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Burney and Empire

TARA GHOSHAL WALLACE

The trial of Warren Hastings was both a watershed moment in British imperial history and riveting entertainment for the public. In a collection commemorating the bicentenary of the event, Geoffrey Carnall calls the trial "an extraordinary spectacle, a flamboyant emblem of the accountability of government, [and] a major theatrical event" (77), one which, as Eddy Kent tells us, required the expansion of Westminster Hall to accommodate the 1,100 spectators "crowding in to watch the proceedings" (43). Burney's chronicle of this momentous episode is so indispensable to historians that she is cited in almost all analyses of the event, from P. J. Marshall's foundational account (1965) which refers to opening sessions "brilliantly described by Fanny Burney" (77), to Jeremy Bernstein's biography of Hastings (2000), which includes a whole chapter entitled "The Diaries of Fanny Burney."[1] Bernstein's chapter on the trial itself consists of enormous chunks of direct quotations from Burney's diaries, confirming that modern rehearsals of that famous trial rely on Burney's personal access to the major players in that drama and on her extraordinary aural memory—so minutely accurate is Burney's recollection of the proceedings that she can correct William Windham on a particular word used by the Lord Chancellor Thurlow in referring to the charges against Hastings (*CJL* 3: 117 n. 336).[2] But modern historians, even while reproducing Burney's accounts, read them as archive rather than as text; understandably, they limit their engagement with Burney's transcription to what it can add to the official, or journalistic, or partisan reports of the trial. In this essay, I want to look at Burney's representation of the trial as a complex set of strategies that resonate with her novelistic practices and demonstrate her deep and anxious understanding of the psycho-social implications of the politics of empire.

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By the time Burney witnessed and recorded this pivotal moment in the narrative of empire, the East India Company had

for two centuries occupied a central position in Britain's global ambitions. The Company's first charter was granted in 1600, under Elizabeth I, "constituted," says Edmund Burke, "with extensive powers for increasing the commerce and the honour of this country" and subsequently extended by powers acquired "more legally, given by Parliament after the revolution" (391). By 1688, it had become a sort of pilot program for capitalist global enterprise, having acquired investors and a governing board of directors; as Nicholas B. Dirks puts it in *The Scandal of Empire*, "Empire and capitalism were born hand in hand, and they both worked to spawn the modern British state" (Dirks 8). In the course of the eighteenth century, the Company steadily increased its control, both commercial and territorial, over areas still ostensibly under Mughal rule. But its early financial success, which had allowed the Company to lend £3.2 million to the state in 1709 (thereby winning both a trading monopoly in India and influence with the Whig government at home) had eroded so that in a reversal of the previous financial transaction, Lord North's Regulating Act of 1773 bailed the Company out of plummeting share value and potential bankruptcy by lending it £1.4 million (Dirks 14–15). Of course, popular belief in the fabulous wealth of the Company lived on as we see in *Cecilia,* when Monckton cautions the heroine against financing Albany, "whose projects are so boundless, that the whole capital of the East India Company would not suffice to fulfil them" (770).[3]

Having provided financial relief, the British government began to scrutinize the practices of the Company and its representatives in India. What they found was systematic corruption and tyranny. Even before the Regulating Act, there were murmurs in the home country about the way Company officials were enriching themselves at the expense of native populations. In 1772, William Bolts prefaced his *Considerations on India Affairs* with a scathing summary of the Company's power and practices:

> From a society of mere traders, confined by charter to the employment of six ships and six pinnaces yearly, the Company are become sovereigns of extensive, rich and populous kingdoms, with a standing army of above sixty thousand men at their command ... many of the servants

> of the Company, after exhibiting such scenes of barbarity as can scarcely be paralleled in the history of any country, have returned to England loaded with wealth, where ... they have set justice at defiance, either in the cause of their country or of oppressed innocence. (iii–iv)[4]

Nick Robins, in his study of how the East India Company "built the foundations for modern business administration.... outstripping Enron for corruption and Wal-Mart for market power," cites a telling sequence of pieces in *The Gentleman's Magazine*: in March 1767, shortly after Clive took over the *diwanis* (revenue collection) from the Mughal emperor Shah Alam, the magazine celebrated the acquisition, anticipating a "mine of wealth" that "will astonish Europe"; one month later, it was warning that the Company could "repeat the same cruelties in this Island which have disgraced humanity and deluged with native and innocent blood the plains of India.... down with that rump of unconstitutional power, The East India Company!" (Robins 17). The periodical anticipates by some twenty-five years Burke's warning to the Lords about the consequences of allowing Hastings to escape punishment: "To-day the Commons of Great Britain prosecute the delinquents of India; to-morrow the delinquents of India may be the Commons of Great Britain.... Every man in Great Britain will be contaminated and must be corrupted, if you let loose among us whole legions of men, generation after generation, tainted with these abominable vices, and avowing these detestable principles" (401–02). Both *The Gentleman's Magazine* and Burke focus on the danger to the home country when practices repugnant to British ethics can flourish with impunity on the imperial fringes. But as both Dirks and Kent argue, the trial was really in the service of "inaugurating a new era of legitimation of empire" (Dirks 25): it showed "how corruption trials can function productively in the consolidation of hegemony, depicting the transgressive in order to create new normalities" (Kent 49), thus "declaring the end of corrupt mercantile imperialism and enunciating a new purified formation, an empire based on virtue, duty, and service" (Kent 58).

Hastings was not the first Governor required to answer for his conduct in India. Even the military hero Robert Clive was summoned

to the House of Commons to respond to accusations that he had amassed an illicit fortune during his tenure in India, returning to England with a fortune of £300,000, accrued from "presents" made to him by Indian princes, as well as the £27,000 a year in *jaghirs* (land-rent) that was granted to him for life. Clive's defense, in a speech delivered to Parliament in 1772, goes some way to show why the government began to worry about the extent of Company power in the subcontinent. After enumerating what he controlled—twenty million subjects, five to six million pounds of revenue per year, an army of fifty thousand—Clive went on: "A great prince was dependent on my pleasure, an opulent city lay at my mercy; its richest bankers bid against each other for my smiles; I walked through vaults which were thrown open to me alone, piled on either hand with gold and jewels! Mr. Chairman, at this moment I stand astonished at my own moderation" (qtd. in Dirks 17). Clive was exonerated, but never recovered his heroic reputation, and his death in 1774 was considered a kind of confession. In May 1778, Dr. Johnson invokes Clive as an example of "a man who had acquired his fortune by such crimes, that his consciousness of them impelled him to cut his own throat" (Boswell 993). Ironically, Warren Hastings was appointed as Governor-General precisely to activate a reform agenda that would halt the peculations of individual Company men and rein in coercive and oppressive tactics deployed to relieve princes and peasants of their earnings. At the same time, however, Hastings was tasked with erasing the Company's ruinous deficits, which had grown exponentially—by 1771, "the Company's military and commercial spending in Bengal had reached £3,210,000, 50 percent more than its revenues" (Robins 97).

Hastings moved swiftly to address the financial issue, establishing "corporate rather than private monopolies over opium, salt, and saltpetre as a way of further increasing revenues," canceling the Company's "annual tribute of £2.6 million to the Mughal emperor," and arranging lucrative deals with the wealthy state of Oudh—2.6 million rupees for ceding Allahabad and Kora and 50 million rupees for helping Oudh annex Rohillkhand (Robins 124–25). In his *Memoirs Relative to the State of India* (1787), Hastings answers criticism of his tactics by pointing out that "When I took charge of the government

of Bengal in April 1772, I found it loaded with a debt at interest of nearly the same amount as the present; and in less than two years I saw that debt completely discharged" (21). The current debt, he avers, has nothing to do with mismanagement but rather with the demands on Bengal's treasury: "It seems to have been supposed that the resources of Bengal were inexhaustible.... the drains from Bengal for the support of the other presidencies have been annually increasing" (31). Insisting on his careful husbanding of imperial power, he complains that Bengal is given no credit for

> sums invested in the support of the Company's commerce, which it has alone supported; nor for the defence of the Company's other Presidencies, which but for that defence would have been lost; no merit ascribed to it for having maintained the splendor of the national character in all its military operations, unalloyed by a single failure ... nor for having insured the blessings of peace, security, and abundance, to the subjects of its immediate dominion, while it dealt out the terrors of conquest to the remotest enemies of the parent state ... while every other member of the British Empire was afflicted with the plagues of war or insurrection. (36–37)[5]

Macaulay endorses Hastings's assessment when he writes that Hastings's appointment kept India secure during a particularly parlous period in Britain's imperial and national history, when the country had, "by the most senseless misgovernment, been brought to the verge of ruin" under the reign of George III, and European nations "now rejoiced in the prospect of a signal revenge" for the military and diplomatic successes of George II (51).[6] Hastings, unlike his successors Cornwallis, Wellesley, and the bellicose Lord Minto, was not a military man, and his *Memoirs* energetically refute charges that he was a warmonger: "all my acts were acts of peace. I was busied in raising a great and weighty fabric.... A tempest, or an earthquake, could not be more fatal ... than the ravages or terrors of war would have been to me and to all my hopes" (106). In fact, Company troops were deployed almost constantly during Hastings's tenure, not only to guard British possessions and investments (as during the rebellion

in Benares in 1781) but also in the service of internal conflicts like the Rohilla and Tanjore/Carnatic wars in 1773–74. It was to finance these wars and the prizes demanded by British officers as well as to meet unremitting demands for increased profits to Leadenhall Street that Hastings tried to squeeze more and more revenue from Indians through coerced contributions and fines. At the impeachment and trial, charges pertaining to Hastings's extortions of Chait Singh and the Begums of Oudh evoked outrage from accusers and audience, but P. J. Marshall concurs with Macaulay that Hastings's "squalid" methods responded to "the Company's needs" rather than personal venality (127, 121). As Macaulay memorably put it, "To enjoin honesty, and to insist on having what could not be honestly got, was then the constant practice of the Company" (47), an exhortation as practical as Mr. Villars's instructions to Evelina to "attend assiduously to Madame Duval" even while judging and acting for herself (166).

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When Burney, during her long conversation with William Windham on the first day of the trial, proclaims herself "utterly ignorant upon this subject," because the affair was "always too intricate to tempt me" (C*JL* 3: 120–23), she speaks somewhat disingenuously. She had, in fact, read Hastings's *Memoirs* by January 1787, no doubt because she had access to one of "a few printed copies ... struck off, for the private information of such persons as from their official situations are intitled to the knowledge which they may be thought to contain" ("Author's Advertisement"). Moreover, she knew the issues well enough to pronounce the volume "too imperfect & unfinished to be satisfactory.... obscure & insufficient for their purpose & promise" (*CJL* 2: 52), that purpose being, of course, self-vindication.[7] The Hastings affair was regularly canvassed at Windsor: at tea with Colonel Robert Greville and Mr. Leonard Smelt in February 1787, for example, "Our subject, all the Evening, was Mr. Hastings:—Mr. Smelt, I had the gratification to find, thinks with me upon the merits & injuries of that persecuted Character.... The King came in for a long conversation, all on the same subject" (*CJL* 2: 73). Given her familiarity with Hastings's own narrative and her subsequent discussions with intimates of the royal family as well as George III himself, it is unlikely that she could

have been in the "state of general ignorance" that she insists upon when debating Windham.

Indeed, Burney's knowledge of India and Company personnel dates back to at least the beginning of her early journals although some of the connections of whom she speaks warmly have somewhat equivocal histories in India. In 1769, she is clearly enchanted by Mrs. Elizabeth Pleydell, "that sweet woman" who presents her with an apron and muffler "of finest India muslin," a gift which elicits from Dr. Burney the encomium "that the East Indian People ... are all remarkable for generosity" (*EJL* 1: 70), but which also recalls Lord Ardville in Burney's *Love and Fashion*, who tempts Hillaria with the "jewels and nabob muslins" he has acquired in the Indies (*Plays* 3.2.34–35). The charming Mrs. Pleydell was the daughter of John Zephaniah Holwell, who, as author of *A Genuine Narrative of the Deplorable Deaths of the English Gentlemen and Others Who Were Suffocated in the Black Hole* (1758), was the most influential chronicler of the notorious episode which took place on 20 June 1756. Holwell's narrative made "Black Hole" part of the English lexicon, so that Captain Mirvan, in *Evelina*, can signal his distaste for Ranelagh by vowing that "he would sooner go to the *Black-hole in Calcutta*" (*Evelina* 113). But Holwell's sensational tale, so compelling to contemporary British readers, was both internally inconsistent and deliberately skewed to provide a rationale to move against Siraj-ud-Daula, who had captured Calcutta from the British, and thereby to consolidate Company rule in Bengal. Robins notes that the "incident would later be blown up as a crime that justified the Company's fullest retribution" (75), and Dirks adds that Holwell, who had erected "a monument of the Black Hole in a central square in Calcutta ... profited personally as well as politically from the sympathy extended to him for his woeful part in the atrocity" (2, 50). When, in 1772, Holwell warns against a trading company engaging in military deployments for the sake of territorial acquisition, the caution, Dirks caustically remarks, "came from the man whose lurid, and fictional, account of the Black Hole had provided the charter myth for the Battle of Plassey and subsequent Company aggression" (180). Moreover, Holwell, like Mrs. Pleydell's husband Charles Stafford Pleydell, had been summarily dismissed from his post by irate

Company Directors for being one of the signatories of a letter, probably dictated by Clive, which contained "gross Insults upon, and Indignities offered to, the Court of Directors; tending to the Subversion of our Authority over our Servants, and a Dissolution of all Order and good Government in the Company's Affairs" (*Reports* 250). In a note to "Marriages in Bengal, 1759–1779," Walter K. Firminger describes Pleydell's long and undistinguished career in Bengal and quotes a letter written in September 1772 by Dr. Tyso[e] Saul Hancock: "I will answer your queries relating to Mr. Pleydell. I say he is either a fool or in desperate circumstances.... Neither his abilities, nor abilities much greater than his, can support him on the footing he has come hither" (486 n. 3)[8]

Another of Burney's early acquaintances was Lord George Pigot; although at their first meeting in May 1769, she dismisses him as a "stupid man" (*EJL* 1: 68), by April 1770 she praises his "accustomed ease & politeness" and regrets that an invitation to dine with him did not transpire, "for I had great pleasure in the thought of being of the Party" (*EJL* 1: 120). Pigot had defended Madras against the French siege in 1758–59 but had clashed with Sir Eyre Coote, whom Macaulay calls "one of the most distinguished soldiers of that time" (54), about whether Pondicherry, wrested from the French, belonged to the Company or the Crown and threatened to stop payment to the King's troops if he did not get his way. In 1763, Pigot returned to England with £300,000, fruits of what Dirks calls the "excesses" of corruption, which "grew at a dizzying pace" in South India (61–62). Pigot's second term of service in India did not end so happily: in a turnabout that Robins likens to "poacher turned gamekeeper" (117–18), Pigot was sent back as Governor of Madras in 1775 to put a stop to Company officials making money out of the scheme to annex Tanjore to Arcot, and, indeed he restored Tanjore to independence in April 1776. This belated attempt to promulgate the upright agenda of the Company led to such hostilities with his own Council that he was arrested and imprisoned, dying in captivity in May 1777.[9]

The convoluted permutations of the politics of empire connect Pigot's career with both Hastings and Burke. The corrupt Lord Pigot became aligned with Edmund Burke in the matter of Tanjore

because Burke's cousin William was appointed as the agent for the Raja of Tanjore in 1777, giving Burke a direct conduit to information about affairs in southern India, which included "persistent rumours that Hastings had encouraged the plot against Pigot" (Marshall 8). Marshall adds, "Unfortunately for Hastings, on the closely related issues of Tanjore and the overthrow of Lord Pigot, Burke's suspicions were aroused against all those who sympathized with Muhammad Ali [nawab of Arcot]" (7). Although Marshall absolves both Hastings and Burke of unethical motives, concluding that "Hastings's support for the Nawab was almost certainly disinterested" (9) and that "there is no reason to believe that there was anything mercenary about Edmund's enthusiasm for Tanjore" (4), the murky alliances and general climate of corruption in the Carnatic created a mutual suspicion and animosity that certainly contributed to the passionate accusations and rebuttals that marked the drama of the impeachment. Moreover, even the financial troubles that required Hastings to undertake those "squalid" methods that Burke and Sheridan described so dramatically were indirectly connected to Pigot and his rebellious Council. The disarray following the rift between the Governor and his Council, the detention and death of Pigot, and the lack of clarity about who was governing Madras encouraged the aggression of Hyder Ali and the French, and "The scale of conflict in the South almost bankrupted the Bengal treasury" (Robins 118), which, as Hastings complained, bore the costs of wars within other Presidencies. Little did Burney know, when she bemoaned Pigot's departure from London, that his subsequent career would reverberate in ways that brought her to the Chamberlain's Box in 1788 to witness the humiliation of another favorite India veteran.

Of course much of Burney's knowledge of Indian affairs came from connections closer to home. Her brother James is best known for his voyages with Captain Cook, but he had some experience in India, both before and after the famous voyages to the South Seas. In June 1772, Burney celebrates James's safe return from Bombay but adds, "As to *merchandise*, the few Ventures he took out with him, he has brought back unchanged! Poor soul, he was never designed for Trading" (*EJL* 1: 152), a comment that demonstrates the twenty-year-

old Frances's familiarity with the kind of private enterprise undertaken by Britons serving in India, even though the Company discouraged such entrepreneurship; Ferdinand Mount writes that "All his time as Governor-General (1786–94), Lord Cornwallis had struggled to stamp out the lucrative private trades between the Company's servants and native merchants" (18). Ten years after his first India mission, James was involved in naval action against the French in the battle of Cuddalore (20 June 1783), which would certainly have provided him with some first-hand appreciation of the complicated geopolitical world of South India. Hastings himself entered the Burney family circle when Charlotte married Clement Francis, a surgeon who served under the Governor-General in India and returned to England with him in 1785. There are multiple references in the journals to the close relationship between the families, and Frances writes to Charlotte in December 1787 that Mrs. Hastings "spoke of Mr. Francis with strong regard, & assured me he was so high in the estimation of Mr. Hastings, that he had said but the other Day—'Of all my numerous correspondents, I think there is not one whose Letters give me more pleasure than Francis's—'" (*CJL* 2: 211).[10] Charlotte's second marriage, to Ralph Broome in 1798, continued her contribution to the family's connection with India; as Margaret Anne Doody notes, in Broome's natural daughter, Burney "encountered a (half) Indian woman, now in some sense a member of her own family" (298). Both Doody and I have suggested that in *A Busy Day*, Burney's knowledge of India informs her critique of racial prejudice,[11] but it must also be admitted that when Eliza Watts answers her sister's ignorant question about "Indins" who do "mischief" and "run about wild," her riposte that "The native Gentoos [Hindus] are the mildest and gentlest of human beings" smacks of stereotypes all too prevalent in imperial discourse (1: 489–94). Macaulay, for example, contrasts "The dark, slender, and timid Hindoo" with "the strong muscle and resolute spirit of the fair race, which dwelt beyond the passes" (26), i.e., the Afghan Rohillas. Fifteen years before Macaulay's typing, Walter Scott was already mocking facile categorizations of Indians. In *The Surgeon's Daughter*, he has Chrystal Croftangry, who admits to knowing "nothing at all" about the country, eagerly embark on a tale which will display "the patient Hindoo, the

warlike Rajapoot, the haughty Moslemah, the savage and vindictive Malay." [12] Eliza Watts's brief allusion to the gentle Hindu evokes a rich archive of what Edward Said calls "the fully encoded discourse of Orientalism" (168).

We know very little about that other family member, Frances's half-brother Richard Thomas Burney, who was, as Doody puts it, "packed off to India, for life" in 1785 (20), "probably," speculates Lars Troide, "because of libidinous conduct which may have led to resultant victimization by blackmailing and debts" (*EJL* 1: 183 n. 4). Such a backstory is obliquely referred to in Burney's letter of 29 March 1801 to Sarah Harriet Burney (*JL* 4: 482), marveling that Richard escaped the monetary penalty exacted from Maria Rishton's estranged husband. One wonders whether Lionel Tyrold's sexual misadventure in *Camilla*, his "want of a little hush money" to escape both scandal and possible imprisonment (731), had its seeds in Richard's early escapade. In Richard's case, India provided repentance, reformation, and re-absorption into the clan, at least in correspondence. Firminger writes that while Richard was staying with Mr. and Mrs. Charles Grant in Calcutta, "He came ... under the influence of the eccentric and latterly mad Surgeon-Missionary John Thomas, and "was built up in faith and holiness under the preaching" of Chaplain David Brown, whom he succeeded as Head Master of the Upper Orphan School" at Kidderpore.[13] Interestingly, it is this Charles Grant, together with fellow evangelical William Wilberforce, who spearheaded the religious and cultural imperialism that ended Hastings's attempt to inculcate in the British an appreciation for Indian languages and customs.[14] J. L. Brockington argues that the efforts of Grant and other missionaries "swept away" the "attitudes of tolerance and respect that Hastings had once nurtured ... so one of his most worthwhile achievements—one that deserves to be set against the undoubted excesses of his rule—was largely negated" (104). And it was against missionary inroads that Hastings testified in his triumphant return to Parliament in 1813. He warned: "A Surmise had gone abroad that there was an intention of forcing our Religion on the Natives. Such an Opinion, propagated among the Native Infantry might be attended by dangerous consequences ... might create a religious war (104)."[15] Hastings spoke

both analeptically and prophetically: the attempt to impose practices abhorrent to religion and caste led to the sepoy mutiny in Vellore Fort (in Mysore) on 10 July 1806, which Mount calls "the greatest shock to British power in India yet seen" and to the famous rebellion of 1857 (31). Richard Thomas Burney touched the edges of imperial history in his Indian backwater as much as his half-sister did at the metropolitan center of British imperial power.

Once Burney entered service at court, she found herself part of a circle that supported Hastings both personally and politically and, sometimes, passionately. One of the few comic scenes in the Court Journals recounts the kind of dialogue at cross-purposes that Burney so often deploys in her novels. Colonel Stephen Digby, unaware of Mrs. Schwellenberg's friendship with Mrs. Hastings, deeply offends the always irascible Keeper of the Robes by reporting that newspaper attacks on the divorced and remarried Baroness Imhoff reflect on the Queen's reputation, adding that "nothing has hurt me so much as the Queen's being ever named in such Company." Digby's inadvertent *faux-pas* releases "so great a Storm of displeasure & so Babellic a confusion of Language" that it rivals Madame Duval's outbursts in its vituperative unintelligibility (*CJL* 1: 89). The scene plays out like an episode from Burney's fiction with the Colonel increasingly baffled while Mrs. Schwellenberg becomes almost inarticulate with rage. I have written elsewhere that Burney often stages confrontations to foreground the reactions of a witness ("Introduction" 20). Here we see Burney's amusement struggling with her habitual discomfort with conflict as she observes the contending parties "running further from general comprehension" (*CJL* 1: 90)—one recalls Evelina's involuntary mirth when Sir Clement Willoughby's rude arrogance meets the Branghton circle's boorish manners. Eventually, impelled by her sympathy for Mrs. Hastings, Burney intervenes, explaining that laws governing divorce in Germany "acquitted [Mrs. Hastings] of ill behaviour" (*CJL* 1: 90), but Colonel Digby's hope that the cultural difference could be publicized so as to protect the Queen's name reignites Mrs. Schwellenberg's wrath: "O, upon my vord, I might tell you once, when you name the Queen, it is—what you call—I can't bear it!—When it is nobody else, with all my Heart!—I might not care for that;—but when

it is the Queen,—I tell you the same, Colonel Digby, it makes me—what you call—perspire,—I might do that."[16] (*CJL* 1: 90–91)

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The Hastings trial was inflected/infected by tortuous intersections of domestic and imperial politics that were anything but comic. George III's well-known detestation of Charles Fox caused him to exert pressure against the India Bill brought forward in November 1783 by the Fox-North coalition, announcing "that anyone supporting it would be regarded unfavourably by himself" (Hadlow 288). His success in derailing the bill led to the fall of the Fox/North administration; Janice Hadlow reports the king's satisfaction at the result: "Amidst furious complaints from its supporters that the king had acted unconstitutionally in declaring his opinions so openly.... The king had no regrets over what had happened. 'I am perfectly composed,' he told Pitt, 'as I have the self-satisfaction of feeling I have done my duty'" (288).[17] The same Whigs who had objected to the 1773 Regulating Act because they "feared that handing more power to the Crown was a remedy worse than the disease" (Tombs 350), now saw Pitt's government "as the tool of royal favour and East Indian corruption, owing many seats in the 1784 election to the wealth of returned Company servants" while Tory opponents of the bill charged that Parliament was attempting to increase its own patronage (Marshall 23, 20–21).[18] To some extent, Marshall suggests, Hastings got caught in the cross-fire of party politics: "Burke's view of Hastings fluctuated with the state of Hastings's relations with the government" (3). When government sided with Company directors to support Hastings in 1780, he "became associated with Burke's political enemies" (6).[19] Hastings, who resisted what he thought of as Parliament's ignorant attempts to intervene in the management of Company affairs, "argued that the Company should buttress its own authority through establishing clearer ties with the Crown," and thereby "alienated both the Whig faction in Parliament and the Company directors" (Dirks 187), but, of course, his position found favor at court. Marshall notes that in 1782, at time when the King inclined toward policies to correct Company misrule in India, Lord Mansfield told Major John Scott of His Majesty's personal regard for Hastings (26). The tension between

Crown and Parliament trapped the King's own ministers. Given that the impeachment proceedings were initiated by the Opposition and implicitly opposed by the king, historians from Macaulay on have wondered why Pitt provided the turning point that brought the case to trial. Both Macaulay and Marshall note that Hastings's supporters believed that Pitt and Dundas were jealous of Hastings's influence with George III and of his power within the Company (Macaulay 107; Marshall 46–47), while Robins argues that "by backing Burke's motion for impeachment, Pitt and Dundas could free themselves of the stain of being mere tools of the nabobs" (159).[20] That Pitt's vote sent gasps of astonishment around the Chamber and gave rise to fevered speculations about his motives shows how fraught with political overtones the impeachment was.

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Into this charged atmosphere stepped Frances Burney on 13 February 1788, "a Day, Indeed of strong emotion to me" (*CJL* 3: 103). Solidly conversant with Indian issues and tremblingly alive (sometimes literally) to the political complexities surrounding the trial and their effect on her personal relationships, Burney chronicles her acute sensitivity to the multiple psychological and social intricacies she must navigate. Her accounts provide an unparalleled insight into the way the politics of empire press on a sensibility both timid and opinionated, torn between her personal history with Hastings's prosecutors and her partisanship and deeply conscious of her own feelings while attuned to the emotional responses of actors in the drama. The extraordinary combination of intense focus on self and empathetic sensitivity to others produces a narrative powerful in its faithful transcription of both external event and internal analysis. Look, for example, at her internal dialogue with Hastings himself, which alternates between vicarious pain on his behalf and anxiety about her own equivocal position. When Hastings is called to answer the charges against him, she "tremble[s]" as she thinks "What an awful moment this for such a man!—a man fallen from such height of power, to a situation so humiliating,—from the almost unlimited command of so large a part of the Eastern world, to be cast at the feet of his Enemies" and wonders "Could even his Prosecutors, at that moment, look on,—& not shudder ... not

blush?—" (107). Moments later, she shifts her attention from his "pale, ill, & altered looks" to her own sensations, "shocked & ashamed to be seen by him in that place" (109). She tries to evade his notice by asking her companions to engage her in conversation, but then agonizes about the deflection because "I could not endure he should suppose I shirked acknowledging his acquaintance in this Hour of Suspence, yet thought it utterly improper to Courtsie to him in such a situation" (110). She is deeply uneasy about being acknowledged by Burke and Sheridan because she "could not have offended either of them by declining their notice ... nor could I endure to have Mr. Hastings perceive me associate with them" (111). Before Windham approaches her, she determines to avert her gaze from the Committee box "since it might else seem to Mr. Hastings that I was quite in the Cabal against him" (112). Two months later, after declining Windham's help "about servants & Carriages" she encounters Hastings as she leaves Westminster Hall and expresses relief that she had not availed herself of Windham's escort: "What a strange incident would have been formed had this rencontre happened thus, had I accepted Mr. Wyndham's offered services! I am most glad I had not. I should have felt myself a *conspirator* to have been so met by Mr. Hastings" (*CJL* 3: 220).

Now, it might be argued that Burney demonstrates a kind of childish narcissism since Hastings no doubt had other things on his mind than whether a woman he barely knew attended the most humiliating event of his life and seemed acquainted with some of his accusers. But there is a measure of psychological acuity here. Mortified by public degradation, undergoing what Kent calls "judicial torture" (28), the object of curious and hostile gaze—Burney indignantly reports that some of Windham's colleagues "even stand on the Benches to examine him ... with Opera Glasses!" (*CJL* 3: 144)—Hastings may well have been particularly alert to the presence and demeanor of those who might be considered supporters. And Burney herself was a conspicuous spectator, not only because of her central location in the Great Chamberlain's box, in close proximity to both the Managers and the accused, but also because of her own celebrity as a famous novelist and a member of the Queen's household. Moreover, the fairly constant stream of visitors to the box would have made its occupants

even more noticeable, especially to the man who might be paying anxious attention to the political climate within the Hall. Burney's nervous cogitations on how Hastings might construe her behavior reflect the multiplicity of psychological perspectives that characterize novelistic practice. Readers will recall Evelina's anguished perplexity when Lord Orville detects her appointment with Macartney: "so extremely was I agitated, that I could hardly move.... Determined as I was to act honourably by Mr. Macartney, I yet most anxiously wished to be restored to the good opinion of Lord Orville" (*Evelina* 303–04). We also remember Edgar Mandlebert's dyspeptic surveillance of Camilla and her almost continuous "consciousness of the ill opinion she must excite" when he inevitably witnesses her seeming defiance of his directives (*Camilla* 263). Burney's representation of her anxious sensitivity to Hastings will be familiar to readers who have seen how carefully she maps the mutual hyper-consciousness of her heroines and their lovers.

Burney feels equally distressed by her own coldness to former friends, now divided from her by the politics of empire: she is embarrassed by a bow from Frederick Montagu, "a man of excellence in all parts of his Character, save politics" (*CJL* 3: 110); she cannot even acknowledge the "usual good-humour & intimacy" of Sir Joshua Reynolds (*CJL* 3: 110); and she rebuffs Sheridan, who approaches her to remind her of their former acquaintance and his early encouragement of her dramatic efforts (*CJL* 3: 167). But her greatest distress is on account of Edmund Burke, whom she has long admired and whose good opinion she has valued for years. The *Early Journals* make frequent references to her obvious gratification when she learns of his pleasure in her literary output, and her easy intimacy with the Burkes is evident in Mrs. Burke's teasing complaint: "See, see! What a flirtation Mr. Burke is beginning with Miss Burney! And before my Face, too!" (*EJL* 5: 193). She sympathizes with his political travails when in December 1782 she notes that "Mr. Burke was extremely *kind* to me, but not all in spirits: he is tormented by the political state of his affairs, and loses, I really believe, all the comfort of his life at the very time he is risen to the station his ambition has long pointed out to him" (*EJL* 5: 365).[21] By 1788, all the ease and intimacy has

evaporated, leaving her both angry at him and dismayed by her own necessary rudeness. On first entering Westminster Hall, she "shuddered ... drew involuntarily back" when she sees Burke, "So highly as he had been my favourite, so captivating as I had found his manners & conversation ... & so much as I had owed to his zeal & kindness to me & my affairs ... now, the cruel Prosecuter—of an injured & innocent man!" (*CJL* 3: 103–04). During their remarkably candid exchanges, she makes explicit to Windham the stress produced by her divided loyalties: "I am the Friend of Mr. Burke, cried I, eagerly, all the time! Mr. Burke has no greater Admirer!—& that is precisely what disturbs me most in this business!— ... I wish so well one way,—& have long thought so highly the other, that I scarce know, at times, what even to wish" (*CJL* 3: 132). Even his famed rhetoric loses its charms: she concludes that his impressive opening speech lacks force because it is tainted by "personal ill-will, & designing illiberality" (*CJL* 3: 139). Her cool dismissal of Burke's effectiveness was apparently not shared by other women in the audience; Macaulay reports that "The ladies in the galleries, unaccustomed to such displays of eloquence ... were in a state of uncontrollable emotion. Handkerchiefs were pulled out; smelling-bottles were handed round; hysterical sobs and screams were heard; and Mrs. Sheridan was carried out in a fit" (Macaulay 115).[22]

Despite her condemnation of Burke's tactics, her own ungraciousness, in stark opposition to his steadfast amicability, mortifies Burney. Indeed, her conduct to him verges on a boorishness she herself deplores: she responds to his "marked civility" with a "courtsie ... most ungrateful; distant & cold" (*CJL* 3: 147); she rewards his "frank kindness" with frigid indifference even to Mrs. Burke's illness (*CJL* 3: 155); upon a slight overture from her he "gave me his immediate attention, with an air so full of respect, that it quite shamed me" (*CJL* 3: 157). Her mild witticism that she "had meant to keep at least that *Geographical timidity*" in avoiding conversation with him in Westminster Hall (Burke had denounced Hastings's defense that his actions in India should be seen in the light of geographical morality) elicits from him full appreciation of her allusion (*CJL* 3: 157): "He laughed heartily, instantly comprehending me" (*CJL* 3: 157), and re-establishing, momentarily, the intimacy they had both

delighted in before the politics of empire divided them.[23] As late as 1792, attending a session devoted to Hastings's defense, she retains the same ambivalence: "Mr. Burke, at this place, I am afraid I have already displeased so unavoidably cold & frigid did I feel myself when here he came to me formerly. Any where else, I should bound forward to meet him, with respect, & affection, & gratitude" (*JL* 1: 117).

To add to this complex mix of emotions, Burney also worries that her coldness to the prosecutors might reflect badly on the royal family. She engages with Burke's son Richard because "the least shyness on my part, to those with whom formerly I had been social, must instantly have been attributed to *Court influence*" (*CJL* 3: 112; and with the Queen's eye on her, she chooses to continue her conversation with Windham because if she broke off the interchange it "could but be attributed to undue Court-influence" (*CJL* 3: 128). Her need to observe decorum despite her partisanship, her misery at having to rebuff the friendly advances of Burke and other prosecutors, her anxiety that the palace will be blamed if she exhibits hostility to those connected to the managers: these add up to an almost intolerable set of psychological pressures as Burney witnesses and records the political spectacle of the empire under attack.

Given her painful determination not to fraternize with the enemy, her multiple conversations with Windham astonish us with their frankness and cordiality. Burney herself distinguishes him from Burke and others, noting that "He is not the Prosecutor" and marking his generous encouragement of her contrary views (*CJL* 3: 157). She welcomes the opportunity to defend Hastings to an opponent who listens respectfully, and throughout their Westminster encounters stretching from 1788 to 1792, each perseveres in trying to convert the other. In February 1792, despite her deep gratitude for his role in freeing her from court service and in the face of his discouraging unresponsiveness, she presses her point, declaring to herself, "surely, at this critical period, I must not spare pointing out all he will submit to hear on the side of a man of whose innocence I am so fully persuaded.... Mr. Hastings little thinks what a Pleader I am become in his Cause against one of his most powerful Adversaries" (*CJL* 3: 121–22). Indeed, she has so much confidence in her persuasive powers that in 1792

she urges George III to heed Hastings's appeal to His Majesty not to adjourn the Lords until the defense can answer the charges: "The King looked a little queer—but I was glad of the opportunity of putting in a word for poor Mr. Hastings" (*JL* 1: 191). Her confidence derives in part from recounting her early conversations with Windham to the Queen, who "not only heard me with the most favourable attention towards Mr. Wyndham, but was herself touched even to Tears by the relation" (*CJL* 3: 137). The mutual trust between servant and royal mistress frees Burney from fears that her advocacy of Hastings might implicate the royal family, and she revels in being able to declare her partisanship to both Windham and the King.

That she could not bring herself to be more than barely civil to Burke during the trial demonstrates her strong personal conviction that he was on the wrong side of the politics of empire. That both Burke and Hastings remained firmly supportive of her literary career—Burke subscribed to no less than twenty copies of *Camilla* and Hastings wrote, when he heard about the subscription project, "Well, then, now I can serve her, thank God! & I *will*!—I will write to Anderson to *engage Scotland*,—& I will attack the East Indies myself!" (*JL* 3: 144)[24]—is a testament to Burney's personal and literary appeal to those who had endured one of the most traumatic moments of those politics. In the Preface to *The Wanderer*, Burney makes what may sound like a boastful claim: that Dr. Johnson and Edmund Burke, "each, separately ... condescended to stand forth the champion of my first small work ... that small work was nearly the only subject upon which they met without contestation" (5). The responses of Burke and Hastings to the *Camilla* project attest to the fact that Burney did indeed have the ability to transcend political divides.

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I end with what I believe is Burney's final novelistic comment on British imperial ambitions: a narrative thread in *The Wanderer* that addresses the personal costs of the politics of empire. We know that those who were sent to manage the British empire were almost children: James Burney was twenty when he first sailed to India, and Hastings himself was eighteen when he was sent out. Mount's family history describes how "For three or four generations they followed

the rites of passage ... leaving the farm or manse aged 16 at the latest," and sent their children back, "sometimes as young as two or three ... to be schooled at "home," in most cases not to be seen again until they came out at 16 or 17 to repeat the whole cycle" (11). Part of Burke's passionate denunciation of imperial practices specifically singles out the "Young men (boys almost) [who] govern there ... as English youth in India drink the intoxicating draught of authority and dominion before their heads are able to bear it ... neither Nature nor reason have any opportunity to exert themselves for remedy of the excesses of their premature power" (371–72). The story of Admiral Powel illustrates the effect of imperial demands on English boys and their families. At sea "from ten years old, when I was turned adrift by my family," he joins those who "are set afloat upon the wide ocean, before we have well done with our slobbering bibs" (*Wanderer* 833). His suspicious nature derives from being denied an education "except ... what we can pick out of books. And that's no great matter; for the chief of a seaman's library is most commonly the history of cheats and rogues; so that we are always upon the look out, d'ye see, for fear of false colours" (822). While Admiral Powel's xenophobia, unlike Captain Mirvan's, is tempered by a generous heart, it too is the consequence of the global competition that accompanies imperial ambition.

In Powel's story, we note the personal costs of imperial service. The Admiral has been separated from his family for twenty-one years, during which time that family has undergone the traumas of secret marriage, death, and disinheritance, not to mention the French Revolution. And in the course of ensuring that British imperial power remains secure, he has learned to despise all "outlandish places" (816), that is, any place that is not England. Moreover, like Admiral Croft in *Persuasion*, he has developed a degree of callousness about the human cost of military life. His cheerful proposition that Juliet could have married a Captain who "had had the luck ... to see his two senior officers drop by his side: by which means he had arrived at his promotion" and that "such another good turn" could raise him to Commodore reminds us of Admiral Croft's optimistic prediction that his brother-in-law would learn to welcome women on board "if we have the good luck to live to another war" (*Wanderer* 865; *Persuasion* 70).

And Anne Elliot's expectation of the "quick alarm" that is the "tax" she pays for "glor[ying] in being a sailor's wife" is expanded when Admiral Powel spells out what such a life entails (*Persuasion* 70): "And then, my dear ... when he had been upon a long distant station; or when contrary winds, or the enemy, had stopt his letters, so that you could not guess whether the poor lad were alive or dead, think what would have been your pride to have read, all o' the sudden, news of him in the Gazette" (*Wanderer* 865)—whether that news would be of promotion or death he does not specify.[25] Like Austen's *Persuasion*, Burney's *The Wanderer* subtly posits a coarsening of sensibility that challenges reflexive celebration of military and imperial heroes. The cultural and characterological disruptions that Burke rails against are reproduced in the Admiral's career—early loss of family life, callousness about death, and a hyper-nationalism of the kind that the novel (as well as the Preface) has been at pains to debunk.[26] These effects of imperial service cannot be elided by the fortunate reunion of uncle and niece or even by the uplifting image of the English Admiral and the French Bishop "sitting cheek by jowl ... as if they were both a couple of Christians" (*Wanderer* 864). Burney's final, complexly historical novel, despite her support for one of the prime movers of the imperial project, reproduces the ill effects described by his primary antagonist. Burney's politics of empire defends the character and good intentions of Hastings but ultimately aligns itself with the anxieties articulated by Burke.

NOTES

[1] Bernstein's familiarity with Burney seems limited; he declares that Burney never completed *The Witlings* so that only "the first act, and some scraps of suggestions for going further, exist in manuscript form" (193).

[2] For bibliographical information on the volumes of *The Court Journals and Letters of Frances Burney*, *The Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney*, and *The Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney*, see the Works Cited. Volumes cited in the text are abbreviated as *CJL*, *JL*, and *EJL* respectively.

[3] Albany, of course, is a product of empire himself, now atoning for the self-centered and dissolute life he led before he dissipated his West Indian inheritance.

[4] Dirks reiterates Bolts's judgment: after Plassey, "What was supposed to have been a trading company with an eastern monopoly vested by Parliament had become a rogue state: waging war, administering justice, minting coin, and collecting revenue over Indian territory . . . the Company acted frequently as if it were an independent entity, a fully functioning state that was sovereign and autonomous. ... In this context, it is not surprising that in 1784 a rumor spread that Hastings was about to declare formal independence for the Company state" (13, 169). Among Burke's charges against Hastings was that he contravened the essential responsibility of sovereign power: "The moment a sovereign removes the idea of security and protection from his subjects, and declares that no contract he makes with them can or ought to bind him, he then declares war upon them: he is no longer sovereign; they are no longer subjects" (397). Burke is of course using the Hobbesian formulation of sovereign power, but he also anticipates twentieth-century theories from Michel Foucault's notion of "governmentality" to Carl Schmitt's and Giorgio Agamben's arguments about sovereign "exceptionalism." See Foucault, Schmitt, and Agamben.

[5] This argument is so important to Hastings that he reiterates it at the end of his narrative, asserting that he has kept the British empire in India going, "enjoying the blessings of peace and internal security, while every other part of the general empire was oppressed by war, or the calamities of intestine discord" (157).

[6] Macaulay also echoes Hastings when he says that "at that time, the most absurd notions were entertained in England respecting the wealth of India" (20). Walter Scott, in *The Surgeon's Daughter* (1827), re-presents the kind of hyperbolic rhetoric used to seduce young men to serve the East India Company when Tom Hillary recruits the ambitious Richard Middlemas: "Not a stream did he mention but flowed over sands of gold, and not a palace that was inferior to those of the celebrated Fata Morgana" (203).

[7] Macaulay speculates that Hastings's fondness for Persian "may

have tended to corrupt his taste" in style of writing (87).

[8] Hancock was writing to his wife Philadelphia, who was the sister of Jane Austen's father. The Hancocks provided the connection between the Austens and Warren Hastings—so close were they to Hastings that he was their daughter's godfather and not only made a £5,000 gift to the always needy family in 1773 but also settled a further £10,000 on them in March 1775. See Grier 505.

[9] Marshall points to the money lost to the Company after the defeat of Chait Singh when officers on the ground took much of the captured wealth as their "right of plunder" (106).

[10] See, for example, August 1786, when Clement and Charlotte Francis were guests at Beaumont Lodge (*CJL* 1: 153 n. 486), and Burney assures her father she will convey his "messages & apologies" to Mr. Hastings, probably through the Francises (*CJL* 1: 159).

[11] See Doody 298; Wallace, "Introduction" 2; Wallace, "Dramatist" 70.

[12] Scott 155.

[13] Firminger, in "Madame D'Arblay and Calcutta," corrects Annie Raine Ellis's account of Richard Burney's life and death, having found a monument that marks his death at Rangoon in 1808 (245).

[14] During the four years in England between his India postings, Hastings proposed a program of Oriental languages at Oxford and mentioned his plan to Dr. Johnson. Macaulay writes that "[t]he interview appears to have left on Johnson's mind a most favourable impression of the talents and attainments of his visitor" (12).

[15] Robins cites Jawarlal Nehru himself as saying that "'India owes a deep debt of gratitude' to Company executives such as Hastings and William Jones for helping to rediscover India's heritage" (17). Of course, Hastings's project to translate and circulate Indian religious and literary texts has been controversial. Scholars like Edward Said and Paul Keen see the undertaking as part of imperial appropriation of native culture while C. A. Bayley and Raymond Schwab argue that Hastings and Jones embarked on an Enlightenment project that became tainted by later generations deploying it for practical purposes. For a summary of the debate, see my *Imperial Characters*, 212–13 n. 54. Brockington believes that Hastings "saw the role of Oriental scholarship in wider

terms than just the practical, considering that acquaintance with Indian literature would enrich European culture" (91). Dirks argues that the aftermath of the Hastings trial shifted the "scandal of empire" to India, allowing for the missionary work of Grant and Wilberforce: Wilberforce "shifted his attention from slavery to *sati* during the second decade of the nineteenth century, symbolizing the more general displacement of scandal from colonizer to colonized" (23, 34).

[16] Macaulay writes that the Hastingses were received with distinction by the royal family when they arrived in England in June 1785 and that "[t]he Queen, who had already incurred much censure on account of the favour which, in spite of the ordinary severity of her virtue, she had shown to the 'elegant Marian,' was not less gracious to Hastings" (92). He himself presents a surprisingly sympathetic account of the affair between Hastings and the Baroness, describing her as a person with "a cultivated mind, and manners in the highest degree engaging. She despised her husband heartily, and, as the story which we have to tell sufficiently proves, not without reason." The reason turns out to be Baron Imhoff's willing participation in a somewhat formalized adulterous arrangement between his wife and Hastings, which included the agreement "that Hastings should bestow some very substantial marks of gratitude on the complaisant husband . . ." (13–14).

[17] Hadlow posits that the King's personal animosity toward Fox was doubly familial: he hated him not only for encouraging the Prince Regent's opposition to his father but also for being the son of Henry Fox, "on whose unscrupulous mastery of the dark political arts the king had been forced to rely to achieve the peace treaty of 1763 which ended the Seven Years War, at much cost to his conscience and sense of himself as a moral agent in the business of government" (287). Robert Tombs writes that "the king recklessly mustered every scrap of his influence and patronage to engineer the defeat" of Fox's bill (364).

[18] Macaulay, despite his Whig politics, suggests that Parliamentary proceedings against Hastings were initiated because the ministers wanted power over India so that "the government and patronage of our Oriental empire might, with advantage, be transferred to themselves" (82). Sunil Agnani says that Burke "uses the term

Indianism to describe the principle whereby men of talent, but no property, gain sudden wealth in the colonies and then return home to England to subvert parliamentary representation and processes" (149). Carnall notes that as early as 1770, there was "Chatham's famous denunciation . . . of 'nabobs' returning from the East laden with the riches of Asia, and forcing their way into Parliament 'by such a torrent of private corruption, as no private hereditary fortune could resist'" (84).

[19] Conor Cruise O'Brien refutes charges that Burke acted as a "sordid politician" whose "causes were chosen for him by his political masters" (63).

[20] Macaulay's judgment is harsh: "We can see, we think, in what way a man of sense and integrity might have been induced to take any course respecting Hastings, except the course which Mr. Pitt took" (105), a course which "a great part of the public" attributed to "avarice of power" (107). Marshall examines the available evidence regarding the influence of Dundas and Wilberforce, concludes that ultimately Pitt was "impressed . . . with the strength of some of the charges [and] his vote was presumably intended to ensure that these charges would at least receive a further investigation in 1787" (50).

[21] She has read Burke's political works and found them "indeed charming,—eloquent, spirited, natural, yet sentimental" (*EJL* 5: 145).

[22] Burney is not alone in characterizing Burke's attacks on Hastings as personal. Marshall concludes that "[t]he Managers prosecuted Hastings with the utmost ferocity and vindictiveness" (83), and Bernstein contends that Burke "wanted to sully Hastings's reputation to such an extent that he would never again have any role in the conduct of Indian affairs. This required innuendo and invective" (209).

[23] Interestingly, Macaulay invokes the same kind of "geographical morality" when he says of the corrupt minister Mahommed Reza Khan that "tried by the lower standard of Indian morality, he might be considered as a man of integrity and honour" (17).

[24] Burke's commitment to Burney's career is exuberantly articulated in his declaration that "I am sure that it is a disgrace to the

Age & Nation if this [the subscription] be not a great thing for her. If every person in England who has received pleasure & instruction from Cecilia were to <rate> its value at the hundredth part of their satisfaction, Madame d'Arblay would be one of the richest women in the kingdom" (*JL* 3: 164).

[25] In *Camilla*, Sir Hugh Tyrold expresses relief that his niece rejects Major Cerwood's proposal because "those young officers . . . may all be sent to the East Indies, or Jamaica, every day of their lives" (540).

[26] Agnani writes that when Burke died in 1797, he was still "occupied by his thoughts of Jacobinism and Indianism . . . the phenomena he named by these words were expressive of the evisceration of existing human character and the gutting of working structures of governance" (136).

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