



# Empire and Revolution: The Political Life of Edmund Burke

*Richard Bourke*

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Edmund Burke (1730–97) lived during one of the most extraordinary periods of world history. He grappled with the significance of the British Empire in India, fought for reconciliation with the American colonies, and was a vocal critic of national policy during three European wars. He also advocated reform in Britain, pressed for constitutional change in Ireland, and became a central protagonist in the great debate on the French Revolution. Drawing on the complete range of printed and manuscript sources, *Empire and Revolution* offers a vivid reconstruction of the major concerns of this outstanding statesman, orator, and philosopher.

In restoring Burke to his original political and intellectual context, this book strips away the accumulated distortions that have marked the reception of his ideas. In the process, it overturns the conventional picture of a partisan of tradition against progress. In place of the image of a backward-looking opponent of popular rights, it presents a multifaceted portrait of one of the most captivating figures in eighteenth-century life and thought. While Burke was a passionately energetic statesman, he was also a deeply original thinker. *Empire and Revolution* depicts him as a philosopher-in-action who evaluated the political realities of the day through the lens of Enlightenment thought, variously drawing on the ideas of such figures as Montesquieu, Rousseau, and Hume.

A boldly ambitious work of scholarship, this book challenges us to rethink the legacy of Burke and the turbulent era in which he played so pivotal a role.



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