vices, whilst justice is left to mourn in sullen silence, and balance truth in vain."[37] Wollstonecraft's astute, though unsystematic, critique anticipates Paine's in associating Burke's emotional manner with the conventions of the contemporary stage. Her insights into the configurations of gender which mark the *Reflections*, however, give her reply a special quality and importance.[38] Wollstonecraft's profound meditations on the meaning and value of sensibility were central to her life and work. From this perspective, she is able to accuse Burke, the doughty upholder of the ancient constitution, of making a modish appeal to contemporary taste.

Naturally enough both Wollstonecraft and Paine focus on the lament for Marie Antoinette in order to support their critique of the theatricality of the *Reflections*. There is, however, an element of polemical oversimplification, and perhaps even of caricature, in their strictures. For a number of reasons, the *Reflections* cannot be described as a "sentimental" work

tout court. The histrionic mode of pathetic tragedy is not sustained beyond the account of the October Days, although intermittently Burke continues to issue strong emotional appeals to his readers. His stance varies from that of a Man of Feeling, at the one extreme, to that of a sagacious elder statesman at the other. The *Reflections* is equally irregular in terms of the modes of discourse which it introduces: the traditions of Augustan satire and the procedures of political economy are represented as fully, and almost as conspicuously, as the language of tragic lament. Furthermore, as I have suggested, the image of distressed womanhood which Burke projects in the *Reflections* is not as uncomplicatedly passive as some of the stereotypes of sentimentalism might lead one to expect.

In some of his writings, in fact, Burke uses the commonplaces of sentimental literature as instruments of mockery, at least insofar as they are applied to men. Included among the essays published in the Dublin periodical *The Reformer*, which appeared in the year Burke graduated from Trinity College and are usually attributed to him, is a review of a production in 1748 of Benjamin Hoadley's sentimental comedy *The Suspicious Husband*. "The Ladies, and Gentlemen likest to Ladies, cry'd it up as an excellent Performance," is the young Burke's wry comment.[39] More than forty years later, he was to renew this ridicule of "effeminacy"—the very foppishness of which he himself stood accused—as part of his counterrevolutionary campaign. Looking forward in his *Remarks on the Policy of the Allies* (1793) to the defeat of the Jacobin republic and the establishment of an interim government in France, he makes it clear that the necessary authority cannot be expected from "a shewy, superficial, trifling, intriguing court, guided by cabals of ladies, or of men like ladies."[40] In the *Letters on a Regicide Peace* (1796–97), he dismisses the suggestion that in the face of calamity the national character has degenerated fatally into "effeminacy," yet it is exactly according to this stereotype that the administration of Pitt and its diplomatic representatives are denounced for maintaining contact with the "Regicide" republic. Again and again they are stigmatized for their "unmanly" political conduct. Thus we are told, in Letter 1, that the speech from the throne which opened the parliamentary session of 1795 "threw out oglings and glances of tenderness. Lest this coquetting should seem too cold and ambiguous, without waiting for its effect, the violent passion for a relation to the regicides, produced a direct message from the crown."[41] The collapse of political authority is such, Burke insists,

that "we have nothing left but the last resource of female weakness, of helpless infancy, of doting decrepitude,—wailing and lamentation. We cannot even utter a sentiment of vigour."[42]

Ridicule of this sort, however, is not inconsistent with the feminized stance of the lament for Marie Antoinette. Indeed, there is a distinct political logic in Burke's ideas of gender. When he denounces "effeminacy," it is with reference to the public authority of the state. When he celebrates the "feminine" principles of love and sensibility, it is with reference to the conciliatory relations of civil society.[43] In this way, Burke's writing is significantly—but also intricately and unevenly—involved in what Terry Eagleton has characterized as "a deep-seated 'feminization' of values throughout the eighteenth century," which, he argues, "is closely allied with the emergence of the bourgeoisie."[44] As Eagleton demonstrates in his briskly entertaining account, this feminization was undertaken less on women's terms than in the interests of certain classes of men. By the 1750s, he remarks, "the barbarous values of militarism, naked dominance and male *hauteur,* badges of a predatory public aristocracy, have been mollified by the fashionable virtues of uxoriousness, sensibility, civility, and *tendresse.*"[45] Although Eagleton does not mention Burke by name, this reads very much like a description of the cultural order the passing of which Burke mourns in the *Reflections.* For the function of what Burke there calls a "mixed system of opinion and sentiment" is to manage and legitimize a liaison between otherwise contending classes. The lineaments of aristocratic power are softened and made more comely through a coloring of "feminine" values. This system of opinion, Burke tells us, "without confounding ranks . . . produced a noble equality, and handed it down through all the gradations of social life." It "mitigated kings into companions, and raised private men to be fellows with kings. Without force, or opposition, it subdued the fierceness of pride and power; it obliged sovereigns to submit to the soft collar of social esteem." By such means, power was domesticated and made "gentle" (*Refl.* 150–51).

The sentimental discourse of the *Reflections* is Burke's tribute to this "feminine" principle which permeates the whole sphere of manners. "Manners," he tells us (in the first of the *Letters on a Regicide Peace*) in one of his most revealing statements, "are of more importance than laws" (*Works* 8: 172). Political power, that is to say, can only on very rare occasions (such as a military threat to the state) be exercised in an

unmediated or "naked" form. More commonly it has to be legitimized and transmitted through a system of "manners" or cultural values. In the *Reflections*, that system is embodied in the figure of Marie Antoinette. Drawing on the conventions of pathetic tragedy, Burke pictures her as a vulnerable and tenderhearted mother, an image which is in stark contrast to the one widely disseminated in France, where she was popularly portrayed as a supercilious and dissolute Austrian princess. Louis XVI, constitutionally if not temperamentally an autocrat, is honored as a mild-mannered father of his people. Little is said in the *Reflections* of the political identity and functions of the French king. We rarely catch a glimpse of the public face of royalty; its fetishized domestic face is more important. As Boulton has shown, Burke's tribute to the French royal family is the culmination of a whole network of images in which the traditional order is represented in terms of sacred family bonds.[46]

Burke could in fact be quite unsentimental about monarchy when he chose. Less than a year before the calamity of the October Days, he delivered a series of astonishing speeches as the House of Commons grappled with the constitutional crisis caused by the king's mental disorder. The king's incapacity presented the Portland Whigs with the opportunity to argue for the installation of the politically sympathetic Prince of Wales as Regent. In a notorious remark, which Burke's opponents of the 1790s did not allow him to forget, he asked the Commons to "recollect that they were talking of a sick king, of a monarch smitten by the hand of Omnipotence, and that the Almighty had hurled him from his throne."[47] In another debate, he speculated on the possible progress of the king's malady and spoke quite openly of the violent and grotesque acts to which such insanity was likely to lead. Responding to the protests of other members, who saw his speech as an outrageous breach of decorum, he justified himself on the grounds that in such affairs "delicacy" must be sacrificed to truth.[48]

In the *Reflections*, the importance of delicacy—of keeping the sanctifying veils in place—is reasserted. Burke perceived the example of France as a threat to the system of social and political compromises which he understood to be the historical essence of Whiggism. In defining the spirit of the British constitution, he often directs us back to its obscurely ancient origins, but his more specific and significant point of reference is the constitutional settlement of 1688. This settlement secured an alliance between a politically dominant landowning class

and a commercially powerful bourgeoisie. It provided the rationale for Burke's own political role as a strategist and thinker from a professional background who had become attached to an essentially aristocratic parliamentary group. The events in France, and, more immediately, the encouragement they gave to dissenters and radicals at home, appeared to put this system at risk. What Burke saw as a bourgeois revolution in France was, in his view, a repetition, albeit on a grander scale, of the detestable Puritan experiment of the 1640s, an error which the triumph of 1688 had expunged.

Burke came to believe that the unity of the royal family, whose differences he had not long since sought to exploit, might prove an important factor in the struggle against "the progress of French arms and principles" (*Corr.* 7: 292). In this belief, he may well have been correct. It has recently been argued that one of the consequences for Britain of the upheavals in France was a growth of national feeling, exemplified by the phenomenon of a newly popular monarchy. Attitudes toward George III's predecessors, and to George III himself in the first half of his reign, had been less cordial. Indeed, as one historian has put it, "Ever since the passing of that immediate euphoria which greeted the Restoration, no English or British monarch other than perhaps Anne had achieved more than partial or transient popularity; no sovereign at all had been able to act as an unquestioned cynosure for national sentiment."[49] From the late 1780s, however, the social appeal of George III was greatly extended. In advancing this process, his spotless "domestic reputation," which secured considerable middle-class approval for the monarchy, was as important as his attention to public ceremonial. In this way, "the royal *family* and not just the monarch . . . acquired increasing currency and popularity in this period."[50] As another writer has recently remarked, in the person of George III the monarchy had undergone a process of social "modernization."[51]

Paradoxical as it may appear, it is in this context, I think, that Burke's account of the October Days, and, more broadly, the project of the *Reflections* as a whole should be seen. For a work which sets such store by tradition, the *Reflections* is stylistically and ideologically a surprisingly "modern" text. Its assimilation of the conventions of contemporary tragic performance is an important instance of this. Other and related stylistic elements, such as the pronounced and fashionable Gothicism which Wollstonecraft derides, suggest that Burke's age of chivalry may

have been a relatively recent creation. In its powerful assertion of private and "feminine" values, the *Reflections* contributes to an embourgeoisement—a consolidation—of aristocratic life. One of the most striking features of the work, and indeed of Burke's other counterrevolutionary writings, is its intense aestheticizing of politics.[52] Political institutions are transformed through Burke's potent use of metaphor into objects of taste, admiration, and attachment. As Burke himself puts it, "To make us love our country, our country ought to be lovely" (*Refl.* 152). Although his audience was, in social composition, relatively narrow, what he asked of it was an extraordinary inclusiveness of response. While in France, Jacobinism proceeded to refashion the culture as well as the polity of the nation, Burke countered by creating a political discourse which turned existing institutions into objects of intense emotional regard. Nowhere is this more true than in his images of the French monarchy. "We ne'er can pity what we ne'er can share," Rowe had concluded in his prologue to *The Fair Penitent*, thinking of the inaccessibility to ordinary sympathies of the fates of kings. In the *Reflections* and, more especially, in the lament for Marie Antoinette, Burke forged a discourse which would permit that impossible sharing to take place. Adapting the conventions of domestic tragedy, and thereby highlighting the private dimension of royal distress rather than the griefs of pomp which cannot stir us from our detachment, he found a way of reclaiming the fall of the great from its apparent remoteness.

Notes

1. Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (hereafter cited as *Refl.*), in *The Works of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke*, 16 vols. (London: F. and C. Rivington, 1803–27) 5: 156–59 (hereafter cited as *Works*).

2. See Paul Hindson and Tim Gray, *Burke's Dramatic Theory of Politics* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1988). Important earlier discussions include Peter H. Melvin, "Burke on Theatricality and Revolution," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 36 (1975): 447–68, and James T. Boulton, *The Language of Politics in the Age of Wilkes and Burke* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963) 142–46, a work to which my own contribution is generally indebted.

3. Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man*, ed. Henry Collins (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969) 71–72.

4. *The Reminiscences of Sarah Kemble Siddons, 1773–85*, ed. William Van Lennep (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1942) 19.

5. See, respectively, *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke*, ed. Thomas W. Copeland et al., 10 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP; Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1958–78) 9: 433 (hereafter cited as *Corr.*); Roger Manvell, *Sarah Siddons: Portrait of an Actress* (London: Heinemann, 1970) 122; William Roberts, *Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of Mrs. Hannah More*, 3d ed., 4 vols. (London: R. B. Seeley and W. Burnside, 1835) 2: 54; and *Life and Letters of Sir Gilbert Elliot, First Earl of Minto*, 3 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, 1874) 1: 154. Donald C. Bryant, *Edmund Burke and His Literary Friends* (St. Louis: Washington UP, 1939) contains much valuable information concerning Burke's relations with contemporary playwrights and performers.

6. Full details of Siddons's repertory at Drury Lane are given in Manvell 353–55. Further information concerning casts and performances can be found in *The London Stage, 1660–1800*, part 5, ed. Charles B. Hogan (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1968).

7. William Mason, *Elfrida, A Dramatic Poem. Written on the Model of the Antient Greek Tragedy* (London: J. and P. Knapton, 1752) i–ii.

8. "I went home with Burke and Windham, and Walker King supped with us, and we criticised Burke out of his admiration for his countryman's (Jephson's) performance" (*Life and Letters of Sir Gilbert Elliot* 1: 154).

9. Laura Brown, "The Defenseless Woman and the Development of English Tragedy," *Studies in English Literature* 22.3 (1982): 429–43 (430).

10. Brown 432, 435.

11. For Siddons's "Remarks on the Character of Lady Macbeth," see Thomas Campbell, *Life of Mrs. Siddons*, 2 vols. (London: Effingham Wilson, 1834) 2: 10–39.

12. Arthur Murphy, *The Grecian Daughter. A Tragedy. Marked with the Variations in the Manager's Book at the Theatre-Royal in Drury Lane* (London: W. Lowndes and S. Bladon, 1787) 24. Here, and elsewhere, I refer where possible to editions based on acting copies of the 1780s. Although Burke no doubt knew of the classical episode of Xanthippe and Cimon on which the scene in *The Grecian Daughter* is based, he may have had Murphy's play in mind when he paid tribute to the productivity of America in his *Speech on Conciliation with the Colonies* (1775): "For some time past, the old world has been fed from the new. The scarcity which you have felt would have been a desolating famine, if this child of your old age, with a true filial piety, with a Roman charity, had not put the full breast of its youthful exuberance to the mouth of its exhausted parent" (*Works* 3: 45). Murphy, whose play was first performed in 1772, was one of Burke's oldest London friends. Bryant cites Burke's early biographer, Robert Bisset, to the effect that he "had great pleasure in beholding, as well as in reading, the dramatic performances of his friend and countryman" and mentions in this context his appreciation of "the representation of filial affection in *The Grecian Daughter*" (207).

13. Campbell 1: 156 cites the *Morning Post* of 10 Oct. 1782: "Yesterday, in the rehearsal of the *Fatal Marriage*, the boy, observing his mother in the agonies of the dying scene, took the fiction for reality, and burst into a flood of tears, a circumstance which struck the feelings of the company in a singular manner."

14. *The Beauties of Mrs. Siddons: Or, A Review of her Performances . . . in Letters from a Lady of Distinction to her Friend in the Country* (London: J. Strahan, 1786) 48.

15. *King Henry the Eighth, a Historical Play, Revised by J. P. Kemble* (London, 1804) 33.

16. In Thomas Francklin, *The Earl of Warwick* (1767), and John St. John, *Mary Queen of Scots, A Tragedy* (1789).

17. *Piozziana; Or, Recollections of the late Mrs. Piozzi* (London: Edward Moxon, 1833) 85.

18. Siddons, *Reminiscences* 22.

19. Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. James T. Boulton (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958) 110 (hereafter cited as *PE*).

20. *Coriolanus; or, The Roman Matron. A Tragedy. Altered from Shakespeare. Printed exactly conformable to the representation at the Theatre Royal, Drury-Lane* (London: J. Christie, 1789) 75.

21. See, for instance, the account of his celebrated "dagger scene" in a debate on the Aliens bill (Dec. 1792) in *The Parliamentary History of England, from the Earliest Period to the Year 1803*, ed. William Cobbett, 36 vols. (London: R. Bagshaw and Longman, 1806–20), vol. 30, col. 189.

22. *Burke: Select Works*, ed. E. J. Payne, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898) 2: 337.

23. This is, for example, Paul Fussell's reading in his *The Rhetorical World of Augustan Humanism: Ethics and Imagery from Swift to Burke* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965) 225.

24. William P. Albrecht, *The Sublime Pleasures of Tragedy: A Study of Critical Theory from Dennis to Keats* (Lawrence: UP of Kansas, 1975) 46.

25. Albrecht 8.

26. See Peter Hughes, "Originality and Allusion in the Writings of Edmund Burke," *Centrum* 4.1 (1976): 32–43, where it is argued that in the *Reflections* "discourse turns into event" and "rhetorical statement turns into perlocutionary act" (32).

27. Boulton 130–31.

28. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, 2d ed., rev. P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978) 605. For an important recent account of the place of sympathy in the ethics of Hume and Adam Smith, see John Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988) 18–56.

29. For a detailed consideration of the influence of the paradigm of the the-

ater on the fiction, aesthetics, and moral philosophy of the period, see David Marshall, *The Figure of Theater: Shaftesbury, Defoe, Adam Smith, and George Eliot* (New York: Columbia UP, 1986).

30. David Garrick, cited in Earl R. Wasserman, "The Sympathetic Imagination in Eighteenth-Century Theories of Acting," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 46 (1947): 264–72 (269). For a more recent view of the importance of ideas of sympathy in the acting of the period, see Leigh Woods, *Garrick Claims the Stage: Acting as Social Emblem in Eighteenth-Century England* (Westport: Greenwood P, 1984).

31. James Boaden, *Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons. Interspersed with Anecdotes of Authors and Actors*, 2 vols. (London: Henry Colburn, 1827) 1: 327. Commenting on this passage in his Introduction to *Plays by George Colman the Younger and Thomas Morton* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983), Barry Sutcliffe remarks, "According to strict Aristotelian definition, terror and pity should properly be produced by tragic action, whereas the pity evoked by Sarah Siddons seems to have been achieved by means of a portrayal of the human predicament in such a way as to have induced powerful and spontaneous sympathetic emotions in her audiences" (41).

32. On this point, see Hughes 41.

33. According to Michael R. Booth, "Throughout the last half of the eighteenth century the patent theatres were largely the preserve of the aristocratic, the fashionable, the educated, the gentry, and the middle-class tradesmen" (*The Revels History of Drama in English*, vol. 6: *1750–1880* (London: Methuen, 1975) 7.

34. Sir Philip Magnus, *Edmund Burke: A Life* (London: John Murray, 1939) 170–71.

35. Magnus 171.

36. Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men, In a Letter to the Right Honourable Edmund Burke*, 2d ed. (London: J. Johnson, 1790) 7, 10, 68.

37. Wollstonecraft 5.

38. On this question, see Ronald Paulson's analysis of the *Vindication* in his *Representations of Revolution (1789–1820)* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1983) 79–87.

39. *The Reformer*, no. 10 (31 March 1748), quoted in A. P. I. Samuels, *The Early Life, Correspondence, and Writings of the Rt. Hon. Edmund Burke* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1923) 321.

40. Edmund Burke, *Remarks on the Policy of the Allies*, in *Works* 7: 186.

41. Edmund Burke, *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, in *Works* 8: 106.

42. Burke, *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, 296–97, Letter 3.

43. See Neal Wood's pioneering account in "The Aesthetic Dimension of Burke's Political Thought," *Journal of British Studies* 4 (1964): 41–64.

44. Terry Eagleton, *The Rape of Clarissa: Writing, Sexuality, and Class Struggle in Samuel Richardson* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982) 14.

45. Eagleton 15.

46. Boulton 112–13.

47. *The Speeches of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke, in the House of Commons, and in Westminster Hall*, 4 vols. (London: Longman; J. Ridgway, 1816) 3: 409. Wollstonecraft's criticism of these speeches in her *Vindication* 56–62 is especially astringent.

48. Burke, *Speeches* 3: 418–19.

49. Linda Colley, "The Apotheosis of George III: Loyalty, Royalty, and the British Nation, 1760–1820," *Past and Present*, no. 102 (1984): 94–129 (95).

50. Colley 124–25.

51. Tom Nairn, *The Enchanted Glass: Britain and Its Monarchy* (London: Radius, 1988) 163–74.

52. For an approach to this phenomenon, see R. T. Allen, "The State and Civil Society as Objects of Aesthetic Appreciation," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 16 (1976): 237–42.