

George III and the Law of Nations

David Armitage

TO associate monarchy with modernity might now seem at best oxymoronic, at worst absurd. An institution dependent on heredity, hierarchy, and unearned privilege could hardly be more antithetical to the values of equality that define modern political identity, at least formally, in the vast swaths of the world that think of themselves as democratic. However, in the late eighteenth century, modernity and monarchy were not essentially or necessarily opposed to one another. From Madrid to Saint Petersburg and from Potsdam to Beijing, hereditary rulers such as Carlos III, Catherine the Great, Frederick II, and the Qianlong emperor variously embraced contemporary erudition, cutting-edge natural philosophy, legal reform, and cultural innovation as elements within a synchronous process of modernization that spanned Eurasia. The movement included a perhaps unlikely member—King George III—whose involvement becomes visible via an unexpected lens: the law of nations. It might seem counterintuitive to portray George as a modernizer, so tenacious is the popular image of him (at least for Americans) as the tyrant who inspired a revolution or (among Britons) as the incapable king who lost first America and then his sanity. Nor does that “King of Great Britain,” notorious from the Declaration of Independence for his “history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object

David Armitage is the Lloyd C. Blankfein Professor of History at Harvard University and an Affiliated Faculty Member at Harvard Law School. Earlier versions of this article were presented as the Sons of the American Revolution Annual Lecture at King's College London in December 2020 and as the Arthur Berriedale Keith Lecture at Edinburgh Law School in December 2019. It is based on research undertaken while holding the Sons of the American Revolution Visiting Professorship at King's College London, in association with the Georgian Papers Programme and the Royal Archives at Windsor Castle. The author is grateful above all to Arthur Burns, Joe Dooley, and Oliver Walton for making this work possible and to the National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution for its generous support, as well as to John Cairns, Harshan Kumarasingham,

the establishment of an absolute Tyranny,” appear to be a likely upholder of transnational customs, conventions, and norms.¹ Yet there is ample evidence over George’s long reign (1760–1820) for his engagement with what contemporaries termed the *law of nations*, for its formative influence on his thought and practice as a ruler, and for the emulation he inspired across the world within its idiom. That engagement distinguished him even among his princely peers as an intellectual in office as well as a practitioner of up-to-date statecraft, informed by modern—for his era—practices in regard to learning, information management, and decision making.

The image of George III as an avatar of reactionary royalism stems mostly from the later part of his reign and especially from his implacable opposition to American independence. That perception may be hard to dislodge from the popular imagination, but three developments have revised historians’ assessments of the king: scholarship that takes seriously George’s intellectual and cultural interests; the opening of the Royal Archives at Windsor Castle to a wider range of researchers; and an effort to place the king within comparative, pan-European, and global contexts. George has accordingly come into sharper relief as the sovereign virtuoso who, at the time of his death in 1820, owned one of the world’s largest private libraries, comprising some 65,000 volumes, together with a further 57,000 maps, plans, charts, and topographical views, a burgeoning art collection, and one of Europe’s finest assemblages of scientific instruments.² His consort, Queen Charlotte, shared his intellectual interests and had more than four thousand books in her own library.³ Among the king’s

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¹ “The Declaration of Independence as Adopted by Congress . . .,” July 4, 1776, in Julian P. Boyd, ed., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 1, *January 1760 to December 1776* (Princeton, N.J., 1950), 429–32 (quotation, 430).

² David Watkin, *The Architect King: George III and the Culture of the Enlightenment* (London, 2004); Jonathan Marsden, ed., *The Wisdom of George the Third: Papers from a Symposium at the Queen’s Gallery, Buckingham Palace, June 2004* (London, 2005); Peter Barber, “George III and His Geographical Collection,” in Marsden, *Wisdom of George the Third*, 263–89; Jeremy Black, *George III: America’s Last King* (New Haven, Conn., 2006), 162–84; Elaine M. Paintin, *The King’s Library* (London, 1989); Alan Q. Morton and Jane A. Wess, *Public & Private Science: The King George III Collection* (Oxford, 1993); Jane Roberts, ed., *George III & Queen Charlotte: Patronage, Collecting and Court Taste* (London, 2004); Felicity Myrone, “What is K.Top?,” [2017], British Library: Picturing Places, accessed July 4, 2021, <https://www.bl.uk/picturing-places/articles/what-is-ktop>.

³ *A Catalogue of the Genuine Library, Prints, and Books of Prints, of an Illustrious Personage, Lately Deceased, Which Will Be Sold at Auction . . . by Mr. Christie* (London, 1819); Clarissa Campbell Orr, “Queen Charlotte as Patron: Some Intellectual and Social Contexts,” *Court Historian* 6, no. 3 (2001): 183–212; Orr, “Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, Queen of Great Britain and Electress of Hanover: Northern Dynasties and the Northern Republic of Letters,” in *Queenship in Europe: The Role of the Consort, 1660–1815*, ed. Orr (Cambridge, 2004), 368–402.

cultural legacies are the Royal Academy of Arts, the British Museum, and the core of what is now the British Library in London.⁴ The full range of his writings and reflections, beyond his published correspondence, made possible by the increased accessibility of the Georgian Papers, is revealing George and Charlotte's mutual commitment to "courtly Enlightenment."⁵ Taken together, these materials now allow historians to situate George within a non-teleological reassessment of monarchy as under reform rather than in retreat in an age of democratic revolution and populist charisma.⁶

These shifts allow us to ask what the law of nations can tell us about George III and what George III can tell us about the history of the law of nations. In the context of the eighteenth-century anglophone Atlantic, such questions have been asked about the British Parliament and about Thomas Jefferson, for instance, but not about any of the Hanoverian kings.⁷ This absence parallels a recent lack of attention to how British sovereigns exercised their sovereignty, imperially as well as internationally.⁸ A focus on George III and the law of nations can illuminate how at least one British monarch was raised to rule heterogeneous peoples and how he experienced governance over both expanding and contracting territories over half a century on the throne. It thereby contributes to

⁴ Holger Hoock, *The King's Artists: The Royal Academy of Arts and the Politics of British Culture, 1760–1840* (Oxford, 2003); Kim Sloan, ed., *Enlightenment: Discovering the World in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 2003); P. R. Harris, "The King's Library," in *Libraries within the Library: The Origins of the British Library's Printed Collections*, ed. Giles Mandelbrote and Barry Taylor (London, 2009), 296–317.

⁵ Clarissa Campbell Orr, "The Late Hanoverian Court and the Christian Enlightenment," in *Monarchy and Religion: The Transformation of Royal Culture in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, ed. Michael Schaich (Oxford, 2007), 317–42 (quotation, 317); Robin Mackworth-Young, "The Royal Archives, Windsor Castle," *Archives* 13, no. 59 (Spring 1978): 115–30; Georgian Papers Programme online, accessed July 4, 2021, <https://gpp.rct.uk/>.

⁶ See for example Hannah Smith, *Georgian Monarchy: Politics and Culture, 1714–1760* (Cambridge, 2006); Hans W. Blom, John Christian Laursen, and Luisa Simonutti, eds., *Monarchisms in the Age of Enlightenment: Liberty, Patriotism, and the Common Good* (Toronto, 2007); Schaich, *Monarchy and Religion*; David A. Bell, *Men on Horseback: The Power of Charisma in the Age of Revolution* (New York, 2020); Sujit Sivasundaram, "Monarchs, Travellers and Empires in the Pacific's Age of Revolutions," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 30 (2020): 77–96; Ben Lowe, ed., *Political Thought and the Origins of the American Presidency* (Tallahassee, Fla., 2021).

⁷ See for example David Armitage, *Foundations of Modern International Thought* (Cambridge, 2013), 135–53; Armitage, "The Declaration of Independence and International Law," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 59, no. 1 (January 2002): 39–64; Charles M. Wiltse, "Thomas Jefferson on the Law of Nations," *American Journal of International Law* 29, no. 1 (1935): 66–81; William Theo Oosterveld, *The Law of Nations in Early American Foreign Policy* (Leiden, 2016), chap. 6.

⁸ For studies of later monarchs in this regard, see Miles Taylor, *Empress: Queen Victoria and India* (New Haven, Conn., 2018); Philip Murphy, *Monarchy and the End of Empire: The House of Windsor, the British Government, and the Postwar Commonwealth* (Oxford, 2013).

both biographical study of international law and intellectual microhistory.⁹ And its subject's interests and responsibilities make it global—or, at least, interregional—in scope. It stretches from northwestern Europe to the middle of the Pacific Ocean, though most of its material comes from the mind of one man working mostly from London and at Windsor.

THE FIRST ATTEMPT TO LINK GEORGE III HISTORICALLY with the law of nations, in 1776, was also the last. The U.S. Declaration of Independence presented the king as the great enemy of the law of nations.¹⁰ Thomas Jefferson, his coauthors, and the Continental Congress accused him of “circumstances of Cruelty & perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized Nation,” including “excit[ing] domestic insurrections amongst us”—that is, revolts of enslaved people—and encouraging attacks from allegedly “merciless Indian Savages.”¹¹ Jefferson, in his rough draft of the Declaration, even charged the king with single-handedly promoting the transatlantic slave trade between Africa and British America: “he has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating it's most sacred rights of life & liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, captivating & carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere, or to incur miserable death in their transportation thither. this piratical warfare, the opprobrium of *infidel* powers, is the warfare of a CHRISTIAN king of Great Britain.”¹² On this account, George had not simply offended against the law of nations within his own dominions in North America: he was its enemy on an unparalleled intercontinental scale, even a pirate-like enemy of humankind (*hostis humani generis*) who threatened Christian civilization and its laws from without. The full extent of this charge sheet only became known with the publication in 1829 of the rough draft of the Declaration in Jefferson's autobiography. Since then, it has apparently discouraged any further consideration of the king and the law of nations.¹³

⁹ On the biographical study of international law, see Ignacio de la Rasilla, *International Law and History: Modern Interfaces* (Cambridge, 2020), chap. 10; on intellectual microhistory, see Andrew Fitzmaurice, *King Leopold's Ghostwriter: The Creation of Persons and States in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, N.J., 2021), introduction.

¹⁰ “The Declaration of Independence,” July 4, 1776, in Boyd, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 1: 429–32; David Armitage, *The Declaration of Independence: A Global History* (Cambridge, Mass., 2007), 55–58.

¹¹ “The Declaration of Independence,” July 4, 1776, in Boyd, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 1: 431 (quotations). On Native Americans and the enslaved in the Declaration of Independence, see Robert G. Parkinson, *Thirteen Clocks: How Race United the Colonies and Made the Declaration of Independence* (Williamsburg, Va., and Chapel Hill, N.C., 2021).

¹² Thomas Jefferson, “‘Jefferson's ‘original Rough draught’ of the Declaration of Independence,” in Boyd, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 1: 423–28 (quotation, 426).

¹³ Thomas Jefferson Randolph, ed., *Memoirs, Correspondence, and Private Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Late President of the United States . . .*, 4 vols. (London, 1829), 1: 1–96, esp. 20.

In the century and a half before George took the British throne in 1760, students and practitioners of the law of nations—lawyers, jurists, professors, and sovereigns—had self-consciously modernized their subject matter. The law of nations—the *jus gentium*, *droit des gens*, or *Völkerrecht*—was rooted in classical sources, especially Roman Stoicism, and in European traditions of natural jurisprudence. Its modern version flourished in seventeenth-century Europe, with the Dutch jurist Hugo Grotius as its leading light and such figures as Thomas Hobbes, Samuel Pufendorf, and Christian Wolff as influential second- and third-generation innovators. Beginning in the last third of the seventeenth century, professorships of the law of nature and nations proliferated across Protestant Europe, with the notable exception of England.¹⁴ Compared to the Netherlands or the German lands, for instance, Britain remained a relative backwater for the law of nations, and the only British chair in the subject, at the University of Edinburgh, fell into desuetude after its foundation in 1707.¹⁵ Despite the backwardness of his kingdoms in this regard, George himself would be better acquainted with the law of nations than almost any of his subjects. This was due to the rigorous program of princely education directed by his early mentor, John Stuart, 3d Earl of Bute, who had studied modern civil law at the universities of Groningen and Leiden.¹⁶ The doctrinal and technical knowledge that George received under Bute's tutelage would inform his statecraft for the rest of his reign.

George III was the first Hanoverian monarch born and raised in Britain and who spoke English, rather than German, as his first language. As he proudly told his first Parliament in November 1760, “Born & Educated in this Country I glory in the Name of Britain”: not “Briton,” as reported in the contemporary press and as often quoted since, but “Britain,” as the original manuscript of his pronouncement clearly shows.¹⁷

¹⁴ On these developments in natural law, see Richard Tuck, “The ‘Modern’ Theory of Natural Law,” in *The Languages of Political Theory in Early-Modern Europe*, ed. Anthony Pagden (Cambridge, 1987), 99–119; Knud Haakonssen, “Early Modern Natural Law Theories,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Natural Law Jurisprudence*, ed. George Duke and Robert P. George (Cambridge, 2017), 76–102.

¹⁵ For the first Edinburgh chair in public law and the law of nature and nations, see John W. Cairns, “The First Edinburgh Chair in Law: Grotius and the Scottish Enlightenment,” in *Enlightenment, Legal Education, and Critique: Selected Essays on the History of Scots Law*, 2 vols., ed. Cairns (Edinburgh, 2018), 2: 82–110.

¹⁶ On Bute's legal education and his mentorship, see Francis Russell, *John, 3rd Earl of Bute: Patron and Collector* (London, 2004), 5–6; John L. Bullion, “The Prince's Mentor: A New Perspective on the Friendship between George III and Lord Bute during the 1750s,” *Albion* 21, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 34–55; Russell, “Lord Bute and King George III,” in Marsden, *Wisdom of George the Third*, 29–42.

¹⁷ George III, fragment of speech to Parliament, Nov. 15, 1760, Add. MS 32684, fol. 121 (“Born”), British Library (BL), London. For versions with “Briton” in place of “Britain,” see *His Majesty's Most Gracious Speech to Both Houses of Parliament, on Tuesday, the Eighteenth Day of November, 1760* (London, 1760); J. G. A. Pocock, “Monarchy in the

It is also notable that George specified he had been educated in Britain. His royal education as prince of Wales was the most anxiously planned and energetically conducted *institutio principis* since the sixteenth century. No subsequent British monarch—up to and including the present one—was quite as thoroughly prepared to govern. From the age of six until his accession at twenty-two, George had a series of tutors who guided him through a diverse syllabus of subjects, with varying degrees of success, in modern languages, classics, geography, political economy, history, law, mathematics, and natural philosophy, all directed toward the ethical education of the prince for the practice of monarchical rule.¹⁸

Among the Georgian Papers at Windsor Castle are some 8,500 pages of extensive tutorial exercises or “essays,” as they are labeled in the collection. One-third of them explicitly treat historical subjects, and the degree to which George focused on those topics is certainly greater because much of his legal study was couched within history, especially English constitutional history.¹⁹ These early historical essays inaugurated George’s lifelong engagement with the law of nations. In composing them, he also learned techniques of information management and retrieval that he would practice throughout his life.²⁰ He read Enlightened works such as *De l’esprit des loix* by Charles-Louis de Secondat, baron de Montesquieu, and *Commentaries*

Name of Britain: The Case of George III,” in Blom, Laursen, and Simonutti, *Monarchisms in the Age of Enlightenment*, 285–302.

¹⁸ On the education of British monarchs, see Morris Marples, *Princes in the Making: A Study of Royal Education* (London, 1965); Aysha Pollnitz, *Princely Education in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 2015). For George’s education specifically, see John Brooke, *King George III* (London, 1972), 39–49; Peter Gordon and Denis Lawton, *Royal Education: Past, Present and Future*, rev. and enlarged 2d ed. (London, 2003), 102–11; Barbara Brandon Schnorrenberg, “Who Was George Lewis Scott?,” *New Perspectives on the Eighteenth Century* 2, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 39–53.

¹⁹ Arthur Burns, “George III as Essayist” (paper presented at the 15th International Congress on the Enlightenment, Edinburgh, July 2019); Jenny Buckley, “The Essays of George III: A Virtual Exhibition,” Georgian Papers Programme online, accessed July 4, 2021, <https://georgianpapers.com/explore-the-collections/virtual-exhibits/the-essays-of-george-iii-an-enlightened-monarch-a-virtual-exhibition-by-jenny-buckley/>.

²⁰ For examples, see George’s essay, “On Industry in Great Britain,” GEO/ADD/32/259–61, Royal Archives (RA), Windsor Castle (WC), derived from Josiah Tucker, *A Brief Essay on the Advantages and Disadvantages which Respectively Attend France and Great Britain, with Regard to Trade . . .*, 3d ed. (London, 1753), BL shelf mark 289.a.25(1); and “America is lost,” GEO/ADD/32/2010, RA, derived from Arthur Young, *Annals of Agriculture and Other Useful Arts* 1 (1784): 11–19. (Here and elsewhere, BL shelf marks refer to copies of books in the King’s Library at the British Library.) On these essays and their sources, see John L. Bullion, “From ‘the French and Dutch are more sober, frugal and industrious’ to the ‘nobler’ Position: Attitudes of the Prince of Wales toward a General Naturalization and a Popular Monarchy, 1757–1760,” *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 17 (1988): 159–72; Angel Luke O’Donnell, “America is Lost!,” Georgian Papers Programme online, accessed July 4, 2021, <https://georgianpapersprogramme.com/2017/01/23/america-is-lost/>.

on the *Laws of England*, by William Blackstone, using a version of the early modern practice of “studying for action,” an engaged form of reading that, in the hands of a future sovereign, was far from disinterested.²¹ He sutured paraphrases from his sources together with passages of his own précis in order to direct his thoughts. This process in turn helped him to shape his own arguments and to ventriloquize those of his authorities, usually without attribution. George’s commonplacing of Montesquieu and Blackstone equipped him with ample knowledge of the law of nations as it related both to municipal law—especially the peculiarities of English law—and to the norms and structures of human governance more broadly, including (as we shall see) the institution of slavery.

In 1771, a Philadelphia newspaper reported that the then “Prince of Wales, we are assured, has already by heart, . . . every thing written by Montesquieu in general upon government.”²² This seems unlikely to have been true of the future George IV, who was only nine at the time, but it had certainly been the case for his father, who worked hard to digest the *Esprit des loix* in the late 1750s.²³ Montesquieu was in fact the main source for the most elaborate of his early political essays, the extensive manuscript, which exists in various drafts in the Royal Archives, entitled “Of Laws relative to Government in general.” Across more than two hundred pages, George synthesized, summarized, and expanded upon his reading of Montesquieu to produce a political treatise that was historical, philosophical, and—in parts—almost uniquely radical in mid-eighteenth-century Britain. Above all, this manuscript expressed George’s familiarity with the Enlightened science of man, especially with Montesquieu’s understanding that constitutions were at once political and bodily and that they related to both civil law and the law of nations. Montesquieu’s climatological theories may also have nourished George’s interest in the governance of nature,

²¹ Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton, “‘Studied for Action’: How Gabriel Harvey Read His Livy,” *Past and Present*, no. 129 (November 1990): 30–78; David Allan, *Commonplace Books and Reading in Georgian England* (Cambridge, 2010); Charles-Louis de Secondat, baron de Montesquieu, *De l’esprit des loix* . . . , 3 vols. (London, 1751); William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, 4 vols. (Oxford, 1765–69).

²² “Aug. 31,” [Philadelphia] *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Nov. 14, 1771, [2] (quotation), which added “every thing published by Milton and Locke on the nature of the English constitution.” Montesquieu does not appear in George IV’s surviving exercise book from when he was prince of Wales, though François Fénelon and Francis Bacon do: George, Prince of Wales’s exercise book, Aug. 15, 1774–Dec. 21, 1774, GEO/ADD/3/1, RA. However, the copy of Montesquieu’s *De l’esprit des loix* at Windsor Castle carries the bookplate of the Carlton House library and hence is likely to have been George IV’s when he was prince of Wales: [Montesquieu], *De l’esprit des loix* . . . , 2 vols. (Geneva, 1748), RCIN 1124211, 1124235, Royal Library (RL), WC.

²³ George, Prince of Wales, “Of Laws relative to Government in general,” [ca. 1755–58], GEO/ADD/32/706–912, RA.

whether on his own farms or as resources for his empire.²⁴ They certainly reflected Bute's plan to provide him with an up-to-date understanding of the contemporary science of government and of self-government through science.²⁵ Like that other contemporary royal reader of Montesquieu, Catherine the Great, George strung together passages from the Frenchman to guide his own thought and to envisage reform. The result was not as systematic, nor as actionable, as the empress Catherine's code of laws, or *Nakaz* (1768)—which would later be found in the king's library—but it provides insight into both the young George's intellectual methods and his formative engagement with the contemporary law of nations.²⁶

George learned from Montesquieu that the law of nations arose from the antagonisms that developed among the communities as they emerged from the state of nature.²⁷ Montesquieu taught him that individuals created societies to ameliorate their weakness in the solitary condition. Yet the polities they created competed with one another, even to the extent of going to war. War demanded victory, and conquest entailed rules to retain what had been acquired. These necessities, together with a desire to limit the damage of conflict itself, were "the beginning, and real foundation of the Laws of Nations, some kind or other of which," George noted while closely following his French guide, "appears even amongst the most barbarous people, tho often formed on erroneous principles."²⁸ At least since Thomas Hobbes had written in the mid-seventeenth century, students of the law of nations had assimilated it to the law of nature, as both

²⁴ For example, see "Of Laws relative to Government in general," GEO/ADD/32/1072, RA. George's agricultural essays are cataloged among the Georgian Papers as GEO/ADD/32/2012–2044, 2049, 2051, 2441, RA; for commentary on the essays, see James Fisher, "Farmer George? Notes on Agriculture," Georgian Papers Programme online, accessed July 4, 2021, <https://georgianpapers.com/2017/01/19/farmer-georges-notes-agriculture/>. More generally, see Richard Drayton, *Nature's Government: Science, Imperial Britain, and the "Improvement" of the World* (New Haven, Conn., 2000).

²⁵ Florence Grant, "Mechanical Experiments as Moral Exercise in the Education of George III," *British Journal for the History of Science* 48, no. 2 (June 2015): 195–212.

²⁶ *The Grand Instructions to the Commissioners Appointed to Frame a New Code of Laws for the Russian Empire: Composed by Her Imperial Majesty Catherine II . . .*, trans. Mikhail Tatischev (London, 1768), BL 26.e.1; *A Description of the Manner in which the Commission, for Establishing a New Code of Laws, Was Opened at Moscow . . .*, trans. Tatischev (London, 1769), BL 113.i.36; W. Gareth Jones, "The Spirit of the *Nakaz*: Catherine II's Literary Debt to Montesquieu," *Slavonic and East European Review* 76, no. 4 (October 1998): 658–71.

²⁷ Montesquieu, *De l'esprit des loix*, (1751); Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws . . .*, 3d ed., trans. [Thomas] Nugent, 2 vols. (London, 1758), in "A Short Catalogue of His Majesty's Books in his Town Library 1769," Add. MS 18847, fols. 176, 174, BL; Montesquieu, *Ses oeuvres*, 3 vols. (London, 1767), BL 15.b.8.

²⁸ "Of Laws relative to Government in general," GEO/ADD/32/1072, RA, paraphrasing Montesquieu, *De l'esprit des loix* (1751), 1: 3.

Montesquieu and George agreed.²⁹ It preceded both political law and civil law, even though the balance among these forms of law differed from government to government, depending on history, national character, and the local climate. So far, so derivatively Montesquieuan—but how did George apply this knowledge of the evolution of the law of nations and its variability according to climate to practical matters relevant to his own time?

The answer surfaces in the young George's treatment of slavery. This is at once understandable and yet surprising. It was understandable because there was general agreement that slavery was an institution of the law of nations but was nonetheless contrary to the law of nature, as Roman jurists had noted and as their successors had repeatedly affirmed. In "Of Laws relative to the Nature of Climates," a chapter of his manuscript with a title taken from book 14 of Montesquieu's *Esprit des loix*, George added to this consensus: "Slavery," he wrote, "is equally repugnant to the Civil Law as to the Law of Nature," even though it was historically deeply rooted and geographically widespread from Africa to Asia. (See Appendix, pp. 26–30, below.)³⁰ And yet George's application of Montesquieu's exposition of the law of nations was also surprising. He drew from the Frenchman an assault on almost every argument that had been used by the mid-eighteenth century to justify the institution of slavery. That this suite of arguments against slavery and the slave trade—including some that Montesquieu himself had derived from John Locke—should have come from the hand of the future king is remarkable enough. But because George III is better known for his opposition to legislative efforts even to ameliorate the slave trade late in his life, this early engagement with abolitionism has gone almost entirely unnoticed.³¹

²⁹ Robert Ward, *An Enquiry into the Foundation and History of the Law of Nations in Europe, from the Time of the Greeks and Romans, to the Age of Grotius*, 2 vols. (London, 1795), I: 4; Armitage, *Foundations of Modern International Thought*, 62–69.

³⁰ "Of Laws relative to the Nature of Climates," GEO/ADD/32/873 ("repugnant"), RA, drawing on "Book XIV. Of Laws as relative to the Nature of the Climate," and "Book XV. In what manner the Laws of civil Slavery are relative to the Nature of the Climate," in Montesquieu, *De l'esprit des loix* (1751), vol. 2. On Montesquieu and slavery, see especially Russell Parsons Jameson, *Montesquieu et l'esclavage: Étude sur les origines de l'opinion antiesclavagiste en France au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1911); David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1966), 394–96, 402–8; Julien J. Lafontant, *Montesquieu et le problème de l'esclavage dans l'esprit des lois* (Sherbrooke, Quebec, 1979); Andrew S. Curran, *The Anatomy of Blackness: Science & Slavery in an Age of Enlightenment* (Baltimore, 2011), 130–37.

³¹ The only previous scholar to have mentioned the manuscript on slavery among the Georgian Papers is John L. Bullion: Bullion, "George III on Empire, 1783," *WMQ* 51, no. 2 (April 1994): 305–10, at 308 n. 4; Bullion, *George III, National Reform, and North America: "The True Essential Business of a King"* (Lewiston, N.Y., 2013), 465–67 (dating it to 1755–58).

George's polemic considered slavery "in the Civil & Political light" as an aspect of the climatologically determined laws of nations. Those laws, he wrote, following Montesquieu, are independent of governments but crucially shape their municipal legislation. Though slavery was almost universal in Asia, Africa, and the Americas, it was observable—as Montesquieu had in fact already observed—that the temperate zone was largely free of human bondage. In despotisms, he went on, "a slave & subject are nearly on a par," but the peculiar institution was incompatible with modern monarchies and especially so with republics, which were founded on the principle of equality. Roman lawyers had derived the title to slavery in part from the *jus gentium*, as prisoners of war could be enslaved in return for sparing their lives; however, George argued, ventriloquizing Montesquieu and—behind him—Locke, victory in war gave the victor no right of life and death over the vanquished, and the right of the conqueror could not descend to the offspring of the conquered.³² Pity—the principle paradoxically proposed by the civil lawyers seeking to prop up slavery—could thus be no foundation for continuing enslavement. Once George had established that not even the law of nations could justify slavery, he demolished all the other arguments from civil law adduced in its defense. He asserted that slavery was ethically destructive, particularly for enslaved persons, of course, but also for their enslavers, in whom it encouraged "Voluptuousness, Anger, severity[,] cruelty, & a savage ferocity." In sum, slavery was "contrary to the fundamental [*sic*] principles of all society."³³

Slavery could not be justified according to the law of nations, or by any other traditional ethical scheme. Did that also mean that the slave trade was illegitimate? "But what shall we say to the European traffic of Black slaves[?]," asked George.³⁴ He believed it was obvious that many of the standard arguments used to legitimate commerce in human beings—such as the impossibility of cultivating the American colonies without enslaved persons, or racial arguments based on somatic difference—were self-refuting. He drew his counterblasts against the trade from book 15 of the *Esprit des loix*, the source of his earlier demolitions of the legal justifications for slavery. He then paraphrased Montesquieu's arguments that voluntary servitude and the enervating effects of climate in some parts of the world had led to one form of "natural" slavery: that is, enslavement not

³² "Of Laws relative to the Nature of Climates," GEO/ADD/32/869–72 ("Civil," 869, "slave & subject," 870), RA, drawing on Montesquieu, *De l'esprit des loix*, bks. 14 and 15; John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* . . . (London, 1690), chap. 16, "Of Conquest."

³³ "Of Laws relative to the Nature of Climates," GEO/ADD/32/869–72 ("Voluptuousness," 870, "contrary," 872), RA, drawing on Montesquieu, *De l'esprit des loix*, bks. 14 and 15.

³⁴ "Of Laws relative to the Nature of Climates," GEO/ADD/32/873, RA.

derived from human agency or positive law. Moreover, George argued that law was just as likely to produce indolence as the climate; for this reason, slavery was not an ineluctable condition but was instead susceptible to human reform.

That said, George continued, it was still noticeable, in the present and throughout history, that slavery and liberty had each clustered mostly in distinct climatological regions: courageous, formidable liberty (and thus freedom from conquest) in temperate Europe; weak, timorous, “effeminate,” and therefore easily conquered slavery in the intemperate East. “Africa enjoys the same sultry climate & the same servile fetters with Asia,” he wrote; the Americas, though ravaged by European colonialism, had still displayed pockets of indomitable freedom in the empires of Peru and Mexico and even in his own time among “the petty Nations . . . that Inhabit the Mountains call’d Bravos by the Spaniards.”³⁵ On that note, George concluded his abolitionist argument. With Montesquieu’s help, he had shown that there could be no basis for slavery in natural law, civil law, or the law of nations, and that reigning arguments in favor of the slave trade were specious and untenable. All that remained was the empirical fact that slavery clustered outside the temperate zone: it therefore had no place in Europe, and the jury was still out on whether climatological determinism alone could account for its presence in the New World.

The bulk of George’s argument came from Montesquieu’s original French, and there is no evidence that he used Thomas Nugent’s contemporary English translation of *The Spirit of Laws* (1750).³⁶ Three-quarters of the text of “Of Laws relative to the Nature of Climates” paraphrased sections from three books of Montesquieu’s work; George’s own words supplied the remainder. Even if considered only as a thought experiment, “Of Laws relative to the Nature of Climates” indicates that Prince George was familiar with antislavery argument. It also showed that he could inhabit Montesquieu’s objections sympathetically. Out of those objections he composed what could have been a freestanding tract or pamphlet, although it remained private to him and his tutors.

George’s antislavery thesis was not just cogent; it was precocious, both for the prince’s own youth and among mid-eighteenth-century abolitionist arguments. By this point in the anglophone Atlantic, only the American Quakers Benjamin Lay (1682–1759) and John Woolman (1720–72) had

³⁵ “Of Laws relative to the Nature of Climates,” GEO/ADD/32/873–78 (“effeminate,” 875, “Africa,” 878), RA, drawing on Montesquieu, *De l’esprit des loix*, bks. 14, 15, and 17.

³⁶ M. de Secondat, baron de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*, trans. Thomas Nugent, 2 vols. (London, 1750).

criticized slavery quite so comprehensively.³⁷ And no abolitionist in England would draw so heavily upon Montesquieu until Granville Sharp in 1769.³⁸ In fact, only one person in Britain went further than the prince of Wales in deploying the full battery of Montesquieu's antislavery arguments in print: the young Scots lawyer George Wallace (1730–1805). In his *A System of the Principles of the Laws of Scotland* (1760), Wallace proposed that “an institution, so unnatural and so inhuman as that of Slavery, ought to be abolished” immediately, and he did so with paraphrases of Montesquieu as well as lengthy quotations in French from many of the same passages of the *Esprit des loix* George relied upon.³⁹ Moreover, Wallace dedicated his *System* to George himself, as “a young PRINCE, born the Guardian of the laws and Protector of the liberties of his country.” He could not have known that his princely dedicatee had already anticipated Wallace's Montesquieuan arguments against slavery in the privacy of his educational essays.⁴⁰ By drawing upon Montesquieu's environmentally inflected conception of law in this way, George showed his ability to

³⁷ Benjamin Lay, *All Slave-Keepers That Keep the Innocent in Bondage, Apostates* . . . (Philadelphia, 173[8]); John Woolman, *Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes: Recommended to the Professors of Christianity of Every Denomination* (Philadelphia, 1754); Marcus Rediker, *The Fearless Benjamin Lay: The Quaker Dwarf Who Became the First Revolutionary Abolitionist* (Boston, 2017), 71–94; Geoffrey Plank, *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom: A Quaker in the British Empire* (Philadelphia, 2012), 97–120.

³⁸ Granville Sharp, *A Representation of the Injustice and Dangerous Tendency of Tolerating Slavery* . . . (London, 1769), 5, 10, 15, 48–49, 78–79, 83; F. T. H. Fletcher, *Montesquieu and English Politics (1750–1800)* (London, 1939), 231. There were none of Sharp's abolitionist works in the King's Library, located at the British Library, which did, however, contain other antislavery pamphlets; for example Anthony Benezet, *A Caution and Warning to Great-Britain and Her Colonies* . . . (Philadelphia, 1767), BL 103.h.23; Thomas Clarkson, *An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species* . . . , 2d ed. (London, 1788), BL 103.k.14; Clarkson, *An Essay on the Impolicy of the African Slave Trade in Two Parts*, 2d ed. (London, 1778), BL 103.k.15; James Ramsay, *An Address on the Proposed Bill for the Abolition of the Slave Trade* . . . , 2d ed. (London, 1788), BL 103.h.24; Ramsay, *Objections to the Abolition of the Slave Trade, with Answers* . . . , 2d ed. (London, 1788), BL 103.k.16. The library also contained proslavery polemics such as James M. Adair, *Unanswerable Arguments Against the Abolition of the Slave Trade* . . . (London, [1790]), BL 103.k.8; see “Catalogue of the King's Pamphlets,” 9 vols. (manuscript, 1850s), BL L.R.419.b.3. George later received a presentation copy of James Montgomery, James Grahame, and E. Benger, *Poems on the Abolition of the Slave Trade* (London, 1810), accessed at RCIN 1051697, RL, WC (with another copy in the King's Library at BL 83.k.10); Robert Bowyer to George III, Feb. 16, 1810, GEO/MAIN/14946, RA; also in A. Aspinall, ed., *The Later Correspondence of George III*, 5 vols. (Cambridge, 1962–70), 5: 513–14.

³⁹ George Wallace, *A System of the Principles of the Laws of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1760), 1: 91–98 (quotation, 91); Fletcher, *Montesquieu and English Politics*, 230–31. A contemporary review of Wallace's *System*, probably by Edmund Burke, highlighted the antislavery passages: *The Annual Register; or, A View of History, Politics, and Literature, for the Year 1760* 3 (1760): 263–65.

⁴⁰ For the dedication, see “To His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales,” in Wallace, *System of the Principles of the Laws of Scotland*, n.p. George III's copy of Wallace's *System*, in his royal binding, is available at BL 22.d.9.

engage not just with advanced arguments against slavery and the slave trade but also with current developments in sociological jurisprudence as it applied to the law of nations.

When George later drew up “The Plan of Education for a Prince” with the future George IV in mind, his advice reflected his own experience commonplacating and compiling those essays. After recommending the study of religion, languages, and philosophy, he urged his heir to “enter upon the Science of Government by studying the Laws of Nature and of Nations, the Municipal Laws of the Country[,] the Institutes of Civil Law and the Spirit of the Laws by M. de Montesquieu[, and] History in the point of view of the different Nations and the Character of Mankind.”⁴¹ Even after completing his education as a prince, George III continued his studies of the law of nations while king. Some five hundred pages of manuscripts in his hand entitled “Of Laws relative to Government in general” and an associated draft essay on government provide evidence for his immersion in the works of Sir William Blackstone as well as the baron de Montesquieu.⁴²

Blackstone had originally delivered the material that comprised the *Commentaries on the Laws of England* as lectures from the newly founded Vinerian Professor of English Law at Oxford. Their success prompted Bute to invite the jurist to repeat them privately for Prince George, though Blackstone shared only texts of some of the lectures in 1759; his reward was a two-hundred-pound “present from the Prince of Wales.”⁴³ In the young king George’s hands, Blackstone’s *Commentaries on the Laws of England* later became a mirror for the prince.⁴⁴ From the first book of the *Commentaries*, George would have learned about Parliament, the royal title, the royal family, and the duties and prerogatives, as well as the councils and revenues, he inherited as king.⁴⁵ Blackstone also supplied George with a historical and empirical conception of the law of nations

⁴¹ George III, “The Plan of Education for a Prince taken from Mr. Thomas Eloge of the late Dauphin,” GEO/ADD/32/1732 (quotation), RA, drawing on [Antoine-Léonard] Thomas, *Éloge de Louis, dauphin de France* (Paris, 1766), 11–20. See also [John Stuart, 3d Earl of Bute?], “Some short Notes concerning the Education of a Prince,” [1756–80?], GEO/ADD/32/1731, RA; George III, “Sketch of the Education I mean to give unto my sons” (fragment), n.d., GEO/ADD/32/1733, RA; M. L. Clarke, “The Education of Royalty in the Eighteenth Century: George IV and William IV,” *British Journal of Educational Studies* 26, no. 1 (February 1978): 73–87.

⁴² “Of Laws relative to Government in general,” GEO/ADD/32/706–912, 1071–77, RA.

⁴³ Wilfrid Prest, *William Blackstone: Law and Letters in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 2008), 316 (quotation), 162–64. For Blackstone, George III was “the most amiable Prince that ever yet filled the British throne”: Blackstone to Lord Shelburne, Aug. 7, 1763, in *The Letters of Sir William Blackstone, 1744–1780*, ed. W. R. Prest (London, 2006), 102–3.

⁴⁴ Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, vols. 1–4.

⁴⁵ P. D. G. Thomas, “‘Thoughts on the British Constitution’ by George III in 1760,” *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 60, no. 143 (October 1987): 361–63; Paul D. Halliday, “Blackstone’s King,” in *Re-interpreting Blackstone’s Commentaries: A Seminal Text in National and International Contexts*, ed. Wilfrid Prest (Oxford, 2014), 169–87.

as “a system of rules, deducible by natural reason, and established by universal consent among the civilized inhabitants of the world; in order to decide all disputes, to regulate all ceremonies and civilities, and to insure the observance of justice and good faith, in that intercourse which must frequently occur between two or more independent states, and the individuals belonging to each.”⁴⁶ The young king probably worked with the copies of Blackstone’s writings held in the growing royal library to make his “Short Abridgment of Mr Blackstone’s Commentaries on the Laws of England.”⁴⁷ In his summary of the chapter in book 1 entitled “Of the King’s Prerogative,” George enumerated what he knew to be his awesome capabilities as monarch: “the sole right of sending and receiving Ambassadors,” “the making treaties, leagues and alliances with Foreign states,” and “the sole right of making Peace and War.”⁴⁸ These were the sovereign capacities George III exercised for fifty years with bureaucratic tenacity and near-complete political consensus behind him until blindness and mental illness finally incapacitated him after 1810.⁴⁹

Montesquieu and Blackstone, then, were George’s teachers on the law of nations in the 1750s and 1760s. From them, he learned that it was an eclectic amalgam of what would later be distinguished as natural and positive law, without any obvious separation between them. As he summarized Blackstone on this point, “The Law of Nations regulates the mutual intercourse between States, it depends entirely on the rules of Natural Law, or on the Treaties between the several Communities.”⁵⁰ The king’s library at Buckingham House reflected this conception: when cataloged in 1769, it contained the classics of the modern law of nations, such as the works of Grotius, Pufendorf, Richard Cumberland, Thomas Rutherforth, Montesquieu, and Blackstone, alongside foundational collections of treaties ranging from Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz’s in the late seventeenth century to the abbé Gabriel Bonnot de Mably’s in the mid-eighteenth century.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, 4: 67.

⁴⁷ George III, “A Short Abridgment of Mr Blackstone’s Commentaries on the Laws of England,” George III Essays, GEO/ADD/32/996–1021, GEO/ADD/32/1042, GEO/ADD/32/1685, GEO/ADD/32/1687–91, RA, presumably taken from the copies of Blackstone’s *Commentaries* now in RL, WC (with George’s royal binding); RCIN 1141576–9, 1765–69 WL 77, Royal Collections Trust (RCT).

⁴⁸ George, Prince of Wales, “Of the King’s Prerogative,” GEO/ADD/32/1016 (quotations), RA, summarizing Blackstone, *Commentaries*, 1: 245–49.

⁴⁹ G. M. Ditchfield, *George III: An Essay in Monarchy* (Basingstoke, 2002), 22.

⁵⁰ “II. On the Nature of Laws in general,” GEO/ADD/32/999 (quotation), RA, summarizing Blackstone, *Commentaries*, Introduction, Sect. 2, “On the Nature of Laws in General,” 1: 38–62.

⁵¹ “A Short Catalogue of His Majesty’s Books in his Town Library 1769,” Add. MS 18847, fols. 171–76, BL; G. G. L. [Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz], *Codex juris gentium diplomaticus . . .*, 2 vols. (Hanover, 1693–1700), BL 121.e.3–4; [Gabriel Bonnot] de Mably, *Le droit public de l’Europe, fondé sur les traités*, 3 vols. (Geneva, 1764), BL 228.a.9–11.

Blackstone had highlighted the fundamental place of treaties in forming domestic institutions and determining foreign relations. For instance, George learned from him that the Court of Admiralty was a treaty-based organization, because admiralty law “being a matter between Subjects of different states, the case must be decided by Treatys, & the Laws of Nations, & not by the Municipal Laws of any one Country.”⁵² George also took early and detailed notes on the existing treaties between Britain and Denmark to determine that the 1670 Anglo-Danish treaty so clearly settled commercial disputes between the two nations “that ’tis unnecessary to recur to the Law of Nations, yet there is no clearer principle of that Law, than that the Goods of an Enemy found in a neutral bottom is a just prize, and that the Goods of a Neutral power in an Enemy’s bottom is an unlawful prize.”⁵³ The context for these notes was the question of neutral shipping during the Seven Years’ War, one of the key disputes deploying the law of nations discussed by William Murray, 1st Earl of Mansfield, and others in the context of the “Rule of the War of 1756” that shaped the debate over neutrality for decades to come.⁵⁴

George had evidently been schooled in the duties of wartime kingship even before he came to the throne: indeed, when news came of his grandfather’s death in October 1760, his very first declaration to the Privy Council as king underlined “His Attachment to His native Country; and His determination to prosecute the just and necessary War in which the country was then engaged, in the manner most likely to bring on an honorable and lasting Peace in concert with his Allies.”⁵⁵ The instrument of that peace would be a “peace” in the other eighteenth-century meaning of the term: a *peace treaty*, in this case the Peace of Paris of 1763.⁵⁶ The young king involved himself deeply in the details of the preliminary peace negotiations in 1761–62—though at one point he confounded the Ganges and the Mississippi, the East Indies and the West Indies—and would look back on his role in making the treaty as a conspicuous triumph.⁵⁷ Twenty years later, he viewed it in the light of the humiliating Peace of Paris that ended

⁵² George, Prince of Wales, “The Court of Admiralty,” in “[Essay on Government],” GEO/ADD/32/973, RA.

⁵³ George, Prince of Wales, notes on Danish trade treaties, [1759], GEO/MAIN/215–16 (quotation, 215), RA.

⁵⁴ For the Anglo-Danish Treaty of 1670, see Richard Pares, *Colonial Blockade and Neutral Rights, 1739–1763* (Oxford, 1938), 176–79; David Lieberman, *The Province of Legislation Determined: Legal Theory in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge, 1989), 112.

⁵⁵ “Memorandum on the Proceedings during the First Days of the Reign of George III October 1760,” Oct. 25, 1760, in *The Correspondence of King George the Third from 1760 to December 1783*, ed. John Fortescue, 6 vols. (London, 1927–28), 1: 18.

⁵⁶ Stella Ghervas, *Conquering Peace: From the Enlightenment to the European Union* (Cambridge, Mass., 2021), 10–11.

⁵⁷ Lewis Namier, *England in the Age of the American Revolution*, 2d ed. (London, 1961), 339.

the American War in 1783: "It is certainly very painful to Me who had the honour to ratify the Peace of Paris in 1763 to be obliged to consent to such terms as the factions Within my Kingdoms not the weight of my Enemies make necessary."⁵⁸ As this painful memory revealed, George was particularly conscious of treaties as marks of his sovereignty and of the manner in which they tracked the global fortunes of his kingdoms in a world of jealously competing states and empires. (His correspondence and other papers reveal surprisingly little interest in those other contemporary treaty-making sovereigns, company-states such as the East India Company.)⁵⁹ He was also vigilant about the commitments Britain took on through its treaties: for example, he was instrumental in ensuring that Britain did not commit to costly and controversial subsidy treaties from 1763 to 1783.⁶⁰ In all these matters related to making war and peace and concluding treaties, a monarch so well-versed in the law of nations exercised fully his constitutional prerogatives.

The contrast between the two Peaces of Paris, in 1763 and 1783, points up a major fault line in the historical memory of George III.⁶¹ His reign saw Britain globally dominant at the end of the Seven Years' War, with the British Empire at its greatest-ever extent in the Americas and South Asia, the Atlantic and the Pacific, and unrivaled among European empires for its worldwide extent after the expulsion of the French from the North American mainland and the acquisition of new territories from Quebec to Bengal. Yet within twenty years, British authority and the British Crown were expelled from half of Britain's colonies in the Americas, and the United States treated for their independence to conclude the American War. George was singularly attached to the honor that went with extensive transatlantic dominions and their burgeoning populations: hence his pride as a treaty maker in 1763, his reluctance to follow suit humbly with the treaty of 1783, and his commitment throughout the American War that the remaining British colonies in North America—Canada, Nova Scotia, and the Floridas—be kept out of any such agreement.⁶²

⁵⁸ George III to Lord Grantham, Oct. 21, 1782, GEO/MAIN/5010, RA; also in Fortescue, *Correspondence of King George the Third*, 6: 147.

⁵⁹ On the importance of trading companies, see Andrew Phillips and J. C. Sharman, *Outsourcing Empire: How Company-States Made the Modern World* (Princeton, N.J., 2020).

⁶⁰ For subsidy treaties, see Jeremy Black, "Parliament and Foreign Policy, 1763–93," *Parliaments, Estates and Representation* 13, no. 2 (1993): 153–71, esp. 155–56; Ditchfield, *George III*, 37, 42.

⁶¹ *The Definitive Treaty of Peace and Friendship, between His Britannick Majesty, the Most Christian King, and the King of Spain. Concluded at Paris, the 10th Day of February, 1763 . . .* (London, 1763), BL 102.h.2; *The Definitive Treaty of Peace and Friendship, between His Britannick Majesty, and the Most Christian King. Signed at Versailles, the 3d of September, 1783* (London, 1783), BL 102.h.3(1).

⁶² See George III to Lord North, Mar. 26, 1778, GEO/MAIN/2859, 1r–iv, RA; also in Fortescue, *Correspondence of King George the Third*, 4: 80–81: "I will never consent that

George had insisted throughout the negotiations for a peace after the American War that granting independence was his red line, and therefore it should be Britain's: to concede that would be to diminish his kingdom and make future relations with his former subjects impossible. In 1778, he concluded, in similar terms, that "to treat with Independence can never be possible."⁶³ He feared the domino effect that would follow the granting of American independence, for example in Ireland and the British Caribbean: accepting the Americans' demand "must annihilate this Empire," he wrote to Frederick North, 2d Earl of Guilford, in 1779.⁶⁴ Even as the final articles of the treaty were being discussed, all George could think about was his own culpability, as he prayed "that Posterity may not lay the downfall of this once respectable Empire at my door."⁶⁵ He annotated the so-called "Red-Line Map," marked up with the territorial changes discussed at the peace negotiations in 1782, with details of the boundaries earlier decided by the Peace of Utrecht in 1713–14, for example in the Great Lakes and the Gulf of Saint Lawrence. The difference between the provisions of the earlier settlements, in 1713 and 1763, and those of the later Peace of Paris starkly revealed to the distressed king the real extent of his amputated empire in North America.⁶⁶ As he wrote, "I owne I flinch whenever I think I may be in the end an instrument of effecting a bad Peace, which to prevent present difficulties may occasion lasting ones to my Country."⁶⁷ When first forced to acknowledge American independence publicly, in a speech before the throne in Parliament on December 5, 1782, George reportedly stumbled and paused over the phrase "declare them *free and*

in any Treaty that may be concluded a single word be mentioned concerning Canada, Nova Scotia, or the Floridas, which are Colonies belonging to this Country, and the more they are kept unlike the other Colonies the better, for it is by them we are to keep a certain awe over the abandoned Colonies, where good Garrisons must be constantly kept."

⁶³ George III to Lord North, Jan. 13, 1778, GEO/MAIN/2750, RA; also in Fortescue, *Correspondence of King George the Third*, 4: 15 ("treat"); compare the memorandum on the state of the nation in regard to American submission and defeat; see "Zero," Jan. 6, 1778, GEO/MAIN/2732–35 (quotation, 2732 2r–v), RA: "a man must be totally unacquainted with the first rudiments of state affairs, who does not know that no sovereign power can enter into a binding or indissoluble agreement with those who are acknowledged to be its subjects".

⁶⁴ George III to Lord North, June 11, 1779, GEO/MAIN/3372, RA; also in Fortescue, *Correspondence of King George the Third*, 4: 351.

⁶⁵ George III to Lord Shelburne, Sept. 16, 1782, GEO/MAIN/4971, RA; also in Fortescue, *Correspondence of King George the Third*, 6: 129.

⁶⁶ For the "red-line map," see [John] Mitchell, *A Map of the British Colonies in North America . . .*, 4th ed., London, 1775, Cartographic Items Maps K. Top. 118.49-b, BL; Matthew H. Edney, "The Mitchell Map, 1755–1782: An Irony of Empire," and "IV: The Mitchell Map in Paris," accessed July 4, 2021, <https://oshermaps.org/special-map-exhibits/the-mitchell-map-1755-1782-an-irony-of-empire/iv-the-mitchell-map-in-paris>.

⁶⁷ George III to Lord Shelburne, Sept. 14, 1782, GEO/MAIN/4966, RA; also in Fortescue, *Correspondence of King George the Third*, 6: 126.

independent States."⁶⁸ The following year, George expressed his relief that he would be away from London when the peace was announced: "I think this compleats the Downfall of the lustre of the Empire; but when Religion and Public Spirit are quite absorbed by Vice and Dissipation, what has now occurred is but the natural consequence."⁶⁹

After finally signing the treaty, George never quite recovered from his losses, which haunted him for as long as he lived and was lucid. Yet he had not shirked the drilling through hard boards that goes into diplomatic negotiations: in the case of the 1783 Peace of Paris, from its preliminary and provisional versions to its final ratification, he haggled over every detail, as he would a few years later with regard to the short-lived Peace of Amiens, for instance. In his capacity as Elector of Hanover, he had also joined in establishing the treaty-based *Fürstenbund*, or "League of Princes" of the Holy Roman Empire, designed to check the ambitions of the Austrian emperor, Joseph II, in 1785.⁷⁰ The following year, George sent three of his younger sons—Princes Augustus Frederick, Ernest Augustus, and Adolphus—to the University of Göttingen in Hanover, where they studied the law of nations with the great German jurist Georg Friedrich von Martens.⁷¹ Far from the Jeffersonian myth of George III as inimical to the law of nations, or from images of the "mad king" mentally incapable of shouldering his duties, George appears instead from his correspondence, his reading, his program of princely education, and his collecting practices to be among the most assiduous and effective sovereign students of the law of nations in the latter part of the eighteenth century.

FOR HALF A CENTURY, George III read diligently, wrote indefatigably, and collected books systematically. Indeed, by the latter part of his life, the king was spending a fifth of his annual income on books to stock the royal libraries at Buckingham House (later Palace), Windsor Castle, Richmond, Kew, and Weymouth.⁷² Nonetheless, he still fell behind intellectually. Despite his early sympathetic, even avant-garde, engagement with

⁶⁸ Elkanah Watson, *Men and Times of the Revolution; or, Memoirs of Elkanah Watson . . .*, ed. Winslow C. Watson (New York, 1857), 204–5 (quotation, 204), quoted in Richard B. Morris, *The Peacemakers: The Great Powers and American Independence* (New York, 1965), 411–12 (quotation, 412).

⁶⁹ George III to Lord North, Sept. 7, 1783, GEO/MAIN/5617, RA; also in Fortescue, *Correspondence of King George III*, 6: 443–44 (quotation).

⁷⁰ Morris, *Peacemakers*. For the *Fürstenbund*, see T. C. W. Blanning, "'That Horrid Electorate' or 'Ma Patrie Germanique'? George III, Hanover, and the *Fürstenbund* of 1785," *Historical Journal* 22, no. 2 (1977): 311–44.

⁷¹ Martti Koskenniemi, *To the Uttermost Parts of the Earth: Legal Imagination and International Power, 1300–1870* (Cambridge, 2021), 931.

⁷² John Brooke, "The Library of King George III," *Yale University Library Gazette* 52, no. 1 (July 1977): 33–45, esp. 39.

antislavery thought, his consistent attachment to property rights and belief in the true sources of his empire's prosperity led him to set his face against any reform of the slave trade on the grounds of what he called "false phylanthropy," let alone any legislative interference with the institution of slavery anywhere in his dominions.⁷³ The next generation of the royal family reflected George's two faces, old and young. His son William, Duke of Clarence (later King William IV), allied with anti-abolitionists in the House of Lords and gave his maiden speech there against the cause in 1799. By contrast, the king's nephew William Frederick, Duke of Gloucester, supported the antislavery movement and in 1808 received a notable memorandum from the abolitionist Liverpool merchant William Roscoe written largely in the language of the law of nations.⁷⁴ And although there is no direct evidence for Queen Charlotte's sympathy for abolitionism, her personal library did contain antislavery writings by Anthony Benezet, Benjamin-Sigismond Frossard, Beilby Porteus, James Ramsay, and Granville Sharp, as well as Sir William Blackstone's *Commentaries*, multiple editions of Montesquieu, and other works on the law of nations. Queen Charlotte was also an early reader of the Jamaica slaveholder Bryan Edwards's *History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies* (1793).⁷⁵

Youthful modernizers can appear old-fashioned, even reactionary, if they fail to catch successive waves of change. In just this way, George did not keep up with the evolution of the law of nations, even among his own subjects. For example, it was during the American War that Blackstone's great intellectual adversary, the philosopher and lawyer Jeremy Bentham, coined a new term in 1780 describing "that branch of jurisprudence"

⁷³ George III to Lord Camden, May 1, 1804, in Aspinall, *Later Correspondence of George III*, 4: 322. On George's reported later resistance to abolitionism, see Lord Liverpool to the Duke of Clarence, July 10, 1799, Add. MS 38416, fol. 312, BL; Roger Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition, 1760–1810* (London, 1975), 304–6; Ditchfield, *George III*, 136–37; Jeremy Black, *George III: Majesty and Madness* (London, 2020), 94–95.

⁷⁴ *Substance of the Speech of His Royal Highness the Duke of Clarence, in the House of Lords, on the Motion for the Recommitment of the Slave Trade Limitation Bill, on the Fifth Day of July, 1799 . . .* (London, 1799); William Roscoe, "Copy of a Letter from Mr. William Roscoe to His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester on the Abolition of the Slave Trade," [1808], GEO/ADD/23/87, RA; more generally, see Suzanne Schwarz, "The Georgian Papers Programme: Slave Trade, Slavery and Abolition in the Royal Archives, c. 1785–1810," Georgian Papers Programme online, accessed July 4, 2021, <https://georgianpapers.com/2017/01/23/georgian-papers-programme-slave-trade-slavery-abolition-royal-archives-c-1785-1810/>; Brooke Newman, "Throne of Blood," *Slate*, June 20, 2020, accessed July 4, 2021, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2020/07/british-royal-family-slavery-reparations.html>.

⁷⁵ *A Catalogue of the Genuine Library, Prints, and Books of Prints, of an Illustrious Personage*, 27, 134, 100; Diary of Queen Charlotte (Mar. 17, 1794), GEO/ADD/43/3b/17v, RA; Bryan Edwards, *The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies. In Two Volumes* (London, 1793).

covering “the mutual transactions between sovereigns as such” and devoid of any trace of natural law: “*international law*.”⁷⁶ In this sense, international law—the truly modern term for what had, since the Romans, been called the law of nations—was a literally Georgian invention. Yet it was not one the king ever adopted; nor was it likely he was even aware of it because successive royal librarians collected almost none of Bentham’s works and certainly not the *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1780/89) that contained his neologism.⁷⁷ They also did not pick up two other contemporary English works now taken to be canonical in the late eighteenth-century development of the subject, Robert Ward’s *Enquiry into the Foundation and History of the Law of Nations* (1795) or Sir James Mackintosh’s *Discourse on the Study of the Law of Nature and Nations* (1799).⁷⁸ And even though George’s librarians were generally effective in keeping track of Continental publications and the European book trade, a work now considered pivotal for the period, Immanuel Kant’s *Zum ewigen Frieden* (1795), either in German or its swift translation into English, does not seem to have joined the ranks of books on “Jurisprudentia” or “Philosophia” they assembled for him and ultimately for the nation.⁷⁹ In fundamental ways, then, George III’s vision of the law of nations remained a product of the Montesquieuean moment of the 1750s and 1760s, and of the Blackstonian bubble in which he had been originally cultivated, even though that vision was deepened by experience, especially with regard to negotiating treaties.

George learned over his long life that the law of nations formed a global language for conversations among far-flung sovereigns, not just

⁷⁶ Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, ed. J. H. Burns and H. L. A. Hart (Oxford, 1996), 6 (“*international law*”), 296 (“branch”); Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation. Printed in the Year 1780, and Now First Published* (London, 1789); Hidemi Suganami, “A Note on the Origin of the Word ‘International,’” *British Journal of International Studies* 4, no. 3 (October 1978): 226–32.

⁷⁷ The sole exception is Jeremy Bentham, *A View of the Hard-Labour Bill*. . . . (London, 1778), BL 104.n.25.

⁷⁸ Ward, *An Enquiry into the Foundation and History of the Law of Nations*; James Mackintosh, *A Discourse on the Study of the Law of Nature and Nations*. . . . (London, 1799); Jennifer Pitts, *Boundaries of the International: Law and Empire* (Cambridge, Mass., 2018), 124–31.

⁷⁹ Immanuel Kant, *Zum ewigen Frieden: Ein philosophischer Entwurf* (Königsberg, 1795); Immanuel Kant, *Project for a Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Essay*, trans. from German (London, 1796). See “Jurisprudentia” and “Philosophia,” in “A Catalogue of His Majesty’s Library at Windsor, 1780,” RCIN 1028949, fols. 76–79, 80–89, RL, WC; “A Catalogue of His Majesty’s Library at Kew, c. 1780,” RCIN 1028954, fols. 27–28, 28–33, RL, WC; “A Catalogue of His Majesty’s Library at Kew 1785, Removed to the Pavilion, Brighton, with Additions, 1822,” RCIN 1028953, fols. 28–29, 30–35, RL, WC. Although Queen Charlotte’s first language was German, there were also no works by Kant in her library.

within Europe but between European monarchs and their peers around the world. Of course, the diffusion of practices such as diplomatic missions, gift exchanges, and treaties did not necessarily guarantee that mutual intelligibility would entail either commensurability or reciprocity.⁸⁰ The most notorious case of misunderstanding was George's embassy to the Qianlong Emperor, led by Lord George Macartney in 1793. The standard narrative of this encounter—which allegedly failed due to Macartney's unwillingness to kowtow to the emperor—has been shown to be a much later and quite partial reading of the available documentation in the early twentieth century, as well as a casualty of ineffective translation between languages and diplomatic cultures.⁸¹

Monarchical exchanges under the law of nations could also collapse under the tyranny of distance and disequilibrium of authority. For example, one of the last diplomatic letters George received—though it is almost certain he did not actually read it—was a communication from another monarch concerning a pressing matter under the law of nations: neutrality during wartime. This came from George's near contemporary, King Kamehameha I of Hawai'i (ca. 1758–1819). Kamehameha presented himself in correspondence as the brother and loyal servant of George III, and he acted as a devoted admirer of his monarchical inspiration across the ocean. In March 1810, Kamehameha wrote to George self-consciously as an equal, sovereign to sovereign. He reported his regret at hearing George was at war with so many powers and that he was too far away to offer assistance. His main concern, though, was the overspill of European conflict should any of Britain's enemies molest the Hawaiian kingdom. "I shall expect your protection," Kamehameha asserted, rather than requested, "and beg you will order your Ships of War & Privateers not to Capture any vessel . . . laying at Anchor in our Harbours, as I would thank you to make ours [Honolulu] a neutral port as I have not the means of defence." In the preceding years, the Hawaiian monarch reported, he had constructed a mighty fleet following European ship designs. To protect his navy, "having no English Colours," he asked George for British flags, cannon, and documents of registration for the ships to show they were under British security.⁸² Kamehameha sealed the exchange with a prestigious gift: a

⁸⁰ See Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Courty Encounters: Translating Courtliness and Violence in Early Modern Eurasia* (Cambridge, Mass., 2012).

⁸¹ Henrietta Harrison, "The Qianlong Emperor's Letter to George III and the Early-Twentieth-Century Origins of Ideas about Traditional China's Foreign Relations," *American Historical Review* 122, no. 3 (2017): 680–701; Hui Wang, "Translation between Two Imperial Discourses: Metamorphosis of King George III's Letters to the Qianlong Emperor," *Translation Studies* 13, no. 3 (2020): 318–32.

⁸² King of the Sandwich Islands (Kamehameha I) to George III, Mar. 3, 1810, GEO/MAIN/14996, RA; also in Aspinall, *Later Correspondence of George III*, 5: 531–32 (quotations, 531); Rhoda E. A. Hackler, "Alliance or Cession? Missing Letter from

magnificent feather cloak (*‘ahu‘ula*) that remains at Windsor Castle in the Royal Collection today.⁸³

Like George, Kamehameha was a monarch who ruled over an empire among empires, in his case a Hawaiian empire menaced by the Americans and the Russians, under British protection yet not part of George’s British Empire. By the time he wrote to George III in March 1810, Kamehameha was monarch over three united kingdoms—Hawai‘i, Maui, and O‘ahu—which he had consolidated under his rule; in the same decade, George had joined his three insular kingdoms into the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland (as it was called after the Act of Union of 1801). Beyond his majestic self-presentation, King Kamehameha joined King George in speaking the contemporary language of the law of nations, a language of “protection,” “neutral port[s],” flags of convenience, and shipping registration. In this regard, he too was a self-conscious example of global modernity in an age of revolutions and counterrevolutions.⁸⁴

Kamehameha’s letter of March 1810 was the belated sequel to an exchange that had taken place when Captain George Vancouver had visited Hawai‘i in 1794: Kamehameha understood their agreement as bringing him a small ship in return for an expression of loyalty to George III. As he recalled later in August 1810, the Sandwich Islands were “subject to His Most Gracious Majesty” but still within a relationship of sovereign equality.⁸⁵ If George III was aware of any of this as he descended into his final and most debilitating illness, we have no evidence of it. Kamehameha received a reply from Robert Jenkinson, 2d Earl of Liverpool, in 1812 but without any of the items he had requested from his fellow monarch: no flags, no cannon, no ships’ registration.⁸⁶ Three years later, in 1815, he was still asking a visiting British captain whether “King Georgey would send him a Vessel, that he might visit his Islands in.”⁸⁷

Kamehameha I to King George III of England Casts Light on 1794 Agreement,” *Hawaiian Journal of History* 20 (1986): 1–12.

⁸³ Hawaiian cloak (*‘ahu‘ula*) (ca. 1800–12), RCIN 69996, RCT, WC.

⁸⁴ Kamehameha I to George III, Mar. 3, 1810, GEO/MAIN/14996, RA; also see Aspinall, *Later Correspondence of George III*, 5: 531; Christine Skwiot, “To ‘Live like King George’ in Hawai‘i and the United States: Entangled Exceptionalisms and Sovereignty Struggles in an Age of Revolutions, 1776–1819,” *World History Connected* 15, no. 2 (June 2018), accessed July 4, 2021, https://worldhistoryconnected.press.uillinois.edu/15.2/forum_skwiot.html.

⁸⁵ Kamaah Amaah [Kamehameha I] to George III, Aug. 6, 1810, quoted in Hackler, *Hawaiian Journal of History* 20: 9.

⁸⁶ Frances Jackson, “The *Duke of Portland*, the *Traveller*, and the *Prince Regent*: Three Little-Known Vessels from Australia,” *Hawaiian Journal of History* 26 (1992): 45–54, esp. 45–48.

⁸⁷ Captain T. T. Tucker to John Wilson Croker, June 28, 1815, in Frederick Watson, ed., *Historical Records of Australia. Series I. Governors’ Despatches to and from England. Volume VIII, July, 1813–December, 1815* (Sydney, 1916), 625 (“King Georgey”).

Hawai'i was never a British possession or part of the British Empire, but Britain considered the island monarchy to be under its protection well into the nineteenth century: it was only after the U.S. invasion of 1898 that the Hawaiian flag was lowered over the 'Iolani Palace.⁸⁸ In light of the synchronous formation of the two archipelagic triple kingdoms, it is perhaps appropriate that the symbolic relationship between the Hawaiian and the Hanoverian monarchies persists to this day in the quartering of Hawai'i's flag with the British Union flag. This makes the island state the only territory outside the British Commonwealth to sport that emblem—a visible legacy of the modernizing moment of two Georgian monarchies. In the first age of global imperialism, monarchy was not the antithesis of modernity, but often its agent and its vehicle. Mutual admiration and intercultural surveillance fueled synchronicity, as the mobilizing effects of monarchy proved to be globally intelligible not least through a common language of the law of nations. Indeed, in stark contrast to George's later reputation, contemporary currents of what might be called Georgian globalization rendered him the very model of a modern monarch for other kings, emperors, and even presidents across the globe.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Merze Tate, "Great Britain and the Sovereignty of Hawaii," *Pacific Historical Review* 31, no. 4 (November 1962): 327–48.

⁸⁹ C. A. Bayly, "The First Age of Global Imperialism, c. 1760–1830," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 26, no. 2 (1998): 28–47; Skwiot, *World History Connected* 15; Sivasundaram, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 30: 77–96.

Appendix
George, Prince of Wales, “Of Laws relative to the Nature of Climates”
 (ca. 1755–58)[†]

[869]¹-Of Laws relative to the Nature of Climates¹

Besides the Laws we have hitherto trac'd relative to the nature of Governments we shall find upon examination that there are some of a kind independant of Government, but that have at the same time so strong an influence over a Nation that the Legislative must in some measure be directed by them; climate & soil afford strong instances of this assertion, nothing is more certain than that the natural disposition of the body is affected by Climate, that the tempers & Characters of different Nations are strongly influenc'd by it, the Laws therefore should conform to the Climate in indifferent things, & correct the effect of it in others; ²thus the Law prohibiting the use of Wine in Countrys where it has noxious qualities,² those which encourage Work & industry where the intense heat inclines Men to idleness & inactivity, are excellent; but of all the effects of air & Climate none appear so singular as that of Slavery in all the warmer Countrys; it will be worth while to examine this thoroughly, both in the Civil & Political light.

[870] The almost <universal> establishment of Civil Slavery in the hot regions of Asia, Africa, & america, & the abhorrence of it under the more temperate Zones is apparent to every one, but yet have <the causes of it have been> hitherto little examined.

³Slavery in general seems to be the right which one man acquires over the rights & fortune of another; this state is in its own nature bad, & obnoxious both to the Master & to the servant, to the first from the unlimited Authority he enjoys, which gradually accustoms him to Voluptuousness, Anger, severity cruelty, & a savage ferocity, all which by degrees deprive him of every moral Virtue,³ while the unhappy slave is from other causes under as miserable a situation, since he has it not in his power to do any one thing through a motive of Virtue.

⁴In Despotic Countrys a slave & subject are nearly on a par, but in Monarchys a manly spirit should ever be supported which cannot be under

[†] “Of Laws relative to the Nature of Climates,” GEO/ADD/32/869–78, Royal Archives, Windsor Castle, reproduced with permission of Her Majesty the Queen. All notes are the editor's, indicating the source of passages (marked in the text by superscript numbers); italicized numbers in the text within square brackets identify the pages of the manuscript. Angle brackets indicate George's additions to the text.

¹⁻¹ Charles-Louis de Secondat, baron de Montesquieu, *De l'esprit des loix . . .*, 3 vols. (London, 1751), 2: 1 (bk. 14, “Des Loix dans le rapport qu'elles ont avec la nature du climat”).

²⁻² *Ibid.*, 2: 18–19 (bk. 14, chap. 10).

³⁻³ *Ibid.*, 2: 31 (bk. 15, “Comment les Loix de l'esclavage civil ont du rapport avec la nature du climat,” chap. 1).

the Weight of Chains, & in Republics 'tis directly contrary to the Nature of the constitution, whose ruling principle is equality;⁴ The Roman

[871]⁵The Roman Civilians have found out pity to be the origin of slavery, & this three different ways; first Prisoners of War made slaves say they preserve their lives that were forfeited by the Laws of Nations; secondly debtors ill treated by their Creditors were permitted to extricate themselves <by the Civil Law to avoid their> Creditors by selling their Liberty; thirdly they affirm'd that the Children of slaves are by the Law of Nature subject to the same state with their Fathers; but all this reasoning is false, War does not justify killing prisoners, the sole right acquir'd by the Conqueror is to secure the person of the Conquer'd, & prevent him from doing harm, the murdering of Prisoners in cold blood is held in abhorrence by all Nations; as to the second case if a free Man cannot kill himself least he rob the country of his Person, how much stronger does it not hold with regard to the giving up his freedom; public Liberty consists in the Liberty of every private Citizen, which in the Roman state was really part of the sovereignty, for a Roman to sell his Citizenship is scarcely possible to be conceiv'd, nor can the Civil Law [872] that authorizes the division of goods among Men, rank without the greatest absurdity amongst those goods a part of the Men who were to make this division; if these remarks are true the third case cannot exist; for in denying the possibility of the Parents being slaves, we prevent entirely the question relating to the Children.

A Malefactor may be put to death Lawfully because the very Law by which he is punish'd, was made for his security, the benefit of which he himself enjoy'd before he enfring'd it, not so the slave, the Law of slavery can never be beneficial to him, & is therefore contrary to the fundamental principles of all society,

It has been said that a person rearing a poor helpless Infant acquires a dominion over him, but this can only hold while it is incapable or [*sic*] earning its own livelyhood; infants are first supported at the breast, from their leaving off that aliement to the age they may be fit for service in so short a space that he who supports them during that interval can never be said to give them a just equivalent for their freedom.

[873] Slavery is equally repugnant to the Civil Law as to the Law of Nature; a Slave is no Member of Society, he cannot therefore be restrain'd by Laws in which [he] has no interest, from attempting to procure Liberty by flight; the legal authority of the Master only can prevent him.⁵

⁶The pretexts us'd by the Spaniards for enslaving the New World were extrem'ly curious; the propagation of the Christian Religion was the first reason⁶, the next was the Americans differing from them in colour, manners & Customs, all which are too absurd to take the trouble of refuting.

⁴⁻⁴ Ibid., 2: 32 (bk. 15, chap. 1).

⁵⁻⁵ Ibid., 2: 33–36 (bk. 15, chap. 2).

⁶⁻⁶ Ibid., 2: 37 (bk. 15, chap. 4).

But what shall we say to the European traffic of Black slaves, the very reasons urg'd for it will be perhaps sufficient to make us hold this practice in execration; ⁷such are the impossibility of cultivating the American Colonys without them, or if that is not quite the case, the produce of these Colonys as Sugar, Indigo, Tobacco &c. would be too dear, besides the Africans are black, woolly headed with monstrous features, nor have they common sense as they prefer a piece of glass to gold;⁷ such are the arguments [874] for an inhuman Custom wantonly practic'd by the most enlightened Polite Nations in the World; there is no occasion to answer them, for they stand self condemn'd.

⁸Whence then shall we deduce the true origin of the right of slavery; it must be founded in the nature of things, & if so some cases exist to show that foundation; one readily occurs deriv'd from the free choice a person makes of a Master for his own benefit, which forms a mutual convention between the two partys, thus in all Despotic Countrys people make no difficulty of selling themselves; political slavery making the loss of Civil Liberty extrem'ly easy; thus the Muscovites whose Liberty is not worth keeping sell themselves continually; thus the principle Merchants at Achim barter their freedom for the protection of some great Lord, & indeed in all these reched Governments, freemen have no better resource than that of becoming slaves to tyrants in Office.⁸

⁹There is another origin of slavery reconcileable to reason which subsists in Countrys [875] where excessive heat enervates the body, & creates such indolence that nothing but the fear of chastisement can oblige Men to any Laborious duty; this comes the nearest to what some call natural slavery;⁹ but ¹⁰suppose it admitted in its full force, it is still limited to particular parts of the Globe, for in all others no labour is so severe but free. People may be found to undergo it, & in real truth there is no climate on the Earth where with proper encouragement the most painful drudgery may not be exercis'd without Slaves; but in some unhappy Countrys the Laws produce indolence & inaction, which very situation of mind & body never fails to give birth to or encourage Slavery.¹⁰

Let this suffice with regard to Natural Slavery; let us next examine ¹¹the relation between <the> Climate & Political slavery between the Political kind of it & Slavery.¹¹

¹²We have already observ'd great heat enervates Men's bodys, & effeminates the mind; but that a colder air gives universal vigour¹² [876]¹³ let

⁷⁻⁷ Ibid., 2: 39 (bk. 15, chap. 5).

⁸⁻⁸ Ibid., 2: 40-41 (bk. 15, chap. 6).

⁹⁻⁹ Ibid., 2: 42 (bk. 15, chap. 7).

¹⁰⁻¹⁰ Ibid., 2: 43-45 (bk. 15, chap. 8).

¹¹⁻¹¹ Ibid., 2: 93 (bk. 17, "Comment les Loix de la Servitude Politique, ont du rapport avec la nature du climat," chap. 1).

¹²⁻¹² Ibid., 2: 93-94 (bk. 17, chap. 2).

trouble of refuting. 296.
 But what shall we say to the
 European traffic of Black Slaves,
 the very reasons urged for it will
 be perhaps sufficient to make
 us hold this practice in execration;
 such are the impossibility of
 cultivating the American Colonys
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 these Colonys as Sugar, Indigo,
 Tobacco &c. would be too dear,
 besides the Africans are black,
 woolly headed with monstrous
 features, nor have they common
 sense as they prefer a piece of
 glass to gold; such are the arguments

FIGURE I

George, Prince of Wales, "Of Laws relative to the Nature of Climates," Royal Archives, Windsor Castle, GEO/ADD/32/873. Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2021.

us apply this to the known parts of the Globe & we shall find that Asia has properly no temperate Zone; for in Turkey, Persia, India, China &c. the transition [*sic*] is immediate from a hot to a cold climate, whereas in Europe the temperate Zone is extensive, & tho reigning over very different Climates, the difference of heat to cold as we travel from South to North, is insensible, so that the Air of each Country nearly resembles that of the one joining to it; from their situation it should & actually does happen that in Asia, the strong Nations are oppos'd to the weak, the

Warlike, brave, & active, border immediately on the timorous indolent & effeminate, the first form'd to conquer, the latter to be conquer'd; but in Europe the strong are oppos'd to the strong, & the contiguous Nations have nearly the same degree of courage;¹³ we say nearly because even under this temperate Zone the martial spirit is more observable in the Inhabitants of baren Mountains, than in those that cultivate the more fertile plains, tho perhaps a few Miles only [877] seperate them, but to return this state of things makes ¹⁴Asia weak, & Europe formidable, fixes Slavery in the first, & makes it impossible for Liberty to encrease, but disperses freedom to the last, & that more or less according to particular circumstances¹⁴ for however it may appear lost for a while as in Russia, Denmark &c. the Climate will operate, & bring it back again under happier Auspices.

¹⁵History will abundantly prove the Theory we have laid down, the greatest part of upper Asia has been subdu'd thirteen times thrice in the early ages by the Scythians, then by the Medes follow'd by the Persians, afterwards by the Greeks, the Romans, Arabs, Moguls, Turks, Tartars, Persians, & Asghans; Europe on the contrary has afforded but four great changes, the Roman Conquest, the irruption of the Northern Nations, the Empire of Charlemagne & the Norman Invasion,¹⁵ but ¹⁶how different were these from the Asiatic conquests; the Europeans breath'd Liberty, conquer'd like free men, & impart'd more or less that invaluable blessing to those they vanquish'd [878] while the Eastern Nations bread up in Slavery, conquer'd like Slaves subduing others to reduce them under the same heavy Yoke with themselves;¹⁶

¹⁷Africa enjoys the same sultry climate & the same servile fetters with Asia.

America has been so destroy'd by the Europeans that it becomes very difficult to get at the true genius of the Inhabitants; but the little we can discover of it appears to suit our principle,¹⁷ ¹⁸the petty Nations there that Inhabit the Mountains call'd Bravos by the Spaniards maintain their Liberty to this day, while the mighty Empires of Peru & Mexico exist only in the Histories of that proud inhuman people's conquest¹⁸

¹³⁻¹³ Ibid., 2: 98-99 (bk. 17, chap. 3).

¹⁴⁻¹⁴ Ibid., 2: 99 (bk. 17, chap. 3).

¹⁵⁻¹⁵ Ibid., 2: 100-101 (bk. 17, chap. 4).

¹⁶⁻¹⁶ Ibid., 2: 101 (bk. 17, chap. 5).

¹⁷⁻¹⁷ Ibid., 2: 106 (bk. 17, chap. 7).

¹⁸⁻¹⁸ Ibid., 2: 106n (bk. 17, chap. 7).