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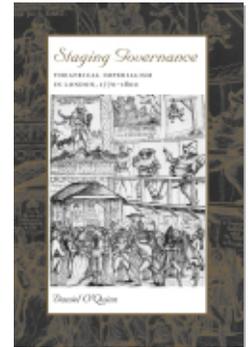
Staging Governance

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press

Staging Governance: Theatrical Imperialism in London, 1770–1800.

Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005.

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CHAPTER

Inchbald's Indies

THREE

Meditations on Despotism circa 1784

FOLLOWING HIS TRAVELS in the 1780s, Major John Taylor observed that “The enervation of the Sultans, from the period that they ceased to head their armies in person, and shut themselves up in the haram; the indolence, ignorance and selfish sensualities of the great officers of state; the insubordination of the Pachas; the disaffection of the Provinces . . . announce . . . the subversion of the Ottoman throne, and that the Eastern empire is soon to become the grand theatre of contention among the predominant powers of Europe.”¹ At first glance, Taylor’s remarks on “the enervation of the Sultans” amount to little more than a British commonplace about the sexual proclivities fostered by Eastern despotism. Taylor can simply invoke the sexual excesses of the sultan because his remarks were supported by an entire century of representations fascinated with the sexual practices of the Levant. However, the link between the sultan’s “enervation” and “subversion of the Ottoman throne” should give us pause for it implies not only that a careful regulation of sexuality is fundamental to stable imperial governance but also that the body of the ruler is a viable locus for a theory of the state. Taylor is able to collapse the distance between micrological and macrological power, between the desiring body and the state, because he understands the sultan as the embodiment of absolute power. In a sense, his remarks are similar to critiques of monarchical or aristocratic excess that weave their way through the revolutionary politics of the late eighteenth century and that linger in the reformist politics of the early nineteenth century. Taylor’s discussion of imperial decay strikes me as significant for its silence on the alternative to the subversion of the throne. After all, offering a coherent articulation of sexual regulation and state governance when sovereign power has been dispersed over legislative bodies and institutional formations is far more dif-

ficult than simply invoking a self-consolidating other. Taylor's pathologization of the Turkish other stands in lieu of a panoply of emergent practices and disciplinary regimes that deploy sexuality in a fashion aimed at stabilizing British interests both at home and abroad.

Taylor's statement provides a useful entry point for examining the way in which Elizabeth Inchbald deploys India and related spaces throughout her work as part of a complex critique of late eighteenth-century British masculinity and statecraft. Unlike Taylor, however, Inchbald is less concerned with pathologizing native populations than with developing precisely those sexual deployments required for stable British governance that remain unspoken in Taylor's derogation of the sultan's sensuality. Five of Inchbald's twenty plays are either set in India or involve characters with conspicuously Indian careers.² "India" should perhaps be placed in quotation marks because key elements of these plays are modified versions of earlier representations of the Levant. This chapter examines the deployment of the fantasy of despotism not only in the constitutional debate surrounding the death of Fox's controversial East India Bill, but also in Inchbald's most important play from the mid-1780s, *Such Things Are*. Inchbald's career as a playwright began with an extremely complex farce entitled *The Mogul Tale; or, The Descent of the Balloon*, which used the figure of the despot to meditate on deviant practices both on and off the stage. As I have already argued in the introduction, *The Mogul Tale* is a sustained critique of sexual deviance that parodically restages Isaac Bickerstaff's *The Sultan; or, A Peep into the Seraglio*. Inchbald's critique of the theatrical practice in this afterpiece was aimed at circumventing the "enervation" of British subjects involved not only in the colonial enterprise but also in the complex reconstruction of the bourgeois family. And thus it targeted the very audience that consumed Bickerstaff's earlier play. However, we also saw how *The Mogul Tale* engaged with the satirical assault on the ill-fated Indian policy of the Fox-North coalition in 1783 and 1784, and, as we will see, the regulation of gender and sexuality that played such an important part in Inchbald's farce becomes a fundamental component of her more-developed critique of imperial governance in *Such Things Are*.

Running at roughly the same time as Inchbald's afterpiece, a rather different farce was unfolding in the Houses of Parliament. Allegations of despotism were leveled both at Charles James Fox for what was seen as an explicit incursion on the prerogatives of the Crown and at George III for his clandestine campaign against Fox's East India Bill. A close reading of how Montesquieu's notion of despotism was deployed in the debate that ul-

timately killed the bill reveals a crucial ideological problem facing the British state at a time when the mercantile economy was in transition. The conflict between the mercantile bourgeoisie and the aristocracy was staged as a screen for a much more unsettling scene of domination, one that points toward the emergence of a new kind of imperial economy and ultimately of a new social order. In *Such Things Are*, I believe that Inchbald, herself an able theorist of the state, picks up on key aspects of Montesquieu's theorization of monarchy to offer a critique not only of the constitutional crisis of 1783 and 1784 but also of the proceedings against Warren Hastings. And she does so by taking key gestures first broached in *The Mogul Tale* and reorienting them once again to explore the notions of virtue, honor, and fear, which lie at the heart of Montesquieu's theorization of democracy, monarchy, and despotism, respectively. By working through the principles that ground these governmental forms, Inchbald is able to intervene in the controversy surrounding the governance of Indian affairs without appearing to be of any party.

Montesquieu's Monsters: Fox's East India Bill

The Mogul Tale was on the stage at the same time that one of the most important constitutional crises of the century was enveloping the coalition government of Charles James Fox and Lord North. Throughout 1783 Whig politicians, led by Fox and working on a template of action developed by Edmund Burke, attempted to rein in the power of the East India Company. Building on North's Regulating Act of 1773, which Burke had formerly opposed, Fox's East India Bill insinuated that the Company was teetering on bankruptcy and asked whether such an operation should be in the hands of a chartered company.³ The bill was controversial not because anyone doubted the necessity of regularizing Company affairs but because it placed the management of the Company in the hands of a body of commissioners, all of whom would have been nominated by the coalition. The bill was immediately satirized by James Sayers as *A Transfer of East India Stock* (fig. 3.1). "The image of Fox carrying on his shoulders the great prize of East India House was a skillfully wounding accusation that he had wrested from the directors and shareholders for the enrichment instead of his own nominees."⁴ The allegation was effective in part because East India Company stock was the object of such long-standing speculation and corruption. The insinuation that the ostensibly noble motives of Burke were but a cover for both his own and Fox's avarice is long-lived, and there



FIG. 3.1. James Sayers, *A Transfer of East India Stock*, 25 November 1783 (courtesy of the Department of Prints and Drawings, The British Museum, London; BM 6271)

are frequent references to Burke's dire financial situation, Fox's gambling debts, and Sheridan's insolvency well into the Hastings proceedings three years later.

Less sensational critics of the bill saw it not only as a Whig attempt to gain direct access to the financial power of the East India Company but also as an incursion against the sacred rights of property. Burke's eloquent speech on Fox's East India Bill and the pervasive sense that something had to be done in Leadenhall Street propelled the bill through the House with a heavy majority of 229–120.⁵ When the bill went up to the Lords, however, a series of clandestine actions emanating from George III ensured its defeat. The king's dislike of Fox was widely known, and during Decem-

ber 1783 he and Pitt developed a scheme for breaking the coalition. In the second week of December, Pitt's cousin, Lord Temple, circulated an open letter from the king that clearly indicated that anyone who voted for the bill would be henceforth treated as George III's enemy. Such interference with the legislative process was extraordinary, even more so because the machinations operated as an open secret.

Nevertheless, on the evening of 15 December 1783, Fox was stunned when the Lords defeated the East India Bill by eight votes and the king requested the seals of office from North and Fox later that night. A contemporary report of the defeat of the bill crystallized the event in one theatrical scene:

C. Fox was behind the throne during the whole time of the business yesterday, and seemed in great agitation. . . . I am told, that his countenance, gesture and expression upon the event were in the highest degree ludicrous from the extremity of distortion and rage, going off with an exclamation of despair, hugging G. North along with him and calling out for Sheridan—So Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo reeled off upon the disappointment of their similar project.⁶

The intertext here is William Davenant's and John Dryden's Shakespearean adaptation *The Tempest; or, The Enchanted Isle* (1667), and a brief digression on the politics of that play is illuminating.⁷ Dryden's invention of a sister for Caliban named Sycorax generates a pair of incestuously coupling racial and sexual monstrosities, both of whom claim aboriginal title to the island. As Bridget Orr has argued, "Prospero's establishment of patriarchal governance [is] a reenactment of the original masculine usurpation which removes the island from the state of nature."⁸ Caliban and Sycorax's threat to Prospero's civilizing patriarchal usurpation is augmented by the interference of Stephano and Trinculo, who attempt to overturn Prospero's rule by proposing marriage with the abhorrent Sycorax and by secretly scheming to geld Caliban. This parody of aristocratic marital alliance is ruthlessly ejected, but it raises a shadow economy of sexual and racial deviance that must be suppressed to ensure Prospero's rule.

From this outline of the interlocking sexual, racial, and political tropes in Dryden's adaptation, a series of observations can be made about Orde's theatricalization of politics. First, it is part and parcel of a fairly consistent figuration of Fox during this period both as a monstrous animal and as a sexual deviant. The former rhetorical gesture was grounded largely on his name, but the latter was very much based on the dissipation of Foxite

society in the 1780s. Crucial to this denigration of Fox was a corresponding assault on Sheridan, as well as on the Duchess of Devonshire, which reached its highest intensity in the 1784 election.⁹ Within the political milieu of the early 1780s, there is a certain logic to depicting Whig society as an incestuous milieu bent on challenging the patriarchal authority of the island's nonindigenous sovereign—that is, the Hanoverian kingship of George III. This rhetorical move in Orde's remark is key because George III emerges as the spectral Prospero whose foundational usurpation has moved the island of Great Britain from a state of nature to a civil society. So the debate over the despotism of George's actions and of the ensuing constitutional crisis is here refigured as competing forms of usurpation. The king's usurpation of Parliament, like Prospero's magic, is a clandestine affair but is legitimized on the grounds that it is favorable to the monstrosity of Whig desires. As Orde details the distortions of Fox's countenance, gesture, and expression, George III's body recedes from view in part because his presence is only ever implied. Like Prospero's magic, the king's body and the power ascribed to it operate in the realm of abstraction and thus he is preserved from precisely the set of tropes used for the despot.

Fox was not so fortunate. The printsellers were busily promulgating images of Fox in a turban, a sign that carries the double connotation of sexual dissipation and political ruthlessness typical of eighteenth-century accounts of despotism. Sayers's famous *Carlo Khan's Triumphal Entry into Leadenhall Street* of 5 December 1783 mobilized antinabob sentiment to attack the East India Bill, and this image more than any other gave the putative Whig desire for nabob status its full visual expression (fig. 3.2).¹⁰ To say that Fox had taken on the garb of the sultan suggested that Parliament had usurped the king and replaced monarchy with despotism. But in Whig circles, the figuration of George III as a despot was also routine. From the American war onward, George III appeared frequently in print satires wearing a turban (fig. 3.3). And following the defeat of the India Bill, Whigs were buoyed by the king's flouting of the constitution because it demonstrated what Fox and others had been saying for more than two decades: namely, that George III not only desired but also actively attempted to reverse the Glorious Revolution.¹¹ With Pitt now installed as prime minister, Fox and other key Whigs assailed the king as anticonstitutional and the Ministry as merely obscuring the despotism of the Crown. The representations of George III in a turban and the repeated allegations of despotic rule in early 1784 are linked to a long-standing critique of despotism and monarchical corruption that has its roots in Mon-

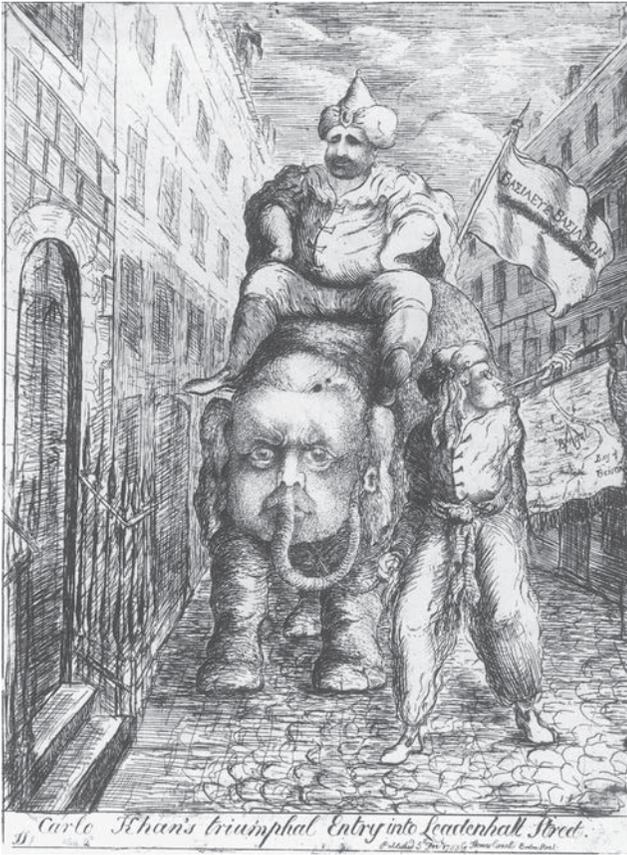


FIG. 3.2. James Sayers, *Carlo Khan's Triumphal Entry into Leadenhall Street*, 5 December 1783 (courtesy of the Department of Prints and Drawings, The British Museum, London; BM 6276)

tesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws*. Already well known as the author of *Lettres persanes*, Montesquieu had profound influence on British thought in the decades after this masterwork of political and legal theory was first published, and its analysis of the British Constitution can be tracked both in the everyday practice of politics and in the theorization of governance.¹²

The Spirit of the Laws was mobilized by all sides in the debate over the East India Bill: Montesquieu's account of the British constitution was explicitly deployed by those wishing to kill the bill on the king's behalf, and his figuration of despotic rule underlay Whig attempts to counter the king's interference. What interests me here is that both Fox's supporters



FIG. 3.3. Anonymous, *The Patriot, George III* (courtesy of the Department of Prints and Drawings, The British Museum, London; BM 5544)

and supporters of the king were fighting with such similar weapons, and that the success of the latter in part arose not only from a delegitimation of the figural economy of despotism, but also from an enactment of one of its chief signs. This chapter demonstrates why Montesquieu's theorization of despotism was available to opposing political camps and, with the help of Louis Althusser's and Alain Grosrichard's readings of *The Spirit of the Laws*, articulates how this struggle over Fox's East India Bill veils a more widespread social upheaval that is directly connected to the fate of mercantilism.

When Fox's East India Bill was introduced by Lord Abingdon to the House of Lords,¹³ he explicitly presented the bill as a threat to the British Constitution and established two key tropes that were to be repeated throughout his remarks: first, that Fox, like Cromwell, is after the king's head and, second, that the British Constitution, as explicated by Mon-

tesquieu in chapter 11 of *The Spirit of the Laws*, established the House of Lords to prevent such a depredation. Later in the speech's peroration, Abingdon states that the nobility or the Lords have "the capacity of being the mediator between the king and the people, and of rendering justice to both, by opposing as well the encroachments of the Crown upon the liberties of the subject, as the encroachments of the subject upon the just prerogative of the crown" (136). In the terms set forth by Montesquieu, the nobility is here understood as both the social force and the political organ by which monarchy is protected, on the one hand, from its natural tendency to devolve into absolute tyranny and despotism and, on the other hand, from revolution and the despotism of the "people." According to Montesquieu, "The most natural intermediate, subordinate power is that of the nobility. In a way, the nobility is the essence of monarchy, whose fundamental maxim is: *no monarch, no nobility: no nobility, no monarch*; rather, one has a despot."¹⁴ As we will see, how one defines the "people" is of signal import in the debate, but for the moment it is enough to understand the rhetorical function of what Althusser calls the myth of the separation of powers.

Althusser argues vigorously that the notion that the British Constitution exhibits a separation of powers is "almost completely a historical illusion."¹⁵ According to received wisdom, Montesquieu's ideal state is composed of an executive (the king and his ministers), the legislature (the upper and lower houses), and the judiciary (the body of magistrates), each of which operates separately in its own rigorously defined sphere of action. As Althusser demonstrates, however, such a separation simply does not exist in Montesquieu's account of the British Constitution: through the power of veto, the executive encroaches on the legislature; through its right of inspection of the application of the laws, the legislature encroaches on the executive; and, finally, through its self-appointment as tribunal in cases of impeachment, for instance, the legislature encroaches on the judiciary (89). Recognizing that the separation of powers is in fact a calculated division of *pouvoirs* between determinate *puissances*—that is, the king, the nobility, and "the people"—Althusser asks "to whose advantage is the division made" (91). The answer is instructive:

[T]he nobility gains two considerable advantages from this project: as a class, it becomes directly a political force recognized in the upper chamber; also by the clause which excludes royal power from the exercise of judgement and also by that other clause which reserves his power to the upper chamber, where the nobility is concerned, it

becomes a class whose members' prospects, social position, privileges and distinctions are guaranteed *against the undertakings of either the king or the people*. As a result, in their lives, their families and their wealth, the nobility are safe both from the king and from the people. How better to guarantee the conditions for the permanent survival of a decadent class, whose ancient prerogatives are being torn from it and disputed by history? (93)

With these remarks, Althusser both summarizes Montesquieu's desire to reconstitute the social and political power of the nobility and opens the door for an argument regarding political misrecognition. As the final question suggests, Althusser understands Montesquieu's investment in the nobility as a form of nostalgia that occludes a clear vision of what is really at stake not only in the placement of the nobility between the people and the king, but also in the historical forces that generate this accession to power. What he says about this misrecognition is, I believe, applicable to Lord Abingdon's speech with some qualifications.

After reminding us that much of the eighteenth-century discussion of monarchy imagines not only a conflict between the king and the nobility but also a supposed alliance between absolute monarchy and the bourgeoisie against the feudal lords, Althusser carefully separates the industrial bourgeoisie of the early nineteenth century from that which emerged from the mercantile economy in the early part of the eighteenth century and argues that the mercantile bourgeoisie was integrated into the feudal system:

All the economic activity which then seemed to constitute the vanguard (commerce, manufactures) was indeed concentrated on the State apparatus, subordinate to its profits and to its needs. . . . The great navigation companies were created first and foremost to bring into the country, and always more or less to the advantage of the royal administration, spices and precious metals from overseas. *In its structure the economic cycle of this period is thus orientated towards the State apparatus as its goal.* And the counterpart to this orientation is the fact that the "bourgeois" who at one moment or another give life to these economic operations have *no other economic or individual horizon than the feudal order that this State apparatus serves:* on becoming rich, the merchant does not, *with a few rare exceptions*, invest his gains in private production, but *in lands*, which he buys for their title and for an entry into the nobility; *in offices* that are

functions of the administration, which he buys so as to enjoy their revenue as a kind of rent; and *in State loans*, which guarantee him large profits. The aim of the “bourgeois” enriched by trade thus consists of *directly entering the society of the nobility*, by the purchase of lands or the refurbishing of a family whose daughter he marries, or of *directly entering the State apparatus* via the gown and offices, or of *sharing in the profits of the State apparatus* via rents. This is what gives this upstart “bourgeoisie” such a peculiar situation in the feudal State: it takes its place inside the nobility more than it fights it, and with these pretensions to enter the order it seems to be fighting, it supports as much as it undermines it: the whole cycle of its economic activity and of the careers of its members thus remains inscribed *in the limits and structures of the feudal State*. (100–101)

I have cited this passage in full because it resonates so profoundly with the anxieties swirling around nabobry detailed in chapter 1. What the nabob makes visible is not the conflict between the mercantile bourgeoisie and the aristocracy but rather their inseparable integration in a state apparatus whose real constitutive “outside” is the lower orders. It is precisely this relationship that Foote dramatized in *The Nabob*. As Althusser summarizes, “the fundamental antagonism at that time did not counterpose the absolute monarchy to the feudal lords, nor the nobility to the bourgeoisie which was for the most part integrated into the regime of feudal exploitation and profited by it, but the feudal regime itself to the masses subject to its exploitation” (103). This helps to explain why Montesquieu’s analysis of the three forms of government was accessible not only to those who sought to shore up the power of the aristocracy but also to those who wished to devolve more power to the emergent commercial powers. In other words, it is not cynicism but corresponding misrecognitions that allow both Lord Abingdon to cite Montesquieu against Fox and prominent Whigs to invoke Montesquieu against George III and Pitt. The anti-Foxite position presupposes the integral relation of mercantile charters with the state apparatus, and the Whig position indulges in a fantasy of aristocratic reconsolidation, which nevertheless assumes a mercantile vision of empire that is already in the process of becoming obsolete.¹⁶

When we turn back to the debate of 15 December 1783, what we discover is that the two ostensibly opposed positions are separated by very little indeed. Abingdon and those intimidated or bought off by the king’s letter were content to cite Montesquieu and to demonize Fox as a monster worse than Cromwell, whereas the Duke of Portland, and Fox after him

in the House of Commons, focused on the king's figurative despotism.¹⁷ Abingdon's attack succinctly states that the "Bill that has for its subject-matter propositions as fatal to the just prerogative of the crown, by their adoption, as by their effects they will be found ruinous to, and subversive of, the rights, liberties, and properties of the subject: propositions as unique in themselves, as they are unmatched in the annals of our history" (136–37). With the invocation of English history, the oratory quickly capitalizes on comparisons between Cromwell and Fox in which Cromwell is held to be the more reasonable character. The characterization of Fox not only asserts his despotism but also questions his relation to the "people." Abingdon declares that Fox "does not shrink back from declaring, that he is not the king's minister, but the minister of the people; who glories in the distinction, who fortifies himself under it in the House in which he acts," and thus argues that Fox has blurred the line between the executive and the legislature (137). Hence, Abingdon can bring down the full force of Montesquieu's analysis of the separation of powers on Fox:

[T]he very ingenious and learned author of the Spirit of Laws; who, speaking of the English constitution, says "that the executive power ought to be in the hands of the monarch; because this branch of government, which has always need of expedition, is better administered by one than by many; whereas, whatever depends on the legislative power is oftentimes better regulated by many than by a single person." Again, "but if there was no monarch, and the executive power was committed to a certain number of persons selected from the legislative body, there would be an end of liberty, by reason the two powers would actually sometimes have, and would moreover be always able to have, a share in both." (140–41)

With Fox established as a threat to liberty, Abingdon can sketch in a very specific account of Fox's despotic ambition that manages to incorporate important documents in Whig policy. Pointing first to a series of minor bills introduced by the coalition to contain the king's influence and then to Burke's *Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents*, Abingdon describes Whig actions as the "influence of an Aristocracy" defined as an "Oligarchical Junto in the two Houses of Parliament"; the bill becomes "a proposition to wrest the reins of government out of the hands of the executive power, and to place it in the hands of a self-created demagogue, supported by a factious and desperate cabal" (137). The gesture has political teeth because his actions point to the formation of an aristocratic

elite that effectively enslaves the people in its own name. Both the people and the king are enslaved, and Fox rules by fear and fear alone.

However, if Abingdon and his allies are content to cite Montesquieu and suggest that Whig incursions on the prerogative have paved the way for a despotism of the “people” with Fox as its fearsome face, Fox’s allies in the House of Lords countered with a strategy equally indebted to *The Spirit of the Laws*. Fox’s chief ally in the Lords was the Duke of Portland, and his intervention in the debate counters the incessant citation of Montesquieu by mobilizing one of Montesquieu’s fundamental tropes for characterizing the despot. Portland was extremely disconcerted by the rumors that Lord Temple was circulating a threatening letter in George III’s name. As Amanda Foreman notes, a letter between Lord Frederick Cavendish and the Duchess of Devonshire indicates that Portland “confronted the king in his closet about rumours of a conspiracy” and that the king “fixed his glassy stare on him and ignored the question.”¹⁸ According to Grosrichard, the gaze and the letter are “the two key terms, the two driving elements, of [Montesquieu’s figuration of] despotic power in the Orient. . . . the gaze and the letter, and the intertwining of imaginary and symbolic registers which maintain their interplay, assume a paradigmatic value in this world of silence and transparency.”¹⁹ The combination of the king’s glassy stare and the letter appears to fulfill all the phantasmatic dimensions of the despotic scenario, and Portland chooses to mobilize them to full effect when he rises in the House of Lords. But Portland’s strategy is hobbled by two key problems: George’s despotic gaze is confined to the closet, and the letter does not operate openly but rather in the form of an open secret. Confined to the shadows, they do not figure themselves forth as evidence of despotic rule, for, as Grosrichard emphasizes, it is the public enactment of these signifiers that instantiates the fear that is despotism’s activating principle.

The lengthy divagations that Portland must employ to establish George’s despotism end up concealing it in the realm of rumor:

[H]e begged their lordships most serious attention, since it materially concerned the constitution of the country. A rumour had prevailed for the last three days, that had given him very great alarm indeed. . . . Among other arts, rumours of different kinds had been circulated with the most sedulous industry; and among others, one of a very extraordinary nature indeed. In that rumour, the name of the most sacred character in the kingdom had been aspersed, and the name of one of their lordships, he hoped, abused; but certainly

such was the complexion of the rumour, that he should be wanting in regard to his own character, wanting in that love and zeal for the constitution, which, he trusted, had ever distinguished his political life; wanting in the duty he owed to the public as a minister, if he did not take an opportunity, if it turned out to be true, of proposing a measure upon it to their lordships, that would prove they felt the same jealousy, the same detestation, and the same desire to mark and stigmatize every attempt to violate the constitution as he did. (152)

Portland pretends to speak on behalf of the king's good name by threatening to propose a motion condemning the rumor of the king and Lord Temple's machinations, which he knows to be true. So in response to Abingdon, he does not charge the king with an unconstitutional incursion on the rights of the legislature, but rather calls the Lords to condemn the rumor, knowing full well that such a condemnation would bring the letter into the public and thus establish the king's despotic actions, and construct the Whigs as protectors of the Constitution from the actions of a particular king. This latter move effectively takes up Abingdon's call for the nobility to "oppose the encroachments of the crown upon the liberties of the subject" without threatening the notion of the monarchy itself. This is crucial because, as we have seen, the king's supporters explicitly argue that the Whigs are attempting to form an "Oligarchical Junto" or what Montesquieu would euphemistically describe as an aristocratic democracy. Portland therefore must fight two battles at once: he must materialize the rumor and, in so doing, demonstrate that the Whigs are protecting the Constitution from George III's absolutism.

However, Portland's strategy is countered by a remarkable moment of performance. The Duke of Richmond, a supporter of the king, immediately stands and obviates Portland's proposed motion by presenting a surrogate text—a text that specifies what is in the letter and yet conceals its materiality. After attacking Portland for vagueness, Richmond pulls out his prop: "A newspaper, which he had in his pocket, his grace said, contained as indecent and as scandalous a paragraph as ever he had met with; perhaps the noble duke alluded to the facts there stated. He would read it to the House. His grace then read the following article from an evening paper of Saturday" (152–53). The article repeats Portland's suggestion that the rumor is libelous but lays out the contents of the letter in detail, specifying not only the king's intimidation but also Lord Temple's involvement.²⁰ Richmond, who explicitly declares his opposition to the bill later in the discussion, performs an act of inoculation here, because, although

the details of the conspiracy are introduced, they are now part and parcel of commercial print culture and can be dismissed as mere scandal-mongering for profit. His closing remarks are telling: "He would acquaint his grace [Portland], if he did not already know it, who was the author of these rumours; it was some hireling fellow, equally undeserving of his grace's patronage and their lordships' notice" (153–54). The double edge here is especially biting because it not only suggests that the rumor is nothing but scandal and hence immaterial, but also insinuates that the "hireling" is operating under Whig patronage unbeknownst to Portland. So the letter, initially introduced as a sign of the king's despotic actions, is turned around into evidence of Foxite despotism. By mobilizing the letter, Portland and the Foxite "hireling" are attempting to execute the king. In short, what started as a figural attack on behalf of the Whigs returns to bite Fox.

This reversal highlights a fundamental impediment to Foxite attempts to figure George III as a despot. As Althusser suggested about the nobility in Montesquieu's analysis of the English Constitution, the Whigs are fighting, this time in the name of the people, for the same ground as the king's supporters. Both the Whigs and the supporters of the king work to consolidate the integrated economic and social power of the aristocracy and the mercantile bourgeoisie. In a sense, the allegations that the India Bill would concentrate the economic power of the East India Company in the hands of Whigs simply states what the bill makes explicit: namely, that the health of the "Oligarchical Junto" depends on a specific form of class integration in which the mercantile bourgeoisie is willing to aspire to the condition of the aristocracy. The bill, while offering itself as a corrective to Company mismanagement, can also be read as a defensive measure against the future supersession of the influence of landed power by the industrial bourgeoisie. What terrifies the supporters of the king is that Fox may choose to act in a fashion that favors "connexion" over rank. So we are dealing with competing fears and a choice between despotic regimes: one threatened and surreptitiously enacted by the king's letter, and one threatened and frankly enacted by the bill itself. In this light, the very materiality of the bill, as opposed to the immateriality of the king's letter, tips the scale against Fox. This is why citation is such a vital strategy for Abingdon: by citing Burke's *Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents*, he can hide the actions of what amounted to a *lettre de cachet* from the king, by parading a "letter" of Whig despotism. As evidence we need only look at how the bill is described during debate. Abingdon refers to it as "ambitious" and "violent" and suggests that it

“seizes upon charters by force and violence” (137, 142). The Whig attempt to depict George III as a despot is effectively trumped by a citational strategy that ultimately understands the figural economy of Montesquieu’s account of despotism to the letter, for it is not the substance of the despot’s letter that matters but rather the fact of its material existence.

The sad fate of the Whigs following the defeat of the bill is instructive, because it indicates both a strategic blindness and a historical misrecognition. Fox extended the figural assault on George’s alleged despotism but slowly lost his majority. Fox apparently welcomed the loss of the bill because it seemed to confirm the presence of the king’s letter, and he strove in the weeks following the loss to initiate an inquiry into the material effect of the letter. However, from the outset Fox’s handling of Lord Temple’s role in the dissemination of the king’s threat moved in a slightly different direction. After rehearsing the story of the letter and the threat such an action poses to the Constitution, he attacked the secrecy of the letter head on:

[H]e took notice of the effect the rumours had produced, and declared, that if such an alarming instance was to prevail, it was not only more dangerous than any other, but that no one could venture to take the government of the country upon him. A Minister might be found bold and spirited enough, to look at the real condition of it, and adopt such measures as would effectually relieve it, but if after all his trouble, after his personal risque, the risque of his situation, and of his character, after he had got it through the House, the measure was to be *whispered away* by the prevalence of secret influence, by back stairs Statesman, by men who stole upon the private hour of the Prince, and came, like thieves, who rob in the night, to pilfer and poison, who would undertake the task of government, or stand the hazard of such a situation.²¹

With the specter of secret influence in his audience’s mind, Fox embellishes the despotic scenario in what I believe is a symptomatic fashion. As his speech unfolds, he refigures Temple, Pitt, and other supporters of the king both as future victims of the despot and as potential usurpers:

Mr. Fox very naturally expatiated on the conduct of the Lords of the Bedchamber, and talked of the miserable situation of a Minister who held his place at their volition; he said it brought to mind a saying of the late Mr. George Grenville [that] . . . “he never would again take

the command, while a band of Janissaries, like the Pretorian band of old, surrounded the person of the Prince, and were ready to strangle him on the order of a moment.”²²

The scenario is a familiar one from Montesquieu. The Oriental despot surrounded by his janissaries is able to execute his capricious will with lightning speed. And no one feels this as forcefully as his prime minister or vizier. One of the primary features of despotism according to Montesquieu is the elevation of any subject to the office of grand vizier. But the elevation comes at a cost for the vizier, for he

is torn by a dilemma which seems irresolvable, since he is compelled both to be reckoned with and to obliterate himself, to be and not be the despot, to exercise all power alone and to exercise none. . . . This is an impossible situation, one which ought to discourage all ambition. But this is not so: “This office is a very hard one, and a Grand Vizier has very little time of his own, yet all aspire to this office with great fervour, although they know almost for certain that within a short time they will die.”²³

Fox quotes Grenville not only to emphasize that he will be no one’s vizier, but also to critique Pitt as one who will happily obliterate himself in order to channel the power of the king. For Fox that way is full of danger because it renders the state vulnerable to internecine strife in the royal household. Fox’s utterance is extremely subtle on this point, because it is quite unclear who is going to be strangled in the final sentence. One reading suggests that the minister of such a prince lives in perpetual fear of execution by the janissaries, but the reverse is also true: the prince himself may become the victim of his own guards if they prove to be more loyal to the minister.

In a sense this reciprocal relation between vizier and despot most terrifies Montesquieu and, by extension, Fox. Despotic states are not prone to civil war but rather to serial assassinations. Montesquieu’s analysis of despotism is staged to teach two primary lessons aimed at preserving the social and political power of the nobility. First, because the despot needs to clear the field of all great personages, the nobility has the most to fear from this form of government. Second, the obliteration of the nobility “is the sure road to popular revolutions” because the violent passions of the people will eventually destroy those who pretend to absolute tyranny.²⁴ So what emerges in Fox’s speech is a subtle suggestion that Pitt’s willing-

ness to serve George III is based on a misrecognition where Pitt both is and is not the despot. The undecidability of this phantasmatic identification is for Fox inherently dangerous and constitutive of despotism itself. Already working in opposition, Fox has sized up Pitt as one who derives pleasure from masquerading as the king, and Fox's fear—which perhaps arises from his own ambition—is that Pitt will one day figuratively execute the monarch in a fashion that excludes those whom Fox represents.

Despite the subtlety of Fox's deployment of the tropes of despotic power, however, it is not that distinct from Abingdon's use of citations from Montesquieu against him. And perhaps this is the most salient issue emerging from the constitutional crisis ensuing from the defeat of the India Bill: namely, that the monarchy was already in a state of corruption and that the real political struggle of the day was a household struggle regarding the relationship between the vizier and the nobility. It is possible to narrate the events up to and following the bill's defeat in a fashion that is entirely in keeping with Montesquieu's fantasy of the despotic state. On the one hand, Fox acted in connection with a portion of the nobility (here understood as the body of landed gentry and mercantile subjects bound together by the bonds of Whig principles) in a fashion that sought to counter George III's absolutist tendencies. In so doing, Fox refused to operate as the king's vizier, and hence he was effectively assassinated by the king's "guards." The execution was so effective that the Whigs never again came into power. On the other hand, there was Pitt, conspiring with the king to "execute" Fox and establish himself as the new vizier. But it would be naive to suggest that this is any less of a resistance to the king. Only through his ascension to ministerial status can Pitt partake in the king's absolute power and channel it for his own ends. One has to become notable in the janissaries' field of vision to eventually turn them on the king.

The paradox here is captured by Grosrichard because both positions accept that ministerial authority partakes of a figurative death: "[I]n the despotic State, either one lives and counts for nothing, or one counts, but on the condition of giving one's life. In these terms, freely offering his head to the despot when he demands it is not the vizier's failure. It is his triumph."²⁵ This paradox sheds light on why the Whigs initially exulted in their defeat but then found themselves in perpetual opposition. The loss of the bill and the death of Fox's Ministry confirmed the king's despotism, but the Whigs overestimated the advantage to be derived from this recognition because they failed to realize that the connections that en-

sured their parliamentary majority depended on the life conferred by the king's gaze. With Fox dead in the eyes of the despot, parliamentarians slowly drifted over to the new vizier because he was politically alive.

As a heuristic device, this fable helps us to understand two crucial issues that would haunt the Whigs for the next decade. The first is the question of the "people" and their role in the Whig schism in the early 1790s. Acting as a good vizier must to keep his head, Pitt ruthlessly ensured that Fox could not reengage the notion of a noble resistance to George's absolutism by acting in the interests not only of the king but also of those who would otherwise make up Fox's real constituency. This meant that Fox's phantasmatic constituency, the "people," slowly transformed from the propertied and mercantile interests of Whig society to the very commercial orders that Whiggism had putatively adopted but resisted throughout the 1760s and 1770s. This transformation hollowed out the party from within, until the French Revolution brought the party's self-definition into crisis. In this light, Fox's early support for the French Constitution becomes a testimony to his desperate desire to resuscitate himself, which paradoxically has its roots in a nostalgia for Whig oligarchy but which operates through a misrecognition of Whig principles that ultimately separates him from his past.

Such is Burke's point both in the *Reflections on the Revolution in France* and in the *Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs* when he breaks into his famous panegyric to none other than Montesquieu.²⁶ What we see when Burke crosses the House and takes up against the concept of the "people," as it is mobilized not only by Paine but also by Fox in the early 1790s, is a more consistent response to the same nostalgic desire. What has happened is that Pitt has effectively separated the notion of the "connections" between mercantile and landed interests that formerly defined Whiggism from specific individuals and adopted it as his own base for resisting both the "people" and the king. Burke can cross the House because Pitt's party is not that different from the Whig oligarchy as it defined itself prior to the defeat of Fox's India Bill. This reading of Whig disintegration through Montesquieu clarifies the vexed question of Burke's apostasy, for it indicates that Burke does not move from left to right but rather that left and right transform into one another. It is the dead man, Fox, who, forced by the hand of the despot, diverges from his political roots and finds himself ultimately with the common people. This, of course, implies that Fox shifts from one who played with and deployed Montesquieu's phantasmatic scenario of despotism to one who was able to see what Althusser describes as its real objectives: namely, the preservation of the political power

of the affiliated interests of the mercantile bourgeoisie and the landed gentry against the twofold threat of the emergent industrial bourgeoisie and the ever present mass of exploited laborers.²⁷

A second issue that the fable clarifies is the Whigs' obsession with Hastings and the place of India in their slow march into political oblivion (see chapters 4 and 5). If we understand the defeat of the India Bill as precipitating the death of Fox and, by extension, his party, then the relentless pursuit of Hastings, especially by Burke, can be understood profitably as an act of mourning, one that predicts the death of Whiggism. Everything Burke mobilizes against Hastings not only attempts to reverse Fox's assassination but also works through the death of his own view of party in *Thoughts upon the Cause of the Present Discontents* that was effectively killed by Abingdon on the night of 15 December 1783. This negotiation with dead versions of their former selves is locked in political language whose parameters are defined by Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws*²⁸ and gets irresolvably intertwined with Hastings's depredations. The performances of Burke, Fox, and Sheridan reveal their attempt not only to indict Hastings but also, literally, to give life to the statesman's body. This hoped-for resurrection shows why the trial's theatricality was of such vital concern.

The Spirit of the Laws: Such Things Are

Elizabeth Inchbald's *Such Things Are* was most likely written in the middle of 1786 and opened on 10 February 1787, three days prior to the opening of the impeachment proceedings against Warren Hastings. Because the rhetoric of despotism played such a prominent role in the Whig analysis of the East India Company, Inchbald engages with the Hastings problematic by focusing on the constitutional crisis generated by Fox's East India Bill in 1783 and 1784. Her meditation on despotism has developed from her initial intervention in *The Mogul Tale* to a complex analysis of the political theory, which everywhere animated the rhetoric of despotism during the constitutional crisis. Inchbald decides to approach the problem of despotism neither through its figuration in Montesquieu nor through citation of *The Spirit of the Laws*, but rather through the principles that distinguish governance.

The fundamental innovation of Montesquieu's theorization of the forms of government lies in the totality of the nature and the principle of action of each discrete form: "There is this difference between the nature of the government and its principle: its nature is that which makes it

what it is, and its principle, that which makes it act. The one is its particular structure, and the other is the human passions that set it in motion” (21). In Montesquieu’s famous tripartite division, democracy depends on virtue, monarchy on honor, and despotism on fear. Althusser argues that the relationship between nature and principle in each form of government is put to the test when governments are corrupted. Book 8 of *The Spirit of the Laws* opens with the contention that “The Corruption of each government generally begins with that of the principles,” and Althusser’s gloss offers a helpful starting point for a discussion of *Such Things Are*:

Corruption . . . constitutes a sort of experimental situation which makes it possible to penetrate the indivisible nature-principle unity and decide *which is the decisive element of the opposition*. The result is that it is definitely the principle that governs the nature and gives it its meaning. “When once the principles of government are corrupted, the very best laws become bad, and turn against the state: but, when the principles are sound, even bad laws have the same effect as good.”²⁹ . . . Thus it really is the principle which is, in the last resort, the cause of the development of forms and their meanings. (52–53)

Montesquieu says this explicitly in the clause following the one cited by Althusser for he states unequivocally that “the force of the principle pulls everything along” (119). This means that laws and constitutions not only cannot protect the state but actually can contribute to its downfall in times of corruption. Principles ultimately protect the state and its inhabitants. Thus, all the wrangling over the constitutionality of Fox’s East India Bill or of the king’s response is beside the point if the principles of government are corrupted. In the particular case of George III’s monarchy, if the principle of honor has been corrupted, then constitutional arguments are actually part and parcel of the devolution of the monarchy into a state of despotism. Inchbald mobilizes this recognition in her sentimental comedy, but to understand the depth of her analysis, we need to clarify what precisely Montesquieu means by principle.

Montesquieu’s signal innovation in political theory is his conviction that the nature of government is not purely formal. As Althusser succinctly summarizes,

The *principle* takes us into life. For a government is not a pure form. It is the concrete form of existence of a society of men. For the men

subject to a particular type of government to be precisely and lastingly subject to it, the mere imposition of a political form (*nature*) is not enough, they must also have a disposition to that form, a certain way of acting and reacting which will underpin that form. As Montesquieu puts it, there has to be a specific *passion*. Each form of government necessarily desires its own passion. (45)

A theorist of government has to be as finely attuned to the social interactions of a particular constituency as he or she is to the history of its laws. Again Althusser's analysis provides the formulation necessary for understanding the opening Inchbald finds for a theatrical theorization of government:

Considered not from the viewpoint of the *form* of the government, i.e. of its political exigencies, but from the viewpoint of its *content*, i.e. of its origins, *the principle is really the political expression of the concrete behaviour of men*, i.e. of their manners and morals, and spirit. Of course, Montesquieu, does not say in so many words that the manners and morals or spirit of a nation constitute the very essence of the *principle* of its government. But he does set out from principles as the pure forms of government: their truth appears in their corruption. When the *principle* is lost, it is clear that *manners and morals effectively take the place of principle*: they are its loss or salvation. (56)

In a time of political corruption, when monarchy has devolved into despotism, the playwright, not the politician, finds herself in an auspicious situation, for she is the arbiter of manners and morals, and thus of the spirit of the nation. In this light, sentimental comedy, Inchbald's preferred mode of composition proves to be generically appropriate to such a calling, for it turns on the representation of manners and the correction of morals. We have already seen Inchbald's willingness to accede to the regulation of concrete social relations through theatrical representation in *The Mogul Tale*. However, her ambitious comedy *Such Things Are* builds on the strategies of the earlier farce to provide a critique not only of private desires but also of the desires that drive the state. Montesquieu's analysis opens the door for Inchbald to collapse both levels of desire into a totalizing critique of a political culture that is caught in the thrall of its own nostalgia for a type of society and a type of empire that is rapidly becoming obsolete.

Inchbald strategically sets the play on the "island of Sumatra, in the East

Indies.” At the time of the play’s production, the East India Company was extending its influence in the island, but very little was known of Sumatra in the metropole.³⁰ It is in a sense *terra incognita* for London audiences and thus can act as a laboratory of sorts for staging governance. Its status as an island is important, because, like Robinson Crusoe’s island, Sumatra is a symbol for Britain itself. However, the island never fully figures for Britain; rather it functions as a heuristic scenario for examining specific matters of principle that are clearly applicable to Britain on the eve of the Hastings trial. It is the burden of the first two acts to establish the spirit of the nation of Sumatra.

Inchbald’s portrait of British society in the East Indies is scathing. Act 1 opens in a parlor at Sir Luke Tremor’s, with Sir Luke and Lady Tremor trading insults. They are both social climbers and are attacked in a manner that is by now well worn. Sir Luke describes his wife as a woman without character who at the time of their marriage was “without one qualification except [her] youth—and not being a Mullatto.”³¹ The indication of her whiteness is important, for despite her lack of education and her faults, she represents a certain kind of colonial English identity that is not beyond repair. In this regard, Inchbald’s satire on British subjects in the East Indies is not reduced to simple *antinabob* sentiment. Sir Luke, we discover, is both an idler and a coward, but he is cognizant that his social milieu is corrupted by despotic rule. As his name suggests, he is the embodiment of despotism’s key effect: fear has beaten down his courage and extinguished even the slightest feeling of ambition.³²

Fear infuses all of the play’s social relations. The Sultan rules by fear, and Sumatra is itself an extensive prison.³³ But despite the ubiquity of terror in the play, all is not as it seems. The Sultan, for instance, turns out to be a surrogate sultan and a closet Christian. His Christianity arises from his love for the Christian Arabella, who was “sent in her youth by her mercenary parents, to sell herself to the prince of all these territories. But ’twas my happy lot, in humble life, to win her love, snatch her from his expecting arms and bear her far away” (40). During a rebellion against the “true” prince, the sultan-to-be takes the side of the rebels in part because such a position pits him against the very figure who would subjugate his lover in the harem. In the midst of the battle, the “young aspirer” is killed and the sultan-to-be is pressed to stand in for him because he “bore his likeness.” He takes to the role because he believes that the “true” prince has abducted and murdered Arabella. In a remarkable speech, the Sultan reveals that his political character is defined by his erotic loss: “Frantic for her loss, I joyfully embraced a scheme which promised vengeance on the

enemy—it prospered,—I revenged my wrongs and her’s, with such un-sparing justice on the foe, that even the men who made me what I was, trembled to reveal their imposition; and they find it still their interest to continue it” (40). The Sultan therefore rules by fear, but he does so in the name of resistance to the erotic desires of the former prince. In fact, all of his actions prior to and following the rebellion show him to be acting against the imputed sexual slavery of the harem, in favor, first, of monogamous seclusion and, second, of his nostalgia for his lost conjugal bliss.

As in *The Mogul Tale*, Inchbald presents her audience with a despot, but one who is disconnected from its conventional sexual tropes. Nevertheless, the Sultan’s interlocutor, Mr. Haswell, who figures explicitly for the prison reformer John Howard, still regards him as mentally diseased and sets himself up as the Sultan’s potential physician. This gesture places strict limitations on the Sultan’s despotism. His rule is corrupted not by the sexual deviance of Oriental polygamy but rather by an excessive manifestation of monogamous love for Arabella. And this excess exists in spite of his Christianity: what Haswell recognizes is that the Sultan’s Christianity arises from his desire for Arabella and not from any adherence to the principles of Christian virtue. Haswell’s task therefore is to rein in that excess and demonstrate that excessive desire even for one lover makes one blind to the love of others. As Haswell explains in the final scene when the Sultan and Arabella are reunited: “Dread her look—her frown—not for herself alone, but for hundreds of her fellow sufferers—and while your selfish fancy was searching, with wild anxiety, for her *you* loved, unpitying, you forgot others might love like you” (66). By tightly knotting the Sultan’s practice as a ruler to the errant assumptions of his erotic desire, Inchbald effectively collapses the public and private dimensions of his character. This implies that the correction of his private excesses will alter the nature of his government and, by extension, the social relations of all who are subject to it.

This rectification of despotic rule via the inculcation of private restraint is further elucidated by Inchbald’s other primary intervention in the figural economy of despotism. The Sultan’s rule is defined not, as Grosrichard’s analysis of Montesquieu would suggest, by the combined power of the letter and the gaze, but rather by blindness. The Sultan’s gaze is literally occluded by the apparatus of his power, for he holds Arabella in prison for fourteen years because he cannot see her. The very darkness of the prisons that represent the extent of his tyranny conceals the supposedly lost object of his affections. And his decrees are unable to bring her into the light because his very ability to issue decrees is founded on

her absence. This is Inchbald's key recognition: that the loss of Arabella, of the object of desire, is a constitutive misrecognition. All of the Sultan's violence arises from his distorted attempts to regain something that he thought was killed by his sexual and political rival. At the heart of his tyranny lies a homosocial conflict regarding the proper exchange of women. As an enemy of the imputed prostitution of the harem, the Sultan is on the side of sexual normativity, but his attempts to reconstitute his former monogamous relationship are so immured in a combination of nostalgia and vengeance that they make him blind to the present: a present in which his lover exists just beyond his field of vision. As a political device, his gaze is fearsome because it sees all but one thing.

Inchbald's analysis here of despotic rule in Sumatra amounts to a rigorous critique of the homosocial rivalry that drives not only British masculine self-stylization but also the day-to-day flow of British politics. Just as the homosocial conflicts in Parliament seem disconnected from everyday life, the Sultan's pathological desires appear to be separate from the rest of the play; however, as Montesquieu would suggest, the fact of their existence inflects all the characters' manners and morals. The Sultan, although only intermittently seen in the play, is in fact ubiquitous. And his adverse effect on Sumatran society is intimately tied to forgetfulness: "A corrosive, self-deceiving and treacherous amnesia pervades both public and private life. The Sultan's tragic acts of forgetting—his failure to remember, as Haswell explains, that others might love like you (5.3)—is represented as a primary cause of the contagious misery which characterizes this inhuman state."³⁴ Throughout the play, the repression of past materials generates symptoms of a social pathology. In the case of the Sultan, unresolved homosocial rivalry generates a form of excessive desire, which has led him to take on the violent character, if not the sexual proclivities, of the former prince.

The Tremors, like the Sultan, seek to exist in a perpetual present, which is in fact defined by an excessive investment in the past. For example, Sir Luke's desertion of his regiment in the midst of battle deforms his character such that he not only feels threatened by Twineall's mistaken praise of his military accomplishments but also moves to seek vengeance against him. Sir Luke's unresolved cowardice has developed into a species of deviant gender identity that impinges on his national character. His inability to accede to the role of soldier has rendered him an impotent husband and a servile colonial subject. Similarly, Lady Tremor's concealment of her low rank has developed into a complementary form of nonnormative sexual identity, for she seems always on the verge of entering into

an adulterous relationship with the treacherous Lord Flint. In the manuscript version of the play, this proclivity carries a further insinuation of national insubordination: Lord Flint was originally a French ambassador named Count Misprision who attempts to seduce English women. As Sir Luke states, “he was sent hither from Tripoli to settle a treaty of Commerce with our Court—instead of which—he is trying to carry on an illicit one with every Englishman’s Wife in the Island.”³⁵ Lady Tremor responds that the count’s attempts at seduction would fall on deaf ears if the husbands paid proper duty to their wives.

The manuscript confirms that the insistence of repressed past materials has generated symptomatic forms of sexual and political deviance in these characters. It should come as no surprise that the correction of the Sultan through his reconciliation with Arabella is immediately followed not only by Sir Luke and Lady Tremor’s repentance for their persecution of Twineall but also by a public disclosure of their respective secrets. In keeping with Inchbald’s deployment of sexual symptoms to mark social decay, the play closes with a resuscitation of the Tremor’s marriage and the all-important inauguration of a new marriage between Elvirus and the Tremor’s daughter Aurelia. Within the figural economy of social health that thoroughly imbues this portion of the play, it is as though the cure of one marriage guarantees the reproduction of marriage itself as a bulwark against the devolution of society into a state of despotic terror.

However, if this hygienic impulse takes up much of the play’s latter acts, it is clear that Inchbald is just as concerned with a careful delineation of the governmental problems posed by figures such as Lord Flint and Twineall. Lord Flint is the play’s self-appointed vizier and the development of his character from manuscript, to submission text for the chamberlain, to the printed text is extremely revealing. As noted earlier, Lord Flint starts off as a French seducer in the manuscript version, but by the time the play is submitted to Larpent he has become an Englishman perverted by his contact with despotic rule. As Sir Luke states, Lord Flint was “Sent from his own country in his very infancy, and brought up in the different courts of petty, arbitrary Princes here in Asia; he is the slave of every great man, and the tyrant of every poor one” (3–4). Flint’s forgetfulness only superficially mimics the Sultan’s forgetfulness, for there does not appear to be a constitutive loss at the heart of his inability to remember: forgetfulness is simply a political device. As Sir Luke emphasizes, Lord Flint forgets nothing, but he pretends to forget the everyday in order to render himself inscrutable. The following passage reconstitutes in italics the material deleted from the Larpent text:

SIR LUKE: . . . do you suppose he is as forgetful as he pretends to be? no, no—but because he is a favourite with the Sultan, and all our great men at court, he thinks it genteel or convenient to have no memory—and yet I'll answer for it, he has one of the best in the universe, *and is the most circumspect and careful in all his dealings of any man living, yet he is perpetually making blunders—presuming to be absent, and to remember nothing at all, and his character he supports so well, that some of his friends are weak enough to pity him for it, as a constitutional defect, while it is merely the result of art.*

LADY: I don't believe your charge—all his mistakes and forgetfulness, I am sure are the effects of Nature. (3)

The distinction between constitutional and natural defects is the setup for a much more biting satirical move, which incorporates Lord Flint's political artifice with his sexual deviance. After listening to Sir Luke rant about how Lord Flint never makes a mistake to his own disadvantage, Lady Tremor counters with an account of their shared experience of his sexual indiscretions, for he has clearly made passes at Lady Tremor in front of Sir Luke:

LADY: *I have known him forget himself so far, as to pay his addresses to a Lady even before her own husband—I have known him forget himself so far, as to make such promises.—*

SIR LUKE: *Of which, when he was reminded, he'd forget himself so far, as not to be able to recollect a word he had said.*

LADY: *And that's all very natural to some constitutions.—*

SIR LUKE: *It may be natural in a political constitution, but never in a civil one.*³⁶

Inchbald's double play on the words *constitution* and *civil* indicate that more is at stake here than Lord Flint's servile adherence to the Sultan. The suggestion is that Lord Flint's behavior arises out of a constitutional defect understood in both political and bodily terms.

Somewhat later in the scene, Sir Luke summarizes his allegations against Lord Flint by suggesting in a fleeting aside that he does "no great honour" in mentioning his name (5). But Lord Flint, while certainly without virtue, is in Montesquieu's terms a man of honor. Early in *The Spirit of the Laws*, Montesquieu argues that virtue is an unnecessary attribute in a monarchy:

Ambition in idleness, meanness in arrogance, the desire to enrich oneself without work, aversion to truth, flattery, treachery, perfidy,

the abandonment of all one's engagements, the scorn of the duties of citizens, the fear of the prince's virtue, the expectation of his weaknesses, and more than all that, the perpetual ridicule cast upon virtue, these form, I believe, the character of the greater number of courtiers, as observed in all places and at all times. (25–26)

The catalog of traits here reads like the *dramatis personae* of Incbald's play, suggesting that the despotic state of Sumatra may well be a monarchy in a state of corruption. Sir Luke's account of Lord Flint's self-interest resonates with Montesquieu's presentation of monarchy, for it is the nobles' selfish preservation of their own interests that paradoxically ensures the moderation of the state. In Montesquieu, honor is the passion of the nobility and enables the nobles to act as a check on the absolutist tendencies both of the king and the people. Paradoxically, Lord Flint is in Montesquieu's terms constitutionally necessary to the health of a monarchy; however, in a corrupted state his very constitutionality works against the state. He is not only the Sultan's minion; he actually maintains and furthers the corruption of Sumatra. Incbald emphasizes this in a brilliant leveling gesture that appears in the Larpent text but not in the print version of the play. As we will see in the next chapter, Sir Luke's allegations against Lord Flint culminate in an indictment of colonial rule that is not that distant from Burke's indictment of Warren Hastings:

SIR LUKE: . . . you know how all this fine country is harassed and laid waste by a set of Princes, Sultans, *Nabobs*, *Vice-Roys*, *Governors*—and I know not what—who are for ever calling out to each other “that's mine,” and “that's mine;”—and “you have no business here”—and “you have no business there”—and “I have business every where;” [*Strutting*] then “give me this,”—and “give me that;” and “take this, and take that.” [*Makes signs of fighting*] (4)

Flint may be necessary to some political constitutions, but he is alien to what Sir Luke calls a civil constitution. If one reads only the political implications of this joke, this implies that civility and monarchy, whether degraded or moderate, are mutually exclusive. But if one also factors in the concept that marriage is a civil union, it also implies that Lord Flint's openly adulterous and predatory overtures are similarly uncivil. What links the two forms of incivility is their frequent deployment in bourgeois critiques of the aristocracy. Taken together, Incbald is taking a withering glance at the place of the aristocracy in the government of the state

and in the deployment of sexuality that ultimately points toward the necessity of a form democratic governance that is regulated from top to bottom by the introduction of forms of normative sexual and class relations.

It may be that the material presented here from the Larpent text that was excised prior to the printing of the play was simply too inflammatory for publication. But her presentation of Lord Flint carefully separates her from a range of factions fighting over the impeachment of Warren Hastings. The collocation of sultans, nabobs, and governors indicates that she shares some of Burke's analysis of Hastings's accession to "arbitrary power," but her indictment of Lord Flint's character separates her both from Whig nostalgia and from the servility evidenced by those who engineered the defeat of Fox's East India Bill. As a supplement to Betsy Bolton's suggestion that Lord Flint represents Lord Chesterfield, I would argue that he is just as persuasively a symbol for Lord Temple or even for Pitt himself.³⁷ As evidence we need only remember that he operates in a clandestine fashion as the Sultan's vizier and exercises his power by carrying around letters that declare characters such as Twineall to be enemies of the Sultan.

If we understand Lord Flint to be the embodiment of aristocratic and monarchical corruption, then Twineall's function in the play becomes more palpable. Twineall, like Lord Flint, is well suited to both monarchical and despotic government, for he is a flatterer who works continually for his own advancement. This perhaps explains why the play's most violent conflict is staged between them, because Lord Flint recognizes that Twineall aspires to his condition proximate to the Sultan. Hence, as one could predict from Montesquieu's account of the vulnerability of the vizier, Flint protects himself by suggesting that Twineall is a threat to the Sultan and arranges for a state-sanctioned assassination of the foppish flatterer by mobilizing the Sultan's guards. Sir Luke and Lady Tremor become complicit because they fear not only Lord Flint's retribution but also Twineall's revelation of their secrets. Significantly, just as with Lord Flint, Sir Luke also jokes on Twineall's ambivalent relationship to honor when the Sultan's guards arrest him for crimes against the state:

TWI: But if they have left out *honourable*, it can't be me—I am the Honourable Henry Twineall.

SIR LUKE: Aye, that you are to prove before your judges. (57)

That judgment turns on the attribution of seditious meaning to what Twineall believes are intentionally ambivalent and inconsequential remarks regarding the Sultan. What he does not understand is that in the

despotic state the content of the utterance is less important than the fact of its performance and that to the guards any utterance regarding the Sultan's legitimacy is by definition a threat.

Like Lord Flint, Twineall is raised in the world of politics. His father and his uncle are both in the House of Lords, but when Haswell asks him about specific political issues before Parliament, Twineall's speeches devolve into the combination of elision and circumlocution that Twineall declares is in fashion at this moment in London (11). This fashionability is directly tied to Twineall's foppish dress, and his clothes are a convenient figure for his deviance. This is especially notable in the manuscript version of the play: when Haswell mistakes Twineall for a woman, Twineall takes it for a compliment. What exists as an explicit remark in the manuscript is maintained via Twineall's feminine costume in the play's performance. Twineall's excessive femininity plays the same role as Flint's excessive masculinity: both are variations from the norm that suggest their social and political deviance. Likewise, his artificially telegraphic speech is the linguistic analogue to Lord Flint's contrived lapses in memory. He is the embodiment of the foolish man of fashion who, bereft of virtue, finds his way through society by flattering those as vacuous as himself. Unfortunately, Twineall's flattery has the reverse of its intended effect because it is based on faulty information, and he finds himself facing execution. However, all that separates Flint and Twineall are degrees of palpable deniability: because Twineall is a flatterer, he can be held accountable for his words, regardless of how vague and misleading they are, whereas Flint always seems able to disown his opinion by pretending to forget the meaning of his utterances. The political analysis here is prophetic because it suggests that the real political danger in the despotic state lies in the dissemination of political utterances.³⁸ As the Sultan emphasizes to Haswell, the men who serve him "fill my prisons every day with wretches, that dare to whisper I am not the real Sultan, but a stranger. The secret, therefore, I myself safely relate in private: the danger is to him who speaks it again" (41).

It is with this sense of the danger of political speech that Haswell remonstrates both Twineall and his persecutors. As the play unfolds, flattery becomes the object of Haswell's chief pronouncements on vice and social decay. Late in act 5, Haswell interrupts Twineall's torrent of praise and offers a critique of flattery that defines Englishness in terms of verbal performance:

HAS: Hold! Hold!—This, Mr. Twineall, is the vice which has driven you to the fatal precipice whereon you are—and in death will you not relinquish it?

TWO: What vice, Sir, do you mean?

HAS: Flattery!—a vice that renders you not only despicable, but odious; *nor are you alone the sufferer, but the poor wretches who listen to your praises, are betray'd, and become even more odious than yourself.*³⁹ (70)

The unpublished version establishes a reciprocal relation between the flatterer and the one being flattered. This has an important resonance with Montesquieu's despotic scenario that Grosrichard describes as the paradox of the vizier:

How can one be loved by a despot while being ignorant of his wishes, yet certain of responding to those wishes? The despot's subject answers: by giving him the opportunity to love himself through me. In a world where there are those who have nothing and are nothing, while the Other is and possesses everything, after the gift of life the spontaneous form assumed by the gift of love is *flattery*; it is the giving of an image which offers the despot more than he has, but supposes in exchange that he will accept that he is not everything, since you cannot be flattered except by someone who matters in your eyes. . . . the logic of flattery demands that it be carried always to excess, to inflation, to extravagance.⁴⁰

Grosrichard's remarks indicate the narrowness of the field of action accorded to Twineall and Lord Flint. They flatter themselves into existence but, in so doing, partake of the odiousness of absolute tyranny. And from Grosrichard's analysis one can glean the figural connection between flattery and sexually suspect economies of excess.

Perhaps the play's most telling moment occurs immediately after Haswell, empowered with the signet of the newly reformed Sultan, releases Twineall from prison. No sooner does Twineall launch into a series of encomiums on Haswell's benevolence and compassion than Haswell orders the guards to "Seize him—he has broken his contract already" (71). Twineall corrects himself by insulting Haswell, and Haswell declares that he'll "forgive *that* meaning, sooner than the other—utter any thing but flattery—Oh! never let the honest, plain, *blunt* English name become a proverb for so base a vice" (71). The invocation of plain English discourse as the bulwark against a vice associated in both Montesquieu and Inchbald with the corruption of monarchy into despotism has extraordinary political implications, not least of which is the assertion of a relationship between virtue, Englishness, and honest, plain speech. As we will see in

chapter 5, this becomes for Frances Burney a crucial problematic in her analysis of the oratory of Burke and Fox during the Hastings trial.

This latter conjunction brings us straight to Haswell himself, for he is the embodiment of virtue in the play. The tactical advantage of such a construction should be by now obvious, because Haswell can walk through the play as both the example of virtue and the patient assailant of vice. But it would be naive merely to assume that Inchbald mobilizes Haswell and John Howard to critique the fantasy of Oriental despotism. From a perspective steeped in Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws*, such a valorization carries with it an incipient critique of monarchy in favor of republican governance because virtue is the defining principle of democracy. The deployment of Howard is ultimately aimed at reengaging the very issues that precipitated George III's resistance not only to Fox's East India Bill but also to Whig notions of party. By attending to Howard, one can evoke Burke's spectral presence in this play and suggest that, like the Sultan, his passion for vengeance against Hastings and his royal supporters arises from an earlier misrecognized loss.

When *The Spirit of the Laws* focuses on the imposition and enactment of law in the various forms of government, Montesquieu argues in no uncertain terms that the law's enactment and the penalties conferred on its subjects operate as signs of the state's spirit:

Severity in penalties suits despotic government, whose principle is terror, better than monarchies and republics, which have honor and virtue for their spring.

In moderate states, love of the homeland, shame, and fear of blame are motives that serve as restraints and so can check many crimes. The greatest penalty for a bad action will be to be convicted of it. Therefore in moderate states civil laws will make corrections more easily and will not need as much force.

In these states a good legislator will insist less on punishing crimes than on preventing them; he will apply himself more to giving mores than to inflicting punishments. (82)

It is therefore possible to assess the moderation and to examine the form of a government by attending to the severity of its punishments. As is well documented, the reign of George III was arguably the most punitive in the eighteenth century. The hallmark of moderation is difference in penalties—that is, making the punishment fit the crime—but precisely this lack of differentiation characterizes British jurisprudence in this period. Fur-

thermore, even a cursory glance at the Hastings trial records indicates that the managers attempted to demonstrate not only the sanguinary nature of Hastings's governance but also a symptomatic leveling in the application of punishment. In both regimes—which many observers felt were mutually supporting—crimes against persons and crimes against property were often accorded the same punishment.

Such Things Are conducts its allegorical analysis of both George III's and Hastings's governance by attending closely to both the frequency and arbitrariness of the state's punitive mechanisms and offers middle-class reform as the only solution. To do so, Inchbald conscripts John Howard, in the form of Mr. Haswell, to explore the Sultan's prisons. This tactic separates her from Whig critics of George III's absolutism and of Hastings's imputed rapacity, and thus her critique is mobilized from a space outside of conventional parliamentary political discussion. In short, Howard offers her an avenue of critique that is indirect enough to protect her from simple charges of party alliance at a time when the conflict over Hastings's impeachment utterly polarized the political world. The importance of this indirection is captured in her prefatory "Remarks" to the 1808 edition of the play:

The writer of this play was, at the time of its production, but just admitted to the honours of an authoress, and wanted experience to behold her own danger, when she attempted the subject on which the work is founded. Her ignorance was her protection. Had her fears been greater, or proportioned to her task, her success had been still more hazardous. A bold enterprise requires bold execution; and as skill does not always unite with courage, it is often advantageous, when cases are desperate, not to see with the eye of criticism: chance will sometimes do more for rash self-importance, than that judgement, which is the parent of timidity.⁴¹

This retrospective account of the play's composition and production is carefully coded because the recognition that "a bold enterprise requires bold execution" indicates that she was fully aware of the play's political volatility. A Whiggish indictment of Hastings would not make it through the chamberlain's office, but a play whose political critique of imperial governance travels at an oblique angle disguised as a tribute to John Howard's humanitarianism and as a satire on Lord Chesterfield operates with sufficient buffers to ensure production.⁴²

For all their ignorance about the island of Sumatra, the audience would

have been highly cognizant of Howard's reputation regardless of whether they had read his *The State of the Prisons*, for his inquiries were widely discussed throughout the 1770s and 1780s. To a reader of Howard's account of British jails, however, certain scenes would have clearly demonstrated that Sumatra was not at all unlike Britain in the treatment of its prisoners. Howard made this same connection in the reverse direction when he compared the lack of air in most British jails with that of the infamous Black Hole of Calcutta. Howard's work was in general not a philosophical inquiry into the rights of the prisoner and the state but a review of the material conditions of prisons themselves. It was the evidentiary quality of his work that allowed him to be deployed in more sweeping enlightenment critiques of statecraft. In this regard, Inchbald's play shares a great deal with the French praise of Howard's findings, but her deployment of Howard uses the materiality of the theatre to effect a similarly materialist critique.

Act 1 is divided into two types of spaces. The play opens in Luke and Lady Tremor's drawing room; as we have seen, this opening scene offers a portrait of a society whose internal dynamics are utterly deformed by despotic rule. The second, third, and fourth scenes of the opening act are set in the prison. And it is Haswell who links the two spaces. The division of the prison scenes into two separate types of space is notable, because, as Howard reported, British jails were typically divided between a common ward and more comfortable "masters apartments."⁴³ Movement between these two wards was regulated by fees paid to the warden. Act 1, scene 2 is clearly a common ward: as the stage directions state, Haswell and the Keeper interact with "Several Prisoners dispersed in different situations" (20). When they move to "Another part of the Prison" via a damp passageway, the scene changes to a single space with "A kind of sofa with an old man sleeping upon it—Elvirus sitting attentively by him" (20). The Keeper explicitly states that prisoners situated in this more hospitable inner chamber pay for less harsh treatment: "In this ward . . . are the prisoners, who by some small reserve—some little secreted stock when they arrived—or by the bounty of some friend who visit them—or such-like fortunate circumstance, are in a less dismal place" (20). In terms of the physical aspects of the stage, the sofa becomes the very sign of class distinction that defines the architecture of the British prison. One of the stock props of Orientalist representations of the East becomes the figure that equates Britain and Sumatra. In this allegorical economy, the sofa, normally associated with the decadence of the Sultan, emerges as a figure for what Howard saw as the naked power of rank in the British penal sys-

tem and thus it operates as a kind of icon of aristocratic corruption in both imperial spaces.⁴⁴

Further attention to the prison scenes of act 1 reveals that this architectural equivalence signals a more specific critique not only of spirit of the laws of the British state under George III but also of Burke's self-identification in the pursuit of Hastings. This latter point is quite complex and requires that we attend both to the specifics of the prison scene and to the historical legacy of Fox's East India Bill in the conception of party unity. In the printed version of the play, the Keeper's tour of the common ward focuses on two prisoners, one "suspected of disaffection . . . sentenced to be here for life, unless his friends can lay down a large sum by way of penalty, and another who was tried for heading an insurrection and acquitted, but who remains incarcerated because of 'Fees due to the Court'—a debt contracted while he proved his innocence" (20). The latter prisoner's predicament conforms to one of the principle tenets of Howard's *The State of Prisons* and some of the legislation arising from its publication. Howard discovered that many of those incarcerated were often declared innocent but were held because they could not pay various fees incurred during their imprisonment. Innocent prisoners found themselves indefinitely confined because they were unable to pay fees to the jailers and to the courts. An entire economy of fees and bribes ensured that being charged was often sufficient to effect punishments, which, considering the dangers of prison life, were often fatal. Howard's position on the ills of confinement is summarized in Haswell's first meeting with the Sultan:

HAS: The prisoner is your subject—there misery—more contagious than disease, preys on the lives of hundreds—sentenced but to confinement, their doom is death.—Immured in damp and dreary vaults, they daily perish—and who can tell but that amongst the many hapless sufferers, there may be hearts, bent down with penitence to Heaven and you, for every slight offence—there may be some amongst the wretched multitude, even innocent victims. (38)

Inchbald's representation of the prison spaces emphasizes their unhealthiness, and most of the prisoners that Haswell encounters are in the process of dying of jail fever.

Howard's analysis of the prison system vividly portrayed the unhealthiness of the prison confines, but his account of corruption and excessive punishment made his text more than a catalog of atrocities. What he

demonstrated was that the problems he described were symptoms of broader social ills, and nowhere was this more apparent than in his discussion of debtors. In addition to discovering that many prisoners were incarcerated in spite of their innocence because of a system of fees, Howard also revealed that the bulk of those imprisoned were not convicts, who were for the most part executed, transported, or branded. More than half of those confined in Britain's jails were debtors, and considering the virulence of the prison spaces themselves, this meant that by their confinement they were effectively executed. Significantly, in the manuscript and the Larpent text of *Such Things Are*, Inchbald includes a debtor in the common ward. After turning from the prisoner suspected of disaffection to the Sultan, and prior to encountering the prisoner accused of insurrection, the Keeper presents "a Debtor, a youthful prodigal, whose ancestors were rich—his father left a charitable donation to this prison, and now a pennyworth of bread a day (his dying father's bounty to poor Prisoners) is all that [is] left him of his parental legacies." This version of the play effectively places debt, disaffection, and insurrection on the same plane, and thus a civil offense is deemed to be no different than a crime against the state. One cannot argue conclusively for why the debtor does not appear in the printed version—it may have been suppressed by the chamberlain, or the manager, or a combination thereof, or it may have been deemed incidental—but in light of the larger argument of this chapter, its presence in the manuscript and the Larpent text opens the door for advisedly tentative conclusions.

First, the collapse of the difference between the civil offense of debt and the treasonous crime of insurrection is the most extreme symptom of a society corrupted by despotism. Such a state exhibits no moderation, and thus the prison scene is the most tangible instance of Inchbald's enactment of Montesquieu's analysis of legal penalties as indicators of the nature and principle of government. In this light, Howard/Haswell's critique of the prison is deployed as the thin edge of an overall critique of the spirit of the laws, which ultimately turns on the character of Haswell himself, for like Howard in Inchbald's prefatory remarks, he is praised for his virtue. As act 5 unfolds, Haswell corrects and unites all the characters, and the play closes with a series of encomiums to Haswell's virtuous qualities. Twineall suggests that these encomiums are another form of the very flattery that Haswell has so rigorously exorcized, but Elvius closes the play with the following defense: "[T]here are virtues, which praise cannot taint—such are Mr. Haswell's— for they are the offspring of a mind, superior even to the love of fame—neither can they, through malice, suf-

fer by applause, since they are too sacred to incite envy, and must conciliate the respect, the love and the admiration of all” (74). Haswell’s Christian virtues here are literally incorruptible: they are not susceptible to flattery and they do not incite envy. Elvirus—and, by extension, Inchbald—is suggesting that Haswell’s actions and his character have conciliatory effects within the social body and, as such, are the spring of social cohesion. When one recalls that the play deploys Twineall and Lord Flint to perform a devastating critique of the complicity of principles of honor in the demise of moderate monarchy, it is clear that Inchbald is arguing for virtue over honor as a corrective social passion. In light of the pervasive influence of Montesquieu on the staging of the problem of government, this means that Inchbald is deploying Howard to make a radical argument for some form of democracy to supersede a period of monarchical corruption.⁴⁵ It is no wonder therefore that Inchbald looked back on the play as a hazardous enterprise.

This gesture toward democracy, however, does not take place at the formal level of governance but rather at the level of its guiding principle—that is, the manners and morals of the subjects governed. As my earlier reading of *The Mogul Tale* and this reading of *Such Things Are* demonstrate, the management not only of the social and governmental relations between subjects but also of subjects’ relations to themselves turns on very particular understandings of virtue. The sexual regulation that lies at the heart of the earlier farce has been expanded into an overarching vision of middle-class ascendancy in the later more mature play. In this light, the sexual deviance of Twineall and Lord Flint can be understood as the incorporation of *The Mogul Tale*’s critique of aristocratic and theatrical dissipation into a radical analysis of the British state on the eve of the Hastings impeachment. In doing so, Inchbald mobilizes sexual fantasies already at work in Montesquieu’s fantasy of Eastern despotism but turns them toward an argument directly counter to Montesquieu’s own desire to reconstitute the place of the nobility in monarchical government. This latter turn is, I believe, crucial because it demonstrates how Howard and Montesquieu are deployed not only to critique the absolutist tendencies of both George III and Warren Hastings, but also to circumvent the nostalgia that characterized Whig critiques of both leaders’ abuses of power.

The latter circumvention is particularly visible when one considers the place of Burke in the entire drama of Indian affairs from the debate on Fox’s India Bill to the impeachment of Hastings. As noted earlier, Burke’s understanding of Whig identity plays a vital role in the assassination of Fox’s East India Bill in the House of Lords. Lord Abingdon alleged that

Fox's bill operated according to the exclusive gestures prescribed by Burke in *Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents* and threatened to place the wealth of the East Indian Company into the hands of the Whig oligarchy. This is a tendentious reading of the bill, but it nevertheless undermined public confidence in Whig actions to the point that more than a decade later the indictment of Hastings could still be lampooned as an attempt to line Whig pockets.⁴⁶ The insinuation of Whig conspiracy was long-lived because it was based on a palpable and arrogant desire first exhibited by the Rockingham Whigs and then furthered in Foxite society to occupy a privileged place between the king and the people. Burke was the primary Whig theorist of that arrogant balancing act, and I want to briefly suggest how Inchbald's deployment of Howard and the question of punishing the debtor may have been aimed directly at him.

One of the most important panegyrics to John Howard came from none other than Burke in his famous "Speech at the Guildhall, in Bristol, Previous to the Late Election in that City" of 1780. Burke's speech upon the loss of his Bristol seat argues in no uncertain terms that a representative does not simply do the bidding of his constituents but is rather an independent subject elected for his ability to withstand the fleeting desires of the moment. As David Bromwich notes, many political commentators of the day recognized that "Burke's vaunted independence of local prejudices was lamentably consistent with the arrogance of the Rockingham party."⁴⁷ One of the issues on which Burke disagreed with his constituents was his advocacy of Lord Beauchamp's legislation to reform the "law-process concerning imprisonment" for debt (225). Defending his support for this bill, Burke argues in terms that are reminiscent of Montesquieu regarding the danger of a penal system that does not distinguish civil infractions from criminal acts: "There are two capital faults in our law with relation to civil debts. One is, that every man is presumed solvent . . . and thus a miserable mistaken invention of artificial science, operates to change a civil into a criminal judgement, and to scourge misfortune or indiscretion with a punishment which the law does not inflict on the greatest crimes" (227). This analysis is augmented by evidence culled from Howard's documentation of prisons in Britain and Europe regarding the reform of the punishments for debt in Holland. Burke's self-defense closes with an encomium to Howard's "humanity" and "charity" that resonates with the way he is praised in *Such Things Are* (229). It may well be that Inchbald's and Burke's shared regard for Howard and their desire for the reform of the law surrounding debt are coincidental. But one could also argue that Inchbald mobilizes Howard precisely because

he figures so prominently in Burke's public self-stylization as a statesman in the Rockingham party. The invocation of Howard may well be a haunting.

If Burke is acting according to principles learned from Howard, then one can postulate a potential affiliation between his politics and those presented by Inchbald in *Such Things Are* that is forestalled or obviated by his later affiliation with Fox. In this light, Burke becomes a figure whose political adherence to the Whig oligarchy distorts the very analysis needed to separate himself from the obsolescence of his party's self-definition. Such a gesture would allow Inchbald to align herself with Burke against Hastings while at the same time marking a specific line of demarcation between her critique and that of the Whig opposition. This has specific implications for the Hastings impeachment because so many of the primary charges against Hastings revolve around cases that replicate the excessive punishment for debt described by Burke. For example, Hastings's alleged extortion of the Begams of Oudh and the violation of the zenana of Panna, Rani of Benares, mother of Chait Singh, operated on the presumption that they were secreting funds in the zenana so as not to pay their debts.⁴⁸ It is not an exaggeration to state that the punishment of the debtor haunts the impeachment proceedings in much the same way that it haunts *Such Things Are*. The suppressed lines on the prisoner confined for debt are a poignant elision not only because they circuitously point to the fleeting possibility of democracy as a solution to the state's descent into despotism, but also because they highlight the very limits that prevent Burke's pursuit of Hastings from coming to anything but acquittal. His commitment to the social and economic interests of an amalgamated aristocracy and mercantile bourgeoisie means that his political opposition to Hastings ultimately does not differ materially from those supporting Hastings. In this scenario, Howard, in the guise of Haswell, represents a political road not taken, a road not contaminated by Foxite economic and sexual dissipation, not corrupted by absolutism or by debt and excess, but whose principles are based on Christian virtue and middle-class restraint—a road where, in Inchbald's eyes, such things ought to be.