

Miscegenations of Modernity: constructing European respectability and race in the Indian railway colony, 1857-1931

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ABSTRACT From 1857 Indian railways built railway colonies to inculcate a practical mastery of middle-class domesticity solely in their European employees. These were key sites for the construction and contestation of European identity. They marked Europe and India as separate locales bounded by distinct racial typologies and gender identities. The central distinction reinforced was that between European modernity and Indian tradition. This project was complicated by the hybrid identities of Domiciled European and Eurasian railway employees, nationalist protests, and contradictions in the colonial discourse of modernity. By 1931 the racial logic of the railway colony was under threat, but its rhetorics of respectability, modernity, gender, and race intensified in new forms. By tracing the historical construction of boundaries between Europe and India and the history of interstitial groups that destabilize these, we can question the transition narratives of nationalism and capitalism that usually structure accounts of colonial history.

In 1888 Kipling described the railway colony at Jamalpur as a paragon of European enterprise in the heart of India, "laid out with military precision; to each house its just share of garden, its red-brick path, its growth of trees and its neat little wicket gate. Its general aspect ... is that of an English village" cleaned up and "put under a glass case", and filled with a "holy calm".[1] He added that all residents of the railway colony were aware that "no one can flatter himself that in the multitude he is overlooked or believe that between 4 p.m. and 9 a.m. he is at liberty to misdemean himself". Railway company officials shared this vision of railway colonies as artificial European enclaves designed to protect their residents, domiciled Europeans and Eurasians, from the temptations of India. From the late 1850s they

provided schools, leisure facilities, and domestic spaces for their European employees that were intended to inculcate middle-class 'habits of life'. However, by 1931 nationalist contestation and strikes had smashed the glass that protected the railway colonies' rarefied calm and in the Royal Commission on Labour in India they were described as "active foci of discontent and disruption".[2] This paper explores the reasons for the founding of the colonies and their transition from sites for the enactment of dreams of colonial order to focal points for challenges to colonial rule.

The railway colonies have much in common with what Foucault has described as heterotopia, "enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted".[3] Foucault suggests that heterotopia comment on, critique, and quintessentially embody the set of relations that demarcate human identity in the larger spaces of the state. He argues that they are of two types: those that reveal all such classifications as illusions and those that compensate for the jumbled confusion of larger social spaces by their meticulous, ordered perfection. This paper will draw on this notion of key sites for the construction, demarcation, and contestation of identity, but it will show that these sites are not 'other' sites but actively 'othering' sites. The railway colony did not passively represent other real sites, but instead dynamically constituted Europe and India as separate locales with their boundaries marked by both particular 'habits of life' and gender identities. It did not reflect culture; it helped to produce the reality of national, racial, and cultural difference. As a key 'othering' site for the production of hierarchies of identity the railway colony and its residents became central to the contestation and inversion of the racial order in nationalist rhetoric and strikes. This suggests that the gap between heterotopia of illusion and those of compensation is not as great as Foucault argues.

The axis of difference between Europe and India that the railway colony attempted to secure was the distinction between Indian tradition and European modernity. This paper will show that the railway colonies were founded to check the process of Indianization to which the modernizing project of the railways appeared to be subject. Their history illuminates the central ambivalence of colonial projects of modernity that offered the hope of reform for India, but represented India as a place where modernity and European history could only be partially re-enacted.[4] For colonial officials, Indian nationalists, and social theorists the railway had a special role to play in modernizing India. Marx suggested that, "modern industry, resulting from the railway system, will dissolve the hereditary divisions of labor upon which rest the Indian castes, those decisive impediments to Indian progress and Indian power".[5] His faith in this "transition narrative" was the common property of railway company officials who, for example, designed railway carriages to break caste and urged Indian women to travel on railways so

that tradition could no longer hold sway over them.[6] However, as Dipesh Chakrabarty has shown, such transition narratives depict India as a place where development will always be incomplete because modernity is an essentially European phenomenon that cannot fully blossom in India where the bonds of tradition are strong. As Chakrabarty's argument would suggest, the typology of European modernity and Indian tradition that the railway colonies and the rhetoric surrounding the railway produced proved to be even harder to contest than the racial order of the colony itself. However, in contrast to Chakrabarty's discussion I argue that the railway colony's history illuminates a different kind of contestation: for when this transition narrative was enacted in colonial industrial recruitment and housing policies, it often became problematic and produced unwieldy consequences for railway companies and colonial officials.

The domestic behavior and deportment of women were fundamental to the construction of differences between European modernity and Indian tradition in the railway colony. The paternalist institutions of the railway colony attempted to produce the reality of national, racial, and class differences along the axis of modernity by imposing bourgeois domesticity and habits of life on the railway companies' European employees and their wives. Consequently, issues of morality became central to debates surrounding the railway colony and the selective recruitment policies it justified. Both Indian political organizations and railway companies used a rhetoric of morality to criticize or justify the exclusion of Indians from supervisory positions in the railway employment hierarchy. Thus the history of the railway colonies will demonstrate that the central collusion between colonial and nationalist fabrications of identity was the construction of a domestic realm beyond the public sphere of male capitalist enterprise and modernity. Nationalists and railway officials together constructed a border between the macropolitics of the nation state and the micropolitics of the home banishing 'the women's question' beyond public political debate while at the same time making private morality a central issue in political rhetoric.[7] Feminist historical analysis disrupts this separation, revealing the hidden complicities between the two as well as the inner space of 'domestic' politics in which race, gender, and nationality are made (in)to matter. Recent analyses in colonial history that provide powerful critiques of this collusion between colonialism and nationalism include Lata Mani's work on legal debates around sati and Ann Stoler's work on the shift in colonies from concubinage to European, bourgeois domesticity as a colonial and metropolitan "moral rearmament" against the transgression of national and racial boundaries.[8] My argument draws on these insights from feminist history to examine how public domains and national identity were bounded by the prescription of private, domestic behavior. In the panoptical space of the railway colony the contradictions and connections between private, bourgeois civility and colonial rule are made visible.

One of the earliest railway colonies was that constructed in Jamalpur in 1858 by the East Indian Railway, and it became an exemplar for other companies. Here work and leisure were carefully organized to produce respectable European laborers. Children were educated for future employment or to be railway wives at a primary level in the local school. Their parents amused themselves with billiards and dances at the Railway Institute. The Mechanics' Institute Library provided instructive books for employees to distract them from more dubious pursuits. In the apprentices' boarding house young men were supervised by a resident master and matron. The Railway Volunteer drills occupied men every weekend. The working-class and middle-class wives of employees waited in the domestic spaces of semi-detached houses for their husbands to return from work.[9] In Britain such paternalist employment strategies were directed at all employees, but Indian employees were excluded from the railway colony and the project of reform it constituted.[10] Why were railway companies not interested in inculcating respectability in the Indian majority of their workforce? Why did the railway companies and colonial officials find it so desirable to found these communities exclusively for their European employees? The answers to these questions will expose the railway colony as a heterotopia that attempted to check the 'miscegenation' of the European identity of domiciled European and Eurasian railway employees and of the modernizing project of the railways itself.

Colonial doubts about the modernization of India arose simultaneously with dreams of this possibility and as we will see these doubts were intimately linked to the founding of railway colonies for European employees. Military engineers, shareholders in the railways, and colonial officials assumed that the result of the introduction of the railway to India would be a new society purged of tradition, instructed in industrial discipline and girded with capitalist values.[11] In the 1850s, during his time as Governor-General, Dalhousie began the construction of railways in India as one of the "three great engines of social improvement".[12] Dalhousie drew on James Mill's utilitarian admiration for Western science and disdain for Indian superstition to argue that the railway would stimulate Indian society and multiply the impact of "every other improvement whatever, both physical and moral".[13] Government accounts placed as much emphasis on the "indirect effects" of the introduction of railways on the minds of the Indian population as on their military importance.[14] This rhetoric criticized Indian superstition and identified British national identity with the railway and its modernizing effects. In 1847 William Theobald, a barrister in Calcutta, repeated a common sentiment among British colonial officials and railway planners:

And, now, what we plead for, is, the introduction ... of this most notable and worthy product of British genius, perseverance and industry, in its last and most perfected form ... Age after age, did the greatest of India's

monarchs strive to perpetuate the memory of their name and rule, by lavishing on 'Paynim' mosques, and idol temples ... those treasures of 'barbaric pearl and gold', that were cruelly wrung from ... the miseries of a suffering people ... Let it now be the glory of Imperial Britain, to confer on the same people a ... work of the greatest extent and utility which the world has yet seen; - a work, which ... shall help to arouse the dormant energies of millions - quicken their intellectual and moral powers - dissolve the spell of a thousand habits and customs consecrated by the superstitious reverence of ages.[15]

This rhetoric imagined that the railway would have a magical, modernizing impact on India, but it also argued that the railway represented a peculiarly British national achievement. It suggested that the railway would dissolve Indian tradition, but it also made tradition essentially Indian and the truth of India's historical nationhood. Theobald's plea demonstrates that modernity's self-representation in the colonial theatre was maintained through its opposition to a reified Indian tradition. The hope of an India freed from tradition could not be achieved within the terms of this 'transition narrative', because the advent of the railway provided new and powerful ways for British civil servants, engineers, and railway officials to capture modernity and the future for themselves.

The general assumption that modernity was a European trait meant that railway companies relied on European employees to supervise the construction and running of the railways. From 1850 to 1932, despite the greater cost of employing European labor, railway company officials continued to insist on the necessity of European superintendence. This refusal to Indianize the railway hierarchy reflected more than military concerns about securing loyal employees. In 1858 the government director of the railways, when questioned about the great expense of European labor, argued that European superintendence was necessary because "there are very few things as yet with which you can trust the natives of India in the management of railways. The native pointsmen on the East India Railway, when they first saw a train approaching ran away".[16] This incapacity to command had a more threatening side. Participants in the railway conferences in the 1870s reported on experiments with Indian drivers and guards. They suggested that Indian superintendence in upper subordinate positions was dangerous because Indians lacked the necessary physical capacities, moral fibre, and "sufficient nerve to avert an accident".[17] These concerns recur in government reports on proposals to train Indians as late as the 1920s. This fear led to the intricate classification of employees into "European, Eurasian, West Indian of Negro descent pure or mixed, non-Indian Asiatic or Indian".[18] In India an elaborate moral typology of racial fitness for command developed in which the more European 'blood' you had, the more suited you were for control of the modernizing force of the railway.

The only concession to economy made by the railway companies was the gradual replacement of Europeans by domiciled Europeans and Eurasians in upper subordinate positions from 1861 and the employment of a few Indians as shunters and goods train drivers from 1870.[19] The companies' selective employment strategy continued despite the failure of the railway establishment to generate profit until the early 1900s, the official policy of Indianization implemented in 1870, and the constant calls for economies from the British Parliament, the India Office, and Indian critics. The railways remained the only arena of the colonial state that continued to give preference to domiciled Europeans and Eurasians in recruitment from 1870 to 1930.[20] Even as late as 1923 nearly half of the Anglo-Indian community was employed by or associated with the railways as dependents of employees, and in 1932 almost 100% of the upper subordinate positions on the state-managed railways were filled by Anglo-Indians and Europeans.[21] However, the preferential employment of Eurasians and domiciled Europeans on the assumption that they were more capable of command than Indians encountered difficulties in its enactment on 'Indian' ground. The European identity of these groups was considered to be uncertain because of their long residence in the intemperate cultural and ecological climate of India.

Theories of ethnoclimatology threatened to compromise railway and government officials' faith in exported European, domiciled European, and Eurasian labor. These theories reveal a fundamental fear that the colonial project of Anglicization of the Indian landscape and future was jeopardized not just by the intransigent 'other' of India, but by the ways in which Europeans could be made 'other' by living in India.[22] Not coincidentally, these theories took on a particular force in the wake of the Indian Mutiny of 1857, which was widely interpreted as the revenge of outraged tradition on the modernizing projects of Dalhousie. The 1859 inquiry into colonization in India was shot through with anxious questions about the potential of the Indian climate to dissolve British colonizers and their modernizing projects into sterile or 'Indianized' progeny. It concluded that settlement should be limited to the superior classes and that the working classes should be discouraged because their intemperate and careless habits of life placed them at greater risk for degeneration. In this report, railway officials, engineers and medical officers all agreed that the keys to maintaining European identity in India were: middle-class temperate 'habits of life', abstinence from alcohol, a European domestic environment, and residence part of the year in hill stations. Without these, the European community would degenerate, and a third generation of Europeans could not be produced in India.[23]

If 'unsunned' Europeans fresh from Britain were in danger of degeneration from the effects of the Indian climate, then the moral and racial identity of domiciled Europeans and Eurasians seemed in much

greater jeopardy. During the debates on colonization domiciled Europeans and Eurasians were recurrently used to confirm the hazards of widespread settlement in India. Commentators suggested that no one could recognize domiciled Europeans and Eurasians as European offspring because of their “hang-dog gait and carriage, that ‘chee-chee’ mongrel speech!” and their “prostrate reptile spirit” that betrayed the “moral and physical fibre of our vaunted race”.^[24] Other authors carefully inspected mortality tables to speculate on the impact of environment and habits of life on health and morality. They often concluded that the high mortality rate among Eurasian females in India was due to the fatal consequences of a “passionate precipity” that meant that “long before an English girl has left school, these sunburnt fair ones appear to lavish their ... true bloom and health and bridal beauty on the fortunate and not less precocious objects of their choice”. This precocious behavior also meant that the influence of mothers on their offspring “must either be nil, or of a very prejudicial character”.^[25] It is clear from these debates that the railway companies and government officials who urged the preferential hiring of Eurasians and domiciled Europeans on the basis of their moral, racial, and physical superiority to Indians were likely to be more than a little anxious about the effects of degeneration. Domiciled European laborers could not be trusted to conform to the bourgeois norms that marked Europeaness in the colony because of their class identity. Eurasian laborers might not conform because of their hybrid racial identity.

In the battle against the enervating influence of India on European energy and enterprise, European women and middle-class domestic habits were seen as crucial. Railway companies took seriously the importance of European habits of life in the private sphere and designed railway colonies and company policies to inculcate these habits. From 1867 all employees sent out to India were granted passage money for their families on the advice of the companies’ consulting physician. The physician rejected 20% of the applicants for posts in India on the basis of signs of habitual intemperance, but he suggested that this inspection was not enough to secure protection from the temptations of India; only European wives could provide such a prophylaxis.^[26] Similarly, the companies secured the performance of middle-class domestic habits through the paternalist institutions of the railway colonies. The agent of the East Indian railway decided to move the locomotive department from Howrah, in Calcutta, to Jamalpur in the early 1860s specifically to eliminate problems of discipline and intemperance among European employees. His reasoning was that in Calcutta these single men, unguarded by European wives, spent their time after working hours in disreputable hotels and bars.^[27] In 1876, a British official similarly emphasized the importance of railway colonies: “It is very desirable to attend to the health, comfort, and amusement of European mechanics in India as well as to the education of their children. There are

great temptations to indulgence and excess, and it is obviously expedient to secure well behaved steady ... European communities of this class in the heart of India”.[28] The railway colonies attempted to guarantee the truth of the racial discourse in which European ‘blood’ led automatically to the performance of European middle-class habits or morality. Their paternalist institutions reflected the railway companies’ fears of Indianization. These fears ascribed a terrifying potency to the Indian landscape to dissipate both European subjectivity and the methodical construction and running of the modernizing railways. What is particularly interesting about these anxieties is that they not only focused on Eurasian women, but also on domiciled European women. This indicates that the railway colony was a potential space of miscegenation simply because it was in India. Miscegenation operated both literally and metaphorically to characterize the dangers that the Indian environment held for the European identity of the railways’ modernizing project and the railway employees who supervised it. The close attention paid by railway companies to their employees’ domestic habits and the behavior of women in the railway colonies reflected both an attempt to construct modernity as European and an anxiety about the possibility of European modernity ‘going native’ in the hands of Indianized domiciled Europeans and Eurasians.[29]

In contrast to the careful management of domiciled Europeans and Eurasians, the railway companies took little interest in providing European domestic spaces or education for Indian employees and their families. Instead, the companies advised them to live in villages and bazaars outside the railway colonies. In 1877 at the annual Railway Conference, where colonial officials and representatives of private companies standardized railway policy, proposals for a regular system of housing for Indians were put forward. The conference participants agreed that Indian workmen should be allowed to erect temporary huts near to their place of work as long as the presence of women and children was discouraged because they were of “doubtful respectability”.[30] The Indian laborers, by far the majority of the employees of the railway companies, were not the targets of this campaign of respectability. Their exclusion from the European leisure facilities and domestic spaces mapped out Indian identity as distinct from that of Europeans and located this difference in the spheres of respectability and tradition. Even the employment of Indians in the railway colony’s industrial spaces was explained in terms of traditional aptitudes. The rationale for hiring Indian employees for particular positions frequently rested on a rhetoric of caste appropriateness. One of the reasons the East Indian Railway Company moved its workshops to Jamalpur was that Jamalpur was adjacent to Moghyr where inhabitants “had for centuries been mechanics by trade and were a caste skilled in the manufacture of ironwork”.[31] When employed in the heart of the modern space of the

railway colony, Indians were represented as fulfilling the promise of their past tradition, rather than that of European modernity.

The railway colony was a heterotopia that constructed differences between India and Europe along the axes of modernity and respectability. It secured a European identity for its domiciled European and Eurasian employees by prescribing bourgeois habits of life. It excluded Indian employees from this purified European existence and encouraged them to live in the Indian spaces of villages and temporary encampments. This difference in habits of life was used to justify a racialized employment hierarchy; only Europeans were given access to institutions that would guarantee their moral fibre to command the modernizing project of the railway. It constructed the modernity of the railway as European, even when the majority of the employees in the railways were Indian. However, as we will see, this space was not unproblematic. The railway colony's construction of a reified India might be necessary to the representation of modernity, but it had a corrosive effect on the presumed purity of the spaces of colonial European modernity. It was not only a space that classified individuals in an orderly manner. It was also constantly threatened by the potency of the differences it conjured up and to which it ascribed the destructive force of tradition and the Indian climate; Indian nationalist challenges to its moral order; and the possibility that its illusory nature might be unmasked.

The railway colony was a magical space in which a racial or class identity could be transformed, and, therefore, it was also a space in which the illusion of the stability of race and class polarities could become disrupted. In the railway colonies the performance of middle-class domesticity constructed a racial identity. This may have been one of the reasons domiciled Europeans, Eurasians, and Indian Christians were so attracted to employment on the railways. It held the promise of becoming fully European and of transforming a hybrid or Indian racial identity through the mimicry of European middle-class habits. In 1923 a representative of the Anglo-Indian community claimed that the main problem in defining the Anglo-Indian electorate was that many people passed as Europeans by being classed as such when they were hired by the railway.[32] Railway company officials' anxieties about such transubstantiation of racial and class essences in the railway colony were expressed in recurrent representations of railway memsahibs as poor imitations of British middle-class women. Domiciled European and Eurasian women's lack of morality became the ground on which distinctions of race and class were reinscribed by railway officials, in spite of the railway colonies' potential to transform these. For example, in 1916 a retired railway official wrote a guidebook to railway employment intended for the entertainment and edification of future railway employees in which he depicted the railway colony as rife with rumors about the infidelities of railway wives.[33] He commented that the extension of electricity

throughout the colony was met by protests because it removed the dark spots in which flirtations took place, and he emphasized that women welcomed power outages for they brought young electricians to their pitch-black houses while they were dressing for dances. He also made a point of mentioning that railway work took men away from home on short notice at any hour of the day or night and that many wives enjoyed themselves much more when husbands were out on duty. His description of the gossip at dances centered on the color and complexion of each woman, revealing the disjuncture between the European milieu of the Railway Institute and the racial hybridity of the crowd. The female members of the railway colony were portrayed as inauthentic mimics of European bourgeois respectability. As Homi Bhabha has suggested about all projects of colonial reform, railway officials only desired partial reform of their employees, so that “to be Anglicized is *emphatically* not to be English”.[34] Railway officials’ contradictory impulse to reform their employees and yet to indicate their slippage from the appropriate standards of behavior recapitulated the racial and class differences of domiciled European and Eurasians from ‘true’ British middle-class memsahibs. Their rhetoric also pointed to the constant permeability of bourgeois respectability and the corrosion of racial purity that justified the disciplinary project of the railway colony in the ‘hostile’ climate of India. In this rhetoric domiciled European and Eurasian women’s behavior became potential signs of degeneration and the disciplinary measures of the railway colony intensified around them.

Indian political organizations also articulated doubts about the efficacy of railway colony domesticity in securing the moral fiber of domiciled Europeans and Eurasians. One of the frequent activities of the many lobbying organizations that developed across India in the period from 1860 to 1890 was that of submitting memorials on the grievances of railway passengers. These petitions disputed the moral potency of the railway colony’s domestic spheres by casting doubt on railway employees’ respectability. Organizations such as the zamindari British Indian Association and the more middle-class Bombay Association, Sukhadayak Sabha in Lahore, and Aligarh British Indian Association used language and institutional forms derived from liberal British rhetoric and constituted a male public sphere of political debate.[35] In 1888 the Sukhadayak Sabha and the residents of Lahore submitted a petition to the director of the North-Western Railway that focused on the discomforts of female passengers. They protested that “platform passes were limited and therefore they often sell out and native gentlemen can’t accompany women to the carriages”. Instead, “they were placed in the hands of subordinate railway staff whose impolite and hard treatment is so well known as to need no comments”. These “respectable ladies” were left to the mercies of the “subordinate station staff who crowd in front of the female carriage and even behave improperly”. The solution they suggested was the employment

of female guards.[36] This petition disputed the moral authority of Europeans and Eurasians and the ability of their domestic milieu to secure this authority. In the process of contesting the associations between racial identity, morality, and modernity the petitioners also developed their own markers of respectability and notions of traditional female behavior. When elite Indian women moved outside the private sphere they had to be protected from the intrusions of modernity, especially because, as Partha Chatterjee has shown, they bore the burden of preserving the nation's spiritual, traditional essence.[37]

The members of the railway conference responded to these petitions by suggesting that the solution was in the hands of the Indian women, who were advised to adopt "the costume commonly worn in Turkey and Egypt where seclusion of their sex is as general as in India".[38] The railway officials collaborated with the project of containing middle-class Indian women, but they argued for a more pronounced inscription of this on the female body through visible markers of conformity to tradition. Experiments with female ticket collectors were rejected on the basis of the experience of the Oudh and Rohilkund railway, which had been unable to find women respectable enough to be suitable to the requirements of the railway as well as to the public.[39] In these responses railway officials reasserted the bourgeois order of the railway colony, in which the appropriate location for a respectable woman was the domestic space. In these exchanges tradition, modernity, racial identity, domesticity, and a public male sphere were disputed and reinscribed on the experience of Indian, Eurasian, and domiciled European women.[40] Both Indian political organizations and railway companies used a rhetoric of morality and constructed a domestic realm beyond the public sphere of male capitalist enterprise and modernity.

Indian middle-class organizations also directly questioned the use of Europeans and Eurasians in supervisory positions in colonial establishments during the agitation against income tax in 1870 to 1871 and against the new civil service regulations in 1877 to 1879. The Indian National Congress continued this attack. The railway companies responded to such challenges to their racial typology by stepping up their efforts to enforce European habits of life on the families of their Eurasian and domiciled European employees. Anxieties about the ability of the Indian climate to dissolve European bourgeois identity also intensified in the context of these challenges. From 1875 to 1888 the education of the children of Europeans and Eurasians for future employment on the railways and as railway wives, away from the degenerating influences of their parents and the climate of the plains, became a central issue in railway conferences and reports to the Government of India. During this period 11 railway schools were founded for Eurasian and European employees in temperate hill climates. From 1883 these schools were supported by grants from the government. The secretary for the Indian railways suggested that these schools were necessary to

prevent the growth of “a floating population of Indianized English loosely brought up and exhibiting most of the worst qualities of both races ... a class dangerous to the state”.[41] Lord Lytton’s minute on the education of Europeans in 1879 included a section on the new railway schools, and made it clear that the Indian government had very extensive powers under Act XIX of 1850 to, “bind as apprentices poor children abandoned or neglected by their parents” and that these powers should be used to remove children to the schools.[42] Since by ‘neglect’ the authorities meant an exposure to Indian habits of life, the railway companies were given tremendous power to ensure that their employees in the railway colonies conformed to European middle-class domesticity. There is evidence in the railway company reports to suggest that the employees were not happy with this possibility. A railway chaplain reported in 1878, for example, that some of the parents on the Madras railway were “unwilling to send their children to the hills because of the distance from their homes, and others, especially Eurasians, because they feared the effects of the cold”.[43] These Eurasians seem to have questioned the theories of ethnoclimatology that threatened to disenfranchise them of their parental rights.

The railway schools did not rely on climate alone to effect a change in their pupils. Their syllabi attempted to counteract any Indianization that had occurred. For boys this meant a technical education, but the primary aim was “above all [to] form the character” through exercise and a disciplined British environment.[44] Almost as many girls as boys went to these schools. For example in 1908, 210 boys and 151 girls attended the East Indian Railway’s Oak Grove schools at Mussorie. Unlike boys, the girls received an education in domestic, practical skills. This was considered to be necessary because “the future of the domiciled community of this country lies in the hands of its women”.[45] The schools’ British routines and ceremonies, such as the annual prize day at which the Railway Agent gave awards for ‘womanliness’ and ‘manliness’ and the boys performed military drills, sought to counteract the Indianization of these children and their possible transgression of appropriate middle-class gender identities. The exclusion of Indian employees’ children from these schools and the emphasis on inculcating qualities of character meant that railway and government officials continued to argue against the calls for Indianization of the upper subordinate grades on the railways. In 1923 a report on the training of railway officials argued that no Indians could be found with the “personal qualities that make efficient chargemen and foremen”. The qualities that prevented their employment were their traditional loyalties to caste and religion that resulted in a “sectarian bias even in matters which affect the comfort, safety and convenience of the population at large” and which “no amount of technical education could remove”.[46]

As the rhetoric of communal representation became central to political debates over constitutional and employment issues, a new problem emerged

for the Anglo-Indian residents of the railway colony. In response to the previous decade's Swadeshi demands for technical education and strikes on the railways, the Royal Commission on the Public Services in India in 1912 recommended that 50% of the appointments to the railways in India should go to 'pure' Indians. The significance of this ruling lay more in its definition of the Anglo-Indian community as non-Indian than for the successful implementation of its findings. Indian nationalists adopted this definition and with it the reified notions of cultural, racial, and moral attributes that the railway colonies had produced. In 1928, when Mr K. C. Neogy spoke to the legislative assembly on the topic of the Indianization of the railway services, he made it clear that he was demanding this only for "the pure-blooded Indians", the "Indian Indians", and "not for those who claim an admixture of other blood".[47] The Eurasian community became the foil against which Indian nationalists defined Indian racial and cultural purity. Nationalist rhetoric shared the same language of disapproval that the railway officials had directed against Eurasians and domiciled Europeans. Gandhi suggested that the main problem for the Anglo-Indian community was degeneration and that "referring to the education of Anglo-Indians he would say that it did not improve their morals, for while travelling he had often noticed that Anglo-Indians instead of having the virtues of the European and Indian had the vices of both ... On railway platforms he had even noticed that their physical tastes were becoming depraved ... the physical tastes were an index of the mental taste".[48] When Anglo-Indians were not excluded because of their 'racial' difference they were attacked for their desire to live, as Gandhi phrased it, a "false mode" of European existence in railway colonies. According to nationalist arguments Anglo-Indians lacked the requisite racial purity, cultural authenticity, and practical mastery of Indian habits of life to be admitted as full citizens of the new imagined community of India.

By 1931 the railway colonies were centers for the contestation of the imperial, racial order. From 1908 to 1928 Indian workers used strikes and violent confrontations to protest the racial employment hierarchy. For railway company and colonial officials these protests were a terrifying eruption of India into the European modernity of the railway colony. For example, a colonial report of the strike in 1906 at Kharagpur attributed mobilization to the irrational power of tradition. It suggested that the ringleaders had threatened to make Hindus eat cow's meat and Muslims pig's flesh if they did not go out on hartal and that bones and flesh of cows were piled up to pelt at blacklegs.[49] In these confrontations neither tradition nor Indian workers were a passive ground against which European modernity could be defined, but were, rather, powerful points of resistance. It is not surprising that the Royal Commission on Labour in 1931 singled out railway colonies as "active foci of discontent and disruption".[50] The solution offered by the Royal Commission for this was the domestication of

tradition within the railway colony. It suggested that Indian employees should be given residences in the railway colonies which were in concord with “good local traditions”, and that colonies should be built close to tightly knit communities.[51] The domestic habits of employees were once more seen as crucial, but in the case of the Indian employees this meant the invocation of traditional ties of community for the containment of discontent. The racial order of the colonies may have been challenged, but the association between Europe and modernity versus India and tradition intensified.

Domiciled Europeans and Eurasians occupied a space between the boundary lines that marked Europe and Indian; a marginal sphere formed by the construction of the boundaries themselves. This interstitial identity threatened the coalescence between modernity, Europeans, and bourgeois respectability that underlay the selective recruitment policies of the railway companies. Their problematic identity and the disciplinary practices of the railway colony that intensified around domiciled European and Eurasian women expose the specific historical mechanisms used by the colonial state and railway officials to secure the existence of racial identities and the association between Europe and modernity. In the heterotopia of the railway colony domestic practices could simultaneously secure and subvert the public boundaries between national and racial identities. The department of women in the private sphere created the reality of European modernity and Indian tradition. Indian political organizations’ challenges to the employment of domiciled Europeans and Eurasians adopted the colonial rhetorics of race, tradition, and respectability and therefore did not move beyond the cartographies of identity produced in the railway colonies.

The history of colonial heterotopias and the interstitial groups they disciplined suggest a way of writing colonial history which imperils transition narratives that chart the movement of colonies from local tradition to European modernity. These transition narratives of the emergence of capitalism and nationalism, like those surrounding the railway, rely on the existence of a stable division between Europe and its colonial subjects and see Europe as the origin point of modernity. The analysis of colonial heterotopias and the problematic groups they targeted shows the historical fabrication of these divisions and explores the mechanisms that policed their boundaries. It traces spaces of resistance not only in reappropriations of ‘Indian’ tradition, but also in the instabilities of discourses of modernity and in the mimicry of European forms by ‘inappropriate’ subjects. It may allow us to hear overlooked critiques of modernity such as Tagore’s depiction of the nation’s “ring-dance of moral corruption” that links, “steel unto steel, and machine unto machine; trampling under its tread all the sweet flowers of simple faith and the living ideals of man”, and that measures its progress on the basis of its “indefinite prolongation of its railway lines toward eternity”.[52]

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Notes

- [1] R. Kipling (1891) Among the railway folk, *The City of Dreadful Night* (Calcutta: Wheeler Railway Library).
- [2] (1931) *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 285 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office).
- [3] M. Foucault (1986) Of other spaces, *Diacritics*, 16, pp. 22-27. I am grateful to Don LaCoss for bringing this article to my attention.
- [4] Here I am drawing on H. Bhabha (1985) Of mimicry and man: the ambivalence of colonial discourse, *October*, 12, pp. 125-133.
- [5] K. Marx (1853) The future results of British rule in India, *New York Daily Tribune*, 8 August.
- [6] D. Chakrabarty (1992) Postcoloniality and the artifice of history: who speaks for 'Indian' pasts?, *Representations*, 37, pp. 1-26.
- [7] On the line of the problematic status of 'the women's question' in Indian nationalist politics see R. Radhakrishnan (1992) Nationalism, gender, and the narrative of identity, in A. Parker, M. Russo, D. Sommer & P. Yaeger (Eds) *Nationalisms and Sexualities* (London: Routledge).
- [8] L. Mani (1989) Contentious traditions: the debate on sati in colonial India, in K. Sangari & S. Vaid (Eds) *Recasting Women: essays in Indian colonial history* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press); A. Stoler (1989) Making empire respectable: race and sexual morality in 20th-century colonial cultures, *American Ethnologist*, 16, pp. 634-660, and (1992) Sexual affronts and racial frontiers: European identities and the cultural politics of exclusion in Southeast Asia, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 34, pp. 524-551.
- [9] G. Huddleston (1906) *History of the East Indian Railway*, p. 241 (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co.).
- [10] For a discussion of paternalist management in Britain see S. Rose (1992) *Limited Livelihoods: gender and class in nineteenth century England*, (Berkeley: University of California Press). Rose defines paternalism as a management style that used the metaphor of the middle-class family to prescribe hierarchical relationships between classes and to enforce middle-class domestic gender relationships on working-class families. Studies of paternalism have proven powerful in the critique of the separation in labor history between production and reproduction, economic relations, and family relations. They have indicated that labor history must include an analysis of the ways in which gender has "shaped the work process, wage form, workplace conflicts and class relations", as well as the worker's identity. See A. Baron (1991) *Work*

Engendered: toward a new history of American labor, p. 8 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press) and G. Gullickson's essay in L. Berlanstein (Ed.) (1993) *Rethinking Labor History: essays in discourse and class analysis* (Champaign-Urbana: University of Illinois Press).

- [11] For general histories of the Indian railways see: J. N. Westwood (1974) *The Railways of India* (London: David & Charles); N. Sanyal (1930) *The Development of Indian Railways* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta); D. Headrick (1980) *Tentacles of Progress: technology transfer in the age of imperialism, 1830-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press); J. Hurd (1983) Railways: the beginnings of the modern economy, *Cambridge Economic History of India*, 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- [12] (1856) *Parliamentary Papers (House of Commons)*, XLV, 245, p. 16, para. 24.
- [13] E. Stokes (1959) *The English Utilitarians and India*, p. 253 (Oxford: Clarendon Press); S. C. Ghosh (1978) The utilitarianism of Dalhousie and the material improvement of India, *Modern Asian Studies*, 12, pp. 97-110.
- [14] (1852-1853) Correspondence lately received from India on railway undertakings in that country, *Parliamentary Papers (Reports of Committees)*, LXXXVI, p. 64.
- [15] W. Theobald (1847) Our Indian railways, *Calcutta Review*, 36, pp. 321-371.
- [16] (1857-1858) Select Committee to inquire into the delay in construction of railways in India, *Parliamentary Papers (Reports of Committees)*, Vol. XV, p. 271, para. 3863.
- [17] (1870) *Proceedings of the Railway Conference*.
- [18] (1900) *Proceedings of the Railway Conference*.
- [19] In this essay I use the terms domiciled Europeans and Eurasians. The legal boundaries of this group shifted according to the colonial state's construction of institutions to regulate their identity, as did the names for them: East Indian, Eurasian, domiciled European, Indo-European, Britasian, and Anglo-Indian. Until 1883 they had no legal rights distinct from those of Indians. In that year, in the context of the inauguration of a government program of European education, they were defined as persons of European descent, pure or mixed, who retained European habits and modes of life. Their legal status changed after the Montagu-Chelmsford electoral reforms of 1919 which defined Anglo-Indians as any individual who had a British citizen in the male line. Summaries of the history of these groups are in D. Arnold (1979) European orphans and vagrants in India in the nineteenth century, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 7(2); and N. Gist & R. Wright (1973) *Marginality and Identity: Anglo Indians as a racially mixed minority in India* (Leiden: E. J. Brill).
- [20] L. B. Varma (1979) *Anglo-Indians*, pp. 89-142 (New Delhi: Bhasha Prakashan).
- [21] (1928) Petition to the minorities commission of the Domiciled European and Anglo-Indian community, *Report of the Indian Statutory Commission (Simon Commission)*, XVI; K. M. Hassan (1932) *Report on the Representation of Muslims and Other Minority Communities in the Subordinate Railway Service*.

- [22] Here I draw on S. Suleri (1992) *The Rhetoric of English India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).
- [23] (1857-1858) Select Committee to inquire into progress and prospects for promotion of European colonization and settlement in India, *Parliamentary Papers (Reports of Committees)*, VII.
- [24] Anonymous (1858) Colonization in India, *Calcutta Review*, 30, p. 168.
- [25] Anonymous (1859) The mortality of Christian females in India, *Calcutta Review*, 63, p. 171.
- [26] (1865) Report to the secretary of state for India on railways in India, *Parliamentary Papers*, XL, Appendix, p. 1, and (1866) LII, p. 34.
- [27] G. Huddleston, *History of the East Indian Railway*, p. 15.
- [28] (1876) Report to the secretary of state for India on railways in India, *Parliamentary Papers*, LVI, p. 13.
- [29] The idea of modernity 'going native' comes from G. Prakash (1992) 'Science 'gone native' in Colonial India, *Representations*, 40, pp. 153-128.
- [30] (1877) Report of the Railway Conference, Oriental and India Office Collections [hereafter OIOC]. L PWD/5/7 Coll. 35.
- [31] Huddleston, *History of the East Indian Railway*, p. 15.
- [32] (1928) Petition to the minorities commission of the Domiciled European and Anglo-Indian community, *Report of the Indian Statutory Commission (Simon Commission)*, XVI.
- [33] R. Westridge (1916) *Railway Life in India* (Calcutta: Telegraph Association Press).
- [34] H. Bhabha, Of mimicry and man, p. 128.
- [35] Here I am drawing on the insights of the formation of a male public sphere in D. Haynes (1991) *Rhetoric and Ritual in Colonial India: the shaping of a public culture in Surat City, 1852-1928* (Berkeley: University of California) and L. Davidoff & C. Hall (1987) *Family Fortunes: men and women of the English middle class, 1780-1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press). I also want to emphasize that power and resistance are interconnected. I use this moment of resistance to trace "how the encounter of colonialism and the emergence of nationalism are secret sharers in an act of cultural transcription so overdetermined as to dissipate the logic of origins or the rational framework of chronologies", Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India*, p. 9, and D. Haynes & G. Prakash (1991) *Contesting Power: resistance and everyday social relations in South Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press).
- [36] (1888) *Proceedings of the Railway Conference*.
- [37] P. Chatterjee (1989) The nationalist resolution of the woman's question, in K. Sangari & S. Vaid (Eds) *Recasting Women*.
- [38] (1877) *Proceedings of the Railway Conference*.
- [39] (1899) *Proceedings of the Railway Conference*.

- [40] For an account of a similar process, see P. C. Cohen (1992) Safety and danger: women on American public transport, 1750-1850, in D. O. Helly & S. Reverby (Eds) *Gendered Domains: rethinking public and private in women's history* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press).
- [41] The railway secretary is quoting Lord Canning's 1860 minute on European education to prove the extreme importance of the education of Europeans and Eurasians, (1877) Report to the secretary of state for India on railways in India, *Parliamentary Papers*, LXIII, p. 11.
- [42] Quoted by the railway secretary in (1880) Report to the secretary of state for India on railways in India, *Parliamentary Papers*, LII, p. 17.
- [43] (1878-1879) Report to the secretary of state for India on railways in India, *Parliamentary Papers*, LV, p. 16.
- [44] J. C. Oman (1877) On training and industrial schools for children of railway employees, *Proceedings of the Railway Conference*, OIOCL PWD/5/7 Coll. 35.
- [45] (1915) *East Indian Railway Report on Oak-Grove School* and (1906) *Report on the East Indian Railway Aided Schools*.
- [46] H. Cole (1923) *Report on the Recommendations on the Training of Railway Officers and Subordinates in India*.
- [47] Quoted in petition to the minorities commission of the Domiciled European and Anglo-Indian community, *Report of the Indian Statutory Commission*.
- [48] (1925/1970), *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, pp. 184-185 (New Delhi: Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India).
- [49] Report on Kharagpur strike from Government of Bengal to Government of India (Home), No. 2141 P.D. of 19 September 1906 to Home Public Proceedings A, December 1906, n. 70-75 quoted and interpreted differently in S. Sarkar (1973) *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, 1903-1908*, p. 223 (New Delhi: People's Publishing House).
- [50] (1931) *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 285.
- [51] *Ibid.* p. 284.
- [52] R. Tagore (1985) *Nationalism in the West*, pp. 21, 24 (Macmillan India).