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Introduction

"Subject to Civility": The Story of the Indian Baboo

By ANINDYO ROY

The nineteenth century, the era from which we date our civility ... Lamb, *Elia* (1835)

We to-day are haunted and beset by Babu English, enlightened discontent, and insolence of University degrees. (*Calcutta Review* 96 [1893], 296)

Decidedly this fellow is an original.... He is like the nightmare of a Viennese courier. (Kipling, *Kim*)

IN BENJAMIN DISRAELI'S 1845 novel *Sybil*, the reader encounters an "obscure adventurer" by the name of John Warren. Described as being "assiduous, discreet, and very civil," Warren's career begins at a London club from where he travels to India to become in a few years' time a "financial genius." Important to note is that behind Warren's spectacular rise in life is his "civility." Impressed by his courteous manners, the colonial gentleman whom Warren serves at the club employs him as his personal valet and takes him to India where Warren generates wealth by selling hoarded food during an Indian famine. Displaying the sheer power of "character" that had been shaped by his sense of "adventure," "discretion," and "prescience," Warren is in many ways reminiscent of the eighteenth-century English nabob. Driven by the promise of unlimited wealth in the newly established Eastern colonies, the nabob embodied the dream of social mobility for the many Englishmen whose economic prospects at home seemed severely constrained by existing laws of property and inheritance. However, the wealthy eighteenth-century nabob remained a perennial outsider in English society: suspected of being contaminated by the Orient, he often became the target of mockery and was parodied for his ostentatious lifestyle and for his ill, and sometimes very odd, manners. However, by the mid-nineteenth-century returning colonials were no longer subject to this stereotype. In fact, they were seen as ordinary citizens of the metropolis, individuals whose aspirations and energies simply mirrored the imperial nation's power and authority. No potential threat of contamination thus existed, because men like John Warren had simply followed the norm, their behavior in accord with the rationale that had already been adopted and validated by the nation's "government." In fact, John Warren's enterprising actions were sanctioned by the state and its governmental apparatus, which had made profit making *as* profiteering a legitimate

way to generate wealth. In the nineteenth century the very notion of the state rested on this personal economic authority that had been vested in the governmental apparatus deployed to administer the colony. Since that authority presupposed what David Lloyd and Paul Thomas have called a “principle of organization in which people and their institutions [were] expressed *in and through* the State,” the “enterprising” individual was perceived to be simply part of what came to be regarded as the “government enterprise.”¹ Disraeli appears to have been aware of this aspect of the state’s function when he commented, with inimitable irony, that John Warren’s profiteering was not separate from the administrative practices undertaken by the colonial government in India: “A provident administration it seems had invested the public revenue in its benevolent purchase; the misery [created by the famine] was so excessive that even pestilence was anticipated, when the great forestallers came to the rescue of the people over whose destinies they presided; and at the same time fed, and pocketed, millions.”² Indeed, Disraeli’s choice of words—“provident enterprise,” “benevolent purchase,” “fed and pocketed”—captures the link between the colonial government’s “administrative” functioning, its role as the “savior” of colonial subjects in distress, and the financial fates of individuals like John Warren and makes visible the inescapable complicity between private profit and state-ordained privilege—a collusion of interests that ensured a special place of privilege for British male subjects in the colonial order.

In 1897 the *Calcutta Review*, perhaps the most well known of the nineteenth-century Anglo-Indian monthlies, carried the commentary that the “great need of education” was “to stimulate and foster, in all ways possible, the growth of a real University life, which may develop in those who share it loyalty, disinterestedness and public spirit, together with what, in default of a recognized name, we might, perhaps, call ‘civility’.”³ As that pervasive Victorian norm that had been essential to the formation of key social values, civility came to be associated in the colonial world with the values of “loyalty, disinterestedness and public spirit.” But there was something curious in this rhetoric: while all of the desirable traits, namely “moral courage,” “loyalty,” “disinterestedness,” and “public spirit” could be named, “civility,” for the *Calcutta Review*, could only exist “in default of a recognized name.” What was it about civility that in the case of colonials it could not be called by its “recognized name”? “Default” suggests lack or absence, which signifies that in some sense what was recognized as the “civility” of colonized subjects could only stand in for—in an approximate sense—but not really represent the “core” that gave the dominant social norms their true meaning and function in the metropolitan world. Could it be that the very ordinariness of the term “civility” concealed another, more significant, order that made it

1. David Lloyd and Paul Thomas, *Culture and State* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 3 (emphasis added).

2. Benjamin Disraeli, *Sybil* (London: Wordsworth Classics, 1995), 67.

3. “Indian Universities: Ideal and Actual III,” *Calcutta Review* 105 (1897): 142.

much more than what was understood as yet just another form of outward social behavior? Why did a word that seemed so easy to define in the metropolis become so enigmatic in the colonial world at this historical moment?

My main objective in introducing these two instances of the rhetorical use of the term civility is to bring attention to a history of the consolidation of a specific form of colonial discourse in the nineteenth century. This history becomes visible when we set John Warren's civility alongside the "elusive" civility of the newly educated colonized subject, a figure placed on the other side of the colonial divide, opening up—as it were—the closely knit network of ideological structures that were produced *within* the nineteenth-century imperial civil and administrative framework. It is through the institutional apparatus of the imperial state that these ideological structures were activated, enabling them simultaneously to identify and differentiate between different orders of civility *and* to negotiate that difference as a way to produce the civil "citizen." Whether it was the task of defining profit and aligning profit with profiteering, or that of introducing "education" in the name of "reform" (or "relief"), the colonial state apparatus successfully circumscribed the economic as well as the cultural realm by simultaneously utilizing the "civil" citizen to mark the center and the circumference of the ideal of citizenship—in other words, by concurrently identifying in this figure the presence of a self-evident norm as well as that of an absence or default.

The common association of "civility" with "gentlemanly behavior" is not a myth. A great many literary works in the nineteenth century (including Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* and *Mansfield Park*, Charlotte's Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Dickens' *Great Expectations*, and Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, to name a few) bear witness to the growing significance of civility in defining the subject/citizen of a modern imperial nation-state. In that nation-state, the codes of civility provided a wide range of discursive tools that helped define the civil subject as a "citizen" belonging to a collective imaginary named the "English people." The idea of nationhood, as Benedict Anderson has pointed out, was based on forging such an "imagined community"⁴ out of the common ground of citizenship, which occurred precisely at that historical moment when England undertook its imperial tasks of governance in the colonies. Along with its administrative duties and its responsibilities for providing relief to famine stricken people, one of the chief tasks faced in the mid-nineteenth century by the imperial government was, of course, the "education" of its colonized subjects. Education was after all another form of "relief" meant to rescue colonized subjects from their world of spiritual and intellectual darkness. This paternalistic imperial mission was undertaken during the era of liberalism when, as Michel Foucault has pointed out, the idea of "governmentality" was instituted as the core principle guiding the state. This idea of "governmentality," Foucault explains, was based on an activity of

4. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso, 1983).

“governing human behavior in the framework of, and by means of, state institutions.”⁵ As Daniel Bivona has shown, despite the pejorative sense in which the term “governmental bureaucracy” was sometimes used, Victorians were, to a large extent, proud of the “accomplishments of their efficiently-managed businesses at home and their well-drilled armies abroad.”⁶ It was this idea of efficiency, evolving from nineteenth-century utilitarian political philosophy, that motivated liberal reformers to introduce education as a way to extend the power of colonial institutions in the colonies.

The issue of state-instituted modes of governance of “human behavior” is nowhere more apparent than in the nineteenth century when education came to occupy a central place in colonial administrative policies. Liberal reformers emphasized the primacy of Western education for the enlightenment of colonized subjects by calling for the need to replace the existing policy of supporting vernacular learning that had been instituted by the “orientalists.”⁷ When the liberal reformer and imperialist Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay defended his policy of introducing Western education in India, he did so by reminding his audience that it was not “possible to calculate the benefits which we might derive from the diffusion of European civilization among the vast population of the East.”⁸ Among these “benefits” was “loyalty” to the state, an allegiance that could no longer be elicited from colonized subjects through the sheer power of military might, and although impressive in the eyes of many Victorians, had led to widespread resentment among the colonized subjects. It was expected that a colonized people “who had acquired a knowledge of western literature and science” would be motivated as much by “an enlightened conviction that their welfare depended on a continuance of existing relations” as from “a knowledge of those powerful resources at the command of the British Government.”⁹ Welfare and power are conjoined in this rhetoric for the protection of the status quo; indeed, the belief that education would be “an inestimable safe-guard to [its] rule” provided the key rationale to the colonial government in the succeeding years to continue supporting Macaulay’s vision of education in India.¹⁰ It was based on an understanding of the power of “hegemony”—as defined by Antonio Gramsci—by liberal reformers in England who justified their educational policies by simply claiming that colonial rule had successfully supplanted the “cruel despotism” of the East with a noncoercive “enlightened despotism,” one that worked for the benefit of the colonized majority, the “people of

5. Michel Foucault, “The Birth of Biopolitics,” in *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: New Press, 1997), 74.

6. Daniel Bivona, *British Imperial Literature, 1870-1940: Writing and the Administration of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998), 9.

7. For a discussion of the institutionalization of orientalist learning in British India, see David Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance: The Dynamics of Indian Modernization* (Berkeley: U California P, 1969).

8. Thomas Babington Macaulay, *Miscellaneous Writings* (London, 1860), 571.

9. “Review of Considerations on Representative Government by J. S. Mill,” *Calcutta Review* 37(1861): 204.

10. *Ibid.*, 204.

India." As Gauri Viswanathan has demonstrated, the creation of a particular class of educated (male) subjects who were possessed with a firm knowledge of their own enlightened self-interest ensured that this class could be relied upon to safeguard the larger interests of the empire. By being able to identify a common ground between the agenda of the empire and its own survival as a new community of classed citizens, these subjects (colonial administrators hoped) would serve as mediators between the imperial government and the colonized populace.¹¹ It might be worthwhile to note that this logic of shared interests (between the individual and the nation) had been patterned after those ideals of social mobility that had helped constitute nineteenth-century metropolitan citizenship and nationhood.

A marked change in this viewpoint becomes evident after the 1870s following the opening up of the covenanted Indian Civil Services, hitherto reserved exclusively for British subjects. Although their numbers were few, qualified university-educated Indians soon began to compete for posts in the imperial government. As a result, they were perceived as a new threat to the privileged spaces of the Anglo-Indian world, a threat that was to materialize in the figure of the "competition baboo"—that of the educated Indian vying for the same privileges promised to metropolitan citizens.¹² The presence of the baboo began to signify not only the failure of Macaulay's dream of producing a docile community of educated subjects, it gave added impetus to the growing perception that "throwing wide the portals of the University [had] attract[ed] effort into unpredictable channels ... inevitably provid[ing] for a large and growing class of the discontented."¹³ That "unpredictability" became, in fact, the problem for many Anglo-Indian administrators: the benefits assured by Macaulay had only exacerbated the problem of efficiently carrying the tasks of governing India, producing a crisis that now seemed to undermine the very foundations of its governmental agenda. The *Calcutta Review* of 1897 in its censure of the colonial government for continuing to support the spread of Western education through the recently founded Indian universities, pointed to the pernicious effects of such policy on the social manners of Indian youth. After acquiring "the small amount of education involved in getting through one or two University examinations," the monthly claimed, the educated youth had adopted "a self-asserting, aggressive and bumptious manner, which is inconsistent either with native or English ideas of what a gentleman ought to be." This crisis in the conduct of Indians, the

11. Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (New York: Columbia UP, 1989).

12. *Baboo English: On Our Mother Tongue as Our Aryan Brothers Understand It*, ed. and comp. T. W. J. (Calcutta: H. P. Kent and Co., 1890). In its preface, the author describes the baboo as "a name applied to native clerks in Bengal, and some parts of upper India, although it really is a term of respect equivalent to Esquire, and to enable them to obtain this coveted title, youths are crammed until they can stand no more, and in many cases they become utterly worthless" (1). *The Hobson-Jobson Dictionary of Anglo-Indian Terms* quotes from *Fraser's Magazine* (August 1873): "The pliable, plastic, receptive Baboo of Bengal eagerly avails himself of this system (of English education) partly from a servile wish to please the Sahib logue, and partly from a desire to obtain a Government appointment" (209).

13. "Teaching of English," *Calcutta Review* 96 (1893): 300.

reviewer further noted, resulted from the failure of education to foster the values of civility among the Indian youth, who had not only failed to acquire "the highly-polished manners of their fathers," but who had also not benefited from the sobering influence of "the quiet, self-contained and modest demeanour which commonly characterizes the young Englishman."¹⁴ This renewed emphasis on civility that accompanied much of the alarmist rhetoric about the "evil" influences of education in late nineteenth-century India is, indeed, symptomatic of a crisis within the liberal order, a crisis that was to manifest itself time and again throughout the last four decades of the century.

Informing much of the debates about the fiscal and political wisdom of maintaining a publicly supported higher education in English, this alarmist rhetoric can therefore be best understood when placed against the task of defining and enforcing the liberal ideals of metropolitan "citizenship" as a way to enlist support and compliance from the colonized subjects. In fact, this division between the "metropolis" and the "colony" was often manifested in the often-repeated sentiments of "crisis" expressed by many India-hands who had succeeded to the legacy of Macaulay. For example, Sir Charles Wood, secretary of state, deprecated the "employment of a highly crammed Baboo of Calcutta," and Lord Salisbury, in 1877, wrote to the viceroy, Lord Lytton, that he could "imagine no more terrible future for India than that of being governed by Competition Baboos."¹⁵ Given that the rationality of enlightened despotism adopted by liberal reformers was itself structured around a "colonial divide," one based on differential notions about race and nationality, it is not surprising that Macaulay's enthusiasm for education, expressed in his 1833 speech, was also tempered by his anticipation that the political fallout of his policies could not be easily predicted or even controlled because of the constraints under which the goals of the new civilizing mission of liberalism had been set. His concluding words: "Are we to keep the people of India ignorant in order that we may keep them submissive? Or do we think that we can give them knowledge without awakening ambition? Or do we mean to awaken ambition and to provide it with no legitimate end? Who will answer any of these questions in the affirmative?" not only reemphasize a fundamental difference between the "we" and "them" that is necessary for the exercise of liberal rule but also strike a hesitant chord that suggests a deep discrepancy within the very order of civility and civil citizenship authorized by the liberal agenda.¹⁶ How was it possible to deal with this inner contradiction within the "universalizing" order of civil citizenship when that order itself relied on a colonial divide that could not, at any cost, be dismantled without risking the very basis for enlightened colonial rule?

14. "Indian Universities: Ideal and Actual III." *Calcutta Review* 105 (1897): 143.

15. Quoted in Singh, Hira Lal, *Problems and Policies of the British in India, 1885-1898* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1963), 16, 28.

16. Thomas Babington Macaulay, *Miscellaneous Writings* (London, 1860), 572.

The fact that this contradiction is managed in strategic ways becomes evident in the Indian baboo, the colonial figure whose "civility" became "elusive" in proportion to his claim to metropolitan citizenship. In his essay "Sly Civility," Homi Bhabha has argued that the notion of civility was built around the presence of "interdictory borders," boundaries that had to be created, policed, and then harnessed.¹⁷ The elusive civility of the colonized subject therefore served as the means through which this dynamic is sustained: it permitted the difference between citizenship and subjecthood to be posited, calibrated, and eventually managed as a way to safeguard colonial interests. Within this dynamic, the Indian baboo, the university-educated Indian man produced by liberal reform, is always shown to come close to—but always fall short of, and even occasionally graze against—the standards of metropolitan civility. Whether employed as a native clerk or a petty government official, the often "un-civil" baboo symbolized that "lack" or "difference" that made him a target of constant satire and caricature. The baboo therefore entered the nineteenth-century imperial imagination with a kind of wild flamboyance that can be easily detected in Rudyard Kipling's creation in *Kim*, the Calcutta University-educated Hurree Chunder Mookherji, and in F. Anstey's parody of the Bengali gentleman, "Baboo Jabberjee," in *Punch*.¹⁸ Various aspects of the baboo's behavior and language were marked as indicators of his elusive civility. He was described as a "mimic man," a hybrid figure that was the product of a monstrously strange combination of English learning and native prejudice. Replete with fragments of learning mostly derived from university crambooks, Kipling's Hurree Babu quotes randomly from Herbert Spencer, Wordsworth, Shakespeare, Burke, and Bengali love songs. His elusive civility was furthered conveyed by the persistent suspicion that behind his submissiveness were the seeds of treason and disloyalty against the master, the British government. Although Hurree Babu presents himself as the devoted servant of the empire, his mask of civility drops when in an state of inebriation he complains that the imperial government "had forced upon him a white man's education and neglected to supply him with a white man's salary."¹⁹ Even when acquiescent, the baboo's civility was perceived to be merely a facade that concealed an intrinsically aggressive, discontented, and deceptively ambitious mind. With his unpredictable combination of domineering manners and fawning ways, the baboo's aberrant hybridism had to be constantly described, deciphered, and monitored, which explains the nineteenth-century fascination with baboo English—with its "polyglot character," ostensible penchant for "bombast and grandiloquence," and "injudicious use of metaphors."²⁰

17. Homi Bhabha, "Sly Civility," *October* 34 (Fall 1985): 75.

18. F. Anstey, *Baboo Jabberjee*, B. A. (London: J. M. Dent and Co., 1897).

19. Rudyard Kipling, *Kim* (orig. 1901; London: Penguin, 1989), 286.

20. Arnold Wright, *Baboo English as 'Tis Writ: Being Curiosities of Indian Journalism* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1891), 6, 18.

Kipling's representation of the baboo's language, including the often distorted pronunciation of common English words, therefore reflects the obsessive preoccupation with this unpredictable hybridism. For instance, the *Calcutta Magazine* described the baboo as someone "who *pretends to know* the language of the *sahib logue* [English people],"²¹ and the *Calcutta Fortnightly Review* represented his learning as being "the flatulent grotesque of Anglo-Indian tradition."²² The 1890 "*Baboo English*": *On Our Mother-Tongue as Our Aryan Brethren Understand It*, described by its author as a collection of "amusing specimens" from native usage of the English tongue, is only one example among many of this interest in scrutinizing the fate of the English language, a language that was perceived to have been corrupted by the baboo's flagrant disregard for the norms of linguistic civility. The proliferation of the discourse about civility is therefore clearly visible in the forms of "institutional incitement" to "speak" about the civility of the baboo, the "explicit articulation" of the baboo's hybrid language permeating the very fabric of nineteenth-century Anglo-Indian public culture, which made language the very basis for circumscribing the borders of civility.²³ Furthermore, it enabled a reassessment and reconsolidation of the centrality of British civility at a time when the dissemination of Western learning had resulted in creating new shifts in the existing colonial power relations.

My discussion of the Indian baboo is meant to provide a historical instance of civility emerging as a significant element constituting the discourse about citizenship. Around this historical instance accrues a larger, more complex, genealogy of civility, one that opens up a vast terrain of interrelated and interanimating discourses needed to consolidate European civil authority. Each one of the essays presented here attempts to trace the jaggedness of these genealogies by showing how, during the era spanning the mid-nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth, the limits of civility were constantly defined and redefined across the vast global terrain of colonial culture. Marked by what Homi Bhabha calls the presence of "interdictory borders," civility became the common battle ground for establishing the boundaries of civil behavior, which were simultaneously inscribed and contained by enacting different forms of transgression. This rationality of "incitement and interdiction"—described for instance by Michel Foucault as constituting the "truth" about sexuality in the nineteenth-century—can be utilized to better comprehend the dynamic relations instituted by civility to produce the "civil subject" as the "object of difference." For most postcolonial scholars working out of this Foucauldian paradigm, the language of civility offers the most productive site for investigating the production of the civil subject under colonialism. The focus on language, of course, necessitates a reconsideration of the entire spectrum of colonial rhetoric on race, class, gen-

21. "The End of Education," *Calcutta Magazine* 53 (September 1883): 123 (emphasis added).

22. "British Rule in India," *Calcutta Fortnightly Review* 1.9 (March 1881): 258.

23. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (London: Penguin, 1978).

der, and nationality that emerged out of specific institutional sites in the nineteenth century. In fact, the function of civility in animating and sustaining the ideology of civil citizenship depended on the presence of the notions of "difference" that had been already posited by these multiple discursive orders. On the one hand, the language of civility insisted on a fixed normative system for identifying what was acceptable or legitimate. On the other hand, the inherent flexibility of that language allowed it simultaneously to spread its discursive nets to encompass the differences already circulating within its fold and to objectify and normalize those differences in specific ways. Indeed, the process of normalization can be said to lie at the very heart of the discursive activity constituting the "governmentality" of the state: it made the task of self-identification depend on differences posited by historical notions of race, class, gender, and nationality, differences that were made functional by being "managed" by the "language" of civility legitimized by the state. As these essays demonstrate, metropolitan society's own understanding of citizenship relied on the varying political effects of that language, effects that often materialized in the functioning of the civil apparatus of the state, including the devising of a diverse range of policies on education, marriage, property, and ownership, which extended to the reproduction and legitimization of cultural capital in the realm of literature and the arts and to the formation of the laws of censorship.

One of the ways in which the power of civility materializes is through the state-ordained authorization to deploy the category of race as a way to interpellate the metropolitan subject as national citizen. However, it should be noted that this racial identification of the citizen could be effected only when the domain of metropolitan rights and privileges had been already subjected to the idea of the bourgeois "family," with its constitutive structure of legality that involved marriage, property, and inheritance. Michelle Chilcoat's analysis of French colonial culture in her essay "Civility, Marriage, and the Impossible French Citizen: From *Ourika* to *Zouzou* and *Princesse Tam Tam*," highlights this aspect of the racial construction of French civility vis-à-vis the notion of the family. Chilcoat argues that Josephine Baker's early twentieth-century cinematic roles (of the "African" or the "mulatto") are part of the discourse of French citizenship based on kinship, family, and blood, ideas that have their historical basis in France's involvement in the slave trade, and in the nineteenth-century discourses about slavery, colonialism, and scientific racism that linked marriage and citizenship through "race." Reconstructing this trajectory of a negotiated citizenship, Chilcoat demonstrates that even in the seventeenth-century France of Louis XIV, citizenship and civility were being molded together in the "African," the figure introduced through slave trade. She considers the subsequent transformations in this figure throughout postrevolutionary nineteenth-century French society by identifying the exclusionary mechanisms behind the ideas of "assimilation," "freedom," and "legitimacy" that served to relay civility within the civil discourses legislated by the French state. By investigating a wide range of essays and tracts produced by

nineteenth-century French intellectuals, such as those by Cassagnac, Gobineau, and Renan, Chilcoat argues that the formation of a French “civil” imaginary was facilitated by the processes of memory and forgetting, which had been activated by the discourse of biology, and which often conjoined “blood” and “inheritance” by inserting them into a vocabulary associated with bourgeois “family” and its attendant network of kinship relations. This biological turn, Chilcoat contends, not only helped produce a “natural order” in accord with the “social order” of the state but also cocreated and legitimized a language that provided a political basis for identifying “nation” with “race.”

In her essay “‘Too Fatally Present’: The Crisis of Anglo-Indian Literature,” Anjali Arondekar probes the negotiated status of Anglo-Indian literature (a literature written by and about the British in nineteenth-century India) as a way to inquire into the larger questions of civility and morality that dominated much of nineteenth-century Anglo-Indian public culture. Arguing that its “minority status” as literature often reflects a contradictory sense of the power of British overseas identity, Arondekar focuses on the “mangled hybridized content” of this literature to highlight the vulnerability of its racial constructions and to deconstruct its efforts to maintain the internal coherence of Britishness. The specific object of her study is the nineteenth-century Anglo-Indian novel as represented by Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair*, Alice Perrin’s *Into Temptation*, and F. E. Penny’s *Beyond Caste and Creed*. She maps out the different narrative enactments of crisis in these novels that center around and embody race and interracial desire to show how the powerful articulations “of a community in exile, and most importantly of the travails of empire building” betrayed a “dysfunctional Anglo-Indian life.” Moral decay and waywardness that accrue around specific figures of transgression—such as the wayward woman, the dissolute European, and the Eurasian of mixed blood—bring to the fore a community in a state of “emergence and contestation.” By tracing the language of the different forms of racial and gendered visibility and the transgressions that are often dramatized in these novels, Arondekar also demonstrates the power of the underlying recuperative mechanisms of that language that served to consolidate the crisis-ridden authority of British power.

Maria Koundoura’s “The Limits of Civility: Culture, Nation, and Modernity in Mary Shelley’s *The Last Man*” investigates the exemplary role of Greece in the formation of the West’s phantasmatic origins and of the order of civility defined by those origins. Although not colonized by Britain in the way India was, nineteenth-century Greece’s location in the interstices of the East and West made it an unstable object of orientalist fantasies and Western philhellenism, both of which constructed Greece both as the “origin of civilization” and the site of a plague that threatens its destruction. This dichotomy, Koundoura argues, has a particular ideological function given that the “knowledge” produced by it serves as “sublimated fantasy” for the metropolitan subject. Operating within this sublimated fantasy is a narrative of projection and displacement that is embodied in Shelley’s futuristic vision

of a possible twenty-first century Republican England emerging from an apocalyptic history. In this vision, the figure of Evadne, the shadowy Sybil-like female persona, represents "not only the unassailable but also the destructive gendered outsider." Using gender as a category for analyzing civil citizenship, Koundoura traces the ways in which Evadne's textual space is occluded by Shelley to "incorporate the outsider into a masculinist and Eurocentric narrative of origins." In her attempt to imagine a new revolutionary and egalitarian future for nineteenth-century England, Mary Shelley projects Evadne's recalcitrant and nationalist self as a "thing of darkness," thereby disavowing Greece's real historical existence as a nation caught in the throes of its own struggle for national self-definition. Using this historical perspective, Koundoura reads Shelley's nineteenth-century novel about Greece as an ideological narrative, cast out of the simultaneous articulation and recuperation of a crisis within English civility, which eventually secures the authority of the metropolitan civil subject.

Geeta Patel's "Marking the Quilt: Veil, Harem/Home, and Sexual Subversion within Them," takes us to another moment in the construction of colonial civility. In this essay, Patel revisits the site of the *zenana* in the context of early twentieth-century colonial India to explore the ways in which questions about civility were routed through the discourse of female sexuality and desire. Patel introduces her discussion of civility in the public sphere of culture by challenging the meanings that have accrued to the *zenana* from Western perceptions of the exotic (female) other, contending that the specificity of the South Asian *zenana* has been obliterated by current colonial discussions about the Eastern harem. Through a careful analysis of the story "Quilt" (1941), written in Urdu by a woman writer, and of the controversy generated upon its publication, Patel reveals how the story "intervenes in discourses about the *zenana*/*zanaanah*/harem by considering socialization into civility and the kinds of failures of vision embodied in these forms of socialization." In short, she offers a reading of identity politics under colonialism, one that interrogates the heterosexual presuppositions that have dominated the understanding of female sexuality and desire within the domestic and public domain. Her careful delineation of the story's complex movement of disclosure of an unnamed act of transgression reveals how the author, Ismat Chughtai, plays with the ideas of "parda" (curtain) and harem to imagine a new itinerary for sexual desire that challenges and often eludes the neat ideological binaries of conventional patriarchy. In addition, Patel provides an astute analysis of the controversy generated by the story by advancing a symptomatic reading of the rhetoric of "obscenity" generated by the legal battle over its publication. This combination of textual and contextual reading, therefore, allows Patel to historicize the discourse of civility in colonial culture by making visible the larger institutional spaces that found themselves in crisis by the story's dramatization of the links between desire and civility.

The final essay in this issue, Jefferson Holridge's "An Island Once Again: The Postcolonial Aesthetics of Irish Poetry from Beckett to McGuckian," is

an exploration of modern Irish poetry's relationship with that nation's own history of colonization and decolonization. As an example of a postcolonial critique of civility, Holridge's essay focuses on the poetry of Samuel Beckett, Seamus Heaney, Derek Mahon, and Medbh McGuckian to offer a reading of the dynamic relations between the "self" and the "other" that come into play in the creative articulations of "home" and belonging. By disclosing the multifarious ways in which the poetry negotiates this dialectic for articulating a vision of decolonized identity, Holridge provides a new understanding of the difficulties inherent in the postcolonial effort to imagine such a vision of home, especially when confronted by the fractured and violent memory of colonization. The dialectic of decolonization, developed by Frantz Fanon, provides Holridge with a larger aesthetic context for mapping out the itinerary of this pursuit. This dialectic, Holridge argues, offers a particular site—that of the "sublime"—for articulating a vision of redemption that is promised by the confines of poetic "form." Extending his discussion of aesthetics and poetic form, Holridge also speculates on the parodic possibilities opened up within this aesthetic order of the sublime by claiming that notions of community, self, and nature, which form the thematic strands of Irish postcolonial poetry, are themselves open to constant revision and rearticulation.