Britishness, Clubbability, and the Colonial Public Sphere: The Genealogy of an Imperial Institution in Colonial India

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The ubiquity of the European social club in the European empires in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has been widely recognized in both popular and academic writings on European, and particularly British, imperialism.[1] The "European" ascription of imperial social clubs derived from their predominantly whites-only membership policy in which all elite Europeans, whatever their nationalities, were potentially included.[2] Although each individual club often catered to a very different and distinctive clientele among elite Europeans in the empire, the "clubland" as a whole served as a common ground where elite Europeans could meet as members, or as guests of members, of individual clubs. These clubs, it has been argued, represented an oasis of European culture in the colonies, functioning to reproduce the comfort and familiarity of "home" for Europeans living in an alien land. The popular narrative of the club, as is evident from the account by the official historian of the Bengal Club, one of the oldest social clubs in India, easily oscillated between an understanding of the club as a broadly European cultural institution and as a specifically British one. Either way, the cultural val-

[1] The focus of this article, for reasons that will be obvious, is on the "gentleman's clubs" as opposed to the far more numerous "working men's clubs" in Britain and their counterparts in the empire. The emphasis here, moreover, is on social clubs as opposed to clubs that were formed for specific purposes such as the numerous "sporting clubs."

[2] During the outbreak of war, however, some of the clubs in India, as in Britain, imposed certain restrictions on members from enemy countries. The Bengal Club, like the Oriental Club in London, put a ban on Europeans of German or Austrian descent in 1916; see Club Committee Meeting, 27 June 1916, *Committee Proceedings of the Bengal Club, 1906–1919*, Bengal Club Archives, Calcutta, India (BCA).

ues that it represented were understood as transplanted to the colonies: "It is the practice of European peoples to reproduce as far as possible in their settlements and colonies in other continents the characteristic social features of their natural lives. . . . For more than a century no institution has been more *peculiarly British* than the social club."[3]

Scores of British memoirs about India further testify to the centrality of the club in the lives of the British in India. As Leonard Woolf has noted, the club, indeed, was "the centre and symbol of British imperialism . . . with its cult of exclusiveness, superiority and isolation."[4] That these often racially exclusive institutions were equally the objects of "native" desire and resentment has also been widely recognized. Thus George Orwell in *Burmese Days* wrote of this forbidden colonial fruit that "in any town in India the European Club is the spiritual citadel, the real seat of British power; the Nirvana for which native officials and millionaires pine in vain."[5] The imperialist British historian, Valentine Chirol, went even further in reducing the cause of the "Indian Unrest" in the early decades of the twentieth century to the racial exclusivity of the social clubs in India. "A question which causes a good deal of soreness," he wrote, "is the rigid exclusion of Indians from many Anglo Indian [British] clubs."[6] Such exclusivity, as a dimension of "the clubbable," has inevitably been at the center of any discussion of the clubs in the empire.

Yet this popular mythology of the club—constructed around its metropolitan origins and its role as a symbol of racial exclusivity—has tended to obscure the club's more complex function as an imperial institution. The role of clubland in reproducing a rigidly exclusive "Britishness" in the colonies has been considered so self-evident as to preclude any systematic exploration of its actual imbrication in the ideologies and practices of imperial rule.[7] Although the contemporary

[3] H. R. Panckridge, *A Short History of the Bengal Club, 1827–1927* (Calcutta, 1927), p. 1, emphasis added.

[4] Quoted in Roland Hunt and John Harrison, *The District Officer in India, 1930–1947* (London, 1980), pp. 127–28.

[5] Quoted in Charles Allen, ed., *Plain Tales from the Raj: Images of British India in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1976), p. 99.

[6] See Valentine Chirol, *Indian Unrest* (1910; reprint, New Delhi, 1979), p. 290. There was even a popular myth among the British that Motilal Nehru, the famous member of the Congress, had turned against British rule because he had been "blackballed" at the Allahabad Club. This myth was successfully challenged by his son; see Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography* (1937; reprint, New Delhi, 1988), pp. 287–88. I have retained the popular nineteenth-century usage of the term "Anglo Indian" to refer to the British in India. It was only later in the twentieth century that the term came to signify an individual of "mixed" British and Indian parentage.

[7] There has been little serious scholarship on the clubs despite the recent proliferation of work on "imperial culture." Paul J. Rich's, *Chains of Empire: English Public Schools,*

trend in imperial historiography of blurring the analytical separation be-
tween "home" and "away," or between metropole and colony, offers
a useful starting point for reappraising the genealogy of the club as an
imperial institution, it too ultimately falls short in this respect.[8] While
eliding the boundaries between the "domestic" and the "imperial" in
order to defamiliarize the domestic has certainly brought the empire back
home to Britain, it has also run the risk of domesticating the empire: the
empire itself is thus often reduced merely to a site from which to interro-
gate the metropole.[9] The real challenge of bringing the metropole and
the colony together within an "imperial social formation,"[10] however,
is to recognize simultaneously the specificities of their separate imperial
locations. When the colonial context of the European social club is thus
foregrounded, its efficacy as an imperial institution has less to do with
metropolitan history—however expanded to accommodate the constitu-
tive impact of empire—than with the practices of imperial rule in the
colony.

    The European social clubs in India, as self-governing voluntary as-
sociations, are better understood in the context of a distinctive "colonial
public sphere." The colonial public sphere needs to be distinguished

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Masonic Cabalism, Historical Causality and Imperial Clubdom (London, 1991) remains
one of the few books to engage with the implications of clubland in the empire. Also see
Wai Kwan Chan, *The Making of Hong Kong Society: Three Studies of Class Formation in
Early Hong Kong* (New York, 1991), pp. 38–40.

    [8] See Ann Stoler and Frederick Cooper, "Introduction" in *Tensions of Empire: Colo-
nial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley, Calif., 1997). John Mackenzie, as editor
of the pioneering Studies in Imperialism series published by Manchester University Press,
helped to lay the groundwork for this shift in contemporary imperial historiography. Ed-
ward Said's *Orientalism* (New York, 1978), however, is widely credited for having inau-
gurated many of the recent trends in the new interdisciplinary scholarship on imperialism.
For some recent books that trace the impact of empire on domestic British history, see
Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women and Imperial
Culture, 1865–1915* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1994); Laura Tabili, *"We Ask for British Jus-
tice": Workers and Racial Difference in Late Imperial Britain* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1994); Annie
Coombes, *Reinventing Africa: Museums, Material Culture, and Popular Imagination in
Victorian and Edwardian Britain* (New Haven, Conn., 1994); and Anne McClintock, *Im-
perial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York, 1995).
For a discussion of this trend in imperial historiography, see Mrinalini Sinha, "Britain
and the Empire: Toward a New Agenda for Imperial History," *Radical History Review*
72 (Fall 1998): 163–74.

    [9] I owe this cautionary note about the "domestication" of empire to Lata Mani and
Ruth Frankenburg, "Crosscurrents, Crosstalk: Race, 'Postcoloniality' and the Politics of
Location," *Cultural Studies* 7, no. 2 (1993): 292–310; and Susan O'Brien, "The Place
of America in an Era of Postcolonial Imperialism," *Ariel* 29, no. 2 (April 1998): 159–
83.

    [10] For the heuristic model of the "imperial social formation," see Mrinalini Sinha,
*Colonial Masculinity: The "Manly Englishman" and the "Effeminate Bengali" in the
Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester, 1995), and "Teaching Imperialism as a Social For-
mation," *Radical History Review* 67 (Winter 1997): 175–86.

from both the classical bourgeois public sphere studied by Jürgen Habermas in the metropolitan European context and the emergent colonial Indian "publics" studied more recently by scholars of South Asia.[11] The European social club was a unique institution of colonial civil society that functioned in an intermediate zone between both metropolitan and indigenous public spheres. It is as such that the European social club served as the privileged vehicle for "Eurocentrism" in the historically specific sense of Samir Amin's revisionary definition of that phenomenon.[12] The historical specificity of Eurocentrism, so defined—as also of the particular conception of modern colonialism as a civilizing mission— refers to the tension that arises out of, on the one hand, the idea of modern Europe as unique and exceptional, the end product of developments supposedly solely internal to Europe, and, on the other, the idea of the universality and the generalizability of the European experience, the possibility for the endless replication of European modernity in other far-off lands. The imperial efficacy of the club as a central institution of the colonial public sphere, and the resulting concept of "clubbablity," lay precisely in their operation within such a "Eurocentric" logic: that is to say, they simultaneously marked the colonizer as uniquely "clubbable" and recognized the potential clubbability of the colonized. This dual investment of the colonial clubs is often elided even in such pioneering accounts of "imperial clubdom" as Paul Rich's *Chains of Empire,* which take the "Europeaness" of these clubs as self-evident.[13] Likewise, the neglect of the clubs from accounts of emergent indigenous publics in colonial South Asia misses the opportunity to explore the particular dynamics of a "colonial" public sphere.[14]

    Although the club was the premier institution for reproducing Euro-

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[11] My thinking about a distinctively "colonial public sphere" draws, of course, from the analysis of the classic bourgeois public sphere in the work of Jürgen Habermas; see his *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society,* trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, Mass., 1991); originally published in Berlin in 1962. See also Craig Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Boston, 1992). For the literature on "the public" in colonial India, see the editor's introduction and the essays in Sandra B. Freitag, ed., special issue on the "public," *South Asia,* 14, no. 1 (1991), esp. 1–13; also see Tanika Sarkar, "Talking about Scandals: Religion, Law and Love in Late Nineteenth Century Bengal," *Studies in History* 1, no. 1 (1997): 63–95.

[12] Samir Amin, *Eurocentrism* (New York, 1989). Also see Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (London, 1994).

[13] See Rich, *Chains of Empire.*

[14] While Christopher Bayly calls for reintegrating the British and Britain into studies of South Asia, I argue for an emphasis on the specifically "colonial" dimension—neither entirely British nor Indian—of public life under the Raj. See Christopher A. Bayly, "Returning the British to South Asian History: The Limits of Colonial Hegemony," *South Asia* 17, no. 2 (1994): 1–25.

pean sociability in colonial India, it was perforce vulnerable to the tensions and contradictions of inscribing a specifically "Eurocentric" logic in a colonial public space. What marks the European social club in India as a quintessentially imperial institution, therefore, is neither its origin as a metropolitan extension nor its representation as an island of exclusive "Britishness" in India. It is, rather, as a privileged site for mediating the contradictory logic of Eurocentrism in the creation of a distinctive colonial public sphere that the European social club acquires its centrality as an imperial institution in colonial India.

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One implication of locating the European social club in the making of a colonial public sphere is the complication it affords to the pedigree of the club as a "national" British institution. To be sure, clubland in colonial India owed its origins to the prior development of a clubland in metropolitan Britain.[15] The limits of a strictly "domestic" genealogy of the clubs, however, are exposed both by the imperial context in which metropolitan British clubland itself was articulated and by the subsequent transformation of British clubland under colonial conditions in India. The *Oxford English Dictionary* describes the club as "an association of persons (admittance into which is usually guarded by ballot), formed mainly for social purposes and having a building (or part of one) appointed to the exclusive use of the members."[16] This particular meaning of the word "club," as a permanent institution for the sole purpose of social intercourse and cooperation, emerged in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It had developed, no doubt, out of the more temporary and periodical gathering of individuals in the discussion groups in seventeenth-century English coffeehouses.[17] Indeed, in recognition of their immediate forerunners in public coffee houses many private clubs in Britain still refer to their dining rooms as "coffeerooms."[18] Yet, very like the "voluntary societies" studied by R. J. Morris,[19] the private gentleman's

[15] See Peter Clark, *British Clubs and Societies, c. 1580–1800: The Origins of an Associational World* (Oxford, 2000). Unfortunately, I was unable to make use of this book in time for this article.

[16] See *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. 1 (1933; reprint, New York, 1977) (hereafter cited as *OED*), p. 534. Also see Bernard Darwin, *British Clubs* (London, 1943), p. 8.

[17] For the seventeenth-century coffeehouses as constitutive of an early modern public sphere in Britain, see Steve Pincus, " 'Coffee Politicians Does Create': Coffeehouses and Restoration Political Culture," *Journal of Modern History* 67, no. 4 (December 1995): 807–34.

[18] This point has been made in Werner Glinga, *Legacy of Empire: A Journey through British Society* (Manchester, 1986), pp. 2–3, 8.

[19] For the role of the nineteenth-century "voluntary societies" in consolidating a new middle-class public elite in Britain, see R. J. Morris, "Voluntary Societies and British

clubs of Britain owed the increase in their numbers and prosperity to the changes of the nineteenth century. Except for a few descendants from the old coffeehouses, the new, luxurious, and exclusive clubs were creations of the nineteenth century. Of the eleven most exclusive clubs in Britain—Traveller's, Turf, Carlton, Marlborough, Brook's, Bachelors, St. James's, Whites, Arthur's, Pratts, and the New Club—five were comparatively recent creations.[20] The famous Athenaeum, the Oxford and Cambridge, the Garrick, the Carlton, and the Reform Clubs were all founded in the first few decades of the nineteenth century. There were also clubs in Britain whose existence was solely the product of the empire: the Indian connection, for example, had given rise to the East India United Services Club, located at 14 St. James's Street, and to the London Oriental Club, established in the 1820s.[21] If Samuel Johnson had famously called James Boswell "clubable" as early as 1763, it was nonetheless only later, in the nineteenth century, that the concept of clubbable came generally to symbolize a specific attribute of Britishness.[22]

The emergence of a distinctive clubland culture in Britain, consisting of a variety of private gentleman's clubs for the elite, was part of the recreation of urban elites in the specific conditions of the social and economic changes of the nineteenth century. The heart of this clubland culture was located in central London in St. James's Street and Pall Mall. The clubs on St. James's Street had their origins in the "aristocratic" eighteenth century and had a clientele drawn mainly from the British aristocracy, while the clubs on Pall Mall were mainly nineteenth-century creations, and their membership was predominantly bourgeois.[23] Membership in particular gentleman's clubs became a passport for entry

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Urban Elites, 1750–1850: An Analysis," *Historical Journal* 26, no. 1. (1983): 95–118, and "Clubs, Societies and Associations" in *The Cambridge Social History of Britain, 1750–1950,* vol. 3, ed. F. M. L. Thompson (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 395–443. Also see R. J. Morris, *Class, Sect and Party: The Making of the British Middle-Class, Leeds, 1820–1850* (Manchester, 1990). John Seed is correct in claiming that the social clubs in Britain were "about much more than good cigars, billiards, and brandy"; see his "Capital and Class Formation in Early Industrial England," *Social History* 18, no. 1 (January 1993): 17–30. For a similar analysis of social clubs in providing cohesiveness to an American ruling elite, see G. William Domhoff, "Social Clubs, Policy-Planning Groups and Corporations: A Network of Ruling Class Cohesiveness," *Insurgent Sociologist* ("New Directions in Power Structure Research," ed. G. William Domhoff) 5, no. 3 (Spring 1975): 173–84.

[20] The above information is from Glinga, *Legacy of Empire,* pp. 2–4; and from Anthony Lejeune, *The Gentlemen's Clubs of London* (New York, 1978).

[21] See Panckridge, *A Short History,* pp. 1–2; and *Pioneer* (30 April 1880) on the East India United Services Club. See also Denys Forrest, *The Oriental Life Story of a West End Club* (1968; reprint, London, 1979).

[22] Quoted in Darwin, *British Clubs,* p. 7. The popular spelling of the term, however, is "clubbable"; see *OED,* p. 535.

[23] Glinga, *Legacy of Empire,* p. 4; and Lejeune, *Gentlemen's Clubs,* p. 15.

into the culture of the ruling elites in Britain and helped to sustain an elaborate system of old boys' networks.[24] By midcentury, these private gentleman's clubs, whose function was to mediate and distribute elite power, had, like the Great English Public Schools and Oxbridge, become naturalized as important, and seemingly timeless, monuments of national English culture.

While the narrative of class and regional politics in the development of the club as a "peculiarly British" institution should come as no surprise to scholars today, it may still be necessary to be reminded of the imperial context in which the supposedly "internal" politics in Britain was articulated. Over the years, indeed, the loosely defined field of scholarship known as "British cultural studies" has contributed to a growing scholarly skepticism about the "naturalness" of English/British culture.[25] A large number of studies have demonstrated adequately that nineteenth-century British culture was forged from the contestations between different classes and regions: it was the hard-won assertion, in effect, of the hegemony of a regional ruling class in Britain.[26] Yet, as a major new focus in contemporary interdisciplinary scholarship on imperialism has demonstrated, analyses of the making of British "national" culture that focus on conflicts solely internal to Britain ignore the impact of colonialism on the formation of this national culture.[27] This new scholarship, indeed, has drawn attention to what John Mackenzie has identified as

[24] See extract from *Vanity Fair,* quoted in *Englishman* (12 October 1883), p. 3. See also Richard Davenport-Hines, "In Good Company," *Times Literary Supplement,* no. 4 (8–14 June 1990), pp. 12–13. The class character of the culture of the "ruling elite" in nineteenth-century Britain continues to be a subject of debate among British historians. For the classic argument of the "gentrification" of Britain's middle-class or bourgeoisie, see Martin J. Weiner, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850–1980* (Cambridge, 1981). It is perhaps symptomatic of the argument being made in this article that much of the debate on the class character of Victorian Britain has gone on without significant recognition of the constitutive impact of Britain's imperial position; this point is made in Alex Callinicos, "Exception or Symptom? The British Crisis and the World System," *New Left Review* 169 (1988): 97–107.

[25] For a useful introduction to "British Cultural Studies," see Graeme Turner, *British Cultural Studies: An Introduction* (Boston, 1990); also see Stuart Hall, "Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies," in *Cultural Studies,* ed. L. Grossberg, C. Nelson, and P. Treichler (New York, 1992), pp. 277–94.

[26] See esp. Robert Colls and Philip Dodd, eds., *Englishness, Politics and Culture, 1880–1920* (London, 1986). Scholars, no doubt, differ on the precise historical moment/moments in which an "Englishness" was crystallized; see Raphael Samuel, ed., *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity,* vols. 1–3 (London, 1989), esp. Samuel's "Introduction," 1:xviii–lvii. Also see Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven, Conn., 1992).

[27] See Gauri Viswanathan's critique in "Raymond Williams and British Colonialism," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 4, no. 2 (Spring 1991): 47–66. Sara Suleri similarly argues for the antecedence of imperialism in the making of English India, see Sara Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India* (Chicago, 1989), pp. 1–22.

the "centripetal" dimension of imperial influence.[28] In contrast to the hegemonic model of "centrifugal" analyses, which focus primarily on the radiation of imperial influence from the British metropole outward to the colony, the focus of much of the recent work in British imperial historiography has been on the imprint of empire on "national" British culture at home.[29] Imperialism, undoubtedly, provided the context for the formation of specific aspects of metropolitan culture that dealt directly with empire. Even more important, however, imperialism also provided the context in which "national" cultures came to be expressed as such. For, as Edward Said has argued, our notion of discrete national cultures is itself the result and the symptom of the particular implication of cultural practices in the history of modern imperialism.[30] So, as various scholars have now demonstrated, the colonies themselves often served as the "test-site"[31] for the management and containment of threats to both the domestic and imperial hegemony of the metropolitan ruling classes.

It was, then, precisely under the conditions of nineteenth-century British imperialism and colonialism that the private gentleman's club in Britain, a cultural site for the distribution and mediation of elite power, articulated a concept of clubbability that was itself mediated by its imperial metropolitan location. The model for the concept of clubbability that was entrenched in such self-governing institutions as the clubs was al-

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[28] See John Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880–1960* (Manchester, 1984), p. 2.

[29] For the marketing of imperialism in Britain in the late nineteenth century, see ibid. Other titles in the Manchester University Press Studies in Imperialism series also demonstrate the impact of imperialism on British culture; for some examples, see Jeffrey Richards, ed., *Imperialism and Juvenile Literature* (Manchester, 1989); John Mackenzie, ed., *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester, 1986); J. A. Mangan, ed., *Making Imperial Mentalities: Socialisation and British Imperialism* (Manchester, 1990).

[30] I see this as the underlying theme of Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism* (New York, 1993), esp. chap. 1.

[31] The term is from Viswanathan, "Raymond Williams," p. 48. For an application of this idea, see Viswanathan, *The Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (New York, 1989). Her study of the origins of modern English studies reveals that what has hitherto seemed as a strategy developed for class management at home and later exported to the colony was in fact developed for the management of natives in India and only later exported to Britain. For the impact of empire on class politics in Britain, also see Bernard Semmel, *Imperialism and Social Reform in Great Britain, 1900–1914* (1960; reprint, Cambridge, Mass., 1979); Thomas Holt, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832–1938* (Baltimore, 1982); Tabili, *"We Ask for British Justice";* and Catherine Hall, "Rethinking Imperial Histories: The Reform Act of 1867," *New Left Review,* no. 208 (1994), pp. 3–29; and for India, in particular, see Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India* (Oxford, 1959); Javed Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings: James Mill's "History of British India" and Orientalism* (New York, 1992); and Partha Sarthi Gupta, *Imperialism and the British Labour Movement* (London, 1975).

ways the "manly independent individual" whose social identity in the nineteenth century, as Catherine Hall has demonstrated, was always defined in relation to the dependent and the subjected—women, children, servants, employees, slaves, and the colonized.[32] The meaning underlying the concept of clubbability thus leads us beyond the network of power relations produced by the internal politics of Britain to include the wide set of class, gender, and race relations that was produced and enabled by British imperialism. The ideal of the "manly independent individual"—the model of the properly clubbable in Britain—owed its particular elaboration to a context that extended beyond the national boundaries of Britain. The relationship between imperialism and culture, therefore, cannot be conceived as a one-way street: where the fully formed national culture of Britain, or such individual cultural monuments of Britain as the clubs, for example, are later simply transplanted to the colonies to serve as instruments of "national domination."[33] The imperial articulation of clubbability, indeed, complicates a strictly national narrative of clubland even in its metropolitan location in Britain.

The further point, however, is that the particular expressions of the class, gender, and racial assumptions of clubbability were themselves shaped in part in relation to their specific metropolitan and colonial locations. For example, the gendered occlusions in the concept of clubbability were especially marked in the development of clubland in metropolitan Britain. British clubs had traditionally catered to men only. The ideology of the "separation of spheres" was scrupulously adhered to in the recently reconstituted nineteenth-century clubland.[34] As single-sex institutions, however, the traditional clubs were frequently in conflict with the rival claims of bourgeois domesticity. The society papers, for example, complained that the married men who frequented clubs did so to the

[32] For the intersection of ideas about race, gender, and class in the construction of mid-nineteenth-century British masculinity, see Catherine Hall, "The Economy of Intellectual Prestige: Thomas Carlyle, J. S. Mill and the Case of Governor Eyre," *Cultural Critique*, no. 12 (Spring 1989), pp. 167–96. Also see Catherine Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (Cambridge, 1992).

[33] I make this argument in the context of the politics of masculinity; see Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity.*

[34] For a sophisticated use of the "separation of spheres" ideology for analyzing nineteenth-century British history, see Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850* (Chicago, 1987). For a critique of the use of "separation of spheres" ideology in histories of British women, however, see Amanda Vickery, "Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History," *Historical Journal* 36, no. 2 (1993): 383–414. I am using the term "separation of spheres" very broadly to refer to the set of ideas about gender that was dominant in the nineteenth century.

prejudice of their domestic habits and that clubs kept away eligible bach-
elors from mixing more freely in general society.[35] Forced on the defen-
sive, the institutional establishments of the clubs were often at pains to
demonstrate that they served as a preparation—and not as a substitute—
for domestic life. By the turn of the nineteenth century, therefore, many
gentleman's clubs had begun to offer associate membership for the wives
of their members. The actual club rooms, which included the smoking
room, morning room, and library, often remained closed to women. In-
stead, women were usually provided with their own section, known as
the Hen-House, in some out-of-the-way wing of the main building. On
special occasions, women could be escorted by men to the club lunch
or dinner.[36] The subsequent establishment of specifically mixed or "cock
and hen's clubs" and of women's clubs, however, never acquired the
degree of popularity enjoyed by the private gentleman's clubs.[37] In the
words of one historian of British clubs, "clearly such clubs have supplied
a much felt want, but at the same time it may be suggested that women
are not, or perhaps it is merely that they have not yet had time to become,
quite as clubbable as men."[38] The history of clubland in metropolitan
Britain, indeed, exemplifies Carole Pateman's argument about the invest-
ment of modern civil society in a gendered construction of the public
and private.[39]

     Colonial civil society, as the evolution of clubland in India demon-

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[35] For a spoof on the clubs along these lines see John Timbs, *Club Life of London*
(London, 1886), 1:248. Timbs quotes from a poem by a Mr. Hood entitled "Clubs Turned
up by a Female Hand": "of all the modern schemes of man / That time has brought to
bear / A plague upon the wicked plan / That parts the wedded pair / My female friends
they all agree / They hardly know their hubs; / And heart and voice unite with me / We
hate the name of Clubs!" For bourgeois domesticity as an important site for the construc-
tion of nineteenth-century middle-class masculinity in Britain, see John Tosh, *A Man's
Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven, Conn.,
1999).

[36] See Glinga, *Legacy of Empire*, pp. 21–22.

[37] For an examination of a very different sort of "mixed" club, see Judith R. Wal-
kowitz, "Science, Feminism, and Romance: The Men and Women's Club, 1885–1889,"
History Workshop Journal 21 (Spring 1986): 37–59. See also Lucy Bland, "Rational
Sex or Spiritual Love: The Men and Women's Club of the 1880's," *Women's Studies
International Forum* 13, nos. 1/2 (1990): 33–48.

[38] Darwin, *British Clubs*, p. 33. Similarly another historian of the clubs suggests that
"socialists, like women, are not on the whole clubbable," see Lejeune, *Gentlemen's
Clubs*, p. 14.

[39] Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford, Calif., 1985). See also Anna
Clark, "Contested Space: The Public and Private Spheres in Nineteenth-Century Britain,"
Journal of British Studies 35 (1996): 269–76. The gentleman's clubs, indeed, differ from
the seventeenth-century coffeehouses that Pincus demonstrates were more inclusive both
in terms of gender and class; see Pincus, " 'Coffee Politicians Does Create.' "

strates, was subject to different gendered imperatives.[40] So, for example, the social clubs in colonial India, unlike their counterparts in Britain, were seldom seen to be in competition with favored forms of domestic life: in fact, these institutions were instrumental in fashioning politically more desirable domestic arrangements among elite Europeans in India. The European social club began to emerge in India precisely at a time when a new European public world of politics and economics was also being consolidated in colonial India. The transition of the British from being first among several political forces in India to being the undisputed rulers of India, and the consequent consolidation of a specifically colonial state in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, brought radical changes in the nature and constitution of the community of overseas Britons. These changes—which extended to the "private" or domestic lives of Europeans in India—became the foundations for the creation of a distinct Anglo-Indian community, sharply separated from native society.[41] The clubs were instrumental in this transition.

The European social clubs in India served to incorporate Europeans abroad into an emerging new colonial political and social order. At a time when interracial marriage was beginning to be frowned on and long-term cohabitation with native women was increasingly regarded with suspicion, the European social clubs in India played a vital role in the homogenization of the domestic life of Europeans abroad.[42] The Bengal Club, established in 1827 on the model of the recently formed London Oriental Club, was perhaps the oldest club in British India. By the end of the century, however, a clubland, comprising "a number of large,

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[40] Partha Chatterjee, in a different context, has already complicated the usefulness of the public/private dichotomy when extended to civil society in colonial India; see his "The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question," in *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History,* ed. K. Sangari and S. Vaid (New Brunswick, N.J., 1990), pp. 235–53.

[41] For the history of the consolidation of British rule in India, see C. A. Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire* (New York, 1988). For British social life in early colonial India, see Percival Spear, *The Nabobs* (London, 1963); and P. J. Marshall, "British Society in India under the East India Company," *Modern Asian Studies* 31, no. 1 (1997): 89–108. For a nineteenth-century British community in India, see Bernard S. Cohn, "The British in Benares: A Nineteenth-Century Colonial Society," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 4, no. 2 (January 1962): 169–99. For the exclusivity of Anglo-Indian social life, also see Dane Kennedy, *The Magic Mountains: Hill Stations and the British Raj* (Berkeley, 1996).

[42] For the implications of changing attitudes toward interracial sex and interracial unions in the colonial empires, see Ann Stoler, "Making Empire Respectable: The Politics of Race and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Colonial Cultures," *American Ethnologist* 16, no. 4 (November 1989): 634–60. For colonial India, see Kenneth Ballhatchett, *Race, Sex and Class under the Raj: Imperial Attitudes and Policies and Their Critics, 1793–1905* (New York, 1980).

depressing lounges and smoking rooms, filled with heavy leather or cane-bottomed chairs,'' had developed all over India.[43] A handbook for ''new arrivals'' in India in 1903 could thus assure its readers that ''all districts have their clubs, where a good game of billiards, whist or bridge etc. can be got.''[44] As a retreat from the outside world where contact with natives was unavoidable, the clubs ostensibly offered elite Anglo Indians the privacy of home.

The popularity of the clubs was in part a response to the particular demographic challenges of the overseas European population in India.[45] There was, for example, a heavy preponderance of single British men, or married men living singly in India, especially in the early decades of colonial rule. Even as late as 1921, however, the total European population in India comprised approximately 45,000 women and some 112,000 men.[46] Moreover, there were always relatively few elderly persons and children in the overseas European community. In addition, a great deal of mobility was required of at least the officials of the colonial government. It was in this context that the clubs became popular in order to provide boarding and lodging for a transient elite white male population; they set apart chambers for the members residing permanently in the city and for those only making a short stay. This ''domestic'' function of the club is emphasized by H. R. Panckridge, a former secretary of the Bengal Club in Calcutta: ''the idea of the club makes a special appeal to the large number of men, who are compelled by circumstances to be separated from their wives and families for longer or shorter periods. . . . [The clubs] offer a welcome solution of a difficult problem to the many bachelors with a distaste for housekeeping.''[47] The control and management of Anglo-Indian domestic life, implied by the rapid rise and popularity of European social clubs in India, served to reproduce the desired forms of private as well as public life for Anglo Indians.

[43] See R. Pearson, *Eastern Interlude, A Social History of the European Community in Calcutta* (Calcutta, 1954), p. 22.

[44] J.A.D., *Notes on an Outfit for India and Hints for the New Arrival* (London, 1903), p. 41.

[45] This is how Dennis Kincaid explains the ''club-addiction'' of Anglo-Indian society; see his *British Social Life in India, 1608–1937* (1938; reprint, New York, 1971), p. 281.

[46] These figures are from Judith Brown, ''India,'' in *The Oxford History of the British Empire,* vol. 4, *The Twentieth Century,* ed. Judith Brown and W. Roger Louis (Oxford and New York, 1999), p. 423. For the demographic composition of the European community in India, see Margaret O. Macmillan, ''Social and Political Attitudes of British Expatriates in India, c. 1880–c. 1920'' (D.Phil. thesis, Oxford University, 1974).

[47] Panckridge, *A Short History,* p. 1; Pearson, *Eastern Interlude,* p. 204. Also see *Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Bengal Club, Limited, with Bye-Laws and List of Members [corrected to 1st Oct. 1917]* (Calcutta, 1917), pp. 55–57.

Even after the arrival of a larger number of white women in India, the clubs continued to play an important role in integrating the private "domestic" and public lives of the Anglo-Indian community abroad. By the end of the century the clubs had become the center of European social life in India. In the words of Lieutenant General Reginald Savory, who served in India from 1914 to 1947, "If you didn't belong to the Club you were an outcast. . . . Either you were a rebel, and a rather courageous rebel, who didn't belong to the club, or else you were a social outcast who wanted to belong to the club and couldn't get in."[48] The "rebels" were to be found mainly among European missionaries, single women, and independent-minded intellectuals who were self-conscious about rejecting the norms of Anglo-Indian social life. The centrality of the club in European social life in India put pressure on the incorporation of white women in clubland. For as W. O. Horne, a civil servant in turn-of-the-century Madras, feared, white women, if left on their own in India, would lower the prestige of the ruling race and "let down the side."[49] This ensured that the European social clubs in India became immediately more vulnerable to the "infiltration" of women than their counterparts in Britain.

When J. H. Rivett-Carnac, of the elite Indian Civil Service (ICS), arrived in India in 1856, he noted that most local European clubs in India already had their "special ladies' quarters."[50] By midcentury the dingy *moorghi khanna* or Hen-House for white women had become standard in most city clubs in India. Although backcountry station clubs held out a little longer, they ultimately proved even more vulnerable to the entry of white women. In the smaller up-country or *mofussil* towns women were often allowed even into the main club buildings, with only the bar carrying the warning: "Women not allowed beyond this point." The club, in particular the club veranda, came to serve as "a sort of get together place for the women folk."[51] These clubs, having been forced to accept the intrusion of women, even carried advertisements for the sale of "prams, ponies, sewing machines etc. on their notice boards."[52]

[48] Quoted in Allen, *Plain Tales,* p. 100.
[49] W. O. Horne, *Work and Sport in the Old ICS* (London, 1928), p. 23. A shared social life for white men and white women was of greater importance in a racially divided society. Macmillan writes that "generally men and women shared the same social life, indeed more, perhaps, than their contemporaries at home"; see her *Women of the Raj* (New York, 1988), p. 154.
[50] J. H. Rivett-Carnac, *Many Memories of Life in India: At Home and Abroad* (London, 1910), p. 15.
[51] Allen, *Plain Tales,* p. 99.
[52] Cited in Macmillan, *Women of the Raj,* pp. 160–61. See also reference to white women's involvement in the clubs in Mary Ann Lind, *The Compassionate Memsahibs, Welfare Activities of British Women in India, 1900–1947* (Westport, Conn., 1988), p. 21.

To be sure, the "domestic atmosphere" that permeated many of the station clubs was the source of much complaint among die-hard masculinist members.[53] Even as late as the 1920s the presence of a white woman who, having lost her way, had strayed into the premises of the United Services Club in Simla to ask for directions created quite a stir. Sir Henry Sharp recalls that the "vision of female form profaning this sacred precinct" so alarmed another member of the club that "with commendable tact and presence of mind . . . [he] snatched a notice from the wall and holding it in front of him, barred further progress to the intruder. The notice ran 'Dogs and other noxious animals are not allowed in the Club.' "[54] White women, indeed, were seldom allowed unrestricted use of the club premises. Although white women had been incorporated grudgingly into clubland, they had no official standing in the clubs and their names seldom appeared in the list of members.[55] Yet clubland in India, in response to its particular colonial location, was already more of a "domestic" institution than it ever became in metropolitan Britain.

While white women were clearly marginal to the culture of clubland, they were nevertheless crucial to the concept of clubabbality as it was elaborated under colonial conditions. The consequent ambivalence in the relation of white women to clubland in India was, perhaps, nowhere more evident than in the arguments for the preservation of clubland as a whites-only enclave. When in the interwar period the issue of admitting Indians (especially those in the elite all-India services) acquired great urgency, Anglo Indian segregationists cited the presence of white women in the clubs as the grounds for their reluctance to allow native members or guests in the clubs. White segregationists argued that the Indians were as yet "unclubbable" because "they would not bring their wives [to the club], but hang around English ladies, for whom, it was well known, Indians held lascivious yearnings."[56] H. T. Wickham, who was the superintendent of police at Bishraw in 1921, recalled the debate over allowing Indians to join the local club: "The Club was a purely private club supported by subscriptions from members who had to be elected, and when the question of permitting Indians to join arose a large number of the members didn't like it. Their chief objection was

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[53] For a sample of some of the complaints against the presence of women in the clubs, see Boxwallah, *An Eastern Backwater* (London, [1916]), pp. 45, 55, 275. See also Allen, *Plain Tales,* p. 105.

[54] Cited in Sir Henry Sharp, *Goodbye India* (London, 1946), pp. 137–38.

[55] Allen, *Plain Tales,* p. 99. The members of the Bengal Club were even alarmed at the idea of an "At Home" for women on its premises for its centenary celebrations in 1927; see R. I. Macalpine, *Bengal Club, 1927–1970,* pt. 2, BCA.

[56] See Michael Edwardes, *The Sahibs and the Lotus: The British in India* (London, 1988), p. 226.

the fact that the Indians, if they joined the Club, would consort with the female members of the club, while their own female members were prohibited from coming, because they would be in purdah and could not therefore mix with people unveiled."[57]

These arguments for the preservation of the club as a whites-only institution underscored the contradictory implication of white women in the term "clubbable" under the conditions of colonialism. On the one hand, white women were grudgingly accorded the status of being clubbable so as to prevent them from getting into trouble if left on their own. On the other hand, the alleged protection of white women from the un-provoked attention of Indian men also made them crucial determinants in the "unclubbability" of Indians. It was the contingencies of the colonial situation that had not only given the clubland in India its more "domestic" character but had also invoked white women as central in the colonial elaboration of clubabbility. The clubland of colonial India was thus not so much a "hothouse" import from a sealed-off national British culture as a response to the particular exigencies of its colonial location.

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A second implication of situating the European social club in the context of a colonial public sphere is to expose its investment in the enactment of a historically specific racialized identity. Scholars have only recently begun to explore the hegemonic asymmetry in the system of racial marking, which "inscribes the system of domination on the body of the individual, assigning to the individual his/her place as a dominated person," but leaves the place of the dominator unmarked: generic, rather than particularized.[58] Examining "whiteness" as a marked (instead of a falsely universal or unmarked) racial category thus counterbalances the asymmetry of the racializing process.[59] The further point, however, is

[57] Quoted in Allen, *Plain Tales,* p. 103.

[58] Colette Guilaumin, "Race and Nature: The System of Marks," *Feminist Issues* 8 (Fall 1988): 41. See also the discussion of this point in David Lloyd, "Race under Representation," *Oxford Literary Review* 13, nos. 1–2 (1991): 62–94; and Elizabeth Abel, "Black Writing, White Reading: Race and the Politics of Feminist Interpretation," *Critical Inquiry* 19, no. 3 (Spring 1993): 470–98. In the context of colonialism, moreover, scholars have argued for the need to balance scholarship on the colonized with attention to the constitution of the colonizer; see David Trotter, "Colonial Subjects," *Critical Quarterly* 32, no. 3 (Autumn 1990): 3–20; and Laura Chrisman, "The Imperial Unconscious? Representations of Imperial Discourse," *Critical Quarterly,* 32, no. 3 (Autumn 1990): 38–58; see also the critique of these moves in Paulus Pimono, "The Centre Writes/Strikes Back?" *Critical Quarterly,* 33 no. 3 (Autumn 1991): 43–47.

[59] Abel aptly characterizes this project as the "racialization of whiteness"; see her "Black Writing, White Reading." Today a number of scholars are calling for closer critical attention on the articulation of whiteness; see Hazel Carby, "The Politics of Difference," *Ms.* (September–October 1990), pp. 84–85; Toni Morrison, *Playing in the*

that the representation of ''whiteness'' as generic and unspecifiable has frequently coexisted historically alongside the need for a more specific racialized representation of ''whiteness.''[60] The contradictory pressures in the political dramatizations of ''whiteness''—as both generic and specific—are thoroughly exposed in the functioning of Anglo-Indian clubland in the colonial public sphere.

The European social clubs, as predominantly whites-only institutions, were implicated in making ''whiteness'' as such visible in specific ways. Not surprisingly, most accounts of the cultural politics of colonial clubland have focused primarily on the role of the clubs in dividing and separating the colonizer from the colonized. Such accounts, however, take the historically produced categories of colonizer and colonized as given; they gloss over the important role of the clubs themselves in producing and demarcating the boundaries that would constitute the colonizer and the colonized.[61] The etymology of ''club''—which derives from ''cleave,'' meaning both to split and to adhere, that is, ''uniting to divide''—nicely captures its ambivalent political function in colonial India.[62] The clubs served both to divide people and to mobilize them on the basis of specific sociopolitical identities. It was precisely this generative role of the clubs—in fashioning a white British self—that implicated the cultural politics of clubbability in a specific enactment of ''whiteness'' in colonial India.

The European social clubs in India, indeed, formed part of an elaborate set of mechanisms that articulated the legitimate boundaries of an acceptable image of ''whiteness.'' Through gendered, raced, and class-

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Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination (London, 1992); and the whole development of scholarship on ''whiteness'' in recent years, see David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London, 1999); Ruth Frankenburg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis, 1993); George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia, 1998); and Mike Hill, *Whiteness: A Critical Reader* (New York, 1997).

[60] For the ''contradictory desires'' in the representation of ''whiteness'' under the specific conditions of late nineteenth-century India, see Satya Mohanty, ''Kipling's Children and the Colour Line,'' *Race and Class* 31, no. 1 (1989): 21–40. Mohanty identifies the desire both for ''invisibility'' and ''spectacularization'' as ''two extreme forms of an imperial subjectivity . . . both perhaps tracing the outlines of an impossible abstraction'' (p. 37).

[61] The work of Ann Stoler has been especially useful in de-naturalizing the constructs of ''colonizer'' and ''colonized''; see her ''Rethinking Colonial Categories: European Communities and the Boundaries of Rule,'' *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31, no. 1 (January 1989): 134–150, ''Sexual Affronts and Racial Frontiers: European Identities and the Cultural Politics of Exclusion in Colonial Southeast Asia,'' *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 34, no. 3 (July 1992): 514–51, and ''Making Empire Respectable.''

[62] Timbs, *Club Life of London*, pp. 2–3.

specific assumptions, the concept of clubbability rendered whites, in Satya Mohanty's phrase, "visible in a certain way" in the colonial domain.[63] The clubs, by their very nature as self-selecting institutions, confined their membership only to "select people": mainly elite European bureaucrats, military officials, and nonofficials (those who were not in the employ of the government). Through such institutions as the clubs, this select group of people was able to sustain a certain lifestyle that corresponded to the politically desirable self-image of a ruling white population in India. As David Arnold reminds us, however, for most of the nineteenth century nearly half the European population in India consisted of "poor whites."[64] These poor whites posed an obvious challenge to the racial self-image of the white community. By the end of the century, therefore, many of these poor whites had been shipped back to Britain, while even more—nearly 6,000—had been taken off the streets and confined in workhouses where they were made, in Mohanty's words, simultaneously "invisible" and "useful."[65] Nonetheless, there was always a sizeable population of "lower" class Europeans in India—most notably British soldiers—who were excluded from the contours of whiteness represented by clubland.[66] The clubs, indeed, functioned in complementary ways with such institutions as the workhouses for the poor, the military cantonments for the soldiers, and the Railways Institutes for the Eurasians, in setting the limits of, as well as determining the visibility of, whiteness as such in colonial India. The clubland, which was never coextensive with the European population in India, was thus implicated in dramatizing a very specific and limited construction of whiteness in India.

The particular political mobilization of "whiteness" in the European social clubs, moreover, was articulated in ever-shifting relationship with the alleged unclubbablity of nonwhites. Such articulations of

[63] See Mohanty, "Kipling's Children," p. 37.

[64] David Arnold, "European Orphans and Vagrants in India in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 7, no. 2 (1979): 104–27. See also Waltraud Ernst, *Mad Tales from the Raj: The European Insane in British India, 1800–1888* (London, 1991).

[65] Mohanty, "Kipling's Children," p. 30. For one Anglo Indian's views on the problem of "poor whites" in nineteenth-century India, see Thomas McGuire, *Professional Beggars: Being Sketches of Beggars, Begging Letter Writers and Impostors From Personal Observation* (Calcutta, 1884).

[66] An anonymous British soldier, describing his life in late nineteenth-century India, contends that the social chasm dividing the "upper" and "lower" class Europeans was greater in India than in Britain; see H.S., *The Young Soldier in India: His Life and Prospects* (London, 1889), pp. 202–5. For the military, which accounted for the majority of the European presence in India, see Peter Stanley, *White Mutiny: British Military Culture in India, 1825–1875* (London, 1998).

"whiteness" had implications for the specific ways in which the white British self came to be represented to "natives" in different gender and class settings. Social mixing between Indians and Europeans was more readily established in all-male institutions; relatively early in the history of Freemasonry in India, for example, the all-male lodges welcomed participation from a certain elite class of Indians.[67] Furthermore, several Anglo-Indian memoirs and works of fiction celebrate the special bonds that supposedly developed among white men and peasants and sepoys in India; many of these accounts even testify to the universality or "invisibility" of whiteness as white men successfully pass themselves off as "natives" among peasants and sepoys in India.[68] It was in the clubs—an arena that was at least potentially open to social mixing between elite and middle-class men and women across the colonial divide—that a specific and particularistic dramatization of "whiteness" acquired such crucial significance.

The particular mobilization of "whiteness" in the European social clubs functioned to underwrite the consolidation of a racially exclusive colonial elite in India. The clubs, for example, served to provide private European economic firms in India direct access to the representatives of the colonial government, thereby contributing to the exclusive European control over the economy and the gradual decline of native economic competitiveness in the nineteenth century, especially in Bengal. To be sure, as Charles Allen reminds us, membership in individual clubs was based on occupation, and there was general discrimination against Europeans in "technical work" and against "counter-jumpers" (people who worked in shops).[69] Yet clubland, both through the system of reciprocation between major clubs and the provision for entertaining European guests on club premises, provided easy access between different sections

[67] For the importance of Freemasonry in the British empire, see Paul J. Rich, *Elixir of Empire: The English Public Schools, Ritualism, Freemasonry, and Imperialism* (London, 1989); and also F. Pick, F. Smythe and G. Norman Knight, *The Pocket History of Freemasonry,* 6th ed. (London, 1991). For Freemasonry in British India, see H. W. B. Moreno, *Freemasonry Revealed! Being a Series of Short Stories of Anglo Indian Life Concerning Masons and Masonry* (Calcutta, 1907). For an example of an Indian who was admitted into the "mysteries of the Craft" as early as the first half of the nineteenth century, see S. M. Edwardes, *Kharsedji Rustomji Cama, 1831–1909: A Memoir* (London, 1923), pp. 51–54. The comasonry movement, however, did not get on the ground until the first half of the twentieth century under the initiative of Annie Besant.

[68] For the construction of a white British self in India in such abstract and unspecifiable terms, see Mohanty, "Kipling's Children." For the Englishman's ability to be as one with the natives and yet their superior, see also Graham Dawson, "The Blond Bedouin: Lawrence of Arabia, Imperial Adventure and the Imagining of English-British Masculinity," in *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800,* ed. Michael Roper and John Tosh (London, 1991), pp. 113–44.

[69] Allen, *Plain Tales,* pp. 101–2.

of the Anglo-Indian elite. Even the Bengal Club, one of the most exclusive clubs of Anglo India, had relaxed its rules about guest nights in 1872, enabling members to invite guests any night of the week so long as the name of the member and his guest was entered in the dinner book the previous evening.[70] Several Anglo-Indian memoirs, indeed, testify to the advantages of the ties that were forged between official and nonofficial sections of the European population in the clubs.

It was these "clubland ties," as Amiya Bagchi has noted, that gave nonofficial Europeans in India their edge over rival Indian economic competitors in the colonial political economy.[71] Official and nonofficial members were able to settle business matters on a friendly and informal basis in the clubs. For example, a case in the Calcutta High Court over a dispute concerning land in the Port Canning area was amicably discussed by the two parties concerned over a friendly dinner at the Bengal Club. The civil servant representing the Bengal government in this case wrote that "the counsel for the plaintiff was a friend of mine, and after we had been served with notice of appeal I spoke to him about the case one day at the Club . . . [the conversation ended with a remark from his friend] 'You must not betray my after-dinner confidences.' "[72] The premium associated with club membership is further brought out in a trial in 1927 of a young Bengali man, who, on the strength of some stolen stationary from the United Services Club in Calcutta, could pass himself off as an Anglo Indian and defraud several European firms in Calcutta.[73] The clubs, indeed, were an important instrument in the European stranglehold of the colonial political economy.

The consolidation of "whiteness" in the European social clubs also answered the need of creating a desirable political consensus among influential sections of the European population in India. The "gentlemanly obligations" of club membership often enabled these institutions to serve as a mechanism for reconciling Anglo Indians to decisions affecting sections of the population differently. The stormy relationship, especially between the official and nonofficial sections of the European population,

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[70] Club Committee Meeting, 7 November 1872, *Committee Proceedings of the Bengal Club, 1869-1888,* BCA, p. 68.

[71] See Amiya Bagchi, *Private Investment in India, 1900–1939* (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 165–66. Also see Maria Misra, *Business, Race and Politics in British India, c. 1850–1960* (Oxford, 1999). The actual phrase, however, is from Rajat Ray, *Urban Roots of Indian Nationalism: Pressure Group and Conflict of Interest in Calcutta City Politics, 1875–1939* (New Delhi, 1979), pp. 5–6; also see Rajat Ray, *Social Conflict and Political Unrest in Bengal, 1875–1927* (Delhi, 1984), pp. 21–29.

[72] Ex-Civilian, *Life in the Mofussil or the Civilian in Lower Bengal* (London, n.d), 2:253.

[73] See *Statesman* (3 June 1927), p. 3.

was frequently mediated through the protocol and etiquette of club membership. In 1836, for example, the Bengal Club was rocked by a controversy that almost threatened the existence of the club. J. H. Stocqueler, the founder of the popular European daily in Calcutta, the *Englishman,* had severely criticized certain measures taken by Mr. Lumley as adjutant general on behalf of the Bengal government. Lumley filed a defamation case against Stocqueler in the High Court. Stocqueler's decision to attack publicly the official action of a fellow member of his club raised questions about the proper ethics of club membership.[74] The subsequent move to expel Stocqueler lead to a schism that almost brought about the dissolution of the club. The smooth functioning of the club, as the Stocqueler-Lumley episode reveals, required a certain degree of civility between members of a club whatever their political differences.

In the 1860s, the divisions within the Anglo-Indian community—this time over the indigo disturbances or the "blue mutiny"[75]—surfaced once again in the activities of the Bengal Club. The well-meaning translation of the vernacular play *Nil Darpan,* by a European clergyman Reverend Long, drew attention to the wretched condition of native indigo cultivators in the European-managed indigo plantations in Bengal. Subsequent government action, regulating the planters and protecting indigo cultivators, was greatly resented by powerful sections of the nonofficial European population. Morduant Wells, of the Calcutta High Court, who was also president of the Bengal Club, was involved in the trial of Reverend Long for libel. Sir Henry Cotton, an ICS officer and member of the Bengal Club, recalled that during the disturbances "it was the practice to blackball an official at the Bengal Club . . . merely because he was an official."[76] The potential of schism within influential sections of the Anglo-Indian community was often contained within the contours of clubland.

Although the various European agents of colonialism in India continued to have contradictory priorities, the clubland came to represent the powerful voice of Anglo-Indian public opinion. Government officials, in fact, looked upon club membership as a means of keeping a finger on the pulse of popular Anglo-Indian opinion in the province. As one

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[74] The information is from Panckridge, *A Short History,* p. 17. See also J. H. Stocqueler, with notes by P. Thankappan Nair, *British Social Life in Ancient Calcutta* (Calcutta, 1983).

[75] For a history of the indigo disturbances, see Blair Kling, *The Blue Mutiny: The Indigo Disturbances in Bengal, 1859–1862* (Philadelphia, 1966). Also see Ranajit Guha, "Neel Darpan: The Image of a Peasant Revolt in a Liberal Mirror," in *Peasant Resistance in India, 1858–1914,* ed. David Hardiman (Delhi, 1992), pp. 1–60.

[76] See Sir Henry Cotton, *New India or India in Transition,* rev. ed. (London, 1909), pp. 62–63.

European civil servant wrote, "It was interesting, though not always sat-
isfactory, to know what non-officials thought of official proceedings; and
opinions were expressed [in the Club] with very considerable free-
dom."[77] It was thus that officials were expressly enjoined to play an
active part in the club life of their stations. The assistant collector's man-
ual in Bombay, for example, clearly defined participation in the clubs
as an official duty:

> Even though you may be shy of thrusting yourself among comparative
> strangers, make a practice of going to the clubs regularly, it will probably
> rub off some unsuspecting corners of your personality to your lasting bene-
> fit. Even if you should find the society of the club uninteresting, you have,
> in virtue of your position, to fill a place in the social life of the station,
> and to do your part to amuse and entertain the other residents, who may
> not have your resources of culture and interest. Golf, tennis, etc. are valu-
> able aids to getting to know your fellows.[78]

A. C. Newcombe, a junior civil engineer who spent much of his time
in late nineteenth-century India in remote forest locations, was keenly
aware of this aspect of club life. For "at the clubs and messes [one met]
leading public men and heard their well-considered and matured opinions
on public questions, whereas in the jungles, the newspaper arriving irreg-
ularly perhaps is the only source of such information."[79] It was as such
a public space that the clubs, especially in isolated up-country stations,
served the function of fashioning Anglo-Indian public opinion in India.
    The efficacy of this Anglo-Indian public opinion was especially felt
in the political controversies of the latter half of the nineteenth century.
The conditions for the cohesion of Anglo-Indian public opinion were
created in part by the rebellion of 1857, which had heightened white
anxieties about Indian hostility.[80] Furthermore, the growing challenge
posed by middle-class Indian nationalists to exclusive white privileges
fostered further the need for greater Anglo-Indian cooperation as well
as the desirability of internal mechanisms to resolve differences within
the Anglo-Indian community. The role of the clubs in representing
Anglo-Indian public opinion was especially marked during the "white
mutiny" of 1883–84 when pressure from official and nonofficial
Anglo-Indian opinion forced the viceroy and his law member to modify

[77] Ex-Civilian, *Life in the Mofussil,* vol. 1, p. 51.
[78] Quoted in Hunt and Harrison, *District Officer,* p. 12.
[79] A. C. Newcombe, *Village, Town and Jungle Life in India* (London, 1910), p. 166.
[80] For the rebellion of 1857 and its implications on race relations in India, see Thomas
Metcalf, *The Aftermath of Revolt: India, 1857–1870* (Princeton, N.J., 1964); and also see
his *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge, 1997).

drastically a bill that would have granted Indian civil servants the right to exercise criminal jurisdiction over nonofficial Europeans in the small up-country stations in India.[81] The clubs, where official and nonofficial Anglo Indians gathered together, orchestrated the massive opposition to the government-sponsored measure. Clubs, all over India, were at the center of Anglo-Indian opposition to the bill; in remote country stations, for example, protest meetings of Anglo Indians were held in the club reading rooms. The members of the Byculla Club in Bombay, contrary to the tradition of that club, refused a proposal to entertain the viceroy on his way home to Britain.[82] Anglo-Indian clubland, especially in Bengal, became the backbone for the opposition against the bill.[83]

The members of the Bengal Club, whose honorary patron was the viceroy of India, used the controversy to spearhead the formation of the European and Anglo Indian Defence Association (EAIDA), which would henceforth monitor any infringement of the privileges of the white population in India.[84] The need for an organization with such an explicit political aim had been broached first in a letter from a member of the Bengal Club. The anonymous letter writer wrote that "the Bengal Club by no means answers the purpose. It is a somewhat dull and decaying institution, but whether it might not be galvanized into new and vigorous life by being placed, in commemoration of these events, on a political basis, it is for its managers to decide."[85] Mr. J. J. J. Keswick, a senior partner in the firm Jardine, Skinner and Company and the president of the Bengal Club, along with other prominent members of the Club Committee, pio-

[81] For an account of the controversy over the Ilbert Bill, named after the Law Member C. P. Ilbert, see Edwin Hirschmann, *"White Mutiny": The Ilbert Bill Crisis in India and the Genesis of the Indian National Congress* (Delhi, 1980); for the race and gender politics of the "white mutiny," see Mrinalini Sinha, " 'Chathams, Pitts and Gladstone's in Petticoats': The Politics of Gender and Race in the Ilbert Bill Controversy, 1883–84," in *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance,* ed. Margaret Strobel and Nupur Chaudhuri (Bloomington, Ind., 1991), pp. 98–116.

[82] Cited in *Bengalee* (18 August 1883), p. 385. For the club as the center of the opposition against the bill, see Rudyard Kipling, *Something of Myself for My Friends Known and Unknown* (New York, 1937), p. 57. For some contemporary news reports on Anglo-Indian protest meetings held in the clubs, see *Englishman* (13 April 1883); *Bengalee* (3 November 1883), p. 495; and *Pioneer* (7 March 1883), p. 4.

[83] The leading opponents of the bill in Calcutta were all important members of the Club Committee of the Bengal Club, including J. J. J. Keswick, the president of the Club; J. C. MacGregor, the Calcutta correspondent of *The Times;* J. H. A. Branson, a leading Calcutta barrister; G. H. P. Evans, a member of the Viceroy's Council; and General Wilson and Colonel George Chesney, of the Army; see *Committee Proceedings of the Bengal Club, 1869–1888,* BCA, pp. 347–49.

[84] For the patronage of the governor-general and then the viceroy, see ibid., p. 70. For a brief history of the European and Anglo Indian Defence Association, see Raymond K. Renford, *The Non-Official British in India to 1920* (Delhi, 1987).

[85] *Englishman* (8 March 1883), p. 2.

neered the creation of the notorious EAIDA as a separate political arm of clubland opinion in India. The close ties between the two institutions continued well into the 1920s when Panckridge, as secretary and histo- rian of the Bengal Club, also served as paid secretary for the EAIDA.[86]

The point, of course, is not that there were unified interests shared even among elite Anglo Indians in India. It is rather that the clubs them- selves produced and represented what counted as Anglo-Indian public opinion in India. Contemporaries had characterized Anglo-Indian politi- cal opposition during the "white mutiny" as "an example of the faithful reflection of club opinion by the English Press." The *Pioneer,* almost the semiofficial newspaper of the British in India, defended the role of the clubs during the controversy: "We are . . . inclined to think that the inherent justice or injustice, appositeness or inappositeness of political measures is what dictates the opinion of men—not so much that opinions spring from the fortuitous gathering of them together in a club."[87] The colonial clubland, however, was itself clearly instrumental in fashioning Anglo-Indian opinion. It is interesting to note, for example, that at the general meeting of the Bengal Club on 27 November 1912, the members decided to give the club vote in the elections for municipal commissioner representing Ward 16 in Calcutta to an Anglo Indian over an Indian can- didate. The decision apparently required no discussion among the mem- bers on the individual merits of the two candidates.[88] Colonial clubland, despite the arguments of its apologists, had long become implicated in constructing and maintaining the boundaries of a particular representation of "whiteness."

This is not to suggest, of course, that different political interests did not continue to jockey for attention within clubland. So, for example, the issue of allowing Indians, either as members or as guests of members, in the clubs in the period after the First World War remained a highly contentious one between Anglo-Indian officials and nonofficials. Sir Christopher Masterman, an ICS officer and president of the Madras Club, found that none of the European military officers in Madras during the Second World War could join his club under orders of their European general commanding officer. The general's orders followed a vote in the club, which as a result of a slight majority of its nonofficial members, had refused to lift its ban to admit the Indian officers under the general's command.[89] In the face of mounting criticism of colonial clubland, Anglo Indians frequently fell back on the view that the club represented nothing

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[86] See Renford, *Non-Official British in India,* p. 335.
[87] *Pioneer* (28 April 1883), p. 1.
[88] *Committee Proceedings of the Bengal Club, 1906–1919,* BCA, p. 245.
[89] Cited in Allen, *Plain Tales,* p. 104.

more than a fortuitous gathering of like-minded individuals. Horne, also of the ICS, defended the whites-only institutions in precisely these terms: "The life and work of the majority of the members required them daily, and in an increasing degree, to mix with their Indian fellow subjects, not only in work or business, but also socially, from Government House downwards, and it was surely not asking too much that a man might have, after his day's work, a place where he could for an hour or two take his ease in the society of men of his own race, and those whose habits and customs were his own."[90] Most scholars today would recognize that to suggest that the social clubs were a central feature of Anglo-Indian life simply because they provided a congenial meeting place for like-minded individuals is disingenuous at best. For it was precisely in fostering a community of individuals who apparently shared common interests that the clubs played a crucial role in underwriting the exclusive privileges of a colonial elite.

* * *

Finally—and, perhaps, most important—it was the dynamics of the colonial public sphere that also set the limits on and exposed the contradictions of the colonial elaboration of clubbability. For ultimately the very efficacy of the concept of clubbability depended on serving both as the essence of a unique and homegrown "Britishness" and as a universal goal to which all non-Britons in the colony could aspire. Modern colonialism, indeed, not only entailed the transfer of resources from the colony to the metropole, but, as various scholars have pointed out, also entailed a restructuring of the social organization of colonial societies and the consequent intensification of class hierarchies within the colony.[91] In this context, then, colonial clubland both held out the promise of potential clubbability to an emerging new "Westernized" Indian middle class and endlessly deferred the realization of such a possibility. The colonial elaboration of clubbability, therefore, had to exist from the outset in constant tension with the potential clubbability of the "right sort" of natives.

As early as the mid-nineteenth century, indeed, there had been individual efforts in India to establish "mixed" social clubs with European

[90] Horne, *Work and Sport in the Old ICS*, pp. 101–2. White women were just as likely to offer similar defenses of the club; see the similarity in Ethel Savi's defense of the club quoted in Allen J. Greenberger, "Englishwomen in India," *British History Illustrated* 4 (1978): 46.

[91] For some salutary reminders of the importance of reinscribing class—as much as race and gender—into contemporary analyses of the working of colonialism, see Aijaz Ahmed, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London, 1992); and Sumit Sarkar, *Writing Social History* (Delhi, 1998).

and Indian membership. These, however, were often short-lived experiments. In the 1860s Mr. James Hume, then the chief magistrate of Calcutta, together with some Indian friends, tried to promote the establishment of the Cosmopolitan Club for Indians and Europeans alike. Accounting for its eventual failure, one Anglo-Indian paper wrote, "the idea was in advance of its age and collapsed in a few years."[92] The India Club, established in 1882 under the patronage of the Maharaja of Cooch Behar, was one of the more durable of subsequent experiments along these lines.[93] It provided the model for several "native" clubs that were set up by Indians in the smaller *mofussil* towns in Bengal and, later, in other parts of India. The entrance fee for the India Club when it started was only five rupees (as compared to the 200 rupees at the Bengal Club and the 100 rupees at the United Services Club in Calcutta) and had a monthly subscription of two rupees. The object of the club was "to supply a place where gentlemen, both native and European, could freely mix, independent of their social, political, and religious differences."[94] The list of some of the early Indian patrons of the India Club included prominent Hindu, Brahmo, Muslim, Parsi, and Christian men of Calcutta. In the first year the club had a membership of 200, and by 1890 it had increased to 435.[95] The Bengal Club for approximately the same time period had a membership of just under 800.[96] The India Club, however, never became very popular with its European members. When Wilfred Scawen Blunt, a member of Parliament, visited India in the 1880s, he wrote of his experience at the India Club that "the bitterness of feeling is now so great that, with the exception of two or three secretaries in attendance on Indian princes I was the only Englishman present."[97]

[92] See Ranabina Ray Choudhury, ed., *Calcutta: A Hundred Years Ago* (Bombay, 1988), p. 46.

[93] Ibid. See also *Statesman* (23 March 1883), p. 3; and the report in the *Illustrated London News* (25 August 1887) on the maharaja's role in founding the club, cited in Kusoom Vadgama, *India in Britain: The Indian Contribution to the British Way of Life* (London, 1984), p. 52. Benay Krishan Dev's *The Early History and Growth of Calcutta* (1905; reprint, Calcutta, 1977), p. 175, however, attributes the foundation of the club to Keshub Chunder Sen, the maharaja's father-in-law.

[94] *Statesman* (24 March 1882), p. 3.

[95] Among the Indian members some prominent names included the following: R. C. Mitter, Jotendra Mohun Tagore, Rajendra Lala Mitra, Nawab Abdool Luteef, H. M. Rustomjee, Keshub Chunder Sen, Bankim Chandra Chattterjee, and Rev. K. M. Bannerjee. Some prominent European members, included Sir Henry Harrison, chairman of the Calcutta Corporation; Sir Henry Cotton of the ICS; and Rev. Father Lafont. Harry Lee, Harrison's successor at the Calcutta Corporation, also played an active role in the club. See Choudhury, *Calcutta*, pp. 132–33; *Hindoo Patriot* (16 June 1883), p. 280; and *Hindoo Patriot* (18 August 1890), pp. 390–91.

[96] The membership on 31 December 1888 was 763; see *Bengal Club Annual Accounts Book, 1860–1890*, BCA, pp. 77.

[97] Wilfred Scawen Blunt, *India under Ripon* (London, 1909), p. 115.

    In patronizing tones, the Anglo-Indian press had been predicting
the dissolution of the India Club from the very outset. According to the
Englishman, the failure of such mixed experiments raised doubts if there
were "clubbable men . . . to be found amongst the natives of India."[98]
The *Pioneer* pointed to the lack of solidarity among "native" club mem-
bers; it noted that the India Club was "proof that natives cannot utilize
the club system of Europe for . . . marshalling and centralizing opposi-
tion, [or] as a means of inspiring its peculiar press."[99] This was in re-
sponse to a scene that had allegedly taken place in the club on 20 March
1883. Raja Shib Prasad, a member of the Viceroy's Council, was re-
ported to have been harassed by the Indian members of the club for his
unpopular stand on the criminal jurisdiction bill of 1883–84.[100] The India
Club, however, outlived the gloomy predictions of the Anglo-Indian
press and continued to be patronized by the leaders of Indian public opin-
ion. It had entertained the delegates of the second annual conference of
the Indian National Congress held in Calcutta in 1886. In 1901 the India
Club was still being patronized by Congress delegates. During the 1901
Calcutta Congress the Congress stalwart, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, and
his as yet relatively unknown apprentice from South Africa, M. K. Gan-
dhi, enjoyed the hospitality of the India Club.[101]
    Despite the success of such individual experiments, however, colo-
nial clubland not only consisted primarily of European social clubs, but
the private gentleman's social club never became a dominant institution
in the emergent Indian counterpublics under the Raj. The endless deferral
in the acknowledgement of Indians as properly clubabble always marked
the experience of even sufficiently Europeanized Indians in colonial club-
land. Brajendranath De, a Cambridge-educated Indian, who was among
the early generations of Indians to enter the ICS in the 1870s, experi-
enced the limits of such assimilation. His commissioner refused to let
him use the local station club in Hooghly because his wife was still in
purdah.[102] The *Ananda Bazar Patrika,* a vernacular newspaper of Bengal,
was clearly skeptical of such excuses: "a native may adopt English cus-

[98] Quoted in Choudhury, *Calcutta,* p. 46.
[99] *Pioneer* (28 April 1883), p. 1.
[100] The incident was first reported in the *Indian Daily News.* It prompted one Euro-
pean member of the club to resign in protest, see *Englishman* (3 April 1883), p. 3. Indians
present, however, denied that such an incident had taken place in the club, see *Englishman*
(6 April 1883), p. 2.
[101] See M. K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth,*
trans. Mahadev Desai (Boston, 1957), p. 229; originally published in Ahmedabad, India,
in two volumes in 1927 and 1929.
[102] Brajendranath De, "Reminiscences of an Indian Member of the ICS," *Calcutta
Review* 32, no. 2 (August 1954): 95.

toms, wear the English dress, change his paternal name, and move in English society with his wife, yet nothing can lead the Englishman to think that a native is his equal.''[103] The colonial elaboration of clubbability functioned precisely to ensure the constitution of the colonizer as unique and exceptional, on the one hand, and the constitution of the colonized as perpetually still-to-be redeemed, on the other.

The slow and painful process by which Anglo India was forced to accept the ''Indianization'' of elite government services in the 1920s and 1930s, however, brought considerable pressure to bear on the ban against Indians as members, or as guests of Anglo-Indian members, in the European social clubs in India.[104] By the interwar period, especially in the country stations, many of the formerly whites-only clubs had granted Indian officials at least honorary membership to the club. Masterman, who as member of the Board of Revenue had an opportunity to travel extensively in the various districts in Madras during the 1940s, noted the extent to which the ''colour bar'' had disappeared from the small station clubs in Madras. According to Masterman, status, and not color, now determined entry into clubland.[105] When Dharam Vira, who joined the ICS in the post–First World War period, was appointed district magistrate and collector in Bareilly in the United Provinces, he found that as district magistrate he was also ex officio president of the local club. Although he was an Indian, he could not easily be refused admission in the club.[106] Alakh Kumar Sinha, who would become the first Indian to be appointed inspector general of police, was already in 1928 a member of even the Executive Committee of the Bankipore Club in Patna, once the exclusive citadel of Anglo-Indian planters and officials in Bihar.[107] Several other Indians who served in the ICS and other elite services in the last decades of the Raj also testify to the gradual opening up of the local European clubs.[108] Yet clearly the politically charged issue of

[103] *Ananda Bazar Patrika* (9 April 1993), p. 167, in *Report on Native Papers Bengal Presidency* (January–December 1883), no. 16.

[104] See J. D. Shukla, *Indianisation of All-India Services and Its Impact on Administration* (New Delhi, 1982). For the transformation of the ICS, also see David Potter, *India's Political Administrators, 1919–1983* (Oxford, 1986). Several contemporary memoirs testify to the awkwardness created by the ban on entertaining Indian guests in the clubs; for Anglo-Indian accounts see Cotton, *New India,* pp. 50–51; and Sir Walter Roper Lawrence, *The India We Served* (London, 1928), p. 16; for accounts by Indians see the recollections of M. A. Hussein of the ICS (Punjab cadre) quoted in Hunt and Harrison, *District Officer,* p. 127.

[105] Cited in Hunt and Harrison, *District Officer,* pp. 127–28.

[106] Dharam Vira, *Memoirs of a Civil Servant* (London, 1975), p. 16–17.

[107] Cited in M. K. Sinha, *In My Father's Footsteps: A Policeman's Odyssey, 1908–1980* (Delhi, 1981), p. 24.

[108] See various individual memoirs, for example: K. P. S. Menon, *Many Worlds: An Autobiography* (London, 1965), esp. pp. 89–147; S. K. Chettur, *The Steel Frame and I:*

allowing Indian members and Indian guests in a European club had not been entirely resolved because Indian entry continued to be implemented unevenly, especially in the major city clubs.[109] Dorothy Ganapathy, a graduate from Durham University, found that when her husband, an officer of the Indian Medical Service, was posted to Madras, they were not allowed to fraternize with her husband's colleagues at the local Adyar Club.[110] Similarly, as late as December 1945, the Calcutta branch of the European Association (formerly the EAIDA) was still debating the desirability of Indian membership, and the introduction of Indians as guests, in the leading clubs of Calcutta.[111] Well up to the end of colonial rule and beyond, some clubs, most notably the Bengal Club, maintained their character as whites-only institutions.

The changing imperatives of the colonial situation, however, had made the concept of clubbability ever vulnerable to the selective incorporation of "proper sorts" of Indians—especially Indians in elite government services and business firms as well as the rajas and maharajas of quasi-independent princely states—into the formerly whites-only institutions. It is significant, indeed, that some of the most successful initiatives at setting up "mixed" clubs in the interwar period came from senior Anglo-Indian officials themselves—many of whom could scarcely be accused of otherwise harboring "liberal" sentiments of Indian equality—after having failed to persuade several existing European clubs to permit Indians. Lord Willingdon, who was exceedingly popular with the Anglo-Indian community, became most active in promoting mixed clubs in Bombay, Madras, and Delhi after his experience, as governor of Bombay, when he was unable to entertain Indian maharajas as his guests at the Royal Bombay Yacht Club.[112] The creation of the Willingdon Clubs, for both Europeans and Indians, in Bombay and Delhi was the product of a new political expediency demanded by a reconstituted imperial order.

Life in the ICS (London, 1962); E. N. Mangat Rai, *Commitment My Style: Career in the Indian Civil Service* (Delhi, 1973); [A. Nehra], *Letters of an Indian Judge to an English Gentlewoman* (London, 1934); Nari Rustomjee, *Enchanted Frontiers* (Bombay, 1971); and Badr-ud-din Tyabji, *Memoirs of an Egoist,* vol. 1, *1907–1956* (New Delhi, 1988). See also the recollections of Indian ICS officers in K. L. Punjabi, *The Civil Servant in India* (Bombay, 1965) and Hunt and Harrison, *District Officer.*

[109] See Hunt and Harrison, *District Officer,* pp. 126–27, 29.

[110] Cited in Zareer Masani, *Indian Tales of the Raj* (London, 1987), p. 53.

[111] Cited in Rajat Ray, *Urban Roots,* pp. 231–32.

[112] The incident involving Willingdon is mentioned in Humphrey Trevelyan, *The India We Left: Charles Trevelyan, 1826–1865, Humphrey Trevelyan, 1929–1947* (London, 1972), pp. 112–13. Details are also given in Masani, *Indian Tales,* pp. 51–52. While Indian princes were not allowed in the clubs in British India, they belonged to the same clubs as Europeans in their own princely states; see the recollections of the son of the Nawab of Palanpur in Charles Allen and Sharada Diwedi, *Lives of the Indian Princes* (London, 1984), p. 158.

The price of retaining the "colour bar" now could often mean the loss of official patronage for the club.

The popularity of mixed clubs in late colonial India, however, was not so much a repudiation of the colonial elaboration of the class, gender, and racial assumptions of clubabbility as its fulfillment. The Calcutta Club, established as a mixed institution in 1907 by the then Viceroy Lord Minto, was a case in point. As a mixed institution, therefore, the Calcutta Club contained special stipulations in its charter for the use of its ladies' annex. The members of the club and other guests could be invited to the annex, but no man whose wife was in purdah was to be permitted access to the annex.[113] In this way, indeed, such institutions as the Calcutta Club both incorporated select Indians into the culture of clubland and perpetuated notions about the "unclubbability" of Indians. It is no wonder that Raj Chatterjee of the Imperial Tobacco Company and a member of a mixed club in Delhi in the 1940s recalls that Europeans still remained so fearful that Indian men might "ogle" white women that most Europeans held their more intimate social gatherings in their homes or in the remaining whites-only clubs.[114] The mixed clubs, no less than the whites-only clubs, served only to inscribe the contradictory logic of clubbability—as simultaneously specific and universal—in the colonial public sphere in India.

The contradictory logic inscribed in the colonial elaboration of clubbability explains in part both the vulnerability of colonial clubland in the final decades of the Raj and its surprising resilience in an independent India. For by the final decades of the British Raj, the particular dramatization of "whiteness" in the clubland was already being rendered obsolete. So for many of the Europeans arriving in India during the Second World War, a great number of whom were quite diverse in their backgrounds and in their political orientations, the "stuffy clubs" of Anglo India held less and less attraction.[115] The Fategarh Club, as recalled by the Indian ICS officer N. B. Bonnerjee, offers a telling example of the growing obsolescence of the colonial clubland in late-colonial India. The Anglo-Indian collector's wife banned the books of H. G. Wells from the club library on the grounds that the latter was too iconoclastic to be suitable

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[113] See *Calcutta Club: Memorandum and Articles of Association 1922,* National Library, Calcutta, pp. 48, 51.

[114] Quoted in Masani, *Indian Tales,* p. 52.

[115] Quoted in ibid., p. 68. For the decline in the popularity of the clubs see also Kincaid, *British Social Life,* pp. 276–77. For one Anglo Indian's perception of the growing "crises of whiteness" in late colonial India, see Bill Schwarz, "An Englishman Abroad . . . and at Home: The Case of Paul Scott," *New Formations,* no. 17 (Summer 1992), pp. 95–105.

for its Anglo-Indian members![116] Many of the Indians who were now eligible for club membership, moreover, were equally disenchanted by colonial clubland. In the new racially mixed clubs, as Bonnerjee complained, any intelligent political discussion was virtually impossible: "A casually adverse remark against the Secretary of State for India, for example, which would have met with approval in the National Liberal Club [in London] under Gladstone's life-size portrait, could be cause of pained looks and embarrassed silence in the lounge of any club in India."[117] The new Indian members of the colonial clubland were equally sensitive to any signs of patronage or humiliation in the predominantly European social clubs. Rajeshwar Dayal, who entered the ICS in the 1930s, writes that "one was not expected to be hob-nobbing with the notables of the town by joining their club, except for going to play a game of bridge, because in bridge you don't have to make any conversation or establish any personal rapport with anybody. But at the same time, we were not admitted, at least in the United Provinces, to the service club as full members. We could only become honorary members; and we Indian officers thought that it was infra dig to accept that sort of situation."[118] Similarly General Palit, then a junior officer in the Indian Army, wrote "we joined the Club, of course, but we only went there for games. I never once saw an Indian officer share a table with a British officer or his wife."[119]

Some of the Indian women who gained access to the European social clubs on virtue of their husband's positions became some of the strongest critics of the gendered construction of "whiteness" in colonial clubland. Renuka Ray, the wife of an ICS officer and herself a member of the Central Legislative Assembly in India, found that her involvement in public politics came in the way of her enjoyment of typical Anglo-Indian club life: "I did go to the Club, and I knew how to play tennis and bridge and all the rest of it. But could not tolerate some of the things they started saying, and I used to have long and bitter discussions with them. Eventually, I decided not to meet them too much, because they didn't like me."[120] Dhanvanthi Rama Rau, the wife of another ICS officer and herself an activist in the women's movement in India, was particularly dismayed by the attitude of the typical Anglo-Indian *memsahib*

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[116] Cited in N. B. Bonnerjee, *Under Two Masters* (Calcutta, 1970), pp. 117–18.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Quoted in Masani, *Indian Tales,* p. 16
[119] Ibid., p. 25.
[120] Ibid., p. 55. There were many others, of course, who made full use of the social opportunities for bridge, sports, and other activities that the clubs provided, see Padmini [Sathianadhan] Sengupta, *The Portrait of an Indian Woman* (Calcutta, 1956).

(white woman) in the clubs. The average club-going *memsahib,* as Rama Rau quickly discovered, either knew very little about, or was expressly hostile to, struggles for women's suffrage, whether in Britain or in India.[121] The dilemma for the few single women professionals, like Cornelia Sorabji, was even greater: "The Bengal and United Services Clubs have Ladies Annexes but for English folk only. The Calcutta Club is for Indians and has an annex and I suppose a library but spinsters may not join."[122] Colonial clubland came under increasing siege from within precisely because of the limits of its own rigid gendered, and racial elaboration of "whiteness."

Furthermore, the intimate identification of colonial clubland with "whiteness" made the clubs seem increasingly as the bastion of an outdated social order. It was as such that clubland became clearly marginal in the emerging national "Indian" counterpublics in late-colonial India. Colonial clubland, in fact, became the target of widespread nationalist Indian criticism. With the transformation of the nationalist movement into a mass movement, the clubs became increasingly identified as the last vestiges of an outmoded system of power and privilege in colonial India. The clubs were especially vulnerable to revolutionary "terrorist" attacks from the extremist wing of Indian nationalists. In 1908, for example, young Bengali terrorists gunned down two Europeans outside the Mozuffurpur Club, in an assassination attempt aimed at the newly appointed sessions judge of Mozuffarpur.[123] For Preeti Waddadar, a young female terrorist who led a raid on the Pahartali Railway Club in 1932, the club seemed to symbolize exclusive European privilege.[124] The most ironic reversal of colonial clubbability, however, came from the growing mobilization of elite and middle-class Indian women themselves who in their own pursuit for women's rights overturned the underlying assumptions of its particular colonial elaborations. When a group of Indian women invaded the inner sanctum of the all-male Bengal Club in 1936, they used the logic of clubbability to devastating effect. The aim of the women's group was to convince the British legislators, residing in the

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[121] See Dhanvanthi Rama Rau, *An Inheritance: The Memoirs of Dhanvanthi Rama Rau* (London, 1977), pp. 99–100, 119.

[122] See Letter From Sorabji to Elena [Alice Bruce] Richmond, dated 24 February 1926, in "Cornelia Sorabji Papers: Correspondence and Private Papers," January–April 1926, India Office Library and Records, London, folder no. 40.

[123] See report of the incident in Renford, *Non-Official British,* pp. 309–11.

[124] See the recollection of this episode in Kalpana Dutt, *Chittagong Armoury Raider's Reminiscences* (1945; reprint, New Delhi, 1979), pp. 40–44. For Indian women's participation in revolutionary terrorist organizations, see Geraldine H. Forbes, "Goddesses or Rebels: The Women Revolutionaries of Bengal," in *Women, Politics and Literature in Bengal,* ed. Clinton B. Seeley (East Lansing, Mich. 1981), pp. 3–17.

club, of the fallacy of their arguments that Indian women were not ready to be enfranchised because so many of them were still in purdah. The women argued that men, who themselves practiced seclusion in their clubs, could ill afford to pass judgment on the seclusion of Indian women![125] That at least some of the so-called new women in India had begun to find a home in international women's clubs that had burgeoned in the first half of the twentieth century—the most famous of which was the Lyceum Club in London[126]—was, perhaps, the final coup de grâce to a colonial elaboration of clubbability that frequently invoked the prevalence of purdah among certain classes of women in India as justification for the exclusion of all Indians from the clubs.

At the same time, however, the subsequent transformation and resilience of clubland in independent India stands as a testimony to that other—more universal—dimension that was also always part of the colonial elaboration of clubbability. A journalist, writing some years after Indian independence, comments on the peculiar phenomenon of the "brown sahibs," or the thoroughly Europeanized natives, who find themselves completely at home in the clubs: "In any officer's mess in South Asia, you can meet a Brown Sahib playing the blimp, imitating and caricaturing his predecessors in the colonial armies. He is recognizable, too, in social and sporting clubs: the made-over Englishman bemoaning the passing of the Empire with the arrogance and nostalgia of the *Daily Express*."[127] The club survives in independent India, however, not merely as sentimental nostalgia for the British Raj. Its survival owes as much to the selective reappropriation by Indians of the ever-present tension in colonial clubbability: the potential clubbability of the Indians themselves. In this context, then, the subsequent proliferation and transformation of clubland in independent India is not so much a site for uncritical Raj nostalgia as a multilayered space for the articulation and mediation of

[125] For a recollection of this incident, see the writings of Indian suffragist Mrinalini Sen, *Knocking at the Door: Lectures and Other Writings* (Calcutta, 1954), p. 150.

[126] The Lyceum Club was founded on 20 June 1904 as a place where "women of every nationality meet in a freedom of intercourse hitherto unavailable;" see the report on the tenth anniversary of the club in its paper, *The Lyceum* (June 1914), in *Papers of Lady Strachey* [longtime vice president of the Lyceum Club], Fawcett Library, London Guildhall University, London, Box 92. Sarojini Naidu was, perhaps, among its earliest and most famous Indian members. Many important connections among Indian women, such as those among Naidu, Kamala Sathianadhan, Padmini Sengupta, and Hansa Mehta, had been cemented first in 1919 in the Lyceum Club in London, see Padmini [Sathianadhan] Sengupta, *The Portrait of an Indian Woman* (Calcutta, 1956), pp. 114–16; Padmini Sengupta, *Sarojini Naidu* (Bombay, 1966), p. 158; and Hansa Mehta, *Indian Woman* (Delhi, 1981), p. 188.

[127] Varindra Tarzie Vittachi, *The Brown Sahib* (London, 1962), p. 10; see also his *The Brown Sahib Revisited* (New Delhi, 1987).

the interests of specific elite formations in India. It was precisely the colonial legacy of clubbability—both as specific and universal—that enabled, eventually, the appropriation of clubbability in the service of a new elite in independent India.

This reappraisal of "imperial clubdom" in the context of a colonial public sphere offers a revised and expanded agenda for what Clare Midgley has identified as the "new imperial histories."[128] The contours of a colonial public sphere, as I have demonstrated, can be reduced neither to a history of imperial Britain nor to a history of indigenous India. The ambivalence specific to the colonial public sphere suggests, instead, the need in imperial historiography to reinscribe the domain of "empire," as distinct from the "nation"—whether in Britain or in India—as a subject in its own right. Imperial dynamics, as a higher-order phenomenon, simply cannot be immediately derived from the dynamics of the nation. The most salutary contribution of the new imperial histories hitherto has been a certain integration of empire into the national narratives of Britain and India. In the coming years, however, its more challenging contribution may lie in reclaiming, as a revitalized scholarly field, the less fashionable "empire": a domain constituted by the interaction between the British and the Indians. Such a renewed scholarship of empire would offer, in their full complexity, transnational narratives of the contradictory imperatives and shifting tactics in the practice of modern imperialism.

[128] Clare Midgley, "New Imperial Histories," *Journal of British Studies* 35 (1996): 547–53.