

alternative (sub)urban environments these authors envisioned. It thus would have further enhanced the appeal of this fascinating book to learn more about the relationship between the contemporary fictional visions Walker so thoroughly and extensively documents and the already existing suburban landscapes of the nineteenth century.

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MICHAEL WHEELER. *The Athenæum: More than Just Another London Club*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020. Pp. 440. \$50.00 (cloth).
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With *The Athenæum: More than Just Another London Club*, Michael Wheeler has both written the definitive history of the Athenæum club and provided a model for future historians of clubs. The genre is tricky to define, and one may wonder whether potential readership extends far beyond the boundaries of clubland. However, the place of clubs in British sociability since at least the eighteenth century, and the place of the Athenæum in particular in the world of British clubs, suggest that more might be at stake than simply a monograph to celebrate the forthcoming two hundredth anniversary of the club (in 2024), or indeed to revisit the myth of the club as a place where serious business is carried out behind closed doors, as suggested in the British sitcom *Yes, Prime Minister*.

Wheeler has sifted the considerable archive with great attention and tends to share with his readers the fruits of his investigations. While not all of it will be fascinating to the general reader, the preservation of the records provides ample material for a comprehensive history of the club. It was started in 1824, more than a century after White's (mainly Tory) and about eighty years after Brooks's (Whig). The rise of the English club is concomitant with the rise of urban life, hence the concentration of such institutions in London. Before the First World War there were about four hundred clubs, of which fewer than fifty have survived. In his discussion of the origin of the Athenæum, Wheeler presents the vision of its founder, John Wilson Croker, who served at the Admiralty as First Secretary: the club should bring together "literary and scientific men, and followers of the fine arts," beyond party lines (11). As Wheeler explains, "The Athenæum was founded at a time of intellectual excitement and expansiveness, when a victorious nation was asserting itself as a liberal state which fostered liberal education and research" (16). This history gives the club its specific identity, reiterated through the ages. Its first members were influential figures in or patrons of the letters and arts but mainly science. Membership rose to about five hundred in four months, one thousand within a year. Its name, which came from the temple in Athens where poets and philosophers met, advertised the importance of intellectual exchange. Indeed, by the early nineteenth century, the name was popular with clubs and libraries in England (Liverpool, Manchester) and the United States (Boston, Providence). The Athenæum was first housed in Waterloo Place before moving to its current building, designed by Decimus Burton and opened in February 1830. The building pays tribute to the name of the club with a frieze inspired by the Elgin marbles and a statue of Athena by Edward Hodges Baily based on the Athena of Velletri found in Rome 1797 (now in the Louvre). Admiration for the classical style is also apparent in the portico and the columns of the hall.

As Wheeler shows, the club defined itself as an elite intellectual institution in the Victorian era. The great novelists of the age, Charles Dickens and later William Makepeace Thackeray, were both members and were perhaps reconciled after a long quarrel on the staircase of the

Athenæum. Matthew Arnold, Herbert Spencer, Richard Burton, and, later, Rudyard Kipling (one of about fifty Nobel prize winners), Joseph Conrad, William Butler Yeats, Aldous Huxley (whose *Brave New World* features the Aphroditium club) and T. S. Eliot belonged to the club, as did other artists, from Thomas Lawrence to Frederic Leighton and Yehudi Menuhin.

One distinctive feature of the club is its ecumenical approach to politics, and its spirit of tolerance, accommodating members on all sides of social and political arguments, as was apparent during the Reform debates of the 1830s. But by the early twentieth century, it was a socially conservative place, changing at a slower pace than the world outside. Wheeler analyzes the ways in which life at the club relates to the life of the nation. For instance, the club provided a retreat for members to gather or discuss news during the Great War. Similarly, during the Second World War and in the aftermath, the club served as a meeting place where members who shaped the war effort and the reconstruction that followed could pursue their conversations and find a retreat from the strains of the day. During the Blitz, the works of art were moved to the basement, while the club port was conveniently transported to All Souls College (Wheeler does not reveal whether the fellows returned the port after the war).

The club also fostered the ideal of the gentleman, embodied, as Wheeler suggests, in the figure of Henry Newbolt, writer, administrator, and devoted clubman: in a speech at the club, drawing on Tacitus, Newbolt defined the gentleman as “never forgetful of his own dignity or of the rights of others” (221). Not all members fulfilled that definition, though, and Wheeler reminds the reader that among its most infamous members, Kim Philby had penetrated this temple of the Establishment (Donald Maclean and Guy Burgess were members of the clubs next door), as did, much later, Jimmy Savile. In the early part of the twenty-first century, the club updated itself, admitting women as members from 2002 and refurbishing the building.

Wheeler has provided more than a straightforward history of the Athenæum. He shows the contribution of club life in general and of the Athenæum in particular to English sociability since the early nineteenth century. He tells of the links between sociability and the Establishment and of the peculiar relationship between the exclusive world of the club and the changes in society at large. The paradox at the heart of the club is that it is both democratic in its functioning and staunchly elitist, a place of retreat from the world, where one might enjoy a relaxing glass of port, and yet be subject to the world’s vicissitudes. And when they retire to their rooms for the night, members of the club will be happy to find a copy of Wheeler’s book on their bedside table.

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THEO WILLIAMS. *Making the Revolution Global: Black Radicalism and the British Socialist Movement before Decolonisation*. London: Verso, 2022. Pp. 288. \$34.95 (cloth).
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The place of Black people in British histories has attracted significant attention regarding precisely what being British means in this contemporary historical moment—marked by the Hostile Environment Policy first initiated by Theresa May in 2012 that denaturalized, deported, and allowed Afro-Caribbean Britons to die and the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union following a national referendum in 2016. How Britons of diverse backgrounds understand themselves with respect to various categories of differentiation after Brexit—race, class, national origin, religion, language, and political