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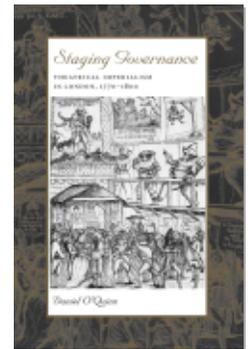
Staging Governance

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*The Supplementation of
Imperial Sovereignty*

BETWEEN 1770 AND 1800, transformations in the relationship between metropolitan British society and its colonial holdings, as well as changes in the concept of the nation itself, precipitated crises in governance that left Britons with a new sense of themselves. By the middle of the eighteenth century the successes of British mercantilism had effectively expanded sovereignty well beyond the shores of the British Isles. Although economically the nation and the empire were mutually constitutive, that was not the case politically.¹ In fact, this very expansion posed significant problems for the theory and practice of sovereignty and contributed to its supplementation by new governmental tactics that eventually dispersed power over a wide range of institutions. These tactics both added to and substituted for juridical sovereignty in such a way that the state form eventually made the empire the target of its operations. This book is vitally concerned with this double process, for it argues that one can track important shifts in governmentality in the theatricalization of imperial affairs in late eighteenth-century London. It is my claim that nightly plays and the discourse surrounding them not only commented on but also orchestrated national reactions to the recalibration of imperial sovereignty in the late eighteenth century.

Michel Foucault's notion of governmentality describes a complex series of events in which the juridical principle of sovereignty, which defined governmental practices through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, was permeated and activated in a new way by practices aimed at managing the imbrication of men and things in the emergent capitalist economy of the nineteenth century. Governmentality is "the ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses, and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of

power, which has as its target population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security.”² Like much of the argument of this book, Foucault’s horizon of analysis involves the relationship between bodies, economies, and the state-sponsored actions of the military. As a general analysis, Foucault’s essay, like much of his work, marks the late eighteenth century as the moment when this ensemble emerged, and his arguments regarding the construction of docile bodies through disciplinary tactics and the correlative mobilization of biopower through the deployment of sexuality and the racialization of class identity are widely known. But, despite the efforts of some scholars, the relationship between these governmental tactics and the recalibration of the politics and economics of empire in the late eighteenth century remains obscure.³

Much of this obscurity derives from the term *empire* itself. Reaching back to the transitional moment between feudal and modern governance, J. G. A. Pocock reminds us that

the primary meaning in English of “empire” or *imperium* had been “national sovereignty”: the “empire” of England over itself, of the crown over England in the church as well as state, the independence of the English church-state from all other modes of sovereignty. The exercise of this sovereignty had involved England in a series of tensions and contradictions, between the crown and crown-in-parliament, between the crown-in-parliament and the government of the national church, which had given rise to a series of civil wars, dissolutions of government, conspiracies, revolutions, foreign wars and a period of dynastic and therefore ecclesiastical uncertainty which as late as 1760 was only recently terminated.⁴

Pocock’s sense of the instability generated by this term is important because his analysis of imperial crisis during the reign of George III emphasizes that, as the empire extended around the world, competing definitions of the term empire had threatened the sovereignty of the British realm over itself. In this account, the American Revolution and the complex struggles over the East India Company, each in its own way, forced an almost continuous reassessment of the relationship between nation, colony, and constitution, whose implications threatened to reengage the long and violent history that had consolidated the notion of King-in-Parliament as the fundamental bulwark against perpetual civil war.

[T]he legal status of the colonies had never been determined, and . . . the identification of “empire” and “realm”—of “empire” meaning “sovereign monarchy” with “empire” meaning “extensive or enormous monarchy”—meant that the British empire altogether lacked the *jus publicum*, regulating the relations between its components under sovereignty, which would have constituted it an “empire” in the sense understood by civilian jurists.⁵

The American war underlined the problem posed by this shifting meaning, and Pocock’s analysis of the dissolution of the Atlantic empire thoroughly demonstrates how the lack of a language of “confederation” meant that control of America would have to be ceded to the colonists to prevent a collapse in the governance of the metropolitan realm. To put it in the language of eighteenth-century politics, the resolution of the American conflict preserved the “sovereign monarchy” at the expense of the “extensive or enormous monarchy” in the Atlantic world.

Pocock’s analysis of the imperial crisis, however, is confined to the Atlantic empire and is thus an illuminating yet partial account of British imperial politics at the time.⁶ Alongside of the American conflict, one can trace an equally significant and no less violent engagement with the definition of sovereignty in the long struggle over the governmental practices of the East India Company in the 1770s and 1780s. The American problematic is suited to Pocock’s combination of political theory and social history because that revolution, staged as an assault on Parliament and the Constitution, provides an entry point for discussion regarding the limits of constitutionality in the empire in the 1770s. As he has persuasively demonstrated, the American Constitution is in many ways the culmination of key elements of British political theory and history and is thus readable through the conventional language of Whig political discourse.⁷ After the loss of the American colonies, British imperial interests in the Asian subcontinent were preserved such that the “extensive or enormous monarchy” either superseded or incorporated the claims of the “sovereign monarchy.” This period of extreme uncertainty in the 1780s is the primary focus of this book because both the anxieties and the compensatory fantasies generated by that decade’s recalibration of the empire had long-lasting effects. One of my contentions, which I take up more explicitly at the end of the book, is that our relative lack of knowledge regarding this period of social turbulence is a symptom of the resilience of the strategies used to suppress the anxieties of empire. The 1780s demand our attention

because the social processes and phantasmatic compensations detailed in the ensuing chapters haunt post-imperial and neo-imperial life.

Although the largely Whig assault on the practices of the East India Company in the 1770s and 1780s cannot be characterized as a revolution, it precipitated a series of constitutional problems that were resolved in ways that explicitly exceeded the language of constitutions. The governmental actions of the East India Company sometimes followed the imperatives of a chartered company and sometimes behaved very much like a state. This hybridity emerged as a disturbing counterexample to the notion of King-in-Parliament and threatened to reveal precisely what the political practice of the state was at great pains to conceal—namely, that the pressure of imperial expansion was redefining the British polity in a fashion that was progressively undercutting the political conjunction of liberty and landed property, while reconfiguring the state relation as one between a potentially tyrannical court of directors and its shareholders.⁸ For observers such as Edmund Burke, that opened the door to a level of corruption against which no amount of virtue could sustain itself:

What, then, will become of us, if Bengal, if the Ganges pour in a new tide of corruption? Should the evil genius of British liberty so ordain it, I fear this House will be so far from removing the corruption of the East, that it will be corrupted by them. I dread more from the infection of that place, than I hope from your virtue. Was it not the sudden plunder of the East that gave the final blow to the freedom of Rome? What reason have we to expect a better fate?⁹

Critiques of Indian affairs were exceptionally volatile because the East India Company operated as a spectral example of how the imperial nation might be defined. The mismanagement of the East India Company revealed the dangers not only of fantasies of corporate rule but also of the collusion of landed and commercial interests in current practices of governance. What is challenging about this debate over the specific form of governmentality exhibited by the East India Company, whose activities would begin to play a compensatory role following the American secession, is that it effectively reengaged with the question of “empire” in a fashion that supplemented strictly juridical constructions of the state.

That history of reengagement, although no less ensconced in the archive of parliamentary debate and political pamphleteering, cannot be understood without stretching beyond constitutionality itself into the mi-

crological practices of social regulation that Pocock identified under the rubric of manners or virtue.

From 1688 to 1776 (and after), the central question in Anglophone political theory was not whether a ruler might be resisted for misconduct, but whether a regime founded on patronage, public debt, and professionalization of the armed forces did not corrupt both governors and governed; and corruption was a problem in virtue, not in right, which could never be solved by asserting a right of resistance. Political thought therefore moves decisively, though never irrevocably, out of the law-centered paradigm and into the paradigm of virtue and corruption.¹⁰

The practice of virtue and the regulation of manners were the province of a wide variety of social agents and play a crucial role not only in the resolution of the problem of revolution in British political theory but also in the day-to-day amelioration of economic and social disparity that was crucial for maintaining the tenuous stability of King-in-Parliament during a time of turbulent change. The language of virtue and manners explored by Pocock, Phillipson, and others is more narrowly defined than the micrological processes that Foucault analyzed under the rubric of disciplinary and regulatory power, but there is enough common ground to recognize that the analysis of virtuous sociability is never very far from the often arcane struggles over corruption, legitimacy, and constitutionality that pervaded the reign of George III.¹¹ That these analyses require one another is one of the basic assumptions of this book and, for better or worse, demands that we consider governmental tactics in both the conventional, often legal, language of political theory and the more diffuse discourse of manners, desires, and proprieties.

The clearest evidence that these apparently dissociated tactics were entwined with key transformations in the governance of the nation and the empire can be found in any of the daily papers circulating in London in the late eighteenth century. On any given day, the papers provided their readers with information regarding events in Parliament, shipping news, advertisements for any number of new and used commodities, reports on specific colonial transactions, scandalous accounts of the sex lives of fashionable society, reports on the royal household, satirical poems and *bon mots*, announcements for sales, reports of births and deaths, and any number of brief essays on science, social life, or public affairs presented as

letters to the editor. The range of information resembles that of contemporary papers, but what is different is the complete lack of hierarchy in the presentation of this information. Events relating to the cataclysmic loss of the American colonies or the economic collapse of the East India Company sit adjacent to accounts of balls and sporting events. Reports of military triumph over native resistance in India are framed by ads for the very materials whose availability these successes ensured. Over the course of its four pages, a conventional eighteenth-century paper simply prints these stories, ads, and announcements where they fit best, and although it is possible to discern precedence in the stories themselves, their haphazard contiguity indicates something about the lives of eighteenth-century Londoners. These levels of social interaction and knowledge, swirled into a colloidal solution, capture the extraordinary flux of everyday life in London and its connection to lives lived in distant locales.

While giving us a sense of the interconnectedness of social and economic practices, the papers are also highly insusceptible to analysis. To understand the social transitions played out in the papers, we need an operator that focuses and organizes the relations between people and things so that salient developments may be discerned. One such operator was present in every daily paper, under the title “Theatrical Intelligence,” for the theatre distilled the social forces of imperial life in London and presented it on a nightly basis. Because of the temporality of performance, the *mélange* of stock plays and new productions that made up a typical season not only reactivated past representations but also put forth new representational paradigms to explore present social problematics. Productions of stock plays frequently allegorized present power relations, whereas new productions attempted to capture the fleeting topicality of the present and posited possible futures for the nation and the empire. On any given night, events in the transformation of British imperial society were brought to the stage, often mediated by the sexual and commercial relations that accompanied all class interactions in the metropole at this time.

The theatrical analysis of these social transformations must be understood as a nightly laboratory in social manners that ultimately addresses the question of virtue that Pocock identifies as the decisive locus of Anglophone political thought. Plays might draw relations between inappropriate sexual behavior and instances of colonial mismanagement, or turn the end of the slave trade into compensatory performances of whiteness. In other words, the theatre tends to bridge the conceptual gap between realms understood to be explicitly political or economic and those understood to be specifically private and social. In so doing, it goes beyond the

adjacency presented in the papers and actively takes part in the supplementation of juridical governance by more pervasive forms of subjectification. Theatre, a governmental mechanism whose target is manners, allows us to observe precisely how governmentality put the crises of sovereignty that swept through the British Empire in the 1770s and 1780s in abeyance. The plays on the London stage allow us to understand how a new form of citizen emerged, one suited to furthering the emergent form of empire inaugurated by the destabilizing loss of the American colonies and by the East India Company's disturbing flirtation with insolvency and absolutism.

After these events, and in reaction to the sense of national vulnerability they occasioned, Britons became heterosexual, and white, and came to possess private lives, all in ways they had not done before. Although these elements of individual identity and social relations existed before, they changed both their signification and their functionality. And it is not enough to argue that these emergent significations were indicators of relative privilege or derogation, which says little more than that power operates by forms of inclusion and exclusion. These changes in signification and function opened new possibilities in the realm of the social that not only allowed for the production of future life-forms but also actively rewrote social history to fit these emergent forces. I use the term life here advisedly because what we see during these reorientations of the social is a complex combination of discipline and regulation of the body as a crucial tactic in the consolidation of middle-class hegemony. That consolidation has proved to be extremely difficult to pin down, in part because it makes more sense to speak of multiple strands of embodiment and behavior that can be understood only retroactively as components of middle-class sociability. As Dror Wahrman has demonstrated, imagining the middle class was, and is, an extremely complex matter not only because the middle ranks were themselves a discontinuous field but also because their representation, both politically and discursively, was often highly contested.¹²

Wahrman argues that the period following the French Revolution saw the mobilization of the social middle in the political imaginary of Britain, and the final two chapters of this book track a similar activation in the theatrical representations of British policy in India in the 1790s. But my readings in chapters 6 and 7 build on arguments regarding the deployment of class in the imperial crises that beset the British Empire in the 1770s and 1780s. A significant portion of my argument focuses on how certain practices and social dispositions became signs not only of the cultural

and national degeneration of social climbers in the colonies but also of the decline of metropolitan society, especially as it is exemplified by aristocratic dissipation. These two forms of degeneration are often figured as mutually constitutive developments reminiscent of the social breakdown that attended the decline and fall of the Roman Empire and, thus, as symptoms of impending imperial doom. Against this figural assemblage, one can discern a number of prophylactic or hygienic gestures that mobilize characters, tropes, and behaviors that are not necessarily referred to as middle-class inventions, but which ostensibly emerge from the social middle. On one side of this struggle, we have caricatures of both aristocratic and lower-class life, and on the other, we have an amorphous social entity that, as E. P. Thompson has argued, is not visible in the structures of power in the late eighteenth century.¹³ If we understand the latter lack of visibility as a sign of the emerging normativity of the middle ranks, then what we are faced with are representations of the social that swing between an excess and a paucity of representation.

Frequently, in this book I use the excessive representation of aristocratic or lower-class figures to reflect on the representational lack of the middle ranks. The assumption here is not only that the middle ranks are thoroughly enmeshed in the power relations that are driving imperial self-fashioning, but also that much of the normative force of these middling dispositions relies on their vagueness, if not their outright invisibility. In fact, their normativity requires not actual or fully consolidated practices and identities but only some momentary consensus, perhaps elicited by a certain performance in a certain setting, that such a social disposition is potentially operative: in other words, the class does not have to have emerged as a definable entity for the forces surrounding its unconsolidated elements to effect social change. Thus when I speak about the middle class in this book I am using the phrase to capture a plurality of difficult-to-discern activities and identities that are still very much in flux, yet which are nevertheless exerting pressure on social relations. To put the problem metaphorically, the middle class operates more like a quantum than a particle in the analyses that follow: I tend to make it visible by giving a detailed account of its discursive and performative frame.¹⁴ At times, this requires a great deal of specificity about the excessive figuration of the upper and lower ranks: as we will see in chapter 6, there is a key moment when critiques of aristocratic excess become more specific and focus on the specious dichotomy between landed and fashionable gentry and thus require a more refined critical idiom. At other moments in the argument, I opt for a level of nominalism, much as Foucault does, in order to

locate polemically the emergence of regulatory transformations in the social.¹⁵

The transformations in the bodies of people in the middle ranks completed the middle-class revolution that spanned the long eighteenth century: aristocratic manners came to be coded as deviant mores, and lower-class sociality was represented as a form pathological excess. This revolution involved a fundamental alteration in the function of the family not only as social operator but also as figure for governance. In his account of the shift from the deployment of alliance to the deployment of sexuality, Foucault provided a heuristic for understanding the instrumentalization of reproductive heterosexuality in the Malthusian couple, the regulation of active female desire and the careful charting of sexual deviance as a threat to racial and class supremacy.¹⁶ We encounter ample evidence supporting the emergence of these sexual deployments in the analyses that follow, and I argue that these questions of sexuality are fundamentally linked to problems of imperial performance. Their importance cannot be underestimated, for they are intimately tied to the beginnings of a new concept of race that makes it something essential rather than local and contingent. This new concept directly impinges not only on the emergence of biological state racism in the mid-nineteenth century but also on the beginning of a “deep” understanding of character and the rejection of surface meaning that will have an enormous impact on the representation of subjectivity.

These beginnings are all tied together and evident in the performances I discuss. What is perhaps less evident and no less important is that these deployments of sexuality, class, race, and subjectivity are themselves a new form of political economy that infiltrated the conventional sites of political and economic transaction during the constitutional and economic crises of the period. Of key importance in the British case is the decline of the Whig oligarchy. Edmund Burke, Charles James Fox, and Richard Brinsley Sheridan inhabit these pages like characters in a novel. The various constitutional crises precipitated by Whig attempts to deal with the economic messes of the East India Company on the one hand and George III’s perceived absolutism on the other are evidence of a decline of Parliament as the figure of eternal and stable Britishness. The performative contradictions evinced by these events indicate precisely where sovereignty is supplemented, for as we shall see, the cracks where conventional definitions of sovereign politics start to fracture are filled by regulatory fantasies and tactics whose dynamics are primarily sexual. Thus the state’s juridical control of its subjects is integrated with the institutional management of bodies and populations. This decline in the state as a fig-

ure for stability is compensated for by the very deployments outlined earlier, such that the mystification of the constitution initiated largely by Edmund Burke in the 1790s operated as a veil for the collusion of juridicality, disciplinary institutions, and regulatory tactics that we have identified as governmentality. What eventually emerges from this collusion is the state in a heightened form that will ruthlessly preside over the species being of the nation and the various peoples, now rendered as species, that are either incorporated into or ejected from the empire.

The seven chapters of this book are grouped into three sections, each of which works through a particular problematic associated with the precarious performance of imperial culture in metropolitan London. I have explicitly left questions pertaining to the Atlantic empire for another project, in order to focus on Anglo-Indian problematics, but, as we will see, the disruption of imperial activity in the Atlantic exerts pressure on the reception of Indian crises. The questions posed by the loss of the American colonies and the complex politics of antislavery have been frequently addressed, but they tend to revolve around questions of race and identity. It is my sense that many issues regarding performance in the circum-Atlantic remain undiscussed. My concern here, however, is more with the broader question of how the empire in Asia emerged as a compensatory imperial fantasy and how this impacted on the constitution and regulation of metropolitan society. Each chapter focuses either on specific theatrical performances or on the performance and reception of political events. Despite the popularity of the plays discussed in the book and the extraordinary level of public interest in the politics of imperial governance, many of these cultural events remain beyond the purview of conventional literary and theatrical scholarship.

Part of my critical strategy throughout the book has been to present the material in detail in order to give the reader a sense not only of the discursive parameters of imperial representation but also of the reception and discussion of performance materials in both the theatre and the press. Much of the argument of the book travels via the newspapers and this methodological decision means that the book's theoretical gestures regarding governance, racialization, and the sex/gender system exist in what I hope is a revealing tension with the ebb and flow of everyday life in the period. Many of the theoretical moves speak to present problematics in social relations that have their roots in this period, and many of the readings that support my argument are embedded in the muddle of life's mundane elements as they are represented in the papers. By playing both registers simultaneously, the argument demonstrates the dialectic

tical relation between past and present social relations as exemplified by these particular archives in an attempt to perform a critical ontology of ourselves.¹⁷

Without moving into an excursus on the modulations of print culture, it is important to stress the tight fit between theatrical performance, political life, and the print media of late eighteenth-century Britain. Newspapers reported on the political news of the day, dutifully advertised and reviewed plays, discussed the world of business, and tracked down social scandal. At times the blend of information is purely disjunctive, and at other times it self-consciously ties together social and cultural spaces that contemporary scholars tend to separate. Most important for our purposes is the extraordinary mediation between scenes of entertainment, such as the theatre, and areas of public life, such as Parliament, which tend to be studied by scholars separated by disciplinary boundaries. The sheer topicality of the plays discussed in this book prevents such a distinction. As the newspaper evidence demonstrates, audiences were extremely curious about their reactions to performances, not because they were obsessed with the aesthetic merit of a particular play, but because plays at this historical moment were negotiating and presenting the transformations in British society on a nightly basis. It is this sense that the theatrical experience in this period can be understood as autoethnographic.

*Domestic and Dramatic Reorientations: Theatre
as Autoethnography*

One of the working assumptions of this book is that a trip to the theatre was as much about the social experience of audience interaction as it was about the consumption of a particular performance. This is most obvious when the theatre erupted into violence either aimed at the production itself or, more routinely, among the audience. Such moments of social performance serve to remind scholars of Georgian theatre that the entire house, and not merely the stage, operates as a performance space. The public space of the theatre had become a site not only for modeling but also for regulating social practice. The Theatres Royal in this period were engaged in a form of autoethnography because so much of theatrical practice turned on the recognizability of character. The complexity of this kind of theatre lies in the relationship between the performance of character on stage, the enactment of character in the boxes and the pit, and the ensuing analysis of character in the newspapers, whose breathless scrutiny

of the theatrical intelligence played no small role in the stylization of class and gender identity in this social crucible. Character in each of these instances means something slightly different, and the calibration and adequation of these differences arguably drive the social and cultural forces of the theatre at this time. This stylization impinges not only on the racialization of class and gender performance in this period but also on the very function of colonial materials in these autoethnographic acts. Charting and adjudicating the limits of social interaction, the theatre, perhaps more than any other form of cultural production, offers a glimpse of how change swept through a culture in the midst of fundamental social transformation both at home and abroad.

This sense that massive social change was afoot suffuses British culture in the late eighteenth century and can be recognized both by the anxiety it produced and by the emergence of a series of tropes that attempt to depict and hence to contain cultural transformation. One of these figures is that of the barometer. As Kathleen Wilson has argued, the 1770s sees the sudden figuration of women as barometers of the historical progress of nations. Citing William Alexander's *The History of Women, from the Earliest Antiquity to the Present Time* (1779), Wilson demonstrates that claims for Britain's national and racial superiority were supported by its supposed deference and protection of the female sex.¹⁸ Wilson's key recognition is that these self-congratulatory indicators not only deform the actual historical state of women but also render them pawns in a larger game regarding the preeminence of cultures over which they have little control. An anonymous contributor to the *London Magazine* makes a similar gesture with regard to the theatre: "To know the state of the Theatres is certainly a matter of consequence, because it is a kind of barometer from which we may determine the rise or fall of publick taste."¹⁹ With its subtle invocation of the fall of the Roman Empire, the barometric figure implies that "publick taste" and, by extension, the sociality of the public behave much like the weather: full of chaotic flows and counterflows that are difficult to predict and often quite dangerous. Most frequently the barometric figure is deployed to capture the degradation of the public by aristocratic dissipation and, hence, the insinuation that these practices constitute a symptom of imperial or national collapse.²⁰ Understanding the hybrid interactions of various social forces in the audience of Covent Garden and Drury Lane is a matter of anthropological concern in the late eighteenth century not only because each performance allows for an incremental surveillance of the public by itself but also because the entire assemblage of theatrical entertainment figures as a form of currency

whose value directly impinges on Britons' self-evaluation in the economy of world history.²¹

Throughout this book, this combination of self-presentation and self-evaluation, which drives the relationship between audiences and the material culture of the theatre, is understood as a form of autoethnography and is the defining principle of the book's first section. The first two chapters demonstrate the relationship between two very different representations of British imperial adventure and the emergence of middle-class critiques of aristocratic vice. I argue that this linkage forms a crucial set of discursive and performative parameters that inflect all subsequent imperial representation on the London stage. Although both chapters work toward mutually supporting arguments, they focus on radically different works and operate as discrete case studies. The distinction between chapter 1's discussion of Samuel Foote's *The Nabob* and chapter 2's engagement with Loutherboung's and O'Keefe's pantomime *Omai; or, A Trip round the World* can be superficially reduced to one of space. Foote's play is set exclusively in England and works through the impact of colonial economics on the social transactions of metropolitan life. Loutherboung's extravaganza is set partially in Britain, but its primary objective is to bring the South Seas to London audiences. As Greg Dening has argued, *Omai* is explicitly ethnographic, but what I demonstrate is the degree to which the pantomime's protoanthropological description of people and picturesque representation of places in the Pacific is superseded by complex self-representations that further the racialization of class identity.²² The chapter on Foote is less interested in racialization than in the way sexuality is deployed in what amounts to a detailed analysis of the relationship between the City and the Town at a moment when the imperial economy is undermining historical notions of aristocratic supremacy. The sexual fantasies mobilized by Foote surface in *Omai* and are sutured to a series of racial fantasies. This phantasmatic conjunction is crucial to the emergence of self-regulating middle-class bodies and plays a key role in the remarkable moment of imperial self-scrutiny occasioned by the impeachment of Warren Hastings.

Before turning to these arguments, we should have a general sense of a night in the theatre at one of the patent houses. Following the Licensing Act of 1737, the options for an evening's entertainment in London were severely constrained. Public theatrical performance, with some exceptions, was limited to Covent Garden and Drury Lane, with summer productions at the Haymarket. All productions in these houses were regulated by the Office of the Chamberlain who censored all new plays. In addition to these

venues for legitimate theatre, the late eighteenth century also saw the proliferation of illegitimate forms of entertainment that evaded the scrutiny of the Licensing Act by presenting musical entertainments or other forms of spectacle that did not rely on the spoken word of actors.²³ These entertainments exerted considerable influence on dramatic practice in the patent houses, but for the moment I want to look in detail at a specific play in order to give some sense of the complex forms of sociability that traverse the production and reception of a licensed theatrical event: in this case, Elizabeth Inchbald's first and highly successful afterpiece *The Mogul Tale; or, The Descent of the Balloon* (1783). What I want to demonstrate is the dynamic relationship between audience and production that defines theatrical practice in this period and which makes the theatre such an important space for considering transformations in the social relations of imperial London. The notion of virtue, which plays such a crucial role in eighteenth-century political theory, infuses not only the play itself, but also the paratextual materials that surround the play—its theatrical precursor, the print satires of contemporary political debates regarding Indian governance, and a chain of newspaper commentary stretching back to an important theatrical and social scandal.

Inchbald started her career in the theatre as an actress and went on to become one of the most successful and innovative playwrights of the late eighteenth century. Ellen Donkin has argued that much of her success can be attributed to her lateral move from performer to playwright, an experience that gave Inchbald an intimate understanding of the dramaturgical elements of productions in the patent houses.²⁴ A typical night at the patent theatres of the late eighteenth century offered a range of entertainments for the audience. Aside from the main piece of comedy or tragedy on the bill, managers also staged afterpieces, which were often much lighter forms of entertainment, such as farce, pantomime, or various kinds of naval or military entertainment. These afterpieces were often highly topical, sometimes explicitly patriotic, and almost always designed to incorporate as much music, singing, spectacle, and low comedy as possible. The main work and the afterpiece were also separated by musical interludes and/or dance performances, and it was not uncommon for audiences to flow in and out of the theatre to catch a portion, if not all, of the evening's entertainment. The dynamic between main piece and afterpiece is sometimes difficult to ascertain, but it is clear that the afterpieces were often staged to direct audience opinion, or to reinvigorate ticket sales for a main production that was waning in popularity.

The Mogul Tale was first staged at the Haymarket on 6 July 1784 as an afterpiece to *Fatal Curiosity*. It was the first of Inchbald's many plays that associate an Oriental career, especially one funded by the East India Company, with sexual, familial, and economic irregularities. As with the later plays, the analogy between political and domestic authority provides both structural and rhetorical coherence to the comedy. Susan Staves has discussed how the late seventeenth-century stage explored the changing relations between sovereign and subjects through the relations between husband and wife.²⁵ Inchbald, I would argue, reinvigorates this analogy between state and family for the Georgian period, but with crucial reversals and modifications. It is now the family that is reconfiguring itself. In Foucault's terms, the familial relations formerly defined by imperatives of economic alliance were being transformed by the deployment of sexuality.²⁶ In Inchbald's plays, this reconfiguration is broached in terms of state governance, but the analogy is far more complex than on the Restoration stage because governmentality is in the midst of a fundamental rearticulation. As Foucault suggests in "Governmentality," from the mid-eighteenth century onward the family "becomes . . . the privileged instrument for the government of the population and not the chimerical model of good government."²⁷

This shift from model to instrument is palpable in all of Inchbald's plays, for good governance is not modeled on the patriarchal aristocratic family, but rather functions via the construction of heteronormative identities that retain gender hierarchy without visible forms of coercion.²⁸ In short, what was posited as an analogy on the Restoration stage is here collapsed such that the family and the state are now mutually constitutive. The emergence of political allegories for the naturalization of bourgeois heteronormativity depends on a constitutive and threefold ejection. For Inchbald's reconfiguration of heterosexual relations to unfold as suggested requires, first, the ejection of suspect forms of masculinity; second, the reconstruction of the Orient as a site of threatening forms of *European* sexual and class identities; and, third, the reorientation of theatrical spectacles of the Other from exotic display to domestic rigor. As the following case study demonstrates, this triple reorientation, in which one set of cultural others is erased, reduced, and reconstituted in order to generate an emergent set of social norms, is crucial to *The Mogul Tale's* critical relation to the representational economy of eighteenth-century theatre.²⁹

All of *The Mogul Tale's* action unfolds from a spectacular contravention of the harem walls. Capitalizing on the enthusiasm for ballooning

following various demonstrations of the new technology in Britain, the play opens when a balloon carrying a doctor of music and a “Cobler” named Johnny and his wife Fanny crashes into the harem of the Great Mogul. The Mogul, who decides to “have some diversion with them,” commands his Eunuch to “[a]ggravate their fears, as much as possible, tell them, I am the abstract of cruelty, the essence of tyranny; tell them the Divan shall open with all its terrors. For tho’ I mean to save their lives, I want to see the effect of their fears, for in the hour of reflection I love to contemplate that greatest work of heaven, the mind of man.”³⁰ The speech is unusual because the conventional despotic stereotypes of Orientalist discourse are here registered as conscious theatrical effects produced for the entertainment of not only the Mogul but also the audience.³¹ After a stream of jokes on the Doctor’s impotence and Johnny’s rampant yet deviant desires, the farce closes when the Mogul underlines that his “despotic” behavior is little more than a dramatic pretense assigned to him by Europeans: “You are not now before the tribunal of a European, a man of your own colour. I am an Indian, a Mahometan, my laws are cruel and my nature savage” (19). But the instruments of torture and execution strewn around the stage are literally props both in Inchbald’s and the Mogul’s play. The Mogul’s play is a theatrical experiment in the practice of othering that turns into a biting historical critique both of British imperialism and its self-consolidating cultural productions. Rather than confirm the English fear of him, he draws attention to the horrors they have perpetrated:

You have imposed upon me, and attempted to defraud me, but know that I have been taught mercy and compassion for the sufferings of human nature; however differing in laws, temper and colour from myself. Yes from you Christians whose laws teach charity to all the world, have I learned these virtues? For your countrymen’s cruelty to the poor Gentoos has shewn me tyranny in so foul a light, that I was determined henceforward to be only mild, just and merciful.—You have done wrong, you are destitute—You are too much in my power to treat you with severity—all three may freely depart. (19–20)

This critical turn depicts British colonial activity as an instructive counterexample to just governance. The Mogul’s performance of tyranny becomes a representation of the governmental strategies of the East India Company. Therefore his performance not only enacts the way he has been culturally constructed but also the way his people have been colonized.

This amounts to a crucial cultural reversal: the Mogul figures as the ex-

emplary Christian, and the English characters display stereotypical signs of Oriental excess and dissipation. This is most clearly seen in the second act when Johnny the Cobbler, bearing the Mogul's handkerchief, roams through the harem. Behaving as he imagines the Mogul to behave, Johnny selects the most desirable woman. When she turns out to be Fanny, Inchbald effectively analyzes the representation of ostensibly non-English women on stage. The desire ascribed to Johnny's Oriental gaze reveals itself to be a hypersexualized desire not for otherness but for the same. However, it would be naive to argue that these gestures constitute an anticolonial strategy. Rather the play destroys a historically specific instance of the imperial gaze only to replace it with another form of colonial representation.

Inchbald's farce specifically restages Isaac Bickerstaff's *The Sultan; or, A Peep into the Seraglio*, such that a specific form of cultural consumption of the East is being ridiculed and ejected in much the same fashion that Bickerstaff himself was ejected from English society. *The Sultan* is a very close adaptation of *Soliman II* by Charles Simon Favart, who, in turn, based his play on a story from Marmontel's *Contes Moraux*.³² With suitable changes in the nationality of the chief female character, the plot is consistent through all three versions: Roxalana, the pert English slave girl, replaces Elmira as the Sultan's favorite, and then, despite the opposition of other women in the harem and of Osmyn the Eunuch, she converts the Sultan to her ideas of English love and liberty (246). After his political and sexual conversion, the Sultan breaks Islamic law and convention by drinking wine, freeing his harem, and marrying Roxalana. Bickerstaff's farce revels in the Sultan's inability to govern Roxalana and attributes it to her Englishness. As is typical of mid eighteenth-century Orientalist discourse, all the comic business revolves around the usurpation of the Sultan's sexual and political power, for it is difficult to ascertain whether the repeated humiliation of the Sultan is a result of Roxalana's defiant national identity or her emasculating coquetry. The involution of sexual and political power simultaneously disables the myth of Islamic despotism and the sexual economy attributed to it by Christian Europeans. The farce ends with the Sultan and Roxalana married according to English aristocratic norms of sexual behavior.

The Sultan was Bickerstaff's last successful comic opera and was composed in exile after Bickerstaff was publicly denounced for sodomy. The controversy surrounding Bickerstaff, like that which consumed Samuel Foote a few years later, was a crucial moment in the regulation of homoerotic desire both on and around the London stage.³³ Bickerstaff played a prominent

role in the construction of “effeminate deviance” in the 1770s because his flight to France after his sexuality hit the newspapers opened David Garrick, his manager, to a series of libelous poems.³⁴ The insinuation that Garrick and Bickerstaff were engaged in “unnatural acts” backfired on Garrick’s enemies, but it effectively destroyed Bickerstaff’s career. There are accounts of near rioting when it was suspected that a Bickerstaff play was being staged under a pseudonym.³⁵ Nevertheless, three years after the controversy, *The Sultan* was staged largely because Frances Abington, for whom it was written, pressured Garrick into producing it. Charles Dibdin and J. C. Bach provided music, and it was a monetary success.

Inchbald was intimately familiar with Bickerstaff’s farce because she played the role of Elmira opposite Frances Abington’s Roxalana exactly four months prior to the premiere of *The Mogul Tale* on 6 July 1784.³⁶ According to James Boaden, Inchbald was “constantly sifting over plots for farces” during the early 1780s.³⁷ She submitted a manuscript called “A Peep into a Planet,” which Harris accepted under the new title *The Mogul Tale*. Aside from the replication of Bickerstaff’s subtitle to *The Sultan*—*A Peep into the Seraglio*—Inchbald’s farce employs precisely the same complement of characters. Both farces share a sultan, a eunuch, and three ladies of the harem. In the 1784 season, Inchbald herself played Elmira in *The Sultan* and Irena in *The Mogul Tale*.³⁸ But *The Mogul Tale* is far from a plagiarism of Bickerstaff’s text. Rather, she takes the characters of *The Sultan* and puts them into contact with the primary agents in the production of Bickerstaff’s farce. Thus the play critiques both the production and consumption of a particular staging of Orientalist fantasy in London at a specific historical moment. When the balloon descends into the seraglio—and into Bickerstaff’s play—the audience is confronted with a doctor of music; a coquette named Fanny; and a cobbler named Johnny, who represent Charles Dibdin, the composer of the music for *The Sultan*; Frances “Fanny” Abington, who owned the copyright to the play and was directly associated with the part of Roxalana; and Isaac Bickerstaff himself, who was famously named the “dramatic cobbler” by Francis Gentleman in *The Dramatic Censor*.³⁹

The metatheatricity of Inchbald’s farce would have been immediately recognizable to regular theatregoers. Once we recognize the identity of the balloonists, a series of otherwise cryptic speeches becomes highly significant. Of chief import is the emasculation of Johnny in act 1. When the character played by Inchbald tells the balloonists that they have landed in the seraglio of the Great Mogul, Johnny’s response is telling: “Eunuchs! Lord madam they are of no sex at all—we have often heard madam of the

Great Mogul. Why Lord he can't be jealous of me, and as to the Doctor there he is nobody—it is all over with him, he has no longer any inflammable air about him, either in his balloon or himself, its all gone, isn't it Doctor?" (4–5). The Mogul has no reason to be jealous of Johnny because, as Bickerstaff, he is a sodomite. Notably it is Johnny/Bickerstaff who proclaims the ferocity of the Mogul, so a link is drawn between his sexual deviance and the practice of othering in *The Sultan*. This gets amplified throughout the act, first, when Johnny asks if the eunuchs "are a good sort of gentlemen" and, second, when the Eunuch first appears (5). Upon his entrance, Johnny decides to say "he is a woman in men's clothes," but Fanny dissuades him, worried that the Great Mogul will fall in love with him. Instead of impersonating a woman, Johnny establishes a relationship with the Eunuch by asking him to "love an Englishman." Ironically, it is the Eunuch that prescribes firmness, boldness, and fortitude when Johnny comes before the Mogul. Johnny's impersonation of the pope rounds out the homophobic discourse of act 1.

The conjunction of Johnny and Bickerstaff is merely a continuation of the much earlier assassination of Bickerstaff in the popular press. Feminizing Bickerstaff at this point is hardly innovative, but it implies that Inchbald expects the audience to be well versed in the widely reported scandal. The second act, however, forgets Bickerstaff the sodomite and focuses rather on dissipated colonial desire. Johnny now emerges as the lustful lower-class drunkard who has been set loose in the harem. The fact that Inchbald can link the feminized sodomite and the hypermasculinized class other in one character should give us a clue to the cultural work achieved in their codeployment. I would suggest that both sexual threats, homosexuality and sexual promiscuity, are being attached to a specific form of Orientalist representation, here exemplified by Bickerstaff's *The Sultan*. This clearing operation opens the way for a different form of colonial discourse that not only ascribes normative heterosexuality to the cultural other but also ridicules the sexual practices of lower-class British subjects who are attempting to rise through the class structure during their colonial career.⁴⁰ The deployment of homophobic discourse for class consolidation involves the negation of a specific form of feminine identification. In *The Mogul Tale*, a great deal of attention is focused on the child of Johnny and Fanny, which I can't help but read as the "monstrous" child of Bickerstaff and Abington—that is, *The Sultan* and its principal character Roxalana. Embedded within Inchbald's critique is the regulation of active feminine desire, which made Abington famous in the role. What we are witnessing here is the ejection of feminized men and masculinized

women—of gender liminality—from both the stage and the domestic theatre of the middle classes.

However, Inchbald's clearing operation, both in the realm of Orientalist representation and middle-class self-stylization, also engages directly with debates on Indian governance. The farce's most spectacular element—the descending balloon—ties the play directly to a series of satirical prints published throughout December 1783 that figured the fate of both the East India Company and Fox's East India Bill as similarly troubled balloons.⁴¹ The debate surrounding Fox's East India Bill is considered at length in chapter 3, but for the moment it is enough to recognize that some of Inchbald's key dramaturgical decisions incorporate the news of the day as filtered through the print market. Like the play itself, the anonymous *The Aerostatick Stage Balloon* of 23 December 1783 fused a satire on the attempts of the coalition government of Charles James Fox and Lord North to rein in the power of the East India Company with a broader critique of the sexual dissipation of Foxite society (fig. I.1). The balloon has three tiers, one of which contains Fox, Lord North, and the Duke of Portland. Fox's gambling comes under direct censure as he is about to cast three dice marked "Madras," "Bombay," and "Bengal." The three prominent members of the coalition are flanked not only by the actress Mary "Perdita" Robinson and other demireps associated with the Whig elite, but also sexual quacks such as Dr. Graham of "celestial bed" fame. The clear insinuation is that Fox's Indian policy is continuous with his predilection for gaming and whoring. The accompanying poem demonstrates the integration of vice and imperial policy:

Who choose a journey to the Moon
May take it in our Stage Balloon.
Where love sick Virgins past their prime
May Marry yet and laugh at time,
Perdita— W—sley Fillies free,
Each flash their Lunar Vis a Vis,
There N—th may realize his Dreams,
And F—x pursue his golden schemes
And Father B—ke may still absolve 'em
Howe'er the Devil may involve 'em.⁴²

This concatenation of the stage, allegations of vice among prominent Whigs, prostitution, and "Fox's golden schemes" to take over control of the East India Company indicates how deeply integrated these issues were

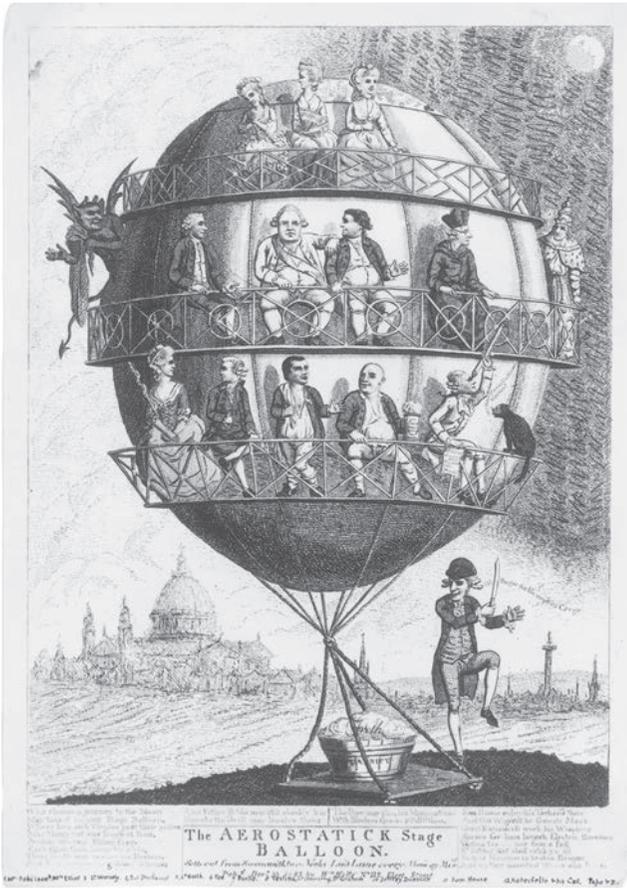


FIG. I.1. Anonymous, *The Aerostattick Stage Balloon*, 23 December 1783 (courtesy of the Department of Prints and Drawings, The British Museum, London; BM 6284)

in the metropolitan imaginary. The sheer popularity of the balloon as a vehicle for satirizing Indian affairs would not have been lost on Inchbald's audience, nor would the incorporation of specific political scandals, such as the loss of the Great Seal after the defeat of Fox's India Bill, into the second act of the farce.⁴³ But, as we will see in chapter 3, the specific allegations presented in *The Aerostattick Stage Balloon* offer a key for understanding Inchbald's complex strategies not only in *The Mogul Tale* but also in *Such Things Are*.

Political Spectatrices: The Theatre of Impeachment

The Mogul Tale is a helpful example of theatrical autoethnography not only because it weaves together so many of the concerns of this book but also because it demonstrates the high degree of topical knowledge routinely assumed of the audience. And the particular knowledges invoked are, I believe, symptomatic, for the papers and the satirical prints routinely interweave theatrical, political, and scandalous “intelligence.” In the prints, these separate concerns are often fused as in *The Aerostatick Stage Balloon*. In the papers, remarks on events and performances in the patent houses are contiguous both with lightly veiled accounts of the scandals of the day and with reports, both satirical and serious, of parliamentary transactions. However, these same London dailies, which Benedict Anderson deployed so successfully as a trope for the consolidation of the imagined community of the nation, are arguably a sign of exactly the opposite social forces.⁴⁴ Extended engagement with the papers and the print satires of the late eighteenth century demonstrates that they are more accurately described as a disjunctive field in which contradictory and often spurious accounts jostle for the attention of the public. Anderson’s trope of the newspaper landing on the doorstep in every house attempted to capture the simultaneity of ideological consolidation in the early nineteenth century, but this needs to be counterbalanced not only by the haphazard and often communal reading of the papers but also by the sheer proliferation of partisan accounts. This counterbalancing is important because during the period discussed in this book the generation of public opinion regarding the various imperial and constitutional crises that dominated the news was highly chaotic, in part because the papers and prints were themselves associated with the very political parties that found themselves in a state of reorientation. The *Morning Chronicle* could always be counted on to give the Whig interpretation of politics and culture, but Whiggism itself was a fractured and often contradictory field. This sense of political confusion is even more pronounced in the visual satires of the period. The fact that the most famous satirists of the day—Gillray, Sayers, and Dent—were regularly contradicting their own representation of political events, often from one day to the next, is a sign less of simple apostasy than of a more deep-seated alteration in the constitution of the political.

The fact that the dailies were not a zone of homogeneous nation making is important for this study because the press is the key link between the theatre of politics and politics of theatre. Throughout this book the press is understood to be a capricious operator that provided London-

ers with information regarding themselves and the world but, in so doing, provided the material both for heterodox anxieties and for compensatory ameliorations regarding the social constitution of the empire. And these anxieties and ameliorations permeated audience expectations and the reception of theatricalized versions of the same issues. At the risk of stating the obvious, it is important to emphasize that the latter thirty years of the eighteenth century were a period of extraordinary economic, social, and political upheaval in the British Empire. Shortly after the cessation of the Seven Years' War, in which British global supremacy over the French was established, almost every aspect of the relationship between metropole and colony had to be reconstructed due to fundamental changes in governmentality. We will be looking at many of these in detail, but a brief outline of the various crises and adjustments helps to give a sense of both the urgency and the interconnectedness of the matters reported and analyzed in both the press and the theatre.

As Nancy F. Koehn has demonstrated, the ten years following the Treaty of Paris demanded a complex engagement with the economic and constitutional challenges posed by Britain's newly acquired global supremacy. That engagement was marked by a combination of almost unrestrained ambition and nagging trepidation that the British Empire would go the way of ancient Rome, sixteenth-century Spain, or seventeenth-century Holland.⁴⁵ At the core of both Britain's commercial confidence and its collective insecurity was the problem of how to bring the different economic and political systems of the Atlantic and Indian colonies into harmony with the fiscal military state of Great Britain. Resolving this problem was a topic of intense interest and endless frustration.⁴⁶ The 1770s was marked by the political and economic disaster of the American Revolution, the temporary financial collapse of the East India Company, and unforeseen military setbacks both in North America and India. Losing the thirteen colonies and failing to decisively overcome Haider Ali of Mysore seriously shook both the psychic and the material bases of British imperialism. Despite supremacy on paper, British corporations and armies were losing significant struggles on a global scale.

The pressure of these reverses cast a long shadow on the 1780s. Disaffection with George III's rule and a series of inept flirtations with absolutism on the part of the Crown brought about a series of constitutional crises each of which was intimately tied to questions of how to correct errant colonial administration. The constitutional crisis of 1784 was directly precipitated by conflict over Fox's East India Bill, which attempted to bring the East India Company under direct control of the Ministry; the

impeachment of Warren Hastings—the first governor-general of Bengal—further deepened the sense that all was not well in the East India Company and raised questions about the nature of sovereignty during this period of hybrid colonial governance; the Regency crisis was partly fueled by Whig senses that George III mismanaged the American war; and the pervasive wrangling over constitutional matters following the French Revolution continually refers to the threat posed either by constitutional reform to British colonial administration or by French colonial aspirations.⁴⁷ Britain emerged from these constitutional, military, and economic crises in the 1790s through a recalibration of imperial interests. This was partly enabled by the disintegration of the oligarchical desires of the Whig opposition at home, and by the new emphasis on military domination of the Indian subcontinent. These two developments were intimately tied to the final transformation from a mercantile to a territorial empire, and this transformation pervaded metropolitan and colonial societies. The emergence of the combined disciplinary and regulatory regimes that molded middle-class life in the nineteenth century was in many ways a direct response to the potential breakdown in the empire made visible in the 1770s and 1780s. It is precisely this pattern of anxious self-scrutiny, tentative self-diagnosis, and triumphal self-projection that characterizes the analysis of the emergent empire that took place in the imaginary space between Parliament, the print media, and the theatrical world—a space that we could refer to as that of everyday life.

The second section of this book is very much concerned with this imaginary space between the satirical world of the London newspapers and the theatre, because it considers the politicization of theatre and the theatricalization of politics in the period leading up to and during the first season of the Hastings impeachment.⁴⁸ The three chapters that make up this section operate less as case studies than as a continuous meditation on the problem of bringing imperial governance into performance. However, the entire argument is organized by women's perspectives on the spectacle of governmentality. Gender becomes a key thematic not only because women play such a controversial role both in the rhetoric and the scene of impeachment, but also because some of the most incisive commentary on this unique moment of imperial self-scrutiny comes from Elizabeth Inchbald and Frances Burney. As we will see, women observers were profoundly aware of the limits placed on the understanding of Anglo-Indian relations by the homosocial structure of parliamentary sociability. It is my contention that during the trial fundamental problems in the relationship not only between metropole and colony but also between po-

litical elites and the emergent bourgeoisie became visible in moments of gendered performativity. These women were witness to the performance of men who were working on an extremely precarious stage and who were caught between two divergent discourse networks: one prescribed by the history of Parliament and one prescribed by the common law.

These problems need to be understood not only in economic and imperial terms but also in terms of governance itself. One of the most remarkable things about the impeachment of Warren Hastings is that it marks one of the most dramatic and lasting incursions of the common law on the British Constitution. Unlike previous impeachments, the proceedings against Hastings were carried out not according to special parliamentary rules but rather according to the rules of evidence prescribed by conventional legal procedure. P. J. Marshall notes that “While complete separation of the judicial and political work of the House [of Lords] was not achieved until the middle of the nineteenth century, the monopoly of the law lords over legal business was not often challenged. . . . Within a week of the opening of the trial, the House of Lords made it clear that it intended to follow contemporary legal practice rather than seventeenth-century precedents.”⁴⁹ This meant that the Lords had to hear the prosecution’s evidence on all the charges before hearing the defense. This decision virtually guaranteed Hastings’s acquittal and was met with acrimonious dissent from Fox and Burke. Accounts of Fox’s response indicate that he recognized that the impeachment was diverging from the Constitution:

He entered into a discussion of the *Lex et Consuetudo Parliamenti* (the law and usage of Parliament), and asserted, that it was coeval with our Constitution, and that it was, if rightly considered, of still greater importance than the common law of England, or even the written or statutory laws of the Realm. He explained this by stating, that the *Lex et Consuetudo Parliamenti* was superior to every other species of law, since it was paramount to all—it judged the Judges, and put those upon their trial who could not be otherwise tried at all.⁵⁰

Fox would lose this argument, but it does signal a transformative moment when one vision of the state would be overtaken by a much more diffuse set of institutional practices.⁵¹ Despite Fox’s claim that the managers will convict Hastings under any set of rules, his widely reported private anger over this decision is intriguing because it demonstrates not only the managers’ clear sense that their case against Hastings rested less on tangible evidence than on oratorical brilliance, but also their sense of impotence

before the law. In this case, one can point to an explicit moment when the disciplinary effects of legal institutions infiltrated Parliament in a fashion that actually suspended procedures inherent to the theory of sovereignty built during the seventeenth century. Put in Foucauldian terms, sovereign power was permeated and reconfigured by the forces of the emergent legal institution, and thus the trial is an early example of a transformation of governmentality that leached power away from the state to disciplinary regimes. The victory of the common lawyers in the House of Lords made one component of the British Constitution obsolete.

This incursion meant that politics had to operate through the extra-parliamentary medium of public opinion. The excessiveness of much of the impeachment's oratory can therefore be understood as a compensation for the managers' loss of political effectivity before the impassive face of the law. The extremity of the managers' performances has become mythic: both Burke and Sheridan suffered similarly dramatic collapses on the third day of each of their four-day speeches, as if to emphasize that the enormity of Hastings's crimes had damaged their own constitutions.⁵² And all of the managers addressed the Lords as if the entire proceeding was an inquiry into Britain's moral pretensions in the realm of world history. Fox's apparently "involuntary" exultation on the proceedings themselves, which followed his castigation of the Lords for ignoring the sanctity of the *Lex et Consuetudo Parliamenti*, captures the tenor of the managers' own acts of self-mythologization:

At such an effort [the impeachment], in the admiring view of surrounding Nations, it were impious, if not possible, to be calm!—Indifference were Insensibility—that prophaned each sacred influence in Heaven and Earth!—There was no collective virtue superior—in the history of England—in the History of Man! It sprang from MOTIVES, of all others the most High and pure—the GOOD OF OTHERS;—and it flowed to CONSEQUENCES, of all others, the most gratifying and enduring—the well-founded APPROBATION OF OURSELVES!⁵³

That such an utterance could be reported as both "involuntary" and "reasonable" speaks volumes about the cultural significance of the impeachment, for it seems to suggest that the ethical inquiry into imperial culpability erupts from and is channeled through the body of the orator himself. Even in the eyes of an unsympathetic viewer, the managers' performances were deemed to be signs of history and thus indicative of far more than Hastings's guilt or innocence.⁵⁴

At the core of this book's second part, chapter 4 combines an analysis of specific oratorical acts by Fox, Burke, and Sheridan during the impeachment proceedings with the visual representations of the trial in the satirical print market in order to stress not only the problem of bringing British rule in India into representation but also the ancillary sexual fantasies that emerged when the managers attempted to enact their abhorrence of Hastings's actions. Chapter 5 extends this analysis of performance and sexual anxiety by attending closely to Frances Burney's analysis of Burke's and Fox's oratory. Burney's diary offers an analysis of oratorical practice that is as cognizant of oratorical theory as it is of crucial problems in imperial governance. In this sense, I go much further with the text than other commentators on the impeachment and accord it status as a rigorous theoretical engagement with the question of imperial self-fashioning. Chapter 3 is arguably the most complex chapter in the book and, like chapter 5's assertion of Fanny Burney's political acumen, it contends that Elizabeth Inchbald's early Orientalist comedies are deeply involved with fundamental problems in political theory. We have already seen how *The Mogul Tale* refashions Orientalist representation into a mechanism of sexual normativity. Chapter 3 returns to the political events satirized in that farce in order to offer a detailed account of the place of Montesquieu's thoughts on despotism not only in the debate on Fox's East India Bill of 1783 but also in Inchbald's extraordinary comedy *Such Things Are*. *Such Things Are* opened just before Hastings was called to the bar, and I argue that Inchbald's play uses Montesquieu's notion of governmental principle both to dissect the political culture of her day and to offer a radical solution to problems of governance highlighted during the constitutional crises precipitated by Fox's East India Bill. As the framing structure of this section suggests, the fantasies and anxieties that drive these performances are fundamentally tied to metropolitan problematics; therefore, the theatrical projection of metropolitan concerns into ostensibly distant spaces needs to be understood as epiphenomenal, as itself symptomatic of a need for temporary self-distancing to comprehend the historical transition that was engulfing British imperial society.

Warring against the Self: Transforming Entertainment

As we approach the final years of the eighteenth century, autoethnography is supplemented and eventually displaced by complex forms of phantasmatic projection that I would argue are far more actantial. In its

autoethnographic phases, theatrical imperialism in London helped lay the ground for the embodied imperial subject of the early nineteenth century. In doing so, it became one of the forces that helped to instantiate what Michel Foucault, Paul Gilroy, and others have usefully defined as biological state racism.⁵⁵ This form of state-sanctioned deployment of codified racial difference as a tactic of social regulation did not fully cohere until the middle of the nineteenth-century and the various signs of racial difference did not fully congeal in the theatrical productions of the late eighteenth century.⁵⁶ The elements of racialization I trace in this book are still very much in flux, and only with a retroactive glance can we discern which elements will achieve later significance.⁵⁷ What is visible in the theatre of this transitional period is a simultaneous resignification of the racialized performer and a startling shift in the relationship between performer and audience that intervenes in the process of ethnic identification that defined previous theatrical practice. This shift from a drama focused on self-stylization and critique to forms of spectacle that enact cultural and racial supremacy can be most visibly traced in the development of illegitimate dramaturgy. But new tactics were also in effect in the patent houses and can be used as signs of important historical bifurcations that alter the meaning of long-standing figures and tropes for racial, national, and class distinction.

Throughout the eighteenth century, the borders between race, nation, and class were often extremely difficult to discern. As Kathleen Wilson reminds us, race referred not to “scientific sets of physical characteristics but to bloodline and lineage” and thus was not that distinct from prevalent definitions of the nation.⁵⁸ One of the most complex problems for historians of British identity is how to disentangle these intertwining meanings. In his highly suggestive treatment of the shifting meaning of blood that attended the emergence of middle-class bodies in the late eighteenth century, Michel Foucault offered an important model for how to think about the recodification of race. In his lectures at the Collège de France in 1975–76, Foucault supplemented his notion of disciplinary power with a technology of power that he described as regulatory. Disciplinary power was “essentially centred on the body, on the individual body . . . [and] included all devices that were used to ensure the spatial distribution of individual bodies . . . and the organization, around those individuals, of a whole field of visibility.”⁵⁹ The notion of disciplinary power is a crucial expansion of Marx’s notion of cooperation, which is marked as a precondition for capitalist production in volume 1 of *Capital* but which did not receive a full specification.⁶⁰ But it is possible to excavate a link between

cooperation and racialization in Marx's mordant recognition that "when the worker cooperates in a planned way with others, he strips off the fetters of his individuality, and develops the capabilities of his species."⁶¹ In supplementing Marx's analysis, Foucault gives us an important indication why the questions of individuation and visibility are so crucial to eighteenth-century culture, but his turn to the question of "biopower" and "governmentality" takes up a problematic explicitly beyond the purview of Marxism. Foucault's interest shifted to a technology of power aimed not at the individual body and its integration into the modes of production but rather at one aimed at the population or the species and its maximization:

Now I think we see something new emerging in the second half of the eighteenth century: a new technology of power, but this time it is not disciplinary. This technology does not exclude . . . disciplinary technology, but it does dovetail into it, integrate it, modify it to some extent, and above all use it by sort of infiltrating it, embedding itself in existing disciplinary techniques. . . . Unlike discipline which is addressed to bodies, the new non-disciplinary power is applied not to man-as-body but to the living man, to man-as-living-being; ultimately . . . to man as species.⁶²

The key conceptual leap here is that the second technology of power, termed biopower or regulatory power, acts not on the individual body but on the mass of bodies that constitutes a population. Foucault suggests that disciplinary power and regulatory power incorporate the body simultaneously and thus permeate one another. This notion of two series operating on the same set of signs offers a way of understanding what is otherwise a chaotic transformation. In the permeation of disciplinary by regulatory technology, we have a model for the resignification of the body itself that downplays the visibility of individual traits in favor of the mobilization of mass qualities.

Foucault uses this transformational dynamic to explain the shift from one notion of race—that based on bloodline and lineage as signs of political sovereignty—to another in which populations are considered in their phantasmatic racial totality. It is significant that these largely unsupported claims emerged from a consideration of governmentality, for Foucault was attempting to explain the fundamental shifts in the locus of governance that we have discussed earlier. Because sexuality lies at the intersection both disciplinary and regulatory power, it is a privileged site

of inquiry. As Foucault states, “sexuality, being an eminently corporeal mode of behaviour, is a matter for individualizing disciplinary controls that take the form of permanent surveillance. . . . But because it also has procreative effects, sexuality is also inscribed, takes effect, in broad biological processes that concern not the bodies of individuals but the element, the multiple unity of the population. Sexuality exists at the point where body and population meet.”⁶³ One of the primary arguments of this book is that the deployment of sexuality is crucial to the racialization of class relations, and this argument comes to its conclusion during my readings of Mariana Starke’s *The Sword of Peace* and the complex reception of her subsequent play, *The Widow of Malabar*. But there is something else at stake here that impinges directly on the relationship between theatre and its audience, on what I would call theatre’s specifically governmental effects.

This book contends that theatrical productions enact governance and, in so doing, both discipline and regulate their audiences. What we see during the primarily autoethnographic performances of the book’s first section is a careful management of identification that relies on suturing the relationship between the performer and the audience member. Affiliation between audience members is therefore mediated by identificatory relations with specific theatrical roles. The analysis of the Hastings trial in the book’s second part turns on the unraveling of these identificatory mechanisms and highlights the governmental vacuum into which regulatory power would rapidly expand. The third part of the book tracks a transformation in entertainment in which the object of the performance is the consolidation of the audience. The suturing processes of individuation that define earlier theatrical practice are integrated into new representational tactics that address not the relationship between performer and audience member but between the spectacle and the audience as a totality. That totality is figured in national terms, but the very meaning of nation has changed in the process of audience regulation such that the former ethnic definition of nationality has been superseded by a definition that either implies biological supremacy or asserts the existence of a unified racial population. In the period where a new form of British subjectivity was being consolidated, symptomatic misrecognitions emerged that were not unrelated to the performative contradictions encountered by Burke and Sheridan during the impeachment process. In the scene of impeachment and in ensuing theatrical representations of colonial affairs, acts of impersonation figure forth a new kind of subject whose instability requires compulsive reiteration and reconsolidation.

Two distinct yet connected strategies are used to put this instability in abeyance. The first concerns the resignification of whiteness on the stage in the late 1780s, and the second involves the transformation in audience-performance relations in the illegitimate theatre. Despite clear ethnographic gestures in the productions discussed, the two final chapters focus primarily on fantasies of governance that are secured not only by military and territorial expansion but also by explicit assertions of British military supremacy. Chapter 6 takes up the question of interracial desire and racial degeneration by looking at Mariana Starke's *The Sword of Peace* as a metropolitan version of Lord Cornwallis's policy of military reform in the late 1780s. Starke offers a scathing critique of the sexual and governmental practices of British colonial functionaries in India and argues that their ostensible Indianization will be rectified by the example of reformed military rule. Starke ties together all the concerns about character formation broached in the previous chapters and attaches them to anxieties occasioned by the Hastings impeachment. But her attempts to put the era of company mismanagement firmly in the past by positing a new governmental regime clearly based on the accession of Cornwallis to the post of governor-general generates a series of contradictions that undermine her chief repositories of normativity. The performance of normativity becomes a problem because there is a disjunction between her normative examples of military masculinity and the obsolete forms of masculinity exhibited by the customary leaders of the nation. This disjunction is a result of the transitional quality of imperial society at this historical moment, and into this metropolitan power vacuum she inserts fantasies of middle-class self-regulation. The play's fascinating prologue and epilogue, written by George Colman, take this entire problematic and bring it into the field of theatrical reception by equating moments of colonial degeneration in the play to degraded practices in the metropole. What emerges from these paratheatrical texts is an argument for the place of the woman playwright in the public recalibration of imperial relations that resonates with both Inchbald's and Burney's earlier critiques of public masculinity. However, I also discuss the co-optation of Starke's critical strategies in her subsequent play *The Widow of Malabar*. Again I make a more tenuous connection to Cornwallis's governmental policies in order to show that the same fantasies that undergirded the ill-fated notion of the Permanent Settlement in India animate Starke's attempt to reform aristocratic gender roles in *The Widow of Malabar*.

If chapter 6 is the culmination of much of the book's engagement with the deployment of sexuality, race, and class, then chapter 7 closes the

project by tracking the place of spectacle in the consolidation of national and racial subjects at the end of the century. Unlike previous chapters, this chapter steps out of the legitimate theatre and into the turbulent realm of precinematic display in order to examine a host of productions that attempted to bring the long British war with the sultans of Mysore into performance. The martial tropes of the previous chapters are here transformed into modes of enactment such that military masculinity becomes much more than a normative example of proper governance: it becomes the catalyst for phantasmatic projections of national and racial supremacy. The actual practice of warfare infiltrates theatrical space, and audiences take on much more active roles in their own racialization. The chapter argues that the new forms of spectacular entertainment that flooded the market at the turn of the century fundamentally altered the economy of imperial representation. With the Hastings trial occluded by Cornwallis's triumphant victories in Mysore, India itself changes its function in performance and suddenly becomes a heuristic for understanding conflict in other colonial spaces. Of key importance here is the way Ireland and India are strangely aligned in James Cobb's comic opera *Ramah Droog*. The sexual fantasies documented throughout this book are here redeployed to intervene in the public reception of the Irish rebellion. And with this assertion of commutability, the book argues that a key phase in imperial representation has concluded to be superseded by a new form of performative regulation in which the audience is rendered not as a disparate collective but as a form of species-being.