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Political Aesthetics: The Historical Sublime and Liberty Beautified in the Works of Edmund Burke and James Barry[1]

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Abstract

This research analyses the aesthetic relationship between the philosopher Edmund Burke and the history painter James Barry, and evaluates the impact of Burke's seminal essay concerning the sublime and beautiful on the ideologies of both the politician and the artist. By closely analysing Burke's essay this paper observes the linguistic similitude present in his later texts and establishes a political-aesthetic present throughout these works. The influence of this philosophy is subsequently analysed in relation to the literary and artistic productions of Barry, particularly those from 1775-1789. In doing so, this essay attempts to establish Burke and Barry's holistic approach to politics, arts and the humanities, and also endeavours to deconstruct the disciplinary boundaries in approaching these figures.
Furthermore, this research subsequently evaluates the position of these two Irishmen living in London during a time of great political and social persecution in Ireland. The appeals of both for justice and equality are once more analysed through the political aesthetic of the sublime and beautiful, and this is used to expose and examine their particular engagement with the political project of Great Britain. At a time of burgeoning nationalism across Western Europe, and both North and South America, it is seen how these two figures promoted cosmopolitan ethics and called for increased understanding across international borders.

Key words

Politics, Aesthetics, Literature, Cosmopolitanism, Eighteenth century

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I.

Critical studies of the Irish philosopher and Westminster politician Edmund Burke (1729-97) often observe how his writings present a nuanced but unified ideology, engaging with political, historical, cultural and moral discourses in a holistic manner. This is frequently related to his early text *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757), which profoundly impacted artistic and political ideologies in the late eighteenth century, not least in Burke's own career. Neal Wood supports this, as he writes: "Burke's two basic aesthetic categories, the sublime and the beautiful, inform and shape several of his fundamental political and historical ideas," most clearly demonstrated in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790).[2] Although it is acknowledged that Burke "maintained his vital interest in the arts" and while the *Enquiry*'s aesthetic impact on certain artists has been explored, the influence of Burke's political aesthetic on painters may be further emphasised.[3]

The Irish historical painter James Barry (1741-1806) was an early protégé of Burke who first brought the artist to London and financed his travels and education in Europe. Moreover, Barry was particularly influenced by the politicised-aesthetic of the *Enquiry*, having transcribed the text in its entirety alongside notes on the British Constitution, the evolution of civil and religious society, and biographies of famous English personages.[4] Additionally, during the Barry's formative period he and Burke closely corresponded, with the politician often advising the artist on his studies and practice. In these letters, the two also discussed political matters relating to the arts, including commercial influences preventing artists such as George Barrett from achieving "as much as his Genius would entitle him to;" and the importance of historical painting in forming "the Taste of a Nation."[5] Admittedly, the two differed on religious grounds, and it is

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[2] Neal Wood, "The Aesthetic Dimension of Burke's Political Thought," *Journal of British Studies* 4, no.1 (1964), 42.

[3] *Ibid.*, 41.

[4] Liam Lenihan, *The Writings of James Barry and the Genre of History Painting, 1775-1809*, (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2004), 47.

[5] "Edmund and William Burke to James Barry, ante 19 February 1767," *The Correspondence of James Barry*, accessed 11 November 2016, www.texte.ie/barry.

important to acknowledge Barry's Catholic perspective which profoundly influenced his moral, political and creative ideologies. In later life, for example, particularly after the 1801 Act of Union between Great Britain and Ireland, Barry began to express a more radical political ideology in works such as *Passive Obedience* (1802) which criticised the unfair union and the failure of Catholic emancipation.[6] Despite this ideological divergence, however, the relationship between politics and aesthetics gained from Burke's *Enquiry* is still evident in these later works, as Barry continued to express political concerns through his art, and it remains worthwhile to assess the critical dialogue between these two figures. Therefore, by extracting key arguments from Burke's *Enquiry*; exploring their significance in Burke's political texts; and evaluating the influence of this politicised aesthetic on Barry's own writings, namely *An Inquiry into the Real and Imaginary Obstructions to the Acquisition of the Arts in England* (1775), the value of this politicised-aesthetic for these two figures may be assessed. In addition to this, by establishing how Burke and Barry related this ideology to the eighteenth-century project of Great Britain an insight may be gained into the holistic, tolerant and cosmopolitan perspective of these two Irish writers.

II.

In his *Enquiry*, Burke examines the two passions of mankind, the sublime and beautiful. The sublime is described as anything which excites "the ideas of pain, and danger;" it is "analogous to terror" and makes the viewer aware of their own inferiority; ultimately it is characterised as expansive, obscure, and beyond an individual's perception.[7] In political terms, it is anything that impresses awe and admiration. In contrast to this, the beautiful is that which inspires love and as such must be small, delicate and flexible, as people only "love what submits."[8] Essentially the beautiful represents the "desire for

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[6] Lenihan, *The Writings of James Barry*, 183.
[7] Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. J.T. Boulton (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1958), 39.
[8] *Ibid*, 113

order and refinement."[9] This emphasis on the sublime being obscure and the beautiful being precise suggests a useful dichotomy of the general and the particular. The former represents that which is expansive and multitudinous, whereas the latter is limited and often described as a single object. In this dichotomy, the *Enquiry* may be politically interpreted as the sublime representing a national "principle of *authority*," and the beautiful as the local "principle of *friendship*."[10] Subsequently, Burke asserts that while these passions are not perceived by reason, judgement may be used to negotiate an adequate response to them, as is examined in the 'Introduction on Taste.' It is judgement that relates the stimulus to "the manners, the characters, the actions, and the designs of men."[11] This crucial process enables the viewer to negotiate a suitable intellectual response to the contemplated object. Furthermore, the individual's facility of judgement can and must be improved through broad study, "by attention and by the habit of reasoning" in order to suitably and to gain experience for future encounters.[12] By reflecting on these stimuli the spectator is led to three responses which "serve in the great chain of society."[13] The first, sympathy, allows the spectator to relate to the mediated experiences of another. The second, imitation, prompts the viewer to copy what they witness: this forms what Burke calls manners. The final response is ambition, the "satisfaction arising from the contemplation of … excelling … in something deemed valuable," which encourages society's improvement beyond repetitive imitation.[14] While the perception of the sublime and beautiful is irrational, the individual arguably has a moral obligation to reason upon these stimuli, and use their judgement to negotiate an appropriate response.

The significance of judgement in determining an adequate response to the sublime and beautiful reveals Burke's key political concerns. Firstly, imitation is vital to developing customs and values, as

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[9] *Ibid.*, 113 & Michael Brown, *The Irish Enlightenment* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2016), 180.
[10] Wood, "The Aesthetic Dimension", 49.
[11] Burke, *Enquiry*, 23
[12] Burke, *Enquiry*, 23.
[13] *Ibid.*, 44.
[14] *Ibid.*, 50.

Burke states, it is imitation which "forms our manners, our opinions, our lives."[15] These manners define how people think and behave depending on their particular social context, and are "one of the chief influences shaping society."[16] Hence, similar manners unify people in friendships, towns, cities and eventually nations. Secondly, Burke's emphasis that manners improve "exactly as we improve our judgement" and the importance of broad knowledge, long attention, and frequent practice indicates a notion of historical progress.[17] As individuals refine their judgement and manners through accumulative study and experience, so too can the nation advance by refining its laws, traditions and customs, through study and empirical knowledge. By maintaining a notion of shared historical experience, manners are incrementally formed, accumulated and improved, and "in this way, human beings are … destined to achieve progress."[18]

Similarly, in his *Inquiry*, Barry observes the formation of manners and the importance of refined judgement in relation to social progress. Firstly, Barry stresses the "influence of habit and education" in the development of the human character, a concept which is central to his philosophy and vision of the artist's public role.[19] Throughout the *Inquiry* he explores the historical relationship between the artist and society, and concludes that the "public grew up in judgement and taste in the same progressive manner as the artist did in his practice."[20] The specific usage of "judgement" and "taste" demonstrates a modified stylistic vocabulary that resonates with Burke's *Enquiry*. Moreover, the notion of advancement is reinforced in terms such as "grew up" and "progressive" although in this circumstance it is from the general to the particular, rather than the local to the national argued by Burke.

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[15] *Ibid.*, 49.

[16] Sora Sato, "Edmund Burke's Ideas on Historical Change," *History of European Ideas* 40, no.5 (2014), 683.

[17] Burke, *Enquiry*, 26.

[18] Sato, "Burke's Ideas on Historical Change", 679.

[19] James Barry, *An Inquiry into the Real and Imaginary Obstructions to the Acquisition of the Arts in England* (London, 1775), 62, http://find.galegroup.com/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=tcd&tabID=T001&docId=CW104869183&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE

[20] *Ibid.*, 62.

Despite this, Barry still acknowledges the relationship between the individual and the public, with the additional moral implication that it is history painters who represent the values of a civilised nation. This implies that as society's taste is refined the artist is able to achieve further greatness, and hence the general public profoundly influences the individual artist.

Secondly, Barry also argues the reciprocity of progression with the view that the artist cultivates the public taste. As he writes, the power and purpose of art is "to raise ideas in the mind, of such great actions as are best calculated to move, to delight, and to instruct."[21] Once again Barry's diction evokes Burke's concepts of imitation ("to instruct") and ambition ("to raise ideas") and that, to educate, art must inspire greatness in what it represents and the manner in which it is presented. The theory of developmental manners is inherent in this interpretation, in which the work of art, by raising ideas, will refine manners, customs and eventually the national character. Thus, not only is the artist's education dependent upon a developed public taste, the public is simultaneously instructed by the individual; and in a time when a society's judgement and taste is flourishing, the artist "leads it on to maturity."[22] The political significance of this aesthetic theory correlates with Burke's ideas relating the sublime to the beautiful, as manners are simultaneously formed, represented and elevated by art. Accepting that manners and customs develop into laws, art becomes vital in ensuring the formation of the best possible manners.

This theory of developmental manners is further enhanced by Burke in *Reflections* which examines the interaction between particular social units and general communities. Firstly, Burke states that the foundation of civil society originates from local attachments, "to love the little platoon we belong to in society."[23] By using "love" and "little," Burke strongly aligns this founding social unit to his notions of the beautiful which must be "little" and "pleasing."[24] As social groupings become

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[21] *Ibid.*, 108.

[22] *Ibid.*, 164-5.

[23] Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. J.G.A. Pocock (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987), 41.

[24] Burke, *Enquiry*, 113.

more general, however, the governing body relies less on beautiful passions to maintain order and its authority, and rules instead through sublime admiration. This is presented through Burke's historical interpretation of the British Constitution which bears an "imposing and majestic aspect" with "monumental inscriptions."[25] The semantic field of grandeur and immensity in these descriptions invoke the sublime by conveying strength, vastness, succession, uniformity, and magnificence.

Thus, while love is the local founding passion of society, larger communities depend upon sublime authority in order to maintain the social structure. Additionally, as manners are formed at a local level, these become customs, and eventually laws, at a national level, which are refined through accumulative experience and study. In this secure method, societies progress in a process of constant self-refinement. In his reciprocal ideology presented in the *Inquiry*, Barry also demonstrates a concept of historical advancement while exemplifying late eighteenth-century political optimism. The American Revolution was viewed by liberal Whigs, including Barry, as the improved reincarnation of British liberty, brought about by the combination of British values and newly developed local manners.[26] In his writings on the event, Burke exhibits similar sentiments, acknowledging the "diversity and complexity of the North American colonists," observing "a distinctive notion of American 'liberty' that arose from their own culture and environment."[27] Through these observations, Burke called on the Westminster government to acknowledge the variety of traditions, beliefs and cultures within the British Empire, rather than to enforce a universal social model based solely on English culture.[28] In the case of Barry, it has been argued that, as an Irish Catholic subjected to the Penal Laws and living in London during the anti-Catholic Gordon Riots (1780), he "could hardly portray himself as central to the British nation and then criticize it for not granting Irish citizens their civil liberties."[29] However, in light of the positive American Revolution

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[25] Burke, *Reflections*, 30.
[26] Lenihan, *The Writings of James Barry*, 42.
[27] Matthew W. Binney, "Edmund Burke's Sublime Cosmopolitan Aesthetic," in *SEL Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* vol.53, no.3 (2013), 655.
[28] *Ibid.*, 655.
[29] Lenihan, *The Writings of James Barry*, 74.

and the representation of the artist as a social instructor, the injustices in Ireland potentially reinforce Barry's insistence on being "central to the British nation." Between 1774 and 1782, Barry produced a sequence of six paintings entitled *The Progress of Human Culture*, or the Adelphi Series, for The Society for the Encouragement of the Arts, Manufactures and Commerce. In the concluding scene, *Elysium and Tartarus, or, The State of Final Retribution*, which intended to represent "an ideal world of humanity reunited," Barry painted the figure of William Penn presenting the Pennsylvanian Constitution to the great historical legislators.[30] Among other articles, this constitution called for religious toleration and the abolition of slavery, and was a prime example of the "cosmopolitan disposition of global friendship" which Barry yearned to inculcate in the British Isles.[31] Just as Burke evaluated that it was the Westminster government's inability to adapt to local customs that led to the American Revolution, so too did Barry assert that the national government must tolerate all manner of local differences to achieve unity. Furthermore, being aware of the injustices against Catholics in Ireland, the positive liberality of the American Revolution represented a possible future for the British state, which Barry attempted to inspire through historical painting.

Overall, it can be seen how both Burke and Barry interpret the Enlightenment discourses of politics and history through the aesthetic theory outlined in the *Enquiry*. In this interpretation, the beautiful and sublime relate to the local and national. The former is organised according to love and manners, and the latter through admiration and laws. However, local communities profoundly impact the country as manners develop into laws and national characteristics. Additionally, understanding the perception of the sublime and beautiful depends upon judgement which the spectator must employ in order to negotiate an appropriate response to stimuli. This act of judgement also contributes to the formation of manners and customs, and thus as the individual's capacity to judge improves, national values and morals

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[30] Daniel R. Guernsey, "Barry's Bossuet in *Elysium*: Catholicism and Counter-revolution in the 1790s," in *James Barry, 1741-1806: History Painter*, ed. Tom Dunne and William L. Pressly (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 1988), 214.
[31] *Ibid.*, 214.

will also improve by extension and after long development. Equally, Barry is seen to have developed a similar political interpretation of the *Enquiry* and explicitly places the historical painter at the centre of national improvement by asserting that art simultaneously cultivates and represents manners. This correlates with the idea that the individual might influence the public, with the added dimension that the public has a responsibility to support the artist, due to this moral and political significance. This interpretation greatly depends upon reciprocity or fusion of the beautiful and sublime, or the local and national, allowing the one to significantly influence the other. However, as Burke states, doing so considerably lessens "the effect of the one or the other upon the passions."[32] In the case of Burke's social model, if the sublime national authority and beautiful love of the local are lessened by combination, it must be questioned why these two passions are fused. Regarding Barry, it must be assessed how successfully the artist negotiates the synthesis of these passions and why this combination occurs. Through this, it may be further established exactly how these two figures related the political-aesthetic to the project of Great Britain.

III.

As Wood states, in the *Enquiry* Burke discussed a subject that became essential to his later works: the "foundations of the commonwealth."[33] While this is true to an extent, as the French Revolution witnessed the destruction of one commonwealth and posed a threat British institutions, Burke is not only concerned with the formation of governments but also with their secure continuation. Wood argues that when the sublime and beautiful are joined "the weaker quality of the beautiful suffers," and that authoritative government demands admiration, reverence, and respect.[34] Although this accords with Burke, the power which the state ought to have is arguably overemphasised in the conclusion that the "beauty of community … will not long survive without the sublimity of government."[35] This interpretation does not

[32] Burke, *Enquiry*, 114.
[33] Wood, "The Aesthetic Dimension," 48.
[34] *Ibid.*, 45.
[35] *Ibid.*, 64.

fully value the restraining force of the British Constitution which, Burke argues, encourages "action and counteraction" and prevents "all the headlong exertions of arbitrary power," or the exercise of sublime tyranny.[36] By claiming that this useful restraint ensures compromise, moderation and "temperaments," Burke evokes his own description of the beautiful virtues, being "easiness of temper … and liberality."[37] Additionally, contrasting the assertion that when power is "employed for our benefit … it is never sublime" with the argument that civil society is "made for the advantage of man," the interpretation of government as purely sublime is undermined in favour of moderation.[38] By describing the Constitution as a fusion of the sublime and beautiful it acts as a "restraint upon [the] passions", restricting the monarch and government from tyranny, and the populace from revolution.[39] Similarly, describing the Constitution in terms of the beautiful, as fluid and seemingly without beginning or end, "a permanent body composed of transitory parts," it restrains itself from oppressing future generations by being adaptable, "to vary with times and circumstances."[40] While the Constitution is described as sublime to an extent, uninhibited sublimity could lead to tyranny and must be tempered with beautifying liberality.

The reason for this fusion can be further explained in terms of the marriage metaphor presented in the *Enquiry*, which compares the "authority of a father" with a "mother's fondness and indulgence."[41] These terms are not mutually exclusive, and throughout his political writings Burke views the institution of marriage and the family as the foundation of manners and social life. This is particularly demonstrated in his unfinished work *Tracts Relative to the Laws against Popery in Ireland* where the disintegration of Catholic families under the Penal Laws is Burke's primary cause for concern. Moreover, in the *Reflections* the British Constitution is described as a "family settlement," thus equating

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[36] Burke, *Reflections*, 31.
[37] Burke, *Reflections*, 31 & Burke, *Enquiry*, 111.
[38] Burke, *Enquiry* 66 & Burke, *Reflections*, 50.
[39] Burke, *Reflections*, 52.
[40] *Ibid.*, 30 & 53.
[41] Burke, *Enquiry* 111.

the national political structure to the most local social unit.[42] These recurrent metaphors of the social family and the marriage of the sublime and beautiful reinforce Burke's theory that the Constitution is formed primarily by manners and customs, while also being the defence of manners. Whilst it must have the authority to impose obedience, like a father, it must also be flexible and responsive to reflect the nation's changing manners, like a mother. Burke admits that this fusion brings only "mediocre freedom" but which, in contrast to sublime terror, that abhors mediocrity, tolerance, and political stability, remains ultimately preferable.[43]

Similar tensions between the sublime and beautiful also arise in Barry's paintings, particularly *Elysium*. In a letter to Barry, Burke outlined this contrast, arguing the importance of beauty within sublime paintings and that "no man can draw perfectly that cannot draw Beauty."[44] This emphasises the challenge of the historical painter who must simultaneously demonstrate technical skill with intellectual gravity.[45] Barry argues that this is possible, citing the case of Michelangelo, and yet the attempt at this fusion in *Elysium* elicited predominantly confused contemporary responses. An anonymous review, attributed to Burke, suggests one reason is because the attention is distracted, misled and divided.[46] Another critic, Rev. James Wills, condemned Barry by stating that the artist attempted "to perplex us with a multiplicity of incomprehensible ideas, and damn us, because we don't understand them."[47] This potentially explains why Barry found it necessary to produce enormous explanations of the Adelphi Sequence, to clarify the profusion of characters and iconography. As the art historian Allan Cunningham commented, Barry "grappled with a subject too varied, complicated and profound for the pencil."[48] Despite

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[42] Burke, *Reflections*, 29.
[43] *Ibid.*, 48.
[44] *Correspondence*, Edmund Burke to James Barry, 13 May 1766.
[45] Lenihan, *The Writings of James Barry*, 97.
[46] *Correspondence*, R.J.L. to James Barry, ante 11 May 1783.
[47] Martin Myrone, "James Barry's 'Hairbreadth Niceties': Risk, Reward and the Reform of Culture around 1770," in *James Barry, 1741-1806: History Painter*, ed. Tom Dunne and William L. Pressly (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 1988), 37.
[48] Lenihan, *The Writings of James Barry*, 59.

the high ambitions detailed in his *Inquiry*, the translation of these ideals to the visual arts arguably proved too challenging in its realisation and too confusing in its reception.

However, an alternative argument for the confused contemporary reception is arguably due to Barry's highly encoded Catholic references. Throughout the *Inquiry*, Barry ascribes the lack of visual arts in England to the iconoclastic Reformation and subsequent repression of paintings with Biblical subjects. Conforming to Burke's concept of historical progress, this retarded the advancement of the visual arts in England, as opposed to Catholic countries, especially Italy, where this advancement had a continuous progression and received public encouragement. An additional implied effect of the Reformation is the encouragement of atheism and mercantile society as opposed to positive religions, such as Catholicism, that promoted tolerance and "embraced all the arts."[49] Thus, *Elysium* was greatly shaped "by a personal vision that would have caused outrage had its meaning not been buried in elaborate codes."[50] This undermined Barry's didactic endeavour by rendering *Elysium* unintelligible and discordant to his contemporary audience.

Despite this, although subsequent prints contained alterations that emphasised Barry's Catholicism, the original *Elysium* arguably best represents the tolerant liberality called for in the *Inquiry*. In accordance with Burke's political aesthetic, the artist attempted to influence his audience's manners, to refine their judgement, and to broaden their knowledge of apparently alien contexts. This denotes another interpretation of Burke's *Enquiry* in terms of cosmopolitanism, which asserts that "all human beings, regardless of their ethnic, cultural, political, or national affiliation, can belong to a single overarching community – a global community."[51] Extending the theory that nations are formed by peculiar manners, institutions and histories, an individual nation can be viewed in reference to the broader

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[49] Barry, *Inquiry*, 216-17.

[50] Tom Dunne, "Introduction: James Barry's 'Moral Art' and the Fate of History Painting in Britain," in *James Barry, 1741-1806: History Painter*, ed. Tom Dunne and William L. Pressly (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 1988), 4.

[51] Binney, "Burke's Sublime Cosmopolitan Aesthetic," 645.

international community. This gives rise to a sublime magnitude of variation in potential manners, cultures and laws. Matthew Binney argues that as this causes a feeling of terror similar to the sublime, the viewer has a moral obligation to use their reason to understand and sympathise with foreign manners and cultures.[52] Developing the idea of refined judgement, if the viewer is experienced and knowledgeable they will be able to interact with foreign societies more effectively and justly. Binney's argument is illustrated with Burke's speeches regarding the British in America and India, and might also be applied to his criticisms of the English in Ireland in *Tracts*. By emphasising the contradiction of public outrage after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in France, Burke asserts that the British "are inflicting the very same distress, or worse, on their fellow-citizens" in Ireland.[53] By positioning Irish injustice in an international context, Burke highlighted the hypocritical mind-set of a nation able to condemn intolerance abroad while simultaneously condoning it in Ireland. Through this, Burke appealed for the British government to develop a deeper understanding of and tolerance for local differences, particularly in Ireland where such religious and cultural variations had the most unjust consequences.

This cosmopolitan ethic is equally visible in *Elysium* with the culmination of an appeal for religious freedom, regarded by Barry as the most important civil right. Interacting with a wider European tradition of history painting, which he believed was "the most effective means of teaching civic virtues and civil rights," Barry contrasted the injustices in Ireland with an idealised representation of "a single [cosmopolitan] state of which all nations are members."[54] Despite the profusion of iconography in *Elysium*, Barry intended to "unite the

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[52] *Ibid.*, 653.

[53] "Tracts Relative to the Laws Against Popery in Ireland," *Letters, Speeches and Tracts on Irish Affairs*, accessed 1 December 2016, http://www.ricorso.net/rx/library/authors/classic/Burke_E/Ir_Affairs/Tracts_1763.htm#TOContents.

[54] John Barrell, "Reform and Revolution: James Barry's Writings in the 1790s," in *James Barry, 1741-1806: History Painter*, ed. Tom Dunne and William L. Pressly (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 1988), 130; Guernsey, "Catholicism and Counter Revolution," 215 (Author's parentheses).

agency of every individual within the idealized realm."[55] Hence, the viewer was expected to use their reason to unify the painting's symbolism, and subsequently extend their understanding and judgement. Through this Barry presents the possible future politics of both England and Ireland which depended upon the political spectator's refined judgement, and which would eventually influence national laws and characteristics.

IV.

In conclusion, the politicised aesthetic of Edmund Burke's *Enquiry* is evident in the politician's own later works and the literary and artistic productions of James Barry through the interpretation of national government as sublime and local affections as beautiful. While these passions are most powerful when separate, they are not mutually exclusive, and both Burke and Barry unite the sublime and beautiful. For Burke this is to establish the necessity of moderate government in his *Reflections* and to ensure the security of the British state in the wake of the French Revolution; whereas for Barry it is to disguise his Catholicism and to encourage the spectator to engage more closely with his works. For both figures, however, their position as ostensibly *Hiberno-Britons* allowed unique perspectives into the eighteenth-century project of the British nation. This enables them to call for a cosmopolitan ethic in the national government that would recognise and accept local variations of culture. As Liam Lenihan argues, Barry did not see Ireland as an isolated identity, but rather "*the* test case on how well Britain realized the ideal of liberty," and the same may be said of Burke.[56] Their local affections gave them a heightened awareness of inconsistencies in British justice, encouraged them to promote cosmopolitan ethics, and facilitated their claims to multiple identities, as Irish, British, and European. This led Barry to comment sympathetically on the art of ancient Greece, Rome and Renaissance Italy, and to strive for Britain to achieve an equal standard among these traditions. This also led Burke to observe the connectivity of Europe, to fear that after the French Revolution "the glory of Europe [was]

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[55] Lenihan, *The Writings of James Barry*, 65.
[56] *Ibid.*, 3.

extinguished forever," and to encourage the British government to secure its own state by addressing the injustices in Ireland.[57] The receptivity of the Westminster parliament to this appeal might be inferred from the violent outbreak of the 1798 Rebellion, just one year after Burke's death. Nonetheless, the perspective of these late eighteenth-century Irish writers enabled them to move fluently from local to national concerns which inspired their call for enlightened liberty, toleration and cooperation beyond national borders. As Burke writes, a "clear idea is therefore another name for a little idea," and so his grand vision of European and international unity, though complex and obscure, was necessarily sublime in its magnitude and is yet to be achieved.[58]

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[57] Burke, *Reflections*, 66.
[58] Burke, *Enquiry*, 63.

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