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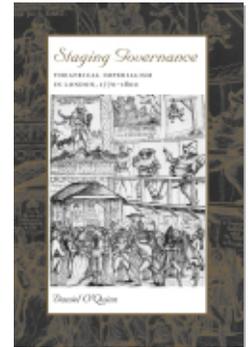
Staging Governance

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PART

A Theatre of Perpetual War

THREE

ON 5 APRIL 1805, in the midst of a debate on the state of affairs in India, Charles James Fox stood up in the House and wearily observed that “We in fact, seemed in India, to be like Macbeth ‘so steeped in blood’ that we thought it vain to get back.”¹ More than thirty years prior to the utterance of these words, observers had been witness to a series of wars against the Rohillas, the Marathas, and the sultans of Mysore that were initiated during Warren Hastings’s term as governor-general of Bengal, but which raged on through the terms of Cornwallis and Wellesley. Along the way, the public sense that these wars were unnecessary and at times embarrassing was superseded by the feeling that their outcome was vital to both the national and imperial identity of Britain. This shift in public opinion corresponds to the changing fate of East India Company’s military actions, for during the 1770s and 1780s many of the conflicts resulted either inconclusively, as in the Treaty of Mangalore, which resolved the Second Mysore War into a draw, or in outright defeat, as in the failed action at Pollilur. At moments during these setbacks, observers would look back on Clive’s previous victories with a combination of nostalgia and anxiety, for it was his extraordinary success that forced fundamental modifications in Company rule as the diwani was incorporated into commercial and governmental strategy. It was not until Tipu Sultan was killed by Wellesley’s forces at Seringapatam in 1799 and the Marathas were decisively defeated in 1803 and 1804, that the ambivalence regarding war in the Asian subcontinent was put to rest.

But Fox’s uneasy interpretation of this history should give us pause. His statement is startling not only because it registers his complicity in what he recognizes is a state of perpetual war, but also because the Shakespearean analogue suggests that, despite Lord Wellesley’s subjugation of the remaining pockets of military resistance, British domination was an aberration in the order of things that would be rectified at some future date. Fox is modifying the famous passage in *Macbeth*, where, after encountering Banquo’s ghost and resolving to seek advice from the Witches, Macbeth sums up his historical predicament:

I am in blood
Stepped in so far that, should I wade no more,
Returning were as tedious as go o’er.
Strange things I have in head, that will to hand,
Which must be acted ere they may be scanned.²

By invoking Macbeth’s recognition that it is too late to go backward and that the cycle of murder cannot be undone, Fox is doing more than stat-

ing that British affairs in India are mired in violence. He is positing both a surrogate fantasy aimed at displacing political events in the 1790s and positing a tragic future for the empire that will reconstitute his own Whig understanding of governance. Here it is the hybrid of company, state and military, cast as Macbeth, that has strange things “in head, that will to hand,/Which must be acted ere they may be scanned.” If the future is fearsome, the reconstruction of the past is no less disturbing for one is hard pressed to separate the wars in India from the battles staged in Parliament by Fox, Burke, and Sheridan during this period. The blood on the hands of the East India Company’s soldiers is figuratively tied to the dismembered body of the Whigs and the oligarchical imperatives they once stood for. One has the sense that the blood in Fox’s remark is not only that of Tipu or of the Marathas but also his own and that it will be avenged at some undisclosed point in the future.

Joseph Roach refers to this kind of historical performance as surrogation, and there is no doubt that Fox is attempting to refigure, however clumsily, one history with a version of the past aimed at keeping himself politically alive even after he is effectively dead.³ Of course, the very act of surrogation here is imbued with spectrality for it is the murdered yet still lingering Banquo who instantiates this recognition of perpetual war. One way of parsing this surrogative performance is simply to ask, Who is Banquo? Is it India or is it a past version of the Whig establishment that interrupts the imperial feast in 1805? Fox, like Macbeth, seems unable to celebrate the new form of sovereignty consolidated by Wellesley’s victories in the Asian subcontinent. That that new form of sovereignty involves a radically increased profile for the military should not go unnoticed for, as John Brewer has demonstrated, the infiltration of the state by the military in the eighteenth century is one of the most significant modulations in British governmentality.⁴ Prior to the eighteenth century, the military played a very minor role in the formulation and practice of government in Britain. In many ways, Britain’s much-vaunted liberty and its relative lack of absolutism was a result of its underdeveloped military class. The particular form of governance developed during the seventeenth century went through a remarkable transformation as the military slowly began to be integrated into the commercial interests of the state. By the beginning of the nineteenth century it would be impossible to think of Britain’s imperial future without some reckoning of the incorporation of the military into the political and social life of the nation. And yet, for Fox’s Whiggish interpretation of history, this relationship between the military and the state points toward the very absolutism he resisted through-

out his career, but with one crucial difference. The absolutism he fears at this juncture is not that of the king but rather of a hybrid governmental form that incorporates the King-in-Parliament, the military, the East India Company, and a whole panoply of intermediate institutions who actually regulate social interaction and economic exchange.

Fox's remark may be a symptom of oligarchic nostalgia, but there is a vital countermemory inscribed in the very words he uses to shore up his own political subjectivity and mourn the passing of one interpretation of "natural liberty." The violent battles for control of colonial territory and the unending struggles that attended the recalibration of metropolitan politics were quite literally "steeped in blood" but not only in the senses that Fox's allusion to *Macbeth* would suggest. As Ann Laura Stoler emphasizes, Foucault's engagement with questions of race in *The History of Sexuality* and in *Society Must Be Defended* focuses "on the shift in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries from a 'symbolics of blood' to an 'analytics of sexuality.' In societies in which systems of alliance, descent and death are dominant, blood was a 'reality with symbolic function.'"⁵ When dealing with this issue, Foucault is careful to refer to the symbolics or the thematics of blood because, in the long history he is tracing, this symbolic assemblage is infiltrated and detached by a new form of power:

Beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century, the thematics of blood was sometimes called on to lend its entire historical weight toward revitalizing the type of political power that was exercised through the devices of sexuality. Racism took shape at this point (racism in its modern, 'biologizing,' statist form): it was then that a whole politics of settlement . . . , family, marriage, social hierarchization, and property, accompanied by a long series of permanent interventions at the level of the body, conduct, health, and everyday life, received their color and their justification from the mythical concern with protecting the purity of the blood and ensuring the triumph of the race.⁶

But this deployment of the symbolics of blood took over from an earlier discourse that did not think about race in a singular fashion. In his more extended meditation on the genealogy of racism, Foucault tracks his analysis back to the moment in European history when wars ceased to be private affairs and were carried on by sovereign states. With the emergence of juridical sovereignty came a new discourse

in which society itself was conceived as an entity saturated by relations of war. . . . In both its bourgeois and aristocratic form, it is an instrument of political opposition and struggle against sovereign rule. . . . It is a discourse that interrogates law and sees its formation as the consequence of massacres, conquests and domination, not as the embodiment of natural rights. It is not however, a discourse that detaches itself from the language of rights; on the contrary, its truth claims are made to specific rights and by specific holders of them; the rights of a family (to property), of a class (to privilege), of a race (to rule).⁷

This discourse was structured around the perpetual war of two competing races who invariably couched their rights and privileges in the language of blood. This unending conflict is described by Foucault as the war among the races.

This race war and its symbolics of blood has particular resonance for the English case because Foucault explicitly ties the emergence of this discourse to the bourgeois revolution of the seventeenth century and to the texts of Sir Edward Coke and John Lilburne. This is significant because this discourse of race war runs alongside of and impinges upon not only the development of the British Constitution's notion of King-in-Parliament but also of the various forms of resistance to this particular manifestation of sovereignty. It is not unusual to see widely divergent social groups staging resistance to juridical sovereignty in terms of blood and in opposition to some internal other. And nowhere is this more evident than in endless attribution of Jacobitism to various constituencies. That this tag should be so regularly attached to Fox in the 1780s and 1790s demonstrates the capriciousness not only of the discourse but also of the long history of the political manipulation of the symbolics of blood.

Foucault argues that these kinds of internal social dynamics undergo two transcriptions. The first, arising in the seventeenth century, was openly biological and attended the figuration of nations as races. This racialization of the nation is then articulated in European policies of colonization, but, as Stoler notes, Foucault does little to expand this aspect of the argument. Instead, Foucault's key recognition is that this already fluid discourse underwent a crucial transformation:

And then you find a second transcription based upon the great theme and theory of social war, which emerges in the very first years

of the nineteenth century, and which tends to erase every trace of racial conflict in order to define itself as class struggle. We have, then, a sort of major parting of the ways, which I will try to reconstruct. It corresponds . . . to a recasting of the theme of racial confrontations in terms of the theory of evolutionism and the struggle for existence. . . . By this, I mean the idea—which is absolutely new and which will make the discourse function very differently—that the other race is basically not the race that came from elsewhere or that was, for a time triumphant or dominant, but that is a race that is permanently, ceaselessly infiltrating the social body, or which is, rather, constantly being re-created in and by the social fabric. In other words, what we see as a polarity, as a binary rift in society, is not a clash between two distinct races. It is the splitting of a single race into a superrace and a subrace. To put it a different way, it is the reappearance, within a single race, of the past of that race. In a word, the obverse and the underside of the race reappears within it.⁸

This reduction from the binary war among the races to the defense of a now normative social category amounts to an important genealogy of whiteness as well as an inversion of the politics of race discourse. In the era of the sanguinary politics of aristocratic alliance, the discourse of race war was a critical tool against the juridical power of the state. In the shift from the symbolics of blood to the deployment of sexuality, “the racist thematic is no longer a moment in the struggle between one social group and another; it will promote the global strategy of social conservatism. At this point, and this is the paradox, given the goals and the first form of the discourse . . . we see the appearance of State racism: a racism that society will direct against itself, against its own elements and its own products. This is the internal racism of permanent purification, and it will become one of the basic dimensions of social normalization.”⁹ It is this genealogy of normativity that is so important to our discussion at this juncture.

For Fox to argue that Indian policy was steeped in blood recognizes the history of bloodshed in the region, but it also allows us to suggest that the metropolitan reaction to Indian affairs shifted from one in which the various social strata laid claim to the thematics of blood in a struggle for real and symbolic power to one in which the middle classes began to develop a politics of normativity whose chief focus was sexuality and whose initial application was on itself. Burke’s and Fox’s reactions to the political problems posed by the East India Company were always analyzed in a combative field that located political legitimacy in the opposition to

absolute sovereignty. What we begin to see in the later years of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century is a shift toward an analysis of the relationship between Britain and its colonial holdings that worries less about conflict in the metropole than about contamination of the metropolitan subjects in the colonies. As Sen, Stoler, Collingham, Teltscher, Dalrymple, and others have argued, the constitutional—that is, political—questions of imperial governance give way to the governance of bodily constitutions in the colonies. The legitimation of political privilege through the symbolics of blood that was so crucial to the history of British politics slowly found itself taking on altogether new meanings as the sexual deployments that defined a largely racialized class body began to take hold until, eventually, to speak of blood in a colonial context was to speak of miscegenation.¹⁰

Stoler has persuasively argued that the deployment of sexuality and the regulation of classed bodies was the result of a deeply intertwined project that took place between the metropole and the colony. We can see two aspects of the metropolitan side of this project in part 3, and both are intertwined with new understandings of the place of war in imperial policy. As Pocock and Wahrman have argued, war in the American colonies posed extremely difficult problems for British subjectification. Whether considered as a social war or as a civil war, the American conflict played a key role in the transformation of the war among the races that lay beneath much of British constitutional and social tension. As the largely Whiggish colonists took on a revolutionary relation to the king and Parliament, an internal bifurcation in British society that demanded that Britons in the British Isles define themselves in contrast to “foreign Britons” suddenly emerged. This demand for self-definition involved the progressive establishment of norms that derived from ancient claims of nationhood as well as current social practices. One can argue that the consolidation of the middle class in post-American Britain is integrally tied to the early phases of the second transcription of racial discourse outlined by Foucault. The evidence for this second transcription lies in the subtle racialization of class relations that slowly works its way through the culture at the end of the eighteenth century.

As I have argued elsewhere, George Colman’s *Inkle and Yarico* provides the most vivid examples of this process in part because it can be read against the myriad versions of the tale that derive from a much earlier understanding of the British polity, and in part because it obliquely addresses the relationship between the decline of mercantilism and the emergent normativity of military masculinity.¹¹ As an indicator of colonial trans-

formation, its mobilization of the category of whiteness is something very new, which nonetheless relied on tropes and narratives that were very old. In that sense, it is a useful example of how one discourse on empire is reoriented to serve the purposes of a very different social movement and a very different understanding of the state. *Inkle and Yarico*'s complex containment and redeployment of interracial sexuality promotes a form of normative whiteness whose parameters are both unstable and in need of constant surveillance. In Colman's comic opera, the ultimate act of racial surveillance is accorded to a military officer, and I contend that he follows two mutually supporting sets of orders. On the one hand, his explicit orders are to defend British West Indian interests against hostile threats from both American and French vessels, but, on the other, he also conducts a kind of surreptitious warfare against himself and against his wife. As the embodiment of an almost transparent whiteness, Captain Campley wages wars at the borders of the white body.

A similar war against the self can be found in Mariana Starke's *The Sword of Peace*, but this time it is staged in India. As we will see in chapter 6, Starke's comedy explicitly engages with Colman's comic opera, and its careful parsing of colonial Indian society allows us to affirm Stoler's conviction that "Colonialism was not a secure bourgeois project. It was not only about the importation of middle-class sensibilities to the colonies, but about the *making* of them"; in addition, it allows us to specify the fine gradation of transcolonial subjects into competent or inappropriate manifestations of white Britishness.¹² That competency has a great deal to do with the relationship between British functionaries and their racialized servants. In *Inkle and Yarico*, the interracial sexuality between master and slave is a locus of intense anxiety, and the opera mobilizes a series of substitutions to bring it under control. In *The Sword of Peace*, which also engages with the question of slavery, the focus shifts from the interracial sexual practices between male masters and fetished female slaves, to the interracial desire of questionable women of British origin and their Indian servants. I make the suggestion that Starke's strategies are not at all distant from those employed by Lord Cornwallis to reform the military forces of the East India Company in the late 1780s and early 1790s. The army plays a vital role in securing sexual, racial, and class normativity both in Cornwallis's regime and in Starke's play, but Starke's consideration of interracial desire is supplemented by an analysis of violent conflict that bridges the gap between colony and metropole by engaging quite explicitly with the homosocial violence both uncovered and enacted in the Hastings impeachment. In this regard, Starke's play, like Cornwallis's in-

stitutional reforms, attempts to erase Hastings's legacy through strategies of self-reform aimed at bodily practices.¹³

Starke's play poses fundamental questions regarding the consolidation of masculinity that cannot be separated from the project of self-regulation that would become so important to British policy in India, and she does so in a fashion that mobilizes the theatre as a place where the audience can stage a war against itself that purifies rather than sheds blood. However, the limits of this kind of regulatory strategy can be charted in the reception and containment of Starke's next play, *The Widow of Malabar*. Again, I draw a relation between Starke's metropolitan dramaturgy and Cornwallis's colonial policy, except this time the emphasis is less on the military than on the array of fantasies attending the Permanent Settlement. I argue not that the play directly engages with the policy—the Permanent Settlement was proposed two years after the brief run of Starke's play—but rather that the play and its reception are inflected by the same nostalgia for the natural liberty of landed property that swept through metropolitan society at the time of the French Revolution, and which found itself enacted in the Permanent Settlement. What I hope to demonstrate is that the deliberate misreading of Starke's play in the press is evidence of the ideological quality of that nostalgic construction.

If Colman and Starke bring the question of war, blood, and sovereignty into crisis in order to offer a model of governmentality based on the regulation of bodies, then the theatrical experiments staged at Astley's Royal Amphitheatre to mark the victory of British forces over Tipu Sultan in the Mysore Wars offer a remarkable opportunity for examining the relationship between imperial war and the management of national subjectivity. The final chapter argues that military logistics became a technique for subjectification in the theatre, and that the political effects of these techniques far exceed those formerly contained under the category of manners. The ameliorative qualities of manners, civility, and virtue played a crucial role in stabilizing the volatile public of eighteenth-century Britain, but the new tactics employed by Astley and others were less interested in ideological amelioration than with the production of a new kind of citizen suited to a new state form whose effectivity no longer derives solely from the long juridical history of the British Constitution. As we have already noted, Phillipson, Pocock, and Foucault argue the early modern state form is irreversibly altered after the 1790s. Under the veil of a mystified constitution, the state was increasingly militarized, and disciplinary power suffused the social fabric through a range of institutions such that the polity was subjected to fundamentally different forms of control. The autoethno-

graphic imperative that focused so insistently on manners and virtue is supplemented by more productive forms of subject maintenance. The emergent entertainment industry borne out of the illegitimate theatre is not simply a mirror of the times but an active producer of subject-citizens who can best be described as subagential—disempowered and incorporated by the very fantasies of supremacy accorded to them. In this sense, the audiences at Astley's no longer adjudicate over British imperial policy as ethical spectators; rather, they accede to positions of normativity and take on the project of self-purification outlined but not specified by Foucault. That this should happen via the incorporation of military spectacle is resonant because it suggests that the integration of a military cadre into the workings of the state, which Brewer has shown to be so important for British political life, was supplemented by the consolidation of a class that zealously guarded itself with the same martial tactics used to fend off the “subrace,” whether it be defined as a classed other or as a racially distinct and subjugated people. The standing army so feared by theorists of British liberty in the eighteenth century was now manifest, in the field, in the state, in the body, and in the soul of the citizenry.