

Robert Clive and Imperial Modernity

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**Volume 12 Issue 2 (June 2010) Article 2****Nigel Joseph,****"Robert Clive and Imperial Modernity"**<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol12/iss2/2>>

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**Abstract:** In his article "Robert Clive and Imperial Modernity" Nigel Joseph analyzes the work of Robert Clive by postulating the questions of why Clive would be emblematic of the bleak modernity of Tocqueville, Weber, and Foucault? Rapacious yet docile, personally ambitious yet capable of curbing ambition in others, Clive seems to be an anomalous figure. Joseph posits that Clive's career is a metaphor for both the trajectory of the imperial state and for the imperial subject. In order to retain his Indian-derived wealth, Clive is forced into a series of paradoxical postures: beginning as the archetypal private marauder, he transforms himself into the scourge of corrupt English officialdom. The actions of a Clive, restless, energetic, ambitious, seeking to be a propertied self in the home country, force a new synthesis. After Clive, and even more urgently after Warren Hastings, the nation is forced to take up the moral burden of empire. Thus, Joseph suggests that Clive represents the classic scenario of modernity: the individual subjectivity whose desire for things, for material wealth is assiduously encouraged, while rendered obedient towards a state that is represented as beyond material desire.

**Nigel JOSEPH****Robert Clive and Imperial Modernity**

The notion that European nationalism may be conceived as arising out of the imperial encounter has been canvassed with increasing vigour and intensity in recent years. If this genealogy is plausible, it follows that important strands of modernity can also be traced back to this critical moment in nation-formation. In this article I explore the possibility that the unheralded arrival in India of Robert Clive, arguably the first, the archetypal British imperialist, is both enigmatic and momentous. Clive's career and his relationship with his masters may well mark the earliest historical instantiation of an influential type of modernity. Around his volatile personality we see the coalescing of a distinctive pairing: the new, paternalistic, imperial State and the docile yet rapacious subject, who exists in an antagonistic as well as symbiotic relationship with this State. I also suggest that Rudyard Kipling's short story "The Man Who Would Be King" replicates, in fictional mode, the process by which the nation registers, disavows, and transmutes the anarchic energies of its subjects. The scale and events of the battles Clive was involved in were often almost farcical: yet these battles laid the foundation of British rule in India. I am not suggesting that Clive's arrival marks anything like the arrival of modernity in India: in fact, the British attempt to keep India in a state of feudal vassalage, with only a covert change of masters. Clive's "jagir" becomes the basis of his great wealth; but the "jagir" itself is a relic of a pre-modern system, a tribute paid to the conqueror.

The real significance of Clive's arrival in India is the effect it has on British nationality: his career has a strangely transformative effect on the centre. Clive's efforts to amass wealth in India were largely motivated by his desire to acquire a British baronetcy. It is Clive's return from the periphery of empire to the centre and the threat he poses at this metropolitan centre to the English indigenous élite with his political ambitions and his immense imperial wealth that triggers the emergence of a new attitude to empire, and, consequently, a new attitude to nationalism. In the struggles that swirl around figures like Clive and Hastings in the second half of the eighteenth century, we see a new Britain emerging, paradoxically more cohesive and unified as her empire increases in extent, with imperial rule becoming more paternalistic as well as more rigid and efficient. In dealing with Clive and Warren Hastings, the nation consolidates itself and inaugurates a new modernity. The empire, beginning as an unplanned extension of the nation, begins to be perceived as a threat to the nation. The response of the nation to this threat is twofold: a folding of the individual back into its protective and coercive embrace; and an imperial discourse of benevolent paternalism initiated to offset the thrust of individualism. While individuals such as Clive and Hastings are discouraged from independent imperial ventures, a discourse of the enduring value of the individual and a discourse of the necessary paternalism of the dominant imperial power are developing, best exemplified in the writings of John Stuart Mill. The wealth of empire is dangled seductively before the British subject, but with the qualification that the pursuit of this wealth must be carried out within the framework of national aspirations and regulations. It is thus partly in reaction to what is perceived as the anarchic potential of early imperialists such as Clive and Hastings that the familiar modernity of Tocqueville, Weber, and Foucault comes to be: a modernity characterized by "soft rule," which, ironically, proves to be far more difficult to resist than more directly coercive regimes. The modern nation constructs itself both by actively channeling the energies and dynamism of such figures as Clive, and by formally distancing itself from the anarchic potential that such figures harbour. In doing so, the nation arrives at an enduring formula for dealing with the modern individual, who is formally free but constrained in a myriad ways not recognized by a normative liberalism.

Clive is thus, as a figure, emblematic of the bleak modernity of Tocqueville, Weber, and Foucault partly because of an accident of circumstances. In order to retain his Indian-derived wealth, he is forced into a series of paradoxical postures. Beginning as the archetypal private marauder, he transforms himself into the scourge of corrupt English officialdom. But what we need to remember is that the transformation is undertaken wholly in order to retain his ill-gotten gains. Clive remains the same as far as his personal ambitions are concerned; what changes is the relationship between state and individual subject. Clive's actions as impartial administrator, then, mirrors the process by which the profit-oriented East India Company becomes the just and disinterested British Parliament, occupying India until such time as her wayward subjects learn the disciplines and restraints of "representative government." Insofar as Clive is an individual, then, he is clearly as focused on the acquisition of wealth as he ever was; more to the point, his actions are seen as justified, even, perhaps virtuous. But insofar as he is the representative of British power in India, his job is to punish those who seek to

amass personal fortunes. Clive's career is a metaphor for both the trajectory of the imperial state and for the imperial subject. He combines, in his extraordinary career, the movement from personal ambition to the seeming disinterestedness of the imperial nation.

Clive's arrival in India on 1 June 1744, after a fourteen-month voyage, did not appear to anyone, least of all to Clive himself, an event of earth-shattering importance. Bad-tempered, unpopular, and prone to suicidal moods, Clive seems like an unpromising founder of an empire on which, it would later be hyperbolically claimed, the sun never set. But with the wisdom of hindsight we can see his arrival as fatefully inaugurating the era of modern imperialism. Clive's three sojourns in India mark the beginning of the serious British presence in India. As Thomas Macaulay puts it with his usual succinctness: "From his first visit to India dates the renown of the English arms in the East. Till he arrived, his countrymen were despised as mere pedlars, while the French were revered as a people formed for victory and command ... From Clive's second visit to India dates the political ascendancy of the English in that country ... From Clive's third visit to India dates the purity of the administration of our Eastern empire. When he landed in Calcutta in 1765, Bengal was regarded as a place to which Englishmen were sent only to get rich, by any means, in the shortest possible time. He first made dauntless and unsparing war on that gigantic system of oppression, extortion, and corruption" (Macaulay 93-94). The trouble with Thomas Macaulay's model, however, is not just its excessive neatness, its improbable schematism. Clive's third visit to India, as Macaulay well knew, was not undertaken out of some vision of high statesmanship; rather, Clive had been fighting a high-stakes battle for years to retain the wealth he had acquired in India and finally had made a bargain with the ruling powers of Britain: he would come to India and settle some of the problems facing the East India Company (problems, his critics claimed, he was responsible for in the first place) on the condition that his "jagir" (a vast annual remittance made over to Clive by Mir Jafar, the Mughal prince Clive aided to the throne, and consisting of quit-rents paid by the East India Company in the area of Calcutta) would continue to be paid to him. What Macaulay's neat trifurcation excludes is precisely what is most important: the underlying continuity of Clive's ambitions, a continuity that allows us to read him as not merely one of the inaugural figures of the British empire, but also of a distinctive relationship between the docile and yet rapacious subject and the moralized State: a relationship, I argue, that is constitutive of modernity.

Rather than argue, then, that the postcolonial situation generates new modernities, or radically reconfigures the old ones, I suggest that the experience of empire lies behind what is arguably an already familiar reading of modernity, one whose outlines I attempt to sketch with the help of Tocqueville, Weber, and Foucault. Modernity is identified plausibly with the emergence of the modern nation and the parallel emergence of the individual who exists in a curious relation of autonomy and subservience to the nation. The distinctively modern pairing of paternalistic State and the subject who is docile and yet rapacious is anticipated in the eighteenth century history of the British empire, in the relationship between the British state (which is not as yet an imperial state) and figures like Clive. One of the first and (even now) most memorable analyses of this distinctive new relationship between State and subject is to be found in Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*. Tocqueville writes of "an innumerable multitude of men all equal and alike, incessantly endeavouring to procure the petty and paltry pleasures with which they glut their lives" (869). Each of these men, he complains, "is as a stranger to the fate of all the rest — his children and his private friends constitute to him the whole of mankind; as for the rest of his fellow-citizens, he is close to them, but he sees them not" (869). Not only are these men trapped in their solipsistic dreams, Tocqueville notes, they are completely dominated by the State, a fact they are oblivious of "Above this race of men stands an immense and tutelary power, which takes upon itself alone to secure their gratifications, and to watch over their fate. That power is absolute, minute, regular, provident, and mild. It would be like the authority of a parent, if, like that authority, its object was to prepare men for manhood; but it seeks on the contrary to keep them in perpetual childhood" (869).

Max Weber, writing in 1905 seventy years after Tocqueville's book, also notes this strange modern combination of apparent freedom and individualism and the iron necessity imposed by the need for "external goods": "The Puritan wanted to work in a calling; we are forced to do so. For when asceticism was carried out of monastic cells into everyday life, and began to dominate worldly morality, it did its part in building the tremendous cosmos of the modern economic order ... In Baxter's view the care for external goods should only lie on the shoulders of the 'saint like a light cloak, which can be thrown aside at any moment.' But fate decreed that the cloak should become an iron cage" (181). And finally, to round off these analyses of the modern condition, there is Michel Foucault. Like Tocqueville, his fellow Frenchman, he registers sardonically the unfreedoms that accompany and frame Anglo-American liberty and individualism. Like Weber, the sociologist from whom he seems to have learned

so much, he is struck by the coercive power of the State, which seems so benign and paternal, and the way this power feeds into productivity and consumer satisfactions. In the concluding pages of *Discipline and Punish* he writes: "The carceral network, in its compact or disseminated forms, with its systems of insertion, distribution, surveillance, observation, has been the greatest support, in modern society, of the normalizing power ... The carceral city ... is governed by [certain] principles.... At the centre of this city, and as if to hold it in place, there is, not the 'centre of power,' not a network of forces, but a multiple network of diverse elements ... These mechanisms are applied not to transgressions against a 'central' law, but to the apparatus of production — 'commerce' and 'industry' — to a whole multiplicity of illegalities, in all their diversity of nature and origin, their specific role in profit and the different ways in which they are dealt with by the punitive mechanisms" (304-08).

Tocqueville, Weber, and Foucault, I suggest, are central figures in a typically European critique of liberalism and capitalism. Rather than being impressed by the claims (typical of Anglo-American liberalism) of liberty, individual rights, and the security of property, these theorists want to draw our attention to the fact that modern subjects are strikingly unfree; and to the further fact that they are unfree to the precise extent that they accept the rationality of the market and of what we have come to call "consumerism." This is clear in the passages from Tocqueville and Weber; but Foucault, too, while reading modernity through the lens of panopticism, notes that the carceral city is still geared towards efficient production, towards commerce and profits. Thus, apart from the shared general tone of pessimism, the unwillingness to go along with a celebratory liberalism and with the assumption that modernity is coterminous with the growth of freedom, there is the more specific tying together of constraint with consumerism, of repression with greed. All three emphasize the tutelary, pastoral, or stealthily coercive power of the State on the one hand; and the ignoble or simply passive consumption and hedonism of the citizen on the other. In this familiar scenario, the all-powerful State, which takes care to mask its power as paternalism, faces the docile citizen-subject whose political energies are dissipated and dispersed by consumerism. Here is a model of modernity that deliberately looks past the rosy vision of Enlightenment optimism and liberal individualism and chooses to dwell on a particular constellation of features: enslavement, usually to a form of consumerism, docility towards power, and finally, a subjectivity that somehow rationalizes these imperatives in such a way that they emerge as exemplary freedom. This is a vision of modernity that is compelling, perhaps the more so because it runs counter to our deepest hopes for modernity, our wistful desire that it turn out to be a "good" one.

Clive's sojourns in India, I suggest, mark a dramatic new development in the relationship between the British State and its subjects. Before the nabob, the India-returned nouveau riche challenger of the political status quo, becomes a feature of eighteenth-century Britain, the State's relationship with its subjects is essentially geared to the perpetuation of the power of landed proprietors. John Locke's *Second Treatise of Government* seeks to guarantee that those who hold property will be defended by the government in their holdings. Locke speaks blandly of subjects acquiring new land elsewhere, but he probably did not anticipate the kind of disturbance that would be created by the return to England of men like Clive. Clive's disturbingly vast new wealth, and the even more disturbing fact that he seemed determined to use this wealth to acquire political power, forces the existing order to develop a new relationship with him. He could not simply be ignored, nor could the rulers of Britain ignore the fact that Clive claimed the wealth to be got from empire could solve Britain's various economic problems. Thus the State has to both glorify Clive's achievements (although these achievements could easily be construed as the actions of a modern-day robber baron) and to "clean up" the actions, censoring the individualist energies of Clive and marking future imperial actions as moral, progressive, part of a civilizing process, part of the neutral, non-larcenous actions of the abstract State. In the process, the State endorses Clive's money-making activities, but also insists on Clive's subordination to the abstraction that is the State. It is this complex movement that plays into the formation of modern subjectivity analyzed by Tocqueville, Weber, and Foucault. It is with the advent of imperialism and the arrival of troublesome imperial figures such as Clive that the modern combination of rapaciousness and docility acquires its lasting impression. At this point the State both endorses individual greed and threatens to punish that greed when it exceeds the restraining purview of the State.

Clive's sojourns in India were impelled by his obsessive desire for wealth and status in England. As Philip Lawson puts it: "Between 1743 and 1767 Robert Clive's relationship with India was dominated by an almost rhythmic pattern of engagement and withdrawal. Three times he made the long journey to India to make, and then to enhance and uphold his fame and fortune. Three times he returned, and each time he came home with a fixed determination to establish for himself what he considered an appropriate position in the Westminster legislature ... With his third and final return, political struggle



became and remained the central activity of his life, for on the outcome of that struggle hinged his ability to preserve the wealth and reputation he had brought from India" (802-03). Virtually every biographer of Clive agrees that his exploits in India were undertaken with an eye to the gaining of political power at home. It is this explicit and transparent ambition of Clive's that marks him out as the exemplary and feared "nabob," the Englishman who returned to England from India with immense wealth and used that wealth to subvert the familiar political order. Clive was undoubtedly the most illustrious, the most wealthy, and probably the most politically ruthless of eighteenth-century "nabobs." He acquired, in Lawson's words, "a parliamentary following of seven or eight MPs, an Irish peerage, and the most prestigious knighthood, the Garter" (228). He communicated regularly with men like William Pitt, the prime minister. In his famous letter to Pitt after the battle of Plassey Clive put the case for India to be governed by the Crown rather than the East India Company, a recommendation of amazing temerity given that Clive, at the time, was an employee of the Company (see Gleig 142-46). Pitt, however, while admiring Clive's resourcefulness and courage, was put on his guard by Clive's ambition. Plays like Samuel Foote's *The Nabob* and portions of William Cowper's *The Task* capture the widespread feeling that India-returned "nabobs" were destroying the carefully contrived stability of English social life with their ill-gotten imperial gains. At times it seems as if all of England is outraged at what Clive represents. He is targeted specifically and repeatedly and vilified and figures as far apart as the facetious and gossipy Horace Walpole and the stern moralist Samuel Johnson have in common a dislike for Clive (the latter never ceased to attack Clive, even after his death). It is the residue of feeling initially aroused by Clive that feeds into the violence of Burke's polemics against Hastings a decade or so later.

Clive retains his wealth; but in order to do so he has to participate in a significant piece of theatricality. The attack on him in Parliament and his defence are all magnificent pieces of theatre. We are repeatedly reminded of Clive saying (of charges against him of corruption and greed): "By God, at this moment do I stand astonished at my own moderation" (Clive qtd. in Lawson 826); or Clive leaving the house in tears after saying: "Leave me my honour, take away my fortune" (Clive qtd. in Bence-Jones 287). All these mark Clive as a great actor in every sense of the word. But what I want to draw attention to above all is the theatricality of the larger movement, in which Clive's greed and corruption are folded into the State's impersonal and highly moralized administration. It is pure theatre, a piece of magic, a secular transubstantiation. Clive keeps his wealth, India continues to be governed and exploited, but now, instead of individual greed battenning on innocent natives, a civilized nation governs a barbaric nation-in-the-making for its own good. In the process, a distinctively new relationship between State and subject is inaugurated; one in which the subject may give free rein to rapacity as long as the forms this rapacity takes are supervised and underwritten by the State. Clive's challenge to the political order of his day generates new forms of statehood as well as new kinds of political subjects. The governing élite in England is forced to take account of Clive. It has to somehow assimilate the threat posed by this surly India-returned nabob, with his exotic wealth and his crude determination to become part of that élite, one way or another. Thus, Clive represents a necessary and inevitable product of empire, but a product which had to be painfully but dynamically reincorporated into the logic of political life. His anarchic style had to be somehow justified as well as ameliorated and accommodated. And insofar as Clive himself participates in this project, he contributes both to the quality of the new state and to the distinctive texture of the new political subjectivity. What we see here is the classic scenario of modernity: the individual subjectivity whose desire for things, for material wealth is assiduously encouraged, while he/she is rendered obedient towards a state that is represented as beyond material desire. The bureaucratic imperative here functions as a crucial screen for the State's desire. Insofar as the State is bureaucratic, it must be disinterested: bureaucratic procedures serve as evidence of impartiality, of the absence of individual greed. Clive's otherwise anomalous development from breaker of treaties and greatest of imperial predators, during his first and second sojourns in India, to inflexible martinet who weeds out the corruption that is spreading in the Company army during his third and final visit, is not merely an ironic footnote to the story of the British empire in India but a logical development.

The actions of a Clive seeking to be a propertied self in the home country, force a new synthesis. After Clive, and even more urgently after Hastings, the nation is forced to take up the moral burden of empire. Empire itself begins to be largely justified in moral terms, as intended to bring civilization to the inadequately civilized. The nation now represents itself as moral, as not concerned with profits. What we see happening during the condemnations of Clive and in the general outrage over empire-generated wealth is a sort of national convulsion, at the end of which the restraints are tightened so that individual enterprise, by its very nature anarchic and uncontrollable, is moved several notches

towards increased national efficiency. The nation is more centralized, more bureaucratic, more abstractly concerned with equality: and it has been led to become like this largely from the threat to stability presented by figures like Clive. Clive has to be assimilated, his anarchic energies domesticated, channeled into the unimpugnable power of the State. But as the State takes over the functions of private individuals and companies ruthlessly seeking profits, a startling transformation of a quite different kind takes place. The State, as it takes over these (clearly) commercial functions, no longer represents itself as a commercial entity at all. The British empire in India, in the writings of Macaulay, John Stuart Mill and Kipling, is relentlessly identified with its selflessness and its generous paternalism. It is in India as a father: rebellious Indians are children, in *statu pupillari*. They might be granted self-governing status, but only if they demonstrate the maturity, the capacity for self-government that Englishmen themselves possess.

What is significant is the way the moralized empire and the docile and rapacious subjectivity are simultaneously, and symbiotically, formed. The simultaneous rapacity and docility of the individual subject, magically sublimated by the fact of citizenship into the non-rapacious actions of the State, which, if it interferes with the actions of another society at all, is involved in "a civilizing mission," or "making the world safe for democracy." The licensed rapacity of the individual is premised on the sublimated passionlessness of the State, its bureaucratized altruism. Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* has to be overwritten by texts that endlessly and anxiously disavow the connection between individual rapacity and state power. A text such as Mill's *Considerations of Representative Government* (1861) is a fascinating example of such a logic at work. Mill's text never ever approaches the possibility of the British state's presence in India as being motivated by the desire for profit. This has to be repressed. Kipling, similarly, projects greed onto his adventurers, who are punished. The "formal" empire remains pure, distanced from profit-seeking.

An interesting fictional exemplification of this relationship is found in Kipling's short story "The Man Who Would Be King." Kipling does not refer to Clive, but this, one of his most famous stories, is haunted by the figure of this enigmatic ur-imperialist. Daniel Karlin describes the story as a "back projection from the early days of imperial conquest" (550); Niall Ferguson remarks that Clive "was the forerunner of Kipling's dissolute empire-builders in his story 'The Man Who Would Be King'" (44); and Kipling himself, writing to Edward Lucas White in 1893 shortly after the story was published, encourages us to see his heroes as eighteenth century figures. He writes: "Men even lower than Peachey and Carnehan made themselves kings (and kept their kingdoms too) in India not 150 years ago" (Kipling qtd. in Karlin 550-51). In the story, Peachey Carnehan and Daniel Dravot, complaining that "India isn't big enough for such as [them]," seek to establish their private kingdom in "some other place where a man isn't crowded and can come to his own" (64). They make their way into the perilous mountainous reaches of "Kafiristan," with a rudimentary but (with the hindsight of history) surprisingly workable plan: "in any place where they fight a man who knows how to drill men can always be a King. We shall go to those parts and say to any King we find — 'D'you want to vanquish your foes?' and we will show him how to drill men; for that we know better than anything else. Then we will subvert that King and seize his Throne and establish a Dynasty" (64). And so they do. Before long the two Englishmen are actually in a position to dominate the entire country. But, when they are at the height of their power, disaster overtakes them. Dravot yearns to take one of the local women (white as a European, but essentially "primitive," a fantasy figure in the construction of which racial snobbery comes together with ideas of the noble savage) as his wife. The chosen woman, unwilling to marry Dravot, and terrified, bites his neck when he tries to kiss her. Seen to bleed, Dravot's power over the Kafiristanis vanishes. His divine status destroyed, his "people" turn against him. Dravot is hurled into a valley from a rope bridge; Carnehan is crucified and tortured. Carrying Dravot's severed head as a grisly memento, Carnehan returns to imperial India as a beggar. Maimed and broken in spirit, he tells his story to the frame narrator, and then dies.

One of the fascinating things about the tale is the way Kipling manages to balance his admiration for the two adventurers' clearly illegal undertakings with his familiar emphasis on the exclusive moral authority of the formal British empire. It is not their greed per se that Kipling wishes to denounce: all their actions are described with an air of sympathetic amusement, as if they are older versions (as they no doubt were, in Kipling's mind) of Stalky, Beetle, and M'Turk. But Kipling cannot allow them to succeed in their quixotic quest. They are like Clive, but like the early Clive, before he shoulders the yoke of theatrical State paternalism. Like Clive, they are obsessed with being honoured by the home country. Clive wanted a peerage all his life; Kipling's Dravot dreams of being received and knighted by the Queen, and of adding his little empire to the British empire. Like Clive they are daring, brave, audacious. Unlike Clive, however, they do not skillfully and patiently work at being absorbed into the rul-

ing class on the terms established by that class. They are endearing and amusing, even heroic in their own way, but they are anachronistic. They must fail, because they represent a threat to the performance of the formal empire. By merely existing on the periphery of the real empire (they even plan to use rifles discarded by the Army, and to hire Englishmen trained in the workings of the "real" empire) they draw attention to empire's actual rapacity. Their performance is too like the real thing, too closely linked to individual greed. Simply by being lower class, by drawing up a comical contract that is like a parody of the Lockean social contract, by wistfully wanting to be a part of the "real" empire, they are jeopardizing the performance of empire.

In "The Man Who Would Be King," Kipling is like the British government, using but finally domesticating the unruly challenge of his working class British adventurers. Kipling, as author, resembles the men who sent Clive to India to enact a benign and incorruptible paternalism. They initially celebrate Clive as an authentic military hero, and then raise doubts about Clive's honesty. The early Clive was lauded everywhere in England as the hero of Plassey, as the man who resuscitated British faith in British valour and force of arms. But he was also feared as the man who ruthlessly pillaged the Indians, brought enormous wealth into Britain, and bought up seats in Parliament. Similarly, Kipling celebrates Dravot's and Carnehan's courage and audacity as something quintessentially British: as boyish good spirits, as playful and charismatic authority over gaping natives. Kipling's authorial posture is analogous to the attitude of the British state. Kipling clearly approves of his adventurers, and delights in their irresponsible energy. But as poet laureate of the empire, he knows they must be punished: they must be sharply distinguished from the "real" empire." Thus Peachey and Dan fail in their efforts. They are not modern subjects: their actions take place outside the sphere endorsed by the state. In both cases there is a celebration of individual prowess which is subsequently, and magically, transmuted into the more muted but also less scandalous achievements of the nation as a collective, and moral, entity. Kipling manages to suggest simultaneously that the British empire was built on the qualities displayed by Dravot and Carnehan *and* that those qualities could only feed into an enduring political structure if ratified by the British nation as a whole. Biographies of Clive tend to communicate the same message: his individual initiative and daring are celebrated, and these are then folded into the blander, more impersonal ethos of the empire. Just as Kipling has to register, celebrate, and finally contain the anarchic and carnivalesque energies of his protagonists in "The Man Who Would Be King," the British political order has to register, celebrate, and contain the achievements of Clive, whose life is such a strange but nevertheless prophetic blend of the deeds of glorious statesman and robber baron.

Clive's intransigence, his nouveau-riche pretensions, his blatant efforts to buy his way into Parliament: all these arouse the resistance of the existing political order. But this order also sees the value of a man like Clive, and wishes to tap into the vein of wealth that he has opened. Under the threat of Clive's return to the center, but also seduced by Clive's oft-repeated statements about Indian wealth saving Britain from economic ruin, the political system is radically reconfigured. The movement from East India Company rule to direct rule by Britain becomes inevitable; it is even suggested by Clive himself fairly early in his career. Clive's energies are not thwarted: that would be quite contrary to the logics of capitalism and imperial expansion. His rapacity is assimilated and incorporated into the state's power. Meanwhile the state itself becomes a metaphysical entity, beyond accusations of greed or injustice. The fact that, in the context of empire this has to happen is significant for theories of modernity. For empire to be successful, the nation's greed must be disavowed: the nation must be rewritten as godlike, as somehow redeeming the sins of its subjects. Thus Burke can chastise Hastings, but only in order that the British empire emerges as beyond blame, as purged of the offences of erring individuals. Similarly, in Kipling's stories, the various criminal and almost-criminal elements can be celebrated for their daring and initiative. But the empire itself is glorious, disinterested, selfless even unto death (in the form of its middle class administrators and officers).

In conclusion, the pattern that emerges, I propose, is a distinctively modern one: a benevolent and powerful State confronting the docile individual whose rapacity is licensed, even encouraged, by that State. Perhaps this pattern would have emerged anyway; but empire quickened, crystallized and consolidated the process. A fascinating process of sublimation is seen: the greed of the individual is transformed into the civilizing mission of the nation; and this process allows the ambitions of the individual just as much free play as it had before the nation takes responsibility for empire. The all-powerful state made up of individuals possessed of a striking degree of freedom in the realms of production and consumption may be seen as typical of capitalist societies; but it was the experience of empire that allowed this combination to emerge in distinct form. Clive and Hastings were portents; but they were also pretexts. If the Indian empire gave philosophers like the Mills and Bentham a laborato-



ry to test their ideas about utilitarianism and liberalism, the careers of Clive and Hastings provided more pragmatic rulers with the opportunity to explore a new relationship with their subjects: one in which coercive governance and consumerist freedoms existed in a dialectical relationship with each other.

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