

# A CRITICISM OF EDMUND BURKE'S CONCEPTION OF PATRIOTISM\*

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## Abstract

This paper draws on scholarship examining Edmund Burke's emotionalism in order to conceptualize his understanding of patriotism, and to understand how it hangs together with other dimensions of his political and aesthetic thought. More substantively, the paper takes the further step of engaging with recent accounts of patriotism in order to criticize Burke's patriotism. According to sympathetic views of Burke's patriotism, and the theory of emotions that underlies it, the latter has resources to ground a cosmopolitanism of a particular kind. The paper contests these views by highlighting the affinities of Burkean patriotism to some objectionable forms of patriotism, such as Alasdair MacIntyre's version of it, and its incompatibility with less objectionable forms, such as Jürgen Habermas's.

*Key words:* Edmund Burke, patriotism, emotions, Jürgen Habermas.

## Resumen

Este artículo se apoya en la literatura sobre el papel de las emociones en la filosofía de Edmund Burke para caracterizar su concepción del patriotismo, y para entender cómo se relaciona con otras dimensiones de su pensamiento político y estético. Más importante aún, el artículo rechaza la idea de que el patriotismo

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Burkeano (y su anclaje en una teoría particular de las emociones) sirva como base para articular una visión cosmopolita de la política. El trabajo hace una crítica de la concepción Burkeana del patriotismo a partir de una comparación de éste con algunas concepciones más recientes sobre el fenómeno. Primero, el artículo pone de relieve la afinidad del patriotismo Burkeano con la versión moralmente inaceptable de Alasdair MacIntyre. Después muestra su incompatibilidad con versiones menos objetables como la de Jürgen Habermas.

*Palabras clave:* Edmund Burke, patriotismo, emociones, Jürgen Habermas.

This paper offers an examination and a criticism of Edmund Burke's conception of patriotism. It seeks to show how Burke's adherence to what Stephen White calls "aesthetic-affective" values<sup>1</sup> shapes his understanding of patriotism, with important normative implications that will be the subject of critical evaluation in this piece. Chivalric patriotism, as I will call it, has several features, which the paper fleshes out, assesses, and criticizes. They are the following. Predictably, it is reactive or defensive patriotism, premised on "masculine" virtues. Furthermore, it is unreflective patriotism, embracing a non-cognitive view of emotions, wherein these are "moods" barely susceptible to revision or critical scrutiny. It is also unreflective in that it deprives what it calls "rationalism" of aesthetic value. The trademark of chivalric patriotism is its inability to detach itself from pre-political bonds or at least to loosen their grip. Finally, it is patriotism that invites selectivity with respect to collective memory; that is, it purges from the narrative of history those events that do not elicit the appropriate set of emotions in citizens, or that elicit inappropriate ones.

This paper, then, draws on scholarship examining Burke's emotionalism in order to characterize his conception of patriotism, and to understand how it hangs together with other dimensions of his political and aesthetic thought. More substantively, the paper takes the further step of engaging with recent accounts of patriotism in order to criticize Burke's patriotism. According to sympathetic views of Burke's emotionalism, the latter has resources to ground a cosmopolitanism

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen White, *Edmund Burke: Modernity, Politics, Aesthetics* Oxford, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002, 5, 48.

of a particular kind. The paper contests these views by highlighting the affinities of chivalric patriotism to some objectionable forms of patriotism, and its incompatibility with less objectionable forms. Parochial, sentimental, susceptible to misuse—these are labels that more adequately describe chivalric patriotism.

This paper is divided into three sections. The first section highlights some of the elements in Burke's political thought that vindicate the value of sentiments and beauty in public life. The second section teases out Burke's understanding of patriotism, putting emphasis on its aesthetic and emotional basis. I focus on two key texts: *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*<sup>2</sup> and *Reflections on the Revolution in France*,<sup>3</sup> although reference will also be made to some of his other texts. The third section critically evaluates Burke's conception of patriotism by contrasting it to Alasdair MacIntyre's notion of patriotism, as well Jürgen Habermas's "constitutional patriotism."

Before setting out, let me comment on a very telling literary reference that Burke makes in the course of his diatribe against French revolutionaries. The best know adventure of the Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha has him charging against windmills that his madness had disguised as threatening giants. A more meaningful episode, however, is the story in which a self-deluded Don Quixote takes a galley carrying a group of criminals to be a host of captives forced to penurious labor. "These people—he says—are going where they are taking them by force, and not of their own will [...] here is a case for the exercise of my office, to put down force, and to succour and help the wretched" (I, XX). And seizing what he believes to be the next opportunity to undo a wrongdoing, and against the wise warning of the illiterate Sancho Panza, who knows that the "captives" are in fact prisoners of the King, the Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance strikes and accomplishes the heroic prowess of setting a pack of ruffians free. In his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Edmund Burke refers to this quixotic incident to illustrate the detrimental effects of "abstract freedom." Our knightly hero sincerely believed to be working in the service of liberty. But what

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<sup>2</sup> All references come from Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998. Henceforth *Enquiry*.

<sup>3</sup> Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, in *Select Works of Edmund Burke*, Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1999, Vol. 2.

kind of liberty did he bring about? How commendable is the liberation of an outlaw? Liberty without a consideration of circumstance, Burke argues, is an empty word. Hence Don Quixote is a “metaphysic” Knight: a man whose lack of understanding of the specific situations, whose delusion causes more harm than good.

And yet in spite of his contempt for Don Quixote, Burke was fond of knighthood. Burke despised the metaphysic delusions of Don Quixote; his knightly enthusiasm, however, he praised. He regrets the unfortunate fact that The Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance has used his spear metaphysically, that is, for the wrong (abstract) cause, but he does not jeer his chivalric spirit: his bravery, his honor, his gallantry. It is his metaphysical action, not his knightly nature, what deserves Burkean scorn. In fact, Don Quixote embodies a set of values that Burke ultimately endorses and that nourish his nostalgia. The aftermath of the French Revolution marked the decline of what Burke ruefully called the age of chivalry. The feelings associated with it had withered in the modern, reason-oriented world. The beautiful plant of sentiments exemplified by chivalry had been over-exposed to the sun of a new rational era and was drying out.

### **I. Aesthetics and Emotions in Burke’s Political Thought**

Good observer that he was of the social structures limiting individual agency, Karl Marx acutely observed in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon* that the “tradition of all past generations weighs like an alp upon the brain of the living.” The Marxian evaluation of those traditions was far from being a positive one, as his metaphor suggests. In contrast, where Marx saw an alp crushing human brains, Burke saw a mountain that raised the Pygmy of individual reason to greater heights. Traditions—or prejudices, as he calls them—are elevations upon which individuals stand to have a clearer view of their past and their possible future. They are the massive giants upon whose shoulder dwarfish human beings stand. This is the sense of the Burkean cherishment of prejudices in *Reflections on the Revolution in France*: “We are afraid to put men to live and trade each on his own private stock of reason; because we suspect that this stock in each man is small, and that individuals would do better to avail themselves of the general

bank and capital of nations, and of ages."<sup>4</sup> Better to stock a large heap of private reasons inherited from the past for everyone to climb on, than to place our confidence in the low mound of limited individual rationality. Governing human affairs is so complicated that it requires an amount of experience that a single man will never acquire on his own. Additionally, abstract reasoning is not a good substitute of experience. Those who believe that government policy can be crafted without very close attention to specific circumstances are, in Burke's merry language, metaphysicians, calculators, alchemists, "oeconomists," aeronauts, and grasshoppers. One cannot govern, for instance, on the basis of abstract rights such as Liberty, Equality, Fraternity and other forms of (Burke would say) gibberish. The lesson to be learned is straightforward: given the complex nature of governmental workings, it is better, first, to rely on the recipes of our forefathers instead of trying to set out *ex nihilo*, from the groundwork of a speculation about government, however sophisticated the latter might be. "Antient rules of life" are a "compass to govern us"; they tell us "to what port we steer."<sup>5</sup> Without them we are led astray. Secondly, by the same token, it is necessary to free one's nation from the "spirit of innovation," which is the offspring of abstract reason, and, in contrast, to infuse a "spirit of caution."<sup>6</sup> Not only because untried innovations are doomed to fail, but foremost because they carry unpredictable and harmful side-effects.<sup>7</sup>

But neglect of tradition and prejudices is not the sole charge that Burke levels against rationalism in politics. Reason is antithetical to tradition and prejudices, but it can also be regarded as hostile to sentiments. Rationality can take over areas of man's lives that should be restricted to emotions. In Burke's words: "Reason banishes affection." Or put another way: "The politics of revolution [...] temper and harden the breast."<sup>8</sup> This has not only individual but, more importantly, social consequences. Only with the aid of our sentiments in all their simplicity and natural state can we perceive what is beautiful; and in its turn, only the perception of beauty is able to strengthen those bonds that allow

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<sup>4</sup> Burke, *Reflections*, 182.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, 172.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, 115.

<sup>7</sup> On this point, the contemporary disciple of Burke is, of course, Michael Oakeshott. See his *Rationalism in Politics*, Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1991.

<sup>8</sup> Burke, *Reflections*, 157, 171.

us to live in society. "We preserve the whole of our feelings still native and entire, unsophisticated by pedantry and infidelity. We have real hearts of flesh and blood beating in our bosom."<sup>9</sup> This is, in a nut-shell, the general thrust of Burke's argument, which will be developed in the following lines.<sup>10</sup>

Burkean political ideas have an aesthetic basis.<sup>11</sup> More than forty years before he drew his pen from his scabbard to write the *Reflections on the Revolution in France* and defend England from the contamination of French-enlightened ideas, Burke wrote a small and yet highly influential treatise on aesthetics: *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Causes of the Sublime and the Beautiful*. He distinguished there between two human passions: those that belong to self-preservation and those that "pertain to society." The former are the most powerful passions and they are the source of what Burke calls the sublime. They arise from terror, that is, from what excites pain and danger, from what fills men with images of horror, and they are the strongest emotion that the mind is capable of feeling. Beauty, on the other hand, arises from pleasure, not from pain. When other creatures (animals or humans) give us pleasure in beholding them they inspire us "with sentiments of tenderness and affection." Beauty is "that quality or those qualities in bodies by which they cause love, or some passion similar to it."<sup>12</sup>

Beauty, then, arises from imagination, not from a judgment based on reason, or so Burke argues. Attributes such as proportion, which is an off-spring of reasoning, is not of itself an element of beauty. The attributes of proportion such as method and exactness are rather prejudicial, not serviceable, to the cause of beauty. Proportion is "a

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<sup>9</sup> Burke, *Reflections*, 181.

<sup>10</sup> One of the best works addressing Burke's emotionalism is Seamus Deane, *Foreign Affections* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005). From a different perspective, see Mary Jean Corbett, "Public Affections and Familial Politics: Burke, Edgeworth, and the 'Common Naturalization' of Great Britain," *ELH* 61, 4 (Winter 1994), 877-897.

<sup>11</sup> As Stephen White (*Edmund Burke: Modernity, Politics, Aesthetics*, 10) notes, Burke's "aesthetic ideas are [...] interwoven with his broader reflections on the social and political world."

<sup>12</sup> Burke, *Enquiry*, 39. Burke's account of the emotional economy of political order is richer than Hobbes's, which focuses exclusively on the emotions such as fear.

creature of understanding, rather than a primary cause acting on the senses and imagination. It is not by the force of long attention and enquiry that we find any object to be beautiful; beauty demands no assistance from our reasoning; even the will is unconcerned.<sup>13</sup> Many problems would emerge were beauty proportional. For instance, who is to determine what the proportions for beauty are? Even if an agreement is reached, what if you determine the adequate proportions and then find a beautiful woman who differs in those measurements? “[Y]ou must conclude her not to be beautiful in spite of the suggestions of your imagination; or in obedience to your imagination you must renounce your rules; you must lay by the scale and compass, and look out for some other cause of beauty.”<sup>14</sup> It is not the rigorous, dull, cold dictate of rationality what allow men to hit upon beauty, but the soft, musical voice of our imagination.

Two examples should suffice to illustrate the point. Burke makes reference to the effort of transferring mathematical ideas to man's everyday objects in order to “improve” nature.

Therefore having observed, that their dwellings were most commodious and firm when they were thrown into regular figures, with parts answerable to each other; they transferred these ideas to their gardens; they turned their trees into pillars, pyramids and obelisks; they formed their hedges into so many green walls, and fashioned the walks into squares, triangles and other mathematical figures, with exactness and symmetry; and they thought if they were not imitating, they were at least improving nature, and teaching her to know her business. But nature has escaped from their discipline and their fetters; and our gardens, if nothing else, declare, we begin to feel that the mathematical ideas are not the true measures of beauty.<sup>15</sup>

Again, rational notions of proportion are not the standards of beauty; the sentimental suggestions of our imagination are:

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 84.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 89.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 92.

When a room appears in its original nakedness, bare walls and a plain ceiling; let its proportion be ever so excellent, it pleases very little; a cold approbation is the utmost we can reach; a much worse proportioned room, with elegant mouldings and fine festoons, glasses, and other merely ornamental furniture, will make the imagination revolt against reason; it will please much more than the naked proportion of the first room which the understanding has so much approved, as admirably fitted for its purposes.<sup>16</sup>

Imagination revolts against reason. The sophistications of rationality impose “discipline and fetters” upon feelings, which are supposed to be simple and natural. Hence, imagination—as the source of sentiments—must rebel against the tyranny of reason.

In writing *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Burke dipped his pen in the same ink that produced his treatise on aesthetics. It is not an exaggeration to argue that both works are by and large a vindication of sentiments, and that the former heavily influenced the latter. As argued before, Burke’s criticism of rationalism in politics is an instance of his traditionalism. True, but this misses the larger picture. Often, when Burke reveals his preference for prejudices as opposed to reason, feelings are always close at hand in his rhetoric. Take the passage quoted in the first section of this essay: “We are afraid to put men to live and trade each on his own private stock of reason; because we suspect that this stock in each man is small, and that individuals would do better to avail themselves of the general bank and capital of nations, and of ages”. As has already been mentioned, the passage reflects Burkean mistrust of individual reason, and the conviction that the Wisdom of the forefather overrides petty, individual reason. But now consider a line that precedes the passage just quoted: “in this enlightened age I am bold enough to confess, that we are generally men of untaught feelings; that instead of casting away all our prejudices, we cherish them to a very considerable degree, and, to take more shame to ourselves, we cherish them because they are prejudices.”<sup>17</sup> This is not (only) a manifesto of the proud fool who rejoices in his ignorance, the defying idiot giving air to his idiocy.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 99.

<sup>17</sup> Burke, *Reflections*, 182.

It is (also) the defense of feelings over reason. Men of untaught feelings are wiser, better men. They have not being exposed to the corrupting brightness of reason, which perverts "natural" sentiments. Better to be "Influenced by the inborn feelings of nature, and not being illuminated by a single ray of this new-sprung modern light."<sup>18</sup> Burke's praise of *untaught* and *inborn* feelings suggests an understanding of emotions that regards them as not being susceptible of revision or change. Put differently, Burke's emotionalism stands in some degree of tension with a cognitive view of emotions, which holds that the latter can (and sometimes should) be subject to revision and change, particularly in political affairs.<sup>19</sup> This does not mean that Burke overlooks what Lauren Hall calls "the interconnectivity of reasons and emotions,"<sup>20</sup> or the view that emotions may supplement reason. In line with Hume's belief that reason has no place in moral issues and that it is an inert element of human activity, whereas passion is the active part because it motivate us to act,<sup>21</sup> Burke states: "vehement passion [...] often accompanies, and actuates, and is even auxiliary to a powerful understanding; and when they both conspire and act harmoniously, their force is great to destroy disorder within, and to repel injury from abroad."<sup>22</sup> What Burke fails to mention is what happens when passion and understanding do not work in harmony. In some cases instead of accompanying and being auxiliary

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<sup>18</sup> Burke, *Reflections*, 168.

<sup>19</sup> On the ability to revise and change one's emotions, Jon Elster, *Alchemies of the Mind: Rationality and the Emotions*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999; Susan James, "Passions and Politics," in Anthony Hatzimoysis, ed. *Philosophy and the Emotions*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003; Susan James, "The Politics of Emotion: Liberalism and Cognitivism," Anthony O'Hear, ed., *Political Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006; and in particular Martha Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire. Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996; and Martha Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought. The Intelligence of Emotions*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

<sup>20</sup> Lauren Hall, "Rights and the Heart: Emotions and Right Claims in the Political Theory of Edmund Burke," *The Review of Politics* 73 (2011), 621.

<sup>21</sup> See David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, 3.1.1. 7 and 10. See also Sheldon Wolin, "Hume and Conservatism," *APSR* 48 (4), 1954, 999-1016.

<sup>22</sup> Edmund Burke, "On the Proposals for Peace," in *Select Works*, 3:218. Hall quotes this passage in "Rights and the Heart."

to reason, the vehemence of passion runs into conflict with a “powerful understanding.” And one of them has to yield.

## II. Chivalric Patriots: Beauty and Locality in Burke’s Political Economy of Emotions

The previous section examined some features of Burke’s political ideas as they relate to aesthetics and emotions. This section shows how these ideas inform his understanding of patriotism. In thinking about the elements that make political order possible, Burke assigns a crucial role to institutions that can emotionally bind individuals to the nation by earning their affection. Burke’s political economy of emotions has beauty and locality as its central components. Citizens, as members of a political community, can only be genuinely attached to institutions for which they feel affection, and only beauty can produce such affection. As we saw in the *Enquiry*, beauty “demands no assistance from our reasoning,” only the “suggestions of imagination.” Furthermore, I take Burke to be making the point that locality, as expressed in long-held traditions that arise organically (“naturally”) in the nation, is a close reflection of the “suggestions of imagination,” much more capable of producing beauty than abstract (mathematical) ideas. Politically relevant aesthetic pleasure cannot be the work of political geometry, only of political geography. Burke is critical of “uprooted” political ties because he believes we can best approach beauty through rootedness in the local. I argue that the aesthetic pressure, as it were, that he deposits on local institutions is at the bottom of Burke’s chivalric patriotism.

Let me begin by considering a parallel that Burke draws between the revolutionary events in France and the Reformation. Both episodes, he writes, are “revolutions of doctrine and theoretic dogma.” One of the effects of the Reformation in Europe, he continues, was “to introduce other interests into all countries than those which arose from their locality and natural circumstances.” The basis of the Reformation, the doctrine of “Justification by Faith or by Works,” could not be true in Germany and false in France. As a result, the “warm parties in each state were more affectionately attached to those of their own doctrinal interest in some other country than to their fellow-citizen or to their

natural government." The upshot of this was that what Burke called "the locality of patriotism" was "weakened and distracted."<sup>23</sup>

Attachment without roots is not really affection for Burke, despite what he intimates in the lines above. In *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, he writes of the French revolutionaries: "Without opening one new avenue to the understanding, they have succeeded in stopping up those that lead to the breast."<sup>24</sup> Why is it so terrible that the avenues towards the heart are clogged? Let us get to the answer by way of one of the most celebrated images in *Reflections*, where a poetic Burke carves his words into the figure of a beautiful woman: "surely never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision. I saw her just above the horizon, decorating and cheering the elevated sphere she just began to move in; glittering like the morning star, full of life, and splendor, and joy."<sup>25</sup> The woman is the queen of France, Marie-Antoinette, and the figurative idealization—for Burke *is* intentionally idealizing the queen<sup>26</sup>—serves as a contrast to the queen's disgraceful escape from the devilish, swinish mob in Versailles:

A band of cruel ruffians and assassins, reeking with his blood [the blood, that is, of the sentinel they have just slain], rushed into the chamber of the queen, and pierced with an hundred strokes of bayonets and

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<sup>23</sup> In "Thoughts on French Affairs," *The Works of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke*, 16 vols. London: Rivington, 1822, 7:15. Emphasis added. In discussing patriotism in the context of the French Revolution, Burke also writes that "No man has ever willingly obeyed, much less was desirous of defending with his blood, a mischievous and absurd scheme of government." Burke, *Select Works of Edmund Burke*. A New Imprint of the Payne Edition. Foreword and Biographical Note by Francis Canavan, Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1999. Vol. 4. Chapter: "Speech on the Reform of the Representation of the Commons in Parliament." Accessed from <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/659/20394/1385323> on 2014-02-10.

<sup>24</sup> Burke, *Reflections*, 157.

<sup>25</sup> Burke, *Reflections*, 169.

<sup>26</sup> Don Herzog holds that Burke says different things to different audiences. For public consumption, Burke eulogizes the queen, in the manner just described. By contrast, in his private correspondence he ridicules her. See Don Herzog, *Poisoning the Minds of the Lower Orders*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999, 27.

poniards the bed, from whence this persecuted woman had but just had time to fly almost naked, and through ways unknown to the murderers had escaped to seek refuge at the feet of a king and husband, not secure of his own life for a moment.<sup>27</sup>

One might be tempted to throw psychoanalytic conjectures at this passage.<sup>28</sup> Suffice it to point out what shocked Burke about the incident: no heroic cavalier came to the rescue of the disgraced queen; no knight to undo “the accumulated wrongs” that burdened her queenly honor: “I thought ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened her with insult. –But the age of chivalry is gone. That of sophisters, oeconomists, and calculators, has succeeded.”<sup>29</sup> What Burke has in mind here is of course a diluted and not so demanding version of the high-mindedness of medieval chivalric values. The nobility and, importantly, the beauty of the queen, who is the representative of the nation, did not stop the mob from threatening and chasing her, and it did not inspire anyone to rescue her. The mob had been exposed to the corrupting light of reason, so that it was insensitive to the queen’s own light. The Enlightenment of the French Revolution had closed the avenues to the heart because it no longer encouraged respectful treatment towards women as would have been the case—so Burke thought—during the Middle Ages, when the chivalric spirit suffused the traditional norms of the French nation.

Just as aristocratic women are left unprotected from the “swinish multitude” as a consequence of the waning age of chivalry, so is patriotism undermined. The loss of chivalric spirit, Burke explains, destroys “The unbought grace of life, the cheap defence of nations, the nurse of manly sentiment and heroic enterprize.”<sup>30</sup> The sentence is somewhat vague, but its meaning boils down to the following: if that

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<sup>27</sup> Burke, *Reflections*, 164. For an extremely interesting take on this passage from the perspective of gender theory see Linda Zerrilli, *Signifying Women. Culture and Chaos in Rousseau, Burke, and Mill*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994, 85ff.

<sup>28</sup> For this, the *locus classicus* is Isaac Kramnick, *The Rage of Edmund Burke*, New York: Basic Books, 1977.

<sup>29</sup> Burke, *Reflections*, 169.

<sup>30</sup> Burke, *Reflections*, 170.

affectionate passion for one's country is gone, it (the country) will be at the mercy of itself and of its enemies. No one will be willing to do anything heroic, let alone sacrifice oneself, for one's nation. The spirit of patriotism will fade along with the age of chivalry.

How exactly were the French revolutionaries proceeding to undermine the affection of the subjects for their country? The question brings us back to Burke's discussion on the gauge of beauty, and to the connection of the beautiful with affection as discussed earlier in this essay. In *Reflections*, he writes: "To make us love our country, our country ought to be lovely."<sup>31</sup> If we are to love our nation, the nation should be beautiful. The French metaphysicians had all sorts of shortcomings—they were inexperienced, they were ambitious. As importantly, though, they were insensible, cold-hearted, and incapable of perceiving—let alone creating—anything beautiful. They had taken proportion and symmetry to be the standards of beauty. An instance of this error of insensibility was the territorial reform they had implemented in France, which erased ancient boundaries, discarded as "mere rubbish."<sup>32</sup> Pulling out their rulers and pencils, the revolutionaries had proceeded by "square measurement"<sup>33</sup> to divide the country into Departments, Communes, and Cantons. This geometrical policy, Burke argued, would fail to produce "Frenchness." Breton and Norman identity—to borrow a contemporary term—could not be dissolved and then recombined to produce French identity, and the reason was simple:

No man ever was attached by a sense of pride, partiality, or real affection, to a description of square measurement. He will never glory in belonging to the Checquer, No. 71, or to any other badge-ticket. We begin our public affections in our families. No cold relation is a zealous citizen. We pass on to our neighbourhoods, and our habitual provincial connections. These are inns and resting-places. Such divisions of our country as have been formed by habit, and not by a sudden jerk of authority, were so many little images of our country in which the heart found something which it could

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<sup>31</sup> Burke, *Reflections*, 172.

<sup>32</sup> Burke, *Reflections*, 279.

<sup>33</sup> Burke, *Reflections*, 280.

fill. The love to the whole is not extinguished by this subordinate partiality.<sup>34</sup>

Proportion, the description of a square measurement, does not make a nation beautiful, and thus it cannot produce affection in the hearts of the citizens, let alone engender patriotism. A Norman would certainly love Normandy, never the Checquer No. 71. It is to “the wardrobe of moral imagination,”<sup>35</sup> which “the heart owns,” that citizens turn in order to support their judgment of the beauty of their country.

But the wardrobe of moral imagination is capacious, and contains all sorts of disguises. Burke argues in his treatise on aesthetics that there are universal standards of beauty; smoothness, smallness, gradual variation, delicacy, and so on, are universal traits of beautiful objects. When it comes to nations, however, figuring out the standards of beauty is a very complicated task. One thing is certain for Burke: these standards cannot be rational attributes, such as proportion and the like. One can clothe his or her country with any “decent drapery” from the imagination’s wardrobe. It might even be necessary—in a less generous interpretation of Burke’s patriotism—to idealize one’s nation in order to love it. To make us love our country, our country ought to be idealized. We have seen how Burke idealizes the queen of France, even when he knows that “It is not to be expected, that she would elevate her mind.” Marie-Antoinette is a fool, but she should be clothed in the disguise of a beautiful, lofty queen. Likewise, in one of his speeches on the impeachment of Warren Hastings, Burke (in)famously calls for a veil to be placed over the violent origins of the state.<sup>36</sup> The passage refers to Robert Clive, who led the British military expansion in India

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<sup>34</sup> Burke, *Reflections*, 307.

<sup>35</sup> Burke, *Reflections*, 171.

<sup>36</sup> Edmund Burke, “Speeches of Mr. Burke on the Impeachment of Warren Hastings, Esq., 16. Feb. 1788,” in *The Works of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke*, Boston: Wells and Lilly-Courty Street, 1827, 13:95. The exact reference goes as follows: “Many circumstances of this acquisition [of India] I pass by. There is a sacred veil to be drawn over the beginnings of all governments. Ours in India had an origin like those which time has sanctified by obscurity. Time in the origin of most governments has thrown this mysterious veil over them; prudence and discretion make it necessary to throw something of the same drapery over more recent foundations in which otherwise the fortune, the genius, the talents and military virtue of this nation never shone more conspicuously.”

that concluded in the conquest of Bengal. In Burke's narrative, Clive "forded a deep water upon an unknown bottom, he left a bridge for his successors over which the lame could hobble and the blind might grope their way." According to a commentator, Burke's goal in obscuring these episodes is "to use this semi-mythical past to mobilize moral outrage against the commercial rule of India."<sup>37</sup> Regardless of the goal of Burke's historical exaggeration,<sup>38</sup> his portrayal of British colonization underplays its problematic aspects. To repeat, "To make us love our country, our country ought to be lovely." A criminal past does not make a country lovely. It would inspire shame, which is not an emotion that triggers tenderness and affection.

Let me recapitulate some of the features of Burkean or chivalric patriotism that I have underscored in the course of my discussion in this section. Chivalric patriotism is grounded on cultural and local loyalties, and has an affective and aesthetic basis through and through. It means loving a beautiful country, because it is *your* beautiful country. Such patriotism, in its aestheticizing campaigns, takes license to hide those episodes of the patria's history that do not meet the standard of beauty. This is of course true of many forms of patriotism; most of them hinge on a stylized and selective portrayal of a nation's past. But in Burke's case, the margins of invention (imagination) seem wide. They leave out fragments of the past, say, a history of colonial oppression, that most would consider shameful, for shame is not an emotion that can produce pleasure or inspire tenderness and affection. Finally, chivalric patriotism is defensive and "manly" — it is a martial kind of patriotism.

At this point, some objections to my arguments might be raised. One could argue that Burke's career does not seem to support my characterization of chivalric patriotism. After all, as was already mentioned, his decade-long effort to impeach Hastings for his atrocities in India is well known. If chivalric patriotism is unreflective and prone to support noble lies over objective truth, if it requires the "idealization" of the homeland, then why did Burke strive so openly and so vehemently

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<sup>37</sup> Brian Smith, "Edmund Burke, the Warren Hastings Trial, and the Moral Dimension of Corruption," *Polity* 40(1), 2008.

<sup>38</sup> Steven Stryer analyzes the syntactical patterns that Burke uses "in order to push apart past and present through the rhetoric of exaggeration" in "Burke's Vehemence and the Rhetoric of Historical Exaggeration," *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric*, 30(2): 2012, 178.

to correct the injustices of British colonialism in India? Or what about his partiality towards the Irish? Do the Indian and Irish chapters of Burke's political career not challenge the characterization of chivalric patriotism I have been making? Was Burke simply inconsistent?

I have several replies to these objections. First, I am not arguing that chivalric patriotism gives license to legitimate unprincipled political action, or covers *any* inconvenient truth under a veil of oblivion. Take the Indian case. Certainly Burke fought ceaselessly to impeach Hastings for his abuses in India. But note that he was careful to portray the atrocities of the East India Company as the result of the misdeeds of one man who *deviated* from British principles,<sup>39</sup> a man, to put it in the terms of this paper, who was not a genuine patriot, let alone a gentleman. According to Burke, membership in the East India Company was not merely a matter of profit and adventure. It implied the endorsement of its historical inheritance, that is, the ideals of English civil society and constitutional politics. The original constitution of the East India Company incarnated British ideals. Hastings' crime was to subvert its noble origins.<sup>40</sup> Burke's thought avoids in this way a seeming contradiction—arguing on the one hand for an instinctive kind of patriotism while on the other holding himself and his country to a higher standard, guided by principles of right.<sup>41</sup> Burke's campaign against Hastings in no way debunks the characterization I have made of chivalric patriotism.

A related objection is the following: What could be problematic about adhering to the account of emotions I am attributing to Burke's political thought, if it did not lead him to a noxious form of political action? If his political career belies his theoretical appeals to emotional/aesthetic

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<sup>39</sup> On these points see Jeff Bass, "The Perversion of Empire: Edmund Burke and the Nature of Imperial Responsibility," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81(2), 1995.

<sup>40</sup> Brian Smith, "Edmund Burke, the Warren Hastings Trial, and the Moral Dimension of Corruption," 82.

<sup>41</sup> Burke never questioned British imperial rule per se; he thought it was legitimate, and that Indian culture, history, and reigning social and political practice did not allow for representative rule anyways. I hardly need to point out that the problem with colonialism generally is not that occasionally some opportunists take advantage of the situation by abusing the system. The system is the problem. Burke's indictment of the East India Company eschews the structural nature of British oppression of India.

values, what is the point of dwelling on such appeals? As a response to this objection, let me restate that the purpose of this paper is to level a criticism against chivalric patriotism. Implicit in this claim is that the subject of criticism is not Burke the politician, or even Burke the author. I am less interested in what Burke did as a parliamentarian or even what he *intended* to argue at a theoretical level, than I am in the *implications* of his thought. Here I harken back to some well-rehearsed methodological debates about the varieties of textual interpretation in the history of political ideas.<sup>42</sup> In examining John Locke's *Second Treatise*, one could painstakingly show that his *intention* was not to lay the intellectual foundations for capitalism. But Locke's intentions notwithstanding, the actual implications of his theory of appropriation and consent were just that. There is no reason why one should limit scholarly attention to the author's intentions, as opposed to the implications of his thought. Similarly, it may be true that in articulating what I am calling chivalric patriotism, Burke does not intend to promote objectionable forms of political agency. Whether it does promote them is another matter. I will return to this point at greater length in the next section.

To conclude this section, let us look back to Don Quixote, whom we have neglected thus far. It goes without saying that the sword of the Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance would have leaped from his scabbard to assist the queen of France when she fled, terrified, from the fury of the swinish multitude. That is a wrong that Don Quixote would have tried to undo without hesitation, because even though he had lost his reason, he was certainly a passionate knight. If Burke idealized Marie-Antoinette in order to underscore the outrageous fact that no gentleman had drawn his sword to defend the honor of the queen, Don Quixote had his own distorted image of her Lady Dulcinea del Toboso, who in the knight's eyes was a beautiful and noble woman, but who in reality was the not very good-looking and not at all aristocratic Aldonza Lorenzo. Don Quixote too pulled out armor and an idealization of Dulcinea from his wardrobe of moral imagination.

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<sup>42</sup> See, for instance, the essays in James Tully (ed.), *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and His Critics*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988.

### III. Alternative Patriotisms

This section compares chivalric patriotism to two other kinds of patriotism—Alasdair MacIntyre’s patriotism, on the one hand, and what one might call reflective patriotism, as represented by Alexis de Tocqueville and Jürgen Habermas, on the other. These contrasts will help me bring into clarity some of the unsettling dimensions of Burkean patriotism, in particular its reliance on parochial, defensive, masculine, and unreflective attitudes, as well as on pre-political commitments and selective appropriations of the past. As I developed at length in the previous section, the patriot in Burke’s view is moved by the blind attachment to his culture, and by the recognition of the beauty of his turf. He would never be drawn to action to defend the Chequer 71. This would be too abstract a loyalty—a loyalty, that is, towards an abstraction with no inherent beauty. By the same token, when one’s culture and history include dark chapters of aggression or oppression of other peoples, it is better to throw a veil over them and “recover” only uplifting episodes, than to defend abstract affiliations (say, to political equality of all, to freedom, and so on). This section provides some grounds to criticize this conception, and indicates how other patriotisms are open to the same objections, or circumvent them.

Alasdair MacIntyre’s patriotism has strong similarities to Burke’s, although MacIntyre himself rejected affiliation to Burkean traditionalism.<sup>43</sup> Admittedly, MacIntyre never espoused any view recommending the suppression from the annals of history of inconvenient past events. He states clearly: “if I do not understand the enacted narrative of my own individual life as embedded in the history of my country [...] I will not understand what I owe to others or what others owe to me, *for what crimes of my nation I am bound to make reparation, for what benefits to my nation I am bound to feel gratitude.*”<sup>44</sup> In other respects, however, MacIntyre patriotism strikes very Burkean notes. For one, even though he understand patriotism as standing by one’s “nation

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<sup>43</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue. A Study in Moral Theory*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1981, 211-2.

<sup>44</sup> MacIntyre, “Is Patriotism a Virtue?,” in I. Primoratz (ed.), *Patriotism*, Amherst: Humanity Books, 2002, 55.

conceived as a project," and not as blindly supporting those in power, MacIntyre nonetheless admits that "at least some practices and projects of her country [...] will be beyond questioning and critical scrutiny." Patriotism is for MacIntyre "a fundamentally irrational attitude."<sup>45</sup> For another, both authors share their communitarian commitments. While many theorists describe patriotism as being inconsistent or in tension with morality, MacIntyre in fact thought that patriotism was a form of morality. It is so, he claims, because it puts emphasis on personal bonds and the moral significance of being a member of a polity, which in his view are the foundations of morality. MacIntyre criticized what he took to be an "emasculated" form of patriotism, which he attributed to the "liberal moralist" who values universal and impersonal values over local loyalties. MacIntyre described such patriotism somewhat dismissively as the "perfectly proper devotion to one's own nation which must never be allowed to violate the constraints set by the impersonal moral standpoint." MacIntyre concludes: "Patriotism thus limited in its scope appears to be emasculated, and it does so because in some of the most important situations of actual social life either the patriotic standpoint comes into serious conflict with the standpoint of a genuinely impersonal morality or it amounts to no more than a set of practically empty slogans."<sup>46</sup> We find here the common charge of communitarianism against liberalism—that it gives normative priority to "neutral" moral points of view over obligation to one's community, and to impersonal attachments over the strong identification of citizens with their commonwealth.<sup>47</sup> Burke's conviction, mentioned before, that the ideals of the Reformation and the French Revolution were the result "doctrinal interest" that undermined "affection" for one's fellow-citizens

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<sup>45</sup> MacIntyre, "Is Patriotism a Virtue?," 52. This interpretation of MacIntyre's lecture on patriotism relies heavily on the introduction to Igor Primoratz, and Aleksandar Pavkovic (eds.), *Patriotism: Philosophical and Political Perspectives*, Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2008.

<sup>46</sup> For a criticism of MacIntyre's views on patriotism, see Stephen Nathanson, "In Defense of 'Moderate Patriotism'," in I. Primoratz (ed.), *Patriotism*, 91-92.

<sup>47</sup> On the old debate between liberalism and communitarianism, and its specific application to the theme of patriotism see Rainer Forst, *Contexts of Justice. Political Philosophy beyond Liberalism and Communitarianism*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002, 103-106.

and government walks along these lines. “The locality of patriotism” seems to be as important for Burke as it is for MacIntyre.

By contrast to chivalric and MacIntyresque patriotism, which defends the *locality* of patriotism—its rootedness on local traditions, not on abstract concepts—reflective patriotism seeks to deracinate patriotism from its situational groundings, as it were—its aim is to construct patriotic loyalties like the ones Tocqueville thought to have identified in the United States (whether as a matter of fact American patriotism fits or ever fitted Tocqueville’s description cannot be discussed here). In his journey through the U.S., Tocqueville<sup>48</sup> hit upon a kind of patriotism that, he claimed, did not belong to the same species as European patriotism. Americans, he claimed, had a patriotic spirit of their own. He hastily concluded that there are two types of patriotism: an “instinctive” patriotism, typical of monarchic governments, and a “reflective” patriotism, akin to republics. The former arises “from the disinterested, undefinable, and unpondered feeling that ties a man’s heart to the place where he was born. This instinctive love is mingled with a taste for old habits, respect for ancestors, and memories of the past.”<sup>49</sup> It is Burkean patriotism, one that “does not reason, but believes, feels, acts,” one that only awakens in cases of dire necessity. The rest of the time, individuals imbued with it sit passively chewing the cud, to use Burke’s (in)famous expression: it “impels men to great ephemeral efforts, but not to continuous endeavor. Having saved the state in time of crisis, it often lets it decay in time of peace.” Burke sees nothing wrong with patriotic sluggishness for peaceful times, but Tocqueville detects the weakness of instinctive patriotism precisely there, along with its dependence on “simple mores” and on an unquestioned “ancient order of things.”<sup>50</sup>

Farewell to instinctive—or chivalric—patriotism, is our Frenchmen’s bid. Its place, he is convinced, will be occupied by a “more rational” patriotism: “less generous, perhaps less ardent, but more creative and more lasting, it is engendered by enlightenment, grows by the aid of laws

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<sup>48</sup> For an excellent comparative on Edmund Burke and Alexis de Tocqueville, see Bruce Frohnen, *Virtue and the Promise of Conservatism: The Legacy of Burke and Tocqueville*, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1993.

<sup>49</sup> Alexis De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, George Lawrence, trans. USA: Harper & Row, 1988, 235.

<sup>50</sup> All quotations come from *ibid.*

and the exercise of rights, and in the end becomes, in a sense, mingled with personal interest."<sup>51</sup> It is a type of nationalism that has "greed"<sup>52</sup> as its fundamental spring. Contra Burke, Tocqueville would argue that enlightenment, reason, and greed do engender patriotic feelings: a reflective patriotism different in nature from chivalric patriotism. The inexorable progression of equality makes the existence of the latter impossible, tied as it was to a hierarchical, unequal society. Briefly put, Tocqueville distinguishes between a patriotism based on "unpondered feelings" that bind "a man's heart to the place where he was born;" based, furthermore, on tradition, ancestry, memories of the past; and a more reflective patriotism, one that is crucially anchored on political rights and institutions.

Jürgen Habermas's development of the notion of *Verfassungspatriotismus* or constitutional patriotism, picks up (without explicit reference) and elaborates some of the elements that Tocqueville identified in the latter form of patriotism.<sup>53</sup> Habermas's insights on this matter are part of his reaction to what he identified as a problematic development post-war public discourse in Germany. In the so-called "historians's debate," Habermas criticized the emergence of a circle of German public intellectuals and academics—"historical revisionists," he called them—who defended a set of ideas that could have been crafted in the mold of chivalric patriotism.<sup>54</sup> He believed that these ideas were objectionable because they presented Germany as another victim of the Second World War whose actions were triggered by fear of Bolshevism. For example, in a language whose aesthetic undertones are undeniable, one commentator praised postbellum Germany for "arising like a Phoenix out of the test of the war", thus continuing to be the harmonious, conflict-free and uniform national community (*Volksgemeinschaft*) that it had always been. Habermas's criticism to the kind of patriotism implicit in these ideas is that that it relies on predetermined historical identities;

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 237.

<sup>53</sup> See Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992, 500. See also Habermas, *The New Conservatism: Cultural Criticism and the Historian's Debate*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992, 207ff.

<sup>54</sup> Habermas, *The New Conservatism: Cultural Criticism and the Historian's Debate*, 229-240.

on passive and inherited nationality; and on ascriptive pre-political criteria. It thus impedes the formation of public discourses of collective self-understanding.

As an alternative to the patriotism of the historians, Habermas proposed a notion of patriotism built on very different principles.<sup>55</sup> Instead of being based on predetermined historical identities, it is based on rights and democratic procedures. Rather than taking for granted a passive and inherited nationality, it requires a conception of citizenship according to which free and equal citizens ought to have effective access to communication processes. Instead of relying on ascriptive pre-political criteria, it relies on forms of political belonging that are based on public interpretation in the light of universalist norms. This is patriotism relieved from the aesthetic and affective constraints that Burke has in mind.

Consider how these two types of patriotism seem to handle the problem of coming to terms with the past. I previously mentioned Burke's plea to throw a veil over the violent origins of the state. This plea is consistent with his belief that the emotions associated with the beautiful (as opposed to the sublime) are the main pillar of patriotism. A criminal past does not make a country lovely. For this reason, Burke believes that it is desirable to throw a veil from the wardrobe of our moral imagination over many shameful crimes of the past, such as Great Britain's colonization of India. As was mentioned before, a generous interpretation of these passages would have it that Burke's purpose in idealizing British (not so distant) past in this regard is to mobilize moral outrage against certain political practices of his time. Let us concede this point and therefore rule out that Burke is an unprincipled politician, or even an author proposing ideas resembling anything like Machiavelli's justification of violence in the founding of states (recall Machiavelli's praise of leaders such as Moses, Cyrus, Romulus, who acquired "new principalities" through their "own arms and virtue"). Whatever the purpose of Burke's idealization of the past, and however noble that purpose would be, idealizations of that sort lend themselves easily to deployment in the service of less noble causes. It is not that chivalric patriotism will *inevitably* lead citizens to deny colonial abuses for which one's country bears responsibility. But with some likelihood, it will

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<sup>55</sup> Jan Werner-Müller, "On the Origins of Constitutional Patriotism," *Contemporary Political Theory* 5 (2006): 278-296.

distract attention away from problematic traditions (i.e. structural, not personal causes) that may have produced, exacerbated, or proved to be incapable of halting such abuses. Idealizing the past, regardless of the purpose, may produce unintended consequences. For authors like Burke, keenly sensitive to the unintended consequences of "untested methods" of government, this should be a great source of concern.

By contrast to chivalric patriotism, for constitutional patriotism unveiling past crimes of one's nation is a patriotic exercise. These crimes should inspire a productive kind of shame. Christina Tarnopolsky's insights on the function of shame should be helpful here. Tarnopolsky argues that shame is a social emotion that reveals an inadequacy in the self (individual or collective), thereby creating a certain degree of discomfort and perplexity that is necessary for self-consciousness, self-criticism, and moral and political deliberation.<sup>56</sup> Thus, instead of stylizing the past through silence (or by finding fault in external forces or personal evil), patriotism should encourage confrontation with past events through accurate, comprehensive, and public examination of it. The outcome might be unpalatable, revealing ghastly events, such as widespread complicity with, or even passivity towards, wrongdoing. The public shame that these events trigger is a crucial component of the process of rectification. This is why publicity and thorough investigation has been the road that many so-called Truth and Reconciliation Commissions throughout the world have taken, or at least suggested, as a national response to past injustice, be it at the domestic level or with regards to former colonies. In this vein, Habermas believed that in the German case, historical revisionism obscured one of the underlying domestic causes of the Holocaust (anti-semitism). Historical revisionism prevented many from fully comprehending the causes of genocide, some of which have to do with false beliefs about historical identities and prepolitical ascriptions. In short, constitutional patriotism brings to bear a broader palate of emotions as a support for patriotic loyalties. Shame, although not a pleasing emotion, is one of them. In turn, shame is the catalyst of beneficial processes of collective self-understanding and self-assertion.

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<sup>56</sup> Christina Tarnopolsky, "Prudes, Perverts, and Tyrants. Plato and the Contemporary Politics of Shame," *Political Theory* 32 (4): 2004, 476-479.

Burke's aesthetic-affective framework, then, is a dangerous one. Let me put the idea in a different way. I have been arguing that Burkean political thought may promote what Martha Nussbaum calls "emotional narrowness:" caring only, or disproportionately, for our kin. Those far removed from us remain outside of the scope of concern, or even become a source of suspicion. Martha Nussbaum argues that such narrowness, although containing a positive dimension, is ultimately undesirable. According to her, a long tradition going back to Aristotle suggests that circumscribed emotions such as erotic love or local pride may be stepping-stones towards broader forms of attachment: "If we want our life with others to contain strong passions—for justice in a world of injustice, for aid in a world where many go without what they need—we would do well to begin, at least, with our familiar strong emotions towards family, city and country. But concern should not stop with these local attachments."<sup>57</sup> Republican authors like Hannah Arendt would of course disagree on the grounds that some private emotions are anti-political. This, however, is beside the point.<sup>58</sup> Conceding that confined emotions are a gateway towards ecumenical emotions,<sup>59</sup> the problem with Burke's *political thought* is that it offers little if any theoretical resources to think beyond local attachments. How is one to transcend emotional narrowness if it is tied to local allegiances, and, even more, idealized ones? As we saw, Burke is suspicious of "doctrinal" interests that are detached from local and emotional allegiances. Supranational movements such as the Reformation introduce "other" interests that for him necessarily come into tension with those of local communities. The "Frenchness" that revolutionaries wish to create will come into conflict with traditions of Bretagne and Normandy (just like in our day

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<sup>57</sup> Martha Nussbaum, "Can Patriotism be Compassionate?," *The Nation*, December 2001.

<sup>58</sup> Arendt is quick to note that love is an anti-political force because it destroys what she calls the in-between that is constitutive of politics. See Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1958. On Arendt on this particular point: Shin Chiba, "Hannah Arendt on Love and the Political: Love, Friendship, and Citizenship," *The Review of Politics* 57:3 (1995), 520.

<sup>59</sup> And Burke did in fact argue along these lines. See Evan Radcliffe, "Burke, Radical Cosmopolitanism, and the Debates on on Patriotism in the 1790s," *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture* (28), 1999, 329.

European identity will create be in tension with national identities, so critics say). But Frenchness is a response to perceived past injustices. It might not be aesthetically pleasant, and it might seem to advance too broad and ambitious a scope for building political attachment. Beyond his skepticism, however, Burke has little to offer as an alternative.

The foregoing characterization of chivalric patriotism should qualify the positive views of some scholars about Burke's emotionalism. For instance, Uday Mehta argues that such emotionalism underlies the vehemence with which Burke worked to bring Warren Hastings to justice for his responsibility in atrocities in India. Burke's political thought ascribes value to cultural dialogue between the unfamiliar and the unfamiliar, between "us" and the "other," something that liberal rationalism, so Mehta argues, does not do. Burke articulates a "cosmopolitanism of sentiments," Mehta concludes, in which "through the conversation, which has as its purpose the understanding of the sentiments that give meaning to people's lives, wider bonds of sympathy can be forged."<sup>60</sup> This interpretation is appealing in light of the role sympathy plays in Burke's political thought. Burke never came close to developing an account of sympathy as complete as Adam Smith's in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*; he nevertheless stressed the importance of sympathy in political and social relationships. Sympathy was more important for him than, for example, compassion because it had a broader scope: the former applies to anyone's welfare through extended identification with them, while the latter applies only to those in a worse situation than oneself.

However, as Lauren Hall rightly argues, Mehta overstates Burke's cosmopolitanism.<sup>61</sup> The cosmopolitan potential of sympathetic identification with the "other" coexists in Burke's political thought with his firm belief that politics is grounded on the local, and that not even sentiments could meaningfully unite dissimilar nations.

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<sup>60</sup> Uday Mehta Singh, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study of Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999, 23. For a defense of Burke's patriotism see Bruce Frohnen, "The Patriotism of a Conservative," *Modern Age*, Spring 2006.

<sup>61</sup> Lauren Hall, "Rights and the Heart," 614.

Burke's understanding of patriotism is a manifestation of this failed cosmopolitanism of sentiments.<sup>62</sup>

#### IV. Conclusion

In this paper I have identified some of the features of Burke's patriotism in light of some general features of his political thought, and of recent conceptual and normative work on the understanding and implications of patriotism. To conclude, let us go back for the last time to the Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance. In the threshold of death, when "melancholy and depression were bringing him to his end" (II, LXXIV), Don Quixote regained reason and abhorred of the books of chivalry that had driven him out of his mind. "My reason is now free and clear, rid of the dark shadows of ignorance that my unhappy constant study of those detestable books of chivalry cast over it. Now I see through their absurdities and deceptions, and it only grieves me that this destruction of my illusions has come so late that it leaves me no time to make some amends by reading other books that might be a light to my soul" (II, LXXIV). No longer under the influence of the spirit of chivalry, Alfonso Quijano—Don Quixote—becomes depressed and melancholic. The waning of the age of chivalry has a different effect on Burke. In his small treatise on aesthetics, he writes: "The passion excited by beauty is in fact nearer to a species of melancholy, than to jollity and mirth."<sup>63</sup> One admires beauty in a melancholic state of mind, not in a rapture of joy. That is how Burke admired the beauties of the age of chivalry; their destruction plunges him in a state of depression (when the anger has subdued). His countenance is that of a sorrowful knight.

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<sup>62</sup> For a study on a successful case see Mihaela Czobor-Lupp, "Herder on esthetic imagination as a source of post-national democratic solidarity: A contribution to Habermas' constitutional patriotism," *Contemporary Political Theory* (2013) 12, 46–70. doi:10.1057/cpt.2012.3.

<sup>63</sup> *Enquiry*, 112.

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