A Room of His Own

His Own

A Literary-Cultural Study of Victorian Clubland

BARBARA BLACK

Contents

Illustrations

Introduction
The Man in the Club Window

He guards the woman from all this; within his house as ruled by her.

—John Ruskin, "Of Queens' Gardens"

A man's home is his castle—or is it not? The nineteenth-century architect Robert Kerr seemed to think it was in his brash tribute *The Gentleman's House* (1864). This far-from-timid volume aims to establish the pedigree of the English gentleman's house, tracing through a wide historic scope its patrimony "from the Hall of the Saxon Thane to the Mansion of the modern Gentleman" (2). Executing his mission to provide middle-class patrons with the houses they deserve, Kerr produced a volume explosive with a pride and authorial earnestness that make his prose positively galvanic. As Kerr educates his middle-class readers on the prescribed architecture of their dream house, a certain appetency fuels his writing: all styles, all period details are available to Kerr's middle-class home builder. "You can have *Classical* . . . you can have *Elizabethan* in equal variety; *Renaissance* ditto; or . . . *Mediaeval* in any one of many periods and many phases" (341). Such architectural excess transformed Bear Wood, Kerr's model middle-class domicile, into assuming such grand expansiveness that it remained forever the text's fantastical ideal never to be built. Yet hidden behind this spirit of inclusivity lies an anxiety, a less-than-generous urgency to exclude when necessary. Of course, readers have long pointed out Kerr's exclusions based on class: in *The Gentleman's House,* modest homes do not interest him, and his career would prove that working-class living conditions never captured his professional attention for long. However, within the welcoming space of Victorian bourgeois existence in Bear Wood, as conjured by Kerr's words and drawings,

also stand firm divisions based on gender.[1] For example, the dining room is the exclusive preserve of the patriarch conducting business in the morning, and for their leisure time, men of the house can turn to the library and the billiard room. This allocation of space requires a separate arena for female socializing, provided by the morning room or the drawing room. Kerr is also attentive to the need for spatial configurations and boundaries that separate male and female servants—through the clever use of staircases, doorways, and passages.

Yet the gendered division of space is nowhere more evident than in Kerr's description of three particular spaces within the ideal bourgeois home: "the Gentleman's-Room," "the Smoking-Room," and "the Gentleman's Odd Room." Here there seems to reside a dire sense that, despite all confidence concerning a gentleman's entitlement, a man must have a room of his own. Why? A practical justification for these distinct spaces, these retreats, is the gentlemanly habit of smoking. As the spokesman for the new profession of architecture, Kerr was rightly concerned with the domestic problem of odor, with rooms that produce noxious smells and the need for adequate ventilation. In defense of the smoking room, Kerr writes, "The pitiable resources to which some gentlemen are driven, even in their own houses, in order to be able to enjoy the pestiferous luxury of a cigar have given rise to the occasional introduction of an apartment specially dedicated to the use of Tobacco. . . . [A] retreat is provided altogether apart where the *dolce far niente* in this particular shape may solely and undisturbedly reign" (129). He adds, "[I]f the Smoking-room be situated on an upper floor it may even be well to have a small special stair to it." However, smoking cannot entirely justify these spaces where men can "undisturbedly reign," for smoking is not the sole activity reserved for these rooms, as Kerr goes on to describe. The "Gentleman's-Room," or business room, "in its most proper and characteristic form . . . is the private room of the gentleman, in which he conducts his affairs" (121). Kerr is emphatic that family space with its accompanying demands and distractions not interfere with this room; it must be protected from family matters.[2] About the "Odd Room," Kerr explains that "[i]n the country more especially, the young gentlemen of the house may find themselves very much at a loss sometimes for an informal place in 'which to do as they like'" (130). He goes on to list not only cigars but also foils, dumbbells, a lathe, and collections both mineralogical and botanical as possible provisions in the room. In describing these three rooms, Kerr loses his characteristically

overblown rhetoric, sounding more like a builder beleaguered who acknowledges the need for patriarchs to seek out refuge in an otherwise hostile dwelling-place in which to "do as they like."

This puzzling tableau of "the-man-in-the-house" continues to vex when one turns to Hippolyte Taine's *Notes on England* (1872).[3] Taine's vivid portrait of Victorian England opens with a period set piece to rival Lenin's first view of industrial London and Conrad's opening vision of imperial London in *Heart of Darkness*. Approaching England by boat, the French journalist Taine marvels at the spectacular built environment that rises before him as London on the Thames comes into view. A gloriously vibrant, mixed picture of London in all its dirt and splendor turns quickly intimate, however, when Taine turns to converse with a middle-class Englishman standing next to him on the boat. Speaking with this twenty-five-year-old man from Liverpool, returning from world travels and now eager to marry, convinces Taine: "It is clear to me that their happiness consists in being at home at six in the evening, with a pleasing, attached wife, having four or five children on their knees, and respectful domestics" (3). Taine offers a flattering comparison between the French and the English gentleman, who can take pride in the moral vigor of his home life. By contrast, Frenchmen are too often out of the house, frequenting the cafés, keeping mistresses, failing as the unfaithful heads of too many unfortunate households. The British advantage over the French, Taine surmises, is the national birthright embodied in the British patriarch—what we today might call family values. For Taine, "At bottom the essential thing in a country is man" (47). Yet Taine's praise takes an odd turn when, only fifty pages later, he again describes the British family man: "That is a good specimen of an English family; the husband energetically, conscientiously, and without yawning drags his conjugal chariot; his happiness must consist in taking tea, with slippers on, at his home in the evening; he will have many children who, not knowing how to gain a livelihood, will emigrate, and who will require to have a constitution like his own to undergo their hardships" (52). The devoted, "attached" wife now becomes the conjugal chariot the husband must drag (the proverbial ball and chain); the evening at home has turned routinized—"his happiness *must* consist in taking tea"; and the children he once dandled on his knee prove the apocalyptic vision of Malthusian overpopulation, as they are forced to emigrate and endure their hard fate. In effect, Taine has transformed the epic paterfamilias into the tragicomic fool or a whipping boy, which raises the question, Is the

Englishman's domesticity a source of pride or a burden? Or to rephrase the question: How should one read the tableau of "the-man-in-the-house"?

Karen Chase and Michael Levenson's study on Victorian domesticity, *The Spectacle of Intimacy: A Public Life for the Victorian Family,* can provide some assistance with this question. As part of their investigation into the public display of private life in the nineteenth century, Chase and Levenson make the argument that, for the Victorians, "marriage was conceived as falling within the wife's domain—that at night a husband crossed an invisible border and dwells among the ladies" (166). E. M. Forster's Maurice agrees: "Home emasculated everything" (52). Indeed, this fear of the feminizing effects of domesticity destabilizes the figure of "the-man-in-the-house."[4] Perhaps Taine's downtrodden husband is the reason for, or the textual and cultural secret behind, Kerr's insistence on rooms within the house for men only. Chase and Levenson's larger mission is to prove to their reader the instability of the domestic world in the nineteenth century as they reconstruct the complex mythologies surrounding the mid-Victorian home. In parsing out the buildup of the separate spheres ideology, however, they focus primarily on mid-Victorian conceptions of wifeliness and femininity. Yet as this introduction's epigraph from Ruskin's influential "Of Queens' Gardens" (1865) suggests, prescriptions for manliness seem equally unstable and complex. The tidy divisions on which Ruskin's theory of the separate spheres relies—the wife as "the centre of order, the balm of distress, and the mirror of beauty" (166) and the husband as "the doer, the creator, the discoverer, the defender" (144)—are challenged by his use of pronouns in a sentence such as this: "But he guards the woman from all this; within his house as ruled by her" (144–45). An alternative story of domestic agency emerges: Is the man's house, "as ruled by her," his castle after all? Chase and Levenson identify something that the focus of their study permits only an allusion to: the intriguing and "persistent motif of the man as elsewhere-than-home" that runs through Victorian discourse (84). To Ruskin's embattled husband who might wish to be elsewhere-than-home, to Kerr's and Taine's British gentlemen, then, this study turns. At times, Victorian men must have felt the need for more than a room, or even three, of their own within the house. Frequently, the elsewhere-than-home was a men's club.

At the turn of the twentieth century, London boasted approximately two hundred gentlemen's clubs; half of these all-male enclaves had been founded in the last thirty years of the century, and at midcentury applicants

could expect to endure waiting lists of eighteen or twenty years (Lejeune, 15, 18).[5] Gentlemen's clubs tended to cluster in London in the exclusive preserve known as "clubland," located predominantly on St. James's Street and Pall Mall, a suburban promenade in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that began to assume the shape of a street at the end of the seventeenth and whose name was coined after a seventeenth-century French form of croquet, "pallemaille." Premiere among the Victorian clubs were the Athenaeum, founded in 1824 for men in science, literature, and art; the Reform (1836), associated originally with supporters of the Reform Bill; its twin club the Carlton, founded in 1832 for political Conservatives (until a vote in 2008 determined that the club would accept women, the Carlton had only one female member, Margaret Thatcher); and the various clubs that could provide for the needs of an imperial city, such as the Travellers Club, founded in 1819 for men who had traveled a minimum of five hundred miles outside the British Isles, the Royal Colonial Institute (1868), for men associated with the colonies and British India, and the United Service Club (1815), founded after the battle of Waterloo for senior-level military officers. Other distinctive and important clubs included the Garrick (1831), which boasted one of clubland's best art collections; the Eccentric (1890), for music hall performers; the Savile (1868), for the younger generation of literary men; and the Savage (1857), for actors, musicians, and artists. This proliferation of clubs begins to highlight clubland as a significant and distinctive site in Victorian London, a force that would "effect a revolution in the constitution of society" (Ackroyd, 357).[6] The historian Roy Porter usefully traces a trajectory from the eighteenth-century coffeehouses—usually run for profit and based largely upon political affiliation—to the not-for-profit clubs of the nineteenth century, run on subscriptions and organized around such diverse modes of affiliation as profession, avocation, traveling, and politics, to eventually the restaurant and hotel of the Edwardian Age, marked as these two early-twentieth-century sites were by far greater social and gender fluidity. This arc of meeting places represents a geographic shift in sites devoted to congress and exchange, social circulation and solidification that paints a changing picture of London life. Provocatively, Porter claims that clubs kept nineteenth-century London a "masculine" town (282);[7] contemporary observation often contrasts the dissolute, feminized fluidity of the French café scene with the "impregnable fortresses" of the English gentleman (Porter, 281).[8] As the nineteenth-century British journalist George Augustus Sala

boasted, "The English are the only 'Clubable' [*sic*] people on the face of the earth" (*Twice*, 200).[9]

Like Porter, one can understand the Victorian club as, in many respects, the descendant of eighteenth-century coffeehouse culture. Indeed, two of London's most famous clubs date back to the eighteenth century: White's, founded first as a chocolate house in 1693, which according to Baedeker's 1889 *London and Its Environs* was "once celebrated for its high play"; and Boodles, founded in 1762, which descended—along with Brooks—from a split in the gaming house that silver fork novels helped make infamous: Almack's of Pall Mall.[10] Samuel Johnson was as much a legendary lover of clubs as he was of London itself. He did not temper his ardor: "Sir, the great chair of a full and pleasant town club is, perhaps, the throne of human felicity," Johnson admitted (quoted by Nevill, 149). In the winter of 1763–64, Sir Joshua Reynolds famously requested that Johnson be a founding member of the definitively named group "The Club"—an association that would later include among its members not only Reynolds but also Oliver Goldsmith, Edmund Burke, Charles James Fox, Adam Smith, Charles Burney, Sir Joseph Banks, and the naturalist Sir William Hamilton.[11] With its chocolate houses, gaming houses, coffeehouses, and social clubs, eighteenth-century London bustled with the fostered sociability of its many all-male enclaves. Such organizations as the Kit-Kat Club, the Society of Virtuosi, the Macaroni (their club was founded in 1764), and the Dilettanti turned to the ancient classical world (both for its "Roman spirit" and for its "Grecian taste") as well as to the international model of Freemasonry and the Italian Grand Tour for guidance in fashioning their club rites and rituals. Members of this libertine culture were necessarily men of wealth and influence who had the time—to pick up on the motto of the Dilettanti, "*serio ludo*"—to play.[12] Eighteenth-century clubmen valued above all else conviviality, conversation, and pleasure.[13] Victorians were often quick to associate such clubs with eighteenth-century degeneracy; as one contemporary account put it, "The club life of the last century was a faster, wilder life than club life is now. Men played higher, and drank more deeply and even the leading men of the day drank as deeply and played as high as the rest" (Dickens Jr., *Dictionary* [1879]). Yet there was much to be admired in these ancestral organizations. Victorians seemed to understand the value of such a network as providing a social entrée, as offering a way to participate in professional, social, and political life.[14] Indeed, nineteenth-century metropolitan culture quite literally carried

this older fraternal culture forward when, in almost cultic fervor, Johnson and Reynolds's Club began to expand its membership after the death of Johnson. Members of this legendary club met at the Olde Cheshire Cheese Pub off Fleet Street for impassioned discussions about literature and especially about the writings of Johnson himself. "The Club" flourished in the nineteenth century and continued into the twentieth century, with Tennyson, Matthew Arnold, Kipling, Macaulay, and Gladstone as just a few of its eminent Victorian members.

Yet the club world of Johnson was simultaneously a more modest and more exclusive affair, representing a difference in both degree and kind that made nineteenth-century clubs ultimately a quite different institution.[15] As a central and shared enterprise, club building became one of the great metropolitan projects of the nineteenth century, and club membership emerged as one of the century's most highly coveted democratized luxuries. Embedded in the etymology of "Pall Mall" lies clubland's originary affiliation with fashion and fashionability, with both leisure and the commercial enterprise that make time for promenading and playing croquet, or "pallemaille," possible.[16] In short, in clubland one can witness the development of the city that commerce created. As an institutional culture that operated upon fraternal ideologies to construct a public, professionalized masculinity reliant on a set of shared cultural practices and male bourgeois sociality, Victorian clubland provided a way of structuring class relations and encouraging—indeed, regulating—identification with one's own class. This pursuit of differentiation, of specialization and segregation, is what Donald Olsen in *The Growth of Victorian London* takes to be a decidedly Victorian development, and he cites Sala, who in 1859 wrote, "Subdivision, classification, and elaboration, are certainly distinguishing characteristics of the present era of civilisation" (*Growth*, 21). When Blanchard Jerrold comes to clubland in his tour in *London: A Pilgrimage*, he tells his reader in awe that "[i]n the clubs, men split into groups, and are all, or nearly all, intent on some weighty affair of the day" (20). And Sir Wemyss Reid, a contributor to George Sims's volume *Living London*, asserts, "Club-land is one of the most distinctive of the special characteristics of London. . . . No one who knows anything of the inside of club-life can doubt its importance as one of the great factors of living London" (74). The erecting of clubland helped to promote the Italian Renaissance palace as the most popular choice for the metropolitan power architecture of the 1840s and '50s (Olsen, *Growth*). Following fashion, Kerr

cites "the great Club-houses of Pall Mall" for making the Palatial-Italian style that "very acme of grandeur," "familiar" (360–61), and thus providing inspiration for the design of his dream house, Bear Wood. In 1807, Pall Mall earned distinction as one of the first streets to have gas lighting installed (Nead, *Victorian*). One hundred years later, in 1909, Walter Besant was able to claim about Pall Mall's cachet, "Without doubt the greatest social force of modern times has been the club" (*London*, 259).[17] Given the acknowledged cultural importance of Pall Mall across the century, we cannot talk about the making of nineteenth-century England, which had much to do with the fashioning of masculinity as well as the building of London the capital city, without acknowledging clubland's central role in constructing an elite. As an institution, clubland is intimately tied to "the many and varied practices and rituals celebrating 'Englishness' that make up what Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger called the 'invention of tradition' during this period" (Arata, *Fictions*, 182).

What is at stake in London's gentlemen's clubs are competing concerns about manliness and Englishness. As an institution devoted to the construction of the British male, the imagined community of clubland sheds valuable light on what it meant to be a man in nineteenth-century England. Responsive to the street, the home, and the empire, the club is a site that registered various uncertainties about modern masculinity. A single image, "The Man in the Club Window" (fig. I.1), the frontispiece illustration of James Hogg's *The Habits of Good Society* (1859), can introduce us to the complexities of Victorian masculine socialization. Because of the famous bow window of White's, the tableau of the man-in-the-window became the century's most recognizable metonymy—along with the club armchair—for the world of privilege called clubland.[18] Hogg's *Habits*—marketed as a "Handbook of Etiquette" for "making one's-self agreeable," recording the "changes of fashion," and identifying the "differences of English and Continental Etiquette"—features a narrator who introduces himself in the preface's first sentence, "I am the Man in the Club-Window" (11), and then proceeds to tell us about himself. A lifelong bachelor, he has sat in his window for the past ten years, during which time his "sole amusement was to observe." As an iteration of the flaneur, the man-in-the-window admits that many suppose his existence to be useless, but he declares his invaluable work to have been the "perfection of observation" that has allowed him the opportunity to watch "the ebb and flow of life" both within and without
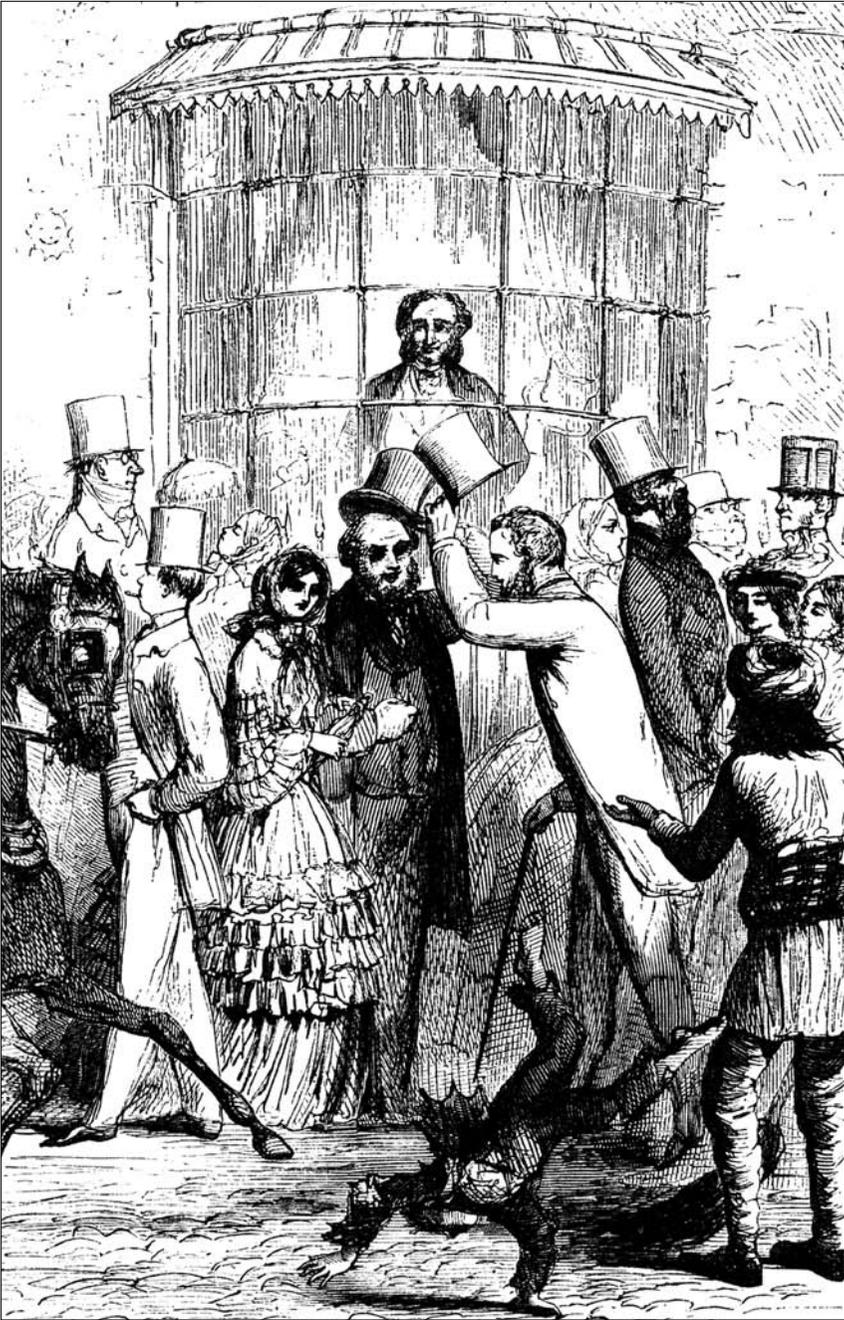
FIGURE I.I. "The Man in the Club Window," frontispiece illustration. From James Hogg, *The Habits of Good Society: A Handbook of Etiquette*, 1859.

club walls. He has witnessed the social dynamics of emergent commercial London culture, with a vision comprehensive enough to catch the street urchin and the snob, the circulating library and the hotel, the hansom and the barouche. The man-in-the-window's vantage point—his advantage, if you will—is that he sees all of this "calmly" (in the illustration, he literally rises above the crowd). Like Sherlock Holmes later in the century, the clubman deftly reads the signs of class and behavior. He knows that social identity is a matter of public performance and display and that clubs are where culture is both produced and consumed and where gentility and acceptability reign supreme. He wishes that all aspiring gentlemen could understand the difference between propriety and impropriety, and he despairs that "a number of men have crept into [his club] who ought not to be there" (14). Anointed, in effect, a trustee of cultural capital, the man-in-the-window functions as a custodian of urban behavior, for there is much ordering and cleaning up to be done in the capital city.[19] Gifted with an insider sensibility, he is grooming, and building, collective identity.

But the most interesting part of the man-in-the-window's life story is revealed when he admits that he moved into his club in a feverish state, significantly weakened by the years following the French Revolution, by events and anxieties that left him unable to read and unwilling to talk. In short, this figure of prerogative demands that he also be seen as compromised: a Watson-like figure, the male construed as gimp, the disabled man who is kin to Kerr's beleaguered paterfamilias and brother to Taine's burdened husband.[20] Thus, this man of advantage is also a figure under siege, and the fenestrated view frames clubland as simultaneously sanctuary and bulwark, bastion and hospice—a dreamscape that nevertheless registers anxieties about modern masculinities. Such scholars as James Eli Adams, Brian Harrison, and Katherine Snyder summarize well the dynamics that defined masculine socialization in nineteenth-century Britain.[21] They point to the rising number of women in the workplace, which created greater economic competition;[22] the legislative acts that empowered women, especially concerning property rights and access to divorce; the waning of the British Empire (going back to 1857, Adams emphasizes the specific psychocultural costs of the Indian Mutiny) and the concomitant rise of America and Germany as global powers; and the lower birth rate among the middle and upper classes, which belied the ideal of male productivity. As Snyder puts it, Victorian males faced "the double threat of extinction and degeneracy" (23). Furthermore, the rise

of the companionate model for marriage, resulting in a male psychic divide (what some historians call a masculine double consciousness); the soaring costs of running the bourgeois household; the rise in the marriage age; and the increasing professionalization of male life all placed new pressures on men. Clubland was an institution that managed these anxieties and responded to these crises in masculine self-development. In such a "man's world," what Judith Butler has taught us to see as the complexities of gender performance are foregrounded.

Victorian London's gentlemen's clubs provided a social geography where identities were forged and recast. Here a corporate culture of common values showcased maleness coming to know and show itself through both private and public masculinities. It is here that we can investigate the "debate over the meaning of masculinity" and consider the variety of "masculine styles" and "ways of being-masculine in the world" both constructed and contested in the nineteenth century, to borrow several helpful phrases from Richard Dellamora (*Masculine Desire*, 167, 3, 2). Clubland's rich constellation of figures showcases a variety of masculinities as well as the instabilities inherent in clubland's function within Victorian society. The great denizen of London's clubs, the bachelor, recalls the British imperial mission to keep males single during their twenties and thus available to serve the empire during a century that the scholar Peter Stearns reminds us was essentially a military age for England (*Be a Man!*). Bachelors grew in numbers also because of the rising marriage age, the increasing professionalization of life (particularly for men), the rising cost of setting up the connubial home, and the growing allure of luxury that competed with the life goal of the bourgeois nuclear family. For bachelors, clubs became a stopping place between the home of one's childhood and a home of one's own. Writing about midcentury London society, Sala considers the "hardy sons of Britain" to be social pariahs if they do not have a membership in one or more clubs, and he is quick to remind us that etymologically *club* comes from *cleave,* referring to the splitting of costs to reap the benefits of privilege. Debentures permitted the young man beginning his career in London to be "the possessor of an entailed estate [who] for all purposes of present enjoyment . . . sits under his own roof on his own ground, and eats his own mutton off his own plate, with his own knife and fork. . . . He cannot waste, he cannot alienate, it is true; he can but enjoy" (Sala, *Twice,* 210).[23] As Karl Baedeker's 1889 *London and Its Environs* claims, "To a bachelor in particular his club is a most serviceable institution"

16

(73)—both home and proving ground for that transition period between boyhood's end and the beginning of a career.

But the swell and the lounger also populated clubland. These liminal figures raised questions about class, propriety, and social position—the swell, for his aspirations to move up the social ladder, and the lounger, whose nocturnal languishing undermined Victorian earnestness. These "social actors," to use Judith Walkowitz's phrase (41), called forth the specter of masquerade for their cross-class trespass, imposture, and impersonation. Contemporary accounts often expressed anxiety about another inauthentic male type, the "club loafer"[24]—the man on the fashionable street who appears clubbable but is in fact begging for coin.[25] But foremost, clubland remained the grand domain of the gentleman, whom Eve Sedgwick calls "the great flagship class of high Capitalism" (*Between Men*, 178). The figurehead for a culture of leisure that only respectability can build, the clubbable gentleman stands next to, yet in tension with, the dandy. The tension lies between the characteristically earnest gentleman and the glib, elegant dandy, between the muscular and effete conceptions of masculinity that they represent. They prompt us to question whether Victorian London's club culture was essentially virilizing or feminizing. Although club culture revolves around many masculinizing rituals such as drinking, smoking, and gambling, it provides room for the expression of fondness and affection between men: male bonding. In this regard, clubland may be a place of both homosocial and heterosexual desires, which, as the work of Sedgwick makes clear, can be complicit.[26] Or Dellamora might be correct when he claims the club's function to be "a homophobic mechanism" that distinguishes between gentlemen and sodomites (*Masculine Desire*, 195). Here is his full argument:

> Late in the century, masculine privilege was sustained by male friendships within institutions like the public schools, the older universities, the clubs, and the professions. Because, however, the continuing dominance of bourgeois males also required that they marry and produce offspring, the intensity and sufficiency of male bonding needed to be strictly controlled by homophobic mechanisms. . . . [C]lubs provided a semipublic space in which 'gentlemen' might be discriminated from 'Somdomites,' to use the Marquess of Queensberry's spelling. (195)

This indeterminacy of class, gender, and sex—this confusion about club culture and Victorian masculinities—only intensifies when one considers

the dueling rhetoric of scandal and propriety that swirled around and about clubs.[27] As Matt Cook in *London and the Culture of Homosexuality* reminds us, St. James's Park had historically been known as a cruising ground. Charles Marsh's two-volume portrait of early-nineteenth-century clubland, *The Clubs of London* (1828), provides a jaunty account of much "Tom-and-Jerryism": "It being customary for the young bucks of those days to sit late, or rather *early,* over the bottle, it was very common, whilst '*serpenting home to bed,*' to meet with odd adventures; and no less so, to *seek* them" (89). Such a storied place, "those dangerous resorts of the idle and discontented . . . thus encouraged to indulge in all sorts of postprandial extravagances" (Barham, 1:297), could easily become the target of vice campaigns and the scapegoat for anxiety about leisure and leisure time.[28] Although associated with daytime commercial London, clubland also readily invoked nocturnal London with its many diversions, an esoteric otherworld of gaming, sexual deviance, and potentially disruptive departures.[29] Clubland's character as a microculture of secrecy is apparent in one contemporary account about a specific and, of course, unnamed club: "[W]henever a secret manoeuvre is to be carried on, there are smaller and more retired places, both under this roof and the next, whose walls will tell no tales" (quoted by Timbs, 242).[30] Yet other contemporary voices felt otherwise. Writing *London Exhibited in 1852,* John Weale confidently concluded, "The moral influence of club life is also, upon the whole, a favourable one . . . there is more of the polish of gentlemanly manners and decorum, and infinitely less of intemperance. . . . Great is the improvement which has taken place in our English habits in this respect; and it is one which has partly, if not mainly, been brought about by modern club habits" (290–91).[31] Cultural optimism such as Weale's has led some scholars today to argue that clubs cleaned up the peerage, particularly improving the evening behavior of gentlemen (M. Mason, 11) and providing a world of social obligation that fostered the manly virtues of reserve and self-control. The punctilio of club life—the boiling of coins, the ironing of newspapers, the dressing for dinner—could variously register either the distance and reserve Amanda Anderson sees as central to Victorian life or the repression—an "education in reserve" (94)—that John Kucich argues to be fundamentally Victorian, or the self-discipline that James Eli Adams claims was an essential ingredient in the making of Victorian gentlemen.[32]

Whatever one's terms, it seems certain that clubs helped to codify an invaluable mode of self-display one might call respectable, public masculinity.

18

To be a man in the nineteenth century was to be a gentleman, or at least to appear and behave like one. Clubs become, in this light, an extension of public school culture into adulthood. What one scholar calls "the gentlemen factories," public schools exploded in the nineteenth century, surely a corollary development to the burgeoning of clubland. While there were only nine public schools in England at the beginning of the nineteenth century, by 1914 there were three hundred, often modeled after Arnold's Rugby (P. Mason, 162). These schools fostered an atmosphere of social and political paternalism, fashioning a male elite founded upon the argot of sociability as a way to consolidate male power to serve empire and high capitalism—gendering national identity, as many scholars argue, in nineteenth-century England.[33] Contemporary accounts are often candid about the public school's mission to detach boys from the domestic sphere and the influence of their mothers. "Becoming a man," John Tosh summarizes, "means leaving women behind—or at least the women who have provided nurture in childhood. It entails renouncing the comforts of the hearth in favour of the rigours of an all-male public atmosphere" (112). Like most ideals, the cult of domesticity, while inspiring, also proved stifling—a pressure from which relief became necessary. As Alan Sinfield asserts, "Defensively male institutions, for men to escape to, were the counterpart of domesticity" (112).[34]

Both for its temporality—for the many ways it both shapes and responds to the experience of time—and for its spatiality, clubland is a transformative site. A fundamental function of club culture is to generate ties and loyalties, to recall and construct memories, to honor old affections—both real and invented. Like Blanchard Jerrold (who, in his pilgrimage through picturesque London, sees the ghost of Beau Brummell haunting clubland), many grow nostalgic in response to the essentially conservative institutional culture of clubland.[35] As the great-great-grandson of Erasmus Darwin (founder of the Lunar Society), Bernard Darwin, claims, "More notably than any other human institution the club is a type of eternity" (quoted by Girtin, 201). Turning sentimental, George Sims's contributor Sir Wemyss Reid values the university clubs, "where friendships formed on the banks of Isis and Cam in the halcyon days of youth are carried on until heads are grey and backs are bent, have their own special place," and the service clubs, where "you would hear names that recalled to you the memory of stirring deeds wrought for England in every quarter of the world" (Sims, *Living London,* 74, 75). For these members, Reid concludes, clubs are their "port at last" (75). Yet while

club discourse often casts a glance back in evoking Old England, it can also celebrate clubland as a sure sign of progress in its capacity to provide the convenience and the surplus of luxury and leisure that characterize a fully modern state. Such is the confident argument of Ralph Nevill's history *London Clubs* (1911). Nevill can boast that, while the beginning of the nineteenth century saw only 1,200 men belonging to only thirty clubs, in his day 200,000 men of modern London enjoy the privilege of membership in over two hundred clubs. He commends London's clubs for their regulating of comfort and convenience: here "life is rendered very easy for its members" (172).

Clubs become a way of ordering and making sense of the world. A topoanalysis of clubland situates it as a central arena within the male urban routine, promising a new way of experiencing the city. Interacting with the city, the street, the away-from-home, the club is a hybrid space within the cityscape—both private and public, less public than the street but less private than the home. The semiprivate arena of the club combines in unique ways claims for privacy with the demands of the public sphere, for it is a simultaneously recondite but monumental institution that reverberates with the counterforces of privatization and public circulation. Instrumental to Victorian social mapping, the club looks out onto the street, but it is also a clearly demarcated interior no nonmembers can enter. Moreover, club culture depends upon the topographic markers of West and East End London; as Wilde once famously quipped, "a gentleman never goes East of Temple Bar" (quoted by Kernahan, 217). Thus, the space of the club is firmly situated within a male zone of commerce, politics, and leisure mapped out by the borders of the West End. A man's club, even when club rules forbid the explicit conducting of business, intersects with the business of the office. Promoting alliances that are both social and economic, it is a temple to the esoterica of male professional culture. The commercial opportunities available within and facilitated by male-only club culture remind us that, as Sedgwick maintains, gender is always about the social and vice versa.[36] Constructing an elite, at the same time constructing Englishness, the shared cultural values of the male space of the clubs foreground the concerns central to a market economy: pseudo-kin, the kind of constituted family privileged by both club and market, becomes more valuable than blood relations; sponsorship matters—it is whom you know that gives you a competitive edge. And the value of the network, crossed with aggressively competitive individuality, raises the question whether you have made the inner circle or not, whether

you have been chosen as the next recruit. In short, the sociability of the old-boys' network can make, or break, your career.

As a proving ground that staged "rehearsals for patriarchy" (Morowitz and Vaughan, 9), clubland was often featured prominently in men's biographies and autobiographies from the century. A survey of Victorian male life-writing uncovers frequent tributes to London's clubs that yield the narratives' most tender moments—understandably so, given the genre's focus on identity formation. Thus, in the biography of his father, *The Life and Remains of Douglas Jerrold*, Blanchard Jerrold lovingly paints a portrait of his father as an eminently clubbable man—known for his wit and sallies, his "mots," and the genial spirits and sharp eye that made him a comrade in great demand. Moreover, the son deems the father a natural-born critic, a man of discriminating taste, known so well in clubland—where, we are assured, he will always be remembered—that the younger Jerrold devotes a full chapter to his father's club memberships and fraternal affairs. In his *Memories and Reflections, 1852–1927*, the Earl of Oxford and Asquith, prime minister from 1908 to 1916, boasts in an entire chapter devoted to clubland that "I've been a good member, in good standing, of two clubs: The Club and Grillions." The paragraphs chock-full of table talk, sporting culture trivia, and expressions of delight in "pleasant womanless evening[s]" are powerful testimony of his claim to male power and distinction, a shorthand for his amply demonstrated civic involvement and for his exclusively male know-ingness. In similar fashion, earlier in the century Captain Gronow enlivens his reminiscences of Regency and Victorian life with tales of clubland that only an insider would know. As a sure sign of his gentility, Gronow's know-ingness quickly aligns him with his own class; his voice is pitch-perfect as a tolerant and urbane observer of life among men of fashion, or, as he calls them, the "fashionables." And in his memoir, *My Life: Sixty Years' Recollections of Bohemian London*, London bohemian George Sims intrigues his reader by claiming that the Unity Club opened the city up for him (57). In his seriocomic biography of the gentleman-journalist James Greenwood, *The Greenwood Hat*, James Barrie captures the thrill of the male rite of passage into adulthood that begins with the moment of initiation and follows with the satisfaction of inclusion: "Anon went to London thinking that clubs were Romance, wondering if ever the glorious day would come when callers at his 'chambers,' on finding he was out, would know that therefore he must be at 'the club.' He even saw, did Anon (in his mind's eye, O Thackeray),

ladies inquiring for him first at those chambers and next with certainty at that club, so he was ripe for Bohemia; clubs even gave him a thrill (which he was never to get from them again) when he joined his first, the Savage" (239).[37] But it is Trollope's autobiography, which I discuss more fully in chapter 2, that best reveals the shared donnée of these narratives. Trollope's expressed affection for London's clubs clearly illustrates that they provided him harbor in his flight from the femininity of writing as a profession, embodied in his mother, Frances—the obscured and anxious secret of his life story. Clubland enables what Abigail Solomon-Godeau in *Male Trouble* has called "a flight from difference"—a difference of class, race, and gender. As George Augustus Sala—always clubland's most faithful social actor—claimed with revealing racializing rhetoric, "A club is a weapon used by savages to keep the white woman at a distance" (quoted by Nevill, 135).

An anonymous contemporary of Sala's once described "a club [as] a place where women ceased from troubling and the weary were at rest" (quoted by Nevill, 135). These fighting words suggest how the refuge of clubland was also a battleground, particularly when it appeared to promote male remoteness and threaten, at its most apocalyptic, the very institution of marriage. The nineteenth-century social observer Mrs. Gore lamented how men so readily identified themselves with their clubs as though they "constituted a second family" (46) and regrettably concluded that "only England, only John Bull, would want to leave Mrs. Bull behind" (21). Thus, we should not be surprised that Isabella Beeton begins *The Book of Household Management* (1861) with the imperative that women must make their homes attractive because they compete with clubs (and taverns and dining-houses) for their husbands' time and attention. Israel Zangwill's comic novel *The Bachelors' Club* (1891) has misogynist fun outlining the requirements for membership in its titular organization: because the seventh commandment of the revised club decalogue is "Thou shalt not marry," all candidates must first condemn their fathers' marriages to be failures, and all members must have clean records without one staining spot of "the grand passion." Roy Porter captures well clubland's cult of misogyny, as he pieces together contemporary observations about clubs: "Their popularity among the married, foreigners observed, called into question the truth of 'home, sweet home.' By their superb comforts, critics jibed, clubs encouraged 'the cult of egoism, the abandonment of family virtues, the exclusive taste for material pleasures, and a deplorable laxity of morals of which the whole nation will someday feel the baneful consequences'" (281).

At times, the debate over fraternalism took place in the popular press. Consider one response to an editorial of September 18, 1888, in the *Daily Telegraph*, bearing the title "Is Marriage a Failure?" and signed "Anti-Club": "In many cases homes and happiness have been destroyed and the wife's future and that of her children blasted by clubs—one of the greatest curses of our enlightened country." A subsequent letter to the editor, from "A Clubman's Slave," admits to having had enough of the "separate spheres." The letter writer is left to suffer the neglect of her husband, who "has made a good stroke of business in securing a cheap housekeeper" while preferring "smoking concerts and club friends." To aggrieve her further, he manages to keep his club life discrete from home and leaves early for the city most days, coming home only after she has gone to bed. In Thomas Hood's 1838 *Comic Annual,* the doggerel verse "Clubs," "turned up by a female hand," continues to express such discontent. Complaining that their men "live, eat, drink at Clubs," admitting that club chefs cook a better omelet than they can, bemoaning how their men come home drunk, irritable, and "sleepy, dull and queer" from the club, the female chorus admits, "We hate the name of Clubs!" The final verse typifies the dark, uneasy humor of the song:

> 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 wedded friends they all allow
> > They meet with slights and snubs,
> And say, "They have no husbands now,
> > They're married to the Clubs!"

As one can see, an examination of clubland can illuminate Victorian urban culture and, within it, the waging of nineteenth-century gender wars. But clubland has much to tell us about the literature of the century as well. For example, the affinities between clubland and the century's greatest genre, the novel, become quickly apparent through their shared investment in class, family, money, and power—through their deep and mutual interest in what writer Susan Davis calls the "dramas of social relations" (quoted by Clawson, 13). In countless novels, the mise-en-scène of the club reminds us of some of the preoccupying concerns of the century: the anxiety over inheritance,

the concern over legacy and generational transfer, and—as I have begun to examine here—the building of both national and gendered identities. Often, clubland provided working writers with real commercial and professional opportunities—the chance for publicity as well as the venue for meeting and socializing with publishers and readers who spent many an evening in clubs devouring the latest novels and journalism.[38] It is important to understand the many ways clubland was involved in the construction of what Trev Lynn Broughton calls "male literary authority" and implicated in the "drama of the male vocation" (111). It is no accident that many of the century's writers, often drawn to clubland's vast libraries or its quiet working spaces, were club members: the Athenaeum alone welcomed Macaulay, Arnold, Trollope, Burton, and Dickens to its membership list. Few can dispute clubland's iconic literary status, whether it be speculations about Disraeli's being blackballed at the Athenaeum or Bram Stoker's first introduction to the story of Vlad the Impaler at the Beefsteak Club or Dickens and Thackeray's "brawl" at the Garrick or Queensberry's pursuit of Wilde at the Albemarle. It is fitting that the mysterious turbocharged virility of Ian Fleming's James Bond is telegraphed through the sole detail of his membership at the Reform Club. And household name recognition of the Drones Club, based on the now-defunct Bachelors Club, is surely part and parcel of the twentieth-century Wodehouse craze. Providing both the métier for real-life working writers and rich matter for fiction and lore, clubland is central to a serious examination of nineteenth-century British masculinity under construction—shaped by both the pressures and the desires that London's clubs could mobilize and unleash. As the following chapters show, those pressures and desires include the burden of tradition, the force of class mobility and capitalism, the ideals of urbanity and civility, the call to power and empire, the tug of nostalgia, the pleasures of sophistication, and the desire for fashionability.

Following this introduction, a tour of clubland begins with "A Night at the Club," which reconstructs the cultural conditions of club life through the histories of several eminent clubs. This first chapter foregrounds clubland's politics and aims to make deeper psychocultural sense of the many rituals—the boiling of coins, the ironing of newspapers, dressing for dinners, blackballing, whist and cigars—that helped to form the mythologies and institutional histories of clubland. My starting point is what Clifford Geertz has called "the definition, creation, and solidification of a viable collective identity" (238), as I discuss clubland's invention of traditions, the metaphorics

of brotherhood, and the appeal of solidarity. Mary Ann Clawson's four de-
fining features of fraternalism–"a 'corporate' idiom, ritual, proprietorship,
and masculinity" (4)—provide a useful framework for better understanding
how the culture of clubland created a space for adult malehood and masculine
group identity, given the distinctly visual, performative, and ritualized char-
acter of nineteenth-century bourgeois life. The next chapter, "Conduct Befit-
ting a Gentleman," turns directly to fiction and examines clubland's ties to the
novel and to male professionalism in the context of mid-Victorian financial
stability. Representations of club life in the fiction of Dickens, Trollope, Dis-
raeli, and Thackeray underscore the shared preoccupations of these authors:
an anxiety over the transfer of property and legacy, a nervousness about so-
cial standing, the allure of politics, and the value of male productivity. In the
archetypal male "great expectations" narrative, fictional clubs raise questions
about legacy and social networking, about ambitious fathers and treacherous
sons, about respectability and fraud. It is within the context of the financial
stability brought on by mid-Victorian expansion that clubland establishes and
upholds standards for conduct, cementing social position that fuels an esprit
de corps through both an invoked dynastic past and invented traditions. The
opportunity for success as well as the risk of fraud or failure raised by mid-
Victorian economics generate the variously didactic, idealized, and satirical
views of these novelists on clubland. Club scenes in the lives of such charac-
ters as Thackeray's Pendennis and Disraeli's Egremont are charged with an
anxious longing regarding class standing that their authors surely shared. In
these novels of male initiation, can there be more important questions than
those concerning the making of the man, the career of the novelist, and how
such ambition can intersect with political aspiration?

　　Thackeray provides the point of connection to the next chapter, "Club-
land's Special Correspondents," which examines clubland's role in the con-
struction of a new and rarefied fraternity: literary-journalistic Bohemia. Mining
Thackeray's extensive journalistic output provides abundant opportunity
to investigate clubland's ties to the fourth estate, journalism, as well as to
the maneuverings of gossip and the ideals of urbanity and male fashion-
ability. Here I am particularly interested in the genre of the sketch, a genre
Thackeray mastered. The writer of the sketch has often been described as
a situated voice; this voice in situ, in Pall Mall speaking to us from the club
armchair (a metonymy Thackeray frequently deployed), had much to tell
his contemporaries—and us today—about cosmopolitan aspirations and

celebrity culture. In his collection of sketches titled *The Book of Snobs*, Thackeray deploys his razor wit to turn satire against itself and achieve the ultimate in wry urbanity. As we eavesdrop on what is, in effect, bourgeois urbanites talking among themselves *about* themselves, Thackeray becomes a startlingly modern voice, a progenitor of what we today might dub our "culture of the cool"—a voice, a tone, a style that have come to characterize modern "talk of the town" columns. Another master of the sketch and an admirer of Thackeray, George Augustus Sala, also figures prominently in this chapter. A bohemian bachelor (who eventually married), a passionate lover of London, a flaneur and an idler—and, indeed, the founder of the Savage Club—Sala quickly became one of clubland's most devoted loungers and the avatar of London's new literary-journalistic coterie. This chapter looks at the origins of clubland papers such as Thackeray's brainchild, the well-known *Pall Mall Gazette*, and the short-lived *Echoes from the Clubs*. Sala's brother in trade, Edmund Yates, is a person of interest here too. One of the first gossip columnists and the instigator of the infamous Garrick Club Affair, Yates built an entire career on gossip and achieved his celebrity status through being in constant possession of the inside scoop. *Cliquerie* and intrigue gain us access into the clubby arena of male professionalism, an arena that privileged the power that comes with insouciance and what one might call "knowingness." For Sala, it was everything to know London inside and out, to be a member of the club who could "unroof palaces and hovels at will," as he boasted in *Twice Round the Clock*.

The fourth chapter, "Membership Has Its Privileges," investigates club culture's critical role in a Victorian colonial context. This chapter first moves from the metropole to the colony, where the exporting of British club culture was in response to anxieties about contact with, and exposure to, the exotic at the empire's borders. Colonial clubs such as India's Bengal and Calcutta Clubs became a home away from home, an escape—this time—*from* the exotic; it is no surprise that club scenes are treasured imperial moments in Winston Churchill's *My Early Life*. Clubs in the colonies showcased British lifestyle choices that underscored the all-important "us" versus "them" colonial mentality, thus providing visible markers for cultural and racial authority. Nowhere do we witness this function of imperial clubs more clearly than in Kipling's fiction. As the critic Stephen Arata has argued, there is an insularity—a club mentality, one might call it for purposes of this study—embedded within the Kipling oeuvre that informs his narrative and colors his

authorial voice. Arata identifies it as the "intense group consciousness" of Anglo-Indians ("Universal Foreignness," 13), that most exclusive of clubs that is neither India nor England. But this chapter also examines the metropole's imperial clubs, those institutions that provided a home now that one's sense of home, following a term of imperial civil service, was forever altered. Club collections that display exotic mementoes and artifacts were a particularly treasured element of club interior design for these institutions and their members. Indeed, collecting was the central mission for one of the metropole's most curious brotherhoods, Richard Burton's Cannibal Club, the Anthropological Society of London's inner circle of erotica collectors. Perhaps this fraternity best showcases the club's role as power base, reminding us of the potentially gnostic culture of clubland as an enterprise that could, and often did, turn away from public service to serve instead a group of "insiders" or connoisseurs. The gentlemen's club's operation as the esoteric brotherhood or learned society takes this chapter to its farthest outpost—to Victorian science—to enable us to gain a better understanding of the curious and deep filiations among colonial expansion, science, and the cultural form of fraternalism. Suffice it to say for now that one of the Savile Club's dynasties was the Darwin family.

The final two chapters of *A Room of His Own* move from empire to decline and excess of two kinds. First, "The Pleasure of Your Company in Late-Victorian Pall Mall" investigates the countercultural pleasures of sophistication, degeneracy, and ennui within several fin-de-siècle male adventure romances by Stevenson, Doyle, Wilde, and Beerbohm. Here we witness how late-century clubland permitted a generic as well as a cultural escape from the realm of feminine/domestic realism. As an arena for sophistication and decadence, boredom and ennui, and taste as well as its decline, clubland liberated its members from domesticity and freed them from the constraints of convention, both artistic and social. In the final decades of the century, the queering potential of male associational culture intensified; clubs, as the "other-home," allowed for disruptive departures that enabled a man's "loyalty elsewhere." This chapter eventually arrives at the imagined and real-life possibility of an eroticized fraternalism, and the hybrid space (both private and public) of the club resonates with the open secret of queer masculinity. Here one might profitably think of Lee Edelman's arguments about the legibility of homosexual difference and queer visibility as the masculine affiliative ideal turns homoerotic.[39] Then, in "A World of Men," the excesses of nostalgia—that endemic

indulgence at the century's end—become John Galsworthy's main concern in *The Forsyte Saga*, an elegy for clubland. Existing in a world of privilege that Galsworthy in his own life renounced, the flawed men in this saga long for the heyday of clubs and male entitlement, and their wistfulness speaks to their inevitable, but damning, sense of social dislocation. Reading Galsworthy through the lens of clubland reminds us of the important work that guided his social fiction: its anatomy of conformity, its attacks on the propertied, and its pathology of a social disease that feeds off communal memories. An epilogue, "A Room of Her Own," builds a bridge between the queen of camp Oscar Wilde and the queens of fashion lounging at the Empress Club, one of the most luxurious ladies' clubs at the turn of the century, where lady shoppers could spend the night away from home. This epilogue also unravels matters somewhat by agitating the issues of gender and class identities, as it turns to London's "feminine clubland." The city's clubbable women are the sisters of Flora Tristan, the French socialist who cross-dressed her way into the clubs of Pall Mall to write an exposé on the British elite. A contested issue in the suffrage movement, club membership became an entitlement that signaled women's growing right to partake of the pleasures of the city. While pressure mounted to make London's clubs coed and while women's clubs, such as the Pioneer and the Alexandra, grew in number during the last decades of the century, male clubland became, at times, more defensively a bulwark against the advances of suffrage reform. Here my aim is to be most suggestive: to consider the process of gender identity formation in sites of same-sex congress; to think about the dialectic between home and city or domestic routine and urban adventure, between privatization and the public sphere; and to examine, one final time, the mechanisms of affiliation and allegiance that inform a club mentality.

These are the many issues with which this book wrestles; however, all these concerns arise from two central questions: *Why?* and *Why now?* First, *why* do humans form clubs? To put aside historical context and gender for a moment, I admit to being interested in the fundamental human desire to join like-minded comrades as a way of forging community beyond blood ties. Neurologists tell us that our brains are hardwired to make us a sociable species. Scholars in the field of happiness studies consistently find that human flourishing is dependent upon human sociability. Humans long to belong to something larger than the self: we gain a sense of our individual identities through participating in a collective identity, and, perhaps even more socially useful to us, we earn some sort of status based on the fact that we are part of

a group while others are not. The precise nature of that status may vary—it may be related to power, respectability, taste, or the stature that comes from some sort of cultural and/or social capital—however, a club by definition is an elite institution. For a club is an assemblage of insiders, the very identity of which depends upon there being outsiders. The "sameness" that defines a club's members cannot be understood except in contrast to those who are construed as "different," and thus a club's very existence relies on the imperative of protecting the group from nonmembers. That sense of connectedness—with some but not with all—provides legitimacy, purpose, and comfort to those who are connected. As Pierre Bourdieu explains, "social identity lies in difference" (479); his notion of "habitus," as that sense of one's place that confers "a sort of social orientation" (466), proves how central clubs, clubbing, and clubbability are to our lives. Here I readily use the word Samuel Johnson coined as highest praise for his friend James Boswell, a word the Victorians well understood and relied on regularly. To call someone "clubbable" was to recognize him to be like oneself; he was a socially eligible and, therefore, desirable member of one's own group identity.

Yet such large, sweeping truths about human nature fail to account for why men in Victorian England formed clubs with a particular avidity—so much so that multiple grand clubhouses arose from the rubble of Carlton Palace built for a single king, thereby transforming Pall Mall and, in turn, Victorian London into a city of palaces and the century into a golden age of clubs. So, in short, *why now?* This shift in lived social experience—in England, in the nineteenth century—is evidenced by a Google word search, for actuality always has its discursive corollary (fig. I.2). These charts begin to tell the story of Victorian clubland, which arose out of a perfect storm of class shifting, gender-identity construction, and nation building. In its pivotal moment, Britain had achieved primacy in a post-Waterloo world. The British defeat of France set two things in motion: in the short term, the end of the Napoleonic campaign brought troops home to England; and in the long term, the triumphant end of the war engendered a second wave of British imperialism. As any Victorianist knows, the explosion of affluence that followed Britain's victory raised the living standards of the British middle classes, creating a demand for goods and services that had been reserved solely for the upper classes. The notion of a "gentleman" changed accordingly. With social status no longer determined solely by birth, one could become a gentleman by behaving like one and by possessing the tastes and habits, and pursuing the lifestyle
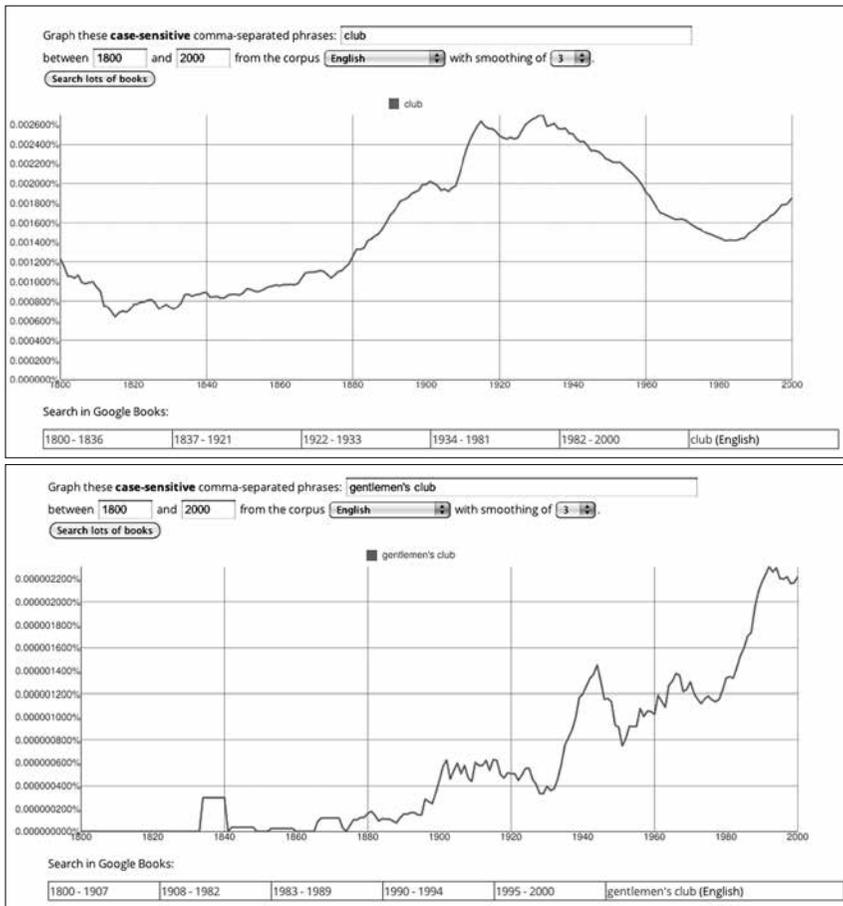
FIGURE I.2. Frequency of use of the terms *club* and *gentlemen's club*, 1800–2000. Charts derived from Google Books Ngram Viewer. Jean-Baptiste Michel et al., "Quantitative Analysis of Culture Using Millions of Digitized Books," *Science*, 2010.

practices, of a gentleman. What scholars of the nineteenth century have not fully recognized, however, is how central club membership was to this equation; once the privilege of the few in the eighteenth century, membership in a gentlemen's club marked a nineteenth-century British man's social arrival. This explosion of affluence allowed the "commercial man" to storm the clubs; the emergent bourgeoisie and their rise to power were proof of social mobility, a dream realized in a country—perhaps paradoxically so—still very much invested in the value of social distinctions. The city's new clubs were there to honor both: to invite new members in yet also to guard the doors.

30 Which brings us to the returning troops. Britain's soldiers, it turns out, were some of Victorian clubland's first denizens. It was the inspired plan of the Duke of Wellington to build clubhouses that would simultaneously provide a suitable home for military heroes and also remove his soldiers from London's streets, where they had been prone to public misbehaving. Undoubtedly, Wellington's extensive military career gave him a keen understanding of how fraternal institutions could channel male aggression. His experience on the battlefield taught him the potency of bonds formed in wartime among soldiers, and how men even more than women needed to belong to something larger than the self. In fact, Wellington's ideal vision of a home life was a military family, and he needed to provide a "home" for his soldiers, those men he called "my boys."[40] Thus, the duke's vision of nineteenth-century clubland was, from the start, that it would serve two conflicting purposes, as an institutional culture that would allow boys to be boys but also groom those boys into men. In other words, as club brothers socialized behind closed clubhouse doors, they in turn would become socialized. Part of the work of the chapters that follow is directed at tracing this double helix of club culture, the entwined threads of respectability and naughtiness rooted in clubland's origins. As this book recounts the biography of an institution, a trajectory across the long nineteenth century emerges—as early Victorian clubs moved away from their roots in libertine culture to usher in the project of social control that constituted the mid-Victorian clubland of respectability. Late-Victorian clubland shifted once more, as certain gentlemen's clubs grew more conservative, providing a bulwark against late-century sexual politics and, in particular, the growing women's movement. Other clubs turned decidedly bohemian, hosting a subculture that recalled the days of Beau Brummell in order to disaffiliate from mid-Victorian clubland and resuscitate the radical possibilities of a men-only culture. Though the precise nature of the work of the elite shifted its shape across the century, I argue that clubs maintained a key institutional role in the building of England's national identity and the constructing of British men's sense of self throughout the Victorian period.

In concluding this introduction, I must acknowledge the many writers who have been important to this book. First, I am indebted to historians like Roy Porter, H. J. Dyos, Michael Wolff, and Donald Olsen who have turned generations of scholars into intrepid detectives of the cityscape and its meanings. Exemplary for their curiosity, these historians have produced

catalogic studies on city life that have left some remaining nooks and a few crannies for latter-day writers to explore. *A Room of His Own* owes another enormous debt to the fields of urban studies and gender studies. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's groundbreaking *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985) is my book's necessary starting point. In effect, my study literalizes the configuration central to Sedgwick's thinking on gender, class, and sexuality: What in fact happens when women disappear from the triangulation of desire?[41] I am also interested in her argument that gender is a class issue—and I suppose I have, in effect, accepted her challenge by doing what she calls the "less glamorous" work of talking about "crucially important" *institutional* male homosocial bonds (19). Books on gender in nineteenth-century Britain such as James Eli Adams's *Dandies and Desert Saints: Styles of Victorian Masculinity* (1995) and John Tosh's *A Man's Place* (2007) have provided me with particularly wise guidance. In thinking more deeply about sociability, I have turned to studies such as Mark Carnes's *Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America* (1991), Mary Ann Clawson's *Constructing Brotherhood: Class, Gender, and Fraternalism* (1989), and Benedict Anderson's touchstone work on collective self-representation, *Imagined Communities* (1991). The historian Peter Clark's *British Clubs and Societies, 1580–1800* (2000) has provided me with a useful "prequel" for my work on nineteenth-century British club life. And on matters of class, I have found no better assistance than in the scholarship of David Cannadine, Catherine Hall, and Leonore Davidoff.

Because club culture raises questions about privacy and publicity, about intimacy on the one hand and cosmopolitanism on the other, this study is indebted to such thinkers as Jürgen Habermas, Georg Simmel, Pierre Bourdieu, and Richard Sennett for their work on the public sphere, public life, and social and cultural capital. To prepare to write this book, I also read with pleasure as many contemporary accounts of London as I could, with a particular eye to the clubland histories and guidebooks that proliferated at the turn of the century—books such as John Timbs's *Clubs and Club Life in London* (1908) and Bernard Darwin's *British Clubs* (1903)—and, earlier, John Murray's 1860 *Handbook to London*. Yet ultimately, these texts are either Baedeker-style overviews or loving festschrifts composed by clubland's "insiders." No scholar has yet investigated the literary and social significance of clubland in quite the ways I describe here. A more recent work, Anthony Lejeune's *The Gentlemen's Clubs of London* (1984), has the advantage of a

more modern perspective; however, it too examines clubland from within that world, a decidedly different perspective from mine. That said, I am grateful for Lejeune's many facts and ample information, appreciative of his clear warmth for club culture and his obvious recognition of the importance of clubland. While that importance takes on different shapes for me, as I aim to remedy what I take to be a costly omission in current scholarship regarding this pervasive cultural site and popular literary trope, I realize that one more fundamental question lies at the heart of this book: not only *why* and *why now*, but also *what*. *What* can clubs tell us about masculinities in nineteenth-century Britain, about nation building and class identities, and about literary texts often read and discussed but rarely through the lens of clubland? If we think about such matters as clubbability, boiling coins, initiation rites, and candidates books, what will we learn about authors, about their lives and preoccupations, and about the production of literature and the meaning of specific literary texts—all issues of great interest to me as a scholar of literary studies? And so I have gladly accepted—and now extend to my readers—Robert Smith Surtees's invitation from his 1860 society novel "*Plain or Ringlets?*": "This is what Clubs do. They invite visits" (236).

Thank you for your interest in this Ohio University Press title.

This book is available for purchase online at our website or through other ebooks vendors.

OHIO UNIVERSITY PRESS