



NATIONALISM AND POST-COLONIAL IDENTITY

Culture and ideology in India and Egypt

Anshuman A. Mondal



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How have nations and nationhood become the dominant form of political organization today? What is the role of culture in nationalism? In what ways have the ideological development of nationalisms in the post-colonial world shaped understandings of contemporary political problems, such as the rise of radical Islam, communalism, and the failure of secular-liberal democracy?

This book offers the first comparative study of two highly significant anti-colonial nationalisms. Its close analysis of nationalist discourse in India and Egypt is situated within a new theoretical framework for studying nationalism, based on a trenchant critique of theorists such as Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner, Eric Hobsbawm and Anthony Smith.

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FOR MA AND DADDY, FOR EVERYTHING

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PREFACE

Some years ago, during what must have been a less than inspiring graduate seminar, I began leafing through a copy of Edward Said's *Orientalism* and happened to notice his reference to Gramsci's 'inventory' of the self. What, I remember thinking, would such an inventory look like for me? Some 6 years later, as I was typing up the first version of the manuscript, I realised that this book represents such an inventory of sorts. What seemed, at the outset, to be an interesting set of questions concerning literature in modern India and Egypt – questions which I do not recollect as being motivated by any conscious personal investment other than academic interest and curiosity – became in the end a reflection on deeper currents in world history and my relationship to them.

As a child born of mixed religious heritage in India but who left with his parents for Britain at a tender age, my 'identity' has constantly been a wonder, a worry and a problem. Not that I dwelt on it too much as a child, but there were moments when issues of 'identity' surfaced and took on a significance that began to grow as I grew older. Incidents of racial tension and abuse – though, luckily, they were few – collectively grew into an archive of memories that signalled a disturbance in my relationship to what I was accustomed to calling 'home', namely Britain; my adolescent rebellion against my father's religion – which continues to this day – has grown into a distinct unease about the place of Islam in the contemporary world; and my growing knowledge that in the country of my birth relations between the two sides of my cultural inheritance, the Hindu and the Muslim, had not always been harmonious – and, indeed, had led to a holocaust – have all shaped my sense of relative distance from certain aspects of my 'identity' and have led me to question the narratives of 'belonging' that constitute it.

These troublesome narratives all seem to converge, for me, on the concept of 'nationhood'. In 1992 a new anxiety appeared on my radar screen as I witnessed for the first time the communal carnage being unleashed upon Muslims in India by the Hindu nationalist-inspired mobs who had been whipped into a frenzy by L.K. Advani, the BJP, and their Sangh Parivar henchmen. It was my first taste, albeit heavily mediated, of communalism in India and struggles over the 'identity' of India. Officially classified as an 'ethnic minority' myself, I instinctively felt sympathy towards the Muslims in India, a feeling sharpened by the fear that my

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father's family were in physical danger. Afterwards, I began to think, and to ask questions. Had such hatred always existed? What did it mean for a Muslim man and a Hindu woman to fall in love and marry, as my parents had done? How had their respective families come to terms with it, as they clearly had? Why had my father's family stayed in India? Why had they not chosen to go to East Pakistan as it was then called?

In the same decade – the 1990s – the Islamic world and the ‘west’ seemed to become increasingly polarized as global antagonists. A few days before I reached adulthood, Iraq invaded Kuwait; a few years before that Ayatollah Khomeini declared a *fatwa* calling for the death of Salman Rushdie and tensions were running high. Although I recoiled, as any bookish liberal would, from what seemed to be the dogmatic intolerance of certain Muslim reactions, I have nevertheless become increasingly conscious of Islamophobia in the west. I am not a practising Muslim, but I am sensitive to the global contexts of power within which Islam is embedded. At a personal level I have witnessed many Muslims trying to negotiate the pressures which are brought to bear upon them by these contexts. I have become acutely aware of the dialectical relationship between western hypocrisy towards Islamic societies and the resentment this fuels. More questions, then: why had Islamic fundamentalism grown to such an extent? Where had such fanaticism come from? Is it to do with Islam itself? Was I embarrassed by my Muslim background?

I first began to frame this project with these questions at the back of my mind. At the front were more academic ones concerning literature and national identity. It is apparent, however, that I was not really interested in not asking those broader and, to my present mind, more important questions. The book that has emerged is thus a negotiation of culture, politics and religion in the modern world. It is not written just for academic consumption, although it may suffer such a fate. Instead, it tries to think through some large questions that intimately affect many lives – including my own, those of my parents and both sides of my family, as well as many others who have been positioned in the interstices of conflicting discourses of power, and whose personal life-stories abrasively intersect them. In trying to understand my own position I have, by way of reward, come to understand the many anxious negotiations that ‘ordinary’ people like my parents must conduct in order to live with the conflicted intimacy of the world today. This book is dedicated to them, and their special kind of courage.

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In the course of a long project like this, which takes up so much of one's life for so many years, it is entirely natural that a large number of debts – of a personal and professional nature – should accrue. My thanks go in particular to Sabry Hafez whose encouragement and intellectual energy were always a source of inspiration. It would not be too much of an exaggeration to say that without him half of this book would not have been conceived never mind written. As a guide to the extraordinary riches of modern Arabic narrative literature he was second to none; as a mentor, he has helped me in all sorts of ways which I can only repay by doing the best I possibly can in future scholarly endeavours. To him I owe the precious intellectual gift of being unafraid to tackle big ideas and large historical panoramas.

Of the others at SOAS during my time there, I must make special mention of Christopher Shackle who has continued to support me throughout the first stages of my career and who, as convenor of the Comparative Literature Masters programme at the time, also deserves to share the credit for having introduced me to literatures that I would not otherwise have had the chance to study. My thanks must also go to the other members of the Comparative Literature group, and to my friends and erstwhile colleagues on the *SOAS Literary Review* editorial board: Munizha Ahmad, Kai Easton and Amina Yaqin. I shared much of this material with them over the years, and have had much fun too. To William Watkin, Stephen Benson and James Massender I would like to say thank you for intellectual companionship, and for discussions over cultural theory which were as invigorating as they were rigorous.

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Finally, I'd like to say a very special thank you to some of my oldest and dearest friends who have lived through this project with me from beginning to end, who have also provided the space for me to get out of it when I had to, and with whom I've shared most of the best moments of my life whilst it was going on. More than that, it's rare to find room for such animated, no-holds-barred but no-hard-feelings discussion about world affairs and contemporary politics as I have enjoyed with them, and I am sure that much of it has gone into this book in one way or another. So, thanks to Gavin Proudley and Alison Hale, Atanu Roy, John Davidson, George and Sarah Davidson, Piers Winrow, Simon and Rebecca Bowen, Nigel Dawkins, Hazel Lee, Rene Freling, Antonia Hinds, Chris Addison and Jo Raggett, Francesca Zander, Alistair Robinson, Mark Cook and Emily Giles, and a special thank you to Melissa Cook, who has had to share a greater burden than most and who has always been there when I needed her.

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INTRODUCTION

This study represents an attempt to investigate the dominant political phenomenon of modern times, namely nationalism. As such, it constitutes yet another contribution to the growing body of academic literature which has attempted, in the past couple of decades, to explain, theorize and prognosticate about nations and nationalism. Why, given the extent of the field, is another study warranted? Two specific reasons suggest themselves. First, despite the oft-repeated claim that nations and nationalism are past their sell-by date, the contemporary world is, in fact, undergoing a realignment in which nations and nationalisms are playing a major, and sometimes bloody, part. The ongoing crisis in the Middle East between Israel and Palestine, the corrosive disintegration of Indonesia, the incremental process in Ireland and the continuing conflict in Spain, not to mention those grim and gratuitous nationalist conflicts which have saturated the Balkans in blood all give the lie to the notion that nationalism is on the decline. In the case of this present study, the intractable stalemate between India and Pakistan over the disputed area of Kashmir and the bitter feud between the state and the Islamist groups in Egypt both provide the impetus for new attempts at studying and, more importantly, understanding the origins and histories of such conflicts. Nor should we imagine, as globalization and supra-national conflicts – such as the ‘war on terror’ – emerge to contest the ‘national’ as the primary arena of political, economic and cultural life, that the relevance of nations and nationalism in any ‘post-national’ world has passed. Indeed, as this book will attempt to demonstrate, the shape of nations, and the character of the movements that built them in the high age of nationalism, continues to have profound and lasting consequences on the contemporary world.

The second reason has a specifically academic rationale, namely a growing dissatisfaction with the theories or models of nationalism currently on offer. Paradoxically, the current theoretical discourse on nationalism displays both too general an emphasis and a certain narrowness of vision. On the one hand, attempts are constantly made to box all nationalisms within certain typologies which, when examined, usually apply to no more than a handful of cases; on the other hand, like all discursive fields, the common assumptions which govern analyses of nationalism have hitherto imposed certain limits. These delimit the analyses in

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several ways, usually towards the verification of a typology but away from the historical specificities of any given nationalism.

The first chapter opens with a detailed discussion of the field of study within which this study will take its place, illustrating generally the various positions and definitions of nations, nationalism and national identity adopted by scholars in the field and defining itself, both implicitly and explicitly, in relation to them. Describing the structure of the field of study illustrates some of the lacunae which must be addressed, and shows how the study of nations and nationalism can be advanced in crucial areas which have hitherto been neglected or ill-defined. Some of these have emerged from certain presuppositions concerning the nature of nations or their origins, others from ambiguities in the usage of key terms like 'nation', 'nationalism', 'nationality' and so on. One schism in particular has had a particularly disabling effect upon much of the scholarship in this field. This is the implicit distinction that is often made between nationalism as either a primarily political phenomenon, or as a primarily cultural one. This separation of culture from politics is generally due to certain assumptions about 'culture' and 'politics', and is overdetermined by the disciplinary background of most of the major theorists whose training in sociology, political theory or history have, perhaps, left them unaware of major developments in cultural theory in recent years that have chipped away at the idea that culture is apolitical, or that politics can somehow exist in a purely instrumental and institutional zone removed from the field of signification.

Certain assumptions lie behind this neglect of such developments, in particular a historical mentality which equates cultural politics – or identity politics – with postmodernity whilst reserving modernity proper for 'hard' analysis by seemingly more rigorous disciplines. Often dismissive of postmodernism, theorists of nationalism have viewed with suspicion those attacks on nationhood and nationalism led by poststructuralist literary and cultural critics that emphasize the affective and discursive; instead, the theoretical work on nationalism has tended to focus on matters of 'empirical' verifiability: the state, institutions, political movements, class, and so on.¹ The result is that the role of 'culture', even among theorists who take the 'culturalist' view, remains untheorized. How culture works within nationalism is not seen as strictly relevant to the study of nation formation. For even the most 'cultural' theorists of nationalism culture is inert, a body of material simply available for political ends. It is not surprising, then, to find that the question of national identity is a particularly fraught one in theories of nationalism, given that it requires some investigation of the relationships between precisely those affective and discursive dimensions which 'hard' social and historical analysis tends to abjure.²

Conversely, it could be argued that the equation of 'identity politics' with postmodernity is, quite simply, wrong. Instead, 'identity politics' as such is precisely what nations and nationalisms are about. From this perspective, modernity is not an enclave of pure instrumental reason but rather the harbinger of a new type of politics hitherto unknown in the world: cultural politics. To say this is to go

slightly beyond Ernest Gellner's famous dictum that 'Nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent.'³ Whilst equating the 'national' with the 'cultural', Gellner cannot adequately explain how the national culture came about other than as the consequence of 'modernization'. Hence 'culture' acquires a passive, secondary status which overlooks altogether how 'culture' constitutes 'identity' and so constructs the 'psychic glue' which binds nations together. Indeed, his position, far from suggesting a fundamental break with pre-modern modes of politics in fact reinscribes them: culture is used 'instrumentally' much as it was by those pre-modern elites for whom politics (and warfare) was their social function. Conquest was what pre-modern elites in Europe and elsewhere 'did', with or without justification.⁴ The cultural identities of those conquered was not relevant, hence the large and loose multi-ethnic empires and kingdoms, often with overlapping and shared sovereignties, that were the dominant political structures prior to modernity. In contrast, it will be argued in this book that nations represent the first emergence in human history when culture becomes the basis for political activity. In other words, in modernity political logic is itself restructured so that 'culture' became its fundamental rationale.

But why did politics become cultural in the age of nations and since? The answer to this question encompasses two dimensions that link nationalism as cultural politics to the emergence of modernity. These dimensions are intimately – as we shall see, this is precisely the right word – related to one another in a dialectical relationship that, for the sake of analysis, can be separated: macro-level transformations of a socio-cultural nature, and micro-level revolutions in 'being' and 'consciousness' for the human subject.

In *The Consequences of Modernity*, Anthony Giddens reconceptualizes one of the central problems in social theory – that of the 'order' or structure of society – in terms of the way that 'social systems "bind" time and space . . . the conditions under which time and space are organised so as to connect presence and absence'.⁵ Using this template, he suggests that the transition from pre-modern social systems to modern ones involves 'disembedding': whereas pre-modern social formations were 'embedded' into 'local contexts of interaction' that bound time and space into a relatively tight unity such that "when" was almost universally . . . connected with "where", disembedded social systems 'unbind' time and space and recombine them 'across indefinite spans'.⁶ The restructuring of time and space in modernity – what Giddens calls 'time-space distancing' – involves new institutional mechanisms that can 'connect the local and the global'.⁷

Modernity unbound, then, was always potentially global in scale but the question that must be asked is why it threw up, in its first efflorescence, such 'bounded' social formations as nations. For, as Benedict Anderson reminds us, nations are always 'inherently limited and sovereign' and not universal.⁸ Giddens suggests precisely this when he suggests that national sovereignty involves the control over 'borders' as opposed to the looser, malleable 'frontiers' of sovereignty

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enjoyed by pre-modern states. This, he suggests, is because the 'nation-state system has long participated in that reflexivity characteristic of modernity as a whole', by which he means that the disembedding of social relations involves a transformation in the institutionalization of knowledge which produces the 'modern rational organisation' that binds together the local and global in unprecedented ways.⁹ Nations, by this argument, are the arenas constructed by such organizations, the most powerful of which is the modern state itself.

There is some truth to this but it does not adequately identify why, given the global potentiality of modernity, these states were 'bounded'. Why, for instance, did modernity not develop a 'world state'? In part, this is due to Giddens's marginalization of the political context in which such transformations were undoubtedly taking place. The boundedness of the nation-state lies in its determination by the type of state that immediately preceded it: the absolutist state. Perry Anderson has noted that the technical advances which propelled the transition from late feudalism to the absolutist state – money, language, travel and war – could all be seen as advances in the field of communications, which testifies to Giddens's theory of disembedding.¹⁰ However, these processes took place in the context of a realignment of political power designed, in Anderson's words, to develop a 'new political carapace [for] a threatened nobility'.¹¹ In other words, 'disembedding' both determined the emergence of the absolutist state and was itself developed in response to it. As Anderson has noted, absolutism was tied to a dynastic principle in which it was patrimony not territory that was at stake in political encounters. In this situation, territory was the 'prize' not the basis of dynastic politics. However, the dialectical relationship between the absolutist state and disembedding institutions led to a secularization of sovereignty and the reorganization of the state's territory within precise 'borders'. Since a disembedded society required, as a corollary to its distantiation, ever more detailed legal scrutiny to hold its various parts together, the state became increasingly concerned with the space over which it exercised its sovereignty. In time this would transform the political rationality of the state, which would henceforth be concerned with territory itself. Territory, of course, is precisely what nations are most concerned with. Nationalism, it has been suggested, is 'land pornography'.¹²

In effect, war, the centralization of the bureaucracy, changes in the codification of law and the ruler's sovereignty, and the emergence of a unified internal market to serve the increasingly powerful interests of the urban mercantile classes were some of the institutional pressures that were to provide the platform for national territories. Bound up with this, however, was a corresponding revolution in culture. On the one hand, it was during the age of absolutism in Europe that vernacular print-capitalism emerged as a decisive factor in the formation of nations, as has been well-documented by Benedict Anderson. On the other hand, this coincided with the rise of new forms of discourse – the newspaper and the novel in particular – that signalled the emergence of new forms of 'representation'. It was this revolution in representation that mediated the transformations in the state on the one hand and transformations in society on the other.

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Representation is double-edged. It has two meanings which are not unrelated to each other. On the one hand, it is ‘discursive’ – a description of a thing, a painting, a photograph – and on the other, its political sense, it is a form of institutional practice. In both cases, representation substitutes for the ‘thing itself’. It is here that the ‘linguistic turn’ in twentieth-century western philosophy and recent advances in cultural theory can provide the insight into how culture is constitutive of politics in modernity. One of its most valuable intellectual advances has been the idea that life is lived in and through representations (of both sorts); that is, our sense of being, our actions, our conscious and unconscious beliefs are invariably – indeed, unavoidably – mediated through the discursive grids by which we are socially interpellated. This was as true of ‘primitive’ societies as it is of sophisticated postmodern ones; as true for that great bulk of humans who lived prior to modernity as for those who have lived since. The nature of the discursive grids, however, changed. In modernity a number of processes converged that produced a reorientation in notions of representation of both kinds. On the one hand, there is a gradual displacement of the sovereign as the metaphoric embodiment of sovereignty – first of God, then of the state – by the metonymic ‘assembly’ representing the sovereignty not of a dynastic state but of the ‘people’: the nation-state. On the other hand, new forms of discourse emerge in the cultural field – newspapers, novels, journals, pamphlets, and eventually photographs and films – that are also metonymic.¹³

The reorientation of representation from the metaphoric to the metonymic axis in modernity is, in fact, closely linked to the ‘disembedding’ processes initiated during modernity, and the subsequent recombination of a distanced relationship between time and space in a territorialized state. For, as Giddens points out, disembedding mechanisms can no longer rely on personalized and face-to-face guarantees to underwrite social relationships but rather must build new ‘trust’ mechanisms that link the local and the distant, the present and the absent.¹⁴ Trust is closely linked to ‘truthfulness’ but in the increasingly abstracted social environment of modernity trust is depersonalized so that trust no longer resides so much in the ‘truthfulness’ of the person as in the ‘truth’ represented by the ‘system’ itself – the system being a metonym for modern, reflexive knowledge as a whole. If modern trust increasingly depends on ‘truth’ as opposed to ‘truthfulness’ then truth itself must be more apparent, and therefore represented as transparently as possible. Unlike metaphoric or symbolic representations, metonymic representations are relatively less polysemous and thus appear to be more ‘transparent’. This transparency effect is perhaps a consequence of the ‘contiguity’ that Jakobson identifies as characteristic of metonymy.¹⁵ Transparency and contiguity, taken together, represent distanced spaces as continuous wholes and not disconnected fragments.¹⁶ These new forms of representation may therefore be seen as ‘embedding’ mechanisms that connect distanced time–space relations. It is for this reason that the age of nations is also the age of realism in literature and the visual arts; that the newspaper bases its ‘truth’ claims on empirical – or transparent – representation of an ‘event’ that is contiguous to the reader

even though it may be geographically distant. It is also the age of representative democracy, where a distanced realm is unified in the ‘assembly’ by the metonyms of the ‘people’, its representatives.¹⁷

This is not to say that nations could only be represented by such novel forms of discourse. Indeed, a sound argument could be put forward that the more ‘traditional’ representational forms, such as lyric poetry or ballads, fairytales and folklore, all of which deploy more metaphoric and symbolic representations, were more culturally significant in areas and eras of low literacy and undeveloped cultural markets. However, it should be stressed that such forms in the age of nationalism contributed to nationalist discourse through refurbishing their content with nationalist tropes and figures; the new discursive forms that emerged in this period were all metonymic. Moreover, it could also be argued that even at the level of form the ‘traditional’ forms were restructured in modernity, moving along the axis of representation towards metonymy. In the case of Romanticism, for example, which certainly coincided with and contributed to the construction of national cultures, its undoubted metaphoric and symbolic dimensions are still nevertheless notably metonymic in some respects.¹⁸ One may take, for instance, Wordsworth’s *Lyrical Ballads*, or the poems of Rabindranath Tagore and Walt Whitman as instances where the symbolic coexists with a metonymic representation of the ‘land’ and the ‘people’ who inhabit it. The verse represents both something over and beyond the concrete and physical whilst at the same time mapping it as contiguous to the ground beneath the feet of its implied readers. One may compare this to representations of space in pre-modern verse to realize the shift: how different Tagore’s evocative landscapes to the spatially ‘empty’ devotional verse of the *bhakti*; how far *The Prelude* from *The Pilgrim’s Progress*?

The ‘boundedness’ of nation-states within modernity is, therefore, a consequence of institutional pressures on the one hand, and cultural transformations on the other, so that the arena of the ‘national’ could be ‘represented’ by cultural forms better able to respond to the demands of contiguously drawing together the present and the absent, the local and the distant. Paradoxically, however, this shift towards the metonymic in both the cultural and political fields is triangulated by a ‘metaphor’: the nation. Whilst the metonymic rests on correspondences that demonstrate contiguity – this ‘man’ represents other men in his constituency (read: distant space); that piece of land is contiguous to the one under your feet, it is part of the ‘same’ soil – the nation offers no such correspondence. What does the nation represent? The land? The people? Their customs? Their culture? Or all of these things? In themselves none of them are, however, contiguous to the ‘nation’; on the other hand, the ‘nation’ represents all of them, and resolves the discontinuities between them. Amos Oz has suggested that, ‘Only in the twilight of myths can one speak of the liberation of a land struggling under a foreign yoke. Land is not enslaved . . . There are [only] enslaved people.’¹⁹ Speaking of the land in terms one would normally speak of persons indicates precisely the metaphoric quality of nationhood. It is as if the shift into the prosaic disenchantment – to use Weber’s apposite phrase – of modernity occasions a need for the consolation of

poetry to keep it all together – a symbol, a *logos*, a metaphysicalization of concrete historical processes. Nations are the enchantment of the modern age.²⁰

To say this is to state categorically that nations are myths, and this is indeed a commonplace observation. But as modern myths, their function is precisely the same as myth in the pre-modern age. They are a resource for collective identity and social solidarity. This is the second of the two dimensions that led to the emergence of cultural politics in modernity. If the outline above is addressed to how nations become ‘bounded’ social systems, it is to the nature and function of collective identity that we must turn to ask why. Once again, it is the constitutive role of culture that provides the crucial perspective on how boundaries between ‘them’ and ‘us’ help construct a sense of national identity.²¹

It is one of the great insights of psychoanalysis that ‘identity’ as such is a risky business. If our ‘self’ is split between a conscious ego and an unconscious id whose operations are not apparent to consciousness, our self-identity is always threatened by this duplicity. Our identity is only possible by the constant policing of our unconscious. Psychoanalysis posits this as a universal condition, but it is worth noting that it is constituted historically into specific forms. Thus, in modernity, the ‘drama’ of identity is played out more urgently as ‘[in] that very movement by which modernity offers an unprecedented range of possible identities, the subject’s need for a secure identity . . . becomes more difficult to satisfy and, correspondingly, desire for it more acute’.²² In other words, the risk of ‘being’ increases in modernity because time–space distancing increases the possibility of inhabiting multiple identities as opposed to the more limited range available in ‘embedded’ social contexts. These multiple selves threaten to fragment our identity and so our desire for a unified ‘ego-ideal’ increases in order to compensate.

This is precisely how Freud theorizes collective identity: as an ‘ego-ideal’ the object of collective identity offers us an image of ourselves that we in fact lack. Collective identity works through narcissism. Lacan approves of this observation as a substantiation of his theory of subjectivity. But he also adds to it a distinction between ‘being’ and ‘meaning’ that is a consequence of his rewriting of the infamous Oedipal drama in the light of structuralist linguistic theory. For him, the ‘imaginary’ state is one in which the infant subject feels itself to be in a state of ‘unity’, unaware of any difference between itself and the world. This stage is a state of pure ‘being’. The constitution of the ‘subject’ occurs when the subject passes through the ‘mirror stage’, which Lacan uses as a metaphor for the subject’s entry into the symbolic order: the linguistic system that makes ‘sense’ of the world and ourselves. By entering the system of language, which Saussure suggests creates meaning only by the differential relation of signs to each other, the ‘self’ acquires identity by becoming aware of ‘difference’. Paradoxically, therefore, the subject only acquires self-identity at the cost of uniqueness. As Easthope puts it, ‘entering language I begin to have meaning but only because my being disappears into language – I can only say things that *anyone* could say.’²³

Identity, then, is an effect of language. But it is also constituted by a desire for the missing ‘being’ that is lost upon entry into the Symbolic order. This desire

for the ‘plenitude’ of being – the ‘fullness’ of being – is located in the unconscious. Our sense of identity is, therefore, split between its recognition, through language, of difference (which gives the self ‘meaning’) and a desire for an impossible ‘fullness’ of being which reproduces the ‘unity’ of the imaginary stage. So too for collective identity: nations are precisely universes of meaning that simultaneously construct ‘difference’ whilst offering an imaginary ‘unity’ that represents the ego-ideal of the imaginary state of plenitude. As Easthope points out, Jacques Derrida has noticed that nationalist discourse operates by a tautology that replicates, in its circularity, a closed unitary state of being: ‘different objects of identification become equated by evidencing common national attributes (‘this is peculiarly English’) while those attributes are reciprocally defined by the objects themselves’.²⁴ Within this closed, circular logic one finds an ‘imaginary’ sense of ‘being’ that substitutes for the lost plenitude of the imaginary stage.

In a slightly different sense, following Giddens, we could say that nations are symbolic ‘trust’ mechanisms that manage the risk of ‘being’ in the modern world by, in Benedict Anderson’s words, transforming ‘fatality into continuity’.²⁵ Indeed, Giddens suggests that risk is particular to modernity, replacing *fortuna* (fortune or fate) and it is precisely this uncoupling of ‘danger’ from notions of pre-ordination that requires humanly constructed mechanisms to ‘manage’ humanly perceived and calculated risks.²⁶ These depend on the formation of ‘trust’ mechanisms which, as we have seen, are constitutive of modernity as a whole. However, like Freud and Lacan, Giddens also sees the formation of trust at the social and institutional level as being cognate with processes of subject constitution at the personal one. Drawing on the object-relations school of psychology, he says,

Crucial to the intersection of trust with emergent social capabilities on the part of the infant, therefore, is absence. Here, at the heart of the psychological development of trust, we rediscover the problem of time-space distanciation. For a fundamental feature of the early formation of trust is trust in the caretaker’s return. A feeling of reliability . . . is predicated upon the recognition that the absence of the mother does not represent a withdrawal of love.²⁷

This is not incompatible with the Lacanian ‘drama’ of subjecthood in so far as they both see the ‘object’ related to the ‘subject’ in some relation of absence. For Lacan, desire is the consequence of ‘lack’ and, according to Easthope’s reading, the nation fills this lack with an imaginary unity. If we follow Giddens, however, we could suggest that nationalist discourse structurates identity on the basis of trust *in absentia*: the ontological security provided by the nation is analogous to the mother in object-relations theory. We may not know all the others in the nation but we trust that they will identify with us in the same way as we do with them. The absence always implies a corresponding ‘presence’ that will return – like the mother – whenever we are in need. Trust in our fellow nationals rests on

this promised 'return'. The 'nation' is, therefore, an absent-present, always there but, like God, ineffable.

Whichever theoretical perspective is chosen, however, the significant point to be made is that identity formation occurs in and through language and representation (the object-relations theory does not, in fact, directly challenge the Lacanian theory of subject formation; in many respects it could be said to complement it), and that collective identity is a cognate of personal identity. Nationhood must, therefore, be seen as a 'discursive formation' that constitutes its subjects as 'nationals'.²⁸ It is through culture, then, that the figure of the nation emerges to provide a collective identity that resolves the anxieties of personal ones.

However, given that the obverse of identity is difference, the limits of this discursive formation is an extremely important question. At one level it is related to the emergence of 'bounded' social formations in the historical transition to modernity. These were the concrete historical determinations, but at the same time they were in dialectical relationship with cultural processes through which such boundaries were both constructed and made sense of. The nation is culturally articulated and rearticulated within the institutional frameworks of historical process such that it is literally 'spoken into being' as a discursive formation. The 'limits' of the nation produced by this process identifies it by articulating both 'sameness' – what makes 'us' the same – and difference – what makes 'us' different from 'them'. It is one of the central arguments of this book that nationalism is a discourse that 'produces' the nation, and that what is at stake in this process is 'culture' itself – its scope, its substance, its peculiar characteristics, its dimensions and so on. If, at the very moment our desire for collective identity inscribes a simultaneous need for difference, then 'nation' only makes sense as a category in relation to other nations, and their respective cultures. In other words, lying at the centre of nationhood is the 'other' that is disavowed in the very constitution of the nation itself.

It is this necessary presence of the 'other' within the discursive frame of the 'self' that undermines the circular unity of nationalist discourse and disrupts its attempts to create an uncontestable identity.²⁹ We should not, therefore, mistakenly posit at the level of theory what nationalism attempts to achieve in practice. The dialectical process by which the nation is produced as a discursive formation can, if we are not careful, seem too neat, too complete and too self-contained to account for the deviations, mutations, repressions and anxieties that have historically been a ubiquitous feature of nationalist discourse.³⁰ Again, we can make the correlation between personal and collective identity. Much as the subject desires a return to the imaginary it can never do so; it is bound to the world of meaning, its identity constituted by the differential system of signs. This system, due to its differential nature, is never stable and just as meaning is never fully achievable, always disrupted by traces of difference, so too is identity always incomplete. It remains partial, always dispersed along the chain of signifiers, always under threat of fragmentation. Conversely, just as any given signifier can never

be fixed to one signified because of the necessary presence of all other signifiers, thereby generating an ‘excess’ of meaning, so too does identity risk being overwhelmed by a plurality of possible identities. On the one hand, partiality, on the other, plurality: fragmentation and excess; this double movement is inscribed into the structures of discourse as much as that of consciousness, generating both ‘supplementarity’ (making good the lack) and ‘erasure’ (keeping at bay the excess).³¹ If meaning is an effect of the temporary halt to the sliding chain of signification, a provisional stop of difference, then identity too is no more than a tenebrous state which needs constant reaffirmation.

It is for this reason that nationalist discourse can never be ‘sufficient’. It is always supplemented by new statements, which also attempt to excise and erase others. The discursive formation that constitutes national identity is, therefore, always contested. However, it should be pointed out that this is an effect not only of the operations of language and the constitution of subjecthood. It is also an effect of the situatedness of both discourse and consciousness within specific historically determined frames of action – the material parameters of social life. For differences in discourse – in meaning and interpretation – are constituted materially by the differential relations of subjects to it. This in turn is an effect of the different position of subjects within the social space that the discourse inhabits and constitutes. These ‘positions’ are an effect both of other discourses – class, race, gender, sexuality, etc. – and the subject’s location in relation to the distribution of power and material resources in a social space. The location of the subject, then, within the discursive materiality of space determines that subject’s relation to the discourses it inhabits. The ‘play’ of signification is activated by relations of force between different social ‘positions’ so that any discourse is always ‘fractured’ by different articulations of it. In contrast to Homi Bhabha’s characterization of colonial discourse, for example, as agonistic, I suggest that the doubleness (or ambivalence, in his terms) of nationalist discourse – and colonial discourse, for that matter – is constituted antagonistically as the effect of collective contests over the ‘meaning’ of national identity.³² In the second half of Chapter 1 I therefore attempt to outline a theoretical position through which I may examine nationalism as a collective discourse that struggles for a coherence that is always dismantled in that very effort.

Against the position taken by Foucault, Althusser and others that offer paradigms of subjecthood that are more or less synonymous with subjection, this book takes as its point of departure the premise that the effects of power are both immensely durable and fragile, and that the subject, far from being powerless to intervene in the operations of discursive power, has the ability to shape and reorganize the discursive formation itself. These interventions, although discursive in form, are ideological in nature. The difference between the two terms is often overlooked. Itself a notoriously ambiguous and polyvalent term, ideology’s relation to and distinction from ‘discourse’ is fraught with difficulty. Ideologies are, after all, discursive; and discourses always carry some ideological charge. It would be incorrect, however, to treat them as mutually synonymous. Discourse is a wider

and more capacious term than ideology, and is capable of sustaining several ideological positions within it which may be diametrically opposed but share the same discursive terrain. Both racists and anti-racists, for example, whilst being ideologically opposed to one another may in fact share the same discourse on race to articulate their respective positions.

The central argument of this book is that nations must be seen as discursive formations within which many competing ideological positions concerning the 'idea' of nationhood must polemically converge in order to attain a 'hegemonic' position. They do so in relation to other articulations of nationhood, either by supplementing them, or by attempting to erase them. Any given 'enunciation' – whether a novel, or a political tract – must therefore be interpreted within this ideological context. The specific relation of a novel and a political tract to the political field may not be equal or uniform, but they are both nevertheless situated in the discursive terrain of nationalism and will thereby occupy particular ideological positions within it. Accordingly, one may examine any text located within this discursive formation whatever form they might take. Form itself may bear upon the precise organization of significance in a given text (as is demonstrated by the discussion of Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* in Chapter 3) but over and above that it is the relations between the text and others within the discursive field of its utterance that determines its 'identity'.

These relations can be both synchronic and diachronic. One of the aims of the study is precisely to investigate not only the structure of the ideological field at any given historical moment so as to determine the significance of particular ideological positions – or paradigms as I call them – but also the ways in which the structure itself changes over time. It will attempt to trace the processes by which ideological contests within nationalist discourse in India and Egypt determined the diachronic development of nationalism in these two countries. It will be concerned with meanings and significances, both conscious and unconscious, that shaped the nations' ideas of themselves through over a century of political and ideological struggle. Such an approach unearths deep subterranean continuities beneath what on the surface appear to be radical discontinuities.

It is due to this concern with ideological process that the chapters that follow involve close readings of a number of significant texts written and published during the anti-colonial struggles in India and Egypt. If it is recognized that any given field of discourse is not an autonomous field but located at the juncture of several, materially constituted, fields of production – on which I elaborate further in the second section of Chapter 1 – then the text, as well as being an utterance from a specific position within the field of discourse is also therefore a 'site' of production which is materially as well as discursively determined. It is the work of a subject who, in his or her social life, traverses the social field and whose subjectivity is thus constituted as an assimilation of the many positions in the many fields in which that subject participates. The text, being an oblique indicator of that subjectivity, is therefore multiply determined, a site of discursive 'pressure'. It is, therefore, open to a symptomatic reading which can diagnose the discursive energies bearing

down upon it. Such a reading enables us to examine how ideologies may be ‘articulated’ by social agents.³³ In examining the development of nationalist discourse, articulation allows one to touch upon the complexity of the process through which a major ideology might make itself felt within a given society and how, in the process, it may be effectively contested by other positions or ‘unmade’ from within by the slippage of meaning that inevitably accompanies dissemination.

Following the theoretical concerns of Chapter 1, the book is divided roughly into three sections. There are three chapters on India, three on Egypt, and a concluding chapter which reflects back upon the material discussed in the previous chapters in relation to developments in the contemporary world, an historical afterword of sorts. Each of the sections on India and Egypt, respectively, open with a discussion of the pre-history of the ideological paradigms that constitute the object of the chapter that follows: Gandhian nationalism in India, and secular-liberalism in Egypt. These chapters operate, at one level, as prefaces to the chapters that follow introducing several of the key tropes and figures which emerged and remained within nationalist discourse in the two countries. The chapters that follow in each section then examine in detail the transformations of the ideological field effected by Gandhism and secular-liberal nationalism, respectively. These, in turn, are counterpointed by the concluding chapter in each triad, which examines the dissolution and degeneration of the hegemonies that each had enjoyed for relatively brief spans of historical time.

As a whole, each triad is structured in order to emphasize the channels by which certain configurations of ideas, images, tropes and figures were deployed and deconstructed during the half century or so with which we are concerned. The texts are examined as much for what they conceal as what they actually enunciate. These unconscious concealments are significant for their repression at one historical juncture is balanced by their irruption at another within the work of writers who are ostensibly advocates of the same ideological position. This ‘surfacing’ of the subterranean may not be apparent to casual – or empirical – historical analysis but these replacements, displacements and repressions testify to the fraught and anxious nature of national identity within the discourse of writers who, on the surface, seem categorically and wholeheartedly nationalist. It is here, at the heart of the nationalist pantheon, that doubt emerges as the most conspicuous trope of all in nationalist discourse. What Jacqueline Rose has observed of Israel is true of nationalisms everywhere, for there is always a ‘constant risk of failed embodiment’ inherent to the nationalist project.³⁴

One question remains: why India and Egypt? Why the comparison? At the heart of this book lies a set of convergent historical temporalities which offer one explanation of its rationale: anti-colonial nationalism emerged at roughly the same time in both countries (1882 in Egypt, 1885 in India) although their specific natures were different: in India, 1885 marked the formal inauguration of nationalism as a specific political project; in Egypt this would have to wait until the formation of the *Hizb al-Watan* and *Hizb al-Umma* parties in the first decade of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, the British Occupation and the failed

rebellion of Colonel Urabi – which has been mistakenly identified by many as being a ‘nationalist’ rebellion simply because its slogan was ‘Egypt for the Egyptians’ – gave impetus to the growing body of work by Egyptian intellectuals during the course of the nineteenth century that had begun to grapple with some of the basic constituent problematics of Egyptian nationalism – the distinctiveness of Egyptian national ‘culture’, the importance of the Pharaonic civilization, the territory of the Nile valley, the relationship between the Egyptian *umma* and the Islamic *umma*, and so on. Similar questions were being debated at precisely the same time in India following the establishment of the Brahma Samaj and what has been termed the ‘vernacular renaissances’ of the mid-nineteenth century, of which the Bengal variant is the most well known. Thus, whilst the temporality of formal nationalism may have differed, the historical trajectory of nationalist discourse in the two countries moved along parallel lines.

It is, however, the almost exact historical simultaneity of their respective transitions to ‘mass’ nationalism – in March and April 1919 in Egypt and India, respectively – that most clearly demonstrates the ways in which the historical experiences of these two important nationalisms may be similar enough to warrant detailed historical comparison. Moreover, both countries moved to mass nationalist politics under the aegis of then seemingly hegemonic ideological positions – Gandhism and secular-liberalism – neither of which survived to see independence. What happened to them, and might their failures be connected in some deep way to the seemingly intractable political problems that each nation faces today? As we shall see, both are facing what might be termed a crisis of secularism that overdetermines, respectively, the dispute over Kashmir and the rise of radical Islamism. Moreover, both are having to deal with the rise of religious fundamentalisms which are, in different ways, reshaping the respective ideas of nationhood further and further away from those imagined at the outset; however, there are also deeper continuities which might explain this in both nations, continuities which stretch back to the emergent moments of nationalism in India and Egypt.

The spectre of comparison always hovers over any judgement about nationalism because, rather paradoxically, nationalism insists upon its universality even as it manifests itself in a particular identity. If one were to single out a feature common to nationalisms all over the world it would have to be that nationalists always compare their nation with other nations. In other words, they imagine the globe to be ‘naturally’ composed of territorially defined national communities. Given the wide range of nationalist imaginings throughout the world, any conclusions with regard to nationalism are always provisional. However, a comparison between two highly significant anti-colonial nationalisms enables one to assess possible commonalities as well as demonstrating the considerable differences between them. In this regard, this study has sought to contribute to a rebalancing of the jaundiced optic which animates much of the theoretical discourse on nationalism produced by western scholars who tend to classify all anti-colonial nationalisms under the catch-all term ‘Third World nationalism’. Often, the wide discrepancies between

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these nationalisms have been overlooked in favour of pronouncements about their common 'illiberal', 'cultural' and essentially inferior qualities when compared with nationalisms in western Europe. Rather than imprisoning Indian and Egyptian nationalism within a typological straitjacket, this study insists that whatever features they possess are the product of a specific history.³⁵

1

NATIONALISM AS CULTURAL POLITICS

Since the early 1980s the resurgence of scholarly interest in the figure of the nation has been characterized by a sustained critical interrogation of it. It is now generally accepted by scholars in the field that, contrary to its self-image, the nation is not a primordial category, fixed and unchanging. Rather it is the product of a specific historical moment, born as the European world slowly emerged into modernity, from the cradle of what Eric Hobsbawm calls ‘the dual revolution’ at the end of the eighteenth century, one which transformed the political contours of Europe, the other which transformed its economic field of production, each of them trailing in its wake the great social upheavals that lay the basis for the kind of world which we still inhabit.¹

Modernity, then, is crucial to contemporary discussions of the nation and even those who argue that the ‘core’ features of nations pre-dated modernity itself – that the cultural community that is the basis of the nation existed before it became a nation as such – concede that it was the advent of modernity that radically transformed those features into what we would now recognize as nations. And yet, in spite of this broad area of agreement, the only genuine consensus in the study of nations and nationalism is that the field itself is radically dissensual. As to why this should be is itself open to question but the disagreements often hinge upon the confusion generated by differing uses of the central terms in question such as ‘nation’, ‘nationalism’ and ‘nation-state’. No standard definition exists within the field itself as to what these terms signify and it is clear from even a cursory glance at recent studies that definitions of them depend upon the position one adopts with regard to the object of study.

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, the greatest confusion seems to rest on the term ‘nation’ itself since this is precisely what is at stake in the debate. Crudely, the field can be divided into two main camps: those who believe that the nation is primarily a cultural category, whom I shall call ‘culturalists’, and those who consider it to be primarily a political category, whom I shall term ‘statists’. For the culturalists the nation can be defined as a cultural community which exists above and beyond any political organization of it into a state; it is, therefore, ‘pre-political’. These cultural communities, which Anthony Smith terms *ethnies*, provide the basis for modern nations.² They are more or less culturally homogeneous on the basis of

what he terms a 'myth-symbol' complex, which forms a fund of shared historical meanings to which every possessor of that culture has access, which bonds 'a people' together, and which ties that people to a 'historic territory or homeland'.³ The nation is, therefore, a collectivity of meaning, a bond 'embedded in history' through common myths, symbols, narratives and other cultural forms, all of which enable 'a people' to recognize itself as a commonality as opposed to others who do not have access to this fund of historical memories.⁴ This *ethnie* therefore places limits upon the transformations that create modern nations. Thus, the nation could be seen as the product of modernity only in so far as 'the era of nationalism succeeded in uniting the community on a new, political basis'.⁵ If, for these scholars, politics is important, it is only because it is the expression of a pre-existing nation; the nation exists 'objectively' regardless of whether it is organized politically. This fundamental separation of the nation from politics consequently separates it from the state such that it is possible to have nations without states, and by extension, 'true' nation-states are those which exhibit a confluence between the 'nation' as an ethnically homogeneous 'culture community' and a political unit. As Smith observes, this means that only about 10% of nations in the contemporary world would thus be classified as nation-states in this strict sense. The rest are, what he calls, 'state-nations' in that these 'nations' are the product of a nationalizing policy on the part of an existing political unit and not vice versa.⁶

For statist, on the other hand, the nation is primarily a political category, as Ernest Gellner points out in the opening sentence of his book *Nations and Nationalism*, 'Nationalism is primarily a political principle which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent.'⁷ Notwithstanding for the moment that this in itself does not resolve the question of what the 'national unit' actually signifies, the statist believe that the figure of the nation emerges as a solution to the socio-political problems faced at the end of the eighteenth century as a result of increasing modernization, the Industrial and French Revolutions and the massive socio-political upheavals they engendered, and of transformations in the relationship between the state and 'society'. Gellner points out that 'nationalism emerges only in milieux in which the existence of the state is already very much taken for granted', and in so far as statist believe nations to be the result of nationalist politics, the existence of 'politically centralized units' has a definitive rather than merely expressive impact upon the formation of nations.⁸ John Breuille elaborates upon this point in greater detail, pointing out that the nation cannot be conceived of without developments in the institutions and functions of the modern state. These formed the basis of the problematic to which nationalist politics addresses itself and to which it professes to furnish a solution, namely the relationship of the state to 'civil society'. Thus,

a clear and distinct idea of the state as 'public' and 'civil' society as 'private' was elaborated . . . the explicit idea of the state as the sole source of political functions was associated with a modern idea of sovereignty . . . This also required a much clearer definition than hitherto of the

boundaries of the state . . . The breakdown in corporate ties meant that within both state and civil society there was a new emphasis upon people as individuals rather than members of groups. The main problem was how to make the state-society connection; how to maintain some harmony between the public interests of society and the private interests of selfish individuals.⁹

The concept of 'nationhood' emerges, according to Breuilly, as a solution proposed by nationalist politicians to this political problem. Consequently, the nation can be seen to be the product of nationalist ideology and not a pre-existing and objective cultural category waiting to assume the trappings of state.

This point will be further discussed in greater detail, but for now one can widen the issue of terminology to incorporate another term that fluctuates wildly according to use, namely 'nationalism'. Part of the problem for the culturalists is that even though the nation is, for them, conceived of as a 'pre-political' category, nevertheless, by accepting its 'modernity' (in that modern nations are not the same as pre-modern *ethnies*), and by accepting that an aspect of the 'modern' nation is, to a greater or lesser degree, a politicization of the cultural community, they cannot actually separate culture from politics much as they would like to in theory. Thus they cannot separate nations from nationalism. Nationalism, its nature and function, becomes a crucial question for all concerned. The culturalists, therefore, must engage the statist on this question and come up with a definition for nationalism. Smith defines nationalism as, 'an ideological movement for the attainment and maintenance of self-government on behalf of a group some of whose members conceive it to constitute an actual or potential nation.'¹⁰ Given that nationalism, in this definition, must, in some sense, be spoken of in political terms it seems at first glance that nationalism is a much less contentious and problematic term than nation. However, Smith divides the category into two components, a principle or doctrine and a movement to realize this doctrine. Gellner, Smith's opponent in the debate, also splits nationalism into these two categories, as does Breuilly. Yet given the structure of oppositions in the debate, it is at once clear that the definition of the 'doctrine' in turn must necessarily be qualified by the definition of the 'nation' that underlies it. The culturalists, having conceded much by admitting the political nature of nationalism still need to distinguish the doctrine which nationalism seeks to actualize from that of the statist. For the statist the doctrine is an invention of nationalist politicians, who thus invent the nation. The culturalists, however, need to maintain that the 'doctrine' is not an invention but rather the self-expression of a pre-existing *ethnie* that informs and determines, from the outset, the political trajectory of the nationalism in question. The doctrine is, therefore, not an invention but an expression of the 'core' values of the nation: an expression of 'national sentiment' which is not nationalist but rather national, deriving from the objective pre-existence of a proto-national cultural community. Thus, depending on the conception of the nation that is subscribed to, nationalism is again either primarily a cultural doctrine, or primarily

a political one. In both cases it may well be that it is a political movement seeking to gain control of a state, but for one group it does so to solve certain socio-political problems, for the other to realize the expressive desire for self-determination of a discrete cultural group.

This leads to implicit assumptions and distinctions which further undermine any attempt at reaching a consensual definition of nationalism, let alone of nations. John Hutchinson, a noted culturalist, identifies, for example, ‘two distinctive types of nationalist project: cultural and political nationalism’:¹¹

It is misleading to interpret nationalism as *just* a political movement . . . there has been a tendency to regard cultural nationalism as just a cover for political nationalism when normal political activity is not possible . . . even when scholars have noted their presence, they have tended to regard these movements as essentially regressive products of otherworldly romantics . . . which have little capacity to direct social change. Third, as a corollary of this they have been portrayed as transitory phenomena, destined to disappear with full modernization.¹²

I, however, will argue that there are two distinctive and sometimes competing types of nationalism: a political nationalism that has as its aim autonomous state institutions; and a cultural nationalism that seeks a moral regeneration of the community. Although the latter looks backward, it is not regressive; rather it puts forward a mobile view of history that evokes a golden age of achievement as a critique of the present, with the hope of propelling the community to ever higher stages of development. Indeed, at times of crisis generated by the modernization process, cultural nationalists play the role of moral innovators proposing alternative indigenous models of progress.¹³

Hutchinson then goes on to say, ‘In practice, of course, it is often difficult to distinguish between cultural and political nationalists.’¹⁴ This begs rather a large question as to the value of the distinction. Aside from that, we can also notice that Hutchinson takes as completely assumed and unproblematic the notion of a singular community which pre-exists its political incarnation, in fact whose value lies precisely in the fact that it can exist apart from its political manifestation. Everything of value is associated with the cultural nationalists, whilst the political aim is dismissed with a short phrase; cultural nationalism is good and integral to ‘the community’ whilst its political counterpart is exterior to it, almost superfluous, and is associated with ‘modernization’ – which in turn is characterized as ‘exogenous’, as opposed to the ‘indigenous’ community. Skipping along a few pages, however, we find that Hutchinson contradicts himself by engaging in the very practices for which he chastises the statist scholars. Thus, when confronted with movements that do not fit his neat distinction, such as when he finds cultural nationalisms that are also political, he shrugs them off as ‘a cloak for anti-state

organization'.¹⁵ These are contrasted to cultural nationalisms in 'normal circumstances', where they take the form of small grass-roots movements that are eventually occluded by 'coercive' political nationalists – the politicians, the journalists and pamphleteers. Thus, it seems that, contrary to his claims, cultural nationalists *are* 'otherworldly romantics . . . [who] have little capacity to direct social change'. Moreover, it seems that such movements are also transitory, occluded as they are by the political versions. Hutchinson has, in effect, gone round in circles in order to maintain his initial distinction. Furthermore, this leads him to make further distinctions. He must, for example, somehow distinguish between different types of cultural products within the community. It would seem that political treatises, pamphlets, newspapers and journals are not 'cultural' whereas others (presumably of a more 'literary' or 'artistic' kind) are.¹⁶ This would seem to contradict his fundamental assertion of the nation being a collectivity of meaning. Why are newspapers, treatises and so on excluded from his definition of 'culture' even though they are available to 'the community' and can be considered as sharing the same 'fund' of meaning?

However, nationalism cannot be considered as just a political movement or principle since to assert that would be to ignore the fact that, for nationalists, what is at stake is not only power but identity. An argument that proposes an 'instrumentalist' theory of identity, in which belonging to a group is seen as 'a matter of attitudes, perceptions and sentiments that are necessarily fleeting and mutable' so that any identity can be manipulated 'instrumentally' to further individual or collective interests, overlooks the fact that political identities are always in competition with other loyalties.¹⁷ The nationalists themselves recognized this and thus sought to yoke their political loyalties to a somewhat metaphysical cultural loyalty which they termed the nation. Nationalism is indeed about identity, but like all identities it must be embedded in a culture. The issue then becomes what kind of culture and why that kind? As is to be expected, both sides of the argument propose different solutions to this question, to which we shall presently return. The culturalists argue that the statist theories are facile precisely because of their instrumentalism. The charge is that statist who claim that nationalism 'invents' a new identity ignore the degree to which political identities must compete with and overcome pre-existing identifications that are usually considerably stronger. Statists usually respond by conceding that, politically, nationalists must to some extent work with pre-existing modes of identity. However, that is the role of nationalist ideology which, in this sense, is removed from the definition of nationalism in general, thereby maintaining a fundamental distinction between cultural production and political practice. Thus, Breuille states that,

To focus upon culture, ideology, identity, class, or modernisation is to neglect the fundamental point that nationalism is, above and beyond all else, about politics and politics is about power . . . we need to examine closely how nationalism operates as politics and what it is about modern

politics that makes nationalism so important. *Only then* should we go on to consider the contributions of culture, ideology, class, and much else.¹⁸

Yet if nationalist ideology is not exactly nationalism in this strict sense then what exactly is it? Is politics to be considered separately from ideology *per se*? Or is it something peculiar about nationalist ideology that merits separate consideration from nationalist politics?

Other definitions of the term 'nationalism' add to the confusion. Eric Hobsbawm, for example, follows Smith in divorcing the doctrine from the movement – or as he puts it, 'the principle of nationality' from nationalism – but for him the latter only acquires meaning and value after the development of fuller electoral democracies in which political parties and agents utilize the 'principle of nationality' in order to accomplish a range of things in the field of power.¹⁹ Nationalism is thus born at the moment of transition to mass politics. The 'principle of nationality' thus seems to possess a life of its own within the realms of cultural discourse as Hobsbawm endeavours to chart the changes in its meaning and value, separated from nationalist politics at least, if not from social and historical realities in general. Until the advent of mass politics, the mutations in the 'principle of nationality' which Hobsbawm, with his great historical eye, tracks so meticulously seem to occur as a response to general shifts in the political climate, themselves a response to even more general historical shifts in social forces and material production, rather than the efforts of nationalist politicians. Hobsbawm implicitly runs the risk of reducing nationalism to a determinism which others less careful have been guilty of.

There is another variation in the term nationalism which merits consideration since it is, according to Hobsbawm, the meaning 'for which the term "nationalism" was actually invented in the last decade(s) of the nineteenth century'.²⁰ This is the 'strict' meaning of the term which for Miroslav Hroch signifies 'that outlook which gives *an absolute priority to the values of the nation over all other values and interests*'.²¹ Hroch goes on to use this strict sense to draw a categorical distinction between 'nationalism' and 'national movements'. The former, which is characterized negatively, assumes that the nation-building process has achieved its goal and that the nation-state is fully formed. It is thus equated with the extremity of the political right. The latter, however, is a positive movement which seeks to form a nation-state by seeking to build on existing national values. Its desire to establish a nation-state carries with it revolutionary implications which firmly locate 'national movements' on the political left. Moreover, it is wrong to confuse national movements with nationalist movements. One is positive, the other pernicious; one regenerates national values, the other overemphasizes them; for one, national revolution prefigures other social and political revolutions, whilst the other signifies an extreme conservatism. However, Hroch's distinction arises as a consequence of his culturalist position. The cultural nation, the spring of all the positive values that Hroch identifies, must be rescued from a tainted association

with the intolerant chauvinism of nationalism. Thus, implicitly, nationalism is characterized as a political ‘interest’ which demands overriding allegiance in order to maintain and camouflage social exploitation and divisions within a state, whilst the narrative of the national movement is characterized as the ‘natural’ expression of a national community demanding socio-political revolutions as a consequence of, and springboard for, cultural regeneration.

Nationalism for Hroch presupposes a fully formed nation-state. It is, therefore, an overemphasis of national sentiment. National sentiment, or identity, is yet another way in which nationalism can be and has been defined. In this sense it signifies the sense of belonging to a cultural community called ‘the nation’, and as such it is probably the only definition of nationalism that can be accommodated by both statist and culturalists since it does not depend upon a prior definition of the term ‘nation’. For Benedict Anderson, ‘nation-ness, as well as nationalism are cultural artefacts of a particular kind’.²² Gellner concurs in that this sense of belonging to a nation is, necessarily, a sense of belonging to a culture, ‘Modern man is not loyal to a monarch or a land or a faith, whatever he may say, but to a culture.’²³ And yet politics cannot be entirely overlooked, even here. Earlier, it had been stated that if, as the culturalists concede, modern nations are the consequence of political transformations of an *ethnie* then the sense of belonging to a nation is not the sense of belonging to a culture *per se* (all previous societies have had this sense of belonging) but rather to the particularly politicized culture that is the nation. As Anderson notes, the nation is not just an imagined community but an ‘imagined *political* community’.²⁴

Ultimately, what we have witnessed is not merely the confusing number of definitions constituting the central terms of debate but also the systematic separation of culture and politics at some fundamental level in each of the theoretical positions. Indeed, such a separation seems endemic to the study of nationalism, and this has resulted in the great morass of confusion over what the terms signify since its effect is to multiply twice over the discursive significations of ‘nation’, ‘nationalism’, ‘nation-state’ and ‘national identity’. Given this structure to the field of study, typical responses have either been to ignore the problem and pitch camp on one or other side, or to try and clear up the mess within the limitations imposed by the separation in the first place. Smith, for example, suggests breaking down the object of study into discrete constituents:

- 1 to define the nation
- 2 to define nationalism (the ideological movement)
- 3 to explain the formation of nations
- 4 to explain the emergence of nationalist movements.²⁵

As has been shown, the first two of these are interdependent since the definition of one greatly depends upon the definition of the other, and both of these are in turn situated within the context of the fourth point. Smith’s implication is that the explanation of the final point is a sociological one but, as Breuille has shown,

it may also be a political one, in which case it is fundamentally interrelated with the first two. Nevertheless, points 1, 2 and 4 are all necessarily implicated in the third point. Therefore, Smith's attempt at clarification by separating these interrelated issues is far from a solution to the problem. Rather, it is a symptom of it. And the problem is, quite simply, that the separation of culture and politics when studying nationalism is a methodological and theoretical error. To then create a separate sociological 'base' which 'objectively' determines both culture and politics is a further error which compounds the first.

What is required is a theoretical perspective that allows for a more integrative approach. Nations, nationalism and nation-states do not constitute discrete problems which need to be solved separately. Rather, they must be seen as constituting an interface resulting in a particular and singular phenomenon. Nationalism is, therefore, a form of cultural politics. It is political because it is a movement which desires to seize control of (liberate), or break away from and create its own (secede) state; or, indeed, break away and join another state which would satisfy its own principle of national self-determination (irredentism). It is, therefore, located within a field of power. It is cultural because it bases the legitimacy of its actions upon the uniqueness of its national culture. The existence of such a culture validates its desire for a national state, or so it claims. Furthermore, nationalism seeks to delimit that state to the national culture, and that culture only, so that cultural and political boundaries should correspond. It is the first political idea to do so. In so doing, it not only seeks legitimacy on the basis of culture, but it also seeks to monopolize legitimacy on that very basis. No matter what type of government is henceforth elected or ascends to power, it must be a national government. Culture is thus thoroughly and inseparably entwined with power. It becomes the arena, arbiter and delimiter of nationalist thought and politics.

National culture: modernity versus ethnicity

To pose the problem in terms of cultural politics, however, is to raise further issues which take us deeper into the structure of the field of study, right down to what could legitimately be considered *the* schism within it, more so even than the culturalist/statist one to which it is nevertheless intimately related. For it is to raise the question of legitimacy. All political structures base their right to power on the basis of legitimacy, even authoritarian and despotic regimes whose legitimacy is based upon force. What is fundamentally at stake, therefore, in political struggle is the legitimacy of authority and, therefore, the right to exercise it. Existing authorities attempt to consolidate their authority by underlining their legitimacy, opponents attempt to overthrow them not only by undermining it but also by proposing alternatives. Usually, this legitimacy is gained by appeal to existing cultural codes and practices, and in this sense nationalism is no different to other political ideologies and structures of authority. There is, however, one crucial difference which distinguishes nationalism, and to an extent its predecessor, the

absolutist state. This difference is that the nation is, in Benedict Anderson's words, 'imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign'.²⁶ Previously, the cultural codes and practices which determined the legitimate exercise of authority had been universalist in outlook, purporting relevance to the whole of humanity. Usually, this authority was handed down from religious bodies and sacred texts which were unchallengeable and thus the nature of political struggle focused not so much upon challenging the basis of authority (i.e. the system of laws) but on challenging the right to exercise them; thus, politics was mainly a matter of conquest and intrigue between and among political agents from an aristocratic class which transcended cultural boundaries.²⁷ Political and cultural boundaries were not, therefore, congruent and political change involved a change of personnel rather than system. Because of this structure of authority – which on the one hand was universalist, and on the other hand involved the transferring of power among individuals rather than groups, or patrimony as Perry Anderson calls it – the pre-modern political maps of Europe (and most of the world) were not so fundamentally concerned with territory.²⁸ Thus, the primary forms of political organisation in pre-modern times ranged from the very small independent kingdom, through feudal duchies and kingdoms, to often very large empires, and the territorial jurisdiction of each of these would be fluid and mutable depending on the number and nature of its conquests or upon it being conquered.

The long, drawn-out process of modernization initiated the transition to a world of nations and the establishment of political authority on a national basis. However, one particular aspect of modernization, usually overlooked by theorists, was vital and this was secularization. It is perhaps not an exaggeration to suggest that secularism is, despite the deployment of metaphysical or religious rhetoric by nationalists everywhere, the definitive distinction of nationalism as a political ideology. As we shall see in the following chapters, the 'problem' of secularism recurred time and again in the discourse of anti-colonial nationalists, and the divergent histories of such nationalisms from their European counterparts is, in no small measure, due to the different trajectory of secularization in these societies.

Secularization encompassed two key transformations. The first was the rise of the absolutist state which wrested the basis of political legitimacy from the metaphysical realm underwritten by religion to a physical realm underwritten by a centralized state. The effect was to secularize authority which involved a major systemic change in political legitimacy. As a consequence of this there was a shift in the principle of sovereignty from a divine to a secular authority, symbolized by the absolute monarch and manifested in the centralized state. Since this state now assumed a monopoly of political functions, a greater emphasis had to be placed upon the territoriality of the state's authority so that its monopoly could not be challenged.²⁹ The second major transformation – closely related to the first – involved the establishment of a separate and entirely secular judicial system. It was from this particular, entirely discrete and secular system, rather than from the more general and universalist cultural codes that had preceded it, that the modern state

derived its legitimacy and authority. As Bikhu Parekh observes, the making of laws ‘presuppose[s] a shared body of values’ among the state’s population such that the common structure of authority that the law represents is recognized to be generally valid.³⁰ By basing legitimacy in a rationalized and secular system of laws, the state conferred the source of authority, no matter how abstractly, on to its population. The state, therefore, implicitly assumed, at some level of abstraction, a degree of cultural homogeneity among its population as the constitutional basis for its authority. Given that this assumption was merely implied *in abstraction*, and that in reality the basis of authority still remained in the hands of an extremely small political élite, it is doubtful that we can infer that such homogeneity actually existed. Nevertheless, the existence of such a theory of state (already in practice in Britain, The Netherlands and France) enabled the critique of authority by the Enlightenment *philosophes* which, in a more mobile society, emphasized the existence of a ‘civil’ society and the individual as a source of authority within it. We return, therefore, to the problematic connection between state and society. However, the more one stressed the authority of the individual as an autonomous social unit, the more one abstracted the relationship between the individual and the state, since the abstract nature of the modern state abstracts the individual,

as its necessary counterpart. It strips away such ‘contingent’ individual characteristics such as social status . . . and other identities . . . and defines him in the barest manner possible as a self-determining agent capable of choice and will. Since all human beings possess these characteristics they are deemed to be equal.³¹

Yet the more one insisted upon this, the more one needed to insist upon a body of shared values that connected individuals together and to the state. That body of shared values could, of course, have been the system of law itself. This solution, which Breuille calls the ‘citizenship’ solution suggested that, ‘a society of individuals was simultaneously defined as a polity of citizens . . . What mattered was the political rights, not the cultural identities of those who were citizens.’³²

The problem remained, however, that the system of law itself presupposed a shared body of common values. The other solution to the state–society problem, therefore, was ‘to stress the *collective* character of society’.³³ The tessellation of the two would not only inform the legitimacy of the modern state but provide a basis for the development of nationhood. The enmeshment of the ideological and the political can clearly be seen here – despite Breuille’s disparagement of the ideological as of secondary importance – in the response of the state’s political élite to the pressures of an increasingly mobile society demanding greater political rights and representation. In the early stages of the absolutist state when the character of society did not exert such pressures on the ruling élite, the shared cultural basis of the state could remain an implicit and abstract assumption; in the light of political pressure, however, it provided a useful ideological basis for reinforcing the legitimacy of the state and the existing political class.

Both solutions to the state–society problem, therefore, rest upon the idea of a cultural commonality within the state as the basis for legitimate authority. And it is precisely this that gives nationalism such ideological power since it directly addresses the problem at hand. The national culture is projected as a concrete counterpoint to the abstract and implicit assumptions made by the absolutist state. This implies, of course, that the emergence and development of nationalism must be related to the problematic of the state (in the sense of a political problem which must be resolved within the constraints of historical realities, i.e. within a historically limited range of possibilities) and cannot be separated from other developments in political discourse which arose as a consequence of it. However, if national culture is now proposed as the legitimate basis of another political revolution one must enquire into its nature. On what basis does this culture possess the right to legitimate nationalism? Or, to put it another way, does the legitimacy derive from the nation's status as a pre-existing cultural category which unifies those who possess it into 'a people' and who thus possess the legitimate right to self-determination on that basis? Or is the 'national culture' an entirely new cultural category, a product of the need to furnish a solution to the socio-political problems posed by the continuing transformation of social reality? Is it, therefore, a product of modernity, if not of nationalism *per se*? If it is, then why does it possess the right to bestow legitimacy, and how?

The questions structure the fundamental schism within the field of study since on the one hand, we have what we may term the 'ethnicist' school, and on the other, the modernist school. There is, in fact, a general (although not, as we shall see, precise) isomorphism between the ethnicist and modernist debate and the culturalist–statist one. Modernists have failed thus far, in my opinion, to answer satisfactorily the above questions, either by neglecting the importance of culture altogether, or by subordinating it to politics, or to a sociological determinism which asserts that nationalism is a consequence of the logic of industrialization. In this respect, therefore, the culturalists/ethnicists have quite naturally had the upper hand. If the ethnicists do not quite take the nationalist claim that nations are primordial entities at face value, they nevertheless attempt to mediate between that claim and those of the modernists. Smith, for example, sets out his conviction that his aim is to relate nationalism 'to economic development and social and cultural modernisation, in the conviction . . . that nationalism is embedded in this wider trend'.³⁴ But, for Smith, if nationalism is indeed embedded in this trend, this in no way implies that nations are too. Rather, nations are the modernized and politicized versions of pre-modern *ethnies*. Another ethnicist, Miroslav Hroch, adopts basically the same position:

Nation-building was never a mere project of ambitious or narcissistic intellectuals . . . Intellectuals can 'invent' national communities only if certain objective preconditions for the formation of a nation already exist. Karl Deutsch long ago remarked that for national consciousness to arise there must be something for it to become conscious of.³⁵

Being a Marxist, Hroch looks for the 'objective' social conditions which enable the pre-existing national 'core' to assume the shape of a fully formed nation. These social conditions are, primarily, an expansion of social mobility and efficiency in communication through the development of various media, and what he calls 'a nationally relevant conflict of interests – in other words a social tension that could be mapped onto linguistic (and sometimes also religious) divisions'.³⁶ But this process of mapping is preceded by an earlier phase in the nation-building process whereby 'selected groups within the non-dominant ethnic community started to talk about their ethnicity and to conceive of it as a potential nation-to-be'.³⁷ These 'learned researchers' of what Hroch calls phase A of the nation-building process 'discover', as it were, the basis of their potential nationality in a common culture designated specifically by common myths of origin and a 'density of linguistic or cultural ties enabling a higher degree of social communication within the group than beyond it'.³⁸ The ethnicist scholars assume, therefore, a high degree of cultural homogenization throughout the Middle Ages along broadly 'national' lines. For example, we can notice the quiet slippage of the term 'ethnicity' into categories which we now recognize as 'nations': 'A large number of medieval polities . . . lost their autonomy partly or completely, while their population generally retained their ethnicity . . . Czechs, Catalans, Norwegians, Croats, Bulgarians, Welsh, Irish, and others.'³⁹ Thus, no matter what the impact of modernity actually is, a nation simply cannot become one without this pre-existing ethnic basis – it is a prerequisite. This, according to the ethnicist, explains the persistence and continuity of pre-modern cultural attributes in modern nations.⁴⁰

It is worth examining the ethnicist assumptions further. The argument rests on a collapse of the distinction between a 'high' or literary vernacular culture and 'low' or oral local cultures in pre-modern times. There simply is no room for a distinction of this kind: the ethnic community possesses one culture. Yet, as Gellner points out in great detail, this distinction was the central structural feature of agrarian societies in which the vast bulk of the population would have been illiterate, 'In agrarian societies literacy brings forth a major chasm between the great and the little traditions (or cults)',⁴¹ and the geographical scope of the local cultures, which would have been the only cultural medium open to the vast majority, would have been extremely small. Even as late as the end of the eighteenth century most of the population 'lived and died in the county, and often in the parish, of their birth', and even the townsfolk were 'almost as ignorant of what went on outside their immediate district, almost as closed in, as the village'.⁴² It is also worth bearing in mind that the idea that there was no distinction between a traditional 'high' vernacular literary culture and the cultures of the agrarian peasants was generally disseminated by nationalists themselves. If the nationalist ideologues did appropriate a 'high' culture for their purposes when one was available, which often was not the case, then that in itself would not have engendered a cultural identification on the part of the vast bulk of the potential nation-to-be. Notwithstanding the fact that the idioms, styles and grammar of

the two registers of cultural practice may have been so vastly different as to be mutually incommensurable, any form of linguistic or cultural uniformity must be considered highly problematic since culture, seen as the total system of signification through which we participate in and interpret social life, and by which we render it meaningful, is deeply embedded in social practice.⁴³ And since the differences in social practice between the rural peasant and the burgher (never mind the educated and literate clerical scholarly classes, and the aristocratic classes who participated in a much more universalist 'High' culture conducted not in the vernacular language but an often ossified classical language) were so great, and the physical (and not only metaphorical) distances between them so vast, the level of signification to which one would have to go in order to find commonalities in meaning and value would be so general as to be literally meaningless. For over and above the commonalities will be markers of difference which, because they are more intimately connected with daily social practice, will therefore be more accessible to the consciousness and command greater emotive power. Thus another ethnicist argument suggesting that a dominant *ethnie* may have simply imposed itself upon other marginal cultures founders on the failure to explain how, given the gap between cultures, this dominant *ethnie* was somehow accepted and not rejected as an alien culture, as the 'high' cultures certainly would have seemed to the mass of the population. A fundamental gap would have remained, despite the general commonalities, which, despite the claims of the nationalists and the ethnicists, belies the possibility of a single, culturally homogeneous pre-modern *ethnie* as the unproblematic basis for the modern nation.

It is this gap that nationalist ideology tries to fill as a conscious political strategy. To put it another way, nationalism does not seek to put a political border around an already unified culture; rather, it seeks to unify a disparity of cultures within a certain delimited boundary. What was needed, therefore, was the elaboration of a cultural idiom which would invite the masses into history, as Tom Nairn puts it. This may have drawn on some cultural commonalities which had particular emotional force, such as general similarities in language for example, so that one cannot consider the cultural boundaries of the nation as entirely contingent. Other disparate and non-common cultural attributes from the various cultures which nationalist ideology seeks to integrate may have been yoked together by a symbolic sleight of hand so as to emphasize a perceived commonality and to efface their differences. In this way, pre-modern cultural attributes are refashioned, re-emphasized, displaced to the margins or brought into the centre of the 'new' culture, in such a way as to transform their discursive context and thereby their meanings and values. Indeed, many aspects of the national culture may simply have been 'invented' and, when placed into correlation with older cultural attributes, effected a kind of symbolic 'meaning' which promoted the idea of the nation as a singular cultural entity. Nationalist ideological strategies thus sought to transform totally the discursive context of existing cultural codes thereby creating new meanings which confirmed the nation as a legitimate cultural category.

To assume that the meanings and values of pre-existing cultural attributes have somehow remained constant and unchanged, even as social practices have been radically transformed by modernity, is erroneous. This view is a logical consequence of the separation of cultural practice from social practice which the ethnicist school generally assumes. The emphasis on the sameness of cultures throughout a long period of history ignores the complex mutability of cultural reproduction. In effect, it ignores or is unable to answer the question so memorably put by Salman Rushdie in *The Satanic Verses*, 'How does newness enter the world?'⁴⁴ Rushdie himself posits two alternatives: revelation (creation *ex nihilo*) or hybridization. Hybridization is a process of cultural reproduction in which existing cultural orders are reordered, mixed with other cultural orders, and refashioned so that a new whole emerges as more than the sum of its parts.⁴⁵ As we shall see in the following chapters, the process Rushdie calls hybridization was a consequence of the interface between the cultural and the political fields such that nations and national identity emerge as the products of an ideological contestation in which what is at stake is the concept of culture itself – its character, dimensions and boundaries. Through this process 'culture' is often so radically transformed that its signifiers may no longer possess the same referents or the same meanings. It is therefore illegitimate to assume that just because one can trace pre-existing cultural attributes within a national culture then that means that it is the same culture. Even the most ardent of structuralists would concede that, seen from a diachronic perspective, the system of signs that is a culture changes over time; as it does so, so do the meanings conveyed by it. Nationalist ideology can be said to redeploy existing cultural resources in a manner which achieves two effects: the appearance of continuity and the reality of change.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Smith must concede that according to the ethnicist theory of the nation, 'only about 10% of states could claim to be true nation-states in the sense that the state's boundaries coincide with the nation's and that the total population of the state share the same ethnic culture'.⁴⁶ He cannot, however, explain why it is that some *ethnies* become nations whilst others do not, or for that matter, why the rest of the world's nations insist that they are nations in a proper sense. In saying that there are true and false nations, the ethnicist school asserts that there are objective criteria for 'nationality' which true nations can conform to. And yet, despite this, all the world's states currently do imagine themselves to be nations, and one could quite reasonably ask whether the real issue is not the distinction between objectively true or false nations but how and why the world's nations imagine themselves to be such, and whether there are any commonalities in their style of imagining. To ask such questions is to firmly put the emphasis back on nationalist movements as creative movements, rather than simply responsive ones. If we return to the passage from Hroch we can find that it rests on the proposition that consciousness of an 'object' can only exist in response to the existential reality of that object. Consciousness is therefore simply a responsive phenomenon. However, one could say that the 'object' of national consciousness does not necessarily exist 'objectively' but is in fact created, invented,

imagined; consciousness is not merely responsive but also, therefore, creative, and that creation takes place in and through language, not merely in the sense of a linguistic system but also in the sense of a discourse which constructs the object of its speech. Concepts and categories, including the very concept of culture itself, are not, therefore, fixed and unchanging; they are constructed and transformed through social and cultural practice and not merely through sweeping sociological changes that occur on the macroscopic levels of social life.

Such questions should occupy a central place within the modernist camp given that they are fundamentally concerned with the novelty of nations. That said, however, they very rarely do. When not neglecting culture altogether, the modernists have typically subordinated culture and cultural practice to sociological transformations or political struggle in a very narrow sense; the national culture with which men and women in the modern world identify is usually an expression of changes in the material 'base' – cultural change is always a tardy partner and is never seen as contributing to changes in social life. Alternatively, there is a tension between the cultural imagination as a generative process which constitutes identities and as a reflective process which conceives of the national imagination responding a posteriori to 'spontaneous' political events such as the French and American Revolutions.

These two approaches characterize the respective positions of the two giants of the modernist school: Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson. For Gellner, nations and nationalisms are products – sociologically necessary products – of macroscopic transformations in social life in modernity. Modern society, Gellner states, has emerged due to a revolution in social function the effect of which is two-fold. First, society is increasingly mobile and constantly so, 'the persistence of occupational change itself becomes the one permanent feature of the social order';⁴⁷ second, there is a revolution in the function of language and communication as a result of this. In agrarian societies where one's social function was stable and the locality of one's social practice was fixed, then language transmitted what Gellner calls 'context-specific' communication; as a result of constant flux, however, contexts are forever changing so a new idiom is required in order to communicate which is contextless and must therefore be based upon transportable concepts. But it is important for efficient communication that such an idiom is standardized so a modern society needs to create a centralized education system; it is important too for the mode of production that, in terms of labour, as many of the population have access to and can utilize this idiom and as a result mass literacy enters the stage of world history. All these features contribute to the urge for homogenization – social entropy – and nationalism is an expression of this phenomenon, 'a homogeneity imposed by objective, inescapable imperative eventually appears on the surface in the form of nationalism'.⁴⁸ Nations appear, consequentially, at the end of the teleological process: industrialization–cultural homogeneity–nationalism–nations.

But as Gellner observes, because of this, 'Modern society is one in which no sub-community, below the size of one capable of sustaining an independent

educational system, can any longer reproduce itself.⁴⁹ Notwithstanding the dubious veracity of this statement, for Gellner modern societies and, by extension nations, have to be of a certain size. This, in Gellner's view, answers the question that the ethnicists cannot answer, namely why, out of all the possible ethnic identities in the world – of which there are thousands – some become nations, and others do not. The ethnicist answer inevitably rests upon a choice between historical inevitability and historical accident, to which Gellner's response is that it were better that it rested upon an historical inevitability. Thus, since there can only be a certain number of 'industrial centres' there can only be a limited number of nations, and the mass of other potential nationalisms (ethnic communities) are necessarily subsumed within them since they did not undergo a revolution in social function which might have actualized their potential nationality. These retarded communities therefore willingly subsume their old cultural identity into the new 'nationalist' one as they are forced, through a kind of industrial centrifugalism, into departing from their agrarian societies and joining the industrial ones. In effect, Gellner is restating the 'viable state theory' which, according to Hobsbawm, determined the principle of nationality in the liberal discourse of the nineteenth century.⁵⁰ The nation's role was conceived of as a facilitator of economic development and it therefore had to be 'of sufficient size to form a viable unit of development'.⁵¹ Underlying this, of course, is the notion of progress situated within a teleological narrative of modernization. Thus, the nation as a necessary consequence of progress is, for the liberal, a 'phase in human evolution . . . from the small group to the larger, from family to tribe to region, to nation and, in the last instance, to the unified world'.⁵² Consequently, as a cultural and economic category it is bequeathed to the advanced communities who, in the interests of progress must somehow integrate the 'backward' communities and cultures. We see in this the kernel of arguments for colonization and imperialism, and Gellner actually replicates this liberal theory of national development accurately, a theory which not only advocates but justifies Eurocentrism but also one which, in specific instances, could be aligned to racist ideologies as a justification for conquest and domination.⁵³

Hobsbawm points out that since during much of the 19th century this liberal conception of the nation was dominant, national movements were expected to be movements for unification rather than the emphasis on the exclusive nature of nationalism put forward by the ethnic school. Gellner would obviously concur but in a fundamental way which relates culture to identity, Gellner cannot really answer the question as to why cultures would willingly subsume their identities into a dominant and advanced one. Curiously, Gellner's position here is remarkably similar to his ethnicist opponent, Anthony Smith, who suggests that a dominant *ethnie* imposes itself on the marginal cultures. Yet as has been pointed out, this would require the filling of a gap between cultures which cannot be filled simply by imposing a culture upon others; people often retain their cultural identifications in the face of such impositions and intimidation and repression usually consolidates rather than diminishes these identities. Nor can one say that a revolution in social

function can effect these changes since this would not be enough to explain how people who share the same social function in the same place might conceive of each other as foreigners. Nor would it explain why national identifications are made across class differences. Therefore, ‘the objective need for homogeneity which is reflected in nationalism’ simply is not a good enough explanation as to why certain cultural identifications are made and others discarded.⁵⁴ Gellner concedes as much when he admits that ‘The question concerning just *how* we manage to transcend [cultural] relativism is interesting and difficult, and certainly will not be solved here.’⁵⁵ In this respect, one can note a tension in his work between nationalism being a ‘spontaneous’ response to social entropy on the one hand, ‘There is . . . no need to assume any conscious long term calculation of interest on anyone’s part’,⁵⁶ such that, ‘ethnicity enters the political sphere as “nationalism” at times when cultural homogeneity . . . is required by the economic base of social life’;⁵⁷ on the other hand, ethnically marked differences are seen as the product of a long-term interest on the part of nationalist intellectuals and propagandists, ‘They share, or groups of them share, folk cultures which, *with a good deal of effort and standardized and sustained propaganda, can be turned into a rival new high culture.*’⁵⁸ On the one hand we have an emphasis on objective determinants, on the other we see the process of cultural reinvention by politically committed agents.

The same tension can be found in Anderson’s book which, although it purports to deal with the nation as an imaginative construct and ideological category, actually oscillates between a conception of culture as merely reflecting socio-political changes, and culture as genuinely contributing to those changes, with the final emphasis firmly resting on the former. There is, therefore, a tension in the conception of national identity: on the one hand, it pre-exists the cultural products such that shared identifications within them are assumed to be unproblematic; on the other hand, cultural artefacts are portrayed as attempting to create those identifications, to create a new field of meaning. To take the latter emphasis first, we can see that Anderson insists upon the ‘cultural roots’ of nationalism, ‘a fundamental change was taking place in *modes of apprehending* the world which, *more than anything else*, made it possible to “think” the nation’.⁵⁹ Thus, the Reformation not only assisted the breakup of the traditional religious authority, the Catholic church, and assisted the transfer of sovereignty from a divine to secular authority invested in the person of the absolute monarch; it also spawned (eventually) vernacular languages of state as discursive production shifted irreversibly from Latin to vernaculars. This was allied with the development of print-capitalism, and changing conceptions of time as illustrated by the shift in meaning of ‘simultaneity’ so that time was no longer conceived of with respect to a divine chronology as it had been in the medieval world, but rather as ‘homogeneous, empty time’ in which simultaneity is ‘transverse, cross-time, marked not by pre-figuring and fulfilment, but by temporal coincidence, and measured by clock and calendar’.⁶⁰ Implicitly, this involves a changing conception of space so that the location of a social group is not perceived vertically and

hierarchically but horizontally and territorially. These changing conceptions inform a host of modern cultural practices, the most important of which are newspapers and novels. Both these forms represent space and time in particular and delimited ways. Thus, Anderson says, the structure of the realist novel is a ‘complex gloss on the word “meanwhile”’,⁶¹ and its narrative is embedded in ‘societies’. Such representation invites shared identifications with the space and the characters represented within them in the minds of the readers. This helps to construct their identifications with one another.

However, Anderson states that these narratives are embedded in societies that are ‘firm and stable’. Jose Maria Rizal, a Filipino nationalist novelist, is said to have had ‘not the faintest idea of his readers’ individual identities [yet] he writes to them with an ironical intimacy, as though their relationships to one another are not in the smallest degree problematic’.⁶² But why, if these cultural products are in the process of constructing new identities, are these relationships so unproblematic? Anderson is presupposing an existing stable national identity which is addressed by the novelist but is in no way being constructed by him. One may take the point that the ‘as though’ complicates matters but equally one may also insist that Anderson is situating Rizal’s writing after the event; in other words, Rizal is not imagining a nation in process but is reproducing a nation that has already been imagined.

His discussion of the French Revolution, however, is perhaps the definitive moment in this respect and it is worth examining it in detail so as to ascertain Anderson’s exact position with regard to his idea of an ‘imagined community’. He states that it was the French Revolution which, as it entered ‘the accumulating memory of print’, formed a model which could be pirated so that the concept of nationality could be applied elsewhere, ‘Like a vast shapeless rock worn to a rounded boulder by countless drops of water, the experience [the Revolution] was shaped by millions of printed words into a ‘concept’ on the printed page, and in due course, into a model.’⁶³ But before this he goes to great lengths to emphasize the spontaneity of the event, how it was leaderless, not carried out by an organized political party, and so on. This ‘model’ for nationalisms the world over thus would seem to confirm his vision of nationalism in the first instance as a ‘spontaneous distillation of complex historical forces’.⁶⁴ In so far as nationalism is the product of cultural artefacts, then it would seem that the ‘concept’, assimilated into a discourse (‘millions of printed words’), comes only after the event. If the French Revolution is to be considered as the blueprint for nationalism then nationalism is unconscious, incoherent and spontaneous (‘shapeless rock’) until it is ‘moulded’ by discourse into a coherent model ready for piracy. This very obviously creates a great tension with his contention that nationhood is imagined through cultural artefacts such as the newspaper and the novel before the event.

Indeed, Anderson’s cultural imagination is creative only in the sense that it organizes and shapes ‘complex historical forces’ into a coherent discourse of the nation. The generative roots of nationalism are, in fact, sociological ones: the development of print-capitalism, the adoption of vernacular languages of

state, administrative pilgrimages and so on. In so far as there are cultural roots, these are always considered as expressions of or symptoms of sociological transformations. There is no sense in which these cultural products actually generate an original field of meaning in which new concepts are vocalized and new identities constructed. Hence the role given to cultural products is always after the construction of national identities. Despite his claim that the nation is an imagined community, the subtext of his book actually assumes that, in terms of cultural production, the nation was already present. To continue the arboreal metaphor, therefore, what he is talking about are not cultural roots but cultural branches.

For all their supposed insistence on the role of culture in constructing national identities, Gellner and Anderson never actually address the real problem: how does nationalist thought overcome cultural relativism in order to create a 'homogeneous' cultural identity to which millions of people can willingly subordinate existing socio-political and cultural identities? If the masses are to be invited into history in a language they understand, how is this to be achieved? What is the language? It cannot be language as such since language is not a viable basis for constructing identities that are limited. As Anderson himself points out, languages are open-ended and can be learnt; nor can it be print-language rather than language *per se* since print-languages are no less open than spoken ones. Anderson's implication is that print-languages create a vernacular literary tradition on a national basis but that again presupposes a pre-existing national identity, and the creation of 'national' traditions must, by very definition, come after the concept of nation has first been imagined. In any case, there are many nations throughout the world that share the same language. Therefore, the 'language' of nationalism must be conceived of differently, in idiomatic rather than linguistic terms.

The focus of enquiry must be, therefore, on the ideological strategies which articulate these idioms and on the modes of thought that generate them. Thus, if communities are to be identified by the 'style of their imagining' then what needs to be explored is precisely that: the aim must be to focus on the structure of thought that we call 'nationalism'. If at the heart of that structure of thought is an object – the concept of the 'nation' – then we must examine the discourse in which that concept is embedded, namely nationalist discourse. This, in turn, means the discourse of nationalists. More specifically, we must focus on commonalities in the style of imagining within a nationalist movement to ascertain the characteristics of that nation: its particularities, its limits, its inclusions and exclusions, and so on. And we must try to explain, in the context of political and ideological struggle, why this particular style was adopted, why certain emphases are pronounced, why others are muted, and why concessions are made to opposing styles of thought. This is the only theoretical perspective that can allow us to conceive of the 'nation' as truly 'imagined'. And, in so doing, we might find out what kind of community resulted. In other words, this may shed some light on the history of the nation-state after the achievement of self-determination and

the legacy of earlier periods of nationalist imagining on what often seem now to be intractable political problems.

However, most of the thinkers in the field completely ignore what nationalist politicians, ideologues, writers and thinkers actually thought.⁶⁵ Gellner typifies this indifference, ‘these thinkers did not really make much difference . . . Their precise doctrines are hardly worth analysing’.⁶⁶ Anderson talks of nationalism’s ‘philosophical poverty’,⁶⁷ whilst Breuilly not only separates ideology from politics but also displaces it onto a level of secondary importance. The ethnicists, on the other hand, suggest that the job of the nationalist ideologues was merely to ‘discover’ the underlying national unit and thenceforth to carry this discovery into the political arena. In effect, there is a very considerable denial of socio-political agency on the part of theorists in this field, who thus fail to concern themselves with the triangulated relationship between nationalist thought, culture and power. This neglect prevents any analysis of why nationalist intellectuals sought the solutions to their own specific socio-political problems in the figure of the nation. Why the nation? Why not another type of community?

Universalism and specificity

Thus far we have concentrated upon a very significant theoretical problem that structures most of the thinking about nations and nationalism, namely the separation of culture from power. But one of the limitations arising from this is not in itself a question of theory but one of method, and that is how to reconcile the universality of nations in the modern world with their specific orientations, histories and problems. No two nations are exactly alike, and no two nationalisms share exactly the same trajectories. On the other hand, almost all nations share recognizably similar socio-political features which verify that they are indeed nations. And, more to the point, almost every polity in the modern world imagines itself as sharing these common qualities, that is, every political unit imagines itself to be a nation. The problem, therefore, is how to relate the nation-as-universal to the nation-in-particular. It is over this very considerable paradox that theory and method fall apart in much of the scholarly thinking about nations and nationalism.

Deterministic theories such as Gellner’s attempt, quite consciously, to account for the emergence of nations in universal terms. In fact, all theories of the nation as a ‘functional’ consequence of the processes of modernization presuppose a theory of ‘even development’ which, through an a priori teleological projection, confidently predict the emergence of nations on the basis of an identical pattern. The emphasis here is on sameness rather than difference. But the problem with developmentalism is that it inevitably comes up against a brick wall of difference. Quite clearly, even a scratch below the surface of the phenomenon reveals a multiplicity of trajectories towards the realization of a nation-state. Miroslav Hroch correctly points out that developmentalist theories assume a model of history which is quite clearly not borne out by actuality: far from modernization proceeding

evenly, it was in fact a highly uneven process.⁶⁸ A quite specific problem for Gellner is that his description of the kind of modernized society that is a prerequisite for nationalism actually pertains to fairly advanced stages of industrial development which, even in most of Europe, was only achieved long after the appearance of nationalism. If one looks beyond Europe, Gellner has no means of explaining the purchase of nationalism on the minds of those embedded in societies which even now have not perhaps reached the standard of development he insists upon.

Quite clearly, the implication is that there is a normative 'model' which explains the phenomenon. This is the methodological consequence of deterministic theories and has become standard practice in studies of nationalism. 'Model-making' has become imbricated, as it were, into the pathology of the field. This has led to a lust for 'typologies' by which the normative model is adapted to accommodate as many outstanding variables as possible, with incommensurate variables delimiting various models. This process is seen as perhaps the only way to catch as many nations as possible within the theoretical net and those that still elude the grasp are quietly elided. It has also led, as a consequence, to a structure of thought that establishes at the outset a 'normative' model and secondary 'derivative' ones. It almost goes without saying that the locus of almost all 'normative' models is Europe or, specifically, western Europe. Gellner's 'normative' model is clearly post-Jacobin France, with all its emphasis on the nation 'one and indivisible', its pathological fear of linguistic difference, and the obsessive establishment of a centralized educational system to inculcate the nation's values.⁶⁹ Others such as Smith and Hutchinson establish a distinction between a 'normative' civic nationalism located in western Europe and an 'ethnic' nationalism located in Eastern Europe and Asia.

Even those whose explicit avowal is to decolonize the study of nationalism and peel it slowly away from its Eurocentrism still end up imposing a Eurocentric 'norm' or origin to the phenomenon through the back door. Benedict Anderson has complained that since the publication of his book, critics have consistently neglected his central point that nationalism 'arrived' first in the Americas. However, if one examines his position there one can find, that far from being conceived of in national terms, the struggles of the American and subsequent Latin American revolutions were in fact struggles to establish republican states in opposition to imperial rule. The founding fathers of the United States primarily conceived of their new polity in terms of a federation, a concept which, according to Martin Thom, has shadowed the unitary demands of nationalism throughout its history.⁷⁰ Moreover, the actual emphasis in Anderson's book is upon the French rather than American Revolution. It is the French Revolution that generates the concept of the nation, not the American one. Finally, Anderson still insists upon the vast swathe of nationalisms, from those in Eastern Europe to those in South Asia and the Far East as being essentially 'pirate copies' of the three main models, the main one of which is, of course, centred upon France.⁷¹

Others, such as Tom Nairn, emphasize that nationalism is a phenomenon of the colonized countries of the Third World resisting imperial domination which

has been, in recent times ‘imported’ back into Europe in the form of ‘neo-nationalism’.⁷² Ostensibly, this is a complete reversal of the Eurocentric position. But even if nationalism originates outside of Europe, the figure of the nation which is the object of this nationalism actually still originates in Europe:

From the very outset, part of the ‘superiority’ of the development leaders [the imperial Europeans] lay in their political and state systems. It lay in the fact that they had invented the national state, the real-prototype of the nationalist ideal, by quite empirical processes extending over many centuries.⁷³

Thus, the ideal towards which these non-European nationalists aspire is, in fact, European. No change there. Moreover, this ‘ideal’, when in Europe, is seen as ‘natural’, the result of ‘empirical processes’; outside of Europe, however, it is ‘over-determined ideologically’.⁷⁴ In this scenario, the nation in Europe is ‘real’, whilst outside Europe it is the product of some imitative fantasy.

Unfortunately, the structure of thought that establishes normative European models and derivative non-European ones, maps on to this difference a number of implicit values and judgements. Liberal European scholars of nationalism, faced with a moral problem – what they call the Janus-face of nationalism, in which nationalism is so obviously a rational, integrative and generally humanist phenomenon on the one hand, but is also an irrational, emotional explosion of communal hatred which has led to incalculable violence on the other – typically respond by mapping on to their Eurocentric ‘normative’ models the ‘good’ features, whilst proscribing the non-European versions as ‘bad’. West and east, good and bad; these are the axes on which the study of nationalism has, for the most part, revolved.⁷⁵ For example, Smith draws a distinction between ‘ethnocentric’ and ‘polycentric’ nationalism which he then maps on to a model of eastern and western nationalism:

In the western model of national identity nations were seen as culture communities, whose members were united, if not made homogeneous, by common historical memories, symbols and traditions . . . At the same time a rather different model of the nation sprang up outside the west, notably in Eastern Europe and Asia . . . We can term this non-western model an ‘ethnic’ conception of the nation. Its distinguishing feature is its emphasis on a community of birth and native culture.⁷⁶

‘Culture communities . . . native culture’; *ethnie* and ethnic. What are the subtle and implicit shifts in value effected by these distinctions? According to Smith’s general theory, presumably both models emerge from an *ethnie*, the difference being that whilst the western *ethnie* is seen exclusively as a cultural community, the eastern one possesses an adjunct: it is also a ‘biological’ community, one of

common descent, a tribe. If Smith's discourse here need not necessarily carry the overtones of a racist ideology, it certainly orbits close to those biological definitions of race and ethnicity which emerged during the nineteenth century. Western nationalism is therefore non-biological, rational, civic, able to overcome its tribal loyalties to blood and ancestry. It is therefore 'polycentric' and resembles 'the dialogue of many actors on a common stage . . . other groups do have valuable and *genuinely* noble ideas and institutions which we would do well to borrow, or adapt'.⁷⁷ This polycentric western nationalism is open and outward looking, civilized and generally reasonable. By contrast, ethnic eastern nationalism is biological, pathological, emotional, irrational and primordial. It is, therefore, 'ethnocentric': 'For an ethnocentric nationalist, both "power" and "value" inhere in his cultural group.'⁷⁸ Eastern nationalists, so the implication goes, simply have not acquired the requisite level of civilization to let go of their pathological adherence to the tribe; they simply are not reasonable enough to engage in dialogue and cannot ever see the other fellow's point of view. That, presumably, is why they cause so much trouble.

In terms of value the west has generally remained supreme, and the east has coyly glanced over towards it and measured its backwardness and inferiority with respect to the west's norms and standards. Time and again, in the writings of western scholars we find the phrase 'insecure intellectuals of the east' who feel they must imitate and aspire to western ideals to compensate for their cultural backwardness but who conspicuously fail to do so since 'their' nationalism does not fit the 'rational' models of the west. This failure is not explained in terms of historical difference but rather in terms of an essential difference between east and west. It is very rarely considered that 'eastern' intellectuals may have genuinely felt it among their rights to partake of the urge for self-determination, that they proudly undertook to realize those rights, that they did not automatically feel inferior but might have, out of their own intellectual endeavours, concluded that there was much value in western modes of knowledge, whilst at the same time rejecting much else voluntarily and strategically. These responses were not determined by an essential cultural difference but on the basis of a cultural politics in which political and intellectual choices are made within a historically contingent, provisional and strategic context.

Earlier, it had been stated that modernists had failed to resolve (or even address) how and why the nation, if it is a product of modernity, possesses the right to bestow legitimacy. This study will attempt to address this fundamental question. For nations are indeed entirely modern phenomena. The national culture constitutes a fundamental break from pre-national conceptions and manifestations of culture. The national identity is in fact totally distinct from pre-modern identifications. Nations were, in this sense, invented. However, they were not invented from scratch but by a process of cultural redeployment, drawing together existing cultural resources and identifications. These processes cannot be systematically reduced to the process of modernization *per se*. Rather, they must be seen in terms of a dialectical interface between thought, culture and social

life, all situated within a field of power. The nation is, therefore, the product not just of sociological transformations but of cultural and epistemological ones, and of political and ideological struggle. The nation is produced by, and in turn (re)produces nationalism. The figure of the nation must be seen as a solution to certain socio-political problems, and its imagining represents a horizon of new political possibilities, and the ground on which to legitimate them.⁷⁹

Fields, paradigms and trajectories

Perspectives on historical development that attempt to take account of ideological struggle need to emphasize 'relations' between opponents and allies. First, however, they must negotiate the concept of ideology itself, one of the most complex in political and cultural theory. A full exploration of this concept is outside the scope of this study and would constitute too great a digression.⁸⁰ However, since ideology is a concept which is open to a large number of definitions – not all of which are compatible with each other, or the concept of ideological struggle – it is perhaps apposite to make a brief case here for those definitions which are not viable for this study.

It should be immediately apparent that the negative concept of ideology as 'false consciousness' is unsuitable for an investigation of the emergence and subsequent development of nationalism because, among other things, it has a problem accounting for historical change and the emergence of new ideologies which successfully challenge existing ones, other than through a materialist determinism which insists that change can only be brought about by alterations in the economic 'base' of social life.⁸¹ This thesis, in its many forms, is persuasive when explaining the mechanisms of domination but by suggesting that domination is effected through 'false' consciousness it necessarily raises the epistemological distinction between true and false cognition. Yet how can this distinction be made if, to be really effective, the dominant ideology must necessarily prevent everyone from seeing the 'truth'? How would one know the truth if everything one can know is false? This leads all theories of 'false consciousness' into a double bind. On the one hand, there is a constant gesture towards totalization in which every aspect of social reality is mediated by this false consciousness. This is especially apparent in the line of thinking which originated with Marx's notion of commodity fetishism, and includes Lukacs's theory of reification as well as Althusser's concept of ideological interpellation.⁸² Indeed, as Terry Eagleton points out, one of the implications of commodity fetishism is that 'falseness' is no longer cognitive but an integral aspect of society itself; in other words, reality is itself false.⁸³ On the other hand, however, one must identify a vantage point outside this false reality in order to affirm the 'truth' that the dominant ideology conceals or distorts. But if it is reality itself which is false, and this falsity is total, then how is this possible? If it is accepted that this is impossible, then this raises two related problems. First, how does one then account for the emergence of oppositional ideologies in the first place? Second, this raises the spectre of epistemological relativism for one is

forced to question the basis on which certain ideologies (Marxism, for example) are judged to be true whilst others are false. Both of these are assimilable into the problem of difference. Theories of false consciousness in fact demonstrate, as a corollary to their urge for totalization, an implicit homogenization of society which ironically negates any concept of social and ideological struggle, strangles any meaningful theory of politics and obviates any explanation of historical change.

Another problem emerging from the false consciousness thesis is that it can potentially be extended to the point where everything is ideological. This is particularly the case with those theorists like Louis Althusser and Michel Foucault who would deny the notion of individual subjectivity altogether and insist that the 'subject' is constituted by an imaginary relation to the social order. This relation is effected through what Althusser calls ideological 'interpellation' and it intersects all aspects of the 'subject's' social experience. Potentially, this could mean that everything from brushing one's teeth to demanding the overthrow of the government is ideological.⁸⁴ The problem with this, as Eagleton points out, is that 'the term ideology threatens to expand to vanishing point. Any word which covers everything loses its cutting edge and dwindles into an empty sound.'⁸⁵ On the other hand, it is important not to lose sight of the 'clear political gain' represented by the observation that power is woven into even the most intimate and personal practices.⁸⁶ All social practices are indeed intersected by economic, political and social 'interests' but what these interests are, how they constitute such practices, and the extent to which they do so varies across the social field. This implies two things: first, that ideas and discursive practices such as ideology are necessarily in a dialectical relation to material reality; and second, that this reality is itself heterogeneous, complex, contradictory, and composed of different levels of social activity which are both related to each other but also relatively autonomous. Ideologies traverse this social field in a curvilinear fashion, their effects more concentrated in some fields than in others. If ideology is discursive practice, then this also implies that not all discourses are ideological in the same way or to the same degree. Is, for example, a novel as ideological as a political manifesto? Is a scholarly work just as biased as a propaganda slogan? By suggesting that discourses can be more or less ideological one can avoid this reductionism and, conversely, also avoid the equally erroneous assumption that any discourse can be value-free, non-ideological, objective and 'scientific'.

The 'third way' then, between 'thinking of ideology as nothing but disembodied ideas on the one hand and nothing but a matter of certain behaviour patterns on the other' is to consider ideology as 'a discursive or semiotic phenomenon' which at once 'emphasizes its materiality . . . and preserves the sense that it is essentially concerned with meanings.'⁸⁷ This tradition of thinking emerges with Voloshinov and includes Antonio Gramsci as well as Raymond Williams. To this tradition of thought one could add Pierre Bourdieu, whose linguistic theories are very similar to Voloshinov's. Bourdieu, however, adds to such linguistics a more comprehensive sociological theory and methodology.

Bourdieu considers the entire social structure to be a relational unity. He conceptualizes this unity in terms of spatial relations between relatively autonomous fields of social activity

One can . . . compare the social space to a geographical space within which regions are divided up. But this space is constructed in such a way that the agents, groups or institutions that find themselves situated in it have more properties in common the closer they are to each other in this space.⁸⁸

For Bourdieu, a field is therefore only relatively autonomous from other fields in the social space and cannot be extricated from the relational unity of the social space as a whole. When considered in itself, however, the field is ‘a separate social universe having its own laws of functioning’ and these laws determine the structure of the field and the possible activity of agents within them.⁸⁹ Thus, there is a political field, a literary field, an economic field and so on, related to each other within the social space but also possessing its own rules, which Bourdieu terms ‘the rules of the game’. To participate in a field, an agent must be aware of its ‘rules’ and possess ‘at least the minimum amount of knowledge, skill, or “talent” to be accepted as a legitimate player.’⁹⁰ For example, in India during the nineteenth century, what might be termed the field of constitutional politics, which might be considered a sub-field of the field of elite politics, had its own rules which were set by the colonial power. For an Indian politician to succeed in this field, he must have been aware of those rules – such as constitutional procedure, memorial writing, certain forms of debate and agitation – which were considered acceptable. Failure to conform to these rules meant that one’s participation would not be recognized and thus rendered ‘illegitimate’. The field is thus a social space within the wider social space and is conceived as an arena of conflict and struggle in which agents take up positions in relation to other agents and engage in a struggle for what Bourdieu calls ‘the monopoly of legitimate discourse’.⁹¹ The rules of the game and the ‘legitimate discourse’ together determine the ‘state of the “legitimate problematic” – the issues and questions over which confrontation takes place’, which in turn determines the possible position-takings of agents over certain issues which are ‘at stake’.⁹²

Bourdieu is unclear as to what the difference is between the ‘rules of the game’ and the ‘legitimate discourse’ but it seems necessary to make one. In his work, it seems as if ‘rules’ imply certain institutional and procedural limits which are imposed upon the field; thus, the development of the ‘legitimate problematic’ must take place within these operational limits. In certain highly structured fields, such as the field of constitutional politics, the struggle over the ‘legitimate problematic’ must be conducted within the framework of these rules; here, the ‘legitimate discourse’ – that which determines value, the yardstick with which one measures the legitimacy of actions in the field – is highly constrained, and what is possible in terms of challenging the established principles of legitimacy is therefore

very restricted. In other less structured fields, such as the wider political field where institutional limits are less constraining, and where there are a wider number and variety of institutions such as the press, the university and other educational institutions, and channels for other non-constitutional political activity – in short, where there is a developed civil society – it is the ‘legitimate discourse’ itself which is the major determinant of the ‘legitimate problematic’ and thus the crucial site of struggle. If the legitimate discourse determines what is possible, sayable or doable in a field, then the less that specific procedural constraints determine it and the greater the scope for possible position-takings that challenge the very principles of legitimacy upon which the legitimate discourse is itself based; this increases the possibility of transforming the legitimate discourse, leading to an alteration in the ‘legitimate problematic’ – in other words, the greater the possibility of change and historical development.⁹³ One major implication of this is that as the arena of political activity expands, and as political activity diffuses throughout the social field, ideology correspondingly increases in importance, directing diverse constituencies, facilitating alliances and structuring political behaviour on the basis of shared values and common agendas.⁹⁴

Since positions are taken in the field with the intention of a struggle for the ‘monopoly of legitimate discourse’, that is for the right to determine the principles of legitimacy in the field, each position can only be defined relationally – to the other positions in the field on the one hand, and to the ‘legitimate problematic’ which determines the nature of all the positions adopted on the other. No position can have meaning in itself. Moreover, when looking diachronically at the historical development of the field, it becomes clear that the ‘legitimate discourse’ is both the determinant of present struggles and the product of previous struggles, and since this changing discourse determines the ‘problematic’ at any given time with respect to which positions are adopted, this strengthens the case against looking at political or other discourses in ‘static’ or ‘fundamental’ terms: the substantive content of a ‘progressive’ or a ‘conservative’ discourse changes markedly over time in relation to the dynamics between the relational forces within the field.

Looking at it this way one can say that ideological discourse is a function of the field of power since one can only make sense of, or take cognizance of, position-takings in and through discourse. The field of power is here conceived of in its widest sense as equivalent to or underlying the entire social totality, calibrating the social relations which constitute the social space as a whole. However, as I have pointed out, ideologies traverse the social space in a curvilinear fashion, concentrated in some fields of activity and diffused in others. Unsurprisingly, ideologies tend to concentrate – and thereby become more apparent – in fields which are more closely adjacent to the field of power, or, to put it another way, in fields where power itself is more visible: those fields which comprise what is usually called the ‘public sphere’. In élite political fields, for example – such as those in colonial India and occupied Egypt – nationalist ideology (among others) was, therefore, a function of that field and correspondingly represented its élitism.

Beyond this field, however, nationalists also had to contend with centres of power in the wider social field, in particular those forces which may heuristically be called 'traditional'.

However, discourses may themselves be said to constitute 'semantic fields' in their own right, possessing the same *modus operandi* as social fields. With regards to nationalism, in the course of struggling to monopolize the legitimate discourse, all nationalists sought to impose their version of nationhood upon the others. In its attempt to monopolize the legitimate discourse, i.e. to become self-identical with it, a position must necessarily address itself to its opponents and try to answer their criticisms. In the process, it may have to accept some of its opponents' positions and incorporate them. Through this process, contest and conflict result in compromise and consensus on some issues, and continuing struggle over other issues. Those issues over which consensus and compromise have been reached become axiomatic and become integrated into the body of the 'legitimate discourse'. These 'axioms' may be said to constitute the 'common sense' of nationalism and national identity. Over time, they come to be taken for granted even becoming 'banal'.⁹⁵ Other issues remain to be contested and a new 'legitimate problematic' thereby ensues. Therefore, although all discourses desire to monopolize the 'legitimate' discourse, none can ever do so since that would negate further struggle; there always remains scope for further disagreement.⁹⁶

The process of struggle is one of engagement which results in a transformation of the 'identity' of a discursive position through a transformation of its substantive content. The 'marks' of this engagement, of its struggle, can be seen as the position develops in relation to others in the field. New elements can be more or less detectable on the surface of its discourse: when these new elements are related to issues over which consensus and compromise have been reached, they can be barely discernible for they present themselves as 'axiomatic'; other elements may be more pronounced, especially if a position attempts to accommodate a particular criticism but fails fully to do so. At the surface level, such marks might be revealed through excessive repetition, highly elaborate arguments using abstruse logic, certain figures of speech and metaphor, redefinitions of existing categories and divisions, or marked silences over certain issues. This process of incorporation may be termed 'interpolation'. In effect, interpolation constitutes an attempt to 'mobilize' the widest constituency of support for one's own position. The effect is to achieve a displacement of 'meaning' within the field such that one's own 'world-view' is considered the only 'legitimate' one: this is how Bourdieu's 'symbolic power' may be reinterpreted.⁹⁷

The logic of accommodation arising out of struggle in the field of ideological production means that every text is necessarily inter-textual. Moreover, the number of 'issues' which were contested in nationalist discourse were numerous: class, caste, gender, religion, region, locality, province, race and so on, depending on the social position of the participant; as nationalism broadened into a wider field of political participation, so the potential variety of 'differences' which might determine an ideological position multiplied. The position adopted with respect

to these issues may combine in various forms and not be necessarily ‘homologous’ in every respect as Bourdieu might have it.⁹⁸ As such, the body of nationalist discourse in general and its particular texts are heavily fractured, contradictory, full of tension and ambivalence. In other words, they are fully replete with the ‘marks’ of struggle and heavily interpolated.

Given this array of ‘issues’ and given that in any given position a number of these issues might be combined in different ways, it becomes necessary to invent, for the sake of analysis, a heuristic device in which groups of positions can be taken together as a ‘paradigm’. Such paradigms cannot reflect the true complexity of the structure of the field. Nor does every position included in a paradigm conform in an automatic way to the constellation of emphases which define it. There remain, within each paradigm, a mass of contrary discourses. Yet each paradigm is constituted by common emphases, axioms, rhetorical styles, and concerns with certain issues. To put it another way, a paradigm represents a certain imaginative mode. As we shall see in the chapters that follow, it was the struggle between the positions represented by different paradigms of nationalist discourse – the compromises and consensus reached over certain issues and the continuing struggle over others – which constituted the problematics that set limits to the historical development of nationalism. The historical development of each paradigm can be traced as a trajectory through time, and the trajectory of nationalist discourse in general can be traced through the trajectory of the ‘legitimate discourse’. To do one without the other would, on the one hand, erroneously give the impression that a particular nationalist ideology could substitute for the whole body of nationalist discourse, and on the other hand, efface the contradictory and fragmentary differences within nationalisms. It is only when we consider nationalism as a field of cultural politics that we can recover and validate the polemical interventions and historical agency of nationalists themselves and their effects upon the histories of their nations.

THE PREHISTORY OF GANDHIAN NATIONALISM

The conceptual frame of modern Indian politics has conventionally been set between the twin poles of nationalism and colonialism. As Judith Brown writes in her book *Modern India*, histories of Indian politics before the 1970s took ‘the ideals and techniques of imperialism, and the growth of all-Indian nationalism’ as their dominant themes.¹ In the flush of euphoria following independence, and perhaps as a means of exorcizing the demons of partition, Indian historians felt ‘under particular pressure to build up a mythology of nationalism, to laud its heroes and martyrs, to “prove” the existence of Indian nationhood, and to mask the tensions which threatened to rend the movement and undermine the nationalists’ claims’.² Great emphasis was laid on the unity of the nationalist movement, and Partition was dismissed as an aberration, or the consequence of British ‘divide and rule’. The origins of such horrific events were not sought for within the nationalist movement itself. Furthermore, as Brown points out, ‘academic analysis of India’s situation was based on the way English speakers studied history and political science – concentrating on institutions, parties, pressure groups’, and thus the story of India’s struggle for independence crystallized around two protagonists, the Congress and the Raj.³ This struggle took on the dimensions of an ‘epic struggle’, to use the name of a book on the subject, a latter-day *Mahabharata*, with its requisite heroes and villains.⁴ Unlike epic, however, this historiography took a linear form and schisms were reconciled within the overall framework of unity, as Congress marched on its inexorable way to victory. As a consequence of this eulogizing approach the history of Indian nationalism was reduced to the history of the Congress, and the unity of the Congress was posited as an equivalence to the unity of the nation. In this line of thinking, the Congress’s claims to represent the nation were accepted unproblematically, and against all the available evidence.

After 1970, however, the claims of the nationalist school of historiography began to be challenged, and the unity of the nationalist movement was, in no uncertain terms, shattered. Anil Seal, in his *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism*, describing nineteenth century political India as a system of competition and collaboration in which it was the institutions and authority of the colonial state that set the agenda for Indian politics; the almost haphazard emergence of political

associations and following on from them the tentative emergence of all-Indian political associations through ‘trial and error’; the lack of an all-Indian political consciousness among men from different locales and provinces who hardly ‘knew each other, or the first thing about other parts of India’; and the lack of any effective political organization in the Congress so that it was to remain ‘shapeless and flaccid’ – elsewhere Seal calls it a ‘a ramshackle set of local linkages . . . an annual tamasha’ – consistently undermined the nationalists’ claims that the emergence of an all-Indian nationalism expressed the spirit of a pre-existing Indian nationality, and that Congress was the ‘national’ party.⁵

Seal was followed by, and closely associated himself with, the so-called Cambridge school, and his introductory essay in a volume which contained essays by many of those associated with the school, has been characterized by some as the classic summation, manifesto even, of their position.⁶ The basic position of the school was to advocate that Indian politics should not be seen merely in terms of the ‘hollow generalities of all-India’ but rather through the arenas of locality, province and nation.⁷ Each of these arenas have different dynamics and different competing interests, and the mediating links between them were politicians engaged in a ‘patron–client’ system, cultivating – and claiming to represent – interests within categories defined by the colonial state. As Seal points out, the logic of this is that:

Politics at the base seem[s] very different in kind from politics in the province or the nation. Whatever forces may have brought men into partnership at these higher levels, they can hardly have been the same as those which made men work together in the neighbourhoods . . . Indeed, there seems to be no necessary reason why the politics of these localities should have become enmeshed with the larger processes at all.⁸

Nevertheless, ‘Local, provincial and national politics worked as they did because they were interconnected’, and since it was the government that defined the categories of interest, and since these categories differed in specificity at the different levels, the effect was that the structure of political interconnections was based heavily upon conflicting interests, ‘In every province, at every level and inside every category, political associations were formed as the expression of claim and counter-claim, of group and counter-group, of competitors vying for the favours of the Raj.’⁹ Politics, by this reckoning, becomes nothing more than a rather cynical power game. Seal had already claimed that the struggle between Congress and the Raj was like a ‘Dashera duel between two hollow statues locked in motionless and simulated combat’;¹⁰ the work of the Cambridge school of historians effectively finished off the idealities of nationalist historiography for good.

Yet the Cambridge school of historians is but one of many challenges to have been launched upon the old conceptual framework of Indian political historiography. The Subaltern studies group, for example, have found in peasant struggles and resistances to oppression different forms of political action to those

generally concentrated upon by historians – the constitutional, urban-based politics of the élite, whether nationalist, communalist, or liberal-constitutionalist.¹¹ By describing two separate domains of politics – the élite and the subaltern – each mutually exclusive, inaccessible, and incomprehensible to one another, and by uncovering innumerable forms of distinctive political behaviour and consciousness within the subaltern domain, the Subalternists have also undermined the hollow unities of nationalism and, moreover, challenged the very claims to representation made by nationalist politicians in the field of élite politics. More conventional Marxists, by focusing on the nationalist movement as a class-based movement have described a contradiction in the class interests between the bourgeois leadership and those it claimed to represent: the urban working class, the peasantry and landless rural labourers.¹² In so doing, they illustrated that there was not only a primary contradiction of interest between the Indian people and British colonialism but also secondary contradictions of interest between social classes within the national movement. This too problematized the glib unity of the Indian nation. Another school of historians, who have been called ‘radical nationalists’, have attempted to decelerate the almost inexorable deconstruction of Indian nationalism, but even they have broken away from the conventional unified frame of reference and utilized a theoretical apparatus drawing heavily on the work of Antonio Gramsci to elaborate the thesis of a many-streamed national movement consisting of many social classes and secondary interests, waging a struggle for hegemony with the colonial regime whilst also insisting on the secondary contradictions between the many ‘streams’ of the national movement, and of a consequent struggle for hegemony within the nationalist movement.¹³

Despite all the advances made, what is conspicuously absent from most writing about Indian nationalism is a significant engagement with nationalist discourse and its ideologies. Even when they have been considered, their role has been underemphasised. In this respect, not much has changed. The earlier nationalists neglected ideology because to them ideology as such was superfluous. In the rarefied world of idealities, nationalism was the expression of the spirit of the Indian nation seeking to regain its historical freedom. To consider ideology at all would have been to compromise this ‘spirit’, to soil it in the grubbiness of *realpolitik*.

In the work of the Cambridge school, the emphasis is almost entirely upon institutional arenas of political competition and ideology is almost completely neglected. Politics, in their theory, is primarily a pragmatic affair in which political actions, positions, oppositions are motivated by interests which seem to be exclusively inspired by a Machiavellian struggle for power and influence, rather than also by ideological considerations. The lynchpin of the entire structure is, of course, the ‘patron–client’ system rather than the more conventional category of ‘westernized middle class’. Yet, as Torri points out, this entails a wholesale rejection of the category of ‘intelligentsia’ as, in Gramscian terms, a ‘professional category’ educated within the colonial system who acquired social and political weight only by acting as theorists, organizers, strategists and spokesmen of social

groups.¹⁴ The emergence of an intelligentsia able to theorize, analyse and strategically manoeuvre in a field of power in which the agenda was set along modern lines by the colonial state, together with moves toward greater 'representativeness', meant that not only were new forms of political behaviour required which were distinct from any pre-colonial 'patron-client' system, but also a class of persons capable of operating within and thinking through the new structures.¹⁵ In other words, the new political settlement needed to be made sense of or, to put it another way, represented. By concentrating entirely on structures, the Cambridge school ignore the logic of their own position, and fail to complete the task they set themselves,

One of the main tasks . . . must be to identify the forces which drove Indian politics upwards and outwards from the oddities of the locality, or downwards from the hollow generalities of all-India, which bonded their political activities together, and which determined the nature of the relations between them . . . it is the connections which must be elucidated . . . Formed out of disparate aspirations and grievances, they were somehow generalized into unities stronger than their own contradictions.¹⁶

But the connections depended not only upon networks of interlocking structures and interests, but a dovetailing of issues which, when articulated in certain forms, created terrains of shared awareness and common understandings. It is this process of ideological construction which filled out the 'hollow generalities' and concretized perceptions among groups; among other things, ideologies bonded the fragile skeleton of interlocking structures and 'somehow created unities stronger than their own contradictions'.

It is in the work of the Subaltern Studies group, however, that we see ideological discourse treated most fully. The division which they describe between élite and subaltern domains also depends upon an a corollary division of 'consciousness'.¹⁷ This division of consciousness rests upon, and is informed by, a division of identity. Identity thereby not only informs and determines certain forms of political behaviour, alliances and oppositions, but also excludes the possibility of others. Political action requires the identification of interests and the articulation of those interests in a form capable of being recognized by those it seeks to 'represent'.¹⁸ Ideology thus becomes indispensable in political action for it provides a basis for not only constructing group identities but also for elaborating a platform of common perceptions in which interests are recognized by the group as a group.

Yet the Subalternists' division of élite and subaltern domains, when considered in the historical specificity of the Indian nationalist movement, also poses a problem: how does one account for the mobilization and appropriation of the peasantry into forms of political behaviour determined by an élite, in which it is the interests of the élite and not the peasantry which are fundamental and

definitive? It is here that a sophisticated examination of the power of ideology is most useful. Gandhi emerges as the pivotal figure precisely because his ideological intervention into an existing body of élite nationalist discourse enabled Indian nationalism to conduct a 'war of manoeuvre' by appropriating the peasantry. Through this focus on Gandhi's relation to nationalist discourse, the Subalternists have gone a long way towards explaining the movement's mass character.

The case has been put most forcefully by Partha Chatterjee.¹⁹ He has suggested that nationalist discourse created a set of homologous rhetorical dichotomies which enabled it to 'simultaneously accept and reject the dominance, both epistemic and moral, of an alien culture'.²⁰ This, for Chatterjee, defines the 'problematic' of Indian nationalism; in other words, it set the limits to what could or could not be said in that discourse. Nationalists resolved the problem by constructing a dichotomy revolving around *ghar* (home) and *babir* (the world) which corresponded to the homologous distinction between inner and outer zones of sovereignty. The outer sphere is the domain of political action and material interests. Subjection to the greater material resources and military power of the colonial state, along with the desirability of modern, rational, institutions of power meant that the superiority of the west in this sphere had to be accepted. Yet to make this the sole basis of the nationalists' claims would actually erase the very difference upon which nationalism could justify self-rule. The inner sphere, therefore, is concerned with the spiritual as opposed to the material, and here the east is clearly superior. This sphere constitutes the 'true self' and is the repository of cultural 'tradition'. Thus, one must fully participate in modern life, be employed in modern industries and institutions, and engage in modern politics but also zealously guard the 'inner' zone of sovereignty for this alone preserves the identity of the 'nation'. One should be 'modernized' but never 'westernized'.

Chatterjee's argument is, on the face of it, compelling but on closer inspection it remains problematic in its ability to assess fully the true historical specificity and complexity of nationalist discourse in India.²¹ According to Chatterjee, the discourse oscillates between 'modernist' idioms – historicism, rationalism, scientism – on the one hand, and 'traditionalist' idioms – essentialism, emotionalism, revivalism – on the other. The differences within nationalist discourse are therefore primarily a matter of emphasis.²² This exposes two related problems.

First, it becomes clear that his approach is too idealist. Chatterjee takes the emphasis on ideology too far in claiming that it is the determining factor in political behaviour. Yet he does not elucidate why some people adopted a modernist emphasis and not a traditionalist one. Without some sort of prior determination by actual relations in the social space and the field of power there is no necessary reason why one should choose one emphasis and not the other; the choice becomes arbitrary. In contrast, one must insist on a dialectical relation between forms of politics, their ideological discourses, and the social space in which they participate and intervene. One cannot simply have an idea and put it into practice; the very production, reception and dissemination of that idea is determined by

one's position within the social space; material resources; relation to loci of power (both 'modern' and 'traditional') and other social classes; and access to institutions of power and expression (e.g. educational institutions, the press, etc.).

Second, Chatterjee's argument revolves around the rather general and empty signifiers 'culture', 'material' and 'spiritual' but he leaves these terms, as they were perceived within nationalist discourse, undefined. What exactly is meant by the 'cultural' or the 'spiritual' here? Chatterjee assumes an automatic consensus within nationalist discourse on the meaning of these vague terms – terms which are still to this day contested fiercely in every country – but is it possible that when what was at stake was the very 'soul' of an entire nation or civilization that there was no form of contest or struggle between competing definitions of such important terms? To put it another way, in order to say what is meant by the 'material' sphere we must first decide how much of Indian culture could be said to be 'material' and how much is 'spiritual'. What parts of one's culture could one concede to the 'material' domain and what parts could on no account be conceded? The answers to these varied widely within the body of nationalist discourse. For example, there were many nationalists who did seek to promote social reform through the machinery of the colonial state (which according to Chatterjee involves an intolerable intrusion of the material sphere into the spiritual since social reform was seen as a 'cultural' issue). These nationalists did not believe that they had 'sold out' their national identity, but some of their opponents thought they had. Although they too may have identified a material/spiritual dichotomy they filled each of these categories with different meanings and values. In other words, what is at stake here is not emphasis but definition, and definition, as Bourdieu has said, involves a struggle 'to impose a legitimate principle of vision'.²³ Chatterjee's discursive determinism, however, actually pre-empts questions of definition and thus defuses any notion of struggle, contest, conflict and compromise in the production of nationalist discourse: the frames of reference are set in stone from the beginning. In contrast, nationalist discourse was, as we shall see, a highly differentiated, fragmentary and contradictory discourse, marked by contest and compromise; questions of seemingly overwhelming importance for some were marginalized or even neglected by others. Indeed, were we to follow Chatterjee's assumptions right through the Surat Split should never have happened since there would have been nothing to disagree about.²⁴

In fact, Chatterjee falls foul of a trap which often traps 'postcolonial studies' because of its exorbitation of the colonizer–colonized relationship at the expense of other social relationships. He implicitly simplifies the complexity of social relations in India by suggesting that the only determinant of nationalist discourse is the élite's relationship to its colonial masters. The nationalist élite thus seem to stand apart from the more immediate and encompassing social field in which they lived. However, their response was not only determined by the colonial encounter but also by other forces within the wider social field. The discursive response fashioned by these early nationalists depended not only upon colonial discourse but also upon the many social discourses which made themselves felt

upon their lived experience. Thus, to talk of a ‘westernized’ intelligentsia overlooks the other side of the coin, that is, that these intellectuals also lived within ‘traditional’ social patterns which were often marginally affected by colonialism, sometimes left unchanged, and even consolidated by colonial rule.²⁵ Peter Robb, for example, has shown the extensive social and economic linkages between urban social groups and the surrounding villages.²⁶ Thus, to be western-educated was by no means to escape the pull of caste, community, religion and family, and the symbolic capital and power invested in them.²⁷ ‘Traditional’ authorities, therefore, had as much impact on the shaping of nationalist discourse as colonial authority. If nationalist discourse was heterogeneous and fragmented it was because participants in this struggle were not uniformly located in the social space. There was no clear-cut distinction, therefore, between ‘traditionalists’ and ‘modernists’ within nationalism. One could be more or less ‘westernized’, more or less ‘progressive’, but one still had to negotiate one’s relation to caste, community and family and this had a determining effect on positions adopted in the political field.

The nationalist response was thus necessarily polyvalent. In order to constitute itself as the only valid principle of political legitimacy in India, nationalists had to respond to both colonial and ‘traditional’ positions and it is only in the relationship to them – augmented by the internal dynamics within itself – that nationalist discourse emerged. Colonial discourse suggested that India could not be a nation because it was not modern and was not a single homogeneous nation. The issues of modernity and unity, therefore, became the original point of departure for nationalist discourse. In response to this colonial critique, nationalists became convinced of the need to reform Indian society in order to modernize it; this was a matter of such fundamental importance that all nationalists had to engage with it. Modernization and social reform became, in principle, axiomatic within Indian nationalist discourse.²⁸ What remained an issue was how this was to be achieved and the extent of reform: in other words, how to define ‘social reform’. However, nationalists also had to engage with other opponents in the field of power, most notably with the ‘traditional’ authorities, and in particular, the prevailing religious authorities. Here, nationalists had to demonstrate that a modern nation did not mean deculturation. With respect to the ‘traditional’ authorities, the terrain of struggle was ‘tradition’ itself. What was required was the elaboration and definition of a concept of ‘tradition’ consonant with the principles of modernity; scriptures were re-edited, reinterpreted, and social practices which contradicted modern principles were redefined as ‘untraditional’, aberrant, marginal or suspect.

Of course, nationalists occupied various positions on both these fronts, which gives to the body of nationalist discourse its heterogeneous character. Some were more ‘modernist’ and ‘reformist’ than others who were more ‘conservative’. In the process, competing visions of the nation emerged and a struggle to impose each vision as the only legitimate one ensued. These visions ranged from the narrowly ‘political’, like that of the heavily ‘progressive’ Surendranath Banerjea,

whose 'sense of nationhood . . . [was] forged out of a commitment to political liberalism'²⁹ and was unquestionably 'modernist' in emphasis, to those, like Bipinchandra Pal, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Aurobindo Ghosh, who considered the nation to have existed since time immemorial, and who based this claim on India's cultural and civilizational unity.

The discursive resolution of the 'material' and 'spiritual' dichotomy therefore provided no more than a framework within which struggles over definition took place. Many divergent and ultimately irreconcilable positions were adopted with regard to the definition of the national 'self' and where exactly the line between 'self' and 'other', 'spiritual' and 'material' should be drawn. Heuristically, one may suggest two broad 'paradigms' of thought during this early period which may be labelled 'progressive' and 'conservative'.³⁰

If the 'progressive' paradigm accepted the need for a sphere of national difference in order to underwrite its difference from the colonial regime, and if it also agreed to locate this in a difference defined in 'spiritual' terms, it nevertheless saw the modern, the rational, and therefore the 'material' domain as the legitimate vision of the 'new' India. The 'progressive' vision of the nation was sustained by a commitment to modern political institutions and to the construction of a 'civil' society in broad alignment with those fashioned in western Europe. Its conception of the nation was, correspondingly, geopolitical. There was, therefore, a further corresponding emphasis on liberalism, both socio-political and economic, as well as a desire to reform society and religion along modern, 'rationalist' lines such that the 'degenerate traditions' of India such as the prohibition on widow remarriage, child marriage, and all of India's supposed 'superstitiousness', were to be eradicated by the intervention and through the machinery of the modern, 'rational' state. Social reform was, therefore, placed in the 'material' sphere and to be kept out of the 'spiritual' sphere. In the 'progressive' paradigm, the substantive vision was, therefore, 'materialist'; the 'spiritual' domain of difference signified a vague sense of the 'national spirit or genius', perhaps even something as tokenistic as a greater propensity towards religion and morality than their western masters.

In fact, the zone of spiritual difference itself was accepted by the 'progressive' paradigm not because of some inherent and coherent ideological policy but because of the struggle with the 'conservatives' on the one hand and with the colonial state on the other. Whilst relentlessly seeking to erase the marks of difference in the social, political and economic fields, the progressives were nevertheless consistently forced to confront the 'rule of colonial difference', as Chatterjee appositely calls it, through which the colonialists retained their position above those they ruled.³¹ The Ilbert Bill affair of 1884 and the Vernacular Press Act of 1874 were just two such instances where the desire of the nationalists to force through the implications of Queen Victoria's proclamation of 1858 were thwarted. In the face of this, the 'progressives' certainly saw the logic of delineating a sphere of difference. Nevertheless, this logic was almost certainly forced upon them by their simultaneous struggle with the 'conservatives', who could claim that the goal of the 'progressives' was to 'denationalize' India by importing lock, stock

and barrel the customs, social practices and institutions of the west. Seen from this perspective, the 'progressive' acceptance of India's zone of 'spiritual' sovereignty was less an ideological strategy than a concession, grudgingly given. Indeed, people like Surendranath Banerjea, Dadabhai Naoroji, Pherozeshah Mehta, Justice Ranade and Gokhale never really let go of their attachment to the notion of 'Albion the just'.

For the 'conservatives', however, the substance of the nation was to be found in the 'spiritual' domain. This was defined, in contrast to the 'progressives', rigorously and in much broader terms. To them it signified an entire civilizational unity from which social, cultural and religious practices could not be extricated. This left very little to the 'material' sphere where the supremacy of the west could be recognized and conceded, and the separation between the two domains would have to be rigorously policed. This was also a point of difference with the 'progressives' for whom the boundary between the 'material' and 'spiritual' was much more fluid. Although the conservatives were as desirous of reform as the 'progressives', any attempt to impose reform from the 'outside', that is, from the 'material' sphere through the legislative institutions of the colonial state meant that the zone of national sovereignty was necessarily compromised. The scope of this zone was so wide precisely because the 'conservatives', unlike the 'progressives', recognized that religion in India was not merely a matter of individual faith and morality, but also, intrinsically, of social practice. This led to a far greater critical engagement with both the 'traditional' and the colonial authorities with the result that the 'conservatives' elaborated a far stronger ideology than the 'progressives'.³²

In its struggle with the colonial state and the 'progressives' within the field of élite politics and, more precisely, the sub-field of constitutional politics, the 'conservative' politicians accepted the 'rules of the game' and took as axiomatic that the politics of the nation should be based upon those elaborated by the modern colonial state. Its concern for 'tradition' in no way involved a return to 'traditional' structures of social and political authority. It also accepted various other axioms of its opponents such as the need for economic 'modernization' and industrialization, the need for a modern military, and the desirability of a modern state based upon rationalistic and utilitarian lines.³³ Yet, outside this narrow field, in its robust engagement with orthodoxy, it found itself taking an 'anti-modernist' position, especially with regard to social and religious reform. It was here that its ideology was strongest and it was in this respect that it stamped its authority on the trajectory of nationalist discourse in the twentieth century. We find, therefore, a curious situation whereby vigorous calls for economic and political 'modernization' go hand in hand with a social, religious and cultural conservatism.³⁴

The struggle for ascendancy between the conservative and progressive paradigms within Indian nationalist discourse reached an insurmountable impasse in the years following the Swadeshi agitations of 1905 and eventually led to what, at the time, seemed a cataclysmic split between 'moderates' and 'extremists' during

the Surat Congress of 1907.³⁵ This had been fermenting, however, for some time following the controversy over the Age of Consent Bill of 1891, a controversy which the ‘conservatives’ had used to good political effect in order to challenge the dominance of the progressives within Congress, both politically and ideologically. Indeed, one of the curious features of the ‘conservative’ paradigm was its relatively late arrival on the field of political activity in the form of ‘extremism’; hitherto, ‘moderate’ political methods had held sway within Congress as the rules of constitutional politics – which the conservatives also accepted – were unsurprisingly designed to favour them. However, the Age of Consent Bill shifted the balance of forces between ‘progressives’ and ‘conservatives’ and gave political momentum to the latter, who found themselves able to mobilize a much larger constituency with the cry of ‘religion in danger’.³⁶

Thus far, the contentious issue of social reform had been ‘shelved’, as it were, by both ‘conservative’ and ‘progressive’ forces in Congress in the belief that participation in constitutional politics necessarily involved presenting a unified nationalist position to the British.³⁷ Annual sessions of Congress studiously avoided the potential divisiveness of social reform issues which were addressed in a separate meeting held after the main Congress session.³⁸ ‘Politics’ was thus narrowly defined as involving petitions and memorandums, attending Congress sessions, and occasional speeches in the Legislative Council.

Quite why the Bill should have had such a dramatic impact on the balance of forces within Indian nationalism is a serious historical question which has not yet, perhaps, acquired the attention it deserves. Clearly, it is significant that it was over the issue of social reform and not political strategy that the fissures within Indian nationalism first became so visible. More accurately, although for pragmatic reasons all sides had agreed to keep social reform and politics apart, the Bill brought to a head what was really at stake in the ideological contest between the ‘conservative’ and ‘progressive’ nationalists, namely the very separation itself. In this regard, the manner of the conservative challenge – the cry of ‘religion in danger’ – is of interest for it implies a disavowal of the separation of religion from politics that the progressives, with their attachment to liberal political ideals, cherished. In other words, the problem raised by the Age of Consent Bill was overdetermined by the issue of secularism in Indian politics. Indeed, the conceptual framework of Indian nationalism – the dichotomy between the ‘material’ and ‘spiritual’ spheres – echoes that of secularism. The framework itself, therefore, may be seen to be determined by the limits of the discourse of secularism in India. As we shall see, its impact on the nationalist imagination in India would have profound consequences for the history of modern India.

The limits of secularism and secularization in India

It has been increasingly evident in recent times that the binary opposition between nationalism (modern, secular, good) and communalism (primordial, atavistic, bad) can no longer be sustained. In particular, the subalternist historians have

done more than any other group to suggest that a ‘modernist idiom’ and a ‘dharmic idiom’ in modern Indian politics have had ‘mutually conditioned historicities’.³⁹ However, the Subalternists read this coexistence through the theoretical perspective of élite and subaltern domains of consciousness. This reveals, ‘a recognition in the élite domain of an arena of subaltern politics over which it must dominate and yet which also had to be negotiated on its own terms for the purposes of producing consent’.⁴⁰ Yet it is not clear why it must be assumed that prior to the emergence of Gandhi, any nationalist politician even recognized the need to speak in a different idiom in order to speak ‘for’ the subaltern constituencies. In the writings of people like Tilak or Bipinchandra Pal, although there are copious references to the ‘people’, or the ‘masses’, the dominant impression is that these are rhetorical tropes deployed for the purposes of boosting their ‘representativeness’ as leaders.⁴¹ There is no hint at this juncture in the development of Indian nationalist discourse that the nationalist leaders recognized that the ‘dharmic’ idiom was how the peasantry ‘thought’ and therefore needed to be imbricated in their ideology in order to appropriate them and their consent. In fact, it seems that nationalist politicians, whether ‘conservatives’ or ‘progressives’, simply assumed their leadership; their status as ‘representatives’ was unquestioned – they only disagreed as to who represented them better. Tilak, for example, unselfconsciously classes Surendranath Banerjea as a ‘leader of the people’ at the very time that he is contesting Banerjea’s right to representation!⁴² In other words, there is no evidence to indicate that the ‘discourse of community’, the ‘dharmic’ idiom in élite-nationalist discourse, originated anywhere other than within the élite itself.

Gyan Pandey has tried to put it another way,

nationalism has everywhere had a deeply divided relation to ‘community’ . . . On the one hand, nationalism must speak the language of rationality, of the equality of individuals . . . on the other it needs the language of blood and sacrifice, of historical necessity, of ancient (God-given) status and attributes – which is part of the discourse of community.⁴³

For Pandey, then, it is this ‘deeply divided relation’ within nationalism ‘everywhere’ which is responsible for the historical equivalence of Indian nationalism with ‘Hindu’ nationalism. In turn, this dialectically produces a ‘Muslim’ nationalism, which in turn sets up the dynamics of communalism, which only becomes ‘communalism’ as such when theorized by a ‘refurbished nationalism’ as being Indian nationalism’s irreconcilable opponent.⁴⁴ At the heart of this argument lies a series of assumptions concerning the relationship between nationalism and cultural essentialism, namely that essentialism is immanent to nationalism and it is this which explains the presence of the ‘dharmic idiom’. Once again, however, this cannot in itself explain why the ‘discourse of community’ in India took the forms it did, namely religious forms, when the ‘discourse of community’ in other nationalisms, which were equally essentialist, adopted more ‘cultural’ and secular

idioms. Nor does it explain why ‘secular’ nationalists in India so unproblematically assumed that ‘community’ in India should be seen in terms of either ‘nation’ or ‘religion’. That these ‘secular-liberal’ nationalists overlooked the possibility that there might indeed be forms of community that are neither suggests that they were themselves afflicted by the blind spot in Indian nationalist discourse that they avowedly eschewed. Even the most secular of them, Jawaharlal Nehru, assumes that ‘syncretism’ in India involves the blending of religious communities. This implies ‘units’ that are distinct prior to their syncretization. These units are seen, unselfconsciously, as being religious in nature.⁴⁵ In effect, the secular-liberal nationalists failed to alter the terms of reference whereby ‘community’ automatically refers to ‘religious community’, and ‘communalism’ to ‘religious politics’.⁴⁶

How, then, did it become part of the common sense of Indian modernity that ‘community’ should so naturally mean ‘religious community’? A number of points suggest themselves immediately. First, it is clear that one of the most significant effects of colonial policy was to determine the basis of political legitimacy in the subcontinent. As Judith Brown puts it,

the way the British saw Indian society, particularly in assessing what were legitimate interests meriting representation, was a crucial influence on Indian responses to the imperial order . . . Imperial structures and categories not only influenced Indian responses to their rulers, but became a significant factor in Indians’ relationships with one another.⁴⁷

In particular, the relationship of the post-company colonial state to society had a decisive impact on the formulation of the parameters of political engagement. John Zavos has suggested that although Queen Victoria’s proclamation of 1858 established a principle of neutrality with respect to religion in India and established the right of religious freedom, this right was itself conceptualized as the legitimate basis for the representation of political interests. He also states that,

[t]he reason for the prominence of religion can be explained through British preoccupations in the wake of the 1857 Rebellion, and through the underlying assumption that religion, degenerate though it may be, was the motor force of Indian civilization and social relations.⁴⁸

This doubleness in the colonial state’s attitude towards religion would be reflected back by the generation of Indian politicians, whose careers were moulded by the expectations it set out, so that religious interests were merged with political ones, and the idioms of liberal constitutionalism were imbricated with those of *dharma* and the *shastras*.⁴⁹

Related to this was the accumulation of a considerable body of colonial knowledge, the purpose of which was to justify the assumptions of colonial discourse, and to deliver its categories as empirical realities.⁵⁰ In the process,

colonial prejudices *vis-à-vis* what constituted ‘community’, ‘religion’, ‘caste’ and so on, came to acquire the mark of finality as both sides of the colonial divide came to see these categories as ‘objective’, ‘real’, fixed and ‘immemorial’.⁵¹ The result was the ‘construction’ of ‘singular’ religious communities out of the seemingly incomprehensible mass of locally practised cults and minor religions.⁵² All of this contributed to ‘Hinduism’, and later ‘Islam’, acquiring something akin to homogeneity. Moreover, it is also clear that since ‘Hindus’ took up the opportunity of western education in much greater numbers than Muslims, their greater participation in the field of constitutional politics meant that not only would they begin to see themselves as ‘Hindus’ representing the political rights of the ‘Hindu’ community, but also that that community would come to be seen as politically the most important.⁵³

However, above and beyond these, the specific trajectory of modernization in colonial India had a decisive impact on the development, or lack of it, of secularism. Historians often point out that Indian society developed very unevenly with the advent of British rule, and even where it did so most forcefully, the modernization of society was neither homologous in all fields of social life, nor did it in any way conform to patterns of development in western Europe.⁵⁴ Most, however, make no explicit connection between this process and Hindu nationalism.⁵⁵ Yet this is the vital factor that determined the divergence of Indian secularism from its ‘western’ counterpart, for unlike in western Europe, modernization in India did not lead to secularization. For if one takes secularization to involve the relative decline of religion in social life, then in India this clearly did not happen. Religion remained as dominant a principle of social life, and in some ways has perhaps even been strengthened. Conversely, liberalism, the lynchpin of western secularism, has remained fitfully and imperfectly elaborated.

It is worth tracing these divergent trajectories for it gives some idea of what is meant by the limits of secularism in India. The divergence can be traced back to the medieval period in both Europe and India, perhaps even further. Indian society has often been compared with medieval Europe, particularly by colonialists for whom the distinction between ‘medieval’ and ‘modern’ could be attached to significations of progress, civilization and backwardness.⁵⁶ For them, the centrality of religion as social and cultural practice (as opposed to individual faith), embedded in wider society through a vast capillary network of institutions, meant that Indian society could be suitably assigned to the ‘backward’ medieval period from which Europe had so recently emerged.⁵⁷ However, this assumption is fallacious, and relied as much on ideological considerations as upon factual evidence. As Asghar Ali Engineer points out, ‘The concept of secularism in India emerged in the context of religious pluralism as against religious authoritarianism in the West.’⁵⁸ There was, therefore, a difference between the social structures of medieval India and Europe. Medieval Europe was essentially one in which local cults were subsumed within a High Church whose priests were sent to police its authority in every outpost of western Christendom. Therefore, despite the profusion and variety of local practices, there was a single institutional structure with the

Vatican at its apex. The politics of medieval Europe were also, in effect, subordinated to a singular temporal authority, the pope or pontiff, as the name suggests, being the 'bridge' between temporal and spiritual spheres of authority. In India, which may well have shared much in common with the religious diversity of the 'little cults' of medieval Europe, as Ernest Gellner calls them, no such High Church existed, nor were temporal authorities subordinated to religious ones.⁵⁹ Whereas religion and politics were inextricably intertwined in medieval Europe, there was a separation of the religious from the political in pre-modern India.⁶⁰ There was no such thing as a 'state religion' as such. The state in India stood above the social space and thus the sphere of the 'secular' came to acquire a narrowly political signification. The British, arriving with their own conceptions of temporal authority born out of the political struggles of the early modern period, encoded in a historiographical mythology concerning the rise of the Protestant Tudor state from the mire of Catholic feudalism, merely sought to replicate this system of separation.⁶¹ This state of affairs, whereby 'secular' had a narrow political signification, was not the experience of Europe. Being in effect a theocracy, the institutional hegemony of the papacy in all social fields – the political, the cultural, the social and the spiritual – had to be challenged on all fronts. This was the goal of the Reformation and, more explicitly, of humanism. The concept of secularism that emerged in Europe as a consequence of this early modern revolution, completed by the Enlightenment, was not purely political but also cultural, enveloping the entire social system and establishing a 'broad' concept of secularism as the dominant discourse of the newly emergent civil society. With this concept, and due to the various transformations in the economic structure of society, a necessary corollary also emerged: liberalism.

If the political, economic and corresponding social revolutions of Europe which characterized its process of 'modernization' were what determined the European concept of secularism, this was not so in India where the trajectory of modernization stalled the process of secularization. The Indian concept of secularism thus retained its narrow political significance. But there were also other, more cultural, limits to the epistemology of secularism in India. Secularism, at its most fundamental level, enacts a separation of existence into two distinct spheres of authority – the material and the spiritual – and has a philosophical connection to European dualism. It is because it is concerned with defining and delimiting a sphere of authority that secularism is involved in a field of power; from its inception in Europe, as in India, it has always been a political matter. But European philosophies of dualism also facilitated the transition to a 'broad' secularism in a way that 'Hindu' monistic philosophies never could.⁶² The entire social structure could be assigned to the 'material' sphere of existence in Europe whilst the spiritual could be hived off within the individual. This was precluded by monism; such an attempt would render the monistic philosophy absurd. Unlike western Europe, India never could separate the material and the spiritual, and the institutions of Indian society continued to revolve around the social practise of religion which remained the dominant organizing principle of social life. It could never, therefore,

take that final step that would separate religion from the state based upon a liberal view of religion as a matter of individual faith.⁶³ Indian secularism was, therefore, communitarian and pluralist rather than individualist and liberal. Accordingly, there was no consequent separation of the ‘private world of “meaning”’ – where religion may remain the dominant organizing principle – from ‘the public arena of “legitimacy”’ – where it may not.⁶⁴ An incident cited by Gyan Pandey illustrates this well. As he traces the incidence of ‘communal rioting’ in Mubarakhpur in eastern Uttar Pradesh, Pandey comes across an incident which may have sprung, among other reasons, from Muslim resentment that a local ‘Hindu’ *mahajan* named Manohar Das had ‘challenged *qasba* tradition by building a *shivalaya* (or small temple dedicated to Shiva) within the boundaries of Mubarakhpur’.⁶⁵ What is most noteworthy here, however, is that Manohar Das’ *shivalaya* had been built ‘inside the compound of his house’.⁶⁶ There is no distinction here between public and private space where religious matters are concerned; the law of the *qasba* operates as legitimately within the domestic space as it does outside it.

Indian secularism was thus defined purely in terms of a relationship to the state in which the state, and the state only, stood apart from religion. The modes of thought which perceived and categorized the world, and identified material interests, remained rooted in a concept of ‘community’ defined religiously which, as we have seen, the British did little to change, and in fact actively encouraged. It was this kind of secularism which determined the character of Indian nationalism from its very inception. As Bipinchandra Pal said later whilst reflecting on the importance of history to a nationalist, ‘Indian history is the record of the dealings of *God* with the Indian people. It is no profane or secular book.’⁶⁷ The most profound consequence of this has been that even at its most tolerant, Indian nationalism articulated visions of nationhood that were implicitly communalist in structure and specifically Hindu majoritarian in emphasis.

This becomes especially visible in two aspects of early nationalist discourse that together constitute the definitive axes of response to the colonial critique of Indian nationalism. The point of departure for Indian nationalism was its need to demonstrate to the colonial state that the Indian nation was – or could be – both modern and unified. But the limits of secularism imposed limits on what kinds of modernity and what kinds of unity could be imagined. It set the terms of the problematic within which these questions could be thought through and argued over. In other words, the limits of secularism not only determined the ground over which debates could take place over the extent, character and desirability of social reform; it also helped shape one of Indian nationalism’s most durable tropes, namely the ‘composite nation’.

Indian nationalism and social reform

One of the most curious aspects of the field of élite politics in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is an ‘inversion’ between ideological position and

political activity. Those who were termed ‘extremists’ and politically militant and ‘radical’ were ideologically ‘conservative’; those who were termed ‘moderates’ and politically ‘conservative’ were ideologically ‘progressive’ – Dadabhai Naoroji called himself a ‘conservative’ (i.e. politically), and yet his was one of the most ‘progressive’ of viewpoints.⁶⁸ Jim Masselos has shown how this structure in the field at large was replicated within the Deccan Education Society in Poona, with a power struggle between Tilak and his followers on the one hand, and Ranade, Gokhale and Agarkar and their followers on the other, ‘The Deccan Education Society . . . began to fissure over issues of social reform and political activism . . . Tilak . . . tended to be socially conservative but not orthodox whilst being politically active and even militant. Agarkar, on the other hand, was socially radical’, whilst being politically ‘moderate’.⁶⁹ Masselos, however, does not comment upon the fact that this is a somewhat unusual state of affairs.

As we have seen, however, this may have been due to the determination of the ‘problem’ of social reform by the limits of secularism which resulted in a tacit agreement by all parties to keep debates about it, and by extension debates over the definition of the nation itself, away from the political arena. In theory, this structure could have reproduced itself indefinitely. However, the ideological tensions could never fully be resolved and all it would take was one spark to light the fuse of a barely concealed tinderbox.

It was in this context that the Age of Consent Bill of 1891 was introduced. Its effect was to explode the façade of unity that had rather precariously held together the nationalist movement. It demonstrated how the limits of secularism could magnify and mediate contests over national definition so that the ‘pragmatic’ separation of politics from religion simply could not be maintained. As Judith Brown says,

From the 1880s . . . an issue emerged which touched the hearts and lives of educated Indians in all regions – namely, the age of marriage of Hindu girls . . . a legislative change . . . would mean that a husband who had consummated his marriage with a girl under that age [of consent] would be guilty of rape though following religious convention.⁷⁰

Since social reform necessarily meant religious reform this meant renegotiating the body of religious laws – the *shastras*.⁷¹ A clear opposition could be seen, and two distinct points of authority in the conflict could be drawn out: the ‘ancient’ religious law of the ‘Motherland’ versus the modern civil law of the colonial state; ‘our’ laws against ‘their’ laws. The choice facing the nationalist was to decide which was valid. Invariably, the cry of ‘religion in danger’ generated, given the circumstances, the most emotional pull. The ‘spiritual’ zone of autonomy had been violated by the ‘material’ zone so it now became necessary to ‘reclaim’ the ‘material’ sphere itself, i.e. the colonial state, from the foreigners. Until this point, conservatives had held fast to the ‘moderate’ political strategy; the Bill, however, cut them to the quick because it would involve what they saw to be intolerable

concessions to ‘progressive’ ideas of nationhood. From now on they devised a political strategy of their own – extremism – premised on maintaining, and even increasing, the distance between themselves and the colonial state as opposed to the ‘moderate’ and ‘progressive’ strategy based on proximity.

However, it should not be forgotten that the ‘conservative’ paradigm accepted the need for reform as well as various other axioms normally associated with the ‘progressives’ such as economic modernization, representative democracy (‘reclaim’ in no way means ‘Indianize’ in their discourse, as it would in Gandhi’s), and, in the final instance, social and religious reform of such issues as caste and the position of women. This leads to some interesting ambivalences and ambiguities in their discourse on social reform, ambiguities that would eventually preclude their assumption of the leadership of a mass nationalism.

In an essay entitled ‘Nation-building’, Bipinchandra Pal writes:

Indian nationality . . . must necessarily be different from what it was in the past. For *new* forces have commenced to operate upon it . . . *new* conditions . . . *new* ideas . . . *new* ideals . . . The *new* Indian nationality must not lose its hold upon the past nor its vision of the future. *Fixed* in the *sacred* actualities of ancient and medieval India, it must reach itself out to the *diviner* idealities of *modern* life. The nation-builder . . . cannot be a revivalist, though he must . . . utilise and assimilate . . . all those *permanent elements* of our *ancient and medieval* life . . . The nation-builder cannot be a radical reformer or or an abstract cosmopolitan.⁷²

We can observe the temporal oscillation between antiquity and modernity, permanence and novelty, which seems to be a characteristic feature of all nationalist discourse. Elsewhere, for example, Pal utilizes the metaphor of the ‘organism’ for the nation, ‘Nations, however, are organisms, and have therefore the universal capacity for *self-growth and self-adjustment*’;⁷³ these metaphors – of the organism, of the body – are capable of sustaining growth and development whilst at the same time retaining an essential character that persists in spite of change. However, here the temporal movement is enacted in religious terms, ‘sacred actualities . . . diviner idealities’. The effect is to give a religious sanction for the nation and the reforms necessary to build it. Thus, if a nation-builder cannot be a revivalist, he cannot be one on religious grounds; it is the nationalist, not the revivalist, who is truly religious. By the same token, a nation-builder cannot be a radical reformer because such a reformer, whilst aspiring to the ‘diviner’ aspects of modern life, lets go of the ‘sacred actualities’ of the past. He is thus equally irreligious and his creed becomes an ‘abstract’ cosmopolitanism. It is significant that Pal collapses the two terms – i.e. ‘radical reformer’ and ‘abstract cosmopolitan’ – into one, characterizing them both as ‘[those] who regard all racial differences and national peculiarities as superstitions and shortcomings’.⁷⁴ Radical reform is incompatible with national regeneration, i.e. nationalism. The ‘radical reformer’ is thus even worse than the ‘revivalist’. Pal constructs a scale of ‘nation-builders’ with the

conservative nationalist at the top, followed by the revivalist who at least has the decency to be proud of his 'national peculiarities', and bringing up the rear is the 'radical reformer' who is also a denationalized 'abstract cosmopolitan'. In the context of a struggle with 'progressives' prepared to concede certain cultural 'peculiarities' of the nation to a modern, universalist, humanism, i.e. to concede the 'spiritual' zone of autonomy, the criticism becomes pointed.

The tactic of using religion to sanction religious reform, which in turn is used to sanction nationalism, can be witnessed in another article penned by Pal, entitled 'The Ganges Bath'. At once, Pal is locking on to sacred idioms merely by using the Ganges as a symbol. Hailing 'Mother Ganga', he states, 'Thou, Holy Mother, holdest in thy embrace all the races of this great and glorious land . . . Thou art the symbol of Indian unity. In thy *sacred* waters all distinctions of caste and creed are washed away.'⁷⁵ The sacred symbol of the Ganges is redefined to sanction social reform; on the other hand, it is immediately recognizable as a Hindu symbol, which Pal hopes will offset any conflict that might therefore occur with the orthodox. As he writes elsewhere,

The Ganges recognises no castes; the Brahman and the Pariya may bathe together without any fear of pollution. But what about places where there is no such sacred river? There also the sanctity of the Ganges must also be imported . . . In this there will be no serious conflict with orthodoxy.⁷⁶

The strain in the argument where Pal insists that the Ganges must be 'imported' to other places is clearly evident; precisely because there will be no serious conflict with orthodoxy, it means that for any 'untouchable' unfortunate enough not to be close to a sacred river this 'symbol of unity' is simultaneously a symbol of exclusion. This reproduces the ambiguous place of the 'untouchables' within the 'Hindu' community, whereby they are not considered part of the community, nor are they allowed to be considered 'outside' it.⁷⁷ Pal produces a symbol that is both 'for' social reform, and against it.

The composite nation

It is clear that with the rise of the extremists and the increasing dominance of the 'conservative' paradigm, religion was secured as the unambiguous determinant of nationalist politics. Thus Tilak could say, 'Religion is an element in nationality. The word Dharma means to tie . . . Hindu religion as such provides for a moral as well as a social tie', and thereby suggest that the 'social tie' that binds 'nationality' is premised upon a 'Hindu' religion.⁷⁸ It is unsurprising that the identification of nationalism with Hindu nationalism created an effect whereby oppositional stances were themselves premised upon religious identity. Hence the rise of 'community politics', taking recognizably modern, constitutionalist forms. Hence, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan would characterize Congress as a 'Hindu'

organization, and in time greater Muslim organization would lead to the creation of the Muslim League whilst Hindus would later establish the Hindu Mahasabha. At the very start, then, the frames of reference were set that prefigured the rise of the communalisms of the 1920s and beyond. A closer examination of Indian nationalism's most durable trope, the composite nation, illustrates how the dynamics of majoritarian Hindu nationalism, so close in character to that which is currently disfiguring the body politic of contemporary India, emerged from out of the very loins of 'mainstream' Indian nationalism.

The idea of India being composed of 'communities' that had a prior ontological status reflects both a compromise and a hesitancy over the idea of India itself: compromise in so far as 'India', as a 'community' that had not existed before, would have to negotiate its own niche in the scale of possible identities with others that possessed some form of existing affective force; hesitancy because this very compromise contained within itself deep uncertainties as to whether India had a prior existence as a nation, or whether it was entirely new, an identity under construction – a thoroughly modern identity.

Within the parameters of this particular problematic, the idea of the composite nation began to take shape as a tessellation of various discursive alignments. From the British systems of classifications and prejudices, and Indians' own self-perceptions as they were moulded by them, the concept drew on notions of existing 'singular' religious communities: Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Christians, etc. As Pandey writes, "Hindu unity", like "Muslim unity" appears to be a prerequisite . . . for a larger national unity.⁷⁹ It was also comprised of a combination of political, territorial, cultural and civilizational conceptions of the nation, elements which were given different emphasis by 'progressives' and 'conservatives'. Therefore, the interest of the 'composite' concept of Indian nationhood lies in its role as a signifier of deeper ideological conflicts within the nationalist movement, conflicts that have had profound effects upon the trajectory of Indian nationalism in the twentieth century.

For the 'progressives' the dominant emphasis lay on territorial and political conceptions. For them the nation was predominantly a political unit, and the nation's unity is based upon a common, modern polity constructed by the British, as stated by Surendranath Banerjea,

Here we stand upon a common platform – here we have agreed to bury our social and religious differences, and recognise the one common fact that being subjects of the same Sovereign and living under the same Government and the same political institutions, we have common rights and common grievances.⁸⁰

This political emphasis required a corresponding emphasis upon territory, so that the nation was increasingly seen in purely geographical terms as a unity of common habitation, 'But who constitute the nation? Not surely the Hindus or the Mahomedans alone, but Hindus, Mahomedans, Parsis, Sikhs, Christians –

the varied races that inhabit this vast empire.⁸¹ The nuances here are striking and worth reflecting on, particularly the slippage from a liberal and constitutionalist idiom to a communitarian one. More significantly, the communitarian idiom classifies community along religious lines and then, interestingly, conflates religion with 'race'. The implications of such a conflation will be examined in due course, but here it is worth remarking upon the coexistence of two supposedly incommensurable idioms within the discourse of a noted 'moderate' nationalist.

It can be partly explained by the fact that territory and political commonality was not in itself sufficient to fashion a national identity, and never would be. An exclusive emphasis upon such a basis was constantly open to competing identities, premised on other territorial and political units, and the national 'Self' could be consistently fractured. Foremost among these were 'regional' and 'provincial' identities since the direct political experience of the vast majority of educated Indians lay in the arenas of locality and province. New groups of interests and identity arose from the creation of frameworks of political competition in these arenas.⁸² Alongside these, and nurtured within the same frameworks, rose cultural identities creating cleavages on to which political identities could be mapped. The linguistic 'nationalisms' arising out of the vernacular 'renaissances' of the nineteenth century tied together the bonds of 'regional' language, culture and tradition and, along with a 'keen appreciation of the changing nature of provincial resources,' this meant that a 'Bengali' self, a 'Marathi' self, a 'Tamil' self and so on, could arise in competition to the 'Indian' self.⁸³ And, of course, there were the ever-present tensions caused by religious identities that had become increasingly drawn into the system of political competition.

Thus territory, in and of itself, was not sufficient for 'progressives' wishing to elaborate an all-Indian political identity which could stand over and above these divisions. What was required was a territorial conception which could be represented as a 'natural unity' in which all these competing identities could be subsumed. As each piece of the territorial jigsaw that made up the colonial state in British India fell into place, and as colonial surveys produced more maps, censuses and atlases, and brought more information about the Indian 'peninsula' to the attention of Indian nationalists, more emphasis could be made, with increasing coherence, upon the 'geographical unity' of India which now became the precondition of any 'cultural' or civilizational unity.⁸⁴

This would prove to be as convenient for the conservatives as it was for the progressives. Their vision of India was grounded in the primacy of its civilizational unity since antiquity, a unity that was by definition based on an ideal Hinduism. This, in effect, meant that for conservatives the nation was equivalent to Hinduism. In addition, 'culture' was increasingly being identified with 'race' as orientalist scholarship and colonial ethnography began to alter the cognitive frameworks of middle-class Indians.⁸⁵ Not only were Muslims, Parsis, Sikhs, Christians and other religious communities excluded from this concept of the nation but, as racial emphases grew, so too were 'Dravidians', 'uncivilized' tribes such as the Santhals and the Kols or the 'Assamese', as well as those linguistic

communities whose mother tongues did not derive from Sanskrit. However, the conservatives were players in a political game in which division was seized upon by the British as evidence of the non-existence, indeed the impossibility, of Indian nationhood. Recognizing the potential political liabilities of their ideology, they supplemented its 'Hindu' base with the territorial discourse formulated by the progressives.

However, the adoption of the territorial dimension was complicated in conservative ideology by definitions of Indian culture which pre-empted definitions of India's territory. Here, race once again emerges as the most significant trope. Thus, Hindustan, the land of the Hindus, coalesced with India or *Bharat*, and Aryavarta, the land of the Aryans. Yet such a conception confined 'India' to northern India, or more precisely to the Indo-Gangetic plain, described by one conservative nationalist as 'bounded on the north by the Himalayas; and on the south by the Vindhyan chain'.⁸⁶ This effectively excluded south India, parts of the Deccan, the far north-eastern stretches of Bengal and Assam, and places associated with the 'tribals'. Moreover, if the geographical unity of India was, for the 'progressives', grounded upon the 'fit' between British India and the South Asian peninsula, the 'conservatives' faced a problem with the 'misfit' between the political geography of the Raj and their concept of the Aryavarta.⁸⁷ This problem raised its head on two counts. First, because of this 'misfit', the majority of nationalists, 'conservative' and 'progressive', lived and originated in the coastal presidencies of Bombay, Madras and Bengal and not in the Aryavarta. Their own location in 'India' was thus outside the 'India' they posited as the 'true' nation. Second, the Aryavarta just happened to be the area where the Muslims were the traditionally dominant group, if not always in a majority. Thus, the very location of 'essential' India was also the location most visibly inhabited by people who, according to the 'conservative' criteria, were 'foreigners'.

A concept of nationhood was thus required which could neutralize such a possibility and the composite conception fitted the bill perfectly. Its strength as an ideological concept lay in its ability to accommodate different emphases whilst also complementing and filling the lacunae in the two competing paradigms. Territorially, it meant that the two geographical areas – the presidencies and the Aryavarta – could be made to complement one another, and a full territorial conceptualization of all-India could thus emerge whilst retaining a cultural perspective. Here, conservative nationalists could draw upon a body of knowledge and assumptions to equate Aryavarta with the traditional 'centre', or the 'seat' of 'all-India'.⁸⁸ In other words, India could be seen to spread out from its Aryan (Hindu) 'heart' in the Ganges Basin, out towards the extremities of the east (particularly the hilly areas such as Assam, home to many of the problematic 'tribes') and the (Dravidian) south. Moreover, if India was now conceived of as a composite of communities then the territory associated with problematic communities could be easily incorporated whilst maintaining an emphasis on 'Hinduism' as the majority and, therefore, foremost community of the nation. This also had the political advantage of being able to present a unified façade to

their colonial opponents since political alliances with the other communities were not precluded.

The 'composite' nation became axiomatic within Indian nationalist discourse, surviving to this day as the paramount basis for India's secular state. It was, however, always already determined by the limits of secularism so that the ideological work for which it was developed was always the articulation of a 'tolerant' idea of India that could accommodate both secular and religious concerns within a political framework in which the two were necessarily imbricated. The political idiom that naturally accompanied this vision of national identity was that of majoritarian/minoritarianism. Composite nationalism is the 'grammar', as it were, that helps majoritarian/minoritarian politics to make sense. Its mask of tolerance underwrites a chauvinistic logic that can be witnessed in the 'unconscious' of Indian nationalist discourse.

Let us turn to a classic example of the rhetoric of composite nationalism: Bipinchandra Pal, on the anniversary of the partition of Bengal, writes, 'In thy waters, Holy Mother, are mixed the two streams of Aryan and Semitic culture . . . both the Hindus and the Mahomedans have a common inheritance in art and civilisation . . . resonant with the minstrelsy of two great world-cultures.'⁸⁹ On the face of it all very inclusive, with its talk of 'mixing', 'common inheritance' and 'minstrelsy'. Yet it soon becomes apparent that the 'two great world-cultures' retain their essential difference. The 'Aryan' world-culture is specifically identified, especially through the symbol of the Ganges, with the territory of India, or Aryavarta, whilst the 'Semitic' world-culture, since by definition it cannot share the same territorial origins, must of course be identified with a territory originating outside India. This difference is maintained despite the assertion of commonality, and it can never be overcome since the two cultures can never share the same territorial foundations. The use of the term 'Semitic' is particularly relevant here insofar as it categorically identifies Islam with the Middle East – a 'world culture' but one that is 'foreign'. A week earlier, on 10 October 1906, Pal had written, 'And in the organisation of this Nation-Day the peculiarities of the genius, the past history, and the ancient culture of the different communities of the Indian people must receive due care and consideration.' Again, a generous statement perhaps. But he goes on, 'To formulate one set of rituals for all would really be to kill the spirit of these functions . . . The Nation-Idea had a particular line of development . . . in Hindu consciousness; while it followed a different line of evolution in Muslim or Christian history or culture.'⁹⁰ Thus, the historical trajectories of India's 'communities' remain essentially separated; at no stage do they overlap, but rather evolve in parallel.

There do not seem to be any traces of supremacism at this point; although essentially different, none of the communities seem intrinsically superior to the others. Yet, the territorial exclusion illustrated above is compounded throughout by a slippage of terms in which 'Hindu' becomes equivalent to the 'nation'. Pal never really considers the other religions to be relevant, except in passing, which results in a cumulative excision of them out of the history of the nation, and a

simultaneous colonization of the term 'nation' by 'Hindu'. Thus, 'the civic religion of modern India cannot do without symbolism, and the functions of Rakhi-Day . . . will be bound to fail to appeal with due force to the *Hindu* mind . . . some day, the Rakhi Day will, we are sure, be associated among *Hindus* . . . with worship of the Motherland,'⁹¹ and, 'The one central fact of Indian history . . . is this peculiar *Hindu* spirit-consciousness.'⁹²

However, it is when his discourse deploys ideologies of race that Pal's discourse most notably reveals its radical chauvinism and Hindu supremacism. In an essay entitled 'Nation-Building', Pal suffuses his discourse with race metaphors:

Every evolution is the evolution of an Idea . . . the regulative Idea of the organism . . . the archetype . . . These regulative ideas constitute the inner principle of differentiation even in the earliest cell formations . . . As it is with individual organisms so it is with races of men . . . All evolution works upon two essential factors, heredity and environment . . . present also in social evolution; and here the two essential factors are race and environments . . . These race characteristics are innate and *pre-historic* . . . 'There is a natural variety of men', says M. Taine, ' . . . and a race like the old Aryans, *scattered from the Ganges as far as the Hebrides* . . . manifests in its tongues, religions, literatures, and philosophies *the community of blood and intellect which to this day binds its offshoots together*' . . . The fundamental differences in the very cast and constitution of the *great world-cultures* that constitute the new Indian nation, demand that the work of nation-building must be conducted not along one single line, but along five main lines – Hindu, Parsee, Buddhist, Moslem and Christian . . . The Hindu nation-builder shall not seek to superimpose his own ideals upon his Mahomedan brother, nor shall the Mahomedan, Buddhist, or the Christian seek to obliterate the essential characteristics of the Hindu culture *and* the Hindu *race*.⁹³

The final separation is significant here for it implies that there is a biological Hindu race which in turn produces a Hindu culture. Cultures, here realized in religious terms, are racially determined, and therefore have a biological origin. We can return profitably to the territorial exclusion of the 'Semitic' culture of Islam from India and note that Pal locks on to racial as well as religious cleavages which in turn operate *vis-à-vis* colonial ideology. For the legitimacy of the Indian (Hindu) nation is premised upon the racial commonality between the 'Hindu' and the Briton. The relationship, it is suggested, is one of racial equality, and therefore should be one of political equality as well. The Muslim, however, cannot claim this equal parentage and is, therefore, excluded from the circle of racial equality which is the basis for the legitimacy of the Indian nation; conversely, the Muslim is therefore not a legitimate or equal part of the nation. The identification of 'Muslim' with 'Semitic' also attaches itself to and addresses European anti-Semitic prejudices. The effect is to build up a racial hierarchy in which Englishmen, Aryans and Hindus

are superior to Muslims and Jews. This implicitly deconstructs the apparent inclusiveness of the composite nation for if Muslims are racially inferior then to genuinely include them in the Indian nation would be to compromise the imagined parity of India and England. (But one notes a contradiction: the Aryan ‘commonality’ between the colonialist and the Hindu is offset by their religious ‘difference’ (Hinduism versus Christianity – ironically, a semitic religion). Hence, if race, culture and religion are intrinsically associated with each other, one of these assertions must be wrong for the other to be valid. No matter, the Semite remains at the bottom of the ladder regardless.) Pal’s discourse is suffused with the term ‘race’, and although its significations are usually connoted with ‘culture’, he uses it often in a biological sense, using metaphors of ‘blood’. Here, however, the potent metaphor prefigures the conceptual matrix of nation (as territory), biological race, and culture/civilization (‘environments’ includes both what he terms ‘physical environments’ – territory, *Bharat*, mother/fatherland – and ‘social environments’ – i.e. culture and civilization) so typical of the extreme right-wing nationalisms of the twentieth century: Nazism, Serbian nationalism, Hindu nationalism (BJP, RSS, etc.), and so on.

Pal goes on,

No more than we can force the colt to develop into a cub, than we can force one type of civilisation to grow into another, quite distinct from it. No more can we take the flower of the rose, the leaf of the mahogany, the white and straight trunk of the ash and the fruits of the vine, and combine them into a new vegetable organism, than we can take the best and most distinctive characteristics of the different world-cultures, and combine them all into a new culture.⁹⁴

Composite nationalism, which so relentlessly polices the rigorous separation of essentially different cultures, does so partly in response to colonial critiques of Indian nationalism which chastised it for not conforming to the European ideal of homogeneity. Its ideological power lay in the manner in which it developed the idea of ‘unity in diversity’. Difference is seemingly admitted whilst simultaneously effaced as the ‘Hindu majority’ becomes surreptitiously identified with the ‘nation’ and the minorities are quietly expelled. Pal seems to be saying that the ‘new’ Indian nation is only different from the ‘old’ in so far as it is a composite – an unavoidable historical consequence; the ‘old’ Indian nation was a homogeneous Hindu nation and, but for the passage of time, still would be. Conversely, therefore, the new Indian nation is composite because it is new; at its heart, in its soul, lies the old Indian nation, the real Indian nation which, like any European nation, was completely homogeneous and, moreover, this ‘real’ Indian nation shares a common racial ancestry with the best of them.

The rationale of this vision of Indian nationalism is totally centred upon the logic of exclusion which underpins it and upon which it depends for its symbolic power. Its extreme point is a supremacist language which is echoed today by the

BJP and Sangh Parivar. Thus a phrase like, ‘[The] Hindu religion tolerates all religions. Our religions say that all religions are based on truth, “you follow yours and I mine”’, can, without apparent irony, be followed by,

they [other religions] are based on the partial truth whilst our Hindu religion is based on the whole – the Sanatan truth, and therefore it is bound to triumph in the end . . . All that is required for our glorious triumph is that we should unite . . . work hard for the final triumph . . . the time will come when instead of Christians preaching Christianity here we shall see our preachers preaching Sanatan Dharma *all over the world*.⁹⁵

In our own day we find this irony replicated in the identification of Hinduism with ‘positive secularism’ (i.e. tolerance) by Hindu nationalists whilst they engage in a systematic denial of human and political rights to all minorities who do not subscribe to the ‘Hindu’ point of view.

After the Age of Consent Bill, although Congress continued to maintain the distinction between political and reform issues, the ‘conservatives’ began to push political activity beyond the legislative council and the annual sessions of Congress.⁹⁶ This expansion was designed to answer the charge that nationalists represented a ‘microscopic minority’ and culminated in the post-1905 domination of the Swadeshi campaign in Bengal by the ‘extremists’. This was followed by the emergence of revolutionary terrorism in Bengal as nationalism in India began, for the first time, to depart from the conventions of constitutional politics. The transition to a mass-based politics was not achieved, however, for a number of reasons.

First, almost all the nationalists (except the small pockets of revolutionary terrorists) accepted the conventional British definition of legitimate politics as constitutional politics; the definition of politics having been suitably narrowed, the progressives/moderates within Congress who still held considerable, if declining, power simply would not consent to ‘extremist’ forms of political behaviour and the post-1905 years of the Swadeshi campaign, with its ‘mob’ character and communal violence merely strengthened their conviction on this score; rather than Congress taking to the field of mass politics, it duly split in 1907. For the conservatives, on the other hand, it must be remembered that their strategic expansion of the political field by no means signified a desire for mass politics. Political extremism for them was based on the premise that the élite would be able to capture the machinery of the colonial state without resort to the direct involvement of the ‘masses’. As a movement it was confined to the upper and middle castes and educated middle classes, and even the Swadeshi movement in Bengal was very limited in terms of political participation by the ‘masses’ when compared to later agitations.⁹⁷ Furthermore, the ‘conservative’ ideology of such extremists may itself have been a significant obstacle to mass politics in so far as it

prevented any possible alliances outside the social groups which these ideologues themselves represented, namely, the 'Hindu' upper castes and emergent middle classes. Religiously, they promoted a divisiveness which was all too apparent in the communal violence which accompanied Swadeshi;⁹⁸ socially, their reform agenda was limited to upper caste 'Hindu' issues and barely considered such questions as caste and untouchability, agrarian reform and rural poverty, all of which might have mobilized the lower castes and peasantry. Finally, the rise of political extremism meant that issues of social reform dropped out of sight altogether and a strong note of Hindu revivalism began to emerge in conservative nationalist discourse.

It is not surprising, therefore, that constitutional politics reached crisis point a mere two years after the 'extremist' phase of the Swadeshi campaign. Consequently, 'revolutionary terrorist' organizations, spanning the range of ideological positions from a hyper-modernist progressivism such as that promoted by the exiled editor of *The Indian Sociologist*, Shyamji Krishnavarma, to a militant Hindu revivalism, as was the case with Aurobindo Ghosh, began to constitute an increasing presence in the wider field of power. However, this merely strengthened the Raj by offering a pretext for increasing its controls over political activity and embarking on a ruthless suppression of all 'seditionist' politics. Furthermore, the basic ideological problems which had initially framed the nationalist response were left unresolved: India could still be characterized as a 'backward', socially and morally 'degenerate' society unfit to enter the modern world of nations; it was still as religiously divided as ever, and its continuing social divisions meant that Indian nationalists could still not claim to represent the whole nation.

The Surat Split of 1907 therefore represented an impasse within Indian nationalism, both politically and ideologically. It marked the point at which the ideological structure of Indian nationalism as it had developed in its first phase, namely between the progressive and conservative paradigms, was no longer tenable. Compromise and consensus had been reached over questions where such resolutions were possible. The outstanding questions constituted the legitimate problematic of the time and proved to be unresolvable within the existing structure of the field. The stage was set for the transition to mass politics but without an ideological resolution of the legitimate problematic the old structure – and the élite politics which it accompanied – staggered through for another decade, a decade which proved to be, in hindsight, the high-water mark of the Raj.

Gandhi's intervention at the end of this period of impasse must be interpreted within this context. What was required was the elaboration of a nationalist discourse that could unite, in as broadly inclusive a movement as possible, all the disparate interests of the nation; it also required the formulation of a discourse that could mediate between the idioms of élite politics and those of the 'masses'. It needed to speak the language of modernity, and be familiar with the institutional framework of the modern state whilst at the same time talking about, identifying with and speaking through the language of 'village' India. After his intervention, the Gandhian paradigm became the dominant ideological paradigm within Indian

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nationalist discourse, precipitating a new structure of ideological relations that rendered the old conservative/progressive debates obsolete. Of course, Gandhism had its opponents too but its political effectivity lay in an ideological and political strategy – and for him they were never separable – that allowed him to be more radical than the conservatives with respect to social reform and, at the same time, more ‘extremist’ in his call for and definition of swaraj. In order to have it both ways, the Mahatma would have to change the rules of the game.

3

A TRAGEDY OF IDEALISM: UTOPIANISM AND THE IMAGINED COMMUNITY OF GANDHI'S *HIND SWARAJ*

The truly great utopian is a Janus-like creature, time-bound and free of time, place-bound and free of place. His duality should be respected and appreciated.

(Frank Manuel and Fritzie Manuel)¹

My ideal village still only exists in my imagination. After all every human being lives in the world of his imagination. In this village of my dreams . . .

(Mahatma Gandhi)²

Of all the ideological interventions into nationalist politics during the struggle for Indian independence, Gandhi's was unquestionably the most decisive in terms of the movement's development from the spectacular ineffectiveness of an elitist constitutional politics into a broadly based mass movement capable of mobilizing, during periods of maximal resistance, diverse and often contradictory constituencies.

Gandhi's rise to national pre-eminence has been given varied explanations. Some scholars such as Judith Brown, have maintained that this may have been almost fortuitous, although she would not deny that he possessed unique skills in adapting to the situations in which he found himself, nor would she deny that once resolved on the political path he showed immense determination in becoming the master of his own fortune.³ Certainly, given his political background on the margins of the nationalist movement even when he returned to India in 1915, it may have been surprising to many of his contemporaries and indeed to later historians to find him unequivocally at the head of the nationalist movement by 1920. Yet, one should not discount the extent of his early political ambitions. That he saw his political future in India in national terms is clearly demonstrated in *Hind Swaraj*, the Gujarati version of which was published as early as 1909. There he strategically positions himself with respect to the existing paradigms of Indian nationalist discourse – characterizing them according to the conventional labels of 'moderates'

and ‘extremists’ – and defines himself against both. As Denis Dalton points out, ‘while the Moderates are defended . . . they are in practice set aside as “ancestors” who have played out their roles’, and the ‘rash action’ of the ‘impatient’ extremists may result in ‘self-destruction’.⁴ Also, Gandhi’s marginal political background, as we shall see, may have facilitated rather than impeded his rise to power since it afforded him both a familiarity with and a distance from the political realities of India at that time, sheltering him from the need to take sides and thereby allowing him to transcend, or at least attempt to transcend, the existing paradigms. Had he been embroiled in the prevailing logic of Indian politics, had he found himself needing to elaborate his arguments in the heat of political conflict, his ideology would probably have seemed absurd and his intervention would have been abortive. As it was, the timing of his arrival enabled him to use the ideas in *Hind Swaraj* to great advantage.

Throughout this chapter, due consideration will be given to the material historical context of Gandhi’s rise to power but the primary focus will nevertheless be his ideology. I would suggest that a great deal of his symbolic power emerged from the formulation of a distinctive ideology capable of addressing and reconciling differences within Indian society in order to project a unified difference against the colonial power on the one hand, and to construct and define an Indian ‘self’ on the other, with a view to transforming the political dynamic of Indian politics from an élite-based political field into a mass political field. In this respect, it is impossible to ignore *Hind Swaraj*, a short book written as Gandhi sailed back from London to South Africa. It is a book which Gandhi would never repudiate and to which he would return for inspiration in the twilight of his career, a book which ‘is the seed from which the tree of Gandhian thought has grown to its full stature’.⁵ Yet, so much has been written on Gandhi that there would seem little scope for original reassessment. However, whilst Gandhian thought has received full treatment in a number of secondary sources, almost no attention has been given to the form in which this thought was expressed, particularly in *Hind Swaraj*, which remained the most systematic of Gandhi’s ideological formulations.⁶ Thus, returning to an old Marxist concept – the ideology of form – I would suggest that what is significant in Gandhi’s case, and has been overlooked, is the form of the ideology. In other words, it is important to address not just what Gandhi said, to whom and why, but also how.

The question of ‘how?’ is, however, dependent upon the more fundamental questions of ‘why?’ and ‘to whom?’ without which the ‘how?’ possesses no significance. As Gandhi was writing *Hind Swaraj*, nationalist politics in India had already begun a decade-long decline. He arrived in India in 1915 to find Congress all but inactive; the ‘Extremists’ – who had gradually come to challenge the dominance of the ‘moderates’ in Congress – either in prison, in exile or maintaining a conspicuous silence in the face of a ruthless government crackdown; and pockets of revolutionary terrorists engaged in a clandestine war of attrition with a resurgent colonial state feeling confident enough to consider delivering another one of its periodic bouts of insufficient constitutional reform. Although

Tilak and Annie Besant began to resurrect some nationalist activity through their respective 'Home Rule Leagues' towards the latter half of this period, it was not until Gandhi himself co-ordinated his own political campaign in 1919 that nationalist politics began to regain momentum. The basis for this long decline was to be found in 1907 when the Surat Congress brought to a head the power struggle between 'moderate' and 'extremist' factions.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, this was the culmination of a much longer period of ideological struggle within Indian nationalism which can be traced back to the formation of nationalist discourse itself in the second half of the nineteenth century.⁷ The problem facing someone of Gandhi's ambition was the construction of an ideological discourse which could resolve simultaneously the issues of social reform without allowing the modern colonial state to infringe upon India's civilizational 'core'; address the socially disadvantaged groups in Indian society; resolve the problem of religious and social divisions; and provide an ideological basis for Indian nationalism which would be as broadly inclusive as possible and thereby facilitate the possibility of making alliances spanning the spectrum of social and political interests. Moreover, since élite-constitutionalist politics had clearly reached a dead-end, political negotiation with the colonial state had to be conducted according to new rules of engagement and via a new discourse capable of traversing the idioms of modern politics with those of the 'masses' to whom modern political concepts were unfamiliar. Such a discourse necessarily needed to address many groups in the field of power. To the conservatives and progressives it had to suggest a way forward out of their ideological impasse and the merits of mass political mobilization; to the British, it had to give a cogent response to their critique of Indian society and a viable reason for giving India its independence; to the 'traditional' authorities it had to demonstrate that the case for social reform could be made without a loss of cultural identity; to the terrorists, it had to suggest an alternative to constitutional politics on a basis other than ineffective and ultimately incidental acts of terrorist violence; and finally, it had to appeal to the groups hitherto excluded, in order to make them understand and identify with the language of nationalism. Ultimately, Gandhi's main task was, therefore, to tackle all those factors which precluded the transition from an élite, constitutional political field to a mass field of political participation. In *Hind Swaraj* his address to the revolutionary terrorists, who in effect sought to bypass the problem, was also therefore an implicit rebuke to both 'progressive' and 'conservative' nationalists.

Yet there was one further factor limiting such a transition and that was the limited scope of a 'public sphere' in which such a politics could be located, and where political ideas could be diffused. Although the nascent public sphere in colonial India had enabled an élite political field to operate, it was nevertheless limited to a tiny fraction of the urban, educated élite. The political lessons of South Africa now delivered to Gandhi an important advantage in so far as he recognized that in order to adequately contest the authority of the colonial state politics had to be moved beyond the constitutional field where political encounters took place

on the colonizer's terms to a wider field of power where the terms of engagement favoured the nationalists.⁸ Thus he had pioneered his own brand of extra-constitutional politics in South Africa and had done so by fully utilizing what public sphere there was to promote an expanded political terrain.⁹ It was here that he sharpened his sense of publicity and acquired the journalistic skills which marked him out as a distinctly modern politician, keenly aware that the medium was as important as the message.

As for the message itself, a clue to its solution lay in the 'conservative' nationalists' emphasis on the civilizational difference between colonizer and colonized, which had enabled a slight shift towards a more expansive political field. If Gandhi was to avoid repeating their mistake, however, he had to find another means of reconciling the 'conservative' insistence on difference with the 'progressive' emphasis on social reform, all wrapped up in a discourse which was not socially divisive.

However, this message, codified in *Hind Swaraj*, was also determined by his own position with respect to the political field in India. During his years in South Africa, his isolation from the currents of Indian nationalist politics conferred both advantages and disadvantages. Of course, one of Gandhi's first concerns was to establish a degree of legitimacy within the nationalist movement and thus we find him attempting to maintain close connections with senior figures in Congress whom he kept abreast of developments in South Africa;¹⁰ *Hind Swaraj* was thus addressed to this nationalist élite in order to carve out for himself a position within Indian nationalist politics.¹¹ He had to demonstrate, therefore, that he was aware of the various political problems facing the Indian nationalists. Thus, although he begins to lay the basis for an appeal to the 'masses' in this text, and begins to work out some specific concepts designed to deliver nationalist discourse to the peasantry, *Hind Swaraj* is conspicuously not addressed to the 'masses'.

The advantages of isolation were, however, considerable. Relative distance from the political turmoil in India enabled him to keep out of the minutiae of political struggle – the factions, rivalries and jealousies – and thus maintain an independent and critical eye on proceedings. South Africa also afforded him the luxury of testing out his beliefs and methods on his own terms, an apprenticeship in leadership which was to prove valuable on his return to India. Finally, his experiences there convinced him of the actuality of a unified Indian community which transcended religious, social and political divisions in a manner which would not have been possible had his political consciousness been forged in India itself.¹²

This, then, was the context in which *Hind Swaraj* was written. It was to serve as the basis for a reformulation of nationalist discourse, a platform on which Gandhi would later build his stewardship of the nationalist struggle. It was achieved, I suggest, by reframing nationalist discourse within a completely new ideological form which enabled him to push forward a politics more radical than the extremists without irreconcilably alienating moderates, and to both address social reform and maintain a sense of cultural difference. Ironically, the form he used was not

indigenous to India at all, but had been developed by an Englishman – taking his cue from an Athenian philosopher – some four centuries previously: utopia.¹³

Utopia as symbolic discourse

Why, then, was utopia so suitable for Gandhi's purposes? It is at this point that we should pause to remember that the efficacy of Gandhi's utopian turn lay not so much in the fact that he wrote one utopian text, but that he constructed an entire system of thought which was utopian. This provided the frame within which he relocated the axioms of nationalist discourse in a new and radical manner. His subsequent ideological manoeuvrings, reformulations, shifts of emphases and contradictory utterances – and there were a great many in a long political career – were continually incorporated into this utopian form, one which, despite its pejorative associations, greatly facilitated Gandhi's pragmatism. Indeed it was utopianism, and not merely the 'experimental' conception of truth which was embedded in it, which enabled what Chatterjee has described as Gandhian ideology's 'tactical malleability'.¹⁴

The first attraction of utopianism for an aspiring ideologue like Gandhi is that it offers a political vision of the 'ideal society'. There have been many types of ideal society imagined throughout history – the Golden Age, Cockayne, millennialism, etc. – but utopias differ from them insofar as they assume that the ideal society can only be achieved through the political organization of that society.¹⁵ In this respect, utopianism carries the signature of its birth in the modern period, not only because it is profoundly secular and therefore intimately associated with the related ideology of humanism, but also because its original imprint – Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), from which subsequent utopias, in terms of their formal characteristics, have in fact differed very little – was produced in the context of, and was indeed directly involved with, the rise of the modern state in Tudor England. Gandhi himself had described *Hind Swaraj* as an attempt to describe an 'ideal state'¹⁶ and although, strictly speaking, it envisages a society in which the modern state has disappeared, the concept of statehood is nevertheless deeply embedded in its structure of assumptions, which is unsurprising given that its author was well-versed in the art of modern politics.

Two other aspects of utopian discourse are relevant to our discussion. The first is the genre's Platonic genealogy. All utopian discourse retains a basic structure mostly unchanged from that of More's initial work which self-consciously looks back to Plato's *Republic*.¹⁷ Although it cannot be said that Gandhi was self-consciously writing in the utopian tradition, it is certain that he was aware of Plato and Platonic concepts.¹⁸ Gandhi placed Plato's *Apology* in the reading list at the end of *Hind Swaraj* and even translated portions of it into Gujarati in his South African journal *Indian Opinion*. Raghavan Iyer points out that he may also have read Plato's *Republic* at this time, and the figure of Socrates certainly made a deep impression on him since he posited him as an ideal *satyagrahi*.¹⁹ Iyer also points out that 'The RgVedic and Platonic notion of the ever-existent Absolute Truth

was essential to Gandhi', and his entire system of thought.²⁰ Gandhi's idealism, therefore, was as much Platonic as Indian and this point is absolutely crucial.

Utopianism is predicated on a Platonic distinction between the real and the ideal. Of course, utopias are ideal as opposed to actual worlds; since *eutopia*, or the good-place (ideal), is also at the same time *outopia* or no-place, the utopian space is therefore the space of the truly other. But otherness is never directly apprehensible since if it were it would no longer be truly other. All apprehension of otherness is therefore mediated. Therefore, although Plato posits a dualism between real and ideal, the ideal-types which gird reality cannot be apprehended in themselves but must be viewed through real-types. Logically, therefore, there must be an overlap between the two domains.²¹ Similarly, utopias can only be apprehended through language. In a sense, therefore, the existence of utopia is wholly dependent upon language, or, to put it another way, utopia can only exist in language. Thus the trench that King Utopus cuts to separate Utopia from the rest of the continent to which it was once attached could be said to represent, symbolically, the margin of the utopian text itself.

Existing only in and through language, the hermetically sealed utopia occupies a purely symbolic landscape and is thus the most complete example of what may be called 'symbolic discourse'. Symbolic discourse is a self-conscious creation, a discourse in which 'real' conflicts and social contradictions are resolved purely within discourse itself, at the level of narrative, metaphor, simile or concept. Of course, this involves at least a partial disengagement from 'reality' – history, politics, society – into an imaginary, ideal space. In symbolic discourse all things are possible, as they are in utopias; in reality, of course, they are not.²² It can and will be argued that much the most important aspect of Gandhi's intervention is precisely its symbolic nature.

This totally symbolic landscape is a result of a lack of narrative referentiality; that is, there is no object in the real world to which a utopia refers. Drawing on the seminal work of Louis Marin, Frederic Jameson distinguishes utopian fictiveness from other types of fictionality on this basis. By definition, therefore, the referent of the Utopia, the 'Real' of the text, is actually trapped in the realm of the Ideal-symbolic since a utopia refers only to its process of self-realization through language. As Fredric Jameson points out, when we read utopias

we will have to begin to think of the Real not as something outside the work, of which the latter stands as an image or makes a representation, but rather as something borne within and vehiculated by the text itself, interiorized in its very fabric.²³

Jameson calls this fictive process 'figuration' as opposed to 'representation' which is the fictive process of such narrative genres as the novel. For him, 'representational' discourse presents something of an ideological problem since it is posited upon 'a linguistics of the *énoncé* . . . [which] imposes a mode of analysis on which categories of exchange are dominant . . . the perspective of an exchange

of completed “speech acts”²⁴ This reflects a mode of thinking, inherent to capitalist societies, ‘in terms of finished commodities (reification) along with the habit, so closely related to it, of reading according to categories of representation’.²⁵ Ideologically, therefore, Jameson suggests that representational discourse serves to reinforce existent theories of value and social relations.²⁶ The ideological task for any radical challenge to existing social relations, therefore, is to find a habit of thought which stresses ‘the creative or process-like character of language’ since that would open up a space ‘in which work as yet represents no value . . . as yet has no meaning’.²⁷ Hence the value of utopian discourse which he sees as non-representational.²⁸

Because utopian ‘figuration’ is non-representational it is also, according to Jameson, ‘preconceptual’. In other words, it occupies that space in which values have not yet been determined. However, Jameson does not make it clear whether by ‘preconceptual’ he means the absence of existing concepts or of existing conceptual systems. It can be quite clearly demonstrated that existing concepts do still exist in utopian discourse, even if the discourse itself constructs an entirely new conceptual system of its own from them. For example, most nineteenth-century socialist utopias implicitly accepted the concept of progress, even if that progress is given a different value to that expounded by liberalism. But, in the haste to find a radical alternative to representational discourse, if Jameson does mean that utopias are indeed completely ‘preconceptual’ then two problematic implications follow. First, utopian discourse would then be completely disembedded from historical and ideological determination. Thus, Jameson seems to contradict himself when, at other points, he attempts to reveal the sets of ideological determinations working on the production of More’s *Utopia*. What is important to note, and what Jameson’s essay, by its very ambivalence on this score, implicitly gestures towards, is that utopias are only partial alterations of perspective on the existing state of things. Thus, utopias are never as radical as they might seem and claim to be. The second implication, therefore, is that utopias would be given a radical emphasis they do not deserve.

This is important because one must resist falling into the trap that Jameson threatens to fall into, a trap into which other theorists of utopia have fallen headlong. They have indeed given utopia the radicalism it courts. Karl Mannheim, for instance, developed a highly influential theory of utopia as an opposite of ideology. As Kumar notes, the influence of this theory has not helped a proper assessment of utopia.²⁹ For Mannheim, both ideology and utopia are ‘non-congruent to reality’;³⁰ however, ‘ideology legitimates the existing social order while utopia shatters it’.³¹ The opposition only works if ideology is conceived purely in its pejorative and negative sense as being a distortion of social reality for the purposes of reproducing the power of dominant groups. Mannheim argues that all social philosophies of dominated groups, which anticipate a reality other than the present one, can be seen as utopian.³² The stress here is precisely on their incipient realizability (he seems to ignore all the evidence to the contrary) without which utopias would have no oppositional value. These dominated, utopian social

philosophies are not ideologies because only dominant social philosophies can be ideological. However, once the utopian vision is realized it must necessarily become the dominant social philosophy and, if one were to follow Mannheim, they would then no longer be utopian!³³ Moreover, it also follows that all social philosophies are potentially assimilable to utopia; if a dominant ideology is successfully replaced it then becomes dominated and thus becomes utopian. Thus, the distinction between ideology and utopia itself collapses. If everything is utopian then utopia loses any value and significance. Paradoxically, therefore, those who would give to utopia an unqualified radicalism erase the concept of utopia altogether.

On the other hand, if we deny utopianism its claim to radical otherness then we can suggest that utopias are themselves ideological without incorrectly suggesting that all ideologies are utopian.³⁴ The second aspect of utopianism that one must take special cognizance of, therefore, is its partial transcendence of the existing social horizon. This is perhaps due to its liminality. Liminality, in the sense used here, refers to the highly provisional moment in-between states, implicated in that which has been but gesturing towards that which is to come. Fredric Jameson, in his essay on Thomas More's *Utopia*, has shown how its crucial determinant was the transition from a feudal economy to a proto-capitalist, money-based economy.³⁵ Unsurprisingly, most utopias are produced during periods of intense and profound social and ideological change, for these periods are full of possibility. It is precisely because of this historical liminality that a utopia can gesture beyond the existing state of things (in this respect, composition of *Hind Swaraj* during the period of Indian nationalism's ideological crisis is significant); however, by the same token, there remains within utopian discourse a structure of complicity with dominant or existing structures of thought, feeling and value. The otherness that it claims cannot truly be realized other than in the symbolic landscape of the Ideal, and even then it is possible to say that it remains bound to the Real by bonds not entirely of its own choosing.

Language, for one thing, necessarily implicates utopian discourse in the here and now. There must therefore be a discrepancy between the ideal non-place and the discourse through which it is described. The same can be shown with respect to history: the apparent ahistoricity of a utopia (and this ahistoricity is one of the marked features of *Hind Swaraj*, as we shall see) is a consequence not of its transcendence of history but rather of the symbolic sublation of its historical determinations. In effect, the utopia's own history is driven into the subterranea of its discourse and reinscribed there, generating in the process a considerable degree of anxiety and ambivalence over the very concept of history itself. Such historical ambivalence demonstrates that there must be some form of exteriority to the utopian text even if it is not a representational one. Thus, the partial sight that a utopia offers of a radical and ideal otherness is simultaneously offset by not so radical, perhaps even conservative, complicities with existing structures of thought, feeling and value. Both these impulses work dialectically within the text pulling it in opposing directions and producing its characteristic mixture of

intimate familiarity with, and yet critical distance from, the real world of politics and history.

Contrary to how they present themselves, therefore, utopias are never as radical as they seem. Liminality affords to the utopia a dialectical character. On the one hand, there lies its radical possibility which opens up a horizon beyond the 'fabric of imperatives' of a society. On the other, lies its conservatism, its structure of complicity with existing and dominant conceptions of the world. The extent of its radical or otherwise character depends upon how it negotiates this dialectic and the balance it strikes between these two opposing forces. Ideologically, it can be creative, constructing new identities as it symbolically reorders the existing society; but it can simultaneously reproduce and reinforce prevailing identities. There is, however, another dimension to its liminality. There is another literary genre which occupies the liminal moment: tragedy.³⁶ If it is liminality which enables the utopian vision, then it is also full of tragic potential and, indeed, tragedy and utopia may be said to be two sides of the same coin. Both are concerned with limits and possibilities and in one there is always the potentiality of the other (as numerous failed utopian experiments have repeatedly shown). If Gandhi's utopianism enabled him to make an ideological breakthrough for Indian nationalism, it was also of that rare kind which is sutured to a systematic theory of political practice. Yet this theory of practice was itself highly idealist, based as it was on the utopianism of the ideology, and here lay the problem. For the one basic fact of utopias is their unrealizability, of the discrepancy between the real and the ideal which must exist in order that the utopia remain a utopia. The world of politics is hardly the terrain of unsullied idealism and Gandhi's attempt to realize his utopia inevitably compromised his ideals and, ironically, allowed opponents to draw on the political and ideological capital of his own discourse to outmanoeuvre him. The tragic paradox of Gandhi's utopianism lay in the fact that it was both the source of his symbolic power and his long-term political inefficacy.

Hind Swaraj and the construction of colonial difference

The importance of *Hind Swaraj* for critics and scholars of Gandhi, and perhaps the importance of Gandhian ideology in the history of ideas, has rested upon its most obviously notable feature: the seemingly radical and uncompromising critique of modernity. It is somewhat surprising, therefore, to find that in his opening discussion of 'Civilisation' Gandhi writes a passage that might otherwise have been found in a futurist manifesto:

Formerly, men travelled in wagons; now they fly through the air in trains at the rate of four hundred and more miles per day. This is considered the height of civilisation. It has been stated that, as men progress, they shall be able to travel in airships and reach any part of the world in a few hours. Men will not need the use of their hands and feet. They will press a button and they will have their clothing by their side. They will press another button and they will have their newspaper. A third, and

a motor car will be in waiting for them. They will have a variety of delicately dished-up food. Everything will be done by machinery.³⁷

Taken on its own, the passage could have been an example of one of those modernist utopias so common in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. That this passage has been overlooked in more than eight decades of Gandhian scholarship is due, of course, to the context. Suddenly, the mood of the passage switches from utopian optimism to dystopian horror, from a catalogue of progress to a parody of it, 'now it is possible to take away thousands of lives by one man working behind a gun from a hill. This is civilisation' (p. 36). The narrator quickly adopts a tone of outright hostility to modern civilization and gives clear signals that the condemnation is unambiguous and unqualified. Not surprisingly, *Hind Swaraj* has usually been taken at its word.

Critics accept *Hind Swaraj* at face value because, it seems, the argument is put forward in such unequivocal terms. But the very strength of conviction forces one to ask if the text is not more problematic than it first appears. Moreover, if *Hind Swaraj* is indeed a utopia we might question its structure of complicity with prevailing norms: might the radical alterity between an ancient Indian ideal and an immoral and degenerate modernity be a little less than clear-cut? Where might the suppressed modernism of the text lurk? If we were to deconstruct the binary opposition between antiquity and modernity might we not reveal these complicities and therefore reveal Gandhi to be less than the radical critic of modernity he is sometimes seen to be? One may thus change the terms of debate about Gandhi. We might locate the genius of his 'spellbinding' potency not in his radical, almost magical-seeming, alterity but rather in the very partiality of his vision, its liminality, in which spaces of possibility are opened up by symbolic strategies which transformed, translated, recombined and reconciled existing concepts and visions of the world into new ones which could be recognized and acted upon by greater numbers of Indians than had hitherto been the case.

If Gandhi used the utopian form in order to construct a new sense of national difference from India's colonial masters, what kind of symbolic strategies did he deploy in order to achieve this? Bankimchandra Chatterjee's call for an indigenous history – 'Bengal has no history! . . . Proud nations have an abundance of historical writing; we have none' – summed up the initial nationalist response to the colonial critique of Indian society.³⁸ History became the ground upon which the nation would prove itself. It should also be noted that from the end of the eighteenth century history had increasingly become the ground of utopian discourse too as voyages in space yielded to travels through time. That both these dimensions of Gandhian ideology – its historical lineage and its formal one – should revolve around the same concept is not coincidental. As we have seen, all ideologies, and nationalist ideologies in particular, necessarily carry some latent utopian charge even though they may not be utopian, and all nationalist ideologies are intimately concerned with history. It is, therefore, to the structure of assumptions surrounding the concept of history in Gandhian ideology that we must turn.

Bikhu Parekh has noted that one of Gandhi's key ideological innovations was the reframing of the spatial dichotomy between east and west to one between ancient civilization and modern civilization.³⁹ This temporal turn was, as we shall see, crucial in accommodating the seemingly irreconcilable requisites of advocating social reform and maintaining a sense of national difference from the colonizer. Instead of insisting on a spatial difference which precluded any borrowing from the west as a basis for reform, Gandhi shifted the terms of engagement so that the features of modernity which were a desirable basis for social reform were now reinvested in an idealized vision of ancient civilization. Thus, Gandhi could say that such features did not originate in either east or west but rather in antiquity. In fact, Gandhi proposed that the ancient civilizations of all peoples, regardless of geography, were ideal states. This manoeuvre enabled him to claim specific features of modern civilization without compromising the sense of difference since the colonial state was both seen to be and claimed itself to be unarguably modern. In the process, however, a temporal circle is enacted in which the desired future state towards which nationalists must direct their attention, is itself a reproduction of a modernized and idealized ancient past. Unsurprisingly, in the ensuing temporal oscillations, one finds a set of ambivalences over history and historical time which both complicates matters and serves to obfuscate the text's complicity with the very modernity it seemingly rejects.

At face value, Gandhi's discourse seems to rest upon a set of binary oppositions – antiquity and modernity, tradition and innovation, continuity and discontinuity, spiritualism and materialism – in which the latter is unequivocally rejected whilst the former is valorized. Yet detailed analysis of *Hind Swaraj* suggests this is not the case. Early in the book we find the Editor (Gandhi's mouthpiece) saying, 'As time passes, the Nation is being forged' (p. 20). Later, however, we find him suggesting that 'We were one nation before they [the British] came to India . . . Our mode of life was the same.' (p. 48). He then traces this common mode back to Indian antiquity. By this reckoning India is centuries old, even timeless; but according to the former, India is in the process of formation and is thus distinctly modern. Anticipating the argument a little, one finds that this opposition between antiquity and modernity frames another: that between continuity and discontinuity. Beyond this, at a deeper level of the discourse, we find an opposition between two contradictory modes of thinking about history, namely between an 'organic' mode of thought and an 'historical' mode of thought. Throughout *Hind Swaraj*, however, we find Gandhi deconstructing these binaries and is therefore not quite so unequivocally for or against any one set of these binaries as it might appear.

There is a famous simile which Gandhi uses to dismiss the arguments of the 'Reader', who is clearly associated with the 'ultra-extremist' faction of the nationalist movement that advocated terrorism as the path towards independence.⁴⁰ It is, however, also addressed to those who saw in modernity the principles towards which the Indian nationalist movement should aspire. He says to the Reader, 'You want the tiger's nature but not the tiger; that is to say, you would make India

English, and when it becomes English, it will be called not Hindustan but Englistan' (p. 28). If the Englishman is a tiger, then it is because his nature is tiger-like. Gandhi is referring to modern English civilization and its institutions which are seen as expressions of the spirit of modernity. There would, therefore, seem to be an intrinsic and organic relationship between a culture's institutions and its 'spirit' or essence. Gandhi's mode of thought here is operating within what may be called an organic essentialism which is backed up at other points by a set of organic metaphors and similes which are used to illustrate the same point. Thus, we have another famous metaphor in which Gandhi characterizes modernity and its institutions in terms of an upas tree, 'One writer has likened the whole modern system to the Upas tree. Its branches are represented by parasitical professions . . . Immorality is the root of the tree' (p. 62). Hence modern civilization, from its roots to its branches, is organically immoral. The significant point is that the 'parasitical' nature of the professions and their institutions depend upon the immorality at the root; the two are inextricable. A civilization and its spirit are, therefore, one. It is on this basis that Gandhi attacks the most visible and significant institution of modernity – the British Parliament – by calling it 'a prostitute' (p. 30).

Yet Gandhi simultaneously suggests that there is no organic and intrinsic link between a culture and its spirit. Hence, he says, 'It is not due to any particular fault of the English people, but the condition is due to modern civilization' (p. 33). The distinction is made, therefore, between the 'British people' and 'modern civilization' and the implication is that modern civilization has corrupted a basically good people into immoral tigers. By this token, modern civilization appears as an historical 'excrescence', a kind of historical palimpsest imposing itself parasitically upon an essentially good civilization. Gandhi here seems to separate matter from spirit, suggesting that cultures and institutions occupy a purely material domain which occludes or obstructs the true spirit of the British people. Earlier, Gandhi had suggested that if the English would but '*revert* to their own glorious civilisation' (p. 7, my emphasis) – by which he meant pre-modern Christian civilization since the heart of the matter for him was the 'irreligion' of modernity – then the historical 'excrescences' of modernity would themselves disappear. Underlying these historical 'excrescences' therefore is an 'organic' civilization where the material and the spiritual domains are one, in a condition of timeless stability. This is as true, he suggests, of Europe as it is of India. Yet, one may ask, where does modernity arise from if not from the English people? If the condition of modernity is due to its historical separation of spirit from matter then this revolves around a dualism quite contradictory to his organic essentialism. Here, Gandhi quite clearly places the materiality of a culture in a different conceptual space to its spirit and 'values'. Cultures and institutions therefore evolve historically, in historical time. If, at one level, Gandhi posits an essentialist continuity, at this level he recognizes historical discontinuity. In spite of this, his historical dualism is also, at the same time, an historical essentialism – as opposed to the organic essentialism above – since the very being of modernity is due to the

realization of its 'spirit' without any form of historical agency on the part of those who are associated with and inevitably corrupted by it. Following an almost Hegelian conception of historical development, modernity emerges through a process of self-realization.

Two further similes may be used to clarify the nature of Gandhi's ambivalence here. The first is the simile of clothing, the second – and according to Anthony Parel, the most important simile in the book – is that of the curable disease.⁴¹ Of the former, Gandhi says, 'If a people of a certain country, who have hitherto been in the habit of not wearing much clothing . . . adopt European clothing, they are supposed to have become civilized' (p. 35). The latter simile suggests that 'Civilisation is not an incurable disease' (p. 38), and again, 'the removal of the cause of the disease results in the removal of the disease itself' (p. 72). On the one hand, clothing is seen as an historical excrescence since the 'adoption' of European clothing by non-Europeans does not actually make them European, just as the symptom is the visible manifestation of the disease but not the disease itself. On the other hand, however, clothing is therefore a marker of one's cultural identity and is organically identifiable with that culture just as symptoms are organically dependent upon the cause of the disease. Thus, in the same breath as attacking the superficiality of modernity's concern with appearances, Gandhi suggests that those appearances are both extrinsic and intrinsic to one's culture and identity. That the appearance of being European does not actually mean that one is European depends upon two possibilities: being able to discard the clothing as inessential, and also having one's 'own' clothing which is an essential marker of one's identity. Clothing, therefore, both is and is not a marker of one's identity. If adopting European clothing is a symptom of the modern disease then discarding it is not enough; to cure the disease one must reject the cause, i.e. the 'spirit' of modernity. But, on the other hand, to adopt one's own 'natural' clothing is indeed to reject modernity, thereby curing the disease.⁴² The ambivalence results from Gandhi's attempt to resolve a contradiction by having it both ways. If one sees cultural institutions as analogous to 'clothing' and 'disease' then his basis for *swaraj* is precisely a discarding of modern institutions for ancient Indian institutions centred around the village community. The premise for this is a belief that a culture's institutions are organically related to that culture's essence. On the other hand, institutions are, as we have seen, also only mere historical excrescences and merely dismantling these cannot therefore guarantee a rejection of the 'spirit' of modernity: perhaps one has only removed its symptoms.

Thus, there seems to be two civilizational registers at work. On the one hand, the radical historical discontinuity represented by modernity is the root of its immorality; conversely, the organic continuity of human experience since antiquity is the basis for a sound civilizational morality. Gandhi, moreover, suggests that this continuity is still existant in India. References to the stable continuity of Indian civilization are numerous. It is the basis, he contends, of Indian civilization's 'truth'. In a chapter entitled, 'What is true civilisation?', Gandhi expounds thus, 'India remains immovable . . . we dare not change' (p. 66). He elaborates a basic

continuity of experience which links contemporary India to its past and, by implication, its future. The symbolic effect is to elaborate a harmonious, ahistorical narrative of identity through time. Thus, by a cunning sleight of hand he maps the temporal distinction between modernity (historical, discontinuous) and antiquity (organic, continuous) on to a spatial one since European modernity and Indian antiquity are now seen to be contemporaneous. Gandhi is here again engaging in his favourite ruse of having it both ways.

This strategy does, however, pose certain logical problems. If Indian society is indeed unchanged from an ideal antiquity, then the very logic of Gandhi's intervention is undermined. For why would one need Gandhi's utopia if it already existed? Why does it need to be reformed? Gandhi can only partly explain this by the 'pollution' of India by 'modern civilization' because he has already claimed that 'the interior has not yet been polluted by the railways' and that this unpolluted interior is proof of India's 'truth'. Elsewhere in his argument, it is precisely this supposedly unpolluted interior which stands most in need of reform. The other side of the coin, therefore, is that there are historical 'excrescences' that have grown indigenously within India. This undermines any unqualified statement of timeless ahistoricity of the kind Gandhi proposes. Thus, the Reader says:

It would be alright if India were exactly as you have described it, but it is also India [sic] where there are hundreds of child widows, where two-year old babies are married, where twelve-year old girls are mothers and housewives, where women practise polyandry, where the practice of Niyog obtains, where, in the name of religion, girls dedicate themselves to prostitution, and where, in the name of religion, sheep and goats are killed. Do you consider these also the symbols of the civilisation you have described? (pp. 70–1).

The scale of the attack is impressive (reflecting the degree to which Gandhi himself felt the need for social reform) and the Editor is left with no option but to agree, admitting that 'The defects that you have shown are defects' (p. 71). But, says the Editor, the Reader has made a mistake in identifying these with 'ancient civilisation'. In other words, they are historical discontinuities; thus, in the very act of defending the 'truth' of antiquity – based, it may be recalled, on an essentialist organic continuity – Gandhi undermines his defence by surreptitiously revealing that such continuity never actually existed. In order, therefore, to return to the perfection of 'ancient India', that is, to return to that which is continuous and permanent, one must actually effect a discontinuity with the present. The binary opposition between continuity and discontinuity is deconstructed by Gandhi himself. He then goes on to say, 'We may utilise the new spirit that is born within us for purging ourselves of these evils' (p. 71). To what does Gandhi refer when he talks of the 'new spirit'? It is quite clear that he refers to the very modernity whose radical discontinuity he argues is the basis for its immorality as against the moral continuity of Indian antiquity.

Far from proposing a return to an India located in antiquity, therefore, Gandhi subtly shifts the terms of engagement by locating in antiquity a desired, modernized and reformed India of the future. He is playing a sophisticated game of ideological cat-and-mouse with his colonial opponents. The 'traditional' India he celebrates in *Hind Swaraj* was far from some of the conceptions of traditional India in currency among the Raj and its officers.⁴³ Drawing on the romantic researches of Orientalists such as Max Mueller and Friedrich von Schlegel (both of whom are cited in the book's appendix) and other, more benign British conceptions such as Henry Maine's,⁴⁴ the idealization of India's ancient past coupled with an emphasis on continuity and a symbolic relocation of all of modernity's desired principles gave to Gandhi's utopia a subversive charge which sought to undermine the logic of *la mission civilisatrice*, premised as it was on notions of Indian degeneracy, superstitiousness and stale custom. By smuggling the concepts of modern Europe into a vision proclaiming itself 'traditional', Gandhi undoes the opposition of tradition and modernity on which the rhetoric of the civilizing mission rested. India, he suggests, does not need civilizing; stripped of its ideological fig-leaf, the Raj thus stands exposed as an artifice of naked power.

What is significant, then, about Gandhi's use of the utopian form is that that it enables him to have it both ways. History is both desired and detested: without it, social reform is impossible; but it is also the cause of decline and immorality. History must also therefore be both realized and negated. Paradoxically, if the historical project of nationalism is to be realized then it must result in the 'end' of history, the realization of a space outside history itself, beyond the real. The desired nation can only be located, therefore, within a purely symbolic landscape since this is the only place where he can reconcile the irreconcilable. It was here – in utopia, that is, nowhere – that he sought to articulate a nation in which all differences within Indian society could be reconciled, and it was here that he opened up a space of national difference from the colonial power through a purely symbolic rejection of modernity, whilst not rejecting it at all. In fact, his entire system of thought is complicit with modernity.⁴⁵ Many have noted this with respect to his acceptance of the orientalist division of the west as 'material' and the east as 'spiritual'; fewer have noted that despite his professed monism, and respect for Advaita Vedanta, and the utilization of concepts from Hindu philosophy and mythology, the language and form of his thought at other times is expressly dualist, adopting in particular a mind-body dualism which is characteristic of post-Enlightenment forms of thought;⁴⁶ it could be pointed out that his 'ethical individualism',⁴⁷ and in particular his stress on the primacy of conscience, is actually a form of modern liberalism;⁴⁸ his universalism, qualified as it was by his nationalism, mirrored the transcendental liberal humanism which was so prevalent in nineteenth century European thought; his approach to religion involved a modernist reduction of religion to ethics;⁴⁹ and he possessed a concept of rationality which, although qualified by his spiritualism, was nevertheless based upon a modern, scientific rationality – indeed, one cannot fail to notice throughout his

discourse the suffusion of scientific terms: naming his ashrams ‘laboratories’, or *satyagrahi* as ‘moral scientists’, his ‘experiments’ with truth and so on.

All of these concepts and ideas form the very basis of his discourse of moral and political reform but, in the context of a polemical intervention into nationalist discourse and nationalist politics, he had to make it seem as if he was unequivocally rejecting the west and its modernity. Thus, what was important was not what he borrowed or rejected but how he assimilated western concepts into his construction of national identity. It was through the complex elaboration of a symbolic discourse, expressed through the utopian form, that Gandhi found the space for manoeuvre which he required. This afforded him the space for a radical-seeming oppositional discourse to colonialism which, at the moment of his intervention, proved to be highly effective politically.

Not that this seemed likely at first. The book, having been proscribed in India on its initial publication in 1909, did not become widely available in India until after Gandhi’s decisive political intervention in 1919. The critical reception of the book, both in India and abroad, before 1919 and after, by the western-educated nationalist élite and western intellectuals was derisory and hostile.⁵⁰ Given that the book was so badly received by the nationalist élite and also that Gandhi had already made his decisive political breakthrough by the time it became widely available in India, on what basis, it may be asked, can one argue that its utopianism lay at the heart of Gandhi’s political efficacy?

First, it must be stated that the importance of *Hind Swaraj* lay in its initial theorization of some important principles that Gandhi would later develop into a more all-encompassing ideological discourse. It provides the kernel, as it were, of Gandhi’s moral and political philosophy which he had, by 1919, already put into practice in rudimentary form in South Africa and then, with more sophistication and political acumen, in the Bardoli and Champaran *satyagrahas*. In one sense, then, Gandhi’s successful intervention into nationalist politics in 1919 merely extended the efficacy of his utopian politics in these previous struggles. Second, one may distinguish between the reception of *Hind Swaraj* by the nationalist élite on the one hand, and that of the Indian peasantry and urban poor, on the other, to his wider utopian discourse which was expressed in much more ‘accessible’ symbolic forms. The ashram which he established on the banks of the Sabermati river (an extension of his initial commune – set up in the same year as *Hind Swaraj* was published – outside Johannesburg), exemplifying the virtues of village India and embodying his utopian ideal of ancient India; the symbol of the *charka* or spinning wheel, which in *Hind Swaraj*, as a result of his unfamiliarity with Indian handicrafts, he had called a ‘handloom’; and the notion of *khadi*, so closely associated with the *charka*, which sutured to his utopian vision of the idealized village republic a symbolically powerful argument for economic independence; all of these effective symbolic dramatizations were based upon ideas first essayed in *Hind Swaraj*. And unlike the élite, the ‘masses’ responded enthusiastically even if their response, for the most part, was somewhat contrary to Gandhi’s expectations. Shahid Amin’s classic work on Gandhi’s reception in eastern United Provinces

during the Non-Cooperation campaign suggests that although the peasantry may have missed the finer subtleties of *satyagraha* and non-violence, their rebellious faith in the Mahatma was imbued with a definite utopian charge.⁵¹ As Sumit Sarkar points out, peasant rebellions in India often resonated with a certain inchoate utopian millenarianism, and it was precisely this which vindicated Gandhi's choice of form.⁵² To put it quite simply, they responded to Gandhi's utopianism because it seemed to be a political language which mirrored their own.

In the discrepancy between the responses of the western-educated élite and the largely illiterate peasantry lies some of the truth about the political efficacy of the Gandhian ideology. Although philosophically complex, it was stated in simple terms which appeared unequivocal, and its idealization of the Indian village identified a recognizable social universe as the goal of nationalism. This was bound to have a greater appeal to rural Indians than the nationalism of urban intellectuals. On the other hand, there was also some 'strategic' appeal for the nationalist élite once Gandhi took the political initiative, for not only did Gandhism invest the national movement with a greater sense of representative legitimacy, it also recovered the moral high ground after the decade of revolutionary terrorism; combined with the Jallianwallah Bagh massacre, this proved to be politically explosive. Intellectually, however, they rejected Gandhism because its anti-modernism sat uneasily with their conceptualization of nationhood which, for them, was a modern concept that could only be articulated by the vocabulary of modern political thought. Gandhi turned their logic on its head and in so doing invited the Indian masses on to India's modern political field for the first time and thereby changed the rules of the political game.

The nation as truth: Gandhi and Indian identity

for me, truth is the sovereign principle . . . not only the relative truth of our conception, but the Absolute Truth, the Eternal Principle, that is God.

(M.K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, p. 15)

If Gandhi's response to the discourse on social reform in India was to reformulate the whole question of Indian modernity, then another challenge for him revolved around the issue of India's actual or potential national identity. As we have seen, this was the second of the two questions that constituted the colonial critique of Indian nationalism. Given the range of cultural and religious communities within India how could it ever claim to be a unified nation? On this score, the colonials had something of a point: India never had been a nation before. Whilst this could not be admitted by nationalists, the task of rebutting it was to prove highly difficult. In his study of Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay's historical fiction, Sudipto Kaviraj notices the 'uncharacteristically ambiguous use of the word *jati* to represent a number of communities 'starting from castes, to a regional people, to religious communities, to the nation'.⁵³ This 'indeterminacy' on the part of so meticulous

an author exemplifies the difficulties of constructing a national self which, as Kaviraj says, corresponded to a community that 'had not existed before'.⁵⁴

In Gandhi's case, his utopianism also enabled him to construct a terrain of political and cultural identification with the Indian 'nation' among disparate groups which had hitherto found no sustaining points of commonality other than that of an antagonism to, and difference from, the colonial rulers. It is clear that this was one of the crucial aspects of Gandhi's eventual political appeal. The measure of that appeal relative to previous attempts such as, say, Bankim's, can be found in the relative lack of subsequent controversy over Gandhi's vision of nationhood and the place of the minorities within it. Recently questions have been raised about this aspect of Gandhian ideology, and will be addressed in due course. However, suffice it to say here that one of Gandhi's intentions was to articulate a new basis for Indian identity through a greater focus on India's religious minorities, and in particular India's Muslims who had begun to organize themselves, with the tacit approval of the Raj, as a major force in the political field, one that was becoming increasingly antagonistic to and in turn antagonized by mainstream nationalism. In addition to the colonial state, the terrorists, the moderates and the extremists within Congress, the Indian peasantry and the urban poor, the Gandhian ideology was also, therefore, conspicuously addressed to Indian Muslims.

However, and this must be constantly borne in mind, it was not just a matter of rhetoric. Gandhi was a shrewd player in a political game which had established rules, lines of communication and channels of influence. Much of his historical importance lay in the fact that he could play this game whilst, at the same time, transforming the rules of the game from within. If the logic of nationalist politics was bringing the leap from a field of élite politics to a wider field of mass political participation nearer, it was nevertheless the genius of Gandhi which enabled this transition to be made whilst at the same time keeping established leaders on board and the élite structure of the nationalist movement intact.⁵⁵ It was this measure of complicity with the established rules of political participation that determined the ideology of Gandhism; one cannot adequately explore the one by losing sight of the other. Thus, for example, Judith Brown's exploration of the contacts and alliances made by Gandhi with Indian Muslims, following on from his work in South Africa, cannot be ignored.⁵⁶ Yet it is clear from Brown's account that he made these contacts on the basis of an idealistic conception of the Muslim community in India,⁵⁷ and thus we can assume that if it is indeed true that his discourse depended upon his political activity, it is equally true that his political activity was based upon and determined by the idealistic visions of actuality which we find expressed in his discourse.

One trope stands out clearly from the rest as being the most representative of his discourse of the self: the trope of reconciliation. In his *Autobiography*, for example, we find the following remarkable rhetorical manoeuvre, 'Sir Pheroze Shah [Mehta] had seemed to me like the Himalaya, the Lokamanya [Tilak] like the ocean. But Gokhale was as the Ganges.'⁵⁸ This is in the context of Gandhi approaching leaders of the Indian nationalist movement for help in his South

African cause in 1896 but was written retrospectively in 1924 or later, after Gandhi had assumed a dominant position in the movement. This retrospective manoeuvre is highly symbolic and allows a point of entry into Gandhi's conceptions of national selfhood. The three men he had approached in 1896 were leading lights in the national movement but were of different 'parties' within it. Gokhale and Pherozeshah Mehta were known as 'Moderates' and Lokamanya Tilak was the leading 'Extremist'. However, all three of them were firmly committed to the field of élite politics. Gandhi is writing here fully conscious of these divisions and of their common commitment to a political game which he, more than any other individual, was responsible for rendering obsolete. We may, therefore, detect an irony in the metaphor. What is important is to note that Gandhi posits an equivalence between the national movement and the nation because when the 'parties' are brought together they represent the geographical unity of India. Thus, this spatial unit is bounded on one side by the Himalaya, on the others by the Indian ocean, and at its heart lies the River Ganges – Gandhi goes on to say that, like the Ganges, Gokhale 'invited one to its bosom'. However, this unity is predicated upon the transcendence or reconciliation of differences between parties within India. The significant fact is that the Indian nation transcends the antipathies within it. But that is not all. The figure of transcendence in this metaphor turns out to be none other than Gandhi himself. In this metaphor Gandhi symbolically represents the supercession of the prevailing paradigms of Indian nationalist discourse by his own. The point is that his discourse can fully represent the nation whereas theirs could not because his transcends differences whereas theirs did not.

Gandhi's approach to national identity is based, therefore, on reconciliation of differences in a higher, transcendent unity. This is clear as far back as *Hind Swaraj* where the nation is seen as the embodiment of truth, the 'Absolute Truth' which by the time of Gandhi's *Autobiography* had been formulated by him as the 'sovereign' principle. The association of truth with sovereignty is not an accident but rather the logical correlation of relations implicit in his discourse since the initial publication of *Hind Swaraj*, even though the systematic conceptualization was not formulated until after it. Indeed, the symbolic power of Gandhi's radical vision of 'swaraj' depends upon the double-edged nature that his underlying correspondence between nation and truth provides. Through this Gandhi was able to elaborate a framework in which swaraj could mean both personal and political self-rule and thereby suture his political quest on to a spiritual quest for truth, a resonant association given the venerable traditions of spiritual fulfilment in India.

In fact, most of Gandhi's later thought is incipient in *Hind Swaraj*. We find there, for example, an analogous manoeuvre of transcendence over the élite-constitutionalist politicians in Gandhi's discussion of modern 'civil' law. Of all the professions associated with élite nationalism and constitutional politics it was the legal profession that most immediately came to mind. Gandhi was most certainly aware of this when he launched his attack on modern lawyers in Chapter 11 of

Hind Swaraj. Lawyers, he says, have exacerbated differences within the Indian nation and thereby ‘confirmed English authority’ (p. 58). By way of example he chooses Hindu–Muslim conflicts, ‘The Hindus and Mahomedans have quarrelled. *An ordinary man* will ask them to forget all about it . . . and will advise them no longer to quarrel . . . lawyers . . . advance quarrels, instead of repressing them’ (p. 59, my emphasis). We are here reminded of Gandhi’s definition of history as ‘truth-force’ in which ‘Little quarrels of millions of families in their daily lives disappear’; thus the introduction of the ‘ordinary man’ as arbiter introduces by association the concept of truth as the means by which reconciliation takes place. Lawyers, on the other hand, do not operate according to this law and are contrasted to the ‘ordinary man’. Lawyers were, of course, the most ‘westernized’ class in Indian society: they lived well and were rich and were, therefore, instantly and visibly distinct from the ‘ordinary man’. Gandhi then uses this distinction to illustrate the difference in values between the lawyer and the ordinary man by suggesting that in terms of ‘truth’ the ‘justice’ of reconciliation offered by the ‘ordinary man’ is superior to the conflict exacerbated by the lawyer. Moreover, since the ‘ordinary man’ signifies the ‘nation’, the lawyer is also shown to be acting against the interests of the nation. Gandhi makes the connection explicit by suggesting that the lawyers facilitate the colonial government by ‘legitimately’ helping them pursue a policy of ‘divide and rule’ – hence the use of the Hindu–Muslim example. Gandhi’s repudiation, therefore, of the ability of the élite-constitutionalists to properly represent the nation rests not only with their modernity but also on their perpetuation of divisions, which in turn is due to their not operating according to the principles of ‘truth’.⁵⁹

Nation and truth: this is the fundamental correspondence. The interests of the nation are only served by adherence to the truth. Characteristically, Gandhi’s strategy in effecting this symbolic correspondence proceeds along two opposing routes which are nevertheless juxtaposed and dialectically related to one another. In this respect, the crucial chapter in *Hind Swaraj* is Chapter 10, appropriately entitled ‘The condition of India (cont.): the Hindus and the Mahomedans’. In this chapter we notice a highly material, untranscendental shift away from a cultural or civilizational conception of the Indian nation to a territorial one. Yet the very basis of this territorial conception is founded upon a transcendent truth which reconciles differences. This is the framework that Gandhi builds for his subsequent exploration of Hindu–Muslim relations in his utopia.

It would be misleading, however, to suggest that Gandhi’s conception of the nation was based solely upon territory. Rather, it would be more correct to say that he subscribed to the axiomatic vision of the Indian nation at the turn of the century, namely ‘composite’ nationhood, a concept which, as we have seen, converged territory, culture, race and religion in a complementary synthesis. His acceptance of this concept may have led to problems later in his career, to which we shall return, but at present the importance of Gandhi’s composite vision is the manner in which he altered, or rather, added to it in order to achieve a more complete and inclusive representation of the Indian nation.

Gandhi fully subscribed to the composite concept of Indian nationhood which emerged out of the complex of factors that I have examined in the previous chapter, but he added a dimension of his own which proved to be even more symbolically powerful. Part of the problem of the 'composite' vision was that it did not convince many of the minority groups, and the Muslims in particular, that it was anything but majoritarianism masquerading as tolerance. Gandhi overcame this distrust in a number of stages. First, his work in South Africa, as well as his upbringing, had already predisposed him towards the Muslim community and they in turn had heard of his work in South Africa.⁶⁰ Second, upon his return he formed alliances with the Ali brothers and other leading Pan-Islamists, 'the most vociferous and skilled political agitators the community could produce', which enabled him to 'exploit . . . the new network of support which the *ulema* opened up'.⁶¹ Lastly, of course, he constructed a discourse which, symbolically at least, overcame the implicit majoritarianism of the prevailing conception of composite Indian nationhood. It was really the implied Hindu supremacism which was at issue since the 'minority' groups could also only conceive of India as a composite of religious communities.

In *Hind Swaraj* the chapters dealing with, and critically examining, the Indian 'self', as opposed to the colonial 'other' begin with Chapter 7, 'Why India was lost' and continue until Chapter 13, 'What is true civilisation?' which begins a new, overtly utopian, phase in the book. Within these six chapters which form the core of the book, the quintet from Chapter 8 to Chapter 12, all of them entitled 'The condition of India', is the most important. There is a structural symmetry in which the intensity of the self-criticism reaches an apogee in the central, defining chapter, Chapter 10. Gandhi's strategy, as has been pointed out, involved a territorial shift followed by a transcendental manoeuvre. With respect to the former, he lays the ground in Chapter 8, when he states that 'the Bhils, the Pindaris, the Assamese, the Thugs are our own countrymen' (p. 45). These groups were thought of by all parties as 'uncivilized' tribes and Gandhi does not dissent on this account.⁶² What is significant is that they are unequivocally included in the Indian nation by being called 'our own brethren' (p. 45). The basis for the inclusion is not, therefore, one of civilizational or cultural commonality since they clearly do not possess these. Rather, the basis is their habitation within the geographical territory of India. This territory now reaches far beyond any Aryavarta right to the extremities of Assam.

The following chapter finds Gandhi repudiating the English claim that India was not one nation before the arrival of the British. Contradicting the assertion that the railways 'united' India, Gandhi first of all embarks upon an illustration of the ancient unity of India by pointing out that India's territory had been unified by a civilizational commonality expressed through places of pilgrimage. This, however, may have carried with it conventional and divisive tones of Hindu majoritarianism so he immediately qualifies it, 'But they saw that India was one undivided land *so made by nature*' (p. 49, my emphasis). India's 'natural' unity is thus expressed, and when he responds to the Reader's criticism that he has been

shown a 'pre-Mahomedan' India, Gandhi then moves right into the central, crucial chapter dealing with Hindus and Muslims:

India cannot cease to be a nation because people belonging to different religions live in it. The introduction of foreigners does not necessarily destroy the nation, they merge in it. A country is one nation only when such a condition obtains in it. That country must have a faculty for assimilation. India has ever been such a country. In reality there are as many religions as there are individuals, but those who are conscious of the spirit of nationality do not interfere with one another's religion. If they do they are not fit to be considered a nation. If the Hindus believe that India should be peopled only by Hindus, they are living in dreamland. The Hindus, the Mahomedans, the Parsees and the Christians who have made India their country are fellow countrymen (p. 52).

There are a number of interesting aspects to this highly pivotal passage in Gandhi's argument, not least the shift of register when discussing 'Hindus'. By labelling them as a 'they' Gandhi symbolically distances himself from the exclusivist implications of Hindu nationalism. But the main point in this passage is the clear and unambiguous focus on territoriality as the basis for nationhood: 'live in it . . . obtains in it . . . who have made India their country'. This in turn is sharply, and with typical Gandhian wit, contrasted with the Hindu nationalists who are not living in India but rather 'in dreamland'. Gandhi's conception of the Indian nation thus far has followed precisely the contours of the composite vision. But it is here, in this pivotal passage, that Gandhi also effects his moment of departure by imbricating a sentence which seems at odds with the rest of the passage, 'In reality there as many religions as there are individuals, but those who are conscious of the spirit of nationality do not interfere with one another's religion'. This is, in fact, the hinge upon which Gandhi suddenly switches from his territorial emphasis to the transcendental.

What does Gandhi mean by 'as many religions as individuals', and why insert it here? First, we must be aware that Gandhi had been preparing the ground for this insertion in chapter 8, at the very beginning of this quintet, 'India is becoming irreligious. Here I am not thinking of the Hindu, the Mahomedan, of the Zoroastrian religion, but of that religion which underlies all religions' (p. 42). It is clear that the sentence in Chapter 10 refers back to this one, so that when Gandhi speaks of the innumerable numbers of religions he is clearly not referring to Hinduism, Islam or Zoroastrianism, or any other established religious order. Rather, he is speaking very precisely in terms of religion as 'ethics'. This conflation of religion with ethics is extremely individualistic – perhaps arising from his dialogues with non-conformist Protestants in London and South Africa – and typically modernist. This is contrasted with religion as a 'sect' which is the sense in which he talks of Hinduism and the others. He then follows up, 'Is the God of the Mahomedan different from the God of the Hindu? Religions are different

roads converging to the same point' (p. 53). Religions in the sense of sect are therefore the basis of difference, but in terms of ethics all differences are relative conceptions of the same transcendental point. The 'true' religion is, therefore, not a communal experience but an individual one. This is certainly in tension with Gandhi's opposition to what he saw as modernity's obsession with selfish individualism but perhaps, choosing horses for courses, Gandhi thought that the only alternative to combat communalism would be to negate it, and to do so on its own terms. Moreover, and this is where Gandhi provides the *coup de grâce*, this ideal point, which Gandhi would later identify with the absolute truth as opposed to the relative truth of individual and sectarian conceptions, is associated with the 'spirit of nationality' – not spirit of truth, of religion, of God or any such like but nationality. Truth and nation thus operate as analogous aspects of each other; at the ideal point of absolute truth we find the figure of the reconciling and transcendent nation. If Gandhi recognized that differences must be accommodated at the material level in the concept of an all-enclosing territory, he also recognized as a religious man in a religious country that a symbolic strategy had to be developed, an idiom searched for, in which religious differences could themselves also be reconciled. Gandhi thus effects an homology between the 'spiritual' universe in which God or truth is sovereign and the material universe in which nations, in particular the Indian nation, is sovereign. In so doing, the material category of the nation is invested with the spiritual authority of God/truth. Thus, Gandhi rewrote composite nationhood to articulate a self reconciled in the higher unity of a nation in which the distinction between 'majorities' and 'minorities' is redundant.

A tragedy of idealism

Ideals must work in practice otherwise they are not potent.

(Mahatma Gandhi, *Young India*, January 1921)

Looking back from a long-term perspective, Gandhi's career represents something of a paradox. On the one hand, his achievement was formidable: more than any other single individual in the history of the Indian nationalist movement, his was the intervention which did most to propel it towards its eventual victory over British colonialism. On the other hand, judged by any objective standards and set against the ideals and goals he set himself, his political career cannot be characterized as successful. This man of non-violence had to endure witnessing the birth of two independent nations amid communal carnage; his project of *sarvodaya*, literally meaning 'uplift of all', remained unfulfilled with chronic poverty, illiteracy and malnutrition still rampant in most parts of India, and the gap between the poorest and the richest growing ever wider; quite apart from partition, the national unity which he strongly advocated was torn asunder: Hindus were not only, as a whole, divided from Muslims and other religious minorities but also among themselves since an increasingly militant and chauvinistic upper-middle caste Hindu nationalism had arisen for whom the status of the 'scheduled castes' and

‘scheduled tribes’, most notably the ‘untouchables’, remained highly ambiguous; and the government of independent India turned its back on his rejection of modernity, adopting the apparatuses of the colonial state and setting forth on a programme of modernization and industrial planning.

It is clear in hindsight that Gandhi’s leadership of the nationalist movement effectively dissipated in the years following the Civil Disobedience campaign of 1930–32. Indeed, he ended his political career in much the same way as he began – a highly respected, even venerated, man who was nevertheless increasingly marginalized as new forces and ideological paradigms emerged and contested the field of power, and as new sets of dynamics responded to new political problems, often drawing on the symbolic capital and established political authority of the Mahatma to legitimize their own agendas. The fact that these paradigms were enabled by the initial Gandhian intervention, and that they continued to negotiate and occupy the space which he had opened up is a testimony to the power and scale of his achievements. Undoubtedly, the most significant of these was his precipitation of a truly mass movement. Constituencies were now directly involved in the field of power which would not have been had he not shifted the balance of forces in the way he did, most notably the lower caste and peasant associations, the untouchables and the urban proletariat. That these groups, as well as their opponents could draw on the symbolic and political capital of the Mahatma and, simultaneously, oppose and supersede him requires an explanation.

Needless to say there were many historical variables, many complex factors, contingent situations and unintended consequences but one need not dwell on those here. I want to look at the latent elements in Gandhi’s ideological discourse which may have facilitated their appropriation by opposing groups. That is to say, to investigate the possibility that within his discourse – its structure, its language, its assumptions – lay the ingredients for his long-term political failure. If so then the very basis of his success anticipated his downfall, a tragic prolepsis reminiscent of Sophocles’ Oedipus. Partha Chatterjee has momentarily pondered whether Gandhi’s ‘idiom of solidarity’ could be shown to be ‘essentially Hindu’, and whether in turn this may have ‘alienated rather than united those sections of people who were not “Hindu”’, but in the end avoids these ‘important questions’ on the basis that they are ‘not strictly relevant in establishing the ideological intent behind Gandhi’s efforts’.⁶³ Perhaps not, but they are extremely important when assessing the ideological effects of his discourse. In this regard, the clue to unravelling the paradox rests, I believe, in the form of the discourse, that is, in its utopian idealism. It is this elementary feature of Gandhi’s symbolic discourse that established the basis of Gandhi’s tragic contradiction.

Fredric Jameson has reminded us of the dystopian possibility inherent in utopian discourse. The expulsion of history, he suggests, is a structural device to occlude this possibility

If history is possible at all then we begin to doubt whether it really can be a utopia . . . and its institutions – from a promise of a fulfilment of

collective living – slowly begin to turn around into a more properly dystopian repression of the unique existential experience of individual lives.⁶⁴

Thus, it is through refuge in the ideal that utopias negate their suppression of individual experience. In the realm of the Ideal-symbolic such promises of collective living are immune from the scrutines of the historical. But what happens when the utopia is no longer insulated from history, when utopian thought is inserted into the messy, compromising world of politics and social relations, when, in short, an attempt is made to realize a utopia? In reality, of course, one person's utopia is another's dystopia. This is due to the partiality of any utopian transcendence of the given social reality, that is, of its ideological nature. The repression of individual expression and difference – a consequence of the totalizing impulse of the genre – actually stimulates the antagonisms of the very oppositions and social contradictions it wishes to resolve. This is highly significant since Gandhi did attempt a utopian reconciliation of collective life with his cherished principles of individuality and experience, and he sought to realize it. These were the basic lineaments of his tragedy of idealism.

Unrealizability, however, is but one half of the tragic dimension. The other is the structure of complicity which determines utopian discourse. Thus, it is only in the symbolic domain that a utopia successfully challenges dominant ideologies, and symbolically reorders society such that existing social conflicts are reconciled and negated. Yet, in the very logic of a utopia is its simultaneous complicity with existing, and usually dominant, ideologies. If this complicity, which compromises its radical alterity, can be successfully masked at the level of the symbolic, it cannot be done so when inserted into an active field of power. Symbolic resolutions are not enough, in this context, to mask these complicities: the discourse is now open to interpretation and appropriation by politically motivated groups of agents. Points of complicity can be exposed and appropriated and the symbolic capital accrued by the discourse can be reoriented. This process of appropriation is assisted by the utopian form since signifiers in utopian discourse are literally 'free-floating', that is, they possess no referent outside the realm of the symbolic itself. In the field of power, however, discourse must refer to something or be irrelevant. Indeed, this fate has fallen on many a utopian project whose well-intentioned efforts at radically reconstructing society failed to accrue the requisite symbolic power to negate their outright unfeasibility. Some, however, by sheer imaginative power have been taken seriously and Gandhi's ranks among them.⁶⁵ And once this is the case it is, ironically, their form which makes them inherently vulnerable.⁶⁶ All things are possible in a utopia precisely because its signifiers need not refer to material actualities. But in the real world, and in the field of power particularly, these signifiers and symbols can be attached to the materiality of power relations; they are inserted into a relational field where they acquire their meanings and significance. The utopian idealist, tragically, has little control over this process.⁶⁷

It is worth examining two aspects of Gandhi's structure of complicity which had particular effects in the field of power and helped generate the dynamics of opposition which would eventually supersede him. These were latent sources of his political failure, present in the tragic underbelly of his utopian discourse. There are other complicities but these two are, in many respects, the most significant. The first is a complicity with dominant conceptions of caste; the second, with the exclusive emphases of existing Hindu nationalist ideologies based on his acceptance of the dominant conception of the Indian nation, namely the composite nation. The two are, it is clear, linked by a common thread: the problem of authority in Gandhi's discourse. The former could be said to operate 'vertically' along the axis 'hierarchy-equality', the second operating 'horizontally', between discretely conceived communities, along the axis 'majority-minority'. Tackling the former first, we may examine the implicit authoritarianism and hierarchical structure of a utopian discourse which professes to advocate the equality of all men.

In *Hind Swaraj*, when the Reader catalogues his criticisms of contemporary 'backward' India (pp. 70–1) one criticism is notable for its absence, namely any reference to caste or untouchability. Symbolically, therefore, this represents the terrain of complicity between the Editor and the Reader or, in other words, between Gandhi and the existing paradigms of nationalist discourse. There are several reasons for this overlap of shared assumptions. Bikhu Parekh, for example, has pointed out that Indian reformism in the nineteenth century in general, and the nationalist discourse in particular, took very little interest in caste issues preferring to concentrate instead on 'such largely high caste practices as *sati*, child marriage, ban[s] on widow remarriage and overseas travel' – precisely the concerns outlined by the Reader and to which the Editor makes no supplement.⁶⁸ Indeed, what is remarkable is that the problem of caste is not directly addressed once throughout the text of *Hind Swaraj*. Even when Gandhi did begin to take up untouchability as an issue, as he did during the Non-Cooperation campaign of 1920, he did so primarily on political grounds rather than as a specifically moral problem, and he certainly did not attack the institution of caste in the early stages of his career.⁶⁹ Moreover, both his background in South Africa, where he dealt mainly with Muslims in the context of an expatriate Indian community facing a common foe, in which the terms of opposition were largely framed in terms of colour or race, and his initial experiments in political resistance on his return to India, may have also suppressed in his mind the need to confront directly the problem of untouchability and caste. Judith Brown, for example, points out that caste was not a significant issue in Champaran where *satyagraha* was attempted for the first time.⁷⁰

Yet by the time that Gandhi began to write *Hind Swaraj* Indian nationalists had been spurred on to addressing the problem of untouchability by the colonial critique of Indian social practices. Faced with the illogical and politically embarrassing nature of their claim to social and political equality whilst denying such freedoms to their own people, they began to confront untouchability. But

they did so not by attacking the institution of caste but by claiming that caste and untouchability were separate and unrelated problems. It is clear that Gandhi followed this trend. Realizing that untouchability and the hierarchical nature of caste practices contradicted his utopian conception of the moral equality of all men, he sought to reconcile the differential aspects of the caste system, based on professional stratification, with the fundamental equality of all men. It is in this light that we must approach his symbolic ideal of the *varna*, a reciprocal system of social relations based on equality and complementarity but nevertheless socially differentiated. He thus attempted to extract from the notion of caste the hierarchical and socially divisive implications which he characterized, typically, as historical 'excrescences'. Again, historical practice is symbolically resolved by a return to an ideal which is associated with India's ancient past. Gandhi did not specifically consider the problem of untouchability precisely because he believed that once the ideality of the *varna* were to be realized then the 'excrescence' of untouchability would disappear by itself. Caste itself, therefore, was not a bad idea but rather its historical degeneration.

It took a long time for Gandhi to realize the error of his position, and he did not do so until after his effective marginalization from the political dynamics of the nationalist movement; in other words, until after the tragedy of his idealism had played itself out.⁷¹ On 20 September 1932 he announced a fast unto death to protest against the granting of a separate electorate to 'scheduled castes' (untouchables) because he was still committed to his belief in the ideality of the *varna*. Untouchable leaders, such as Dr Ambedkar, failed to see things this way, however, realizing that since untouchability and the Hindu caste system were inextricably linked, then the best political prospects for untouchables lay in their outright separation from Hinduism. Gandhi, however, believed that the untouchables were an integral part of Hinduism and they could be lifted out of their present misery by returning to his *varna* ideal. That Gandhi believed in this 'integrative' nature of Hinduism based upon social differentiation illustrates just how close he was to existing dominant conceptions of caste, especially to what is called the 'synthetic' theory of caste. Indeed, one can identify interesting parallels between the two theories.

According to Partha Chatterjee, the most sophisticated elaboration of a 'synthetic' theory of caste is Louis Dumont's *Homo Hierarchicus*.⁷² Nationalists, according to Chatterjee, can respond to the colonial critique of caste in two ways: either through the position of the left and the Marxists, considering caste as a 'superstructural hangover from a traditional social order', or retain caste 'as an essential element in Indian society to emphasize its difference from Western societies'.⁷³ Gandhi, as we know, followed the latter course. But, in order to deny that Indian society is therefore necessarily contradictory to modern principles of social justice, one must 'distinguish between the empirical-historical reality of caste and its ideality'.⁷⁴ Thus far Gandhi follows this manoeuvre exactly. The synthetic theory of caste attempts to unify differentiated parts into a significant whole but the only way to do this is to constitute a shared terrain of identity and difference

between the parts and the whole. This terrain is, according to Chatterjee, only held together by 'force', 'In Dumont's treatment, the force that holds together the different castes within the whole of the caste system is the ideological force of *dharma*.'⁷⁵ More significantly,

The central argument of his [Dumont's] work is that the ideological force of *dharma* *does in fact unite the mediated being of caste with its ideality* . . . The claim is central not merely in Dumont; it must in fact be central to all synthetic constructions of the theory of caste, for all such theories must claim that the conflicting relations between the differentiated parts of the system (namely jatis) are effectively united by the force of *dharma* so that the caste system as a whole can continue to reproduce itself.⁷⁶

Once again Gandhi closely follows the line of reasoning which unfolds here since the force which, in Gandhi's system, holds together the differentiated parts to the transcendental whole is precisely morality or *dharma*, reformulated and modernized but *dharma* nevertheless.

What is crucial here is to investigate whether, beyond Gandhi's symbolic reformulation of *dharma* for his own utopian conceptual system, there are traces of shared assumptions with the ideological *dharma* that underpins the synthetic theory of caste. For, as Chatterjee points out, the *dharma* which girds the ideality of caste in such synthetic theories is based upon the notion of hierarchy which 'fixes a universal measure of "casteness" ', and is maintained by the mechanism of differentiation, namely the ideology of 'purity' and 'pollution'⁷⁷: this unity of identity (based on the maintenance of ritual purity) and difference (based on the threat of pollution) constitutes the 'ground of caste as a totality or system'.⁷⁸ Chatterjee objects to synthetic theories of caste because the system and its ideological force is 'contested *within* . . . the immediate system of castes'.⁷⁹ In particular, he suggests that a critique of the synthetic theory of castes would show that there is no single universal ideality of caste, that a universal *dharma* is a one-sided construction, and that this construction proceeds according to a logic of subordination and domination. Thus, if Gandhi's synthetic theory were to share these assumptions then it would contradict the professed moral equality and social freedom expressed in his *varna* ideal, thereby allowing for its appropriation on the one hand by upper-caste Hindus, and on the other hand its rejection by untouchables and others who would perceive Gandhi to be reproducing the system of subordination and dominance of caste Hindus.

At first glance, Gandhi's *varna* ideal seems to be a synthetic theory of caste from which the notions of hierarchy and pollution/purity are symbolically expelled. So far, so good. But utopias often subtly reinscribe that which has been symbolically expelled due to their structure of complicity and the partiality of their historical transcendence. As Jameson has shown with More's *Utopia*, the 'twin-evils' of violence and money which More expels by 'geographical' fiat (read: symbolic fiat) from the island of Utopia reappear in other forms, slightly distanced from the ideal

commonwealth itself, but suitably nuanced into the fabric of the text, and carefully insinuating themselves into the structure of assumptions that the text radiates to its receptive audience.⁸⁰ Thus More, whilst resolving his antipathy to violence and money in his symbolic ideal, simply cannot, due to the partiality of his utopian vision, conceive of a world without violence and money altogether since they were part of the hegemonic structure of assumptions in the England of his time. Similarly Gandhi, as we shall see, simply could not transcend the structure of assumptions inherent in synthetic theories of caste, and he introduced these through the back door, so to speak, into his discourse.

The language of purity and pollution emerges, therefore, in another context in *Hind Swaraj* but, significantly, it still establishes the ground of identity and difference. At several points, Gandhi discusses contact with the colonial other in terms of purity and pollution, 'the interior has not yet been polluted by the railways' (p. 70), and again, with respect to modern education, 'Only the fringe of the ocean has been polluted' (p. 106). At another point, he maintains the concern with ritual purity as the basis for defining the identity of the self, 'It [modern civilization] is eating into the vitals of the English nation. It must be shunned' (p. 38). It is significant that Gandhi uses a dietary idiom here, diet being, of course, one of the most important markers of purity/pollution. Thus, an analogy is drawn whereby the definition of a 'pure' Indian self is spoken of in exactly the same terms as a pure caste identity. This identity, as we have seen, is measured along a hierarchical scale so it is not surprising, therefore, to find an implicit authoritarianism in the text premised upon the concept of a legitimate social hierarchy. Although this hierarchical consciousness is not directly associated with the *varna* ideal it is consistently in tension with it, corroding it like a slow solvent. In particular, it emerges in respect of Gandhi's direct confrontation with parliamentary democracy, 'If the money and time wasted by the Parliament were entrusted to a few good men' (p. 31). But it is not only the institutions of modern democracy that he attacks; he also confronts the notion of freedom of speech, 'Now everybody writes and prints anything he likes and poisons people's minds' (p. 36). Juxtaposing the communal language of caste identity with the attack on modern democratic freedoms, Gandhi undermines other emphases in his discourse which depend upon a notion of civil liberties. Contrasted against this is the basis of India's wisdom, which rests upon social élitism as much as it does on the 'soul-force' exercised by India's ordinary millions; thus, the very people who established India as one nation in antiquity are described as our 'leading men'. Such implicit authoritarianism was eventually to emerge in the concept of the *satyagrahi* as a political leader following the violence which accompanied the Rowlatt campaign. This corps of disciplined moral leaders eventually became the organizational backbone of Gandhi's political strategy, 'Before we can make real headway . . . a few intelligent, sincere, local workers are needed, and the whole nation can be organized to act intelligently, and democracy can be evolved out of mobocracy'.⁸¹

Thus, the 'idiom of solidarity', to use Chatterjee's phrase, is – regardless of its humanist emphasis on equality and the numerous symbolic strategies such as

the *varna* ideal – built upon assumptions which reproduce the structure of subordination and domination through which the Indian caste system had elaborated and legitimized untouchability. It is not surprising that intelligent and perceptive political opponents such as Ambedkar should understand the prevailing logic of Gandhi's discourse and reject his attempts to help them. Nor should it surprise us that upper-caste Hindu nationalists should have found it relatively straightforward to appropriate the Mahatma's message and legitimize their chauvinistic attitudes to the untouchables. Neither should we then be surprised that the underbelly of Gandhi's utopia should reveal a dystopia not just for untouchables but for religious minorities as well.

Actions can usually be more revealing than words, especially to participants in mass political arenas. Contrast then Gandhi's fast unto death against separate electorates for untouchables with this statement from *Hind Swaraj* written 23 years previously, 'The Mahomedans . . . ask for certain concessions from Lord Morley. Why should the Hindus oppose this?' (p. 57). The concessions to which Gandhi refers were eventually agreed in the Lucknow Congress of 1917, cementing the alliance between the Muslim League and the Indian National Congress. Among other things, this granted separate electorates to religious minorities. This was itself premised upon the dominant conception of composite nationhood in which the Indian nation was seen as an aggregation of discrete religious communities identified singularly as Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian, etc. Given this delineation of political interests in terms of religious 'communities', minority communities naturally felt alarmed at the incipient power of the majority community, the Hindus, and thereby sought to circumscribe that power by demanding separate political representation in order to counteract any Hindu majoritarianism. What is significant is that the discourse of Hindu majoritarianism and of Muslim minoritarianism shared the same assumptions, namely the existence of discrete, monolithic communities of which the Hindu was the largest. And for people like Gandhi, for whom the implications of Hindu majoritarianism based on undifferentiated representation posed the possibility of a catastrophic communal division at the heart of the nation, it was no different. Thus he could countenance separate electorates on the basis that it would undermine majoritarianism. However, in doing that he subscribed to the same structure of assumptions that underwrote both Hindu majoritarianism and Muslim minoritarianism, assumptions which would later form the basis of communal conflicts from the 1920s, leading increasingly to an exclusive Hindu nationalism of the RSS type on the one hand, and to Muslim separatism on the other.

In *Hind Swaraj* the communal underbelly of Gandhi's discourse can most clearly be seen in the very same chapter as that in which he symbolically reconciles India's religious communities into a higher, transcendental unity. He begins by saying, 'The introduction of foreigners does not necessarily destroy the nation' (p. 52). Thus, from the outset of this crucial passage, he reproduces the Hindu nationalist view of Indian history in which Islam is an intrinsically foreign force, and in which the history of Islam in India forms part of a narrative other than that

of the Indian nation. Gandhi then goes on to say that ‘That country must have a faculty for assimilation’ (p. 52). Anthony Parel correctly suggests in the footnote here that ‘Gandhi is a cultural assimilationist in that all Indians, while retaining their sub-national identities, are supposed to share certain common values and symbols’, but fails, I think, to perceive a subtext which marks Gandhi’s discourse as adjacent to that of outright Hindu majoritarianism.⁸² The language of assimilation takes one back to an old argument in post-war Britain regarding race relations in which a seemingly open, liberal discourse masked the language of cultural annihilation. For ‘assimilation’ involves the suppression or denial of extraneous cultural identities and the unreserved acceptance of the indigenous identity. It is predicated upon an acceptance of an interiority and an exteriority. Similarly, if we bear in mind that Gandhi perceives Islam to be an exterior presence, what Gandhi is suggesting is that Indian Muslims are ‘Indian’ in so far as they ‘share certain common values and symbols’ which are, it must be remembered, unambiguously identified with ancient India, that is, before the ‘introduction of foreigners’. Other elements of their identities – such as those specifically Islamic elements – are subordinated to these ‘common [Hindu] values and symbols’.

We can take the argument one step further. Perhaps the most pressing issue and point of tension between Hindus and Muslims in the years preceding and during Gandhi’s ascendancy was that of cow protection. In the same chapter, less than two pages later, Gandhi deliberately raises the issue in order to argue a position of reconciliation. When the Reader asks for his views on cow protection, the Editor replies:

I myself respect the cow, that is, I look upon her with affectionate reverence. The cow is the protector of India, because it, being an agricultural country, is dependent upon the cow’s progeny. She is a most useful animal in hundreds of ways. Our Mahomedan brothers will admit this. . . . But, just as I respect the cow, so do I respect my fellow-men. A man is just as useful as a cow, no matter whether he be a Mahomedan or a Hindu. Am I, then, to fight or kill a Mahomedan in order to save a cow? In doing so I would become an enemy as well of the cow as of the Mahomedan. Therefore, the only method I know of protecting the cow is that I should approach my Mahomedan brother and urge him *for the sake of the country* to *join me in protecting* her (p. 54, my emphasis).

At first, Gandhi puts forward an economic argument in which rural Muslims and Hindus can find a common ground. He then follows this up with a reminder that one should not kill a fellow human being in order to save a cow. So far, Gandhi is advocating reconciliation through a process of consensus. But if one looks closer one finds exactly the kind of subtext which, in the field of power, could be appropriated or condemned by opponents. Thus, as Muslims and Hindus would agree, because the cow is the ‘protector’ of India economically, so he implies that it would make sense not to kill her ‘for the sake of the country’. At the utilitarian

level this argument is fine but Gandhi is quietly eliding the cultural argument. For what he is implicitly asking the Muslim to do is to set aside his cultural identity 'for the sake of the country'. Cow-slaughter, identified with the Id festival and hence unambiguously a part of Islam which we recall is 'foreign', is therefore against the 'national interest'; conversely, cow protection is identified as being part of the 'common values' of the nation. The slide into majoritarianism is gentle, almost imperceptible to a reader almost a century later but in the contemporary context of high tension such implications would have been magnified. The minority is asked to acquiesce to the will of the majority for the 'sake of the country' – both culturally and economically; it is beholden upon Muslims to undertake their national duty by giving up this foreign practice, even if it happens to be one of the most sacred rites of their religious calendar. Islam, as a minority religion, is subordinated in a hierarchy of national values to the indigenous (and morally superior) Hindu model.⁸³

All this might have been academic had Gandhi not been the great politician and master ideologue that he was. In the maelstrom of conflict what could be resolved by ingenious symbolic strategies and the exigencies of the utopian form could not, in that context, be protected from the deconstructive necessity of political interpretation. In such situations contradictions will out. Moreover, if he was unable to resist this call to action, his very mode of action itself probably accentuated his tragedy for it too was highly idealistic in mode. In reality, *satyagraha* was practised very little.⁸⁴ Indeed, mass civil disobedience, it could be argued, did not in practice conform to the principles of *satyagraha* and neither, if one were to be absolutely accurate, did Gandhi's fasts which involved a considerable degree of moral coercion. Indeed, the very fact that mass civil disobedience often degenerated into violent conflict illustrates that for the 'ordinary man', no matter what Gandhi might otherwise claim, *satyagraha* was more often honoured in the breach than in the observance. Even when mass disobedience remained peaceful it is likely that the participants were engaging in more traditional forms of moral coercion such as sitting *dhurna* rather than in the more active consensual pursuit of truth. Indeed, the importance of *satyagraha* has been exaggerated. Far from instigating new forms of mass political action, it seems more likely that Gandhi's importance lay in his ability to reorient traditional forms of mass protest towards new political horizons, and in establishing an identification between large and disparate groups of people with the singular figure of the nation. Indeed, one may go so far as to say that the Janus faces of Gandhi, the idealist and the pragmatist, actually cancelled themselves out and that this was the basis of his tragedy.

Gandhi's pragmatism led him to make compromises with opponents and to elaborate justifications. In the end, his pragmatism was only reconcilable with his idealism through the 'experimental' notion of truth which itself was a highly symbolic, and ultimately idealistic, strategy for reconciling and accommodating 'a potentially limitless range of of imperfections, compromises and failures'.⁸⁵ Granted, it was tactically malleable but, ironically, it simply reinforced the tragedy

of idealism since this idealistic device, through its sheer pragmatic malleability, actually took him further from the truth, the ideal point towards which he set his face. In the end he could only watch from the political margins as his tragedy played itself out before his eyes. Interestingly, rather than give up and succumb in old age to the cynicism he refused all his adult life, Gandhi, at the twilight of his career, returned to the radical idealism of his youth, and utilized whatever authority he still possessed to considerable advantage in quelling some of the communal riots leading up to and beyond independence. But perhaps the most poignant testament to his tragedy remains the fact that on the eve of independence this central character in the story of India's struggle for freedom chose not to celebrate its *denouement* in Delhi, but rather to meditate in his ashram as India kept its tryst with destiny.

THE MAKING AND UNMAKING
OF GANDHIAN IDEOLOGY:
RAJA RAO'S *KANTHAPURA*

Of the three continental agitations which punctuated the Indian nationalist movement the second of these, the 1930–32 Civil Disobedience movement, has been described by Judith Brown as ‘the most serious country-wide agitational challenge in the name of nationalism which the British faced in their Indian empire’.¹ For this reason it was pivotal, both in terms of the wider politics of the nationalist movement and in terms of Gandhi’s personal political career. It was during Civil Disobedience that he reached the pinnacle of political authority as he came to be seen by both British and Indians alike as the outstanding figure in Congress and Indian nationalist politics.² It also probably represented the zenith of the Gandhian paradigm as an ideological force. Despite Gandhi’s relative lack of political activity following his release from Yeravda gaol in 1924, the decade following his initial intervention had given Indians of all kinds, educated and non-educated, Hindu and Muslim, time to reflect upon the man, his ideas and his methods. As Shahid Amin has shown in his study of the ‘Mahatma image’ in Eastern Uttar Pradesh in 1921–2, there was a ‘considerable discussion about Gandhi in the villages of Gorakhpur in spring 1921’.³ As the decade passed Gandhi maintained a public profile through his ‘open conversation’ with the nation via his own journals and the Congress informational channels which, as would become clear during the 1930–2 satyagraha, were surprisingly effective. As the figure of the Mahatma grew in stature, the ideas associated with him and popularized by him and the Congress machinery would achieve greater potentiality and significance. In this chapter I shall move my analysis of the Gandhian ideology from Gandhi himself to those who received his message, and examine the forms in which his ideas were received, reproduced, distorted and disseminated by others.

It became rapidly apparent that politicized Indians could no longer afford to ignore the Mahatma. In the totally new political environment which Gandhism itself had done much to bring about, ideological opposition within the nationalist movement sought to be, as it were, parasitic: engaging with the Gandhian ideology, exploiting its symbolic power and feeding off the authority of the Mahatma. Paradoxically, therefore, the very strength of Gandhi’s impact upon Indian politics exposed his ideas to appropriation and rearticulation by groups with

agendas never wholly commensurate with Gandhism itself. These opposing paradigms themselves emerged and consolidated during the same decade as Gandhism ascended to the peak of symbolic power.

As is to be expected, the circumstances of Gandhi's second intervention into the all-India political arena were wholly different to the first. A new field of power had come into being as a consequence not only of Gandhism but also of two other parallel transformations. The first of these concerned the slow transformation of constitutional politics in India towards something akin to minimal democracy. The reforms of 1919 increased Indian participation in managing the affairs of state and one consequence of this was that the province became the most significant arena of politics where 'power over a wide area of life was available to Indians who could attract the votes of an enlarged electorate'.⁴ In becoming the pivotal juncture between the politics of the locality on the one hand and the all-India arena on the other, the province could act as a sort of prism modifying the calculus of political activity. Thus, 'long-standing issues and alignments of local politics [which] were now working their way into moulding the new provincial arena' meant that 'local tensions were given new political significance' and were thus incorporated into calculations made in the all-India arena.⁵ This almost certainly accounts for the greater tactical flexibility allowed to the Provincial Congress Committees (PCC) by the All-India Congress Committee and its central Working Committee during the 1930 campaign.⁶

The second major process was a decisive transformation in the field of power and its ideological forces. Factors other than the rise of Gandhism contributed to the changed field of power as we find it in the 1930s. It is important, therefore, to note that it was not only Gandhian ideology but also the 'event' of Non-Cooperation – organizational, physical and ideological – which despatched the old élite politics and helped usher in popular political participation. If Non-Cooperation had absorbed and focused the latent political energy of the general urban and rural populations, then its collapse accordingly released that energy into the public domain in quite unprecedented dimensions. Such kinds of energy did not dissipate but found new forms, new concerns and issues. One of the most significant of these was the proliferation of large-scale communal rioting. Such incidents were not mere spontaneous outbursts of primordial religious hatred and passion but rather they were reactions to an array of provocations and incitements, some organized others less so. For example, as a corollary to the rise of overtly communal ideologies the 1920s witnessed the emergence of communal organizations such as the RSS which organized and practised mass conversion and reintegration programmes.⁷ The impact of these organizations – both Hindu and Muslim – and the subsequent atmosphere of tension, suspicion and hostility both reflected and helped produce the communal ideologies that emerged in this period.⁸

Yet it was not only the riot or the conversion programme which helped facilitate the rise of modern communal ideologies in the 1920s. The new level of religious militancy, taken together with the constitutional reforms and the opening up of

the province to democratic politics exerted its pressures too since it increased both the need and importance of ideology – as an aid to the assertion of a political identity as much as for mobilization or for electioneering. Following the suspension of Non-Cooperation and the dissolution of the Khilafat issue which had bound them to Congress and Gandhi, Muslim politicians, for example, utilized the constitutional reforms to buttress their political position whilst ideologically consolidating their political identity on a communal basis in response to both the rise of overtly communal Hindu nationalisms and the implicit Hindu majoritarianism of existing nationalist discourse.⁹ In time, the Pan-Islamism of Khilafat would evolve into an Islamic nationalism, at first conceived of in terms similar to Syed Ahmed Khan’s ‘two-nation’ theory but later emerging as a separatist nationalism.

This convergence of constitutional and popular political forces also led to ideological transformations at the other end of the spectrum. Most significantly, if the events of the 1920s led, on the one hand to the emergence of communalism, on the other it generated a ‘refurbished nationalism’, to use Gyan Pandey’s phrase, in which ‘the coexistence of loyalty to the country and loyalty to the (religious) community’ envisaged by the concept of the ‘composite nation’ was superseded by ‘the primacy of one over the other’ – an inversion of the communal position in which the figure of the nation achieves a ‘pure’ significance ‘unsullied by the “primordial” pulls of caste, religious community etc.’ and stands above religious differences.¹⁰ This secular-liberal paradigm¹¹ also opposed the communal significations latent in Gandhism which would, as we shall see, in due course enable mutations of Gandhism in which communalist sentiments were masked by what at first appears to be overtly Gandhian sympathies. As Pandey notes, it was Nehru who was to become the ‘chief unofficial, and in due course official spokesman’ of this paradigm;¹² but for the most part this paradigm remained confined to the urban intelligentsia and moderate politicians of the upper-middle classes and possessed little of significance to the general populations of rural and urban India. Yet its role as an antecedent to the field of power in the 1930s is crucial for it was the first of a set of secular and left-wing paradigms that emerged within Indian nationalist discourse in the 1930s. In Nehru’s ideological career, for example, one notices the development of this secular-liberalism into a form of socialist nationalism.

It is important to remember that like other ideologies emerging during this period, the left-paradigms were responses to ‘facts on the ground’ which gave them a legitimating logic. Aside from the communal threat, ‘the voice of the disprivileged came to be voiced . . . more concretely and insistently than in the past’¹³ as a rising proletariat responded to the increasing pace of urbanization and industrialization; as Untouchables organized themselves in the wake of Gandhi’s Harijan uplift programme and the rise of Dr Ambedkar; as an increasingly militant peasantry responded first to massive inflationary pressures in the world economy and then a worldwide depression by forming peasant organizations and *kisan sabhas*. Young intellectuals and Indian army servicemen, having returned

from a Europe gripped by the possibilities suggested by the Bolshevik success, began to translate this shifting social experience into socialist or communist discourse and to disseminate it among potentially receptive groups.

After such a period of adjustment and transformation it is unsurprising, therefore, to find that the ideological field in the 1930s was vastly more diverse and variegated than it had been two decades earlier when Gandhi wrote *Hind Swaraj*. Broadly speaking, the ideological field in the 1930s in the all-India arena (and this, unfortunately, is the only arena in which we can draw such broad brush-strokes given the permutations possible at the provincial and local levels) consisted of colonialists, the 'traditional authorities', or 'orthodoxy' (although, as we shall see, what orthodoxy actually meant ideologically is a moot point), loyalists, liberals, communalists, Gandhians, Nehruvian socialists, communists and other 'left' groups and Dalits. Needless to say, this list is hardly exhaustive and is devised as an initial heuristic companion to the rest of what follows. If we extract from these the main nationalist paradigms, then – very broadly speaking – one might suggest that nationalist discourse was contested by the 'leftist' paradigms (both inside and outside Congress) on the one hand, the communal paradigms on the other, and the Gandhian paradigm somewhere in between.

The above preamble not only illustrates the complexity of Indian political life, but also how this could bear down on the production of diverse ideologies, thus marking the very nature and composition of those ideologies. For if Indian politics occurred at 'the juncture of diverse worlds' then any single ideological utterance possesses at least a dual if not plural dimension and significance.¹⁴ Ideologies were produced at the interface between national, local and provincial arenas not to mention the even more specific social differentiations – such as region, class, caste, religion, gender and race – which will be imbricated into the network of pressures impacting upon the discourse. A fuller understanding of any of these ideological paradigms necessarily involves a conceptualization of ideology as a process of collective authorship. This process, in differing political contexts, and enunciated, assimilated and disseminated by differing groups of people in often divergent ways affects the development of an ideology.¹⁵

Politically speaking, and certainly in the long run, the crucial factor was the reception of Gandhism by the rural peasantry and landless labourers of India, but that is beyond the scope of this chapter. Rather, the focus of what follows will be to examine its reception by Raja Rao, a south Indian brahmin from the princely state of Mysore, who grew up in another princely state, Hyderabad, and became a cosmopolitan intellectual, schooled in modern thought as well as classical Indian philosophy¹⁶ and was domiciled in France when he wrote his first novel, *Kanthapura* (1938). This novel is both complex and rich enough to enable one to delineate and examine some of the ideological pressures determining the political activity of the Indian intelligentsia and middle classes during the 1930s and to sense some of the tensions being felt by them towards Gandhian ideology.¹⁷ Indeed, in so far as these classes and intellectuals dominated and often controlled to a very large extent the channels of communication and dissemination, and

therefore influence, their reception of Gandhism and their response to it is perhaps as important, although in a different way, as the peasants.

However, to do this as fully as possible one must approach the text with a double-optic and situate the text on the one hand within the field of power at the all-India level, and on the other hand to locate the specificity of its ideological utterance and the effect of this on its representation. In one respect, analysis of Rao's text is simplified by the fact that being domiciled in France during the whole of the 1930s he cannot have felt any of the local or provincial pressures which might have complicated the writing of another writer domiciled in India and closely attuned to such intricate nuances of power. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that from such a distance Rao has managed to capture, as we shall see, the ideological pressures of the all-India field to a remarkable extent; at the same time, of course, he assimilated and responded to that field from his own specific point of view. This reading will thus seek to locate itself at the 'juncture' of these diverse worlds – the all-India arena, and Rao's regional, class, caste, gender and communal backgrounds – and consider the text itself to be an intersection, a body in which different currents meet and merge. From this one may attempt to develop a relational reading of the text as ideology.

Kanthapura and Gandhian ideology

Kanthapura is most certainly a political novel. Indeed, it is still among one of the most political novels in the English language. It is also, however, one of the finest novels in Indian literature in English, and possesses the distinction of being one of those rare novels which established a radical departure from all the English-language novels written in India before it. Its literary accomplishment, its experimentations in style and language, its success in capturing life in an Indian village have all been commented upon profusely. The very complexity of its achievement is, in fact, one of its merits for a prospective ideological reading. However, by the same token, we cannot therefore reduce the novel to ideology *per se*. As a text it requires a different form of reading to *Hind Swaraj*, which was self-consciously ideological. Thus, our reading will also have to take account of form, style and the grammar of novelistic discourse but will take these important questions up as more than just literary ones and thereby attempt to situate these in a field of power.

Reading a text politically as an ideological utterance and reading a text as a literary product need not, however, be mutually exclusive exercises. Nor is reading a text politically the same thing as saying that a text is political in the sense that it is 'about' politics. A properly political reading needs to go beyond that and approach the ideology of the text with a great deal of rigour and caution (one may say scepticism), for the ideology of the text is both what it says, how it says it, and what it conceals.¹⁸ The analyst is, especially with a text like *Kanthapura*, engaged in a perpetual game of hide-and-seek with the text and its author. Ideological significance is usually not to be found in those moments that would otherwise,

according to other analytical criteria, be the most significant moments in the text. And the critic must be on guard against taking the text at face value but must rather read against the grain, resisting the text's interpretation of itself and locating those moments of aporia that reveal that the text is not what it claims to be. This, unfortunately, is a stand seldom taken by critics of *Kanthapura*.

There is, of course, a long tradition of literary criticism with scant regard for history or historical analysis, and an equally long tradition of 'historical' criticism which hardly bothered with history. Yet even a cursory glance at the historical record and the secondary material reveals that the celebrated historical 'accuracy' of the novel, and the subsequent praise heaped on Rao for his realistic portrayal of 'village' India and his focus on the local minutiae of the nationalist struggle, is without doubt unfounded.¹⁹ Certainly, there are aspects of his representation in the novel which are astute such as his observation of the effects of capitalization on the rural economy. The village moneylender was indeed a pivotal figure in this capitalization process since, in south India, the general commercial unattractiveness of agriculture meant that 'there was no temptation for non-agriculturalist capital to enter the arena and even when poor ryots sold their lands it was to a financially better placed ryot and not to the modern capitalist . . . The rural credit needs were also fulfilled by the rich ryot.'²⁰ The stranglehold the Chetty brothers and Bhatta have upon the other peasantry in the novel thus has a solid basis in historical fact, as does the portrayal of Bhatta's rise from poverty to owning 'half [of] Kanthapura' (p. 5),²¹ which illustrates how the 'the upper caste dominance which was more ritualistic and ornamental in pre-British India was now strengthened and consolidated after the system of land control was changed'.²² Despite such examples it is simply not the case that Rao's novel presents us with a realistic and historically accurate moment in the life of a south Indian village. For one thing, Kanthapura is supposedly situated in Mysore state and the historical moment is the Civil Disobedience agitation of 1930; however, there was not a single incidence of civil disobedience in Mysore state at that time.²³ In fact, it was not until the Quit India agitations of 1942 that Mysore state became physically involved in the struggle against colonialism even though there was considerable sympathy for the nationalist movement in British India among students and other urban groups in the earlier period.²⁴ One might also point out Rao's representation of Congress organization in Mysore during this period, which the novel would have us believe was extensive and reached deep into the *mofussil* (rural interior) but in reality was barely existent until 1937 even in urban areas;²⁵ or the representation of the Congress as sympathetic to the peasantry when in fact the Congress organizations in South India were vehemently anti-peasant, controlled as they were by urban Brahmins who were in many cases major landholders themselves.²⁶

It is clear then that Rao's novel is far from historically 'accurate' or realistic. In fact, its representation is overtly ideological but, upon closer analysis, not the ideology it so self-consciously wears on its sleeve. The task of a political reading of *Kanthapura* is, therefore, to unmask those ideological operations which the text seeks to conceal, to lay bare the hidden scaffolding of assumptions and

‘distortions’, and to illuminate those darker recesses of the novel’s ideology which might reveal that, in the process of reproducing Gandhian ideology, the novel paradoxically also ‘unmakes’ it.

Kanthapura and the making of Gandhian ideology

In his book *Beginnings*, Edward Said writes, ‘the designation of a beginning generally involves the designation of a consequent *intention* . . . *The beginning, then, is the first step in the intentional production of meaning.*’²⁷ The beginning is thus a special moment in the narrative, a prolepsis from which what follows is structured and made sense of. But, Said asks, what or when exactly is the beginning in a work? Is it merely the beginning by virtue of its being first and if so what defines firstness? In other words, is the beginning distinguishable from, say, the ‘start’, the opening, or the ‘origin’? Said believes it is and cites *Tristram Shandy* and *The Prelude* as works which ‘[amass] a good deal of substance *before* [they] get past the beginning’.²⁸ In short, it may not be so easy to designate the ‘beginning’ of a work and more difficult in a novel like *Kanthapura* which presents us with a number of possible beginnings. Is the beginning of *Kanthapura* actually Rao’s famous ‘Preface’, or is it the primordial beginning of Kenchamma’s mythical slaying of the demon?²⁹ Or perhaps the beginning is what may be called the secular beginning of the novel – the building of the Kanthapuriswari temple – designated by the words, ‘that’s where all the trouble began’ (p. 7). Yet another beginning suggests itself: what may be called the formal beginning – that is, the narrator’s very first words (as opposed to the author’s), ‘Our village’ (p. 1).

Whilst all of these beginnings are legitimate I will take up the last of these as the crucial one and the point of departure, the beginning, if you like, for my analysis of the novel. This is because it raises a narratological distinction – namely that outlined by Gerard Genette in *Narrative Discourse* between the *reçit* and *histoire* of a narrative – that is vital for the interpretation of this novel.³⁰ The grandmother narrator’s words, ‘Our village’ designates the beginning of her narration, her *reçit*, which fundamentally determines the meaning of the *narrative*. In other words, the *reçit* produces and, in Said’s terms, intends to produce a meaning out of the events (*histoire*) it narrates. In *Kanthapura*, the grandmother’s *reçit* is retrospective, a narrative of ‘becoming’ being narrated by a ‘self’ different to that which is represented in the narrative. In other words, the *reçit* represents and imposes meaning on the process of her becoming a Gandhian after the event. Her narrative is thus not a spontaneous representation of events but rather a reconstruction of those events in order to express the ‘meaning’ of Gandhism for her, and its effects upon her. It also permits Rao, as the author, to compose a structure to the narrative which expresses this ‘meaning’.

Looking closely at this beginning, then, the most noticeable aspect is its sense of geographical space, ‘Our village . . . Kanthapura is its name, and it is in the province of Kara. High up on the Ghats is it, high up the steep mountains that face the cool Arabian seas, up the Malabar coast is it, up Mangalore and Puttur’

(p. 1). This space is then immediately associated with economic production, 'many a centre of cardamom and coffee, rice and sugar cane', but it soon becomes clear, before the first paragraph is in fact completed, that this is a very particular type of economy: a colonial economy, 'There, on the blue waters, they say, our carted cardamoms and coffee get into the ships the Red-Men bring, and, so they say, they go across the seven oceans into the countries where our rulers live' (p. 1). This reference to the colonial economy will, in due course, be explicitly associated with a familiar nationalist trope, that of the economic 'drain' effect first elucidated by Dadabhai Naoroji in the late nineteenth century, which became an axiomatic idea within nationalist discourse, 'Our country is being bled to death by foreigners . . . [the village weavers] buy foreign yarn, and foreign yarn is bought with our money, and all this money goes across the oceans' (p. 16).³¹ What is important is that the beginning prepares us for a nationalist interpretation of Indian space and the colonial exploitation of it.

This space is then filled with elaborate networks of road and rail, which both facilitate and make possible the colonial economy, 'Roads, narrow, dusty, rut-covered roads, wind through the forest . . . they turn now to the left and now to the right and bring you through . . . into the great granaries of trade' (p. 1). What we find therefore is a matrix of space organized in the service of colonial capital along which (Indian) produce and (Indian) labour are moved and the sheer weight of verbs and prepositions denoting movement – 'wind through . . . they turn . . . bring you through . . . Cart after cart cart groans through the roads of Kanthapura' – both in the opening paragraph and the following one, create a sense of this space as being unsettled, dynamic, disruptive and dislocating; this sense of perpetual movement is only halted momentarily by incidents of capital exchange, 'Sometimes when Rama Chetty or Subba Chetty has merchandise, the carts stop' (p. 1), but as soon as this is over the motion recommences. Later, as Rao introduces a sub-plot into the novel, that of the coolies of the Skeffington Estate, he recalls this beginning and its sense of exploitative movement as he delineates the effect of the colonialist network of economic relations upon Indian labour, 'armies of coolies marched past the Kenchamma temple, half-naked, starving, spitting, vomiting, coughing, shivering, squeaking, shouting, moaning' – again, this rapid list of discomfiting verbs produces a quickening of the narrative pace and suggests a sense of disruption – 'a day's journey by road and a night's journey by train and a day again in it . . . they marched on and on by the Godavery, by path and by lane and by road; and the trains came and they got into them' (pp. 44–5). The terminus of this epic journey is, of course, the coffee estate itself – a space devoted to the colonial expropriation of Indian land, labour and resources. In the landscape of perpetual motion that Rao has created here this is a place of rest (ironically, since rest is about the last thing the coolies are allowed), of stasis, the symbolic closure of the estate gate behind them being a moment of foreboding finality (later we are told 'nobody who ever sets foot on the Blue Mountain ever leaves it' (p. 54)). The novel thus presents us with a matrix of space defined by a system of economic production (capitalism) at one end of which lies a terminus of

production and the other end of which is a terminus of consumption (England). In between is a dislocated space filled by channels of mobility. The village of Kanthapura lies in this interstitial space, on one of these channels.

In contrast to the colonial space, however, the space of the village is represented very differently. As opposed to the universe of motion which is the modern matrix of a colonial economy, Kanthapura is rigid and static with a spatialization reflecting the hierarchical nature of the social order. Thus we have a brahmin quarter, a weaver's quarter, a sudra quarter, a potter's quarter and a pariah quarter. The organizing principle of this matrix of space is not capital but symbolic capital, the value of which is calculated not by a system of cash exchange but by a calculus of purity and pollution. Thus, almost as soon as the modern matrix of colonial space is introduced we find an opposing matrix of spatial organization with its attendant differences. There is, for example, a different system of economic production based not on exchange value but on subsistence and use value. Moorthy, when asking for money to enable a *harikatha* in the village, is met with astonishment, 'Money! It made us think twice before we answered . . . But, if it's camphor, I'll give it. If it's coconut, I'll give it. If it's sugar candy' (p. 8). Whilst both economic systems are concerned with land (the villagers think of their wealth in terms of wet and dry land), the extraction of natural resources and their shipment overseas is contrasted to the cyclical, regenerative pattern of farming undertaken by the villagers (Chapter 12). There are also differing locations and principles of authority for each of these spatial matrices. On the one hand, authority is represented by colonial law, the secular principles of empire and capital, and the historical authority of the King Emperor; on the other, authority is divine, represented by the goddess Kenchamma, codified by the *dharmashastras*, and the figure of authority is a religious one, namely the Swami. Whilst modern authority is invested in the urban institution of the court (located in the city of Karwar), the villagers locate their authority in the Kenchamma temple. In addition, each matrix is presented as being mutually exclusive, symbolically illustrated by the adjacent but enclosed spaces of the coffee plantation and the village. Thus, whilst the coffee plantation is physically encircled by a fence and gate, keeping both the coolies in and others out, the village is represented as a closed and exclusive social order, keeping the agents of the colonial matrix out. The policeman, Badè Khan, being a figure of colonial authority, is not offered a home in Kanthapura and instead finds himself quarters in the Coffee Estate.

This binary opposition between an orthodox matrix and a modern matrix is barely allowed to settle before yet another matrix is introduced in this densely packed opening chapter. The narrator, as soon as she finishes her invocation to the goddess Kenchamma and her description of the village, then introduces an alternative temple, one not associated with Kenchamma but with the god Siva, namely the 'Kanthapuriswari temple' which 'did not exist more than three years ago' and is 'where all the trouble began' (p. 7). In other words, it is clear that this is the centre and source of the narrative. One must be careful not to confuse Kenchamma's temple with this one because 'the historical action of the

novel . . . is *not* connected in any way with Kenchamma. Kenchamma's traditional sanction plays no part in the introduction and dissemination of Gandhian thought, nor is it the scene of crucial happenings.³² As Dey quite rightly notes, it is in this temple that Gandhian ideology is introduced, and it is here that many of the scenes associated with the Gandhian struggle are enacted. The oft-quoted *harikatha* recited by the famous Jayaramachar which begins, "Siva is three-eyed . . . and swaraj too is three-eyed: Self-purification, Hindu–Moslem unity, Khaddar" (p. 10), takes place in the temple of Siva.³³

One immediately becomes aware that the novel's ideology is clearly affiliated to this matrix and that the tripartite structure of matrices constructed within the opening chapter is clearly meant to indicate certain positions in the field of power: nationalism (by which is meant Gandhian nationalism) versus colonialism on the one hand and 'orthodoxy' on the other. In this respect it is also significant that the temple is dedicated to an all-India deity such as Siva rather than to the local deity, Kenchamma, whose power appears to have only a limited and locally specific purchase. Such a goddess is clearly an unsuitable figurehead for the nation. Yet the principle of authority in the Gandhian matrix is not simply divine. As has been pointed out, the *harikatha* illustrates that 'a process [is] occurring wherein the traditional Gods are being, if not displaced, at least identified with Gandhian ideals';³⁴ thus Siva is also swaraj – identified in Gandhian terms – but is also representative of the principle of authority in Gandhian ideology, truth, 'Truth must you tell, he says, for Truth is God' (p. 12).

The Gandhian matrix is also spatially organized and is constituted by a network of water. Water has an immense symbolic significance in this novel. Natural water is always closely associated with the Gandhian matrix, whether in proximity to certain Gandhian characters or accompanying Gandhian activity, or denoting an alternative conception of Indian space to the exploitative oppression of the modern/colonial matrix on the one hand and the rigid caste-bound space of orthodoxy on the other. Here, for example, is a seminal moment in the representation of the pivotal Gandhian character of the novel, Moorthy:

Why was it he could meditate so deeply? Thoughts seemed to *ebb away to the darkened shores* . . . Once, however, in childhood he had felt that vital softness – once, *as he was seated by the river*, while his mother was washing his clothes, and the soft *leap of the waters* . . . and the beating of the clothes *sank* into his ears, and the sunshine *sank* away into his mind, and his limbs *sank* down . . . and as he looked fearfully at the holy, *floods suddenly swept in from all the doorways of the temple, beating, whirling floods* . . . *and he quietly sank into them and floated away* like child Krishna on a pipal leaf (p. 63, my emphases).

As the villagers embark upon civil disobedience, they are accompanied by a constant downpour of rain, 'With the rain came a shower of lathi blows', their self-sacrifice assuaged by the symbolic sanctification of the water as it adds

significance to their physical pain. Rain also eases the physical suffering of the coolies since the monsoon allows them to rest from work (p. 51). Finally, as the novel approaches its climax the entire spatial organization of India as a network of rivers is made explicit, 'it is the same by the Ganges and the Jumna and the Godaveri, by Indus and Kaveri' (p. 160). The rivers mentioned here represent the cardinal points of the nation: the Ganges descending from the Himalayas to the east, the Indus to the west, the Cauvery to the south and in between, the Jumna bisecting the Indo-Gangetic plain and passing by the political centre of India, Delhi, whilst the Godavery crosses the Deccan roughly bisecting India through the middle. The geographical territory of India, disseminated by colonial maps and imprinted on the mind of every educated Indian, is here symbolically represented as being 'Gandhian'.

Why does Rao invest water with such symbolic authority? Why is water the trope of the Gandhian nationalist matrix? It is likely that Rao, being a scholar of classical Indian philosophy and culture, chose water because of the mythic significance of water in India's cultural heritage.³⁵ We are reminded in the Preface that Rao intended *Kanthapura* to read like a *sthalapurana* and in her book *The Pauranic Lore of Holy Water-Places*, Savitri Kumar suggests that 'In India, water is given much significance right from the age of the *RgVeda*';³⁶ she goes on to say, 'When we come to the Puranas we find the most elaborate form of waterworship. The waters are considered to be the most miraculous, holy, supernatural and divine.'³⁷ But there is also perhaps another reason. Kumar suggests that in the puranas water plays 'the most important part in metamorphosis'³⁸ and this relates ideologically to the nationalist concern for the rejuvenation of the nation, the metamorphosis of society from a caste-ridden divided and shameful society on the one hand and an impotent, oppressed, emasculated society on the other. Water, as a sign of cultural metamorphosis is thus an apposite metaphor for the new community nationalists sought to build. We notice that the 'Gandhian' characters, alienated from orthodox society, gravitate towards bodies of water in moments of isolation. Ratna, the child widow who resists her subjugated place in society 'would hurry back from the river alone' (p. 30), and Moorthy, having been excommunicated, 'wandered by the river all day long . . . thinking, how, how is one an outcaste?' (p. 80).

In fact, in the process of creating this new community, which is envisaged as a unity unhindered by social division, water is the very symbol which inverts the orthodox calculus of purity/pollution. In a highly significant moment as Moorthy meditates, the scornful orthodox brahmin widow, Venkamma, berates what she sees as his mock holiness, 'As though it were not enough to have polluted our village with your Pariahs! Now you want to pollute us with you gilded purity' (p. 62). She then performs a mock oblation, 'taking out a wet roll of sari, she holds it over her head and squeezes it. "This is an oblation to thee, Pariah!"' Ironically, this act of hers serves only to confirm Moorthy's genuine purity: because the calculus of pollution/purity is reversed, her mocking his 'gilded purity' actually confirms his genuine purity.

Water thus becomes an index of nationalist identity which gives significance to, and promises the end of, their isolation. But as a nationalist symbol it is opposed, in this structurally precise text, to other forms of water which are in effect travesties of the true, genuine, nationalist sign. Associated with the modern/colonial matrix is toddy, an adulterated form of water which, significantly, provides the principal occasion for the villagers' civil disobedience. On the other side, another form of adulterated water signifies the destructive and vindictive venom of orthodox society, namely spittle. In Kanthapura the villagers spit so often that it becomes a cultural trait, and thus a symbol of identity. As Ratna walks alone along the river bank the villagers, once her mother's back is turned, 'would spit behind her and make this face and that and . . . pray for the destruction of the house' (p. 30–1). This vindictiveness in turn verifies the inverted morality of the orthodox matrix. By contrast, the water symbol of the Gandhian matrix is always natural – rivers, seas, rains – and the very naturalness of this water, its very ordinariness (as opposed to ritually sanctified water which is another 'orthodox' water sign) means in effect that the whole national space becomes a *tirtha* (in the *puranas* a *tirtha* is a holy water place, a body of water invested with sacred significance) which, in true Gandhian fashion, sacralizes the secular space of the nation.³⁹

The Gandhian matrix operates, therefore, according to a system of value completely distinct from the other two matrices in the novel. Its economy is what might be called a moral economy with *khadi* as its currency. This notion of *khadi* as an alternative currency to both the capital of the modern matrix and the symbolic capital of the orthodox matrix is actually made very explicit in the novel. On the one hand *khadi* displaces the calculus of purity and pollution, 'He [the Mahatma] says spinning is as purifying as praying' (p. 18); on the other it displaces the cash nexus

'Then, my son, I'll have a charka. But I can pay nothing for it.' 'You need pay nothing, sister. I tell you the Congress gives it free . . . every month I shall gather your yarn and send it to the city. And the city people will give you a reduction on the cotton' (pp. 18–19).

Nationally, *khadi* becomes a bona fide alternative economy directed at supplanting the colonial economy with consumer centres, 'khadi shop[s] in the town[s]' (p. 96), and a national network of distribution. But in saying this we must be clear that for Gandhi spinning was much more than an economic issue. In fact, economically speaking, Gandhian ideology celebrated the subsistence system of use value that the novel identifies as part of the orthodox matrix.⁴⁰ Structurally, therefore, the way is not open for Rao to promote proper Gandhian economics; he thus substitutes *khadi* for Gandhian economics *in toto* and in so doing suggests that the moral sign which *khadi* was for Gandhi is in effect also the economic ideology of Gandhism. This moral economy is contrasted to the colonial matrix, nowhere more vividly than in the final stages of the novel where we are given a graphic confrontation between two opposing systems of value:

Yes, sister, yes, the Government is afraid of us, for in Karwar the courts are closed and the banks closed and the collector never goes out . . . and it is the same from Kailas to Kanyakumari and from Karachi to Kachar, and shops are closed and bonfires lit, *and khadi is the only thing that is sold* . . . and money set in circulation, *the money of the Mahatma*, and the salt of the sea is sold, and the money sent to whom? to the Congress (pp. 159–60, my emphases).

In this highly significant passage, the whole colonial matrix, its institution and officers, are confronted with the moral weight of civil disobedience which sets up an alternative matrix with *khadi* as its economic core.

For Gandhi, however, the significance of *khadi* lay not in its economic function although he tended, as part of his ideological strategy, to accentuate its economic logic to those modernists in the nationalist movement who were sceptical of the Gandhian vision;⁴¹ rather, *khadi's* importance was a moral one – it symbolized not just swaraj in a purely negative sense but rather swaraj in its full positive connotation: freedom as self-mastery involving both self-sufficiency and self-restraint. Part of its connotation is of course economic since for Gandhi the problem with capitalism lay precisely in its libidinous sense of licence, its restless pursuit of accumulation through an unrestrained greed which Gandhi saw as the very engine of its economic production. *Khadi* on the other hand symbolized the virtue of self-restraint as well as an identification with the effluvia of capitalist production, the poor. But the novel transposes this partial connotation into a full identification of *khadi* with Gandhian economics and it does this because, ideologically, the tripartite structure must be maintained. In translating *khadi* into primarily an economic sign (indeed, in constructing his critique of colonialism on a primarily *economic* basis), however, Rao inflects Gandhian ideology with nuances that reveal a certain distance in sympathy between Rao's Gandhism and Gandhi himself – a point to which we shall return.

Nevertheless, such liberties do allow Rao to construct a properly homological tripartite structure in which the Gandhian matrix stands in a relation of opposition to both the colonial/modern and the orthodox matrices (see Table 4.1). Moreover, both the colonial and orthodox matrices are shown to be in collusion with each other. The entire edifice of the colonial legal system is staffed by eager brahmins, and these same brahmins utilize colonial law to their own advantage.⁴² The obvious set piece in the novel which illustrates this is the 'debate' between a 'Swami's man' and the Gandhian throng in the maidan in Karwar (pp. 87–91). By the same token, however, the colonial system in effect helps the brahmins reproduce their socio-economic dominance.⁴³ This complicity is framed in largely economic terms. As mentioned above, the colonial system of land control helped complement Brahmins' symbolic dominance with socio-economic dominance. Hence, the 'pay-off' for the Swami is figured in traditional terms as 'twelve hundred acres of wet-land' (p. 89), and it is precisely the capitalization of the rural economy that helps Bhatta to rise from poverty to owning 'half [of all] Kanthapura'. Indeed,

Table 4.1 The tripartite structure of *Kanthapura*

	<i>Modern matrix</i>	<i>Gandhian matrix</i>	<i>Orthodox matrix</i>
Historical authority	King Emperor	Gandhi	Swami
Principle of authority	Empire/Capital	Truth	Kenchamma
Character	Skeffington/Nephew	Moorthy	Bhatta
Agents of authority	Police/Army	Satyagrahis	Brahmins
Texts of authority	Colonial law	Newspapers	Dharmashastras
Economy	Cash	Moral	Exchange
Location	City/ Skeffington Estate	Village/ Kanthapuriswari temple	Village/ Kenchamma temple
Form	Novel	Epic	Ritual
Idiom	Realism	Myth	Rumour/ Superstition
Networks	Roads	Rivers	Roads
Water symbol	Toddy	Pure/Natural e.g. rain, rivers	Spit/Stagnant/ Sanctified
Socio-political status	Colonial exploitation	Swaraj/Rama Rajya	Brahmin exploitation
Gender principle	Masculine	Feminine	Masculine

although the rural economy is figured in terms of use value, we find that, actually, the cash nexus is completely dominant in *Kanthapura*. Thus, *Kanthapura* is not really a closed world at all but one which has been opened up by the colonial economy and which symbolically stands on one of its thoroughfares.

The Gandhian matrix, of course, is shown to reject both these matrices and to stand above the circuit of collusion and corruption through which they seek to reinforce each other's interests at the expense of the nationalists. Moorthy, the central Gandhian character rejects the colonial matrix by symbolically dumping his city clothes and adopting *khadi* clothing, and he rejects the hierarchical calculus of the orthodox matrix in his embrace of the village pariahs, thus resulting in his excommunication. In effect, the novel purports to show how the circuit of collusion is in fact short-circuited by the Gandhian intervention.

Rao also represents the ideological conflict in terms of competing textual authorities – the promissory notes, bills of sale and mortgage deeds of the colonial legal system, the dharmashastras of the orthodox, and the nationalist daily newspaper. It is significant that the symbolic moment when *Kanthapura* turns its back on the orthodox matrix should be facilitated by the distribution of nationalist

information. By raising textual authority as an issue, however, Rao escorts us to another dimension in the ideological structuring of his text. This is because the ideology of the text is not just represented in terms of content but also in terms of form. Using once again the tripartite template elaborated above we notice that *Kanthapura* presents us with a set of formal relationships which correspond to the three matrices in the novel. In other words, each of the matrices has its own idiom of representational discourse.

To illustrate this point, let us begin by first addressing a complaint made by a critic of *Kanthapura*, who finds a certain failure of artistic vision in the novel. Commenting on the lack of narrative perspicacity toward the latter stages of the novel, Esha Dey interprets this diffusiveness as a failure because, she asserts, the novel has hitherto been a mixture of precise, concrete realism and myth but at this point it seems to be neither.⁴⁴ If we turn to these latter passages we find that Dey's point about narrative diffusion is astute:

and then, like a jungle cry of crickets and frogs and hyenas and bison and jackals, we all groaned and shrieked and sobbed, and we rushed this side to the canal-bund and that side to the coconut garden, and this side to the sugar cane field and that side to the bel field bund, and we fell and we rose, and we crouched and we rose, and we ducked beneath the rice harvests and we rose, and we fell over stones and we rose again, over field-bunds and canal-bunds and garden-bunds did we rush (p. 168).

and so on; in fact, this particular sentence carries on in this vein – a succession of quick, imprecise phrases conjoined by a succession of ‘ands’ – for thirty-five lines. If we recall the precise delineation of space in the opening chapter, and the detailed descriptions of village activity in the early chapters, this diversion into vagueness does seem odd. Dey explains this as an artistic failure. Such a judgement fails, in my opinion, to take account of the measure of deliberation which is obviously present – after all, this kind of narrative description is absolutely dominant in the novel from the moment the village is barricaded by the colonial authorities (p. 145) although small sections, proleptic traces, appear beforehand. Why? I would suggest that this narrative confusion and disorientation is predicated on the fact that ‘the whole world seems a jungle in battle’ (p. 150). Conflict is the key trope in these latter stages of the novel – an overwhelming, almost perpetual conflict. If we recall the earlier moments when small sections of narrative diffusion appeared, they too described conflicts between villagers and the police. In other words, the narrative idiom here is an indicator of a certain type of activity, namely civil disobedience.

What, then, is the significance of the barricades around *Kanthapura*? To answer this we must return to the beginning and recall the spatial descriptions of the opening chapter. These descriptions are expressed in precise, realistic detail. The spaces represented are defined relationally to other spaces, they are ‘filled’ with markers which capture the specificity of the place. The forest is ‘filled’ with teak,

jack, sandalwood trees; there are ‘bellowing gorges’ and mountain passes, each specified with a name, ‘Alambè and Champa and Mena and Kola’; the village is in the ‘province of Kara . . . on the Ghats . . . up the Malabar coast’; and the houses of the village are described in great detail and we are told in which quarter they are, even where the quarters are in relation to each other, ‘when you walked down the Potters’ street and across the temple square, the first house you saw was the nine-beamed house of Patel Range Gowda . . . The Brahmin street started just on the opposite side and my own house was first on the right’ (p. 6). These highly particularized spaces, full of detail and clarity, are not to be found at all later in the novel and this is because the spatial status of Kanthapura undergoes a symbolic metamorphosis. In the beginning, Kanthapura lies on a network of colonial space and represents an orthodox space. The two matrices this spatial distribution represents are shown to be in collusion against Gandhian nationalism. This circuit of collusion is, however, shown to be short-circuited by Gandhian nationalism, at first in conflict with orthodoxy and second in conflict with colonialism through civil disobedience. When the barricades go up, the orthodox space of the village has been replaced by an incipient Gandhian space, which is signified in two ways: first, the departure of Bhatta and second, the symbolic death of Ramakrishnayya, the village custodian and interpreter of the ‘Vedantic texts’ which are the texts of orthodox authority. His death is symbolically accompanied by a flood, ‘a huge swell churned round the hill and swept the bones and ashes away’ (p. 101), followed by an insistent rain. The next chapter opens with a significant alteration in social relations as, for the first time ever, the women take it upon themselves to be custodians and interpreters of the sacred texts. A new era in the life of the village has begun. This new era is consummated by the villagers’ commitment to Gandhism, and their participation in civil disobedience. The village is transformed into a fully ‘Gandhian’ space, and is symbolically isolated from the colonial space around it; no longer is it a thoroughfare servicing the colonial network, ‘all the roads and lanes and paths and cattle tracks were barricaded’ (p. 145). This metamorphosis is accompanied by the change in narrative mode identified by Dey.

What is significant about all this is that spaces, depending on the matrix they symbolically represent, are described in different ways, through different idioms. Of course, these narrative registers are not rigorously separated and, inevitably, there are overlaps when one idiom shades into another. However, for the most part, the dominant narrative idiom associated with each of these spaces is distinguishable. The colonial space, as has been shown, is associated with a realistic idiom. The space of the village is also, to a certain extent, described via realism but in other respects, the orthodox matrix possesses its own idioms, namely ritual invocation (‘O Kenchamma! Protect us always like this . . . Oh most high and bounteous!’ (p. 3)), superstition and rumour.⁴⁵ We notice for example how quickly rumour fills the discrepant space between the villagers’ superstitious faith in Kenchamma’s divine potentiality and her failure to save ‘young Sankamma’ who died of smallpox. When Kenchamma’s grace was not forthcoming it is rumoured

to be due to some sexual misdemeanour on Sankamma's part; this rumour is then verified by the 'fact' of her child being born 'ten months and four days after he [her husband] was dead' (pp. 2–3). These idioms abound in Kanthpura until its symbolic isolation when they all but disappear. Indeed, Kenchamma is only mentioned three times following that moment and each time it is ironic, most notably when one of the women invokes her name as she burns the village to the ground.

Myth is the Gandhian idiom but it is important to distinguish this mythic idiom from the myths associated with Kenchamma which, it is implied, are of a lower order and verge on, if not outrightly become, superstition – we notice that, for example, that the narrator says of Jayaramachar, 'Never had we heard *Harikathas* like this' (p. 10). In fact, the defining characteristic of the Gandhian idiom is an emphasis on non-mimeticism, which Rao employs in order to emphasize its formal opposition to the 'realism' of the colonial matrix. Thus, for example, even after the village has been barricaded, men and boys both from the village and from the city continue to suddenly appear inside it having supposedly slipped inside the cordon (pp. 159–60). This porousness is also not a failure of vision or a forgetting of the barricade but a deliberate foreshadowing of the climactic conflict ahead. As a prefiguration of this, Rao is narrating through a non-mimetic idiom in order to emphasize its significance: the narrative will become a mythic showdown between the forces of good and evil.

Clearly, Rao is drawing attention to a relationship between literary form and the field of power.⁴⁶ But what is the ideological significance of this? I would like to turn to Rao's own assessment of the novel as a literary form in India, a statement which implicitly pertains to both aesthetic and political questions, 'The Indian novel can only be epic in form'.⁴⁷ At first, this seems a relatively simple statement; on closer inspection it is highly revealing. Why can an Indian novel only be epic in form, and if it is not on what grounds is it not Indian? And what kind of Indianness does the epic novel express? Thus power, culture and identity coalesce into a set of questions overdetermined by a brace of assumptions. The first of these is that the novel, as experienced by Indians in the context of colonial oppression, can in no way be a legitimate expression of Indian national identity unless it is somehow adapted. If realism is the idiom of colonial modernity, what Rao's formal homology suggests is that this idiom is expressed by the form of the nineteenth-century novel. Having said that, it should not be outrightly rejected either. The second assumption, therefore, is that in order to adapt the novel so as to express Indian reality and Indian national identity, one should employ the epic mode. Thus, in Rao's schema, epic and Gandhism are in some way connected.

We shall return to the first of these assumptions in the next section. For now let us deal with the question of myth as a Gandhian idiom, and epic as a form that expresses it. First, epic as a form involves a certain secularization of myth. Whilst myths such as those associated with Kenchamma are associated with divine origins, epics are concerned with the doings of men.⁴⁸ Epic does, moreover, possess

a certain doubleness in its articulation in which the doings of men and the doings of gods are intimately interconnected and thus is an apposite form for Gandhian nationalism which is at once a secular ideology speaking with a sacred tongue. Second, epic and myth share common ground in that each of them are concerned with morality. This, of course, is a central Gandhian concern and it allows Rao to draw broad brush strokes in his portrayal of the nationalist struggle. Nationalism is now involved in a fight between the forces of good and evil. Such a process of mystification is ideologically necessary and it is for this reason that we find the diffusion of narrative clarity in the latter part of the novel. In what becomes a protracted battle between the villagers and the police, the latter are completely dehumanized and become embodiments of colonial oppression. Finally, epic and myth are both less concerned with mimeticism, with the messy complexities of everyday life, than with ideal types and principles. On the one hand, this counteracts the colonial 'ideology of the real' which invariably underlined an empiricist critique of Indian society, and on the other, it opposes the excessive ritualism and idolatrous emphases of most Hindu orthopraxies, which were rejected by Gandhi himself. As Judith Brown points out, Gandhi 'clearly did not believe in these deities in any literal way' but rather believed them to be symbolic representations of elemental forces and passions.⁴⁹ Thus Gandhi would talk of the gods as 'sheer poetry' but felt that 'veneration of these images had its proper place in religious devotion, provided that the "idols" were used as an aid to contemplation rather than worshipped themselves as physical objects'.⁵⁰ For Gandhi 'the touchstone was the human heart and understanding rather than outward action' and he 'felt that Hindus in the twentieth century were cluttered with a multiplicity of ceremonies which meant nothing'.⁵¹ Moreover, the central texts for Gandhi were the *Bhagavad Gita*, itself a part of one of India's great epics, the *Mahabharata*, and the other great epic the *Ramayana* which, by the way, Rao later cited as his 'book of books'.⁵² It is not surprising to find that in the Gandhian idiom ritualism is replaced by ideas and ideals.⁵³

The Gandhian idiom in *Kanthapura* approximates to Rao's conception of the ideal literary form for the novel in India. Rao seeks to make *Kanthapura* a totally new kind of novel which is ideologically compatible with Gandhian ideology. Thus, the novel becomes, in effect, a retelling of the *Ramayana*, an epic concerned with the loss and recovery of sovereignty. Throughout the novel parallels are made between Gandhi and Rama on the one hand, and between characters in the novel and those in the *Ramayana* on the other. In fact, the very first of these is to be found as early as the opening chapter, 'he [Moorthy] and Seenu were as, one would say, our Rama and our Lakshmana. They only needed a Sita to make it complete' (p. 5). These references accumulate throughout (Seenu is elsewhere compared with Hanuman) and culminate in the peasants' vision of Gandhi as Rama and of the Gandhian nation as a Rama-Rajya.

There is, however, one more reason why I believe Rao promoted epic as the form for the Indian novel. The epics are a rich source of mythology throughout India and provide a common platform from which to construct a new myth for a

new type of community: that of the nation. This is especially important in a country like India in which myths may differ greatly from region to region and community to community.⁵⁴ For if, as Mircea Eliade suggests, myth is intimately associated with ‘beginnings’ then the novel makes it clear that it seeks a new beginning and hence a new myth.⁵⁵ This concern is, of course, figured in the symbolic destruction of Kanthapura, and the final chapter looks forward to new beginnings as the villagers are brought out of the closed cyclical world of orthodoxy and on to the stage of history. Esha Dey sums it up quite nicely, ‘The life of Kanthapura, a hermetically sealed existence revolving eternally on its own axis, is destroyed forever at the end, and is drawn into the vortex of time.’⁵⁶

But for Rao, epic also allows for a strategic identification of the new with the old, of putting new wine in old skins. This, of course, mimics Gandhian strategy itself. The retelling of the *Ramayana* is not supposed to be a reenactment; the arrival of history means that one must discard the old, cyclical patterns of time and yet, at the same time, gesture back to mythical beginnings in a bid to give the new myth a similar metaphysical structure which can deliver similar incontestable truths. In effect, Rao needs to throw out the baby but keep the bath water.

This presents Rao with a similar ideological problem to that faced by Gandhi: how does he deliver a tale in which the ‘past mingles with the present’ and seems to project an unbroken continuity whilst actually conveying the desirability of a new beginning? At the same time, he is also attempting in this novel to illustrate the symbolic power of Gandhian ideology on the rural peasant sensibility, and this sensibility, as Shahid Amin has shown, deals with novelty by reinscribing it into existent patterns and motifs.⁵⁷ So, on the one hand Rao requires a narrator who can, in the very process of her narration, dramatize this process of ideological assimilation. The grandmother’s narration is thus conceived as a *skaz*, a writing effect which involves ‘an orientation toward oral speech’ which gives it a distinct social identity (in this case rural peasantry) ‘and carries with it a particular viewpoint that the author needs for his purpose.’⁵⁸ From the grandmother’s viewpoint the events she narrates are indeed a reenactment of primordial myths, whether of Kenchamma slaying the demon or the all-India myth of Rama into which it is later assimilated. Rao recognizes that the rural sensibility cannot simply be transformed into a modern one.

On the other hand, Rao must enable readers to see that this gesture is in fact only a symbolic parallel to the new beginning that the text wishes to celebrate. In tension with the narrator’s belief that the conflict with the colonial regime is merely a reenactment of a primordial drama, is the author’s point of view in which this conflict is historically specific, a moment of departure. Hence, at this level of narration, the text feels compelled to dissociate itself from the superstitions of the old myths. At the same time, the novel makes clear that the new beginning depends upon its assimilation by people like the narrator in order for the Gandhian project to succeed. This is why the narratological issue of beginnings raised at the start of this section is so important for it allows both perspectives. The novel hovers ambivalently between two ideologically distinct spaces: rejection of the old myths

in favour of a new kind of myth (nationalism), and a strategic recognition of the necessity of those old myths in order to enable the new beginning to actually begin. This, as we shall now see, was precisely the ideological dilemma faced by Nehru, the modernist intelligentsia and the left paradigms in their relation to Gandhism. It is also the point at which we begin to reveal a set of ideological determinations upon this novel other than the Gandhian paradigm.

The unmaking of Gandhian ideology: part 1

Thus far the novel has presented a tripartite structure in which it clearly celebrates and promotes Gandhian ideology. In formal terms, it presents us homologous idioms which correspond to certain literary forms. But in so doing Rao creates a formal problem for himself because, according to his homology, the colonial matrix is associated with the novel and, whatever else might be claimed about it, *Kanthapura* is indeed a recognizable novel. On what basis, then, can Rao claim that *Kanthapura* is a genuine expression of Indian national identity? It is precisely for this reason that I think Rao desperately tries to persuade the reader that *Kanthapura* is not a novel but a *sthalapurana*. In this respect, the famous preface to the novel becomes something of an ideological scaffold which supports his rather disingenuous claim. It is on this basis too that the stylistics of the novel attempt to convey a sense of estrangement to the reader who is, it is assumed, accustomed to reading novels of another kind. Hence also the ideological importance of the *skaz* as a means of expressing orality as well as defining a certain social accent for it; after all, a village peasant is hardly likely to be familiar with the mechanisms of writing a novel. Add to this the style of English too, which one critic has pointed out is said to both approximate the expressive style of Indian villagers and, by the same token, 'may also be pointed out as a sign of bad English'.⁵⁹ Unfortunately, the same critic fails to point out that this linguistic vandalism is part of an ideological strategy designed to create the impression that one is not reading – or hearing – a novel but rather a *purana*.⁶⁰

However, these stylistic attempts to defamiliarize the reader should not divert us from the fact that *Kanthapura* is indeed a novel. It is, therefore, refreshing to read Esha Dey's exposition of Rao's stylistics in *Kanthapura*. In her book, *The Novels of Raja Rao*, she places these stylistic strategies in *Kanthapura* under close scrutiny. She notes, for example, the 'informal and intimate tone of the whole narrative,' is in stark contrast to the 'style of the ancient puranas . . . [which is] simple, impersonal and formal'.⁶¹ Furthermore, the attempt at 'mythification' is also, as Dey rightly points out, 'a rhetorical use of language [designed] to counteract linguistic realism, in establishing the distance from the actual which is an essential requirement of mythical representation'.⁶² Dey suggests that Rao attempts to do this by a process of 'poeticization' which involves the use of some of the 'rhetorical devices of poetry' such as syntactic inversion, for example.⁶³ Yet this also distances the novel from the *purana* since it implicitly recognizes 'the novel as a verbal construct', whereas in the *puranic* tradition 'language is

diaphanous and the whole motive . . . entirely content-oriented'.⁶⁴ Why, then, does Rao claim that the narrative idiom is *puranic* when in fact it is not?

One might add that Rao's stylistic effects do not necessarily establish the novel as being in 'consonance with Kannada or Sanskrit habit' since the same effects are seen to be important aspects of the French and English literary traditions, particularly the use of syntactic inversion which, as Dey rather acidly remarks, 'is actually conditioned by a long and established western practice . . . Rao's "abnormality" in syntax draws entirely on the English literary tradition'.⁶⁵ This is ironic indeed but it gives us some indication as to why Rao so assiduously attempts to persuade and estrange the reader into thinking s/he is not reading a novel. This endeavour only really achieves full significance in the context of the ideological problem that Rao has himself set up. This is the great weakness as well as strength of a text which basically simplifies the field of power into a straight fight between nationalists and anti-nationalists. In the process of constructing such a scenario, Rao has embarked upon drawing formal correlations between the protagonists and certain idioms of expression but finds that his own chosen form falls on the wrong side of the ideological divide – hence the attempt to mask the fact that it does.

This paradox between the ideology of the content and the ideology of the form also possesses a deeper significance which is again a consequence of the simplification of the field of power. In associating the modern matrix exclusively with the colonial system Rao is actually forced to elide the modernist dimension of Indian nationalism itself and suppress another set of ideological determinations which, in the 1930s, would have exerted powerful pressures upon a modern, cosmopolitan and intellectually sophisticated writer such as himself. One may read this paradox as a sign of the ideological conflict within Rao and his social and intellectual class toward Gandhism. In this, of course, he shares his position with nationalists such as Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose. For these nationalists, like Rao himself, both recognized the strategic value of Gandhism as an ideology and yet believed it limited their quest for a more modernist, progressive nationalism.

It can be argued that this ambivalence is rendered visible by the considerable anxiety over modernity in this novel, and is represented formally in the tension between realism and myth as representational idioms. For despite Rao's systematic attempts to create a mythic idiom and an epic form, there runs throughout this attempt a subterranean strain of realism, which seeks to undermine and reveal the limits of what is mythologized. As Dey points out, realism and myth are, to a large extent, incompatible and realism is, according to the tripartite structure of the novel itself, associated with modernity.⁶⁶ But at this 'subterranean' level of the text, one must read the spectre of modernity as being not associated with colonialism (although indirectly, of course, it is) but rather with the nationalist left and, in particular, the 'Nehruvian' paradigm.⁶⁷ In this regard, we may note that Rao, on his return to India, became associated with the cultural vanguard of the nationalist left, the Progressive Writers Movement, and in fact coedited their journal *Tomorrow* in 1942 with Ahmed Ali.⁶⁸ In addition, it must also be pointed out that the stated aesthetic position of the PWM was a fastidious concern for

realism in literature as a means of capturing the specific qualities of contemporary Indian society; for an expressive rationality to set against what they saw as the bogus irrationality of Indian cultural practices; and for looking forward to a socialist India firmly ensconced in modernity. Unsurprisingly, this vision of Indian nationalism was often in an ambiguous and uneasy relationship with that of the Mahatma. This ambiguity is perhaps most acutely illustrated by Rao's own early writings, especially *Kanthapura*.

Of course, Gandhi also found himself in an uneasy and ambiguous relationship with modernity but, as we have seen, modernity was never allowed to undermine his explicitly anti-modernist positions. Rather, it was symbolically controlled and held in a state of perpetual tension. Writing a generation on, and having witnessed the rise of Nehru and the left, having come into contact with socialistic and progressive writers in France (in particular Malraux),⁶⁹ Rao is much more 'pro-modern' and thus we find a consistent modernist 'underground' running through the text which seems to affirm a more 'leftist' ideological position. His Gandhism is inflected by this different ideological constellation and becomes, in effect, a different form of Gandhism.

This modernist underground runs right the way through the novel but it is most visible in certain ruptures in the text when the logic of the text seems to run against its own grain. The most significant of these ruptures is Moorthy's letter to Ratna in the final chapter of the novel. Moorthy had hitherto been the ideal Gandhian, a true *satyagrahi*; however, after the novel's climax he writes a letter in which he switches his allegiance to Nehru, arguing in much the same way that Nehru and other left leaders in Congress did, that although the Mahatma was a great man and that he had provided a crucial strategic impetus to the movement, the ways of the Mahatma were not the ways of the 'real' world. Then comes the decisive rupture, 'And yet, what is the goal? Independence? Swaraj? Is there not Swaraj in our states, and is there not misery and corruption and cruelty there? Oh no Ratna, it is the way of the masters that is wrong' (pp. 180–1). This last reference is an anachronism for Moorthy is supposedly writing his letter in 1931–2, a full 3½ years before the Government of India Act of 1935, and a full 5 years before the first Indian-administered provincial ministries of 1937. It is highly likely that Rao is alluding to a contemporary reference months before the publication of his text in 1938, and is specifically gesturing to the fact that although most states possessed Congress ministries they were often far from progressive in the leftist sense.⁷⁰ In particular, the Congress ministries of south India, in which Rao had a special interest (he may also be referring obliquely to the princely states as well, especially his home state of Mysore and his adopted home state of Hyderabad),⁷¹ have been described by one historian as 'so intolerant of and hostile to the peasant labour movement that when it [Congress] ruled Madras Presidency it let loose the police and reserve police to terrorise them'.⁷² In one sentence, the modernist underground demolishes the carefully constructed ideological position elaborated at the surface level of the text. Congress is no longer an ideologically uniform organization, walking harmoniously in the footsteps of the Mahatma. Nor can

it claim to be the mythic protagonist that the surface level of the text idealizes it to be. In place of unanimity there is dissent.

Tracing back this modernist underground we find that it emerges at other, less conspicuous rupture points in the text. Here is one in the opening chapter, as the narrator describes the effect of the Kenchamma myth on the physical geography of the locality, ‘she fought for so many a night that the blood soaked and soaked into the earth, and that is why the Kenchamma hill is all red’ (p. 2). She then launches upon a justification of her statement, ‘If not, tell me, sister, why should it be red only from the Tippur stream upwards . . . Tell me, how could this happen, if it were not for Kenchamma and her battle?’ One feels compelled to ask to whom she is addressing this statement. We should not be diverted into thinking that the word ‘sister’ here means that she is addressing an imaginary audience of sceptical villagers since one thing the novel does show is that the villagers are a highly credulous lot. Rather, she is addressing the reader who, it can be reasonably assumed, is likely to be an educated, urban Indian possessing a modern, ‘scientific’ rationality. This presence of the reader/listener within the body of the text is, of course, an integral device of Rao’s construction of a *skaz*. But it also means that within the layers of text there is imbricated a modernist scepticism which is in conflict with the ‘mythic’ sensibility of the narrating grandmother. It surfaces again in the Skeffington Estate, gently and ironically undermining the coolies’ superstitions and their rejection of modern medicine (pp. 52–3). At other times the scepticism is voiced by characters within the novel. Dorè, who has been to the city for a modern education, responds to Rangamma’s mythologization of Gandhi’s Salt March with the sarcastic remark, “‘This is all *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*; such things never happen in our times.”” (p. 120), and Vasudev, another ‘city-boy’ quells the villagers’ optimism over Moorthy’s acquittal with crushing realism, “‘The Goddess will never fail us – she will free him from the clutches of the Red Man.”” But Vasudev, who was a city boy, said, “‘No sister, they will give him a good six months.”” (p. 92).

Although the ‘sceptical’ rationality becomes apparent only at certain moments its significance lies in the fact that it reveals a compulsive logic throughout this level of the text towards narrative realism. Thus, at the same time as the surface level rejects the logic of realism in favour of idealization and mythologization, at this level the text remorselessly exposes the limits of the Gandhian ideology. It does this in three specific ways. First, it illustrates the limits of Gandhism on the peasant sensibility and in so doing circumscribes its effectiveness. This is mainly figured in terms of the peasants’ deviation from the principles of *ahimsa*. Take for example this exchange between Moorthy and Patel Gowda,

‘Ah!’ says Rangè Gowda. ‘And I shall not close my eyes till that dog has eaten filth’, but Moorthy interrupts him and says such things are not to be said, and that hatred should be plucked out of our hearts, and that the Mahatma says you must love even your enemies. ‘That’s for the Mahatma and you, Moorthappa – not for us poor folk!’ (p. 69).

Not only does almost every act of civil disobedience in the novel degenerate into violent physical conflict but such violence is always graphically represented, 'he had seen Putamma and the policeman on her, and he had fallen upon the policeman and torn his moustache and banged and banged his head against a tree' (p. 156). This is very perceptive on Rao's part since peasant participation in the nationalist movement very rarely conformed to the tenets of Gandhism. As Shahid Amin points out, the violent episodes in Chauri Chaura which brought Non-Cooperation to a halt were rooted in the paradox between Gandhism and the peasants' reception of it.⁷³ As a result, 'a "jaikar" of adoration and adulation' quickly became 'the rallying cry for direct action' and 'was now a cry with which an attack on a market or a thana was announced. "Mahatma Gandhi ki jai" had, in this context, assumed the function of such traditional war cries as "Jai Mahabir" or "Bam Bam Mahadeo".'⁷⁴

Nor were the peasants as controllable by the channels of Congress authority as the surface ideology represents. Undoubtedly in some areas, notably Gujarat, Congress did manage to maintain a considerable grip on peasant activity but for the most part peasant militancy also revolved around a certain independence of vision and discrepancy between Congress's goals and their own. It has been pointed out that the peasant response to the Gandhi-Irwin pact was one of outrage and a refusal to cease agitation, especially the no-tax campaigns,⁷⁵ and Amin suggests that 'Though deriving their legitimacy from the supposed orders of Gandhi, peasant actions were framed in terms of what was popularly regarded to be just, fair and possible.'⁷⁶ Thus it is that Moorthy repeatedly feels confused by the discrepancy between the peasants' expectations and his own, between his own interpretation of Gandhism and theirs, as we see in the following two episodes:

'And you are the soldiers of the Mahatma? And it's you who defied the police?' and Moorthy smiles and says, 'Yes mother', and she says, 'Then you'll free us from the revenue collector?' and Moorthy says, 'What revenue collector?' – 'Why Raghavayya, the one who takes bribes and beats his wife and sends his servants to beat us', – and Moorthy does not know what to answer (p. 134).

and then he says, 'I ask you: will you spin a hundred yards of yarn per day?' But Madanna's wife says, 'I'm going to have a child,' and Satanna's wife says, 'I'm going for my brother's marriage' and her sister says, 'I'll spin if it will bring money. I don't want cloth like Timayya and Madayya get with all their turning of the wheel . . .' And Moorthy feels this is awful and nothing can be done about these women (p. 72).

The impasse derives from different horizons of expectations: for the nationalist the goal is swaraj but for the peasant it is the removal of tax burdens, the chance to reduce their poverty, and a release from the tyranny of government agents such as the police. The abstract goal of national self-determination is contradicted in many ways by the more direct and earthy concerns of the peasantry.

This brings us to the second point, namely the framing of nationalism – whether Gandhian or Nehruvian – in terms of a hierarchical relationship between the town and the country. The Gandhian hero, Moorthy, reaches an impasse with the other peasants precisely because his Gandhism is an idealistic, urbanized Gandhism quite distinct from the Gandhism of the peasants. Thus it is that the novel's ideological inflection is urban in origin and sympathy even though, at the surface level, the novel stands in a line of 'Gandhian' novels from the mid-1920s which sought to turn the aesthetic spotlight on to rural India. In this respect, part of the text's ideology is to suggest an unproblematic identification between Gandhism and rural life. However, the disavowal of the city that this implies is exposed by the modernist level to be merely rhetorical. Throughout the novel, the centrality of urban life is maintained: it is in the city that the Gandhians meet on the maidan and expose the Swami; it is in the city that the 'perfect' Gandhian character of Sankar resides; it is in the city that Rangamma becomes radicalized and converted to Gandhian nationalism; and it is from the city that the Congress volunteers come to direct the climactic conflict with the Raj. In fact, throughout the novel, the aspirations and motivations of the villagers are placed at the disposal of city-educated boys, from Moorthy to those who direct the finale. Thus the role of the villagers in this novel becomes nothing more than that assigned to them by an urban Congress organization, i.e. as 'followers', and a willing acceptance of this role by the villagers themselves. If this élitism seems somewhat incongruous for a left-wing ideology then it must also be borne in mind that élitism within Indian nationalism was institutionalized to such an extent that hierarchy in one form or another was more or less assumed, even on the left. Throughout, Indian nationalism was sustained by a paternalism which emanated from the enlightened urban space out towards the *mofussil*. It was this kind of paternalism which could sustain the Nehruvian paradigm's insistence that 'there shall be neither rich nor poor' and be 'equal-distributionist' (p. 181) and yet at the same time reserve the right for the urbane, nationalist intelligentsia to speak for and decide the fate of the poor.⁷⁷

Thus, the modernist underground of this text exposes the disavowal of the city on the surface level as merely rhetorical. Interestingly, it was on this point that Gandhi himself was most uncompromising. For him urban life was intrinsically sinful and to be unequivocally rejected. The distance between that and even the surface level rhetoric of disavowal in *Kanthapura* is marked. Yes, on the one hand the city is rejected – Moorthy does, after all, leave the city; the novel after all does for the most part concentrate on village India – and yes, the city is identified with colonial authority. But, on the other hand, the novel is aware of the need to build a national solidarity between country and city and in so doing takes modern urban life in India to be a fact which can neither be removed nor should be removed; beyond that it identifies the city as the source of salvation – a complete inversion of Gandhi's own position.

A third means by which the logic of realism undermines the mythologizations of the surface ideology is through the exposure of *khadi*. It has been demonstrated

above how Rao substitutes *khadi* for Gandhian economics as a whole, and in so doing places the emphasis on economics over and above the moral aspect which for Gandhi was, ideally, more important. But the emphasis on economics, coupled with a greater sympathy towards modernity, actually undermines the surface position of *khadi* as an alternative moral economy and exposes *khadi* as already being fully incorporated into the logic of capital. This totally undermines the value of *khadi* which, for Gandhi, was a means toward the dissolution of capital *per se*. Hence, in a significant moment we find that the spinning wheel, that potent symbol of rural self-sufficiency, is actually mass-produced in the city, ‘they had even brought spinning wheels from the city’ (p. 16). The logic of capital so dominates in the novel that even though it is explicitly identified as helping the colonial and orthodox matrices consolidate their dominance, Moorthy and Congress find it indispensable. That this exposure of *khadi* is derived from the compulsion towards realism at this level of the text can be verified by merely looking at the way that, for pragmatic political reasons, Gandhi himself was forced to compromise the ideal conception of *khadi* since ‘Business support for foreign-cloth boycott was an urgent necessity . . . without commercial assistance a large-scale campaign would have inadequate financial foundations’.⁷⁸ Thus, the only viable means of engaging in large-scale political conflict meant, ironically, that even as *khadi* was promoted on the back of a foreign cloth boycott, in the long term the logic of capital (Indian capital this time) remained undisturbed and dominant. In other words, Gandhi was forced to pronounce the short term and pragmatic economic logic of *khadi* at the cost of the long-term ideal. The structure of political conflict in India meant that the ideal orientation of *khadi* was hamstrung from the start. *Kanthapura* merely underlines this point.

The unmaking of Gandhian ideology: part 2

Is it possible that there is yet another set of ideological determinations to this novel, yet another level insinuating itself deeper but more significantly within the substratum of the text, suppressed and silenced but, at a crucial moment, rupturing the text and making itself known? Consider, then, this small sub-narrative which ostensibly seeks to celebrate the integrity of the ideal *satyagrahi* lawyer, Sankar. In the process of describing Sankar’s honesty, the narrator relates an event which made his honesty famous:

you know how he withdrew in the last criminal case they had in Karwar. You see, this is what really happened. One Rahman Khan was supposed to have tried to murder one Subba Chetty, for Subba Chetty had taken away his mistress Dasi. And everyone said, ‘Poor Subba Chetty, poor Subba Chetty!’ – and everyone said, ‘He will win the case easily.’ And Subba Chetty was an old client of Sankar and so he goes to Sankar and tells him the story and swears it is all true, and Sankar says, ‘Now this is going to be a criminal case and if you have hidden a thing as small as a hair you will come to grief Subba Chetty!’ (p. 97).

It turns out, however, that this is far from the truth. When the key witness, Dasi, is finally made to testify an entirely different account emerges:⁷⁹

and Dasi runs up to the advocate and falls at his feet and says, 'I know nothing, father! Nothing!' And when Sankar hears that, he asks the judge for permission to speak to his client, and he says to Subba Chetty, 'On your mother's honour, tell me if you have not concocted the story to pinch Rahman Khan's coconut garden?' And Subba Chetty trembles and says, 'No, no, Sankarappa!' But Sankar has seen the game and he turns to the magistrate and says, 'I beg to ask your Lordship for an adjournment,' and the magistrate, who knows Sankar's ways, says, 'Well, you have it.' When Sankar gets back home, he asks Subba Chetty to speak the truth, and Subba Chetty tells him how he had employed Dasi to go and live with Rahman Khan and to enrage him against Subba Chetty, 'with drink and smoke and lust,' and with drink and smoke and lust Rahman Khan had cried out he would murder that Subba Chetty and had run out with an axe and Subba Chetty had cried out, 'Murder! Murder!' in the middle of the street, and Dasi had run out innocently and tried to calm Rahman Khan, who was so weak that he had rolled upon the earth, an opium lump. And when Sankar heard this he said, 'Go and confess this to the Magistrate,' and the next day the magistrate gave him three years rigorous imprisonment, with one year for Dasi. And Sankar had asked pardon in public of Rahman Khan, who got six months, too (pp. 97-8).

A number of questions strike one as being immediately significant here. First, where did this happen? Did it happen in Kanthapura or elsewhere? Second, is this the same Subba Chetty who, we are told on the opening page, owns a shop in Kanthapura? And if it did happen in Kanthapura from where did this phantasmagoric Muslim, Rahman Khan, appear? It would seem that he has been living in Kanthapura all along but has not been mentioned.

To begin with Subba Chetty. We should not be diverted by the relative formality of the narrator's introduction to the incident, 'one Rahman Khan . . . one Subba Chetty' for although this may be interpreted as a sign of unfamiliarity with these characters on the narrator's part, it can also, in the context of the passage, be interpreted as a Bakhtinian heteroglossic parody of legalistic discourse. By mimicking legalistic discourse, the narrator seeks to legitimize her claim that 'this is what really happened' since we all know by now that the villagers are inveterate rumour mongers. In addition to this, a note of familiarity is introduced later in the passage, ' "Poor Subba Chetty" ', and a filial allusion is made just before this passage since it seems that Subba Chetty's brother Rama, another resident of Kanthapura, has also been involved with Sankar and has also been fraudulent in some way, 'he withdrew in the case between Shopkeeper Rama Chetty and Contractor Seenappa over false accounts' (p. 97). We might also note the

reputation that the Chetty brothers have in Kanthapura as swindling money-lenders (p. 24). If money-lending is a means for Bhatta to acquire land, through defaults, it is reasonable to assume that Subba Chetty is involved in the same game. We have already been told that Subba Chetty owns a great deal of land and it might be the case that his attempts to acquire Rahman Khan's coconut garden had floundered and had thus driven him to this scheme. Whatever the case, it seems reasonable to assume that the Subba Chetty in this sub-narrative is the same Subba Chetty who is a resident of Kanthapura. Finally, in addition to the character profile one might add that Rao, as a novelist, is extremely judicious in his naming of characters and despite the many names bandied about it is always possible for the careful reader to keep track of who is who. In fact, Rao never duplicates a name such is his meticulousness.

If Subba Chetty lives in Kanthapura, then it is also reasonable to conclude that the street in which the incident took place is also in Kanthapura. Furthermore, it is also reasonable to conclude that Rahman Khan not only resides in Kanthapura but also owns land there. This is a problem for a number of reasons. First, he has not been mentioned once and although it might be objected that not everyone in the village could possibly be mentioned, the presence of a Muslim in such an orthodox 'Hindu' village at least merits mention. If one returns to the delineation of space in the village which is divided into caste quarters, we find no mention of a Muslim quarter – and it is unlikely that only a single Muslim would reside there since for rural Indians communal life is of paramount importance. Moreover, we can recall that Badè Khan, when he arrives in the village, seeks shelter but Rangè Gowda neglects to mention the house of Rahman Khan. Indeed, following on from the description of the village space, we sense that the reason for Badè Khan's exclusion from the village is because he is an outsider, both on account of his job and his religion. Nevertheless, it seems quite clear from this passage that Rahman Khan's house is quite proximate to Subba Chetty's.

What ideological significance, then, does the 'phantasm' of Rahman Khan have in the context of the novel? First let us look again at the characterization of Rahman Khan in this passage and of Muslim characters in general. We notice immediately that Rahman Khan seems to conform precisely to the caricature of the dissolute Muslim; he is an opium addict, a drunkard, and sexually licentious to boot. All the associations of decadence which had been formerly attached to the aristocratic Muslim élite are here attached to the figure of Rahman Khan. In fact he is represented as quite a pathetic character – if he can be called a character. Being a caricature he is also, therefore, a representative figure symbolizing the novel's attitude to Muslims in general. It is quite significant that throughout the novel, Islam is identified as a threatening force, even in Jayaramachar's *Harikatha* in which the only threat to the Mahatma comes from an 'ignorant Pathan' (p. 12). Thus, we find that all the representatives of colonial authority are Muslims, from Badè Khan to the 'young Badè Khan [who] had joined the bearded one' (p. 117). Like Badè Khan himself, he too mirrors the habits of the colonial planter by living on the estate and by taking for himself concubines among the coolie women.

Islam, degenerate and treacherous, seems to become an anti-national sign which needs to be symbolically contained and subordinated. Hence we find that the authority of the Mahatma stupefies the Pathan, or that the role of Indian Muslims in the struggle against the British is excised. In a crucial passage eulogizing the rebellion of 1857, in which the role of the Rani Lakshmi Bai is foregrounded, the narrative focus is exclusively upon Rajput resistance (p. 104). This Rajputization of the rebellion neglects to mention, however, that the rebellion formally organized itself around the banner of the last Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah II, and that by far the greatest number of combatants were, in fact, Muslims. Whilst Rajputs are symbolically compared in glory and valour to the British, the Muslims are rather ignominiously expelled from Indian history. This symbolic containment is perhaps metaphorically expressed by Rahman Khan's incarceration, despite his innocence.

So, in spite of the novel's overt ideological stance on Hindu-Muslim unity, it seems to be the case that at a further underground level of the text there is an incipient communalism which, it may be argued, actually overdetermines the ideology of the entire novel. One of the reasons why the Muslim is such a figure of anxiety, despite the fact that in demographic terms they made up only 5.8 per cent of the Mysore population,⁸⁰ is that Rao is gravitating in the all-India field towards the ideological positions of the Hindu nationalists who had been emerging as an ideological force since the end of Non-Cooperation. By the mid-1930s, Hindu nationalism had begun to achieve quite a sophisticated ideological dimension after the work of V.D. Savarkar, K.B. Hedgewar, and finally, M.S. Golwalkar. Christophe Jaffrelot proposes an interesting thesis to explain the ideological impetus of Hindu nationalism. He suggests that these ideologues constructed a 'Hindu' identity through a simultaneous process of stigmatizing and emulating 'threatening Others' such as Muslims and the British. This strategy developed out of an inferiority complex which perceives other communities as a threat to the very existence of the Hindu self (despite the Hindus' numerical advantage), and at the same time emulating those very features which are deemed to be the other's strength and thus the basis of their 'threat' to the Hindu community.⁸¹ One of the threatening features of the Islamic community that was also deemed to be its source of strength was its unity and thus unity became a model for emulation. Take B.S. Moonje's report on the Mapilla riots, for example, in which he bemoans 'the lack of a common meeting place in the Hindu polity . . . just as the Mahommedan has his Masjid . . . [where Muslims] vividly visualise and imbibe the feeling of oneness and the identity of the social and religious interests'.⁸²

Recognizing the need for an 'ecclesiastical structure' similar to that which Christians and Muslims already possessed, these ideologues began to turn their attention to the problem of caste in Hindu society.⁸³ In so doing they set forth to engender reform of the caste system and to remove caste thresholds which they believed were an obstacle to the unification of Hindus into a common religious, social and political community. And they sought to do this at first by proclaiming

a reformed *varna* system in the face of increasing agitation and militancy by untouchables and other low-caste groups. This, as we have seen, was precisely the manoeuvre effected by Gandhi himself, especially during the 1920s, and its aim was the reintegration of 'excluded' communities into the fold. Hence, the Hindu Mahasabha voted in 1923 'in favour of resolutions calling for untouchables to enjoy full access to roads, schools, wells and even temples'.⁸⁴ But just as Gandhi's reformulation of the *varna* system involved a set of assumptions which surreptitiously maintained caste hierarchies, so too did the reformulation conceived by the Hindu nationalists for this 'egalitarianism was presented in an 'organicist' model of society in which the social hierarchy was merely relaxed . . . and the caste system was to be reformed largely in order legitimise it'.⁸⁵

However, after Hedgewar broke away to form the RSS his successor, Golwalkar, returned to the problem of caste but this time reinterpreted the problem through the institutional paradigms of the RSS. The main RSS institution revolved around a space symbolically conceived as being outside the rules of 'normal' society, in effect a reformulation of the *ashram*, and closely tied to the *shakha* (local branch). This space was the *akhara* and, nominally at least, it was for Golwalkar a space in which caste was non-existent. As Jaffrelot points out, 'Golwalkar did not aspire to re-establish the ancient order of the *varnas* through the RSS but to abolish caste so as to build a nation defined as an "aggregate of individuals"'.⁸⁶ But two things qualified this seemingly more unequivocal egalitarianism. The first was the demographic composition of RSS membership, which was overwhelmingly derived from the upper castes; the second was the fact that the space of the *akhara* was, like Gandhi's *varna*, mainly symbolic and contained. Egalitarianism operates only within this space but outside hierarchy still prevails.

This departure of communalist ideology in the late 1930s is rather aptly described by Gyan Pandey as 'upper-caste racism' precisely because it takes the form of 'socio-cultural domination' from which the religious elements seem to have been extracted but which reintroduce the forms of domination traditionally sanctioned by religious scriptures, through the back door as it were.⁸⁷ Thus, for our purposes an analysis of any incipient communalism in *Kanthapura* needs not only to focus on the text's representation of Hindu-Muslim relations but also on two other things specific to the Hindu community itself, which may indicate the kind of Hindu community that is ideologically desired.

The first of these is an insistent anxiety over caste thresholds. Whilst the surface ideology of the novel celebrates, in Gandhian fashion, the inversion of the calculus of pollution/purity which measured and policed caste thresholds, and whilst it ostensibly celebrates the transgression of these thresholds, there is nevertheless a hesitation figured by the constant highlighting of the 'threshold' as a trope throughout the novel. One incident exemplifies this perfectly. As Moorthy is arrested for the first time, he is 'seen on the threshold, the bright light of the police lantern falling on his knit face' (p. 83). One is tempted to say that the novel is being self-reflexive here, that the brief moment of illumination actually gestures towards and illuminates what is one of the most important issues in the novel.

Indeed, the word ‘threshold’ is probably one of the most reiterated words in the novel. Here is Moorthy hesitating over entering a pariah’s house, ‘Moorthy thinks that this is something new, and with one foot to the back and one foot to the fore, he stands trembling and undecided, and then suddenly hurries up the steps and crosses the threshold’ (p. 71). Most critical accounts of this vital moment tend to stress the realism of Rao’s characterization with the emphasis falling squarely on ‘trembling and undecided’.⁸⁸ In this context, however, the crucial words are ‘crosses the threshold’. A few pages later, as the pariahs gather for a Congress meeting which Moorthy himself has called, Moorthy reaches an impasse of conscience as the pariahs themselves refuse to cross the temple threshold (p. 75). One could go on and cite every time attention is brought to the ‘threshold’ but the list would be too long. One more example may suffice: Moorthy, having committed himself to Gandhism (i.e. having in effect crossed his caste threshold), refuses to cross back, ‘Moorthy sits by the kitchen threshold and eats like a servant’ (p. 43). Moorthy’s actions here implicitly recognize the hierarchy which he has transgressed but which, by refusing to transgress again, he affirms is still valid. In other words he implicitly recognizes that because the threshold itself, as a structuring principle, is still valid, he, by transgressing it, has lost his former status and is now no more than a ‘servant’. This overwhelming anxiety marks a hesitancy over the transgression of thresholds which, according to the surface ideology of the text, should be celebrated unequivocally. The ‘threshold’ as an issue looms so large that one detects Rao’s own repressed concern over its transgression.

The second aspect both reinforces our suspicions about Rao’s anxiety over thresholds and confirms that the ideological sympathy of the novel at this level is with ‘upper-caste racism’. The anxiety over thresholds is given form and substance when we notice a putative brahminical supremacism running throughout the novel which goes beyond the banal observation that all Rao’s protagonists, in *Kanthapura* and other novels, are brahmins. Other, more subtle, instances of brahmin supremacy are more rewarding when it comes to tracing the inflections of Rao’s caste bias. Throughout the novel we find that any form of action must first pass through the legitimizing conduit of brahmin authority. Conversely, the pariahs are represented as being unanimously cowardly and without initiative unless a brahmin leads them. After Moorthy’s arrest we hear that the pariahs refuse to carry civil disobedience further (p. 107). Earlier, two slight incidents reveal this dynamic of brahmin supremacy and pariah dependency very well. Although the planter forces young coolie girls to have sex with him through a number of repressive sanctions, ‘It’s only when it is a Brahmin clerk that the master is timid’ (p. 55). We learn, of course, of the brahmin Seetharam’s earlier resistance, his murder and the subsequent trouble that the planter finds himself in. This explains the planter’s timidity with brahmins; but it also postulates that only a brahmin would resist the planter for the sake of his daughter. The pariah and other low-caste families are represented as paradigms of mute passivity. When we turn the page we find that the pariahs are terrified of Badè Khan who only has to ‘sneeze or cough and everybody will say “I lick your feet!”’ (p. 56). Not so ‘Those Brahmin

clerks Gangadhar and Vasudev [who] go straight in front of him and do not care for the beard of Badè Khan' (p. 56). The narrator tells us that this fearlessness is because they are city boys (which makes one wonder what they are doing as coolies on a coffee plantation since earlier in the chapter it is made quite clear that the coolies are recruited from villages) but taken together with Seetharam on the previous page, it is certainly as much to do with their caste as with their urban backgrounds. Brahmin agency and dynamism, contrasted with pariah passivity, is then made explicit, 'And it is they indeed, Gangadhar and Vasudev, that *took* the Pariahs down to Kanthapura for the bhajans and it is *they* that asked our learned Moorthy to come up' (p. 56 my emphases). One may add that on this score, Rao's use of the *Ramayana* rather than the *Mahabharata* as the template for his novel may also be a register of 'upper-caste racism'. As Tabish Khair points out, 'the *Ramayana* – and not the *Mahabharata* – is the epitome of upper-caste, largely Brahminical value systems in India,' and one needs only to scan briefly the agitational flashpoints of recent BJP campaigns, notably Babri Masjid, to concur.⁸⁹

Yet again there are interesting narratological dimensions to be considered here. For it is legitimate to ask who is inflecting the narrative with this brahminical supremacism; is it Rao or the narrator? I have already suggested that Rao's presence is perceptible because of the 'sceptical' voice which underlies the grandmother's narrative and towards which it adopts a somewhat spectral antagonism. It might be added that the third-person 'omniscient' narration of significant passages in the novel also testifies to Rao's authorial presence, as does the fact that the gentle ironizing of the narrator signifies an alternative narratorial position from which such irony is projected. However, Rao's adoption of *skaz* does offer an opportunity for him to hide this presence and to mask the communalism of the 'author' behind that of the 'narrator'. It becomes a question of representation and mediation: it may well be the mediation of the grandmother that leads us to believe that the pariahs are mute and passive; that it is because of her prejudice that it seems that only brahmins can act. On the other hand, it may also be the case that it is not she who is responsible for the narrative 'action' – for Vasudev and Gangadhar's actions, for Seetharam's defiance, or the pariahs' inaction. In narratological terms, these are not part of the grandmother's *reçit* but of the novel's *histoire*.

There may also be regional inflections to Rao's brahminical supremacism since brahmins in south India enjoyed considerable social privileges and yet made up only 3 per cent of the population.⁹⁰ They perceived themselves to be custodians of a Sanskrit culture which had come to be increasingly identified with an 'Aryan' conquest of south India by significant numbers of educated non-brahmins.⁹¹ Hence, as Chandrashekar points out, although 'Brahmins and non-Brahmins were [not] worlds apart . . . the dichotomy remained potential enough to trigger off several conflicts'.⁹² Throughout the nineteenth century, brahmins in the south faced organized political resistance in a manner totally unknown in other parts of India. Because of the organized strength of the Justice Party on the one hand, and the increasing socio-economic dominance of brahmins on the other, 'Every

appointment and every incident in the country came to be discussed upon communal and caste lines'.⁹³ In fact, the cleavage was significant enough and wide enough for non-brahmin and brahmin politics to assume mutually exclusive spheres of activity.⁹⁴ In this climate of suspicion and hostility, it is unsurprising to find deep within *Kanthapura* both an implicit, patronizing hostility towards other castes, and by the same token, an anxiety centring around Brahmin vulnerability in the face of the overwhelming numbers of non-brahmins.

Thus it seems that there is indeed a communal underground to the novel which coexists with an overt Gandhian ideology and sympathy for the Nehruvian/left paradigm. Before we proceed to draw out some of the implications of this let us try to explain why we should not allow ourselves to be diverted by, first, a seeming contradiction between sympathy for the Nehruvian paradigm and an incipient communalism given that it was Nehru who expelled the Hindu Mahasabha from Congress because of its communalism; and second, by the attack on orthodoxy in the novel. At the outset one must recognize two things: that communalism and sympathy for left-wing ideologies were not incompatible; and that communalist ideology was by no means merely a recapitulation of 'orthodoxy'.

To take up the latter issue first, it seems necessary to begin by examining what exactly is meant by the term 'orthodox', and hence the differences between orthodox ideology and Hindu communal ideology. Judith Brown notes that Gandhi was accompanied by Pandit Malaviya on his trip to Britain for the Second Round Table Conference.⁹⁵ She also notes how Malaviya took with him gallons of ritually pure milk because he was not allowed to take a cow on board the ship. She thus describes him as orthodox. But Malaviya was also a leading member of the Hindu Mahasabha, a communal organization within which there were many 'reformist' Hindus, some even radically reformist (such as Savarkar, who was to become president of the Mahasabha in 1937, and B.S. Moonje, whose protege, Hedgewar, formed the RSS in 1925), and which had negotiated the Poona Pact with Dr Ambedkar's untouchables; Malaviya was a crucial figure in these negotiations. The Pact agreed concessions (drafted by Gandhi) to untouchables to which, it would seem, no self-respecting sanatanist (orthodox) Hindu would agree such as 'no Hindu should be regarded as untouchable because of his birth, and that all those who had once been untouchables would now have equal access with other Hindus to all public institutions, including wells, roads, and schools'.⁹⁶ How, then, does one define what is meant by orthodox? Under some definitions, Malaviya's trip to England, never mind the Poona Pact, would be considered unorthodox. Also, at what point, if any, does communalism become incommensurate with orthodoxy? There were, indeed, considerable differences of opinion between the two centring around the Hindu nationalists' eagerness for a unified ecclesiastical structure and for reconversion programmes, both of which antagonized sanatanists.⁹⁷ These confusions prove, if proof were needed, the looseness and inadequacy of a term like Hindu 'orthodoxy' which, as Parekh notes, is actually something of a contradiction in terms.⁹⁸ It could be suggested, however, that it remains valid if only as one of those empty but useful signifiers which denote

a broad range of positions,⁹⁹ the main common characteristic of which is a fundamental concern with the vertical cleavages of Indian society, as sanctioned by religious traditions and scriptures. That is, orthodoxy's primary concern was to maintain the hierarchical distribution of symbolic capital as it was measured by the calculus of purity/pollution and institutionalized in the caste system. By contrast, Hindu communalism's primary concern was with the horizontal cleavages in India, between different religious communities conceived as unitary and homogeneous entities. Within these communities, however, the communalist attitude was, for the most part, anti-hierarchical (which, as we have seen, however, was merely a symbolic sublimation of hierarchy). Whilst it may seem that communalism and orthodoxy are inverse positions, they did however overlap significantly – precisely because of the very looseness of the term 'orthodox'. Indeed, one might say that whilst 'orthodox' Hindus accepted the communalist insistence on India's horizontal faultlines, it was by no means the case that communalists accepted India's vertical faultlines. Thus, whilst one can say that all sanatanists were also communalist, one cannot say that all communalists were orthodox.

This raises the issue of the distinction between earlier forms of 'communal' consciousness and more recent ones. Communalism and Hindu nationalism, for example, are not mutually interchangeable because, as Achin Vanaik points out, Hindu nationalism of the RSS type is a specifically modern form of communal consciousness.¹⁰⁰ Both forms of communalism are present in *Kanthapura*. Direct statements of communal consciousness expressed by the narrator such as 'After all a Brahmin is a Brahmin, sister!' (p. 73) or her instinctive mistrust of Badè Khan, not merely because of his official position but also because his religion is distinguishable from the communal underground of the text which is expressed more subtly, as we have seen, through anxieties over caste thresholds, a representation of brahminical supremacy, or inflection of 'Aryan' race consciousness.

It is in this context that we must try to interpret Rao's attack on orthodoxy. Was orthodoxy such a strong position in the field of power that it merits the attention that Rao gives it? Certainly, the regional specificity of south India complicates things since orthodoxy in the south is generally perceived to have been stronger than in the north given that a small brahmin population sought desperately to cling to their socio-symbolic advantages. Nevertheless, whether this actually meant a stronger brahminical orthodoxy in states like Mysore is unclear. James Manor, for example, points out that apart from mutual political suspicions between brahmins and non-brahmins, there does not seem to have been any insurmountable sectarian hostility which prevented their alliance when political interests called for it.¹⁰¹ In other words, the symbolic cleavage between brahmins and non-brahmins does not seem to have been that important in Mysore. If, then, orthodoxy was not as strong a political constituency as Rao represents it to be, why does he do so? It is possible that the construction of the 'orthodox' forms a diversionary tactic which occludes the communal and brahminical ideology of his text. In fact, one might consider 'orthodoxy' in the novel to be a straw man, an easy target, first because of the looseness of the term, and second because the

orthodoxy represented in the novel is so uncompromising that even given the rural constituency of the novel it is unlikely to have been historically accurate; even if it was it was likely to have been politically marginal. It is certainly the case that the novel's reading public would have been concentrated in metropolitan centres and social classes in which orthodoxy as a considered political position was insignificant and probably not as uncompromising as, say, Bhatta's or the Swami's. It is also a convenient target since Rao can attack two opponents at the same time; if orthodoxy is perceived as a subset of communalism, then given the promotion of Hindu-Muslim unity at the surface level of the text, attacking orthodoxy can also be taken to signify an attack on Hindu communalism, thereby proving an even more effective diversion from the novel's hidden communalist inflection.

Because communalism was primarily concerned with the horizontal cleavages in Indian society, its stance on social questions within the Hindu community could also, theoretically, occupy a broad range of positions ranging from the orthodox to the radical. In practice, because of their incipient totalitarianism and concern for Hindu 'unity', Hindu nationalists tended, ostensibly at least, to be quite radical in their socioeconomic ideology.¹⁰² Their one fundamental concern centred on the establishment of Hindutva (Hindu-ness) as a socio-cultural and political category. Thus, sympathy with left-wing ideologies, particularly the Nehruvian paradigm, need not necessarily imply an equally emphatic anti-communal ideology. Indeed, given the field of power in the 1930s, it seems perfectly possible that someone like Rao could have shared considerable sympathies with both Gandhism and Nehruvian socialism whilst reconciling both of these at a higher level within a communalism which formed his political unconscious. However, as we have seen, such radical emphases within Hindu nationalist ideologies were merely symbolic sublimations of social hierarchies and were thus recontained in such a way that any redistribution of economic capital did not imply an equally sincere redistribution of symbolic capital, and that such capital remained a Brahminical/upper-caste monopoly. Such is what we find in *Kanthapura* where the modernist concern with socio-economics leads logically through the contradictions of Gandhism to an 'equal-distributionist' stand and yet, in terms of socio-symbolics, the novel covertly reinforces thresholds which a true Nehruvian socialist would erase. In fact, insistence on the equal redistribution of symbolic as well as economic capital, along with an uncompromising secular attitude to communal relations, is perhaps the defining ground of the Nehruvian and similar left-wing nationalist paradigms as they defined themselves in opposition to communalism and to the implicit divisiveness and conservatism of Gandhism. Indeed, the very 'left-ness' of these ideologies only makes sense in relation to their definition of communalism, despite its sometimes radical emphases, as being ideologically on the 'right', and vice versa.

Hindsights

What, then, are the implications to be drawn from this relational reading of *Kanthapura*? The first thing to notice is the close proximity of ideological discourses in the field of power during the 1930s. In particular, one notes the appropriation of Gandhism for its strategic value by both Nehruvian socialists and by those whose Gandhism is laced by covert communalist prejudices. James Manor points out, for example, that non-brahmin politicians in Mysore (which, in effect, meant non-Congress also) ‘were less amused by the tendency of some Congressmen to clothe Brahmin communalist sentiments in Gandhian trappings’.¹⁰³ Indeed, the very strengths of Gandhian ideology – its inclusiveness, its symbolic flexibility, its openness to new influences – made it vulnerable to groups wishing to utilize parasitically both Gandhi’s personal prestige and the political acuity of his ideological discourse. Moreover, one should also notice that ideologies are therefore relational discourses which cannot occupy exclusive positions. In fact, ideological discourse shows itself to be an amalgam of conflicting discourses. Although defining themselves as mutually exclusive, ideologies are interpolated by the discourses of their opponents and possess no coherent self-identity. It is thus possible for seemingly incompatible ideological positions to be assimilated into a single ideological utterance.

The second inference to be drawn is that the proximity of ideological positions in the 1930s had a necessary effect upon the reproduction of any single ideological paradigm, since the process of dissemination, assimilation and rearticulation opens up that discourse to inflections over which it has no control. *Kanthapura* has a triple determination because of the close proximity of these discourses but also because of Rao’s own relation to them as a subject. His modernist, socialistic, and yet communalistic emphases, coexist with his Gandhism because as a cosmopolitan, brahmin intellectual from south India his sympathies could range widely between ideologies which, by their very proximity and interdependence, could be assimilated by this gifted writer into a seemingly coherent discourse. The lesson of *Kanthapura*, for both prospective ideologues and analysts of ideology, is that an ideology is never static, sufficient or containable. In the heat of political struggle an ideology, particularly one which diffuses into a broad range of social fields, quickly ‘oversignifies’ itself and comes to mean many different things to different groups of people.

This is both a possibility and a danger as India’s post-colonial history has borne out. Indeed, the novel itself dramatizes this double-edged sword. The narrative of becoming which the narrator relates reaches an end – the narrating self looking back – in which there is no coherent identity. Even as the narrative seeks to convey the sense of transition from an orthodox sensibility to a Gandhian one, our reading of the narrator’s voice (as opposed to Rao’s voice) shows how the narrator’s sensibility ends up somewhere else altogether, an interstitial space in which elements of Gandhism coexist with residual elements of her former orthodox sensibility. One can illustrate this interstitial space by noticing the

distance in sympathy between the narrator and her description of Sankar (the ideal *satyagrahi*) who, for the narrator, becomes a ‘fanatic’ because of his Gandhian zeal (pp. 98–9). If the narrator was a fully converted Gandhian, as much of a Gandhian as Sankar, there would be no distance in sympathy and hence no space in which difference might open up between her interpretation of Gandhi and Gandhi’s own. This, however, is not the case. Rather, the process of reproduction occupies this interstitial space which is one of potentiality – ‘something has entered our hearts, an abundance like the Himavathy’ (p. 180) – and danger. The narrator is clearly both tiptoeing on the verge of a full Gandhian sensibility and open to other suggestions, especially ones that play with her visceral communalism. Gyan Pandey has shown how peasant mobilizations in the 1930s were contradictory in nature, now nationalist in sentiment, now communalist, now concerned with some other issue altogether, pro-Gandhi one moment, anti-Gandhi the next.¹⁰⁴ It is the very possibility of this space, and the coexistence of conflicting ideologies in it (a space not peculiar to the peasantry but, as we have seen, one shared also by sophisticated intellectuals like Rao) that gives one an insight into the motivations driving the puzzling array of responses in differing political arenas witnessed throughout India during its long struggle against the Raj.

The danger, of course, is that in the long term the significance of an ideological position may rest not so much on its intentions but on its outcome, not so much on its point of departure but its place of arrival. To take Rao’s rewriting of Gandhism as just one example, we find that Gandhism, as Rao articulates it, comes to legitimize brahminical supremacism and Hindu nationalism. Unfortunately, this remaking – which is at once also an unmaking – of Gandhian ideology was not unique to Rao; the process of reproducing Gandhism involved many such deflections, following many convoluted and tortuous trajectories, which ultimately led to independent India’s sense of itself being tied up in knots. The trajectory of Gandhian ideology in particular, and Indian nationalist discourse in general, has thus followed a tragic course, the outcome of which has been Partition, the Kashmir ‘problem’, the Babri Masjid incident, and now, nuclear flashpoint. Of course, this is not to imply that this is all Gandhi’s fault – to do that would be absurd. Nevertheless, the making and remaking of Gandhian ideology was without doubt a significant factor in determining the subcontinent’s post-colonial predicament. The crossroads at which the subcontinent finds itself today has much to do with yesterday’s wrong turns and unintended consequences; it remains to be seen what twenty-first century India will make of its twentieth-century legacy.

AN ANATOMY OF EGYPTIAN SECULAR-LIBERAL NATIONALISM

Egyptian nationalism¹ emerged from its pre-history into a political field transformed by the British occupation of 1882.² And of this occupation, one specific aspect is of utmost relevance, and exerted, indirectly, a profound influence on the trajectory of Egyptian nationalist discourse and politics for at least the next 70 years, and arguably beyond. Whatever other residues might have been bequeathed to generations of nationalists by the concatenation of forces which precipitated it, the legal status of the occupation itself and the unprecedented political entity that Egypt became decisively shaped the future development of political imaginaries in Egypt.³ For the British presence in Egypt was not a typical case of colonial conquest, nor did it possess the simple legitimacy that such conquest would have conferred.⁴ Rather, it was Egypt's pivotal position in the wider field of international relations, its importance as a pawn in the political chess being played in Europe at that time between the major powers which determined the nature of the British power there. In other words, the particular political field into which Egyptian nationalism emerged was itself located at the very fulcrum of the balance of forces not just in the Middle East but of Europe and of much of the rest of the world.⁵ This complex, and delicate, balance of forces had to be weighed in any of the political calculations made by these powers with regards to Egypt. As Peter Mansfield has stated, 'Britain knew that the acquisition of Egypt and its incorporation into the Empire was out of the question'.⁶ Thus, Egypt, the 'Veiled Protectorate' (designed to protect not so much Egypt itself but British imperial interests in India)⁷ was to find itself in an ambiguous legal situation – occupied by British forces whose presence was overwhelming, but still nominally and legally under Ottoman suzerainty. Despite being labelled 'the sick man of Europe', the Sublime Porte was still, therefore, a major presence in the post-1882 Egyptian political field.

There were also cultural rather than strictly economic, political or legal dimensions to this ambiguity. In particular, the symbolic capital invested in the Ottoman Sultan as Caliph of the Islamic world added a religious dimension to the political considerations, and this too had to be weighed into the balance. Indeed, in the nineteenth century, Muslims' identification with the Ottoman state was more pronounced than at any time in its history. Whereas before, 'substatal

institutions frequently seem to have attracted the loyalty of Muslims more than did the remote and often oppressive state that might be formally sovereign over a given geographic area',⁸ in the nineteenth century this process – perhaps due to the increasing pressure of what Anthony Giddens has identified as the 'disembeddedness' of modernity⁹ – seems to have reversed. As Israel Gershoni and James Jankowski point out, most of educated public opinion in Egypt in the period before the Great War of 1914 seems to have been strongly pro-Ottoman, and this allegiance was, in turn, not so much due to purely political considerations but in the main due to their identity as Muslims; Egypt's place in the wider field of international relations was conceptualized not so much in terms of material interests and the instrumentalities of power as in terms of its irreducible integration into an Islamic civilization which formed one half of a bi-polar world, the other half being non-Islamic, or anti-Islamic.¹⁰ This tendency to divide the world into Islamic and non-Islamic halves persisted (sometimes more pronounced, sometimes less so), as we shall see, throughout the years 1882–1952, and demonstrates the symbolic pull of Islam on perceptions of Egyptian identity.

On the other hand, there had also been an increasing sense of identification with the Egyptian as opposed to Ottoman state ever since Muhammad Ali had begun to create a modern, centralized state in the first half of the nineteenth century. By the time Egyptian nationalism had developed into a political force, the existence of this state was a manifest reality and thus Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot is correct in suggesting that 'The state first came into existence and then roused feelings of kinship and belonging among the population.'¹¹ The pull of the Egyptian state as a focus of loyalty and political identification was even more pronounced among those groups who had, in the latter decades of the century, been emerging as an indigenous Egyptian élite ready and willing to challenge the authority of the Turkish-born aristocracy. This élite saw in the Egyptian state a more attractive local power base as opposed to the more diffuse and decaying power structures of the Ottoman empire, the higher echelons of which were, in any case, out of their reach. Sensing Egypt's importance in the wider world, a fact borne out by the efforts of all the major powers to have a stake in it, this élite quite correctly perceived the greater political weight to be attained by a more Egypt-centred approach to power. This necessitated, of course, the demonstration of a viable basis for Egyptian identity over and above the more pan-Islamist orientation of Ottomanism.

From the outset, therefore, Egyptian nationalism was moulded by these two circuits of loyalty: an allegiance based upon a pan-Islamic identity, and an Egyptianist allegiance centred upon a territorially defined state. Although they were soon to come into conflict, in this first period of Egyptian nationalist discourse they were more often than not coexistent. This was certainly the case with the more popular of the nationalist groups of the time, the Watani party, for whom the contradiction of a pan-Islamic Ottomanism and an Egypt-centred national identity which transcended religious identities seems not have been apparent. That the Islamic aspect of this pro-Ottomanism was stronger than the Ottoman aspect

is illustrated by the fact that Mustafa Kamil, the charismatic leader of the Watanists (a party whose name, by the way, ironically emphasizes the territorial circuit of Egyptian identity), did not extend his loyalty to the point of advocating – after almost a century in which Egypt had more or less carved out an almost autonomous sovereignty within the framework of the Ottoman empire – the effective reimposition of direct and centralized political control from Istanbul.¹² On the other hand, the incipient secular-liberal paradigm elaborated by Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid, which proposed that Egypt itself be the only focus of identity, was not very popular precisely because such an ideology seemingly rejected religion as a basis for political identity and was, therefore, not framed from within the parameters of Islamic discourse.

If, then, these early Egyptian nationalists were attempting to formulate satisfactory answers to the two fundamental questions which faced them, namely, ‘Is Egypt a nation, and if so, then what is its basis?’ and ‘How does one modernize Egyptian society so that Egypt can take its place in the modern world order of sovereign and independent nations?’ they did so in terms of their relation to Islam, both in cultural terms as the largest single determinant, in an overwhelmingly Islamic country, governing the horizon of expectations in Egyptian society (and this, as we shall see, was as true of the so-called ‘westernized’ élite intellectuals), and in terms of an existing (albeit waning) pan-Islamic political reality as manifested in the Ottoman Empire. If, on the one hand, these nationalists were competing with the entrenched forces of Islamic conservatism and the existing Turkish aristocracy – for whom the questions of constitutional reform, which the Egyptian nationalists saw as an indispensable aspect of the modernization of Egypt, were regarded as both a heretical attack on Islam itself and on the power and legitimacy they derived from it – on the other hand, they were competing against groups who did not believe that Egypt was, in fact, a distinctive nationality at all. These included the British who, as they did in India, saw Egypt as a collection of ‘communities’ (defined religiously, so the majority community was, of course, Islamic)¹³ which was incapable of being reconciled into a single, coherent nationality;¹⁴ the Turko-Circassian aristocracy, who, for obvious reasons, had no desire to find themselves labelled ‘foreigners’ in their own domain with their political legitimacy accordingly undermined; and the ‘traditional’ Islamic intellectuals, the *ulama*, who perceived identity in terms of the traditional notion of the universalist Islamic *umma*, and not in terms of geographically limited nations.

Islam thus represented a determining limit on Egyptian nationalist discourse – what was sayable or do-able – in so far as the latter found itself circumscribed by its opponents in a political field in which Islam was always the issue. The ‘problem’ of Islam thus intersected a set of questions which were being addressed in Egyptian intellectual and political circles in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth. These ranged from ‘such matters as individual freedom and representative government . . . freedom of thought . . . the separation of state from religion, [to] the explosive question of the emancipation of women’.¹⁵ One might add that Islam was also at the heart of questions of Egyptian identity,

the fundamental one being, 'Is Egypt an essentially Islamic nation?' This was, of course, inseparable from the other questions, all of which were, for the nationalists, assimilable into one large problem, the 'problem' of Islam.

This problem encompassed two separate but necessarily interdependent dimensions and each of the many specific questions could be related to one or both. On the one hand was the problem of Islam with regards to the modernization of political authority and legitimacy as the basis, it was believed, for a subsequent modernization of society. On the other was the problem of Islam with regards to the definition of the Egyptian *umma*: what is the Egyptian *umma*, and what is Islam's role in it? The two problems converged on the issue of secularism. In anticipation of the later argument, one might also add here that the problem of Islam and secularism constituted the central political problematic for Egyptian nationalist discourse throughout the period 1882–1952, and was the basis for competing and conflicting nationalist imaginaries. With regards to secular-liberal nationalism in particular, whilst it purported in its very name to offer a solution, it was its failure to satisfactorily resolve this problem which led to its eventual political failure and eclipse. This is not to suggest that an ideological failure is of itself sufficient to ensure political failure. Rather, it is to suggest that ideological production, embedded as it is in a political field which is itself part of the wider social field, informed the political practice of the secular-liberal nationalists and their approach to the new socio-economic problems of the day. Ideologically, these nationalists were not equipped to face such problems. Yet there were also material and institutional limits to their political behaviour and to their ideology. These limits were more fundamental than they believed and ultimately circumscribed the ability of these nationalists to elaborate a fully secular-liberal nationalist ideology for Egypt.

The limits of secularization and secularism in modern Egypt

Secularism as a principle is intimately related to liberalism as a political ideology which is why they are so often spoken of together. Both are products of the process of secularization, the classic definition of which is the relative decline of religious influence in all fields of social life. Secularization is in turn a product of the larger process of modernization.¹⁶ The particular trajectory of modernization in a particular social field decisively determines the subsequent extent of secularization and the consequent development of secularism as a socio-political ideology. Many of the similarities in the development of political imaginaries in, say, India and Egypt, are due to similarities in their respective trajectories of modernization. On the other hand, these trajectories also accounted for many of the quite considerable differences.

Modernization is, therefore, the key issue. It is often said that Muhammad Ali initiated the modernization of Egypt following on from the French occupation. Such a statement needs, however, to be qualified. Most historians agree that

Muhammad Ali inaugurated the political modernization of Egypt in so far as he ‘pushed and pulled’ the country into taking the form of a modern, centralized state.¹⁷ Political modernization is, however, not equivalent to modernization *per se*. As we shall see below, one of the greatest errors of the secular-liberal nationalists was to assume that modernization meant solely political modernization. In fact, modernization is a much broader process involving the transformation of the economic, social, political and cultural practices and institutions within a given social totality.

In so far as pre-modern Egypt was a basically agricultural economy, the entire period from the rise of Muhammad Ali to the revolution of 1952 witnessed no great transformation of the Egyptian economy. Throughout this period, Egypt remained an overwhelmingly agricultural country, a fact which not even the large-scale urbanizations of the 1930s and 1940s could alter.¹⁸ Muhammad Ali may have begun to centralize landholdings – principally for the benefit of his own family¹⁹ – in a process which continued throughout the entire period, but the structure of social relations within the agrarian economy was not significantly altered until the revolution of 1952. In terms of the modernization of the Egyptian economy, the advent of the British occupation, far from disrupting pre-modern economic patterns, actually consolidated them by transforming it into an agricultural monoculture geared towards the export of cotton to feed the mills of Lancashire.²⁰ Much of the vaunted ‘modernization’ engaged in by the British administration amounted merely to projects designed to facilitate cotton growth, such as irrigation, and communications projects designed to facilitate its transportation as well as of British troops.²¹ Whilst such a policy drew the newly emergent class of native large landowners into the cash nexus of a world capitalist economy, the *fellah* continued to operate within a subsistence economy which further contributed to the stabilization of traditional economic activities.²² Moreover, the large landowners, growing rich on the export of cotton, found this an incentive to invest their acquired capital into more land rather than into industrial production since this was discouraged by the British, thereby further consolidating the agricultural economy at the expense of an industrial, capitalist one. Where such an economy did exist, it was restricted to the large urban centres and almost monopolized by the resident foreign communities making use of the Ottoman capitulatory system.²³ These foreigners chose not to integrate with the mainstream society even though many of them had been resident in Egypt for generations precisely because the capitulations, which existed in Egypt until well into the 1930s, conferred upon them certain advantages which dated back to Ottoman initiatives centuries before and which remained intact in the early twentieth century, thereby illustrating yet again the fitful and haphazard process of economic modernization. In addition, therefore, to a ‘twin-track’ economy, there was also a ‘twin-track’ society, in which the minorities ‘had access to better schools and more attractive employment’.²⁴ Many of the vacillations within Egyptian nationalist discourse concerning the definition of the Egyptian *umma* stemmed from the resentment felt by the majority towards advantages enjoyed by

these communities, and this became woven into the problem of Islam since they enjoyed such privileges on the basis of religion, i.e. because they were non-Muslims. A native Egyptian capitalist class did not therefore emerge until the 1930s and when it did it merely reflected the agricultural basis of the economy since this class was largely drawn from, in P.J. Vatikiotis' words, 'an older native propertied class turned industrialist'.²⁵ In contrast to Europe, modernization in Egypt was distinguished by the lack of an economically active bourgeoisie.

If the economy remained overwhelmingly unmodernized, this unsurprisingly left the other social fields unmodernized too. If land had been the basis of wealth and status in a pre-modern Egypt whose society was based around a social hierarchy with a landed aristocracy at the apex and the ranks of the *fellahin* below (ranging from the medium-stratum landholders to the landless labourers), it remained so. In fact, whilst the wealth inequalities of Egyptian society most certainly did not decrease in the modern period, they may well have sharpened considerably.²⁶ As a result of changing patterns of landholding in which land was increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few families, 2 per cent of the population came to own half the land.²⁷ Upward social mobility, in nineteenth and twentieth-century Egypt, was, if not quite as restricted as in previous periods, then certainly limited to the medium stratum of landowners and the newly emergent western-educated professionals who could take advantage of the opportunities opened up to them by acquiring land themselves in order to boost their social standing; downward social mobility was, however, fairly rampant and was a result of the very same processes, as was reflected in the growing number of landless *fellahin*. In time, those groups of indigenous Egyptians who could take advantage of the new opportunities began to eclipse the Turko-Circassian aristocracy, mainly by marrying into it, thus inheriting both their land and their symbolic capital of status, thereby constituting the nucleus of an emergent class of Egyptian large landowners.²⁸ It was this class which would promote Egyptian secular-liberal nationalism; the important point to note, however, is that they achieved their social, and eventually political, dominance without fundamentally altering the social hierarchies of Egypt's pre-modern class structure, again in contrast to the European bourgeoisie. The benefits accruing to these secular-liberals from this form of 'neo-feudalism' would have a profound impact upon their conceptions of power and authority.

The continuation and even consolidation of existing social and economic structures therefore ensured the basic replication of the political field. Power was, as it always had been, restricted to the privileged few, the population of which was circumscribed by wealth, birth and status. Thus a pre-modern political field based on the monopolization of power by an aristocracy, whose political motivations and interests were removed from the interests of other social groups, was carried over into the era of parliamentary democracy in Egypt which did little to promote and much to harm the development of representative government. As in any 'feudal' field of power, there could be political conflicts but since all the participants were from the same class political conflicts were underlaid by a convergence of

economic interests.²⁹ Political power, in such a situation, cannot be representative of any social group other than that of the élite itself. Thus, parliamentary democracy in Egypt was also accommodated within political structures wholly inimical to the development of democracy, and this was with the consent of the secular-liberal nationalists for whom democracy became merely a means of channelling power from the hands of the palace into their own. Even the Wafd, with its mass electoral base, sought neither to alter the social structure of Egypt nor the mechanisms of politics, preferring instead to manipulate the electorate within the 'feudalistic' framework into which Egyptian parliamentary democracy was fitted.³⁰ As a result, 'the masses' connection to mainstream political life in Egypt remained weak'.³¹ Unsurprisingly, if in pre-modern Egypt political power was exercised and sought after by a warrior-aristocracy in control of the state, on the one hand, and a wider society controlled by the religious authorities based in the Azhar, on the other, then this remained the case in modern Egypt, with only the composition of that élite having altered.³² In so far as the legitimacy of the former depended, at least nominally, on the latter, power and legitimacy was, as in pre-modern Egypt, derived from the all-pervasive influence of Islam in Egyptian society and culture. Accordingly, without any challenge to the authority exercised by the *ulama* in the wider social field, Islam was to remain a significant and dominant presence in the political field; in fact, its significance was accentuated by the fact that in so far as parliamentary democracy had at least instituted some channels of representation between the political field and wider society, those channels were weak compared with those controlled by the *ulama* who possessed the greater mobilizational power based on their symbolic authority among the masses. It became, therefore, impossible to engage in political activity, and in so doing to establish new principles of authority and legitimacy, without consideration of the power of the *ulama* in society at large. In short, the establishment of democracy in Egypt made the establishment of representative government as a principle of political legitimacy more not less difficult. This would become apparent in the later 1920s when the respective claims by each of the political parties to be the 'true defender' of Islam would become the major political issue.³³

If there were many material limitations to secularization in modern Egypt, these were each assimilable to the most significant limitation of all, namely Islam itself. Being a total social system, with both material and ideological dimensions that had been, since the seventh century, invested in the bricks, mortar and histories of all of Egypt's social and political institutions, and in the hearts, minds and everyday practices of the vast majority of its population, Islam represented an obstacle to secularization quite unlike that represented by Christianity in Europe, even if superficially similarities could be detected. As Paul Salem points out,

Christianity advocates a withdrawal from the dominant and social order to an inner, private life. Islam is fundamentally different . . . a call not only to reform human private spiritual life but to restructure radically the

dominant social and political order. Whereas Christianity restricted its area of interest as an early pillar of its world-view, mainly to accommodate the colossal political reality of the Roman Empire, Islam quite frankly claimed total, all-encompassing authority.³⁴

Thus, whilst the secularization of social life could proceed in Europe without challenging Christianity's core principles, this is impossible in an Islamic society. At some point, the social authority of Islam must be challenged directly. Needless to say, in the face of such an overwhelming obstacle in all its dimensions, and deprived of a dynamic capitalist economy, which in Europe had so significantly and decisively loosened the bonds of religion and divine morality in favour of a moral economy of desire specifically oriented towards fulfilment in this world as opposed to the next, the western-educated intellectuals, who saw in modern Europe the social principles by which to revitalize what they conceived of as their own listless and backward society, balked at the larger implications of what secularization would involve. Being predominantly drawn from the élite sectors of Egyptian society and, in any case, moving within a social universe vastly different to the majority of their compatriots for who Islam had, in perpetuity, been the only principle of social life, they possessed neither the ability nor the inclination to tackle the social dominance of the Azhar and its capillary institutions.³⁵ Nor should it be forgotten that the vast majority of these would-be secular-liberals were themselves devout Muslims who fervently wished for and sought its modernization and renewal rather than its demise.

The secular-liberal intellectuals who thus spearheaded the campaign for secularization therefore targeted their attack on Islam's dominance in two specific fields. In order to reform Egyptian society they believed they should, on the one hand, first reformulate the basis of Islamic doctrine through a reinterpretation of its divine message and associated laws. An attack on current dogmas in favour of rediscovered Islamic values more in keeping with modernity itself would, they believed, result in an automatic revolution in social practices. Philosophical modernization of Islamic doctrine thus became a substitute for modernization *per se*. On the other hand, these secularists were, in Gramscian terms, the 'organic' intellectuals of a newly emerging social group³⁶ – the native Egyptian élite comprised of large and medium landowners, professionals, and bureaucrats – with a compelling political reason to curtail both the autocratic and therefore arbitrary power of the Khedive since such power necessarily conflicted with and endangered their own interests. In this respect, the secular-liberals conceived of secularization as a purely political problem designed to remove Islam as a dominant principle in political life. Islamic principles of government would be replaced in favour of modern secular-liberal principles which would guarantee their power and safeguard their economic interests.³⁷ Thus, secularization was idealistically conceived as the modernization of Islamic doctrine and narrowly conceived as the separation of religion from politics. This, however, brought these organic intellectuals into conflict with the 'traditional' Islamic intellectuals, the *ulama* of

al-Azhar, for whom the separation of religion from politics was anathema. For their part, the secular-liberals believed the Azhar to be the greatest single obstacle to the renewal of Islam because of its perpetuation of outdated dogmas. The intellectual and political offensive against orthodoxy were thus two sides of the same coin.

However, if secularization was to be intellectual and political, an unmodernized and non-secular society, combined with an élite political field considerably removed from the social field at large, and the considerable ideological weight of anti-secular forces represented by al-Azhar and the *ulama* (who, to all extents and purposes, possessed the only institutional channels of communication between this rarefied political field and the wider society) impressed upon these intellectuals the necessity of preserving Islam as a dominant principle in social life as a whole even whilst they sought to remove it from political life. This illusion was, as we have seen, itself facilitated by a lack of modernization. Thus, for the secular-liberals, as much as for their opponents, the de-politicization of Islam in no way meant the de-Islamicization of Egyptian society. This, however, is the fundamental test of secularization since, as we might recall, the classic definition of secularization involves the relative decline of religious influence in all areas of social life. This, no one was prepared to concede, partly because it lay beyond the horizon of expectations of all but a handful of individuals, and partly because it was politically impossible.³⁸ In fact, the secular-liberals, far from seeking to eradicate Islam's influence in society sought to strengthen it in the belief that a reformed Islam would be more not less relevant to modern Egyptian life. This was true of even the most determinedly secular of them, Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid.³⁹

Far from being seen as incompatible, Islam and modernization were seen as mutually reinforcing. This, for example, was the position of much of the *salafiyya* discourse of the early twentieth-century Islamic reformers, hints of which can be ascertained in Lutfi's writings.⁴⁰ For example, he suggests that 'praiseworthy government such as that of the caliphs in early Islam was far from being truly despotic, because [their administration] was subservient to the Book of Allah and the *sunna* of his Prophet'.⁴¹ Such a position is only tenable if it is believed that the Book of Allah is itself absolutely consonant with non-absolutist principles of government, that is, if it is consonant with modern, secular-liberal principles of government. The fate of the *salafiyya* discourse is instructive as to the problems faced by such a strategy of secularization: it was to prove the basis for the most powerful opposition to secularism in early twentieth-century Egypt, not in the intellectualist hands of Rashid Rida but rather in the far more populist philosophies of the Muslim Brotherhood.⁴² Ultimately, therefore, the lack of determination to confront Islam as a dominant principle of social life precluded the success of the secularization of political life. It was this which constituted the final, uncrossable limit to the development of a truly secular political discourse in Egypt and it had a profound effect upon the development of political imaginaries throughout the twentieth century.

The problem of Islam and the Egyptian *umma*

The problem of Islam as it impacted upon definitions of the Egyptian *umma* can be traced right back to the writings of Rifa'a al-Tahtawi, when the concept of a specifically Egyptian identity begins to emerge for the first time. Tahtawi was, by all accounts, the first modern writer to conceive of Egypt as a distinct territorial entity.⁴³ In this respect, as Charles Wendell observes, he used the term *watan* quite unambiguously in its territorial sense as an equivalent to the French word *patrie*.⁴⁴ However, in order to give this distinct piece of land an ontological legitimacy in opposition to an Islamic framework which visualized territory in universalist terms, he found it necessary to postulate a theory of cultural continuity from Egypt's pre-Islamic past right up to the present.⁴⁵ Thus, he was also perhaps the first modern Egyptian writer to conceive of a pre-Islamic history for Egypt.⁴⁶ But if *watan* signifies territoriality, in terms of nationhood it must, in fact, also be complemented by the term *umma*, which can be identified as 'a collectivity of people brought together by a unifying factor, this being, on the basis of investigation, language, locality, or religion'.⁴⁷ At once we begin to identify the lineaments of the problem for Tahtawi since as an Egyptian he sought to identify the unifying factor as 'locality' but as a devout Muslim he cannot escape the notion that the *umma* is an Islamic term referring to the community of believers. He thus tries to have it both ways. Wendell draws attention to the conceptual uncertainty in Tahtawi's discourse over the precise definition of the term *umma*, and shows how he equivocates and interchanges between using the terms *milla* (sect) and *umma* as synonyms for each other in a traditional religious sense, and as antonyms where *umma* is conceptualized in the purely secular sense of 'nation'.⁴⁸ Furthermore, Tahtawi seems unsure as to whether patriotism (*wataniyya*) is a complement to religious identity or a supplement to it, 'Every duty that the believer has towards his brother believer is incumbent on the members of the *watan* . . . because they share in a brotherhood of patriotism *besides* the brotherhood of religious belief.'⁴⁹ It is unclear from the translation whether Tahtawi is suggesting that the nation is an alternative focus of loyalty over and beyond that of religion, or whether religion is itself the basis for loyalty to the nation. The question is, however, important in so far as it pertains to the crucial question of whether Egypt is essentially an Islamic nation.

By positing an unbroken continuity of Egyptian history from Pharaonic times to the present as the means by which to verify the separate existence of a distinct Egyptian *watan*, Tahtawi raises two related problems. First, he raises the problem represented by the break in that continuity created by the Arab conquest of Egypt in the seventh century and the subsequent irruption of Islam.⁵⁰ Second, he raises the Muslim/Copt issue since 'No one could very well deny that the Copts were the truest representatives of the ancient stock, and their lineage the least diluted by foreign blood – including that of the Arabs.'⁵¹ Tahtawi's response above had been an ambiguous suggestion that communal unity as a basis for national solidarity was an alternative circuit of loyalty to that of Islam. On the other hand,

it is not clear whether religion itself should be the basis of loyalty. What, then, of the Copts? What is interesting is that when he writes of the Pharaonic ancestry of the Copts he feels a certain pride in sharing it. However, when he writes of present-day Copts, that is, when he consciously writes as a Muslim, this sense of shared ancestry is abandoned, and a sense of 'foreignness' to the territory of Egypt surfaces (precisely because he is a Muslim): 'the people of Egypt too were, in ancient times, the cleanest of people in the world. *Their* descendants, the Copts, have not imitated them in this.'⁵² Here Tahtawi oscillates between a secular Egyptian identity based on a common ancestry (a pride in the cleanliness of ancient Egypt) and an Islamic identity conceived of as foreign to the Egyptian *watan*.

Such equivocation on Tahtawi's part may not have been particularly consequential; indeed, it may even have been relatively desirable since he was writing at a time when Muhammad Ali's Egypt, although carving out a considerable degree of autonomy for itself within the Ottoman empire, still remained consciously and unambiguously tied to the notion of its integral place in a Pan-Islamic civilization. In addition, ideas of Egyptian nationhood were still incipient and largely unformulated. By far the greater allegiance was to Islam, and in no way was it envisaged, even by Tahtawi, that the Egyptian state would be based on anything other than Islamic political principles. In context, therefore, Tahtawi's hesitations represent an almost unconscious and impalpable grasping of the problem. However, such vacillations could have, and indeed did have, more pronounced political consequences when the political situation itself had been transformed by the British occupation. In so far as the rise of Muhammad Ali's Egypt had perhaps fostered an illusion that modernization was possible without any significant reform of Islam (although Tahtawi himself was the first to introduce modern principles of government and administration to Egyptian readers⁵³), the sheer fact of the occupation apprised Egyptian intellectuals and leaders of the discrepancy between European society and their own. Issues concerning Islam, modernization and secularization were part of the response to this new political problem, as were questions of identity.

Moreover, the political field, although its basically élitist structure remained unaltered, was now transformed. For one thing, the British presence altered the terms of engagement inasmuch as the newly emergent Egyptian élite which had risen throughout the later nineteenth century had to turn its attention away from its struggle with the Khedive and the Azhar in order to concentrate on the new power in the land. Between 1882 and 1914, the political field was marked by a convenient alliance between the palace and the emergent Egyptian élite against the British.⁵⁴ Second, the ineffectiveness of the Ottomans with regard to preventing the occupation began to gradually shift the balance away from Islamic notions of political identity while not undermining the notion of a Pan-Islamic civilization to which Egypt belonged.⁵⁵ In the minds of the newly emergent élite facing the immediate political problem of resisting British rule, it was apparent that much of the vitality of European nations stemmed from the fact of national sovereignty. It was also true, however, that for them Europe possessed a supra-national,

civilizational coherence over and above the existence of such discrete nationalities; therefore something similar was envisaged for the Islamic world. Third, this Egyptian élite consisted not only of large landowners but also of a growing class of bureaucrats, lawyers and other professionals whose jobs 'required them to think in terms of rights, duties, nationality and national jurisdiction, authority and sovereignty and so on'.⁵⁶

All these pressures, which together constituted the basic problematic at hand, compelled nationalists to emphasize the local and territorial aspects of Egyptian identity. Yet, as we have seen, Islam remained a dominant presence in the field of power, and so this more Egyptianist emphasis needed to square the circle that confronted Tahtawi, namely the elaboration of a territorially based Egyptian identity to which Islam was not a foreign irruption. Two responses emerged, exemplified on the one hand by Mustafa Kamil and on the other by Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid.

Both followed Tahtawi in taking as axiomatic the existence of a clearly delineated Egyptian *watan* based on the unity of the Nile valley, circumscribed by the desert on both sides and the Mediterranean sea to the north, and possessing an unbroken continuity of history since Pharaonic times. With regard to the definition of the *umma*, both paradigms ostensibly rejected Islam as a basis for national identity in favour of a cultural/racial or 'indigenist' perspective based upon the rudimentary 'doctrine of assimilation' first proposed by Muhammad Abduh,

The people of Egypt have inhabited their land for thousands of years, and everyone who [ever] came to [live among] them mingled [his blood] with theirs. For the customs and manners [of the Egyptians] gradually came to prevail among these [strangers], and [in the end] they claimed relationship with them [i.e. the Egyptians], and became Egyptians themselves.⁵⁷

On this basis, Mustafa Kamil could claim ethnic unity between Copts and Muslims,⁵⁸ and Lutfi al-Sayyid could state, in an oft-quoted passage,

We have one religion for the majority . . . and virtually the same blood running through our veins. Our fatherland has natural boundaries . . . We have an ancient history . . . We are the Pharaohs of Egypt, the Mameluks of Egypt and Turks of Egypt. We are Egyptians!⁵⁹

None of this, however, resolves the problem concerning Islam's irruption into Egyptian history. In fact, whilst the assimilationist argument allows the *watan* to be a basis for an alternate conception of loyalty to Islam, it also threatens to suggest that it is an incompatible circuit of loyalty to Islam since the 'dominant' circuit is clearly the indigenous culture into which all foreign elements are absorbed. In so far as Egypt had a pre-Islamic culture, the question is, therefore, how Egypt became Islamicized rather than the other way round. The irruption of Islam,

therefore, must rest on foreign conquest by force, and Lutfi admits as much by suggesting that all foreign conquerors of Egypt, Islamic or otherwise, are imperialists.⁶⁰

Such implications were, however, dangerous in an Islamic country which was largely unsecularized and unfamiliar with such notions. The Watanist paradigm paradoxically recontained such anti-Islamic implications within the framework of an emotional and instinctive Pan-Islamism. In this respect, the Watanists reproduced almost exactly the ambiguities of Tahtawi's position albeit with a slightly reformulated and stronger indigenist emphasis. Unsurprisingly, despite Mustafa Kamil's appeals for communal unity, the Copts regarded the Watani party with suspicion.⁶¹ The political advantage for Kamil and the Watanists, however, were great since he could not only appeal to the instinctive Islamic allegiance of the majority of his countrymen, but also rely on the support of the Khedive and the *ulama*. Before the Great War, therefore, the Watani paradigm was unquestionably the dominant and most popular of the nationalist imaginaries.

This could not be said of the nationalism promoted by Lutfi al-Sayyid. Lutfi's response to the anti-Islamic implications of his position was to effectively sidestep the problem by reframing the whole question of national identity in the language of utilitarianism.⁶² In making social utility the basis for political action Lutfi sought to remove religion from politics altogether, thereby making the question of Islam's origin redundant, 'we are convinced that the basis for political activity is patriotism [*wataniyya*] and the bonds of [common] interest and nothing more'.⁶³ For Lutfi, social utility was above all predicated upon a shared and common territory, a *watan*.⁶⁴ This led him to unambiguously reject Pan-Islamism, and to promote an Egyptianism which came at times dangerously close to chauvinism, 'Their love [i.e. the Egyptians] for her [i.e. Egypt] must be unshared by any other country . . . They must demonstrate in word and deed that they have no home [*dar*] but Egypt, and no other folk [*ashira*] but the Egyptian.'⁶⁵ This may have been logically consistent but was considerably less popular. It was also not completely secular. One finds in the nuances of the following brief statement an indication of the extent to which the problem of Islam impacted upon secularism in Egypt:

We believe categorically that making utility the basis for action is a credo which *does not conflict with the monotheistic faith*. Let people act as they wish in actual life for their own benefit, *with the proviso that they do not legalize what is forbidden, nor forbid the legal, and that they comport themselves in conformity with the teachings of their religion*.⁶⁶

The forbidden here is clearly that which is forbidden by religion, specifically Islam. The legal arbitrator, ultimately, is the Quran. There is also a problem when Lutfi says that all should conform to their religion. This begs the question as to what should be done in the event, first, when conforming to religion is in conflict with social utility, and second, when people, conforming to different religions, come

into conflict – i.e. when religions themselves come into conflict. Such questions were fundamental to the definition of the Egyptian *umma* and in particular the relationship of the religious minorities to the Islamic majority. As we shall see below, these intersected with questions of power and definitions of the Egyptian state.

Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid's secular-liberal nationalism was, however, to become the seemingly dominant paradigm of nationalist discourse in the 1920s. This was due to a number of reasons all connected to the watershed represented by the impact of the Great War on Egypt between 1914 and 1918. The political field after the war was considerably transformed from the one that preceded it. For one thing, the collapse of the Ottoman empire removed the possibility of a viable Pan-Islamic politics although Pan-Islamism as a concept and a focus for loyalty did not vanish. For another, whilst the Watani party found its main ideological plank removed from beneath it, it was also beset by a number of other problems which precipitated its steep political decline. Its charismatic leader, Mustafa Kamil, had died in 1908 and the party had subsequently divided in opinion with regards to its Ottomanist orientation, some favouring a more Egyptianist stand, others being more Ottomanist and Pan-Islamicist.⁶⁷ Moreover, most of them happened to be in exile during the months in 1919 when the Wafd seized the initiative, and the more Egyptianist of them returned to support the Wafd.

The outcome of the war also strengthened Britain's position in the field of power in so far as the legal fiction of nominal Ottoman suzerainty had now been removed as had the pro-Ottoman Khedive Abbas.⁶⁸ The message to the Egyptian palace was also unmistakable: Britain was the real power in the land. Moreover, the war had also impressed upon the British Egypt's considerable strategic importance to their imperial interests in Asia, and the centre of British foreign policy in the Middle East now shifted from Istanbul to Cairo.⁶⁹ Thus, whilst the British periodically reaffirmed their intention to withdraw, it quickly became apparent that such a withdrawal was not likely.

However, if the British position *vis-à-vis* the Palace was strengthened, its position with regards to the emergent native Egyptian élite – the very class for whom Lutfi had spoken in the columns of *Al-Jaridah* – was considerably weakened. This class had slowly attained greater social dominance throughout the nineteenth century and the removal of Ottoman suzerainty merely capped its rise to power. In the pre-war years, its antagonism to Britain had been tempered, on the one hand, by the benefits of British administration and the *pax Britannica* which had delivered enough social stability for them to acquire large parcels of land and thus grow rich on cotton, and on the other, by the promise of a share in power which would be the consequence of Britain's intended constitutional reforms.⁷⁰ It was on this basis that they interpreted Britain's intentions to withdraw from Egypt as a tacit recognition of their claims to power and the Protectorate as a temporary arrangement since its declaration had been accompanied by a promise to review the future status of Egypt. Although the involvement of the Egyptian people against their will and, contrary to British assurances, against their Caliph

was highly unpopular, this élite suspended anti-British agitations for the period of the war, banking the popular alienation from British rule as political capital in future negotiations.⁷¹ Its position was thus considerably strengthened by the war and this enabled it to seize the opportunity to lead a popular revolt against the British when it became apparent that the British were unwilling to talk.

This revolt when it came delivered to them a considerable degree of political legitimacy and substantiated their claims to leadership. It was facilitated by the social linkages which they had acquired in the process of eclipsing the older Turkish-born aristocracy and these in turn had had a significant impact upon the effectiveness of the 1919 revolt. Although most of this élite had relocated from the countryside into the urban centres, precisely because they had at one time been *fellahin*, they still retained many contacts and relatives in the surrounding villages.⁷² As Marius Deeb has noted, 'Social mobility between the class of village notables and the *effendiyya* was very great . . . The link between these two groups . . . not only made the 1919 popular uprising possible, but also constituted the basis of its leadership at the local level.'⁷³ Such linkages gave to these leaders a semblance of popular representativeness, and to their ideas a degree of legitimacy which culminated in the establishment of a Constitution and parliamentary democracy in 1923, following Britain's unilateral declaration of Egyptian independence in 1922.

The 1920s thus gives the impression that it was a period of total political and ideological dominance for this élite and its ideas of a territorially based secular-liberal nationalism. As Israel Gershoni and James Jankowski put it, 'By the mid-1920s and for several years thereafter, there seemed to be but one political path before Egyptians: to be Egyptian, to think Egyptian, and to act Egyptian.'⁷⁴ This impression of dominance was misleading for two fundamental reasons. First, the triangular relationship of power – between parliament, palace, and the British residency – instituted by the onset of parliamentary democracy and expressed in the Constitution left effective power in the hands of the same two that had it before, namely the palace and the residency. No elected Egyptian cabinet ever enjoyed any freedom of manoeuvre from British or monarchist interference, restricted as it was, on the one hand, by the four Reserved Points which safeguarded British interests, and on the other by a capricious king determined to use all the powers at his disposal to disrupt constitutional government, which he correctly surmised as representing a fundamental abrogation of his autocratic prerogatives.⁷⁵ Second, whatever the motivations of those taking part in the 1919 uprising might have been, for the vast majority of them it is unlikely to have been due to their espousal of secular-liberal nationalism. Its relative popularity as an ideology was confined to a small sector of the Egyptian political and intellectual élite. Moreover, the linkages which enabled the uprising in the first place were not ones which could compete, in the mind of the *fellah* or the uneducated urbanite, with the ideological resources at the disposal of the *ulama*. Quite simply, secular-liberal nationalism was not a language which the majority of Egyptians could understand.

Nevertheless, it is fair to say that within the political field and the adjacent intellectual field – both of which remained highly élitist in structure and composition – secular-liberal nationalism enjoyed an ascendancy in the 1920s. It was this which perhaps spurred its advocates to refine its ideological principles. With respect to the definition of the *umma*, this later generation of secular-liberals returned to the doctrine of assimilation proposed by Abduh, perhaps because they found Lutfi's by-passing of the problem too dry, or insufficiently powerful; perhaps because they suspected that it did not really solve the problem at all. In any case, the assimilationist doctrine was raised to new levels of 'scientific' sophistication.

Israel Gershoni and James Jankowski have shown in great detail how the war-time writings of Muhammad Husayn Haykal deeply influenced this rearticulation of the secular-liberal ideology. Taking his cue from the French thinker Hippolyte Adophe Taine, Haykal proposed to solve the problem of defining the Egyptian *umma* by advocating an absolute environmental determinism.⁷⁶ In attempting to overcome the difficulties raised by the notion of cultural assimilation, especially with regard to the irruption of Islam, Haykal placed even more emphasis on the *watan* as opposed to the *umma* by subordinating everything in the Nile valley – flora, fauna, cultures, peoples – to the distinctive environment of the valley itself. Taine had suggested that 'Human development is completely governed by immutable natural forces',⁷⁷ and Haykal took this and applied it to the Nile. The Nile valley had, for thousands of years, imprinted itself upon the Egyptian nation and shaped its collective personality; it will continue to do so. Once again, we see the theme of an unbroken continuity to Egyptian history emerging but this time assimilation is effected by the environment itself, not people or cultures. Cynics might say this is quite handy since the environment does not speak and cannot claim any political rights, and indeed it still merely obviated rather than solved both the Muslim/Copt problem and the irruption of the Islam problem. If Egypt was Islamicized by force, well then what does this matter since the conquerors were in turn themselves Egyptianized by a far stronger force, that of the Nile valley?⁷⁸ And if this force exerts itself on Muslims and Copts alike, well then it does not matter whether one is a Copt, Muslim, Armenian, Greek and so on. Residence in the Nile valley is itself the basis for membership in the Egyptian *umma*. Needless to say, this was by far the most 'open' conception of the Egyptian *umma* to date.

Yet this resolution is precluded at a deeper level. According to Taine, the three forces shaping a nation are 'race', 'milieu' and 'moment'. Of these, Haykal subordinated 'moment' to 'race' and 'milieu'.⁷⁹ 'Race' refers to 'the spirit or genius of a particular nation' (not to be confused with later racialist theories), and 'milieu' is the 'totality of the physical conditions in which a nation is born and lives'.⁸⁰ Both of these, 'as soon as they crystallize become almost entirely static',⁸¹ and this of course has parallels with other nineteenth-century conceptions that a civilization's purest form is to be found in antiquity. Such an emphasis on antiquity led Haykal and others to emphasize Pharaonic civilization as Egypt's distinctive 'spirit'

which of course raises once again the Muslim/Copt issue that confronted Tahtawi. It also raises once again the problem of Islam's irruption into Egyptian history, since logically 'everything that came from outside the Nile Valley was *ipso facto* alien'.⁸² This time, however, the secular-liberals thought they had an answer. If Egypt became Islamic, it did so on its own terms. In other words, environmental determinism enabled them to claim that Egypt had become Islamicized because Islam was itself compatible with Egypt's particular 'spirit' and had thus become 'Egyptianized'. Thus, a generation of secular-liberals in the 1920s sought antecedents for Islam in Pharaonic civilization. Salama Musa (a Copt) believed that 'It was Pharaonic Egypt that had originated advanced religious beliefs and disseminated them first through Judaism, then through Christianity, and finally through Islam.'⁸³ He believed that the Pharaoh Akhenaton had reached the point of 'true monotheism' before being undermined by the reactionary pagan priesthood. The point remained that the principles of monotheism, and therefore of Islam and Christianity, both of which, he could claim, were of 'alien' origin, were evident in Egyptian civilization from the outset. Tawfiq al-Hakim went even further in suggesting that it was Egyptian, rather than Arab civilization, which was truly monotheistic, that Arabs were in fact fundamentally antagonistic to monotheism.⁸⁴

This brings us back to the Arab conquest since if environmental determinism, along with the idea of assimilation, was designed to distinguish sharply the Egyptian *watan* as the sole basis for the Egyptian *umma*, at some point this had to come into conflict with Egypt's Arab cultural heritage. In order for Egypt to possess its own specific 'genius' it had to be extracted out of the frame of the Arab heritage. According to Gershoni and Jankowski, these secular-liberal nationalists were almost unanimously and unequivocally anti-Arab. Building on the cultural disdain which the *fellah* directed towards the nomadic bedouin (who stood in as a surrogate for Arabs as a whole),⁸⁵ these intellectuals believed that not only was Arab civilization, if it could be called that, incompatible with the Egyptian 'spirit' but that the Arab 'spirit' was inferior to the Egyptian 'spirit'. This anti-Arabism used the same theoretical frame of reference as that used to define the Egyptian nation, namely environmental determinism, and its logic suggested that the desert environment in which Arab culture was born determined the Arab 'spirit', which of course must be as barren.⁸⁶ But what of Islam? These intellectuals could not deny that the Arabs, for all their cultural poverty, had given Islam to the world.⁸⁷ It is here that the problem of Islam resurfaces with a vengeance; constantly fearful of being labelled atheists and anti-Islamic, with all the political consequences that might have in a political field already imbalanced towards the king and the Azhar, the limits of secularism are evident in the contradictory ways that the anti-Islamic implications of secular-liberal nationalist discourse were recontained. Thus, these secular-liberals made a distinction between historical Islam or 'Islamic civilization', to which they claimed the Arabs contributed very little, and Islam as a religion, which they conceded was produced by the Arabs, but about which they said very little. At this point their own logic starts to tie them up in knots. For the idea of

historical Islam is a logical correlate to arguments about the ‘Egyptianization’ of Islam. Yet Islam itself is said to be the product of an immutable Arab ‘spirit’ which is incompatible with the Egyptian ‘spirit’. One might ask how it is possible to separate the Arab ‘spirit’ from Islamic civilization since this spirit was presumably responsible for the genius of the religion in the first place (which they do not deny) and how, if this religion must *ipso facto* be the essential ‘core’ of Islamic civilization, can one make the distinction between Islamic civilization and Islam itself? To complete the syllogism, how, then, can one separate the Arab spirit from Islamic civilization? Conversely, how can one advocate the separation of ‘spirit’ from civilization in the case of the Arabs whilst insisting that no such separation is possible in the case of Egypt. The very terms of their argument threaten to overwhelm them. If it is indeed not possible to separate the Arab spirit from Islamic civilization then either Islam and Egypt are indeed incompatible, which is not admissible, or there is no essential distinction between the Egyptian spirit and the Arab spirit, in which case there can be no essential Egyptian spirit. The whole language of environmental determinism collapses.

Whichever way one looks at it, the problem of Islam remained unresolved. By trying to have it both ways the secular-liberals demonstrated either their inability or their refusal to answer one of the fundamental questions of identity which faced Egyptian nationalism from the outset, whilst purporting at the same time to have provided one. This question was a relatively simple one to state but a very complicated and politically fraught one to answer, namely ‘Is Egypt essentially an Islamic nation?’ Unable to provide a categorically negative answer, the question was left open for others to respond, categorically, in the affirmative.

The problem of Islam and power

Some of the ambivalences of Egyptian secularism are apparent in the Constitution of 1923, a document which supposedly espouses secular-liberalism as a principle of government. Article 149 stated that ‘Islam was the religion of the State’, without expanding upon what this actually meant.⁸⁸ Was Egypt, therefore, an Islamic state? If so, presumably this meant that Islamic law would still be the law of the land; however, ‘Article 3 granted to all Egyptians equal rights and duties and equality before the law, without distinction of race, language or religion thus abandoning formally the principles of Islamic law which discriminate between Muslims, *dhimmis*, and unbelievers’, which in every respect conceives of Egyptian law as based on entirely secular considerations.⁸⁹ Further articles guarantee absolute freedom of conscience, and state that power is derived not from God, or the Revelation, or the *sharia* as a whole but rather from the people of Egypt.⁹⁰ This was indeed a radical departure from previous political imaginings. Neither Tahtawi, nor Abduh or Afghani, nor Mustafa Kamil – although each of them might have espoused constitutional reform – ever envisaged that Egypt would be anything other than an Islamic state in which power and legitimacy was, fundamentally, derived from Islam. This had a profound impact upon their definitions of the

Egyptian *umma* in so far as their rhetoric of inclusiveness and Muslim/Copt unity was underlaid by a majoritarian Islamicist emphasis which originated from within Islamic law itself.⁹¹ Furthermore, although Lutfi al-Sayyid had certainly rejected the idea of a Pan-Islamic state, with regards to Egypt, his utilitarian argument left considerable room for ambiguity when it came to the relationship between religion, social utility and the state. These ambiguities were taken up by the secular-liberals who followed him. Thus, as Safran points out, the seemingly unequivocal espousal of secular-liberal principles in the Constitution is qualified by other articles within it and in practice the *sharia* remained the ultimate framework for legislation.⁹² In effect, therefore, a majoritarian Islamicist conception of Egyptian nationhood continued to survive.

All of this underlines how the problem of Islam was not only concerned with identity, but was fundamentally one which involved questions of power, authority and legitimacy. The transfer of Egyptian law from an Islamic basis to a modern, secular one was, of course, also a political process which had to negotiate competing concepts of authority. In particular, constitutional reforms designed to remove the arbitrary and autocratic prerogatives of the ruler were considered by the Khedive/king and the *ulama* as an affront to Islamic principles of legitimacy. They could point to a large body of traditional Islamic knowledge which legitimized authoritarian and absolute rule. Albert Hourani has shown how ibn Khaldun's theorization of Islamic authority and political principles could legitimize despotism despite the proviso that power should be exercised for the benefit and preservation of the subjects.⁹³ G. Hossein Razi has suggested that within the Sunni tradition, constitutional theory 'has not, historically, developed a clear and coherent theory of political obedience'.⁹⁴ However,

in order to reconcile their religious ideals with the cruel facts of their historical experience [i.e. the obvious fact that Islamic rulers did not always conform to the ideals of political authority which they identified with the first four Caliphs], some Sunni ulema have since upheld the duty to obey political rulers as long as they profess Islam and manage to maintain order, a ruling that formed the genesis of 'establishment Islam'.⁹⁵

Razi goes on to suggest that 'ossification' in Islam has led, in modern times, to a 'nonconvergence' between such traditional Islamic values and the contemporary social situation, which can lead to a crisis in legitimacy.⁹⁶ Such a crisis was apparent to the secular-liberals and the emergent Egyptian élite who saw limitation of the arbitrary powers of the ruler as the only means of consolidating their social position as well as the correct response to European superiority.

An important factor in the renewal of such Islamic values so as to enable 'reconvergence' is the recovery of *ijtihad*, free interpretation, which had been closed to Sunnis after the development of the four schools of medieval jurisprudence.⁹⁷ It was for precisely this reason that Muhammad Abduh found it strategically

imperative to restore the principle of *ijtihad* as a prerequisite for restoring the political legitimacy of Islam. However, faced with a resolute and powerful Khedive and an immobile and hostile Azhar, Abduh's followers went one step further and advocated the removal of Islamic political principles altogether from Egyptian public and political life. As Lutfi stated clearly, 'Our progress . . . is impossible to achieve . . . until we liberate ourselves first from the curse of worshipping uncritically thoughts and ideas on authority.'⁹⁸

In the attempt to modernize Egypt, the secular-liberal nationalists therefore sought to emulate the secularization processes of modern Europe so as to transform the basis of legitimacy from which authority in Egypt could be derived. Such a process was seen as a fundamental aspect of constitutional reform. Yet in so emulating Europe the emphasis was limited to the separation of religion from the state and the removal of religious principles from their position of dominance in the political field only. Given that the gravitational locus of authority and legitimacy revolved around the circuit between the Palace and the Azhar, this was a necessary but by no means sufficient means of obtaining the desired secularization of political life. For politics is part of wider social life, and is indeed deeply embedded in it, but these secularists did not aspire to challenge Islam's dominance in the social field at large. In fact, it was Islam's dominance in the wider social field which was the very basis for its political legitimacy. Precisely because secularization was conceived by these secular-liberals as a narrowly political solution, it proved to be no solution at all. The limits of secularization in wider society ensured that the political modernization envisaged by them rested on brittle foundations, and was to prove partial and unfulfilled.

The basic problem with the secular-liberal approach was an idealistic mode of thinking which interpreted these issues without relation to the wider social field in which such new principles were supposed to take hold. It may be suggested that this was a consequence of an élitist political field almost totally disconnected from the pressures of social life, even after the establishment of parliamentary democracy. This idealism encompassed two specific methodologies. On the one hand, rather than mounting a frontal attack on Islam on the basis of alternative and incompatible principles, an attempt was made to modernize Islam from within so that a reinterpreted Islam appeared consonant with modern political principles. In other words, this was no equivalent of the Enlightenment. This method has been particularly associated with Muhammad Abduh, and was Islamic reformist rather than secularist although the goal of limiting autocracy and establishing constitutional government was the same.⁹⁹ The other approach was to deny any connection between religion and politics at all, and reframe the language of politics by using the totally modern discourse of utilitarianism. This was Lutfi al-Sayyid's position. The problem with the former was that it was inherently limiting; the problem with the latter was that it was inherently unpopular and therefore politically implausible.

Thus, when events after the war transformed the field of power and propelled this Egyptian secular-liberal élite on to the centre of the political stage, they found

themselves in the unlikely position of having apparently succeeded in their political aims without having found a satisfactory basis for legitimizing their success. Nor did they seek to develop one after their rise to political prominence since, in effect, they took it on faith that they had been proved right and therefore no more political theorizing was required. They soon found out, however, that it was their opponents who were much the stronger players in the political game and that their position was weakened further by the lack of a satisfactory basis for their legitimacy among the wider society, even though officially they had seemingly achieved a notable political victory. This was so as early as 1922–3 during the framing of the Constitution. It was even more apparent later in the decade as the palace launched offensive after offensive against constitutional government.

Before this realization was made, however, these secular-liberal leaders and their allied intellectuals were content to leave their political theorization unresolved, partly because their idealism led them to consider democracy as an ethical ideal and not as a political practice which is one of several on offer and whose adoption needs to be justified and defended.¹⁰⁰ It seems they believed that the outward forms of democratic practice – the holding of elections, the establishment of political parties, parliamentary debate and so on – would ensure the establishment of its legitimacy because it was so obviously right and far superior to autocracy. There was no consideration therefore that such principles must be integrated into wider social practices which in turn legitimize the principles themselves.

This hesitancy in attempting to embed the principles of modern, secular-liberal democracy in the wider society was also due, of course, to the limits of secularization in modern Egypt. Thus, whilst they advocated political principles which promote a social structure dissonant to the hierarchical and authoritarian society envisaged and upheld by Islamic socio-political ideology, these same secular-liberals were nevertheless content to leave the hierarchical social structure of Egypt intact. There were, of course, compelling economic and political reasons for them to do so, all of which were connected to the lack of modernization in Egypt. For one thing, notions of social hierarchy ensured their social and economic position. Thus, whilst they sought to curb the autocracy of the ruler, they were themselves autocratic in their relations with the *fellah* who lived in their ‘fiefdoms’.¹⁰¹ For another, if their socio-economic emergence was dependent upon their creating links between the rural and urban economies, as Afaf al-Sayyid Marsot suggests, then this necessitated their involvement in politics.¹⁰² Conversely, it also meant that to be involved in politics one had to possess land. This had a profound impact upon the Egyptian élite’s conceptions of power and politics. For despite their espousal of modern, secular-liberal constitutional government, their conception of power was based upon older ‘feudal’ notions of leadership and authority. Whilst Lutfi agreed with Aristotle that the ‘best political community is formed by citizens of the middle class’,¹⁰³ in the absence of such a class in modern Egypt he believed that authority should be invested in the ‘government officials, members of the liberal professions, and the gentry’.¹⁰⁴ Since each of these groups possessed,

acquired or sought to acquire land as a means of improving their social status, they established political linkages in the rural interior which would serve them well. Democracy in Egypt was thus slotted into the prevailing 'feudal' pattern and it operated within a complex 'patron-client' system of leverage in which votes were marshalled on behalf of the landlord and the party to which he belonged.¹⁰⁵ It was the discrepancy between these secular-liberals' espousal of democracy as an ideal and their actual practice of it which foreclosed their political success in the long term. Combined with the logic of party politics, it led to the ironic collusion of the Liberal Constitutionalist party – who had drafted the Constitution in the first place – with the palace in abrogating constitutional government in 1928.¹⁰⁶ Their justification was either naïve or cynical, depending on your point of view. Believing that a period of stability would benefit Egypt as a whole they advocated a paternalistic conception of political authority which, they believed, would be in the interests of the nation and thus enable secular-liberal principles to take hold in society; in fact, it further entrenched authoritarianism as the only legitimate political principle in Egypt, and further undermined secular-liberal constitutionalism.¹⁰⁷ Nor did the Wafd (despite their electoral power and consequent affection for a wide democratic franchise) possess a fundamentally different conception of political leadership to the Liberal Constitutionalists since the national leadership of each party was essentially composed of the same class.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, since the *'fellah* seldom voted out of political conviction' it is not surprising that secular-liberal principles failed to take hold among them. Democracy in Egypt was therefore hamstrung from the outset.

All of this helped to consolidate rather than remove Islamic political principles in modern Egypt. By replicating the traditionally sanctioned notion that politics is above society – a pre-modern conception of the political field in which élites struggle among themselves with the rest of society constituting the spoils of war – the secular-liberals adopted the rather contradictory position of assuming that it was possible to modernize Egypt whilst leaving its basic social structure intact. They therefore merely advocated the most visible outward form of a secular society, which was the separation of religion from the state. In so doing, they rehearsed a problem which first became evident in Egyptian nationalism's pre-history and which was intimately connected with the idea of Egypt's essentially Islamic identity, namely, the question of following European patterns of modernization without surrendering Egyptian society's Islamic character; in other words, the question of adopting the forms of European modernity whilst ensuring that these forms were substantiated by 'Islamic' content. This was a vital means of securing or salvaging some Muslim pride in the face of the necessary adjustments required to accommodate the Islamic world within modernity. It was apparent, as Charles Wendell observes, to all the great thinkers in the Islamic world including Afghani and Lutfi al-Sayyid.¹⁰⁹ However, the 'mistake . . . was to imagine the feasibility of an ideal case of adoption of form cleansed of content. That some were uneasily aware of the essential impossibility of the procedure . . . does not negate the fact that they went ahead as if it might just be practicable.'¹¹⁰ This was another

reason, then, why the secularizers chose not to disturb Islam's role as the dominant principle of social life.

In this respect, one rather surprising line of continuity in modern Egyptian thought links the Pan-Islamicist Afghani to the utilitarian Lutfi and thereupon to the dominant strain within the later secular-liberal paradigm which believed that the trappings of a modern secular state would guarantee Egypt's modernization. Another line of continuity would link those who intuitively reasoned that such a position was untenable without at least an effort to reform Islam from within and thereby reconcile European forms with a 'true' Islamic content. This would link Muhammad Abduh to Ali Abd al-Raziq and beyond him to the later 'Islamic turn' of writers such as Muhammad Husayn Haykal and al-Aqqad.

By the 1920s, a third response to the form-content dilemma, driven by developments in Egyptology and the European fascination with the grandeur of Pharaonic civilization, was to make the distinction redundant. This strain within secular-liberal ideology, which would later find its most articulate manifestation in Taha Husayn's *The Future of Culture in Egypt* (1938), would unequivocally locate Egypt within the wider civilizational orbit of a Mediterranean culture which provided the basis for a common heritage between the Egyptian and European civilizations. For these secular-liberals, there need be no contradiction. However, they had to confront the massive and stubborn reality of an unmodernized and unsecularized Egypt where such notions were anathema. Faced with opponents for whom the traditional Islamic division of the world into the two halves of Islam and the rest was still an axiomatic category of perception, those who espoused westernization unequivocally were constantly open to the threat of being labelled heretics, atheists and anti-Islamic. The cry of 'religion-in-danger' still continued to exert an emotional pull far in excess of the 'Westernist' argument and was utilized by the king and the *ulama*; it was even utilized by other secular-liberals of different parties as they sought to accumulate party political advantage. Such a resolution was, therefore, not only highly idealistic and intellectualist but politically limited.

The only option, therefore, was to take up from where Muhammad Abduh had left off in order to resolve the issue from within the framework of Islam itself. In effect, this required the secularization of Islam – a reinterpretation of Islamic doctrine so as to enable it to be reconciled with the adoption of western patterns of development – which was a tacit admission of the failure of Lutfi and others to bypass the problem. Abduh himself had stopped well short of this point but the political problematic had now changed. His reforms had been conceived within the context of the British occupation and had therefore been largely of a philosophical nature. He had attempted to demonstrate the theoretical compatibility of Islam with modern political principles in the event of Egypt achieving self-determination and reaching the stage when such a possibility might be realized. Yet in so far as he was not prepared to contemplate the decline of Islam in social life, he could not envisage how Egypt could reach the requisite stage of modernization in the first place. His thinking therefore equivocated

between the idealistic notion put forward by others that constitutional reform based upon a reformulated Islam would by itself be sufficient, and the equally idealistic but more traditionally Islamic notion of a benevolent despot capable of and willing to institute the necessary reforms.¹¹¹ In other words, for Abduh, instead of absolutism being considered the opposite of political modernization, it was considered, at least sometimes, as its necessary prerequisite; unlike in modern Europe where the absolutist monarchies were superseded by their political antagonists, Abduh believed autocracy would be replaced by its political heir. Such notions of enlightened absolutism permeate the discourse of most of the secular-liberals, from Lutfi with his emphasis on the personal righteousness of the Rashidun caliphs who ensured that political Islam, although absolute, was not in contradiction with modern notions of liberty,¹¹² to the paternalism of the Liberal Constitutionalist who also believed that their authoritarian rule would bring about liberty and democracy. The question that is begged is, of course, what kind of a democracy could be expected if it was the heir and not the rival of despotism?

The political problem facing Ali Abd al-Raziq was of a totally different order to that which had confronted Abduh, and its solution was more urgent. Instead of being conceived as part of a distant future, parliamentary democracy and constitutional government was, by the time he wrote his *Islam and the Principles of Political Authority* (1925), a manifest reality but one which was bombarded on all sides by the forces of reaction emanating from the palace and the Azhar. Nor, after independence, were the British available as a surrogate for the benevolent despot as they were for Abduh. The consolidation of constitutional government as a viable political system for Egypt was of paramount importance for Raziq, whose family were prominent members of the Liberal Constitutionalist party. What was clearly required was the separation of religion from politics as Lutfi had argued; but this had to be done in a different language, not by using the imported and alien language of utilitarianism. Rather, such a separation had to be argued for from within the framework of Islam itself. Only then could the opponents of constitutional government be engaged on their own terms. That he took up his pen in the context of a palace-sponsored effort to restore the caliphate merely underlines the extent to which the secular-liberal ascendancy of the political field was built upon shifting sands, for in the context of the caliphate debate Egyptian secular-liberal nationalism was faced with the continued existence of an opposing political imaginary based on older, more traditionally Islamic concepts of authority and loyalty, namely autocracy and Pan-Islamism. Abd al-Raziq's intervention into this debate was ostensibly about the desirability or otherwise of a restored caliphate. In reality, it was nothing less than the defence of European principles of political authority and their compatibility with Islam. In effect, he argued that secular political principles were compatible with Islam because Islam itself had no political principles.¹¹³ Whereas Abduh had suggested that other than in his prophetic capacity Muhammad had not been infallible, Raziq redefined the notion of the prophetic mission still further by arguing that Muhammad was not just a fallible

politician but was, in fact, not a politician at all.¹¹⁴ In fact, he had not even conceived of any kind of specific political order for Islam. If that is the case then it is open for each generation to adopt a political order that is most suitable for it, and for modern Egypt that order was constitutional democracy based on secular-liberal principles. Thus it is possible to adopt European forms whilst maintaining an Islamic content, if that adoption is limited to the political sphere.

In his book, Raziq extends Muhammad Abduh's methodology and synthesized it with Lutfi's arguments. He shared with both an idealism which is reflected in his axiomatic insistence on considering modernization only in terms of its effects in the political field. This was partly because his logic made him insist on an equally idealistic conception of Islam as a religion which could be extracted from its social and historical moorings leading to a de-politicized, de-institutionalized, highly individualist and basically protestant conception of Islam. As Leonard Binder has suggested, his conception of the Prophetic regime was that it was 'a pure religious Islamic essence',¹¹⁵ and if this was case for the Prophetic regime it must, by extension, be the case for Islam *in toto*. It was also partly due to his having recognized the problem of Islam with regard to the modernization of political authority in the first place. Having recognized the problem, it is unlikely that he would have risked losing whatever he might have gained by attempting to tackle Islam's social dominance. Another reason may simply have been that he did not want to challenge Islam's dominance in social life since as a member of the *ulama* himself it was the basis for his own social position. Whatever the case, he denied that Islam was a total social and political system by adopting a highly idealist mode of argument which rejected 'history or practice as a source of meaning'.¹¹⁶

This kind of idealist thinking extended to almost every aspect of Egyptian secular-liberal nationalist discourse. For example, the rationale for their neglect of socio-economic reform, in addition to the class interests they had in not doing so, was their belief that education would, of itself, bring about the necessary reforms and implant in the population a 'democratic disposition'.¹¹⁷ A belief in the power of education thus acquired an almost talismanic status in their discourse and this indicates why the question of Azhar reform was such a 'hot' political topic for them.¹¹⁸ A reformed Islamic education based on a modern ethical approach as opposed to the outdated and dogmatic catechistic approach would, if combined, with a modern, secular education facilitate the spread, slowly, of an awareness among the population of their political and civil rights.

This, of course, was predicated on an élitist and paternalist concept of leadership in which the concept of a vanguard was quite openly avowed but the implications of which were not assimilated or even vaguely recognized. In his analysis of the writings of one noted secular-liberal, Ahmad Amin, William Sheperd points out how he did not seem to notice that according to this idea of leadership 'Justice in government depends on an enlightened and effective public opinion, which will prevent it from acting tyrannically . . . [but] the development of that which is to control government action depends in great measure on the government which needs to be controlled.'¹¹⁹ Without such an awareness of the implications of their

concept of leadership, paternalist liberalism constantly shaded into authoritarianism. In fact, this entire concept of leadership was predicated upon a class discourse which reflected an 'upper class's flattering view of its role in society'.¹²⁰ Thus, rather than emphasizing the liberal language of individualism in which the individual is the basic unit of society, society is conceptualized as consisting of an enlightened élite which is opposed to the supine and ignorant *fellah*, or the dangerous 'mob'. Thus did the secular-liberals rationalize their willing perpetuation of Egypt's pre-modern social hierarchies whilst indulging in a rhetoric of revolution. This too played its part in the undermining of the very political system they espoused since 'An open class system is imperative for democratic practice.'¹²¹ Whilst they advocated such an open class system in theory, in practice they foreclosed it. In so doing they helped, in more ways than one, ironically to consolidate the traditional Islamic principles of authority and legitimacy that they sought to replace. An 'Islamic turn' in the political discourse of modern Egypt was thus rendered inevitable not despite secular-liberalism's ascendancy but because of it.

The crisis of Egyptian secular-liberal nationalism

It is highly significant that the first real ideological crisis which the secular-liberal nationalist paradigm experienced was in 1925, a mere 2 years after the establishment of constitutional government and at the supposed zenith of its ideological and political ascendancy. For 1925 was also the year the palace used its considerable power to enact its first constitutional coup d'état.¹²² Its second coup d'état against the constitution was in 1928, this time aided and abetted by the very men supposedly most committed to secular-liberal principles of government, the Liberal Constitutionals. This was followed, in 1930, by a much more serious suspension of constitutional government under the Sidqi regime, and the Constitution of 1923 (itself the very reason the king had the power to dissolve constitutional government in the first place) was not restored until 1935. It would therefore be fair to point out that during the period 1925–33, which Gershoni and Jankowski identify as the 'high point of Egyptianist [i.e. secular-liberal territorial nationalism] expression',¹²³ Egypt was ruled most of the time by autocratic governments. In the ironic journey from Abd al-Raziq's attempted defence of secular-liberalism from within the framework of Islamic discourse to the Ministry of the Iron Grip lies much of the truth about Egyptian secular-liberal nationalism.¹²⁴

First, the furore over Abd al-Raziq's book, and then subsequently over Taha Husayn's *On Pre-Islamic Poetry* (1926), revealed to the secular-liberals that it was not they who possessed the stronger ideological, political and institutional resources, but rather their more traditional and Islamicist opponents – the palace and the *ulama*. The dominance seemingly manifested in the existence of a parliament and a constitution, and the legitimacy seemingly delivered by the uprising of 1919, and seemingly later confirmed by the Wafd's incontestable electoral power, proved to be nothing more than a mirage. Real power continued

to reside, as it always had, in the hands of the palace, the British residency and the Azhar.

Second, the consequences of the secular-liberals' ideological failure – their wilful blindness to or hesitancy towards the problem of Islam in both its dimensions, and their refusal to consider Islam as a total social system to be tackled at both the political and wider social levels – were profound. For they awoke from their political illusions in the later 1920s to find that far from leading their society, they were in fact at odds with it. This became especially apparent as, motivated by the manifest shortcomings of constitutional government, new political groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Young Egypt began to nudge politics in Egypt towards mass participation, to move it from the cloisters of the palace and the debating chamber and out into the streets and the mosque and the university corridor. It was the realization, both of their actual alienation from the society they were purporting to represent and of the increasing swell of popular participation in the political field, that led the secular-liberal intellectuals to try new ideological methods which might establish secular-liberalism as a viable alternative basis for political legitimacy.¹²⁵ The necessity of this shift in ideological strategy, however, had been anticipated by Ali Abd al-Raziq as early as 1925.

Their problems had been compounded by the implications of their failure to tackle the problem of Islam in so far as it had negated both their commitment to liberalism, on the one hand, by consolidating rather than challenging traditional patterns of authority and legitimacy, and on the other, their commitment to secularism by promoting a latent, majoritarian Islamicist concept of the Egyptian *umma* (a fact proved rather than disproved by their repeated stress on Muslim–Copt unity). Thus, inflecting Charles Smith's argument, I would suggest that it was not so much that the Islamic turn within secular-liberal nationalist discourse aided and abetted the Islamicist ideologies which rose to challenge it in the 1930s, which is undoubtedly true; rather, the significant fact is that the reorientation was necessitated by the ideological limitations inherent in the secular-liberal paradigm itself. In fact, the alternative ideological paradigms of the 1930s emerged from within the discursive parameters of Egyptian secular-liberalism, in particular from the idealistic mode of thinking which structurates almost every one of its arguments. If one of the effects of this idealism had been to reinforce authoritarian Islamic principles of power, and another had led to a tacit acceptance of an Islamic basis for Egyptian identity, yet another effect was its latent orientation, rather ironically, towards what would later be known as Islamic fundamentalism. Leonard Binder has put the case rather concisely,

Traditionally, Sunnis believe that an ideal Islamic government is attainable and was in fact the case under the rightly guided Caliphs. Traditionally, Shiites believe that an Islamic government is attainable under the rule of the Imams. Fundamentalists hold that an ideal Islamic government is possible regardless of historical conditions. Indeed, among the purposes of Islamic government is the overcoming of historical conditions.¹²⁶

Thus, an idealistic approach to the problem of Islam, by evacuating Islam from its history, concurs with the fundamentalist idea that a 'pure' and 'true' Islam is applicable to all times and all places. Egyptian secular-liberal nationalism thus had an intimate relational existence to its later opponents in so far as they were already anticipated within it. One might discover the precise lineages between them by closely examining some of Egyptian secular-liberal nationalist discourse's classic texts, in particular Tawfiq al-Hakim's *Awdat al-Rub*.

TAWFIQ AL-HAKIM AND THE
DARK SIDE OF EGYPTIAN
SECULAR-LIBERAL
NATIONALIST DISCOURSE

Awdat al-Ruh (The Return of the Spirit) was published to rapturous acclaim in 1933. Without doubt much of this praise was due to its literary merit but the timing of its publication was nevertheless fortunate for the young al-Hakim. As Ali Jad has written, ‘the novel came out at a time of great disappointment and despair which followed the defeat and death of Saad Zaghlul and the loss of the Wafd of its right to govern’.¹ Add to this the rather more important factors which had contributed to the gradual loss of enthusiasm for the political settlement of the previous decade (after all, Zaghlul had been dead for almost 6 years), namely the installation and consolidation of the brutally authoritarian and unconstitutional regime led by Ismail Sidqi; the lack of stable democratic government due to the constant fractiousness between the respective political parties (such that a new term in the political lexicon – *hizbiyya* (‘partyism’) – became widely disseminated);² and the effects of a world economic recession upon an Egypt ill-equipped to cope with it, and one begins to envisage how *Awdat al-Ruh*, with its positive and optimistic affirmation of the revolution of 1919, might have appealed to a political and intellectual class in need of revivification.

Al-Hakim wrote the novel in 1927 which coincided with the cusp of a profound transformation in Egyptian social and political life. As the 1920s drew to a close the spread of free state education from primary to tertiary levels, the subsequent expansion in student numbers and the widening of educational participation to the lower social groups, combined with an expansion in the governmental machinery in order to accommodate the extra supply of ‘graduates’ and other products of the education system, and a general expansion of the Egyptian capitalist economy, had led to a ‘substantial increase in the number of the petty bourgeoisie by the 1930s . . . composed of low- and middle-echelon government employees, small landowners, teachers, police and army officers, low- and middle-echelon employees in companies, professionals, students, small and middle traders, and artisans’.³ As a rule, this literate and often highly articulate class (Gershoni and Jankowski call them the ‘new effendiyya’⁴) was economically insecure, a condition

exacerbated by the conjuncture of its social emergence with the great economic crisis of the 1930s.

The world-wide recession, taken together with the anti-agriculturist policies of the pro-industrialist Ismail Sidqi,⁵ the subsequent emergence of a fledgling indigenous Egyptian industrial capitalism, and the effects on the *fellah* who, uprooted from the land, flocked to the urban centres in ever greater numbers, led to massive urbanization in general and the doubling of Cairo's population in particular.⁶ This too further undermined the economic security of the petty bourgeoisie and as their discontent grew they began to flex their nascent political muscles to shift the balance of forces in the political field. It was the rise of this new social class which nudged Egyptian politics from an élite to a mass field of political participation. It was through the initiatives of organizations which articulated and represented the petty bourgeoisie's class interests that there was a diversification of the institutions through which political participation could be enacted. In particular, the Muslim Brotherhood (*Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun*) and Young Egypt (*Misr al-Fatat*) contributed to the shift of Egyptian politics from the palace and parliament to the streets and alleys, the coffee-houses, shops, mosques, factories, and even homes of Egypt. Richard Mitchell noted how Hasan al-Banna recognized the need to move the Brotherhood's activities to the 'people's institutes'⁷ and how the Brotherhood came to develop 'schools and institutes . . . small industries . . . Welfare activity . . . hospitals, clinics, and dispensaries'.⁸ All of these created a network of institutions through which the political activity of the Brotherhood could be channelled, by which discontent with the existing political institutions could be fomented, and from which offensives could be launched. Young Egypt also contributed to the disestablishment of politics in Egypt by advocating 'direct action . . . mounting boycotts . . . and sending its activists to picket foreign and "prohibited" forms of entertainments'.⁹ Disillusionment with the parliamentary system of government was fed by the chronic economic problems and the lack of opportunities (there was an alarming pool of unemployed graduates in the 1930s) which confronted the petty bourgeoisie, was fuelled by the perception that the only people who gained from parliamentary democracy were the politicians who were themselves usually wealthy landowners, and was facilitated by the new anti-parliamentary organizations.

Such a shift in the balance of forces in the political field naturally had consequences in the ideological field too, and the political ascendancy of groups like the Muslim Brotherhood and Young Egypt was reflected in the increasing popularity of their respective ideological configurations as opposed to the secular-liberal nationalism which had, in the 1920s, been in the ascendant. The crisis of legitimacy for the parliamentary system of governance had led to an ideological crisis within Egyptian secular-liberal nationalism and in turn had necessitated a switch in ideological strategy. Yet, as Charles Smith has shown, the ground conceded by the secular-liberals to their illiberal and non-secular opponents would in fact further undermine secular-liberalism in Egypt.¹⁰ This was, however, in addition to the inherent ideological weaknesses within Egyptian secular-liberalism

itself. Standing on the verge of this profound ideological and political shift, *Awdat al-Rub*, as we shall see, both reaffirms secular-liberal ideology and articulates an incipient disillusionment with it. It does so not by articulating an entirely different ideological perspective but by pushing the latent tendencies of secular-liberalism to their limits, thus illuminating the ‘dark side’ which precipitated its eclipse.

Awdat al-Rub and Egyptian identity

At face value, *Awdat al-Rub* is quite clearly a novel which promotes secular-liberal territorial nationalism and employs all the discursive tropes which are associated with that particular ideological paradigm. No reader could fail to notice the strong current of Pharaonicism throughout the novel but, as I have shown, the 1920s secular-liberal paradigm developed a specific type of Pharaonicism which I have termed ‘environmental determinism’. Such a concept is apparent in the words of the ‘history teacher’ which Muhsin recalls after his encounter with the bedouin tribesman, ‘his [the Egyptian peasant’s] goodness and love of peace were a consequence of his deeply rooted agricultural heritage’ (p. 166).¹¹ As if the words of the Egyptian history teacher are not enough, they are affirmed by the French archaeologist; admiring the flat landscape, he detects ‘a more profound meaning’ in it: because the flatness of the land enables cultivation he suggests that, ‘You are a people with a deep-rooted civilization’ (pp. 175–6). Thus, ‘civilization’ is a consequence of environment, which in turn ensures a continuity of experience since time immemorial. The idea of an unbroken continuity of Egyptian history was another fundamental trope in the secular-liberal concept of environmental determinism, and references to continuity abound in the novel.¹² To take one example, ‘the present-day Egyptian was the very same Egyptian farmer who lived, plowed, and planted the same earth long before the Bedouin was a Bedouin’ (p. 166). This too is confirmed by the French archaeologist who responds to the English irrigation inspector’s scepticism about ‘a link between Egypt today and Egypt yesterday’ by exclaiming, ‘And what a link! . . . the essence is eternal’ (p. 183). This continuity of experience, together with the environment which enables it, predicates the irreducible unity of Egyptian national identity. Muhsin, chancing upon a cow suckling both its calf and a human child, intuitively grasps its significance in so far as it demonstrates the unity of existence. Building on his intuition he again recalls his history teacher’s lesson that the recognition of the unity of existence was, in fact, the special achievement of the ancient Egyptians – and by extension, of course, the present-day Egyptians (p. 170).

This narrative of unity was not, of course, universal; it too had its exclusions. Al-Hakim’s construction of a specific Egyptian identity followed the secular-liberal strategy of drawing a distinction between Egyptians and Arabs. Like other secular-liberal intellectuals, he conflated the bedouins with Arabs as a whole, drawing upon the residual prejudices of the agricultural *fellah* toward the nomadic bedouin.¹³ During Muhsin’s conversation with the bedouin guard the latter asserts an irreducible difference between *fellah* and *bedu*, ‘How, Bey, could the Bedouin

resemble the peasant?' (p. 166). This assertion of difference is not only not denied but actually reinforced. If the *fellah* has a love of goodness, peace and tranquillity, the bedouin 'continued to be wild and to love war, revenge, and blood' (p. 166). With the parameters of difference agreed, al-Hakim then proceeds to puncture perceived Arab pretensions to cultural superiority. Abd al-Ati, the bedouin guard, asserts this superiority on the basis of a 'long and noble line of descent' (p. 166), but al-Hakim, drawing on the concept of environmental determinism, illustrates that the Egyptian peasant has a longer lineage, one stretching back to 'before the Bedouin was a Bedouin' (p. 166). Once this is established, the way is clear for al-Hakim to inferiorize the bedouins, confident of Egyptian superiority on the bedouin's own terms. All this leads Muhsin to conclude that 'The farmer's better than the Bedouin, more generous than the Bedouin, kinder than the Bedouin' (p. 170).

In addition to the novel's anti-Arabism there is also a conspicuous anti-Turkish agenda. In some respects, this agenda is politically superfluous since the Turko-Circassian aristocracy had, by the 1920s, embarked upon a steep and terminal political decline. In other respects, however, it is valid to see this attack within the wider context of the political conjuncture as a symbolic attack upon the authority of the palace since it represented, institutionally, the last vestiges of Turkish rule.¹⁴ The stand-off between the secular-liberal nationalist politicians and the monarchy had, by the turn of the decade, become a permanent feature of Egyptian politics although this was given an additional twist by the logic of party politics which fostered the illusion among some members of the Liberal Constitutional party that an alliance between themselves and the palace was both necessary and desirable in order to confront the electoral dominance of the Wafd.¹⁵ For despite the reality of a parliament and a constitution, King Fuad believed that 'he was the only constant in Egyptian political life,' and he never relaxed his conviction in his absolute right to govern.¹⁶ This conviction was, in turn, fed by an aristocratic belief in innate superiority.

Through the figure of Muhsin's mother and her response to the 'cheese' episode al-Hakim delivers a comic satire of such pretensions. Not realizing that Europeans conclude their banquets with cheese, she brings upon herself a quite hilarious episode in which the only cheese in the house, some ageing 'Greek' cheese for baiting mousetraps, is eventually served up. Muhsin's mother's response to the crisis is illuminating:

Her husband asked in a tone of censure, 'Didn't you know that banquets have cheese?'

The lady regained her sense of pride and self-respect. Placing her hands on her waist she shouted at her husband, 'You, Sir, what are you saying . . . Banquets? I'm the one who understands what the picture is – raised in the house of pashas. I know how Ottomans eat. Who says that after lamb stuffed with raisins, hazelnuts and pinenuts; chicken and pigeon . . . and stewed stuffed vegetables, people eat cheese?' (p. 177).

The point is, of course, that she clearly does not know ‘what the picture is’, since this picture is based upon the residues of glory derived from her belief in the continuing superiority of the Ottomans, a belief shown to be utterly irrelevant to the present situation. Not only does this irrelevance draw into question her very assertion of superiority but it also implicitly illustrates a point about the historical passing of Ottoman or Turkish rights to govern Egypt. By presenting her anxiety to please her European visitors, Muhsin’s mother – and by implication any persons and institutions associated with the old Ottoman order – is reduced to the status of handmaiden to European dominance. On the one hand, it alludes to the contemporary situation in Egypt in so far as it suggests that the palace is merely a prop of British power; on the other, this very impotence is itself the basis for questioning the possibility of true independence for Egypt as long as the palace exists. The episode represents a quite astute appraisal and critique of the triangular power relations in 1920s Egypt.

Another trope in *Awdat al-Rub* which was a familiar aspect of Egyptian secular-liberal nationalist discourse is its concern with the Sudan. The Sudan had long been considered by Egyptian nationalists of all persuasions to be an integral aspect of Egyptian territory based on the principle of the unity of the Nile valley.¹⁷ We are thus presented with the Sudan issue the moment Muhsin crosses the threshold into Saniya’s house, ‘Hung on the walls were stuffed heads of Sudanese gazelles and elephant tusks. A terrifying stuffed crocodile from the Sudan was similarly attached to the entry door’ (p. 62). We are then told that Dr Hilmi, Saniya’s father, was a medical doctor in the Egyptian army during its Sudanese expeditions. It becomes immediately apparent, therefore, that Saniya’s house carries a special symbolic resonance in so far as it represents the territorial aspect of the nationalist imaginary.

But, in terms of the Sudan’s exact location within the nationalist imaginary, and in particular the secular-liberal paradigm, what is most relevant for our purposes here is the long anecdote delivered by Dr Hilmi regarding his exploits there. The episode makes some symbolic points about Egyptian solidarity and unity using the metaphor of the monkeys in the well, but the most interesting element of Dr Hilmi’s narrative is its form, that is, its picaresque quality. By presenting a picaresque journey through the ‘unknown province of Bahr al-Ghazal’, commencing at a camp near Ghaba Shambe, then ‘deep into the dense and far-reaching forests’, then through ‘the bush country’, then ‘another forest as vast as the ocean’ full of mahogany trees, then to ‘still another place until they reached Tungu’, and finally crossing the ‘savannah regions’ (pp. 142–6), the novel serves to domesticate an unfamiliar and exotic space through a sustained act of narrative mapping. This not only serves to control and claim the space but also reinforces the conception of the Sudan as merely a place; to Egyptian nationalists, therefore, its value extended only in so far as it demonstrated the unity of the Nile valley. There is no attempt to engage with the Sudanese people (even the Sudanese soldier acts merely as a guide for the benefit of the Egyptians) and their cultures, nor is there any suggestion that these people share any kind of cultural or political identity with

the Egyptians. In fact, an active process of estrangement occurs through the exoticization not only of the space but also of the people, 'You'll see something *stranger* than that when we get to Tungu . . . You'll see some of the *natives* hunt lions with short spears' (p. 142, my emphasis). An innate and irreducible sense of difference is thus represented, even as the Sudan is claimed to be an integral part of the Egyptian nation. As Gershoni and Jankowski point out,

the unity of Egypt and the Sudan was a heavily instrumental concept, one based not on any metaphysical identity between the two regions or on the ethno-historical unity [of] the peoples of both, but rather on the necessity of Egyptian control over the Sudan in order to assure the security and prosperity of Egypt itself.¹⁸

What, then, of Egypt's place in the wider world? As I have suggested previously, the conception of a bi-polar world divided into two camps, east and west, Islamic and non-Islamic, was axiomatic within all shades of opinion. During the 1920s an intense debate was going on concerning which hemisphere Egypt belonged to, a debate which was to conclusively favour the rise of 'Easternism' in the next decade.¹⁹ In *Awdat al-Ruh*, al-Hakim seems to equivocate. On the one hand, the specific configuration of his Pharaonicism seems to gesture, as in the case of other secular-liberals, towards Egypt as the foundation of Western civilization. Indeed, the novel's title is predicated upon an historical concept within secular-liberal discourse which suggested a 'hiatus' between Egypt's Pharaonic grandeur and its modern reawakening. The return of the spirit to which the novel refers is quite self-consciously portrayed as a return of the 'Pharaonic' spirit. The two concepts of 'hiatus' and 'western foundationalism' are related. Responding to the advances in Egyptology in the early twentieth century, and in particular the sensational discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922, some secular-liberal nationalists sought to bypass a battle for cultural parity with modern Europe by rather stressing Egypt's role in the development of European civilization itself. Egypt was thus located not outside the orbit of Western civilization but rather at its very foundation.²⁰ The discrepancy between Egypt's perceived 'backwardness' compared with modern Europe was explained by the complementary concept of the 'hiatus', a historical slumber from which Egypt had, in 1919, awoken. Thus, 'Egyptian nationalist intellectuals of the 1920s assumed a correlation between the realization of Egyptian authenticity and the attainment of modernity.'²¹ This had a significant effect upon Egyptian ideologies of the future and their concepts of progress. Once the spirit of Pharaonic civilization is revitalized, Egypt would automatically acquire the benefits of modern civilization and even surpass Europe. It is on this basis that the French archaeologist confidently predicts, 'What an amazing industrial people they will be tomorrow!' (p. 182). All that is required, he suggests, is a 'beloved' to reawaken that slumbering 'spirit' from its 2,000 year hiatus. This was, of course, consonant with the anti-Arab orientation of the novel but was also implicitly anti-Islamic since it effectively bypassed the Arab conquest and the subsequent irruption

of Islam into Egyptian history. The concept of hiatus also had the additional benefit of reinforcing the notion of Egypt's uninterrupted historical continuity by suppressing this most problematic discontinuity. Yet, it needs restating that this was not so much a resolution as a deferral of the 'problem of Islam', a wilful denial of its existence.

This denial is, however, complicated in the novel by an explicit 'Easternist' orientation which, in the context of ideological development in twentieth century Egypt, appeared dissonant with the logical implications of the secular-liberal nationalist emphasis on Pharaonicism and western affiliation. This has led some to position al-Hakim as an anomalous figure within the secular-liberal ideological discourse.²² Yet, as we have seen, due to the political exigencies of the period there was, even within the secular-liberal paradigm, a recognition of the need to accommodate Egypt within the civilizational orbit of Islam and the 'East' stretching back to Ali Abd-al-Raziq's tract on Islam and political principles.²³ The point, therefore, is not that al-Hakim's easternism and his secular-liberalism are in conflict but that it illustrates a shift within the secular-liberal paradigm towards that strand of thinking in the 1930s which would be qualitatively different to Abd al-Raziq's 'resolution' of the problem of Islam, and which would be exemplified by the writings of people like Muhammad Husayn Haykal. This difference lay in the form of easternism during the 1930s which, unlike Raziq's, posited a dualism between 'spirit' and 'matter' which is then mapped on to the dualism between east and west.

This theme was developed at length by al-Hakim in a later novel, *'Usfur min al-Sharq* (Sparrow from the East) (1938), but it is incipient here almost a decade earlier. Al-Hakim's lifelong affirmation of the philosophical dualism between the spiritual and material and its association with the geographical polarity of east and west derives, most probably, from his sojourn as a student in Paris. There, under the influence of Bergsonian subjectivism on the one hand,²⁴ and the difficulties of adjusting to the demands of a different social landscape on the other, the 'relationship between the cultures of East and West [which] becomes [such] a dominant concern in his writing'²⁵ was mapped on to the dichotomy between 'intellect' and 'intuition', the head and the heart. In *Awdat al-Rub*, whilst al-Hakim draws a distinction between 'the intellect's logic' and 'that of the heart' and suggests that 'Each of them is sound. Each of them is necessary' (p. 244), it is clear throughout his voluminous writings – especially his plays, which demonstrate a consistent fascination with the impossibility of perceiving an 'objective reality'²⁶ – that he effectively circumscribed the power of the intellect in favour of intuition as the preferred means by which to judge human experience. This emphasis on the heart and the power of intuition occurs at several points in the novel, some of them at very crucial symbolic moments. Thus, for example, Muhsin's 'vision' of the unity of existence (which is, of course, a predicate for the unity of the Egyptian nation) is felt at 'a deep, mysterious level' which one needs to 'translate . . . into the language of logic and the intellect' (p. 169). As if to underline the superiority of intuition over intellect, al-Hakim then writes, 'Emotion is the knowledge of the angels whereas rational knowledge is human

knowledge' (p. 169). At another hugely symbolic moment, the truth of Egypt's national existence and its reawakening is demonstrated by the spontaneous emotional recognition of this by the population during the 1919 uprising, 'this emotion had flared up in all their hearts . . . because all of them were sons of Egypt, with a single heart' (p. 273).

This dichotomy between head and heart, intellect and emotion, is mapped on to the spatial distinction between east and west via a parallel dichotomy between European superficiality and Egyptian substance. It is most apparent in the French archaeologist's discourse about the Egyptian peasant, 'this people you consider ignorant certainly knows many things but it knows by the heart, not the intellect. Supreme wisdom is in their blood' (p. 179). He then goes on, 'Europe is out in front of Egypt today, but in what? Only in that acquired knowledge which the ancients considered accident not substance . . . Deprive a European of his schooling and he'll be unspeakably ignorant. Europe's only power is in the intellect' (p. 180). This carries a resonance which anticipated the later commonplace within Egyptian political discourse between the superficiality of Europe's materialist civilization and 'eastern' spirituality. Al-Hakim would develop this at greater length in his later novels but here, at the cusp of an ideological transformation in Egyptian political life, although the distinction is not placed in terms of 'east' and 'west' but rather in terms of 'Europe' and 'Egypt' the very distinction illustrates the liminality of al-Hakim's ideological position. If, by distinguishing between Europe and Egypt in the first place, al-Hakim is rejecting the 'foundationalist' argument and gesturing towards an 'Easternist' affiliation for Egypt, by omitting any mention of the east but rather focusing on Egypt's specific difference from Europe he retains his Egypt-centred territorial nationalist position. Yet, at a deeper level, the mode of this incipient Easternism anticipated the later 'Islamic turn' of Egyptian political discourse.

Al-Hakim's novel can thus be located within this wider 'reorientation' of Egypt's secular-liberal nationalist intellectuals towards Islam.²⁷ Such a shift was due, of course, to the relationality of ideological positions within the 1920s, and in particular the brittle ascendancy of the secular-liberal paradigm. Faced with opponents possessing stronger ideological and institutional resources, once the precariousness of their ascendancy was exposed, the secular-liberal intellectuals had no choice but to engage their Islamicist opponents on their own terms; the 'proto-Easternist' strategy adopted by Raziq not only proved to be insufficient but was itself the catalyst which galvanized the more unequivocal shift towards Islam and the East among ideologues formerly committed to the concept of 'western foundationalism'. Haykal, one of the leading secular-liberal intellectuals of the 1920s also therefore enacted the same ideological shift as al-Hakim by suggesting that the 'rational material life' of the west could be borrowed but its 'spiritual ideological life . . . is unsuitable for emulation'.²⁸ In so doing, intellectuals like al-Hakim and Haykal were, unintentionally perhaps, questioning the very place of principles such as secularism in Egyptian life. Into which category, one might ask, do notions like secularism, democracy, liberalism and individual rights belong,

the 'material' sphere which could be accommodated, or the 'spiritual ideological sphere' which could not? The writings of the more Islamist ideologues of the 1930s, people like Hasan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb, would share this form of argument but would unequivocally reject secularism and liberalism as unsuitable for an 'eastern' and Islamic country like Egypt.²⁹

It is not surprising to find, therefore, a considerable ambivalence towards Islam in the first novel of a writer who is generally considered to be one of Egypt's most secular intellectuals. Of course, this ambivalence was, as we have seen, an integral aspect of secular liberal discourse but this, taken together with al-Hakim's particular form of incipient easternism, illustrates the lineages between Egyptian secular-liberalism and the Islamicist ideologies of the later 1930s. On the one hand, therefore, we find quite a strong satire of Islam in the novel. Zanuba's propensity towards superstition, for example, and the numerous comical episodes associated with her magical attempts to attain a husband offer al-Hakim a suitable platform from which to castigate the perceived cultural degeneracy and backwardness of Egypt's 'traditional' society. Not all these episodes are, moreover, comic in tone. Zanuba's visit to the 'miraculous' Shaykh Simhan develops a sinister tone which complements its theme of economic exploitation of the vulnerable and gullible by such shaykhs (pp. 54–5). One could, perhaps, object that the Shaykh Simhan episode is not an attack on Islam itself inasmuch as the shaykh is quite clearly not a part of mainstream Islam but represents that undercurrent of miraculous cults associated with local saints which formed the body of 'popular', as opposed to 'doctrinal' or orthodox, Islam in Egypt. Yet, if one reads carefully, one finds an interesting series of comparisons between the shaykh's shrine and the tomb of the Sayyida Zaynab, the Prophet's granddaughter. Shaykh Simhan's shrine is compared with a 'cage or tomb' (p. 54) as is Sayyida Zaynab's tomb (p. 51). This set of correspondences serves to equate the shaykh with a central figure in mainstream Islam and is reinforced by the description of his shrine which seems a parodic imitation of the holiest building in Islam, the Kaabah in Mecca, 'It was, rather, a kind of cage veiled from sight by a heavy black cloth covering' (p. 54). One may add to this seeming rejection of Islam the strong sense of nature pantheism which animates the lyrical sections of the novel praising the *fellah's* way of life. Indeed, the hymn which Muhsin hears the *fellahs* sing is conspicuous both by the absence of any reference to Islam and its strong connotations of an ancient, pre-Islamic Pharaonic religion, 'Were they chanting a hymn for the morning, to celebrate the birth of the sun the way their ancestors did in the temples?' (p. 172). Finally, one may point to the discussion in the railway carriage in which a discussion of Europe prompts a shaykh to deliver an offhand remark that 'It's a country without Islam' (p. 156). This causes some embarrassment since the person it is directed to is a Copt. Another passenger, sensing the situation, intercedes and proceeds to refine the shaykh's statement, in the process redefining the meaning of Islam itself, 'an enlightened man . . . began to emend the statement until he showed those present that the word "Islam" that was current in common Egyptian usage at all levels of society really had no religious or sectarian stamp'

(pp. 156–7). This is, of course, consonant with the principles of secularism which al-Hakim espoused.

On the other hand, however, over and above these protestations of secular solidarity and Coptic–Muslim unity in a ‘union of hearts’ (p. 156), which subliminally illustrates the limits of secularism rather than its total purchase, there is a strong emotive affiliation with Islam permeating the text. All the main characters are Muslims and Islam suffuses the cultural milieu to such an extent that it seems that Egypt and Islam are mutually synonymous – the very reason perhaps for al-Hakim’s attempted redefinition of the word ‘Islam’. That redefinition was, of course, true to form within the secular-liberal discourse in so far as it is an idealist conception of religion with no regard for the social and material dimensions of religious affiliation. Hillary Kilpatrick suggests that al-Hakim, ‘appears to be scarcely aware of religion in its social aspects’.³⁰ But as far as these dimensions are represented to a limited extent within the fabric of the novel, they are all Islamic: the Sayyida Zaynab mosque, the Azhar mosque, the shaykh’s shrine. The majority of the novel’s action takes place within the space of the Sayyida Zaynab quarter of old Cairo and not once do we glimpse a church or any institutions of Egypt’s other religious minorities. Finally, one may also point out that at times of crisis these Islamic institutions provide emotional support and sustenance. Muhsin finds himself unconsciously drawn to the tomb of Sayyida Zaynab during his period of emotional trauma following his rejection by Saniya, and during the 1919 rebellion it is the Azhar mosque which becomes the focal point of activity – hardly the most inclusive of locations for those Copts who presumably constituted part of Egypt’s ‘single heart’.

This already latent ambivalence to Islam in the secular-liberal paradigm anticipates the full-blown Islamicist ideologies of the later 1930s, aided and abetted by the ‘Islamic turn’ of writers such as al-Hakim and Haykal. *Awdat al-Rub* stands witness to the cusp of this reorientation within al-Hakim’s own body of writing; in 1936, he published the first edition of his play *Muhammad* which formed a significant addition to the growing body of what Gershoni and Jankowski call *Islamiyyat* writing in the 1930s.³¹ Although clearly more secular than the Islamic discourse of such movements as the Muslim Brotherhood, al-Hakim’s Islamic writings participated in the general shift away from secular-liberalism towards Islamic nationalism, and contributed to the rise in anti-foreign sentiment which, fuelled by economic recession, crystallized around the fact that the vast majority of Egypt’s nascent capitalist economy was owned by ‘foreigners’ taking advantage of the still operational capitulations. These foreign companies exacerbated the increasing problem of unemployment among educated Egyptians by rarely employing indigenous Egyptians, preferring instead to recruit from their own communities.³² Unsurprisingly, in the increasingly competitive world of the 1930s, such practices generated considerable resentment and provided the latent political pool of discontent with the ‘West’ – with whom these (usually European and non-Islamic) foreign communities were associated – which furnished the political revival of outright Islamic conceptions of Egyptian nationhood.

The relevance of al-Hakim to this process of ideological transformation is that he quite clearly understood his own role and motivations for this Islamic turn in political rather than religious terms and associated it quite explicitly with a redefinition of Egypt's national identity. In an article entitled 'In Defence of Islam' (1935) he suggested that the defence of Islam was not just a religious issue but 'also an issue of nationality and nationalism . . . the defense of our personality and belief, in short the defense of our life'.³³ Nothing better illustrates the extent to which the Islamicist ideologies of the 1930s possessed deep roots within the secular-liberal discourse which they challenged than the adjacency of these sentiments, from the writer of *Awdat al-Rub*, to those of Hasan al-Banna, the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood.³⁴

Awdat al-Rub and power

Al-Hakim's liminal reorientation of Egyptian national identity in *Awdat al-Rub* is but one aspect of the novel which demonstrates the lineages between Egyptian secular-liberal discourse and the Islamicist ideologies of the later 1930s. The other, perhaps more crucial aspect, is its attitude to power, authority and class. If, as William Maynard Hutchins suggests, *Awdat al-Rub* is a 'political romance in which an individual's awakening to life is tied to and representative of the political awakening of the nation',³⁵ then no analysis of the nature of this representation can afford to overlook the representation of power relations in the novel nor can it neglect to relate this to the gradually shifting class configurations within Egyptian society at the beginning of the 1930s.

The main theme of the novel in this regard is solidarity. It is introduced in the foreword to the novel, a quotation from The Book of the Dead, 'You are going there where all will be one'. This is quickly followed in the brief preface which presents the family's communal solidarity, even in sickness; not only do they contract influenza 'at the same time', they also sleep together in one room and project a 'profound . . . inner joy at this communal style of life' (p. 27). The same theme (and almost exactly the same scene) is returned to at the end of the novel as the family are lined up, one beside the other, in the hospital. Quite clearly, then, the family functions in some metaphorical or symbolic capacity, underlined by Al-Hakim's use of the Arabic word *al-Sha'b* (the people, translated by Hutchins as 'the folks') which 'has a nationalistic connotation'.³⁶ Al-Hakim is here drawing on a strong Egyptian tradition of viewing the family as not just the fundamental unit of society but also as the ideal type of community. The anthropologist Andrea Rugh has suggested that

Family as the most intense social group in Egyptian society with the strongest set of mutual obligations becomes the ideal by which other social groupings are measured. The idioms that are peculiar to its organization are used to reinforce other social, political, or economic relationships.³⁷

By employing a trope with such strong cultural resonance, al-Hakim is attempting to make the symbolic dimension of his 'political romance' more apparent. Nor was he the first writer within the body of Egyptian nationalist discourse to have promoted the family as a metaphor for the nation; a long line of nationalist intellectuals and politicians had deployed this particular rhetorical strategy, among them Saad Zaghlul, Mustafa Kamil and Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid.³⁸

As a symbolic ideal, this representation of the family advocates a national solidarity in which class divisions are effaced. The servant Mabruk, for example, is not considered external to the family even though he is not a blood relation. Abduh the engineer at one point passionately reminds us of Mabruk's integration into the household, 'Isn't Mabruk a human being? Isn't Mabruk one of us? Since when has Mabruk been treated any different from us. Since when has there been discrimination in this house?' (p. 42). That Mabruk's character itself possesses a representative and symbolic dimension is illustrated by the echo of Abduh's initial question later in the novel as a peasant asks Muhsin's mother. 'Aren't they [the *fellah*] human beings, your ladyship?' (p. 164). Mabruk therefore represents an entire class within Egyptian society, the *fellah*, which the novel suggests must be fully included into the national community. Indeed, the points of the novel at which al-Hakim is at his most effusive in presenting the case for 'unity' are those which are located in the countryside and which centre on an idealization of the *fellah* designed to complement and reinforce the narrative of inclusion represented by the 'folks'.

The family also exerts a strong emotional pull upon the novel's main character, Muhsin, who is himself a conduit for presenting the value of solidarity. When he is separated from the 'folks' Muhsin longs to return and become once more absorbed into this ideal community. He becomes depressed by the 'solitude' of his parental home in Damanhur and he remembers the 'life of the group' as 'a happy life . . . even during their hardships and difficulties' (p. 160). As a character in his own right, Muhsin is presented as being psychologically inclined towards group solidarity and embarrassed by the class superiority his mother attempts to instil within him.³⁹ On the opening page of chapter 1 references to his side of the family's wealth and his new suit cause him embarrassment. His acute self-consciousness only heightens his aspiration towards solidarity (p. 44).

Other symbolic and metaphorical episodes are deployed to project the theme of national solidarity such as the metaphor of the monkeys in the well (p. 143), the significance of which is buttressed by its location in that significant *topos* of the nationalist imagination, the Sudan. There is also the anecdote of the troupe of singers to whose communal lifestyle the young Muhsin is drawn (pp. 88–102). All of this is, of course designed to convey a political message of nationalist unity and solidarity which might at first seem strange for a liberal to be espousing. After all, is not this emphasis on communal solidarity highly illiberal? Such a judgement would be based upon an erroneous and Eurocentric assumption that liberalism as it is known in western Europe is the universal standard against which all other varieties must be judged. But liberalism as a political concept is related

to definitions of freedom, the individual and his or her place in society, all of which are culturally relative. As Andrea Rugh suggests, the Egyptians enjoy a ‘corporate’ rather than ‘collective’ conception of a social group which emphasizes the primacy of the group over and above its individual members; the ‘collective’ conception which is broadly favoured by Euro-American societies emphasizes the individual constituents of a group as entities in their own rights with an ontological precedence over the group to which they belong.⁴⁰ Corporatism, however, means that an Egyptian feels that ‘As an individual he is insignificant; as a social being he has significance.’⁴¹ Thus, the sense of individuality which underlines Euro-American liberalism is not so strongly present in Egyptian life and liberalism as a socio-political ideology developed accordingly. Hence an emphasis on communal solidarity over and above individual liberty does not of itself prove that Egyptian secular-liberalism was illiberal.

Nevertheless, there does seem to be another side to the political message conveyed by *Awdat al-Rub*. If the theme of solidarity is designed to advocate an effacement of Egypt’s social and religious divisions, such divisions are (as we have already witnessed in the case of religious division) present throughout. In terms of social class what we find, upon reading more closely, is a departure from the egalitarian rhetoric of solidarity. This is demonstrated by other aspects of the novel’s class representation summed up in the separation of Mabruk and the *fellah* from the narrative of solidarity on the one hand, and the separation of Muhsin from this same narrative on the other. Taken together they reveal that the novel’s class ideology is in alignment with the exclusionary and élitist class discourse of the large landowners and other members of the Egyptian élite, the very class to which the secular-liberal nationalist paradigm was affiliated. Indeed, al-Hakim was a member of this very class – his father possessed a large estate of about 300 acres near Damanhur and married into the declining Turkish aristocracy in a manoeuvre so typical of the emergent Egyptian élite.⁴²

Taking up the novel’s representation of Mabruk and the *fellah*, then, one notices that Mabruk himself impalpably recognizes that ‘a certain division . . . would continue to exist between him and these people he lived with’ (pp. 42–3). This is complemented on the one hand by the underside of the theme of continuity which, on one level is used by the novel to prove the ‘unity’ of the national community, but on another level projects a sense of absolute and irreducible class difference. At his father’s house in Damanhur, Muhsin ‘began a mental review of his father’s personality and upbringing. Wasn’t he a peasant too, first and foremost? . . . Wasn’t he still? How had he changed? Did his clothes, his expensive walking stick, his shoes and socks, and his diamond rings alter him?’ (p. 161). Thus, it seems that despite acquiring all the trappings of upward social mobility, despite possessing the economic wealth to be considered a member of the Egyptian élite, a peasant always remains a peasant. This class essentialism may be generously read as an idealistic attack on the pretensions of the Egyptian élite who are reminded of their *fellah* origins, but it is in fact combined with a contemptuous condescension towards the *fellah* that serves to keep the peasant in his place. We find, therefore,

a satirical rejection of the *fellah's* potentiality for acquiring full political rights which bristles with patrician contempt. This is demonstrated through the very same family metaphor which is supposed to project the *fellah's* equal place in the national community. Zanuba having squandered the household finances, the folks turn instead to Mabruk and this change is presented, allegorically, as a revolutionary change of government, 'Listen, Mabruk . . . You be our government' (p. 75). He is then told to 'proceed by reasoning, brains, and sound management' (p. 76). Mabruk, however, utterly fails in his task and proceeds to squander the money as well, this time on a pair of spectacles which he naïvely purchases in order to please Saniya. The very means of his disgrace is a metaphor in itself, the spectacles representing an upper class disdain for the short-sightedness of any revolutionary alteration of Egypt's class relations. Moreover, by failing so utterly at his task, Mabruk is shown to possess neither reasoning nor brains nor sound management, an impression strengthened by his characterization as a child.

Thus, despite the idealization of the peasantry at one level of the text, there is a disparagement of them at another. In fact, one may suggest that the novel goes so far as to dehumanize them. Ironically, this becomes apparent in the very same 'calf and child' episode (pp. 169–70) which is used to demonstrate the peasant's natural comprehension of the unity of existence. As Paul Starkey says, the chapter presents the *fellah* as 'at one with nature; his feeling is shared with the angels, the child, the calf, his forebears – and, of course, with Muhsin himself.'⁴³ One the one hand this projects a positive association of the *fellah* with God, the angels and Muhsin, the hero of the novel. On the other hand, he is associated with children and animals, an association which has, as we have seen in the case of Mabruk, political implications. In this episode the double-edged image of the *fellah* actually swerves towards the emphasis on his association with animality and difference rather than the association with God, the angels and Muhsin. This is because the text subtly elaborates a profound sense of difference between Muhsin and the *fellah*. Muhsin we are told possesses a 'developing intellect' (p. 169) which associates him with childishness only temporarily – a stage through which he will inevitably pass into adulthood. Indeed, at other times he is presented, even as a young boy, as not at all childish. He 'seemed to scorn youthful frivolity' (p. 76), for example, and becomes aware of his difference from other 'simple children' with their 'innocent, artless glances' (p. 44). It is implied, however, that the peasant and the calf do not possess a 'developing intellect' like Muhsin but are caught in a state of perpetual childish stupidity. Quoting Dostoevsky, al-Hakim associates childhood with 'knowing many things without knowing it' (p. 169). This phrase is echoed in the discourse of the French archaeologist who, with specific reference to the peasant, again says that they possess 'Supreme wisdom . . . without knowing it' (p. 179). In the context of a speech in which he stresses the eternal continuity of the peasants' way of life, this echo of childhood suggests that in thousands of years the peasant has not developed an intellect which Muhsin, in 15 years, has been able to develop. This reveals an entirely new dimension to the metaphor of the (peasant) child and calf suckling together from the udder of a cow. Muhsin's

irreducible class difference – reinforced in the very next passage by his incomprehension over the peasants' propensity to mourn the death of a water buffalo, 'as though the deceased were a man' (p. 170, my emphasis) – is presented not only as a difference in intellectual maturity but also as a difference in being, with the peasants placed in correspondence to their animals.⁴⁴

Thus, the egalitarianism which the theme of solidarity promotes is circumscribed by an élitist paternalism which ultimately reduces the *fellah* to merely an emblem of 'authenticity' in the nationalist discourse. For all the talk about the hidden power of the peasantry in the Frenchman's effusive disquisition – the British engineer has a point when he accuses him of 'sacrificing facts to eloquence' (p. 180) – it becomes apparent that they are in fact completely powerless. If on the one hand the Frenchman's idealization of the peasantry gestures towards a revolutionary potential, it becomes clear that much of value of the peasantry's 'spiritual power' (p. 180) as far as the ideology of the novel is concerned lies not so much in their revolutionary potential to challenge authority but rather in their submission to authority. 'Spiritual power' enables the *fellah* to take 'pleasure in communal pain . . . without complaint or a groan' (p. 182); unlike the European workers who 'catch the germs for revolution', the Egyptian peasant's spiritual power sublimates pain and suffering into a 'secret pleasure and happiness' (p. 182). It is on this basis that they will become 'an amazing industrial people . . . tomorrow' (p. 182). When it is recalled that this Egyptian élite of large landowners, far from being challenged by an industrialist bourgeoisie, were in fact themselves diversifying into industrial capitalism then the class significance of this statement becomes obvious: it represents nothing less than the bourgeoisie's fantasy of a perfectly submissive and acquiescent potential labour force.⁴⁵ The nationalist imaginary of *Awdat al-Rub* is quite clearly, therefore, affiliated to the class perspective of this crystallizing 'national bourgeoisie'.⁴⁶

The rhetoric of national solidarity expressed in *Awdat al-Rub* represents, therefore, nothing but a specious attempt to mask the *fellahin's* continued subjection by the very nationalism that speaks of their liberation. In many respects it operates as a bluff which proposes a potential power which – to ease the national bourgeoisie's anxiety that it might in fact amount to more than just a figure of speech – is always recontained by the élite. This sense of anxiety over the activism of the lower classes among the Egyptian élite and the subsequent need for their recontainment is mentioned by Selma Botman with regard to the 1919 uprising, 'What originated as a peaceful political proposal initiated by largely upper-class Egyptian notables . . . turned into revolutionary activity carried out by the mass of the population' which was 'not encouraged by the political establishment . . . who wanted to control the political sentiments of the masses not unleash them.'⁴⁷ It is reflected in the closing chapters of the novel – significantly those chapters which describe the revolution of 1919. In formal terms we witness a 'fragmentation' of the narrative into a sequence of disjointed, impressionistic episodes (pp. 272–6) which reflects the content of the chapter – the loss of control, the anarchy, 'Cairo was turned head over heels . . . They set fire to police stations

. . . They had smashed and destroyed the gas lamps and the hedges. They armed themselves with stones, heavy sticks, clubs and knives' (pp. 273–4). Although al-Hakim presents us with the desired spontaneity on the part of the masses as evidence of the return of the national spirit, this same spontaneous response is also a cause for concern since it is soon uncontrollable. In fact, it represents a radical decentring of the élite nationalist narrative, just as the formal fragmentation here suggests a decentring of al-Hakim's narrative. It is interesting to note, however, that this uncontrollable spontaneity is soon recontained within structures that reimpose élite control such as the meeting held in the Azhar, and the symbolic figure of Saad Zaghlul, 'the situation calmed down with the return of the mighty exile to an unsettled Egypt' (p. 282).

So, if the British need not fear the Egyptian peasant then who should they fear? Who controls the iron fist of power? The answer, veiled by the specious rhetoric of the Frenchman's speech, is of course the Egyptian élite itself, the emergent national bourgeoisie. It was this very class whose flagging spirits needed to be revived by a novel such as this. The other side of the rhetoric of solidarity, therefore, was a self-conscious vanguardism. If the rhetoric of solidarity was the necessary means by which a small class could claim legitimacy for the whole nation by making itself metonymically 'representative' of it, this class also claimed such legitimacy on the basis of its 'natural right' to leadership as a superior social group. The representatives of the class in the novel are Muhsin, his parents, Dr Hilmi, Saniya and Mustafa. Each in their own way are set apart from the rest of the characters in the novel – the uncles, Zanuba, the peasants, the bedouin and so on. Dr Hilmi is set apart by his experience of the Sudan and his 'trophies' on the wall, and his superiority is exemplified by the way the listeners in the café hang upon his every word (p. 141); Saniya by the way she functions at a higher level of existence effecting upon every person she comes into contact with a transformation of their character towards noble and lofty ideals (e.g. the transformation of Salim from lazy lecher to an honourable man (pp. 248–9) and committed political activist), as well as by her sophistication and manners, her wit and intelligence; Mustafa by his character which never stoops to the base level of his companions who seek pleasure in the arms of prostitutes; even Muhsin's parents, although somewhat disparaged, are never treated in the same way as the novel treats the peasants or Mabruk – they are pretentious but never childish, vain but never stupid (compare Mabruk with his glasses), arrogant but never 'animals'.

Muhsin, however, is the main character and he is set apart in various ways. First, his background sets him apart from the rest of the 'folks' in so far as his uncles and aunt are from the poor side of the family; the utility of the family metaphor becomes apparent here for the blood tie between Muhsin's family and their poor relations effectively sublimates their class differences. Second, his sensitivity sets his lovesickness apart and at a higher plane than that of his equally lovesick uncles, 'They felt for the first time that they did not measure up to him [Muhsin]. He was set apart from them by the rare quality of his heart' (p. 213). In this respect, it is also symbolically significant that of all the 'folks' he is the only one to be

allowed genuine access to Saniya who is herself an emblem of class superiority. Third, as we have seen, he is set apart from his youthful contemporaries, an adult with no time for 'youthful frivolity' (p. 76) and more intelligent. All these different manifestations of Muhsin's superiority operate as signposts towards Muhsin's leadership potential. This potential is spelled out in the way he relates to his classroom colleagues and to the 'folks'. It is quite clear that to his classroom friends Muhsin is a born leader, 'most of the pupils respected him and liked to listen to him when he spoke. The pupils would frequently gather around him and Abbas' (p. 76). As for his family,

Muhsin's sensitive heart had enough of the sacred fire in it to suffice to fill Salim's heart and to make up for the deficiencies of Abduh's . . . A single sensitive heart may suffice to inspire a wide diversity of others . . . The deeper Muhsin got into his pain and the more they shared it with him they felt raised by that much above their original status (p. 248).

Recognizing that the other members of the family are looking to him to give a lead Muhsin decides to approach Saniya once more 'for he felt he was responsible for the well-being of these folks' (p. 252). It is on the basis of his quite apparent leadership potential that Muhsin makes sense of his mission in life, 'to give expression to what is in the hearts of the entire people' (p. 79). In this regard, he begins on a small scale almost immediately by challenging the teacher into allowing him to discourse in composition class on the word 'love' thereby expressing to his fellow pupils 'what was in their hearts' (p. 82). This rather ambitious sense of mission is presented in the text not as overweening conceit or arrogance or even vanity but as a duty and a right, one premised, however, on a class supremacy which is ideologically transmuted into innate superiority.

The dark side of liberalism

Although for the most part Muhsin is presented as being quite embarrassed about his distinction from the lower classes, there are times when he is quite self-consciously pleased to set himself apart. Inevitably, these moments are always associated with his infatuation with Saniya, 'The word "bey" rung in his ears strangely, although this one time he did not mind it. He felt an unaccustomed pride. He wished Saniya could have been present to see and hear' (p. 158). At other times Saniya compels him to resist his gravitation towards communal living, inciting in him a desire to be alone, 'For the first time Muhsin resented that style of living: five individuals in a single room' (p. 69). In fact, Saniya has this effect upon all the folks; because of her Abduh too begins to resent the communal life (p. 116) as does Salim (p. 123). As their emotional involvement with her intensifies, the communal solidarity between them begins to break down. Each of the folks begins to harbour suspicions about the others, Abduh and Salim becoming resentful of Muhsin's capacity to see and talk to Saniya (pp. 68-9), Muhsin coming

to 'hate Abduh' (p. 119) and 'growing to hate Salim' (p. 124) in turn as they too enjoy their moments in the ascendant. At times, this family tension becomes sinister, 'Salim came back to them with the letter in his hand. His face looked terrifying . . . He said that in a menacing tone no one had ever heard him use before' (p. 128). Indeed, because of Saniya communal solidarity is replaced by mutual suspicion and individual competition, unity by disunity. If the 'folks' possess some allegorical function, how is one to interpret this complete breakdown in family (read: social) relations? Moreover, Saniya is a representative of that same class to which Mushin belongs, indeed, the very class that Saad Zaghlul belongs to, one which has been presented as the social group from which Egypt's natural leaders are to emerge. If Saniya's character possesses a symbolic value, as most critics seem to accept, then what can her effect upon the folks symbolize? I suggest that in the gap between her symbolic function and the reality of her effects upon the (equally symbolic) folks we can attain a fleeting glimpse of a fracture in the class ideology of *Awdat al-Rub* which illuminates a concealed ideological level that gestures towards an incipient and different ideological configuration.

The issue of whether Saniya's character possesses any symbolic value and if so what she represents has been at the centre of most of the critical controversies with regard to *Awdat al-Rub*. Whilst most critics agree that she does indeed carry some kind of 'symbolic burden',⁴⁸ they are not agreed on what she represents. For critics like Hutchins and Kilpatrick, Saniya quite clearly represents the Egyptian goddess Isis.⁴⁹ Matti Moosa, on the other hand, not only believes that this is 'far-fetched' but is also sceptical that any symbolic value whatsoever can be placed upon Saniya.⁵⁰ Yet there does seem to be a prima-facie case for believing that Saniya represents Isis. In one passage especially, the description of Saniya's modern hairstyle quite explicitly alludes to her connection to the goddess, 'her hair was cut in the latest fashion . . . A picture came to Muhsin's mind. It was one he looked at frequently in the year's text for ancient Egyptian history . . . That picture was of a woman. Her hair was cut short too . . . like an ebony moon: Isis!' (p. 86). Critics like Moosa who object do so on the grounds that there is no correspondence between Saniya's role in the novel and Isis' role in the myth of Osiris. This, however, is to miss the point for it seems to me that al-Hakim is attempting something quite different by associating Saniya with the mythological Isis.

By associating Saniya with Isis, al-Hakim is attempting to make explicit the symbolic framework of the novel which, according to his wont and in conformation with the secular-liberal ideological discourse within which he is writing, is emphatically Pharaonic. He is suggesting that the template myth with reference to which we ought to read his novel is the Osiris myth because it enables him to enlarge upon his favourite theme of the unbroken continuity of Egyptian history since Pharaonic times. It acts, therefore, as a formal correspondence to this nationalist theme, and nothing more. In other words, he is not attempting to 'rewrite' the Osiris myth, he is merely referring to it, thereby locating himself within a wider cultural current of opinion about Egypt's past and, by implication, its future.

In so far as the novel is therefore quite clearly affiliated to a body of opinion which had constructed a Pharaonic nationalist symbology around the uprising of 1919, Saad Zaghlul, the leader of this uprising, is clearly associated with Osiris (p. 273), and is in turn, represented as the 'beloved' which the French archaeologist had spoken of. Is Saniya, the 'beloved' of *Awdat al-Ruh*, associated with Isis because her role in this particular narrative is analogous to Zaghlul's role in the wider narrative of Egyptian history?⁵¹ And could one not say that al-Hakim chose to associate her with Isis rather than Osiris because he wished for a correct gender correspondence? Saniya, then, is Isis but what does Saniya/Isis represent? Here we must return to the French archaeologist and his conception of the 'beloved'. If Zaghlul/Osiris as the 'beloved' embodies the nation, as the Frenchman suggests he does, then perhaps Saniya/Isis also embodies Egypt. To this one might also add that it is Saniya's house which also embodies the secular-liberal territorial nationalist imaginary. Yet, her effect upon the 'folks' (who, as we have seen, also represent Egypt) is so divisive and destructive that we must pause for thought here. There seems to be an irreconcilable contradiction in the novel's symbology. What are we, as readers, to make of it? It may be suggested that this contradiction is, in fact, the very aporia which enables us to deconstruct the ideological scaffolding of the novel and to move into its political unconscious.

At this point it is worth recalling another critical controversy, namely over the history of the text's composition. Whilst the critics agree on 1927 as the year of composition, some suggest that it was written in Paris in French and later translated by the author into Arabic,⁵² others that it was written in Paris but not in French,⁵³ and others that it was started in Paris in French but finished in Egypt in Arabic.⁵⁴ There is also the fact that al-Hakim wrote a letter to Taha Husayn in 1934 which suggests that regardless of whether he wrote it originally in French or Arabic, he spent the years before its publication in revising it.⁵⁵ What is common to all positions in this debate, however, is that the initial version underwent some changes before its publication.⁵⁶ The text itself seems to indicate that al-Hakim added what might be called a 'mythic overlay' to what had originally been the core narrative, the failed romance between Muhsin and Saniya, thereby transforming what would essentially have been an autobiographical romance into something far more significant: a fledgling 'political romance'.⁵⁷ This suggestion is reinforced by the observation, frequently made by critics, of the 'tenuous connection between the realistic and symbolic aspects of the novel'.⁵⁸ The Egyptian writer Yaha Haqqi has written of *Awdat al-Ruh* that, 'The symbolic aspect seems majestic and is supported by a dynasty of gods and by *The Book of the Dead*, while the realistic aspect contains childish narratives and events marked by ostentation, sham, and inconsistencies.'⁵⁹ The idea that al-Hakim added a 'mythic overlay' to the romance narrative explains, I suggest, the slightly 'additional' feel to the 'mythic' episodes and their superfluity to the main narrative. The chapters dealing with the revolution, for example, seem hastily tacked on to the end of the novel; perhaps the most significant chapter in the novel, that in which the Frenchman exudes his enthusiasm for the revival of Egypt, is in fact a long digression in which none of

the main characters participate; similarly, most of the other 'countryside' episodes seem forced and artificial in marked contrast to the more languid and 'realistic' romance narrative in Cairo; long digressions mark other highly significant chapters which also seem superfluous to the narrative such as Dr Hilmi's anecdote about the Sudan and Muhsin's anecdote about the troupe of singers.

All these 'mythic' episodes share a common orientation: all of them explicitly espouse the themes of national solidarity, unity, continuity, spiritual power and all the other obvious aspects of secular-liberal nationalist discourse in the 1920s. They are there not because al-Hakim cannot stick to the point but because he wants to make sure the reader gets the point. Ali Jad points out how, as a writer, al-Hakim 'tries very hard and very frequently to impose his vision of things upon his readers' throughout his work.⁶⁰ One might add to this that in *Awdat al-Rub* al-Hakim tries a little too hard and in so doing unwittingly reveals the 'dark side' of his vision which in turn illuminates the dark side of the secular-liberal vision of the late 1920s.

We might recall that a transformation of the political field was taking shape in the years during which al-Hakim was revising *Awdat al-Rub*, a widening of political participation engineered by the emergence of a new social group, the petty bourgeoisie. *Awdat al-Rub* stands on the cusp of this transformation and it is just about perceptible in the recesses of the text. It might also be worth remembering that as al-Hakim wrote the first draft in Paris in 1927, Muhammad Mahmud's decidedly less than constitutional Liberal Constitutional party was sitting in an unelected cabinet, and that al-Hakim was working in the Egyptian *rif* (countryside) during Ismail Sidqi's ministry compiling the experiences which would later inform his brilliant satire of the political status quo in *Yawmiyyat Na'ib fi'l-aryaf* (Diary of a Country Prosecutor). The addition of the mythic levels of the text were thus perhaps designed to make the nationalist narrative more apparent in order to bolster flagging optimism and to reassert faith in the nationalist project. But by making the symbolism more apparent he also changes the dynamic of the text, thereby drawing attention to the divergence of the narrative from its avowed symbolic intentions. In other words, al-Hakim, by trying to make the symbolism of the novel clearer in his usual heavy-handed way, only serves to complicate matters, and in the centre of this complication lies a subtle ideological shift.

By adding a mythic overlay, al-Hakim creates two levels of text: a mythic-symbolic level and a realistic level. His intention is to endow the realistic level with a corresponding symbology to that of the mythic level in what might be said to be the first and immature attempt at constructing a national allegory in Egyptian fiction. A beloved at the mythic level therefore requires a beloved at the realistic level. Yet at this point the correspondence of the two levels of text disintegrates because whilst the mythic beloved, Zaghulul/Osiris, 'brought reconciliation to the land of Egypt' (p. 273), Saniya in fact sows division.

What now becomes apparent is that the discrepancy between Saniya's symbolic role, on the one hand, and the failure to carry that symbolism, on the other, is

symptomatic of a deep narratological and ideological fissure in the text. The logic of a correspondence between the mythic and realistic levels of the text suggests that if the mythic carries a nationalist narrative so too does the realistic, and at this level one might suggest that the marriage between Saniya and Mustafa functions as an analogue to the 'uprising' at the mythic level – the consummation, as it were, of the return of the spirit. We notice, for example, that their engagement is agreed upon the day before the uprising (p. 275) and the marriage itself concluded on the 'day the situation calmed down with the return of the mighty exile' (p. 282). As we have seen, the overt ideological position of the text is that the revitalization of the nation is the historical destiny of a very specific class, namely the 'national bourgeoisie' of which Saniya and Mustafa are members. Indeed, we are given a great deal of specific information about their respective class backgrounds which verifies this. One of the most remarkable features of the novel is, in fact, its quite astute and accurate observations on the class configurations of Egyptian society at the time. Thus, whilst the 'folks' all sleep together in one room, the far wealthier Saniya has her own room; her father, Dr Hilmi has, we are told, returned from the Sudan having amassed a fortune through the commercial exploitation of the Sudan's resources in contrast to his listeners who have 'been asleep here, farming' (p. 147), that last detail suggestive of the shift of the Egyptian landowning élite to a proper national bourgeoisie; Mustafa, for his part, is also quite clearly a member of this national bourgeoisie since he is both a landowner, 'one of the gentry' (p. 214) who also has a family business from which 'every blessing comes' (p. 217). Indeed, it is the capitalist firm which is of most importance since 'It's this firm that has brought all the lands and possessions' (p. 217). Most significantly for our purposes, however, is the fact that Saniya only gives her consent to marry Mustafa on the condition that he does not sell the business to a foreigner. A clear, unambiguous nationalist message is conveyed from a specifically bourgeois position. Accordingly, Mustafa completes the shift from landowning gentry to capitalist and so becomes aware of his historical duty. His transformation is completed as he is energized by bourgeois values of ambition, 'force and determination' (p. 266). Even more significant is that Saniya forces him to abandon his projected career as a bureaucrat believing it to be beneath both herself and Mustafa (p. 265). This is, of course, an assertion of social superiority but the rejection of the bureaucracy as a possible career is also a symbolic rejection of the emergent class which made up the bulk of its personnel, namely the petty bourgeoisie.

The mythic overlay then is designed to make the nationalist significance of the love story between Saniya and Mustafa more apparent. Consider, then, the novel without this mythic overlay – a spurious exercise, perhaps, but one which is nevertheless very instructive. All the implications of Saniya's marriage to Mustafa remain but without the explicit associations with the nationalist symbology which are effected by the addition of the mythic level. If al-Hakim had left it at that we might have been faced with a more aesthetically satisfying novel but one which would certainly have been less nationalist in emphasis and less politically inspiring.

Within the realistic level, however, we now find a further division of narrative registers – a divergence of narrative trajectories which seems to be pulling the text in two different directions and so dragging us down into yet another level. Once again, this divergence revolves around the pivotal figure of Saniya. On the one hand, we find the love narrative between Saniya and Muhsin and the folks; on the other, the aforementioned love narrative between Mustafa and Saniya. As regards the former, the narrative centres upon the themes of disappointment and disillusion: despite their fondest hopes that Saniya might love them, Muhsin, Abduh and Salim are time and again forced to confront the stubborn fact that such hopes are an illusion, ‘He realized in a moment that . . . All his hopes concerning her were a mirage’ (p. 136). Muhsin in particular is prone to self-delusion but even he cannot avoid the moment of truth (p. 257). With respect to the latter narrative however, the theme is consummation and truth. Mustafa does indeed marry his beloved and she is never an illusion to him, although at times he is afraid she is. It is in fact precisely this divergence which problematizes Saniya’s symbolism, for in one of these narratives she fails to carry the symbolic investments placed in her. In other words, she fails to live up to the image of her that the folks have constructed. As William Maynard Hutchins suggests, ‘Saniya is more like a screen on which each suitor projects a romance’,⁶¹ which is true but in this case the projection is out of focus. On the other hand, in terms of Mustafa’s projection, she more than lives up to it. In book two we find this divergence formally represented by the conflict between Zanuba’s lies and Muhsin’s illusions about Saniya and Mustafa on the one hand, and the more objectively presented love story between Mustafa and Saniya on the other.

Thus, if at the realistic level the marriage of Saniya and Mustafa functions as an analogue to the 1919 uprising, that is, as a consummation of the nationalist narrative, then the relation of Muhsin and the folks to this nationalist narrative is one of exclusion. That is why Saniya fails to live up to their expectations and it is also why Saniya does not represent Egypt *per se* but rather a certain kind of Egypt, a certain vision that is a specifically national bourgeois, secular-liberal territorial conception of Egyptian nationhood. The lineaments of the ideological fissure in the novel are now becoming clearer, and this, it is worth repeating, is a consequence of al-Hakim’s overstrenuous efforts at endowing his novel with symbolic *gravitas*. For it is because we are made explicitly aware that Saniya carries some symbolic charge that we also become aware that, sometimes at least, she does not fulfil her symbolic function – and we become aware that she does not fulfil it for a group of characters who quite explicitly represent a specific social class. In this regard it is worth observing that al-Hakim’s astuteness in representing the class configurations of Egyptian society extend to the quite accurate portrayal of a typically lower middle-class family. The folks are quite clearly insecure economically (at one stage one pound must last the entire family for a month!), their professions are those associated with the emergent petty bourgeoisie, namely a policeman (Salim), teacher (Hanafi) and student (Abduh), and their origins are quite clearly rural, from that class of medium landowners whose sons provided the bulk of the

urban petty bourgeoisie.⁶² If the national bourgeoisie was constituted by a combination of large landowner, native capitalist and powerful professional (such as lawyers), the petty bourgeoisie was constituted by Egyptians of more humble rural origins and lesser professionals. All the folks, except for Muhsin, conform to this petit bourgeois class profile, being as they are from the less well-off side of the family. In addition, al-Hakim also observes that this petty bourgeoisie was not necessarily antagonistic to the national bourgeoisie but rather became so because of their social and political exclusion. Indeed, as a class occupying an insecure position between the dominant bourgeoisie and the growing proletariat it aspired to recognition and absorption within the upper echelons of the Egyptian class structure, not its overthrow.⁶³ Al-Hakim represents this aspiration through the folks' desire to marry their national bourgeois counterparts: Zanuba with Mustafa, and Abduh/Salim with Saniya.

If al-Hakim had not overlaid the realistic narrative with a mythic one then we might have been able to read some form of nationalist symbolism into it if we so wished but it would have remained, fundamentally, a love story in which Muhsin's and the folks' disappointment in love would have remained just that. Yet his insistence on presenting this novel as a nationalist narrative opens up the text to interrogation and reveals within it some of the conflicting currents operating within the ideological field at the time. *Awdat al-Ruh's* importance for us lies in the fact that it stands as a sensitive testament to the heterogeneity and contradictory nature of the nationalism which it attempts to voice.

Al-Hakim attempts to offset the exclusionary logic which he has unwittingly revealed by emphasizing the solidarity of the folks so that the family becomes a metaphor for the 'nation' thereby drawing it into the symbolic framework of the mythic level. This does not work, however, not least because the expressive logics of the two levels are at odds. Whilst myth can be used, as Frederic Jameson has reminded us, to resolve symbolically existing social contradictions, realism draws such contradictions into its very fabric.⁶⁴ We thus encounter the beginnings of an autocritique in which the realistic level, affiliated to a secular-liberal ideological paradigm,⁶⁵ begins to undermine its own rhetorical flank which stresses solidarity and community. Thus we find a tension between the two levels and their respective principles (individuality versus solidarity). The manifestation of this tension is the fact that Saniya, who along with Mustafa represents the individualistic, disembedded sensibility of the national bourgeoisie (in stark contrast to the petty bourgeois Abduh who, recently arrived from the village, possesses a highly 'embedded' sensibility based around kinship and locality; thus whilst Mustafa at one point asks himself 'what link tied him to her [Saniya]?' (p. 236) but then reasons that even though he is not linked by kinship to Saniya, his emotional bond to her is perfectly legitimate, Abduh resents the fact that 'the woman now belonged to . . . a man who was foreign to them all . . . She had become entangled with a man without links to her or her family' (p. 207)),⁶⁶ is herself the cause of the breakdown of solidarity among the folks. Conversely, the restoration of solidarity among the folks occurs against the divisive effects of Saniya.

Thus, despite al-Hakim's best intentions, the kind of nation the folks represent – often spoken of in terms of a 'government' – is quite clearly not the kind of nation that Saniya symbolically represents.

What we are encountering here is not only an autocritique of the novel's own dominant ideology, secular liberal nationalism, but the vaguest gesture towards an oppositional ideological paradigm, a gesture which is covert and very much suppressed but nevertheless present, and centred upon the petty bourgeois folks and Muhsin.⁶⁷ This is a consequence of the novel's liminality as it stands on the cusp of disillusionment with the political project initiated by the Egyptian élite of the 1920s. Indeed, one notices that the entire novel is 'framed' by the metaphor of illness. At the outset we find the folks enduring a bout of collective influenza, and at the end we find them in a hospital. Like Hamlet, al-Hakim intuitively senses that something is wrong with his society. There is, therefore, a subtle shift away from the secular-liberal paradigm which was ascendant in the 1920s towards the oppositional ideologies of the mass political movements of the 1930s. But it does so not by suggesting an oppositional position extrinsic to its own dominant ideology but by mounting a critique from within it, almost as if by pushing the dominant ideology to its limits it enacts an ideological 'flip' which reveals its ever-present dark side. This underground level we might call the 'proleptic' level because rather than looking back to the 1919 uprising and celebrating it as the manifestation of the return of the national spirit, it looks back in terms of a bitter disillusionment and because it anticipates a revolution yet to come.

Nothing exemplifies this buried sense of disappointment and class resentment more than the words which describe Abduh's reception of the news of Saniya's betrothal, 'In his eyes there was bitterness mixed with indignation, even anger. He did not want to remember' (p. 281). At the proleptic level, the novel combines this sense of disillusionment and resentment with a sustained attack on the very class which, on the surface, the novel's dominant ideology celebrates as the nation's natural leaders. Again, the attack is perhaps sharpest in relation to the character of Saniya. Throughout the novel, a succession of 'false idols' are presented – the tarot cards on the first page of the novel, 'the grand buffoon' in Master Shahata's cafe whose admirers 'surround him as though he were an idol encircled by devout worshippers' (p. 46), Shaykh Simhan, the peasants' tea (p. 173), the 'letter' from Saniya which Muhsin falsely idolizes, and even Sayyida Zaynab herself in so far as she is in fact unable to alleviate Muhsin's pain. To this long list one might add Saniya who is repeatedly characterized as an idol surrounded by devout worshippers: Salim gazes up towards her balcony 'as though he were a pagan worshipper' (p. 49), her latticed balcony reminiscent of Shaykh Simhan's 'cage' and Sayyida Zaynab's shrine; the folks peer through a keyhole when she visits 'in admiration at the image' (p. 67); Muhsin carries her handkerchief 'the way pious people carry the Holy Quran' (p. 67); and Mustafa sees her as the 'the goddess of the balcony' (p. 236). Of course, to Mustafa she proves to be a true idol but to Muhsin and the folks she proves false.

This theme of truth and falsity overlaps with the significant theme of illusion and reality and is in turn connected to one of al-Hakim's major thematic concerns, that of time. In *The Sleepers of the Cave*, for example, the illusion/reality theme is quite clearly linked to the fact that there has been a significant passage of time. The falsity of Saniya's image initiates the disillusionment of the folks which reflects their disappointment with the kind of Egypt that she represents. In a sense this calls into question the very reality of the Egypt she represents and uncovers the reality of an 'independent' Egypt in which nothing had changed despite the rhetoric of revolution. Mustafa too has this feeling of change without change (p. 216) except for him this has a profoundly different meaning since Saniya represents the Egypt imagined by his class, an Egypt in which the rhetoric of revolution occludes the fact of consolidation rather than disturbance of the prevailing social relations. The illusion of reality and the disillusionment of truth thus has a temporal purchase in so far as it is related to the contemporary historical moment. The revolution in which Muhsin and the folks participate is, therefore, on one level that same one which had precipitated the 'fantasy' of an independent Egypt; on another level it is a gesture towards a future reality in which the 'illusion' of the contemporary moment is overcome since the revolution occurs, in the novel, after their illusion has been revealed. There are, therefore, two revolutions: one that corresponds to the 'real' revolution of 1919, and one – a better one – that is yet to come. Accordingly, there is a schizophrenic temporal distribution in the novel, a double-time, in which the mythic level looks backwards and the proleptic level looks forwards to an as yet unrealized properly post-revolutionary future. This temporal doubleness reflects the conflicting class registers of the novel, as does the fact that there are two houses which symbolically represent the nation – Saniya's house and that of the 'folks'.

At the proleptic level, therefore, there is a strong attack upon the national bourgeoisie. First, one may point to the vicious satire of Saniya's father, Dr Hilmi. Like the 'buffoon' in the cafe, he too is surrounded by seemingly devout worshippers eager to hear his tales of the Sudan, a parallelism confirmed by the fact that he too is presented as a 'buffoon' when faced with Zanuba's vindictive letter accusing Saniya of dishonourable behaviour. Far from being a character with a sharp and critical intelligence, he is both too quick to judge that his 'military honour' (p. 232) has been 'soiled' and just as quickly becalmed when another explanation is offered – he is unable to think it out for himself (in fact he does this twice). Moreover, his 'military honour' is itself called into question if one reads the Sudan episode carefully. Rather than admitting honestly and honourably his culpability in spoiling the water in the well, 'a crime according to military law' (p. 143), he rather cowardly 'thought the best way out of this predicament was to pretend ignorance of everything' (p. 144). Indeed, this episode further undermines his honour since he is shown to put his own selfish desire for a little sport over and above the well-being of the group, a telling parallel to his daughter's divisive effects upon the solidarity of the 'folks'.

The Sudan episode also demonstrates the incipient disillusionment with the

national bourgeoisie's claim to have 'liberated' Egypt from the British. As the implications of the 'Four Reserved Points' which Britain appended to their unilateral declaration of Egyptian independence became increasingly evident and the continuing power of the British became increasingly apparent, and as each successive attempt to negotiate an Anglo-Egyptian treaty failed, the emergent politicized classes, in addition to their economic frustrations and social dislocations, came to be increasingly dissatisfied with the political élite's response to the British presence. As Selma Botman points out, 'Those outside the political mainstream construed the system of liberal politics as practised in Egypt to be a form of appeasement to the British.'⁶⁸ Unsurprisingly, there was a class motivation for this resentment with the consequence that the national bourgeoisie increasingly came to be seen as a comprador class. This is reflected in the Sudan episode through various strategies which suggest that Dr Hilmi and his class are in fact a mirror image of the colonial power. The narrative form, for one thing, resembles those colonial romances through unknown continents in search of treasure and adventure; Dr Hilmi himself resembles the great white hunter, and his acute sense of Sudan's fitness for economic exploitation is also reminiscent of the colonial desire for new markets and raw materials, 'He thought about the terrific fortunes that would be gained by . . . a forest like this' (p. 145). This dimension to the class dissatisfaction is also perhaps symbolically represented when Zanuba calls Saniya a 'whore' perhaps implying that her class has prostituted itself to the occupying power.

There are further examples which demonstrate a rejection of the national bourgeoisie at the deeper levels of *Awdat al-Rub*. Whilst many critics have rightly noted Muhsin's rejection of his mother and her aristocratic and pro-Ottoman values, Muhsin's rejection of his father has been relatively underemphasized. The significance of this lies in the fact that his father to all extents and purposes represents that class of Egyptian *fellah* who had, during the course of the nineteenth century, come to form the Egyptian élite of large landowners and professionals which had, throughout the 1920s and early 1930s constituted the politically dominant class. This class had originally been medium landowning *fellah* who had married into the Turkish aristocracy as it waned in social and political significance. Indeed, the most famous of Egyptians, Saad Zaghlul, had done this. Muhsin's father belongs to very much the same class, therefore, as Mustafá, Saniya and Dr Hilmi.⁶⁹ Muhsin's rejection of him further underlines the subtle shift in class sympathies surreptitiously being enacted. Once again, this rejection is premised upon his father's desire to save Muhsin from trouble at the expense of his uncles, a divisiveness which Muhsin is unable to accept (pp. 279–80).

If the novel at its mythic level invests symbolic significance in the *rif* (countryside) and affiliates this with a class ideology which celebrates the natural superiority of Egypt's large landowners and national bourgeoisie (which we might think of as the same class), on the proleptic level the novel rejects this class affiliation and rather attaches itself to the emergent petty bourgeois ideologies which would decisively alter the shape and texture of social and political discourse

in Egypt from the later 1930s. In contrast to the symbolic investment in rural space offered at the mythic level, the proleptic level rejects what it perceives as the vested agricultural interests in the *rif* and relocates its affiliation into the urban space where most of the petty bourgeoisie were clustered. Cairo is thus the symbolic space most associated with this covert ideological agenda. It is the place to which Muhsin, despite his experiences with the peasants and his visions of unity and so on, longs to return – to the comfort of solidarity with the folks, ‘to his native habitat where he could flourish’ (p. 191). In fact, the ideology of the novel at this level is not only anti-large landowner but it is also anti-peasant too.

The petty bourgeois ideologies of the 1930s were, despite their rhetoric, less than successful in attracting the peasantry, which is unsurprising given that the overwhelming membership of these movements was urban based and they were therefore naturally concerned with urban issues. James Jankowski has pointed out how Young Egypt, for example, ‘seems to have had little success’ in attracting the peasantry and thereafter ‘made no major initiatives directed at proselytizing amongst the peasantry’;⁷⁰ similarly, Uri Kupferschmidt has demonstrated that the *fellah* were not a fertile recruitment ground for the Muslim Brotherhood, despite the organization’s best efforts.⁷¹ As he points out, ‘Since the Muslim Brotherhood was basically an urban phenomenon it took only a secondary interest in the problems of the Egyptian village.’⁷² One might add to this Marius Deeb’s observation that the urban petty bourgeoisie were often the sons and daughters of the medium stratum of rural landowners and were often critical of the large landowners on the one hand and the smaller peasants on the other since increasing landlessness was uprooting the smaller peasantry and compelling them towards the towns and cities thereby forming an urban proletariat which could become a pool of future competition from below.⁷³ Ahmad Husayn and Fathi Ridwan, the leaders of Young Egypt, and Hasan al-Banna, leader of the Brotherhood, were indeed sons of medium landowners.⁷⁴ Thus, in response to the exclusions of the secular-liberal ideology we find at the proleptic level petty bourgeois exclusions of the national bourgeoisie and the *fellah* represented formally by a symbolic spatial distribution which emphasizes Cairo and not the *rif*. Nothing illustrates this better than the ‘expulsion’ of Saniya and Mustafa from Cairo on the day of Zaghhlul’s return. They go, in fact, to al-Mahalla al-Kubra, an industrial town in the Delta which became, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, a centre of Taalat Harb’s Bank Misr industrialization project. Mustafa’s hometown, therefore, is quite conspicuously a space associated with the national bourgeoisie and Mustafa himself, by returning there, is associated with the emergence of Egyptian capitalism. However, it is at one remove from Cairo which is the locus of revolution and the (future) return of the spirit.

What we are witnessing at this proleptic level is an incipient transfer of allegiance occurring among certain members of the ‘traditional’ intelligentsia of the dominant classes as they perceive the rise to pre-eminence of a new social class.⁷⁵ Tawfiq al-Hakim was, of course, one of the ‘organic’ intellectuals of the newly dominant

Egyptian élite in the 1920s but the acceleration of development which has been the lot of rapidly modernizing societies meant that the periodization of social change became accordingly distorted. No sooner had the national bourgeoisie effected its social ascendancy than some of its organic intellectuals had begun to transfer their allegiance to the classes which had very quickly emerged to challenge it.⁷⁶ In so doing they were perhaps signalling the imminent demise of the very class which had so recently consolidated its dominance. By the later 1930s, al-Hakim was quite openly and unashamedly attacking the large landowners for their monopoly of power and it is interesting, therefore, that in his own personal trajectory he follows almost precisely that followed by his fictional creation Muhsin who, at the proleptic level, rejects his class and transfers his allegiance to the petty bourgeoisie as represented by the 'folks'.⁷⁷ What we have here, perhaps, is an unconscious or subliminal fictional mapping by al-Hakim of his own future psychological and political development.

It is at this point that we can return to the ambivalences over the question of power in *Awdat al-Ruh* and give them their full ideological significance. This involves giving due weight to the complexities of al-Hakim's notion of leadership. His attacks on the large landowners in the 1930s were accompanied by correlate attacks on the parliamentary democracy which they controlled. Democracy encouraged *hizbiyya* which was not only divisive but also encouraged moral decay, corruption and injustice not only in political life but in all other fields of social activity.⁷⁸ As Pierre Cachia suggests, 'his writings did imply that democracy carried within itself the seeds of its own destruction' and he quotes al-Hakim as suggesting that 'the parliamentary system is a worthy instrument for producing unworthy rulers'.⁷⁹ Such sentiments resonate in harmony with simultaneous attacks on parliamentary democracy from among the new petty bourgeois political movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Young Egypt.⁸⁰ What al-Hakim thought should replace democracy as practised in Egypt is, as many critics have noted, not at all clear.⁸¹ However, one can discern two separable but none the less mutually reinforcing trajectories of thought, both of which overlap in mode of reasoning and implication with the authoritarian principles of power being advocated by Young Egypt and the Muslim Brotherhood.

First, there is an idealistic conception of democracy as an ethical rather than political practice which, as we have seen, was an endemic problem within early modern Egyptian political discourse of all types. Thus, even as he continued to mount ferocious criticisms against democratic practice, al-Hakim maintained that he continued to believe in the principles of democracy.⁸² This kind of idealism, however, can also be witnessed in the Muslim Brotherhood's redefinition of democracy within an Islamic framework, a redefinition which in effect, if not in theory, promoted absolute and autocratic rule.⁸³ Their idealistic conception of the Islamic order as a set of loose ethical and legal but not political principles meant that such an order can be realized whatever the political system⁸⁴ (one recalls Leonard Binder's statement that for fundamentalists, ideal Islamic government can be achieved whatever the historical conditions).⁸⁵

Recognizing that in the modern period democracy was perceived to be the best political order, the Brothers set about redefining it so as to reform democracy whilst also abolishing political parties thereby creating a single party with an 'Islamic reform programme'.⁸⁶ In so doing Islamic democracy would combine the best features of dictatorship with those of democracy. Mitchell notes an analogy frequently employed by the Brothers to demonstrate this, namely the relationship of the Muslims at prayer to the *imam*

The *muadhdhin* cries out, prayer begins, everyone follows the imam in his actions; there is 'unity' and 'discipline', the best qualities of dictatorship. But the imam is no tyrant, for if he errs he must stand corrected by any one in the congregation who may choose to do so; this is the best aspect of democracy.⁸⁷

This, however, is an abstract and idealistic conception of democracy since it completely extracts it from the frame of power; what, one might ask, if there is no choice? Unsurprisingly, the Brotherhood's theorization of how Islamic democracy might be practised invariably returned to an executive in whose hands all power lay and a legislature with no effective power,

There are five 'powers' in the Islamic state; executive power belongs to the ruler alone; legislative power is shared between the ruler and *ahl al-shura* [elected consultative and legislative assembly]; judicial power is exercised by the judges *nominated by the ruler* who, because of their role as interpreters of the law are 'absolutely independent' [how, if they are nominated?]; financial power by officials *appointed by the ruler* but responsible to the community; and the power of 'control and reform' belongs to the community at large in the persons of the *ahl al-shura*.⁸⁸

Thus, of the five powers the executive has a hand in four and holds the upper hand in these. Nevertheless, the Brotherhood believed that this would satisfy the requirements of an Islamic political structure which 'would be bound by three principles: 1) the Quran is the fundamental constitution; 2) government operates on the concept of consultation; 3) the executive ruler is bound by the teachings of Islam and the will of the people.'⁸⁹ The ideologues of the Muslim Brotherhood reasoned that such a political structure existed during the rashidun caliphate but then afterwards degenerated into autocracy. Yet one might point out that there is nothing to prevent history repeating itself if the imagined Islamic political order of the future is merely a repetition of the rashidun caliphate. This raises again the acute problem in Islamic political theory of how the legislature can tackle the executive if all direct power is in the hands of that executive. The answer is, of course, that it cannot and autocracy ensues. Thus the consequence of the Brotherhood's idealistic definition of democracy is its negation.

The same implications run throughout al-Hakim's idealization of democracy, and second we find the same tendency towards privileging 'ideal' individuals as the solution to the problem, 'Ideal rule, as a matter of fact, depends not upon ideal principles but on ideal individuals.'⁹⁰ Pierre Cachia quite rightly suggests that 'The implication must be that a community's well-being depends largely if not entirely on the character of the individual whom circumstances, or the will of the people, or simply its quiescence, place at the very top.'⁹¹ Al-Hakim's concept of leadership thus overlaps with those of Ahmad Husayn of Young Egypt and Hasan al-Banna of the Muslim Brotherhood, for whom the leader was the embodiment of the state and its people,⁹² a notion which bristles with fascistic connotations.⁹³ We might now profitably return to the notion of the 'beloved' which al-Hakim puts forward in *Awdat al-Ruh*, a man 'who will manifest all their feelings and hopes and who will be for them a symbol of the ultimate' (p. 182). Al-Hakim never retreated from such a fascistic cult of hero-worship; even after his disillusionment with Nasser 'he asserted with apparent approval that Egypt always needs an object of worship from amongst its own sons'.⁹⁴ What he has retreated from is the secular-liberal idea of a vanguard class to a more traditionally Islamic conception of the 'Just King' which was the comforting idea to which Muhammad Abduh often reverted. Combined with his anti-intellectualism, a posture which has, ideologically speaking, been the platform for a number of irrationalist political ideologies of which Nazism is the most notorious, one begins to see the matrix of an unpalatable politics at work in al-Hakim's writing, one which he might have consciously denied but which is certainly present in his political unconscious.

Yet there is a further complication. What kind of person would this ideal ruler be? In *Awdat al-Ruh* there is quite a strong case for seeing the 'artist' as the ideal embodiment of the nation and therefore the perfect ruler. One finds for example this passage suggesting that art not politics is the means by which to achieve national solidarity, 'The audience of enthusiastic guests surrounded the [singer's] troupe like the crescent moon around the star on the Egyptian flag. They listened as though they were all a single individual' (p. 99). Certainly al-Hakim had enough of an exaggerated opinion of himself and of the 'artist', perhaps as a consequence of his immersion in romantic literature in Paris,⁹⁵ to have considered the artist to be something akin to a prophet.⁹⁶ However, al-Hakim was also adamant that an artist, whilst being committed, should also remain aloof from the grubby world of politics, that he should remain within 'an ivory tower' as the title of one of his books puts it. Thus, it seems, the intellectual must complement the ruler by exhorting him to do good rather than evil. The intellectual's role should, moreover, be circumscribed by this exhortatory role which has the added bonus of removing culpability from the intellectual when the ruler does not listen to such advice. Rejecting the secular-liberal notion of a vanguard class, al-Hakim promotes a vanguard intelligentsia which will nevertheless surrender all power to the ruler. By such means have intellectuals like al-Hakim acquiesced in the consolidation of authoritarianism in modern Egypt.

Postscript: the lineages of the one-party state

On 28 May 1954, Gamal Abdel-Nasser presented to Tawfiq al-Hakim an inscribed copy of his own *The Philosophy of the Revolution* which contained these words, 'To the reviver of literature, Ustaz Tawfiq al-Hakim, in anticipation of a second, post-revolutionary return of the soul.'⁹⁷ The inscription points to the profound effect upon the consciousness of the young Nasser of *Awdat al-Ruh*, so much so that in an early attempt at writing a novel Nasser called his hero Muhsin. Yet this also provides something of a conundrum to an observer of the political discourse in modern Egypt for here we have a left-wing dictator (who was soon to develop a cult of leadership of his own) idolizing a secular-liberal author whose own most famous novel gestures towards some fairly uncompromising right-wing ideologies. In this conundrum one notices a fairly surprising line of continuity between Egyptian secular-liberalism in the 1920s, the authoritarian right-wing Islamicist ideologies of the 1930s and 1940s, and the socialistic Nasserite ideology post-1952. Certainly, al-Hakim's place in this channel illustrates how his incipient gesturing towards 'Easternism' anticipates the rise of 'supra-Egyptian' political imaginaries on the part of the ideologies of the 1930s and 1940s which eventually matured into the Pan-Arabism of the Nasser regime; on the other hand, when P.J. Vatikiotis asks, 'Can one say that al-Hakim provided Egyptians generally and Nasser in particular with a native conception of legitimacy?'⁹⁸ we can respond quite categorically in the negative. In fact, he helped to continue a process which had failed to deliver a new concept of legitimacy suitable for Egypt and had ended up consolidating older, traditionally authoritarian principles. In a choice historical irony which demonstrates how ideologies develop in relation to their opponents, often building upon their principles and ideas rather than rejecting them, the socialistic one-party state of the Nasserite regime which imposed such a clampdown upon the Muslim Brotherhood has now gradually transformed itself into a form of one-party authoritarian democracy akin to that envisaged by the Brotherhood itself.

NAGUIB MAHFOUZ, NATIONAL
ALLEGORY AND
NEOPATRIARCHY: THE *CAIRO*
TRILOGY

The stirrings of disillusionment which were perceptible at the beginning of the 1930s had, by that decade's end, crystallized into widespread social discontent with the 'liberal experiment' initiated in the 1920s. All those associated with the regime – the politicians, the political parties, and even the palace – had been discredited as self-seeking and corrupt or stooges of the British; even the brief spell of euphoria which had greeted the resumption of parliamentary life after the Sidqi regime was brought down quickly dissipated. By the onset of the Second World War the social and political crises in Egypt had become entrenched and endemic. The 1940s thus represented the last paroxysms of life for this ill-fated political regime and witnessed the emergence of competing alternative forces as significant players in the field of power.

The expansion of the nascent Egyptian industrial capitalist sector, however 'obstructed' it might have been by various powerful interests, led to the emergence, for the first time in Egyptian history, of social classes comparable to those of modern Europe: a 'national' bourgeoisie, a petty bourgeoisie and an industrial proletariat.¹ Taken together with the great depression of the early 1930s; the rapid expansion of the education system which led, in these circumstances, to an ever-increasing pool of educated unemployed increasingly familiar with modern ideas of political organization and development; and a corresponding expansion of the field of cultural production that enabled new channels through which discontent could be voiced and new ideas disseminated, this concatenation of social forces led to the emergence of political ideologies which increasingly challenged the secular-liberal ideology upon which the prevailing regime stood, first from the right in the shape of the Muslim Brotherhood and Young Egypt, and then from the left through the re-emergence of socialism as a major ideological and political force.²

It was the petty bourgeoisie which was to play the decisive role throughout the later 1930s and 1940s in giving political expression to the social discontent, bringing the political crisis of the liberal regime to a head. As Mahmoud Hussein has said,

The urban intellectual section of the petty bourgeoisie plays an especially important social and political role in view of the fact that it monopolizes intellectual activity among the masses. All the political parties and organizations which challenged the established system and the ruling class were led largely by individuals who came from this petty bourgeois section.³

Nevertheless, as a class the petty bourgeoisie was highly diffuse and heterogeneous. As Joel Beinin and Zachary Lockman suggest, the Arabic term *al-ummal* was used during this period to refer to ‘an undifferentiated category of urban “working people” encompassing all those performing manual labour or lower level clerical tasks’ which could be said to constitute a ‘broadly defined petty bourgeoisie’.⁴ The petty bourgeoisie could, at its upper levels, shade into the bourgeoisie proper, a ‘petty bourgeois “élite”’ as Mahmoud Hussein calls it, composed of ‘intellectual petty bourgeoisie made up of middle level cadres of the state apparatus and economy . . . [possessing] relatively advanced theoretical or specialized training . . . [and] access . . . to the political, administrative, military, academic or economic apparatus’;⁵ at its lower levels, it could, however, shade into the industrial proletariat and, as a result of the social and economic crises of the 1930s, the threat of downward social mobility was a considerable and ever-present pressure exerting itself on the petty bourgeoisie, even at its upper levels. It was precisely this heterogeneity of social position, combined with endemic (even systemic) social uncertainty that contributed to the dual, or schizophrenic (as it were) nature of this class,

The petty bourgeoisie oscillated between two poles of attraction. As a class possessing a few privileges . . . it could aspire to exploit others . . . as a class living from its own labour – a labour, moreover, that was individual, atomized, always subject to pressures from the ruling classes . . . it inclined towards the dispossessed classes.⁶

Thus, it could work both ways, as both a conservative force wishing to maintain the hierarchy of social classes, and as a radical force wishing to challenge it.⁷

With respect to its radical side, its most conspicuous feature was its nationalist orientation. Whether this was due to its recognition that an ‘obstructed’ development of capitalism in Egypt was counter to its interests, and that one of the main reasons for this obstruction was the insistence of the British not to allow ‘an unfettered development of capitalism’,⁸ or whether it was because of the weakness of indigenous Egyptian capital which required, inevitably, a subordinate position for Egyptian capital and, by extension, Egyptian labour,⁹ the result was that increasingly nationalism in Egypt was infused with a greater degree of radical social content and, conversely, the rise of socialistic ideologies (whether articulated from the left or the right of the political spectrum) were invariably sutured to nationalism.¹⁰ At this juncture, therefore, Egyptian nationalist discourse altered

course. Where it had once been as much concerned with identity as with the modernization, or otherwise, of the social and political structure, it now tended to focus almost exclusively on the latter. Indeed, in one sense it seemed as if the question of identity had been settled: the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty had been signed and the Sudan was no longer an issue; and, despite the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood, Pan-Islamism and Pan-Arabism during the 1930s, the territorial integrity and validity of the Egyptian national state seemed secure.¹¹ The great issues which were now 'at stake' within Egyptian nationalism were those concerning the state, society and the individual. In the late 1930s, the Egyptian national imaginary turned its gaze inward.

The ideologies produced by the petty bourgeoisie spanned the spectrum of political orientations, from the extreme right to the communist left, and yet, despite the wide divergence of ideological positions from which demands for greater social justice were voiced, the various competitors shared a number of assumptions, not only with respect to each other, but also with respect to the very ruling classes – the national bourgeoisie and the large landowners – they sought to challenge. Arguing from the radical left position some three decades after these events and with the benefit of hindsight, Mahmoud Hussein suggested that all the new political ideologies of the 1930s and 1940s 'share[d] a common ideological background consisting of individualism . . . of élitism . . . [and] idealism'.¹² Although one might disagree with Hussein's insistence on the essential sameness of all ideologies articulated from a petty bourgeois class position – for the differences were apparent and often significant – nevertheless, this chapter and the last, when taken together, will build upon the perspicacious suggestiveness of this point. One may add that many, although not all, also subscribed to what Beinun and Lockman call 'corporatism', which is defined by them as a discourse that 'denies the reality of class conflict in society, rejects an independent role for the working class, and projects the state as the benevolent guardian of the workers' interests'.¹³ These ideas will recur again and again with respect to our analysis of one of these socialistic positions as advocated by the great Egyptian novelist Naguib Mahfouz.

Naguib Mahfouz began writing in this period of protracted social crisis and began working on his magisterial *Cairo Trilogy* as it reached its watershed in the year 1946. His novels of the 1940s and particularly his 'social' novels, which were set in contemporary Cairo, reflected upon and criticized the social reality of Egypt in the 1930s and 1940s, espousing a Fabian socialism promoted by his mentor Salama Musa. Of Musa's influence he was later to say, '[Salama Musa] directed me to two important principles, science and socialism, and once these two principles entered my mind, they never left it'.¹⁴ This espousal of Fabianism as the specific type of socialist imaginary to which Mahfouz felt able to commit himself was itself closely connected to his petty bourgeois subjectivity.¹⁵ Mahfouz can certainly be identified as one of the 'new effendiyya' as Gershoni and Jankowski call them – the 'modern' educated graduates of the secular Egyptian University – the bulk of whom originated from and constituted the petty bourgeoisie of the

1930s and 1940s.¹⁶ Fabian socialism was clearly the perfect vehicle to articulate the interests of this ‘schizophrenic’ class, at once both radical and conservative. It was, from its outset, a socialism which appealed to the middle classes, the self-made professionals and others who, in Edwardian England, found their way to advancement obstructed by the Victorian class system.¹⁷ The parallels here with that of the petty bourgeoisie in Egypt are striking. One may note that it was perhaps the reformist rather than revolutionary aspect of Fabianism which might have held the most appeal to the petty bourgeois sensibility. Tellingly, Egger notes that for many Fabians “‘socialism’ meant no more than any doctrine opposed to *laissez-faire* economic theory and the right of society to intervene in the production – *but particularly the distribution* – of wealth.”¹⁸

Mahfouz has been characterized as the novelist *par excellence* of the petty bourgeoisie, a characterization with which he has not taken issue. He has even suggested that the petty bourgeoisie will play the world historical role normally reserved by socialists for the proletariat, that it will be the ‘candidate for the salvation of humanity’.¹⁹ This class position, within the relational totality of the Egyptian social field of the 1940s underlies and overdetermines his greatest work, the *Cairo Trilogy* which is not only a document of the social transformations of Egyptian society in the first half of the twentieth century, but also an allegory, in the form of a family saga, of the political evolution of Egypt voiced from the perspective of a Fabian socialist.

The *Cairo Trilogy* as ‘national allegory’

There seems to be a critical consensus on two particular points regarding the work of Naguib Mahfouz. The first is that his output over the last 50 or so years represents the greatest body of modern Arabic fictional literature produced by a single individual, and second, that one can chronologically classify this large corpus within various stylistic periods. Thus, his novelistic *œuvre* opens with his early historical novels, is followed by his ‘social realist’ phase, which is then followed by his ‘symbolic’ phase, then his ‘experimental’ phase and so on. Within this system, the *Cairo Trilogy* is, without perhaps even an afterthought, placed into the ‘realist’ phase. This is true even of critics who have recognized the allegorical or symbolic value of much of his writing. Thus, even though Menahem Milson asserts that well before commencing upon the *Trilogy* Mahfouz ‘would . . . appear to have had allegory in mind as a stratagem . . . and he had certainly adopted it as a literary mode by the time he wrote the trilogy’ – even suggesting that ‘Allegory is Mahfuz’s way of reading reality’ – nowhere in his recent book does he even propose to apply an allegorical reading to the *Trilogy* itself.²⁰ Mattiyahu Peled, as another example, would seem to implicitly base his entire reading of the *Trilogy*, especially the ‘Aisha episode’, on a symbolic understanding of the *Trilogy* yet even he does not wish to challenge the established critical practice of categorizing it as a work of realist fiction.²¹ It is important to challenge such classificatory systems, however, because such systems in themselves impose certain limits on analysis and on the very

assumptions governing such analyses. Thus, the Trilogy has most often been read as a (brilliant) chronicle documenting the social transformations of a pivotal period in Egyptian history – as valuable as most ‘orthodox’ historical records, if not more so.²² Whilst this is undoubtedly true it seems particularly self-defeating to foreclose other readings which might coexist with it.

Recently, Rasheed El-Enany has admirably sought to put such classifications under pressure by noting aspects of the work which might feasibly result in the placing of the Trilogy within, say, Mahfouz’s symbolic period, or his ‘modernist’ phase.²³ In particular, he has noticed its ‘intricate symbolic pattern’²⁴ and he essays a reading of the Trilogy which attempts to uncover it.²⁵ The symbolism of the Trilogy, however, goes much deeper and is much more complex than he allows for. Despite its success as ‘realist’ fiction, the Trilogy is also an allegory of the political evolution of Egypt in the twentieth century; indeed, it is precisely because of its success as a work of fictional ‘realism’ that its allegorical dimension has been missed. As Milson perceptively suggests, ‘[allegory’s] advantage (its cipher-like nature) is also its weakness (its susceptibility to misinterpretation). Furthermore, if the surface story is realistically convincing, the hidden level of meaning may escape detection altogether, and some readers will not feel the need to decode the story’ (Milson himself being one of them in the case of the Trilogy).²⁶

The key, which Milson notices but inexplicably fails to follow up, lies in the text of the Trilogy itself, in the third volume, as Sawsan Hammad explains the attractions of fiction over and above other forms such as the essay, ‘An essay is blunt and direct. Therefore it is dangerous, especially when eyes are scrutinizing us. The short story is more devious and harder to restrict. It’s a cunning art.’²⁷ Given that Mahfouz embarked upon the Trilogy in 1946, the same year as a massive government repression of the Egyptian left commenced, this is almost certainly a covert statement about its production.²⁸ Mahfouz is here encoding the very necessity of writing in an allegorical fashion in order to circumvent the political reprisals that would inevitably follow. Such conditions held true as much under the monarchical regime as it did under the dictatorship of Nasser. Allegory was, perhaps, the only means by which one could mount a serious and critical challenge on established notions of authority, religion and social organization and thereby articulate an alternative political imaginary from the perspective of the left.

The family saga, or generations novel, is a particularly apposite form within which to submerge such an allegory. Not only is the passing of a significant portion of time built into the narrative structure – absolutely necessary in evaluating the political evolution of a society – but it enables one to converge often divergent chronologies and topologies. That is, it is possible to weave the public space and the temporalities of the historical narrative into the fabric of a narrative in which the main (or surface) concern is the private space and diurnal temporality of a family. Additionally, it can act as a signpost for the allegory: Andrea Rugh has noted, for example, that ‘Family as the most intense social group in Egyptian society . . . becomes the ideal by which other social groupings are measured. The idioms that are particular to its organization are used to reinforce other social,

political or economic relationships.²⁹ We have noticed before that the familial metaphor operates as something of a leitmotif in Egyptian political discourse and, indeed, even in fictional discourse; Mahfouz's deployment of it here may indeed signify an intertextual reference to Tawfiq al-Hakim's *Awdat al-Rub*, rendering a fictional mode first attempted by al-Hakim with greater skill and sophistication. In other words, the form of the surface narrative is itself a key through which one can decode the allegory lying submerged beneath it.

Yet it should be clarified that by 'weaving' together the public and the private, the historical and the diurnal, it is not suggested that it does so in the same way a novel might illustrate the impact of historical events upon the eponymous family. This is a feature of almost all good realist novels and, at the realist level, the Trilogy achieves this effect admirably. Rather, the allegory operates in the sense of marking the personal as a signifier of the political.³⁰ This becomes most apparent in the second volume, *Palace of Desire* (Qasr al-Shawq):

Kamal found that the political activities of the day presented an enlarged version of his life. When he read about developments in the newspapers he could have been reading about the events at Palace Walk or on Palaces Street . . . Kamal felt the same emotion and passion as he did about his personal condition. He might just as well be referring to himself when he asked of Sa'ad Zaghlul, 'Is this unjust treatment appropriate for such a sincere man?' He might easily have meant Hasan Salim when he said of Ahmad Ziwar Pasha, who replaced Sa'ad Zaghlul as Prime Minister, 'He has betrayed our trust . . .' Aida could have been on his mind when he said of Egypt, 'Has she dismissed the one man she could trust at a time when he was busy defending her rights?'³¹

One finds this invitation to read allegorically again in *Sugar Street* as Kamal informs his friend Riyad Qaldas of the ideological rivalry between his two nephews, "With regard to what you said about the international competition of ideas, let me tell you it's being played out on a small scale in our family. One of my nephews is a Muslim Brother and one a Communist" (SS, p. 138). More subtly, key events in the lives of the family members also possess a certain allegorical significance. It is no coincidence that on the very day that 'All hopes of restoring the Muslim Caliphate have been lost,³² Khadija celebrates her marriage for it is through her sons, and one of them in particular, that the future of Egypt's political evolution will take shape. The Ottoman caliphate, in so far as it is associated with the past is consigned to the dustbin of history precisely on the day when the two characters for whom the future of history itself will be at stake are 'enabled', as it were. Even more significant, perhaps, is Khadija's continual struggle with her mother-in-law – who signifies the old Turkish aristocracy and hence Egypt's Ottoman past – to establish an independent household for her family. Again, it is important that it is Khadija who does this for it is her sons who will represent the future of the Egyptian nation.

In the first volume of the Trilogy, *Palace Walk*, the political allegory does not become apparent until the onset of the revolution precisely because it is constructed to suggest that there was no political evolution in Egypt until that 'historic' moment. The Abd al-Jawwad family thus becomes representative of the 'traditional' Islamic order which, it is implied, has changed little over the preceding millennium. This sense of changelessness is introduced in the very first passage of the novel as Amina awakes to attend to her husband on his return from a night of carousing, 'Habit woke her at this hour. It was an old habit' (PW, p. 1); very quickly we are then told that the Abd al-Jawwad household is located in an Islamic 'old quarter', al-Gamaliyya, that the neighbourhood is 'ancient'. Within this clearly definable 'traditional' Islamic space the family itself and its house is also presented as possessing attributes which reflect the social and political order of 'traditional' Islam. Al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawwad, the formidable patriarch of the household, rules his roost with an absolute will analogous to the omnipotence of Allah and, indeed, he is often likened to a god (PW, p. 161)³³ – a central point of authority for the household, who bestows 'meaning' upon them and their activities (the entire daily operation of the household revolves around him and the satisfaction of his needs) and who can resolve all the contradictory aspects of his character into one harmonious whole (PW, p. 223).

The other indicator that the household represents a traditional Islamic order is its hierarchical organization, not just in the role and function of women and children as subordinates,³⁴ but also in the spatial organization of the house itself. In *Palace Walk*, the house is hierarchically organized with al-Sayyid's quarters on the top floor, the children on the first floor (PW, p. 15); by the second volume, after the irruption of history following the revolution, and reflecting the relative diminution of Al-Sayyid's authority, all the family sleep on the top floor, with the first floor vacated for the entertainment of guests – this change is described as 'a new regime' (PD, p. 12); finally, in *Sugar Street*, an infirm al-Sayyid is forced to sleep on the first floor, and the top floor is monopolized by his son Kamal – a total reversal of the situation in *Palace Walk* (SS, p. 9). The house on Palace Walk, in its very materiality, signifies the totality of Egyptian society and for that reason can be called 'the house of the nation'. In due course, as the allegory unfolds, this house will come to be challenged by other houses which represent the appropriate 'house of the nation' for that particular stage of political evolution. Accordingly, in terms of its allegorical significance, the house in *Palace Walk* corresponds to the palace in so far as it is the residency of the regent of the Ottoman caliphate, itself the physical embodiment of God's power on earth.

Given that the family represents the 'traditional' Islamic order, Mahfouz envelops them in a web of sensibility, the threads of which are narrated throughout the first novel by the permeation of legends, superstitions and suras from the Quran; the boundary between the physical and metaphysical worlds, the visible and the 'invisible realm' (PW, p. 38) is porous and the family take the 'invisible realm' very seriously, often more seriously than the physical world. A mythical symbology pervades the novel as Mahfouz alludes to significant episodes in the

Islamic tradition and parallels them. Amina's ill-fated excursion to al-Husayn mosque, for example, alludes to the Fall and Mahfouz underlines it by portraying Amina's happiness in her roof garden, signifying Eden; her banishment from it is brought about through a symbolic encounter with the 'forbidden fruit' of modern knowledge, as represented by the motor car with which she collides – a rare enough sight in Cairo in those days for one to deduce that it possesses symbolic value. This Fall episode, of course, prefigures other symbolic rebellions against the will of the divine patriarch, most notably in Kamal's comical encounter with his father in *Palace of Desire*, in which he attempts to promote Darwinian evolutionary theory against al-Sayyid's theology, and more notoriously still, the one allegorically represented in Mahfouz's next novel, *The Children of Gebelawi* (Awlad Haratina).

The family's orthodoxy in politics, therefore, should come as no surprise and it functions as a correlate to their religious 'traditionalism'. Without exception they are introduced to us as supporters of the Watani party and they identify with it precisely because they believe in the restoration of the Khedive Abbas and the renewed suzerainty of the Ottoman caliphate.³⁵ The one slight exception to this, however, is Fahmy. In training to be a lawyer and influenced by Muhammad Abduh and the school of Islamic modernism, he rejects the family's superstitiousness and traditionalism as 'lassitude, ignorance and indifference' (PW, p. 326). As the novel progresses, Fahmy is shown to be increasingly alienated from the kind of society his family represents, and it is through him that Mahfouz brings the allegory into sharper focus. At Aisha's wedding, the moment that Fahmy discovers his father's debauchery and duplicity is illuminating, 'He could not have been more incredulous or panic-stricken if he had been told that . . . the Egyptian nationalist leader Muhammad Farid had betrayed the cause' (PW, pp. 270–1). His juxtaposition of his father's personal duplicity with political treachery brings the political frame into the foreground for the first time in the entire Trilogy. Conversely, the father is also now explicitly associated with a particular political position, namely that of the Watani party and the Ottoman caliphate, and thus his status as a figure representative of the 'traditional' Islamic order is made apparent.

Of all the members of the family, it is Fahmy for whom politics gradually threatens to displace religion as the primary focus of loyalty. He submits to it entirely and submerges his will in the current of political events which sweep him along, ever further from his family who, whilst initially welcoming the emergence of the Wafd and the onset of the preamble to the uprising, increasingly shelter themselves from its consequences thereby revealing a stronger undercurrent of political fatalism. For them, politics is best left to the 'aristocracy' and 'the great pashas'.³⁶

It is also through Fahmy, however, that Mahfouz explores the irreconcilable contradictions of Egyptian nationalist sentiment during this 'first' generation, i.e. before and leading up to the uprising of 1919 which, for Mahfouz, seems to possess almost talismanic status as the beginning of Egypt's political history. I disagree, therefore, with Israel Gershoni (and others, since his is a typical reading

of Fahmy's character) when he suggests that 'Mahfouz draws Fahmi in the image of a modern, young intellectual – a symbol of the new, post-Ottoman age.'³⁷ Whilst one can agree that his political evolution is depicted in terms of a progression from conformism to the family's Ottomanist orientation (PW, p. 56), to a begrudging acceptance of the Wafd in which he allows its leaders a place in the nationalist pantheon, 'With the resentment of a person who wished these men were members of the National Party' (PW, p. 322), and finally towards an enraptured displacement of his old religion by that of Wafdist nationalism, 'Sa'd Zaghul will do what the angels used to' (PW, p. 348), this progression is nevertheless represented as contradictory and asymptotic. Coexisting with this new political sensibility is a strong traditionalism with respect to social affairs, in particular with regard to women, and a continuing and overwhelming respect for his father's authority which he feels compelled to obey. His views on women signify a more general social conservatism which qualifies his political evolution and renders it incomplete; as for his desire to ingratiate himself with his father following his disobedience, 'he had made up his mind to get back into his father's good graces no matter what it costs him . . . for he had a sensitive heart, which was imbued with dutiful obedience' (PW, p. 484). We see here the lineaments of the contradiction which leads to Fahmy's political impasse, for he does not realize (or chooses not to) that disobedience to his father's will lies at the very heart of the new politics he espouses – it necessitates a break with the traditional order which his father represents. Indeed, much the most alarming thing about the revolution for al-Sayyid is that he considers the Wafd's manifesto an incitement to rebellion thereby demonstrating the real cause of his anxiety, namely the spectre of disobedience, the disturbance of power relations which would challenge the Islamic social order (PW, pp. 484–6). Fahmy's inability to challenge this order as represented by his father leads to much anguish and, eventually, must cost him his life for, in the end, he is not ready to assume the mantle of the future – that task will fall, in time, to Kamal and then the Shawkat brothers. In a masterful piece of characterization Mahfouz intimates at Fahmy's inability to represent the political future of Egypt following the 1919 'revolution'. His is a tormented character – he is intense, nervous, slim (a pejorative trait given the valuation of plumpness throughout the Trilogy: another 'slender' girl would later catalyse Kamal's agony), gloomy and introspective, much given to outbursts of rage and even fanaticism. He is tormented even after the 'success' of the revolution, chastising himself for not having been more involved, for not having been a martyr, but secretly relieved at having escaped death. Ironically, he does indeed become a martyr but at the 'wrong' time: a mocking indictment of him. Thus, whilst one can indeed read Fahmy's death as 'the outcome of a treacherous act . . . on the part of the British . . . a premonition of another forty years of delays and double-dealing',³⁸ one must also read it within the framework of Mahfouz's allegory of the embryonic phase of political evolution in Egypt and the contradictions which lay therein.

Fahmy's death is as cataclysmic for the Abd al-Jawwad family as the revolution of 1919 is for Egypt as a whole. Both herald a new era of change following this

dramatic irruption of history into the timelessness of the family, a timelessness which Mahfouz had meticulously constructed for over forty-seven chapters for a specific purpose, namely 'to prepare the scene for the shattering impact of the approaching revolution'.³⁹ Indeed, Mahfouz had alluded to this earlier in *Palace Walk*, 'His children were meant to be a breed apart, outside the framework of history' (PW, p. 422). This characterization of the house as a womb-like space is reinforced by the building itself, as Saeed Ahmed perceptively notes, 'Most of the activities in the house take place in an *inward* direction. The rooms have windows looking onto an inner court . . . this design of the home inspires a feeling of privacy, intimacy and independence.'⁴⁰ Independence, that is, from history, from the world 'outside'. It is within this inward-looking, womb-like space that Mahfouz creates an impression of the quotidian, structuring his narrative according to a 'diurnal' temporality in which the repetitive rhythms of the day govern the narrative progression.⁴¹

However, with the irruption of history timelessness and stability is replaced by change. Compare, then, the first pages of *Palace Walk* with the opening pages of *Palace of Desire*, and a new sense of time (as opposed to timelessness) – one of the first things that Al-Sayyid does, after he returns home, is to remove a 'gold watch' (PD, p. 1). This new sense of time demands a corresponding change of narrative mode, with the omniscient 'external' descriptions (even of characters' inner thoughts) displaced by an increasing use of free indirect discourse which enables a greater fluidity between the internal voice of a character and the external world, reflecting an increasing mediation of the narrative, especially through the character of Kamal.⁴² The second volume, therefore, may be said to operate according to an 'emotional' temporality in which the filters of Kamal's desire operate in much the same way as the quotidian did in *Palace Walk* – historical and political events are woven into the fabric of Kamal's emotional development. In the third volume, the style shifts again, back towards externalized description but this time governed by what Benjamin calls 'homogeneous empty time',⁴³ the most apposite chronology for a primarily external descriptive mode in which dialogue predominates over interior monologue and in which historical and political events are themselves the main engine of narrative development.

This shift from external to internal to external narrative modes parallels the sources of narrative 'authority' in each of the volumes. If the first represents the 'traditional' age, the source of authority is indeed external, namely God; the second volume, however, is concerned with the 'liberal' age, and the source of authority is correspondingly internalized within the individual; finally, the third volume moves the source of authority back to an external force, this time the meta-narrative of history governed by the teleological motor of progress. Richard Myers, in comparing Mahfouz to Kafka, has suggested that both writers are 'committed to an ordered world' and that 'The idea of order is inevitably fixed on a point of authority . . . the enforcing power of an authority that allows one order to prevail, as opposed to another.'⁴⁴ This was also a characteristic of Salama Musa's thought. Like any good Fabian of the time he believed not only in the intrinsic goodness

of the universe but also in a fundamental principle of order which governed its scientific laws; this principle of order found expression in Musa's thought in a historical determinism which Naguib Mahfouz seems to have adopted.⁴⁵ Rather like *Children of Gebelawi*, the Trilogy therefore seems to trace the displacement of ultimate authority and power in the universe from that of God to history (and science), via a detour through the human individual.

If *Palace Walk* focused primarily upon the 'first' generation of Egypt's political history, then *Palace of Desire* is concerned with the 'middle generation' which dominated Egyptian politics during the height of the liberal age in the 1920s. It does so through the character of Kamal and it would be worthwhile, therefore, to concentrate for some time on the allegorical significance of Kamal as a character since this has been a source of confusion for critics of the Trilogy. Following up on comments made by Mahfouz himself, and juxtaposing it to the remarkably scant biographical details of Mahfouz's life that are available (usually sourced from the various interviews Mahfouz has given over the years), most critics have taken Kamal to be an autobiographical representation of the author. For the same reason, Kamal's crisis is commonly read as the intellectual crisis of Mahfouz's generation.⁴⁶ At the risk of contradicting some of Mahfouz's pronouncements but drawing upon the implications of others, it is possible to assemble various pieces of evidence from the text itself to adduce that although there is a strong autobiographical element in Kamal's characterization, Kamal is not Mahfouz and his crisis does not represent the intellectual crisis of Mahfouz's generation. Thus, for example, in the same interview in which Milson cites Mahfouz's admission of Kamal's similarity to him, he adds in a footnote that Mahfouz said, 'This does not necessarily mean I am him.'⁴⁷ The point is two-fold; the first is that one need not necessarily look to authorial intention nor to the author's own pronouncements of intention, and second, that although Kamal's character is partly autobiographical, in reading the Trilogy as a national allegory certain details in the text itself highlighting the differences between Mahfouz and Kamal prove to be highly significant.

We may commence by pointing out that although Mahfouz was born on the 11 December 1911, Kamal is born 4 years earlier, a discrepancy which is not great but which is enough to differentiate him generationally from Mahfouz's generation, the 'new effendiyya', which actually corresponds to the 'third' generation of the novel – the Shawkat brothers and Ridwan *et al.* The four years make all the difference for whilst Mahfouz did indeed attend the newly opened Egyptian University (as do the Shawkat brothers and Ridwan), Kamal does not because the university did not yet exist. Rather, he attends the Teacher's College which, as a higher education institution, was formed during the phase represented by the first volume. In addition, aspects of Mahfouz's own biography are grafted, as it were, on to Ahmad Shawkat such as his first meeting with Salama Musa which in *Sugar Street* is represented by Ahmad's meeting with Adli Karim. In addition, there is the crucial difference between Mahfouz and Kamal over what they actually write. Whilst Mahfouz had his first short story published in 1935 and his first novel in 1939, Kamal, even as late as 1944 still does not take fiction seriously as mode

of writing. His attitude is reminiscent not of Mahfouz's generation but of the generation which preceded him. As Milson points out, 'Haykal, Tawfiq al-Hakim, al-Aqqad and others of their generation were not primarily novelists . . . Narrative fiction had not yet been acknowledged as a serious literary art. However, the late thirties and forties saw the emergence of a new generation of writers who devoted themselves entirely to fiction'; Mahfouz was among them.⁴⁸

On the other hand, like Kamal, Mahfouz actually began his writing career by publishing non-fictional and philosophical articles. Biographically speaking, therefore, Kamal both is and is not Mahfouz, just as Ahmad is and is not Mahfouz. They are, in one sense, two aspects of Mahfouz himself. One notices numerous parallelisms which link Kamal to his nephew Ahmad (incidentally, it is Ahmad who is encouraged to take up narrative fiction by his wife-to-be, Sawsan) – both fall in love with girls whose social standing is superior to their own (which, by the way, demonstrates the downward social mobility traced by the Trilogy; in *Palace Walk*, the Shawkats are a middle-class family with Turkish origins and are thus shading into the aristocracy; in *Sugar Street*, Ahmad Shawkat is considered beneath a daughter of the bourgeoisie); both publish articles and are committed to modern knowledge (they are shown attending the offices of two respective journals in adjacent chapters); both reject the authority of Islam. The character of Ahmad, in some respects, operates as something of a foil for that of Kamal, an indicator of the type of person Kamal could have been had he been born a generation later. Indeed, the comparison highlights Kamal's inability to overcome his crisis whilst Ahmad's ability to deal with his is thrown into sharp relief. As men of action, both he and his brother Abd al-Munim therefore allegorically represent a generation not in ideological confusion but rather finding ideologies which promoted greater clarity, again in contrast to Kamal whose scepticism leads him into an impasse. They therefore seek to lead Egypt out of its political impasse in much the same way that the novel intimates that Ahmad Shawkat leads Kamal out of his. These parallelisms reinforce the impression that Ahmad and Kamal represent two aspects of the same figure. This is extremely significant; as will become apparent below, it is perhaps the case that Ahmad Shawkat represents an imaginary resolution of Mahfouz's own psycho-political and intellectual impasse, a fictional rendering of that part of himself towards which he aspired but could not attain.

Nevertheless, in the allegory Kamal does not represent the 'new effendiyya' but rather the older effendiyya, that generation of secular-liberal nationalist intellectuals who not only disliked narrative fiction but whose 'crisis', as we have seen, was symptomatic of the political crisis of the liberal regime. Kamal's rebellion against his father in the second volume and his rejection of the beliefs and values for which he stood (PD, pp. 332–9) is significantly placed either in the year 1926 or 1927, the years immediately following the publication of two of the landmark texts of that generation, Taha Husayn's *On Pre-Islamic Poetry* (1926) and Ali Abd al-Raziq's *Islam and the Principles of Government* (1925). Indeed, *Palace of Desire* articulates a period of intellectual self-confidence in both Egyptian society at large and within Kamal himself. This contrasts tellingly with the impasse in which we

find Kamal and the political system in *Sugar Street*, an impasse heralded at the end of the second volume by the death of Saad Zaghlul.

If, as I have suggested, it is through Kamal's emotional and intellectual development that *Palace of Desire* allegorizes the liberal phase of Egypt's political evolution, then it is specifically through his desire that it allegorizes the emergence of an alternative focus of political loyalty to that represented by al-Sayyid, namely the secular-liberal territorial nationalism of those committed to a specifically Egyptian political identity. The figure of Aida emerges as the new symbol of the nation as opposed to al-Sayyid. Kamal gravitates towards her, as her name implies, and the image of Egypt she represents.⁴⁹ In Richard van Leeuwen's words, 'Ayida is easily recognizable as a covetable symbol of a new "social order" and a certain vision of Egypt, free of the inhibitions imposed by tradition, fostering a rational, secular philosophy and unrestrictedly oriented towards Europe.'⁵⁰ One may recall the Westernist orientation of many secular-liberal nationalists in the abandon with which Aida embraces Paris as the epicentre of culture. It is also not insignificant that just as this western orientation was a corollary to Pharaonicism, we witness Aida at her most recognizably 'western' during the visit to the Pyramids (PD, pp. 174–94). The Shaddad mansion thus emerges as an opposing 'house of the nation' to that of the old house in al-Gamaliyya, and just as that house corresponded to a 'real' institution, namely the palace, so too this house corresponds to Saad Zaghlul's home, in turn a 'signifier' of the newly established parliament (PW, p. 332). The Shaddad mansion, for Kamal, is most certainly a palace of desire (the pun referring of course also to the house in Palace of Desire alley, thereby maintaining the link between the allegorical and realistic levels of the narrative) and as a national symbol, Aida is shown to sublimate class differences, 'What's happened to the political feud, the heated debate, the furious quarrel and the class conflict? They've melted away and vanished at a look from your eyes' (PD, p. 158); on her wedding day we are told that all the democratic forces in Egypt have formed a united front to protest against the King's abrogation of the constitution and suspension of parliament (PD, pp. 309–10).

Yet it is through this same narrative mechanism, namely Kamal's desire, that this second volume not only allegorizes the zenith of secular-liberal nationalism but also the moment of its downfall. For Kamal's desire is shown to be thoroughly impotent, reflecting the impotence of the secular-liberal nationalists and pre-figuring the crisis of the 1930s. Throughout the Trilogy thus far desire has been a locus of potentially subversive energy which threatens to disturb the hierarchical nature of Egyptian society. In fact, the Palace of Desire, both allegorically and as a narrative topos, functions as a general signifier of rebellion against 'traditional' authority. Yasin's mother, Haniya, who is the first to rebel against al-Sayyid, relocates herself to the house in Palace of Desire alley, as does Zanuba after she too resists al-Sayyid. In *Palace Walk*, desire is contained by its institutionalization in marriage (and concubinage), a monopolization of legitimate desire by religion and the state. If, however, desire and power are seen as opposite forces in *Palace Walk*, then in *Palace of Desire*, desire is power (one might suggest that the former

is a 'traditional' view of desire, and that the latter is a 'modern', 'liberal' view). However, the subversive potential of this modern view of desire is negated by its representation as an external force in the face of which the individual is rendered impotent. We find, therefore, Kamal's desire presented as a tyrannical force (PD, pp. 18–19). This is a consequence of Kamal's excessive idealization of his desire, reflecting the impotent idealism of liberal nationalism. Both here and in *Palace Walk*, desire thus serves an allegorical function: it is a force which figures as an indicator of potential social and political change but which, in both the autocratic/traditional phase and the liberal/democratic phase, is unfulfilled because the strategies of the former either suppress it or channel it through institutional safety-valves, and the modalities of the latter (i.e. idealism) eclipse its subversive potential. In both cases, desire is co-opted by power. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that Aida – the object of Kamal's desire, the origin of the tyrannical force – utilizes his desire to consolidate rather than disturb the social hierarchies of Egyptian society, playing him like a pawn in her attempt to accelerate the marriage proposal of Hasan Salim, the aristocrat she wishes to marry. In this brilliantly sophisticated manner, Mahfouz manages to symbolize the complicity of the secular-liberal regime with prevailing notions of the social order.

Aida's betrayal of Kamal's desire is but one instance of many such betrayals – Hasan Salim's being another (PD, pp. 215–27), and Khadija's accusation of betrayal against Aisha being yet another (PD, p. 244) in a novel in which it becomes apparent that betrayal is a major theme. This correlates, of course, to the political infighting and the political betrayal of the people by the parties: the *hizbiyya* which by the middle of the next decade would be such a stigma on the body politic. Prefiguring the crisis of the 1930s and 1940s, which will be tackled by *Sugar Street*, the volume climaxes with Kamal's rejection of both his father and Aida, of religion and idealism (PD, p. 339). He comes to favour what we might call an 'ethical materialism' in which philosophy and knowledge are based on 'solid, scientific foundations' (PD, p. 388). He also comes to favour a more ecumenical view of progress,

There's nothing to prevent a sensible person from admiring Sa'd Zaghlul as much as Copernicus, the chemist Ostwald, or the physicist Mach; for an effort to link Egypt with the advance of human progress is noble and humane. Patriotism's a virtue if it's not tainted by xenophobi (ibid.).

Yet for Kamal, far from resolving his intellectual crisis, his 'ethical materialism' (which, we might note, is not really different at all to Ahmad's doctrine of 'perpetual revolution') merely intensifies it and by the next volume he finds himself trapped between 'pairs of contradictions cancelling out each other' (SS, p. 30). Part of his problem seems to be that although it seems at first that his new sense of idealism is qualitatively different to that which had characterized his infatuation with Aida, it turns out not to be so. Sasson Somekh says at one point that although Kamal is not a flat character, 'he is, in a way, an anti-climax'.⁵¹ This, however,

seems to be Mahfouz's point. Although he holds high ethical ideals, what Kamal lacks is commitment to a cause, and in the third volume the comparison with Ahmad Shawkat makes it abundantly clear that this commitment should be to socialism.

Palace of Desire ends with a cataclysmic historical event much like the revolution of 1919 which heralds the end of one era and the beginning of the next. This time it is the death of Sa'd Zaghlul. In the final part of the Trilogy a new narrative principle emerges, that of History. As has been suggested, this results in a new narrative mode which focuses on externalized description and dialogue; it also results in an acceleration of the narrative, exemplified by the fact that although this part is the shortest of the volumes, it encompasses the longest period of time (9 years in 308 pages, as opposed to 3 in PD spread over 422 pages, and 2 in PW using 498 pages).⁵²

Nowhere is Mahfouz's Fabian conviction in the inexorability of historical progress more manifest than in *Sugar Street*. As Vernon Egger reminds us, although Fabians 'tended to be ambiguous about whether socialism was inevitable or had to be achieved, [they] generally wrote as if they assumed that it would arise from an inner necessity of the historical process.'⁵³ Here, history's sheer destructiveness is sutured to an insistent attack upon the past as a repository of cultural value. The past appears in this volume as an alternate reality to the 'truth' of historical reality in much the same way as legends and superstitions in *Palace Walk* submerged the family in an atmosphere of metaphysicality, or the manner in which Kamal's idealism distanced him from 'reality' in *Palace of Desire*. It is, however, systematically shattered, sometimes quite literally: Ahmad Abduh's coffee shop, for example, is demolished, and history swallows up the Shaddad family, along with their mansion (SS, p. 44). Pondering the demise of his beloved's family, Kamal reasons that 'It would not do for him to mourn the threatened destruction of Ahmad Abduh's coffee-house anymore, for everything was *destined* to be turned head over heels' (SS, p. 45 my emphasis). The other hugely symbolic destruction of the past is, of course, the death of al-Sayyid at the hands of 'the most advanced inventions of modern science' (SS, p. 203) signifying the final displacement of the 'once secure past' by modernity.⁵⁴

Perhaps the most sustained meditation on the past is represented through an intricate process of time reversal through which Mahfouz criticizes Egyptian society's excessive attachment to the past, and by implication, its disregard for the future. Throughout the Trilogy one notices that certain parallelisms enact a process of temporal reversal which climax with the ultimate reversal of al-Sayyid's being carried back to his house in the arms of his youngest son following the air raid, like a young child. The sexual desires of the Abd al-Jawwad males also undergo this process; *Palace of Desire* opens with Yasin dreaming of Maryam in much the same way as Fahmy had done in *Palace Walk*; al-Sayyid lusts after Zanuba in the same way that Yasin had done in the previous volume, and this is explicitly represented as an attempt by al-Sayyid to recapture his youth; and Kamal attempts to recapture his love of Aida by chasing her younger sister, Budur, and in so doing

returns to university to attend a lecture years after he has graduated and become a teacher himself. Finally, after losing Budur as well, we find Kamal following her to a market where he ends up examining toys in a symbolic return to childhood (SS, p. 265). In psychoanalytic terms, through this meditation on Kamal's return to the past in particular (although echoes are found in al-Sayyid's attempt to seduce Zanuba in *Palace of Desire*), Mahfouz is perhaps representing his return to the past as an effort to conquer it and thereby lay it to rest: to unblock his neurosis – i.e. his emotional and intellectual paralysis. Only then can he face the future and move on. Allegorically, this possesses certain significances. Kamal's return may signify a sort of prescription calling for a process of collective therapy on the part of Egyptian society in order to cure it, to unblock it from its 'ancestor complex' as Salama Musa put it in the context of the Hijazi Arabs.⁵⁵ In this regard, it is perhaps worth quoting the words Mahfouz places into the mouth of Ahmad Shawkat, substituting the whole of Egyptian society for the bourgeois class, 'This bourgeois class is nothing but an array of complexes. It would take an expert psychoanalyst to cure all of its ills, an analyst as powerful as history itself' (SS, p. 217).

Thus, whilst the inhabitants of the old house on Palace Walk are gripped by nostalgia (which seems to be the overwhelming sentiment of the first chapter) Mahfouz transports his main theme of the battle between past and future to a new symbolic 'house of the nation', the house on Sugar Street where the two Shawkat brothers fight over the very outcome of history itself. Unlike the previous houses of the nation, this house does not correspond to any 'real' institution, illustrating on the one hand the institutional marginality of the new political forces, and signifying on the other hand that they belong not to the present but to the future, to institutions yet to be built. Within the new 'house of the nation' Abd al-Munim, the Muslim brother, represents historical regression and Ahmad, the Communist, represents progress. We are left in no doubt as to whom Mahfouz would prefer the reader's allegiance to lie with. As Rasheed El-Enany and others have pointed out, Mahfouz's preference for his socialist characters is well known and although in his novels he usually presents the opposing point of view he has insisted that 'neutrality between ideas' in his novels is only 'technical' adding that 'I am not neutral to the end.'⁵⁶

Of all the characters in the Trilogy it is only Ahmad Shawkat who seems to be free from the allure of the past, rejecting everything that acts as 'a brake obstructing the free movement of humanity's wheel' (SS, p. 123), and it is he in whom Mahfouz invests his hopes for the future. His inspirational doctrine of 'perpetual revolution' even seems on the verge of convincing Kamal to commit to a method of political praxis and although this doctrine has no specific political orientation (which is why it is capable of being espoused by his brother as well), it was Ahmad Shawkat who had earlier articulated what seems to be the conscious ideological position of the Trilogy, 'the most important thing is to question nationalism itself. Yes, there is no argument about the need for independence, but afterward the understanding of nationalism must develop until it is absorbed into a loftier, more

comprehensive concept' (SS, p. 26). This concept, for Mahfouz, is undoubtedly Fabian socialism.

If it seems a little odd for a Fabian socialist to be advocating his ideas through a communist character, then we must remember that Mahfouz is attempting to represent symbolically the ideological polarizations of his time, a period that Mustafa Badawi has called the 'age of conflicting ideologies',⁵⁷ and he can best achieve this by intensifying the dichotomy between left and right. This strengthens the case for reading the Trilogy as a political allegory as does the anachronistic representation of the contending forces at this time, especially the communist movement. Although the novel closes in 1944, it presents the Egyptian communist movement as fully formed and functional and one in which Egyptians were active. However, as Selma Botman points out, most communists in Egypt were members of foreign minorities and those organizations that did plan to recruit Egyptian intellectuals, such as Iskra, did not begin this phase until 1945. Moreover, although Iskra did become a visible force in various university faculties, it was not actually formed until 1942–3, a couple of years after the graduation of Abd al-Munim and his brother Ahmad; Mahfouz, however, insists on portraying communism as a visible political force at a time when it was not.⁵⁸ Furthermore, in so far as there was at least one communist organization in which Egyptians were active, namely New Dawn (al-Fajr al-Jadid), this remained a 'a small circle of four intellectuals whose main task was to study Egyptian society and work within the existing legal organizations of workers, students, and intellectuals'.⁵⁹ Again, New Dawn was not operative until after the brothers had left the university but more importantly it, along with all the other communist groups at this time, practised openly and legally and did not constitute itself as a Communist party. This then invites the question as to why they should have attracted repression at the hands of the state in the way that Mahfouz depicts at the end of *Sugar Street* to which the simple answer is that they did not, at least not until July 1946, after the close of the Trilogy. Neither did the Muslim Brotherhood, which underwent its period of repression even later, in 1948. This should provide those who would see Mahfouz's trilogy as a completely 'realist' novel with much to ponder.

So why then did Mahfouz depart from his commitment to historical accuracy in these final sections of the Trilogy? The answer is two-fold, and both aspects are related to each other. On the one hand, writing as the repression under the monarchist regime reached its crescendo, it enabled him surreptitiously to make apparent the relevance of his political allegory to contemporary Egypt. Nothing articulates this better than Khadija's lament at witnessing her two sons being marched off by the state apparatus, 'The government and the English – can't they find some other place to search besides our afflicted house?' (SS, p. 297). This is one last reminder to the reader that the various houses in the Trilogy possess a significance other than that apparent on the surface. On the other hand, Mahfouz is now able to push the allegory further, to one final 'house of the nation', which alludes to the sombre and oppressive contemporary situation. This is the prison. Inside, the brothers find themselves incarcerated with a microcosm of society and

thus, in one final allegorical manoeuvre, Mahfouz subtly points to the incarceration of Egypt under a political system which uses the state apparatus to oppress its citizens and which denies any basic political freedoms. This final, gloomy ending (offset by the words of hope from Ahmad which emanate from within the bowels of the jail itself) is perhaps a self-conscious meditation on the difficulties of establishing a socialist politics in Egypt. Of all the obstacles to progress in Egypt it is this last one – the coercive state – which is envisaged as perhaps the most serious, being that very thing which renders allegory absolutely necessary in the first place.

Naguib Mahfouz, the Trilogy and neopatriarchy

Thus far, the analysis has proceeded ‘with the grain’ of the text; in the course of what follows it will seek to brush against its timbre. If the national allegory offered a radical critique of Egyptian society and its political evolution and intimates a socialist alternative, it can also be demonstrated that this alternative vision shares an enormous terrain of common ground with its object of criticism, namely the prevailing modes and ideologies which had hitherto dominated Egyptian social, cultural and political life. A reading against the grain reveals a ‘zone of complicity’ which must qualify any evaluation of Mahfouz’s socio-political criticism.

Hisham Sharabi has offered a suggestive theorization of the development of modern Arab societies which may be usefully employed here. In his book *Neopatriarchy*, he suggests that patriarchy in modern Arab society assumes different forms to that within ‘traditional’ Arab societies, and that for all its appearance of modernization the ‘neopatriarchal state . . . is in many ways no more than a modernized version of the traditional patriarchal sultanate’.⁶⁰ Despite the flaws in the book, Sharabi’s refusal to see patriarchy as merely the oppression of women by men – his insistence that it also involves social classes in their hierarchical relations to one another, as well as individuals in their relations to the family, the neighbourhood, the workplace, the public sphere and the state – is very useful and suggestive as it brings together issues which are quite often treated separately, such as gender, politics, class and religion.⁶¹

Mahfouz himself has suggested that sex, politics and religion are the three axes around which his fictional work revolve,⁶² and reading the Trilogy through the conceptual frame of patriarchy and neopatriarchy as defined by Sharabi will enable us to explore the assumptions that lie behind these central themes in his fiction. Against Mahfouz’s triad of central issues the analysis will posit its own triad of gender, power and form as the crucial concepts through which to approach Mahfouz’s treatment of sex, politics and religion (and, one might add, class). In this way, I shall relate each to the other in order to investigate the totality of Mahfouz’s ideological vision.

Gender

Where critics of Mahfouz's work have tackled the issue of gender in his work, they have done so on the basis that Mahfouz's consideration of the problem has been generally progressive.⁶³ Much of this criticism has not been overly sensitive to its own patriarchal assumptions and therefore its engagement has been rather superficial.⁶⁴ The most sustained engagement with gender issues in Mahfouz has been conducted, unsurprisingly perhaps, by a woman, Miriam Cooke.⁶⁵ She argues that Mahfouz, in his early career, could be considered a feminist writer because of his exploration of the shifting gender relations within Egyptian society during that period, and his incisive critique of masculinity within that shift, especially in the way he illuminates gender relations to be 'grounded in asymmetric power'.⁶⁶ Central to her analysis is the figure of the prostitute – 'Mahfouz's most interesting and creative women characters'⁶⁷ – which operates as a mirror in which masculinity's true nature is revealed;⁶⁸ Mahfouz's prostitutes thereby enable a space-clearing gesture from within the patriarchal discourse from which a critique of patriarchy can be launched. Thus, Mahfouz endows his prostitutes with a certain freedom: 'they have in common not so much a commodification of body for survival but an urge for independence'.⁶⁹ All this is echoed by Mahfouz himself, and, at times, by some of his male characters. He has said, 'The prostitute is invaluable to a social critic because it is only in contradistinction to her that one can realize how immoral, inwardly and outwardly, prominent figures in society are,' and Ahmad Akif, a character in Mahfouz's earlier novel *Khan al-Khalili*, suggests that 'the real woman is the prostitute. She is the real one since she puts off the mask of hypocrisy from her face and does not feel the need to claim love, loyalty and purity.'⁷⁰

If we examine the Trilogy, at first glance the text seems to substantiate Cooke's argument. There is a sustained critique of patriarchy in evidence, both explicitly stated and in certain situations such as the parodic marriage between Al-Sayyid Ahmad and Zubayda during one of his soirées (PW, pp. 40–1, 104, 116; SS, pp. 23, 193, 245). The index of this attack on patriarchy is the reversal of al-Sayyid's and Amina's roles in the final volume, the old patriarch becoming totally bedridden and dependent upon his wife. However, my concern here is not with the surface of the text but rather its underlying structure; not so much with what it says as what it conceals. Anticipating the argument a little, there is a contradiction between the surface ideology of the text and its political unconscious which is symptomatic of an impasse in the nationalist imaginary of Mahfouz and others on the nationalist left. But this impasse was not only shared by those on the political left. It structured, in various discursive forms, the entire nationalist discourse of this period. In other nationalist paradigms it is more obvious but the fact that it permeates the discourse of the left-wing paradigms suggests both the extent of the impasse within Egyptian nationalism as a whole and the limits to a truly progressive ideology emerging from that discourse.

Once we begin to look more closely at Cooke's argument, we begin to notice

certain fundamental problems especially with regard to her analysis of the figure of the prostitute. Cooke's argument, ultimately, rests upon the liberal humanist notion of an individuated, autonomous subjectivity, 'Mahfouz's men cannot imagine that a woman's function masks an individual.'⁷¹ However, modern critical theory, especially feminist theory, has increasingly rendered the notion of the 'individual' as problematic pointing out that the 'individual' is a product of wider social processes and is itself a product of patriarchy.⁷² The 'individual', therefore, is a social construct. It is rendered doubly problematic in a society like Egypt in which such notions of individuality, in contrast to modern Europe and America, are heavily muted in favour of more 'corporate' identities. As Andrea Rugh points out, this leads to 'an inability in certain contexts for people to develop an individual sense of identity'; an Egyptian thus feels that 'As an individual he is insignificant; as a social being he has significance.'⁷³ Therefore, one can suggest that we do need to look at the 'role' and 'function' of the prostitute in Mahfouz's discourse, not in itself but rather within the wider fictional representation of the totality of social relations.

Returning to the above statement by Ahmad Akif in *Khan al-Khalili*, we notice that there is an implicit distinction between the prostitute and other women who, it is implied, are hypocrites. This begs several questions: are all women other than prostitutes hypocrites? Should they be blamed for claiming 'love, loyalty and purity' from men, and is it wrong for men to give them these things? Is it implied that prostitutes are, in fact, the 'real' women, and that all other women are not? What then does Mahfouz understand by the notion of 'woman'? These questions render the whole issue of 'woman' as a sign in Mahfouz's signifying system unstable and open to interrogation. Whilst feminist criticism advocates that the destabilization of the category of 'woman' as it is represented in the patriarchal discourse is a necessary aspect of feminist politics, in the course of what follows it will become clear that the reverse is true of Mahfouz in so far as the manner in which he deploys 'woman' as a mode of criticism actually destabilizes his critique. In other words, his criticism of patriarchy is confused by the manner in which his notion of 'woman' operates within his discourse. Once we step through the fog of confusion we find that Mahfouz's underlying representation of women conforms to 'traditional' patriarchal canons of femininity whilst disguising itself as an espousal of 'modern' notions of 'womanhood'. This is precisely symptomatic of what Sharabi calls 'neopatriarchy'.

So how does Mahfouz represent women in the Trilogy? I want to look first at what Peter Brooks has called the 'aesthetics of narrative embodiment'.⁷⁴ According to Brooks, 'the body is only apparently lacking in meaning . . . it can be semiotically retrieved. Along with the semiotization of the body goes what we might call the somatization of story.'⁷⁵ This, he suggests, is a result of 'narrative desire' which is itself the consequence of 'epistemophilia' – the desire to know – which Brooks, following psychoanalytical theory, sees as emerging from the desire to know one's own body as a means of discovering, or knowing, oneself whilst being nurtured in close proximity to the body of another, that of the mother. The

body, then, insofar as it is central to the process of identity formation, is also a key sign in the formation of meaning, including narrative meaning. It is worth quoting Brooks at some length:

In modern narrative literature, a protagonist often desires a body (most often another's, but sometimes his or her own) and that body comes to represent for the protagonist an apparent ultimate good, since it appears to hold within itself – as itself – the key to satisfaction, power and meaning. On the plane of reading, desire for knowledge of that body and its secrets becomes the desire to master the text's symbolic system, its key to knowledge, pleasure and the very creation of significance . . . Thus, narrative desire, as the subtending dynamic of stories and their telling, becomes oriented toward knowledge and possession of the body.⁷⁶

Brooks then adds that, 'the desiring subject may be in the narrative, *and is always also the creator of the narrative*, whose desire for the body is part of a semiotic project to make it signify.'⁷⁷ This need not be a conscious process, of course, and therefore the semioticization of the body in the text is implicated in those wider processes that inscribe socialized bodies with meanings and significances in society at large. Narrative representations of the body are, therefore, overdetermined by ideological and social discourses in currency within the social field. Moreover, if, as Foucault maintains, knowledge is power then the 'aesthetics of narrative embodiment' may function as the initial term in a simple syllogism which unlocks the importance of bodily representations in any attempt to decode the political unconscious of the Trilogy. If knowledge is power, then epistemophilia is a desire for power. Bodily representation emerges from epistemophilia and therefore representation of bodies is also a desire for power over them, to control them, to possess them. In a patriarchal society, this desire for power is gendered; representation therefore operates as a surrogate for sexual politics.

This is paralleled in the narrative of the Trilogy itself by the sheer number of male sexual conquests. All the novels dwell repeatedly and at length on the female body as an object of sexual desire and almost all male sexual desires, in terms of possessing such sexualized bodies, are satisfied. Everywhere, it seems, women afford men sexual opportunities. To pick out just a few examples of this process of embodiment: 'She draped the black cloth around her skilfully to reveal the details of her body's features and articulations. It especially highlighted her full gleaming rump . . . Under the pressure of her weight, her buttocks were compressed' (PW, p. 74); or again, 'he caught himself, despite his good intentions, gazing stealthily at the precious treasure of her rump, which loomed up like the dome of a shrine' (PD, p. 124). The narrative thus gazes long and deliriously over delectably sexualized female bodies in a process of sexual reification which enables the satisfaction of the voyeuristic gaze of its (predominantly male?) readers.

Two objections could be made here. First, that this 'gaze' is invariably filtered through the perceptions of male characters in a patriarchal society, buttressed by the use of free indirect discourse, interior monologue or description of the character's inner thought processes, thereby decentring these bodily description from the authorial point of view. Second, that Mahfouz describes male bodies as much as female ones, that is, his concern for physicality is not, in fact, gendered but applies equally to both sexes.

In response to the second objection, one may point out that there is in fact a qualitative difference in Mahfouz's representation of male bodies. These descriptions evoke stature, strength, virility, or allude to their psychological character. Menahem Milson has shown how Mahfouz's strategy of naming accentuates Al-Sayyid's virility and ironically throws Yasin's animal sexuality into sharp relief and we have seen above how Fahmy's slender build alludes to his nervousness of character.⁷⁸ One may add to this Kamal's large head which signifies his intellectuality. Women, on the other hand, are described in purely external terms in which their physical appearances denote nothing other than their beauty or otherwise, and hence their desirability. Moreover, whilst the males are rarely described in terms of their sexual attributes, on those occasions that they are – tallness and broadness of build, for example, denotes virility – we notice that they are represented as sexual subjects; Mahfouz's women, by contrast, are represented as sexual objects, objects over whom in the end men always have control – and to whom they always have access.

This leads us back to the first objection, for Mahfouz's textual strategies here take refuge behind the 'realism' of his portrayal of patriarchal society. But the assumptions which are encoded into Mahfouz's description of that reality, of that society, become a legitimate concern for the critic because novels are never mere passive reflectors of life, mere ciphers of reality. Rather, all narrative is constructed and mediated through the subject-position of the author, and an interrogation of Mahfouz's 'reflection' of Egyptian patriarchy from his subject-position provides, in fact, much the more significant evidence for our analysis of the gender ideology encoded in the Trilogy.

It is here that we can turn to the importance of situating Mahfouz's representation of the role and function of his women characters within the frame of his wider representation of the totality of social relations. We may begin with the observation that men are represented as having full sexual access to the women in the novel. This has to be qualified somewhat. There are, of course, some women who are presented as sexually inaccessible except under certain circumstances which are rigorously policed by marriage and the class structure. These are the 'respectable' women, such as Amina, Khadija, Aisha and Aida. These women are also not 'embodied' in the same way that the others are. Indeed, in the case of Kamal's idealization of Aida, we find her totally 'disembodied'. This disembodiment is, however, complementary to the process of narrative embodiment and both contribute to the construction of a 'discourse of respectability' which divides women into 'reputable' and 'disreputable' functionaries in the male

economy of sexual desire. On the one hand, we find the idealized mothers, sisters and wives who are the object of legitimate yet sublimated desire; on the other, the whores and women of 'easy virtue'. It is in the difference between the text's representation of these 'respectable' women and the sexually accessible or disreputable women, and in their relation to each other (all mediated, of course, through the male author's subjectivity within a patriarchal social order) in the narrative that many of the assumptions about gender and society in the Trilogy may be unpicked and examined.

Mahfouz correctly identifies the 'discourse of respectability' as the linchpin of the system of gender and class regulation of patriarchy. In *Palace Walk*, in a quite masterful scene at Aisha's wedding, the performer Jalila begins a drunken reverie about the number of lovers she has had. The narrator contextualizes her function: 'At a party like this, women were able to entertain the drunken jokes of the performers and respond to their humour, although the limits of decency were occasionally surpassed. They seemed to enjoy a break from their normal primness' (PW, p. 266). In addition to the contrast between Jalila's drunkenness and the 'primness' of the 'women', Jalila's articulation of the number of lovers she has had (most of them the husbands of these 'women') reveals how a woman like her is vital to the definition of the 'women' she addresses. Her sexualization is the corollary to their desexualization and hence their respectability. She is thus a necessary part of the economy of desire in which desire is redistributed away from 'respectable' women towards concubines and prostitutes. She plays a vital role in the male regulation of female sexuality for the purposes of maintaining a hierarchical social order based on respectability. As Evelyne Accad points out, even though prostitution is illegal according to the Islamic religion, it persists because it serves that function; moreover, in addition to such illicit institutions, there are within Islam licit ones like multiple marriages and concubinage which serve the same function.⁷⁹

Whilst Mahfouz correctly and admirably exposes the double standards and hypocrisy of the 'asymmetric' gender relations within patriarchy, he never actually challenges the 'discourse of respectability'. In fact, he consolidates such a discourse. First, Mahfouz's women conform to the pattern of representation in Arab fiction, which portrays them in either familial (wives, mothers, sisters, aunts, grandmothers) or sexual (mistress, prostitute, concubine) relationships to men.⁸⁰ In the Trilogy, such women only operate either in the home or in the brothel (except Sawsan Hammad, to whom we shall return shortly). The inability to imagine anything other than the brothel as an alternative to the home as a space for women seems to suggest a complicity on Mahfouz's part with the discourse of respectability even as he exposes its double standards.

The 'home' of course is the locus *par excellence* of respectability. Nothing illustrates this better than Maryam's reaction to Yasin bringing Zanuba back to their home one night, 'Have you ever heard of anything like this before? A prostitute off the street in a home?' (PD, p. 278). This discourse of respectability channels 'respectable' female desire away from the fulfilment of their sexuality

towards a desire for domesticity. This is perfectly illustrated in the trajectory of the character of Zanuba. In *Palace of Desire*, her strategies to acquire a greater degree of economic and personal freedom by becoming al-Sayyid's 'concubine' rather than a mere prostitute (chapter 7, pp. 88–90; chapter 9, pp. 99–106) are presented as evidence of shifting gender relations by placing them in the context of a wider redistribution of power away from the male patriarch. At first glance, it seems as if she is indeed arrogating some of the power, via her sexuality, hitherto reserved for men but on closer inspection we find that, despite acquiring greater economic and personal freedom, Zanuba does not in fact alter the structure of gender relations at all. She rises one notch in the ladder of disreputable women but her role as a concubine is essentially the same as her former role as a prostitute. Indeed, she wants everything to continue as before. However, this does not suffice and she wishes to become fully 'respectable' by marrying Yasin and by acquiring a home (PD, p. 284). Eventually, her desire for respectability is consummated and by the final volume, having given birth to Yasin's daughter, she is welcomed into the family as a 'respectable woman' (SS, p. 19).

In the domestication of Zanuba's sexuality lies a moral fable concealed deep within the heart of the Trilogy. Whilst it is indeed one step above considering all women or all prostitutes as morally suspect by nature, it does not represent anything like an anti-patriarchal position. If we are left in any doubt about Mahfouz's patriarchal conformism on this score, Zanuba's fable is counterbalanced by Bahija's. The boundary which separates the respectable ladies from the rest is crossed twice, actually, once by Zanuba in the direction of respectability, once by Bahija going the other way. These inverse narratives seem to suggest the possibility of redemption for she who respects the discourse of respectability but damnation for she who does not. Bahija's fable seems to encapsulate all the stereotypical fears about the dangers of women's sexuality. One notes that Bahija's sexuality is 'released', as it were, only after the death of her paralysed husband thereby signifying that despite his infirmity his very presence guarantees her obedience to the rules of respectability. Moreover, her rather sudden death (PD, p. 173) seems to echo Yasin's sentiments about women which reveal the instrumentality of male desire in such a society, 'If my hopes turn out to be groundless, I'll cast her away like a worn-out shoe' (PD, p. 113). Bahija, her fable concluded, is herself tossed off like a worn-out shoe, her fate representing a warning not to transgress the norms of sexuality. The narrative thus rather disturbingly mimics its most misogynistic character here.

In addition to her sexual voracity, one of Bahija's main crimes seems to be that she is not a good mother. Indeed, she is shown to put her own sexual satisfaction (with Yasin, her daughter's suitor!) ahead of her daughter's interest. The victory of the sexual instinct over the maternal one is cause for a great deal of anxiety as well as moral censure. Here one may agree with critics who have noted Mahfouz's idealization of motherhood.⁸¹ 'Maternal' characters like Amina and Khadija certainly seem to come off best in the Trilogy. Even among 'respectable' women, non-maternal characters are punished, as it were. Take Aisha, who has been the

subject of much critical scrutiny. The extermination of her branch of the family has been given various glosses, most extensively by Mattiyahu Peled, who suggests that because she has blue eyes and blond hair she is a representative of the Turkish aristocracy which Mahfouz felt had no place in modern Egypt. Anything that must come from her womb must accordingly die.⁸² Although this is ingenious, there is no support for it in the text and is not therefore particularly convincing. I agree that the blond hair and blue eyes are significant markers as to the interpretation of Aisha's significance in the Trilogy but by placing these markers within the frame of gender, we can see that although they do signify foreignness they do not signify foreignness *per se*. Rather, they allude to a foreign paradigm of womanhood. It is within this context that the oft-noticed comparison between the 'poster girl' which Kamal identifies with Aisha makes sense. If we look at the description of the poster closely we notice that she is advertising cigarettes (smoking is a disreputable thing for a woman to do) made by 'Matoussian', a foreign-owned tobacco company operative in Egypt at the time.⁸³ Unlike, say, Amina this woman is not 'busy as a bee' doing the housework but reclining in leisure. She thus represents the 'modern' woman. Aisha is therefore associated with this nexus of connotations: she represents a foreign ideal of womanhood which is specifically non-maternal. This is reinforced by her concern over her appearance, a concern that is particularly resonant in the Islamic tradition in which there operates a concept of female 'invisibility', potently symbolized by the *hijab*. Aisha's concern for appearance characterizes her as a 'visible' woman (to the policeman she initially falls in love with we notice that she is physically visible) who is contrasted to the 'traditional' maternal image of womanhood which Mahfouz seems to idealize.⁸⁴ In her treatment we find perhaps an unconscious anxiety over these changing gender roles and the imposition of a vicarious closure on such changes. Aisha herself echoes this, saying of herself that 'she became the cautionary tale of her day' (SS, p. 5). Absolutely. Mahfouz quite literally grants her no future.

In fact, the Aisha episode acts as a point of reference for the tension within the Trilogy between its espousal of modern femininity (after all, Kamal is much attracted to the poster) and its rejection. This tension is symbolized at the very end of the Trilogy by Kamal's inability to overcome his reticence about approaching another 'modern' woman, Aida's sister Budur. In the second volume we sense Kamal's unease with Aida's modern ways, as well as his attraction to them; faced with the possibility of resolving this ambivalence by consummating his desire for Budur, he is unable to do so. This moment of paralysis is a significant point in the political unconscious of the Trilogy as the modernity which Budur represents slips away. Kamal's inability to reject his traditionally patriarchal canons of femininity is symptomatic of the wider ideological tension within the Trilogy as a whole.

One consequence of Mahfouz's idealization of maternal women is that the narration of female experience in the Trilogy is confined to the domestic space. Although Amina is increasingly allowed out, in practice this boils down to her shuttling between her home, her daughters' home and the mosque. Khadija also

is never represented outside the home, nor is Aisha nor Naima. This is not just a question of representation which could, perhaps, have been put right simply by 'placing' these characters in different situations. It is also a question of narrative voice, something which Cooke believes Mahfouz gives to his female characters and which thus earns him the right to be called a feminist.⁸⁵ But what kind of voice are they given? In chapter 38 of *Sugar Street*, we are given a long interior monologue from Amina (SS, pp. 209–13), but this is the first sustained articulation of Amina's inner 'self' since the opening chapter, and in *Palace of Desire* the only narrative voice she is allowed is in the first chapter again. We might compare this with *Palace Walk* in which her voice is given reign on many occasions. It seems that not only is Amina's 'voice' heard only within the confines of the domestic space but that as the focus of the narrative moves gradually from such a space to a more 'public' space, the female voice is increasingly muted and marginalized. Correspondingly, the narrative register becomes increasingly 'masculine'. As compared with the marginalization of Amina one may note the extensive space afforded to a character like Yasin to articulate his misogynistic views (e.g. PD, p. 367).

The representation of women as absolutely bounded by the domestic space without any affective, emotional or intellectual bond with the world outside, never mind any active political involvement, is thrown into sharp relief when we recall that Huda Sharawi and her activists had been right at the heart of the 1919 revolution.⁸⁶ These women shared the same background as the family of Ahmad Abd al-Jawwad. Of course, there is the allegorical function to take into account in that what matters at this stage is Mahfouz's symbolic rendering of the power relations within 'traditional' patriarchy. What is problematic, however, is that when the allegory moves into its second and third phases, the representation of gender relations remains static. This has its parallel at the level of content by the family's continual acceptance of al-Sayyid's dictum that girls should not be educated past primary level – and, indeed, not one of the Abd al-Jawwad females receives a secondary education throughout the trilogy – but it is formally paralleled by the restriction of the female narrative. It is almost as if Mahfouz, having explored the dynamics of gender and power and exposed patriarchy in *Palace Walk* felt obliged to leave it at that rather than exploring the changing dynamics over the years. This means that he felt that fundamental gender relations either could not or should not be changed.

One character we do see outside the home is Sawsan Hammad who becomes Ahmad Shawkat's wife. And whilst one may disagree with El-Sheikh's disappointment with Mahfouz for leaving us in the dark about her 'physical attributes, her way of dressing, or her efficiency in household affairs',⁸⁷ in so far as this would merely reinforce the stereotyping of women as fundamentally domestic, one may agree with him that 'Mahfouz did not succeed in portraying a strong, convincing, up-to-date female character in his novel. The reader is suddenly confronted with a series of ideas and a chain of ideological attitudes.'⁸⁸ He goes on, 'There is hardly any spontaneous or gradual development and growth in the portrayal of Sawsan

as a character.⁸⁹ Actually, there is but it is not very progressive. Despite her voluble protests against the ‘bourgeois’ family, and about the need to redefine it (SS, p. 245), we notice that by the end of the novel she too is fully accommodated (in both senses of the word) into the bourgeois family home. At first we notice her adoption of cosmetics and then, after her marriage, we do not see her outside the domestic space again. Nor, within this space, does she wish to antagonize her mother-in-law which seems a little odd for a woman who so vehemently espouses class conflict as a political ideal – especially in a political allegory (SS, p. 260).

Which brings us to marriage. Diane Singerman, in her outstanding analysis of popular politics in Egypt, has said that

If marriage and reproducing the family is such a critical issue in Egypt, we should expect constellations of power to form around it. It is not, therefore, surprising that Personal Status Law . . . has been one of the most deeply contested and sensitive issues for a wide range of political forces in Egypt.⁹⁰

We should, therefore, expect discursive constellations to form around it too. Moreover, in the Trilogy we should expect this precisely because marriage, as a locus of political conflict, must form a significant part of its political allegory. Mahfouz does consistently show that marriage is a battleground upon which various forces converge: the foiled suitor of Aisha, Hasan Salim’s marriage to Aida, Alawiyya Sabri’s rejection of Ahmad, Ahmad’s eventual marriage to Sawsan. However, there seems to be no critique of the fact that it is precisely because of this that marriage is the axis upholding the entire patriarchal order and that in order to challenge this order one must challenge marriage as an institution in which various political investments are made. Rather, marriage is presented as a fact of life rather like birth and death.

The only criticisms of marriage are accordingly made by the male characters who deploy a rhetoric of victimization which represents marriage as a cage, whether of their sexuality in the case of Yasin or their philosophical idealism in the case of Kamal. This, of course, occludes the real nature of gender relations in so far as it presents the male as victim. One could again object that these are articulated only by male characters and that they would express their dissatisfaction this way, but episodes like that in which Al-Sayyid confronts Zanuba’s strategy of ‘trapping’ him into marriage seem to give objective narrative corroboration to al-Sayyid’s view. He considers her the spider and himself the fly and, indeed, she is shown in the episode to be doing exactly what he thinks she’s doing, namely ensnaring him and devouring his money. If, ostensibly, the rhetoric of victimization is shown to be a product of a masculinity in crisis due to shifting gender relations, the increase in female power that is implied merely serves to confirm a long held stereotype of feminine cunning.

Thus a recurrent theme is emerging in which women who are not contained by the institutions which police respectability and who do not conform to the

familial role are consistently represented as threatening, dangerous. They must be recontained. There is therefore, in contrast to feminism's urge for destabilization of the patriarchal image of 'woman', a move towards stabilization within certain prevailing norms and images. Furthermore, in contrast to this threatening womanhood we find a positive valuation of what David Radavich, in his analysis of David Mamet's plays, calls 'homosociality'.⁹¹ In the Trilogy, whilst relations between men and women are confined to physical gratification or to the reproduction of the family, male friendship with other males is consistently shown to be warm, fulfilling and satisfying. One need only quote al-Sayyid, 'He chose friendship over passion. He would say "The affection of a friend endures. A girlfriend's passion is fleeting"' (PW, p. 223). This concern with homosociality – which Mahfouz seems to exhibit in his own personal life – may be due, as Fatima Mernissi suggests, to the pressure of Islamic tradition,

The Muslim system is not so much opposed to women as to the heterosexual unit. What is feared is the growth of the involvement between a man and a woman into an all-encompassing love, satisfying the sexual, emotional and intellectual needs of both partners. Such an involvement constitutes a direct threat to man's allegiance to Allah.⁹²

Or it could be an escapist compensatory reaction against a perceived threat, a last, unconscious defence of a 'wounded patriarchy'.⁹³ One notices, for example, a leitmotif of male nostalgia by each succeeding generation in the Trilogy, which posits the previous generation as more 'manly' or more 'virile' than themselves (e.g. SS, p. 132). Either way, a fundamentally neopatriarchal view of gender relations is reinscribed deep into the political unconscious of the Trilogy.

Power

The writer and critic Yusuf al-Sharuni has noticed that Mahfouz exaggerates the extent of al-Sayyid's patriarchal authority over his family.⁹⁴ As we have seen in the context of gender relations, this conforms to our reading of the Trilogy's representation of patriarchy as being ultimately unchallengeable, either through the inevitability of marriage or through the inevitable doom of those, like Bahija and Yasin's mother, who transgress its laws, or through the unchangeability of the structural division of patriarchy that determines and constricts female social experience, which is always placed at the service of and in relation to men. Women are, in the final analysis, rendered powerless by an all-embracing and totalizing patriarchy.

This is a common conception of Arab society but it is not strictly true. Diane Singerman has noted, for example, that 'Blanket characterizations of the Egyptian family as patriarchal and authoritarian are challenged by the level of contestation, negotiation and bargaining that is endemic to these communities';⁹⁵ women take part in such processes of contestation and negotiation as much as men, often

wielding significant resources and exerting considerable power within the frame of such 'local' political frameworks, leading Singerman to ask, 'why is it that many ethnographic and anthropological studies depict women as important community figures . . . yet the classic works on Egyptian politics and political economy barely allude to them? Where does all that power go?'⁹⁶ What then does Mahfouz's representation of women as powerless, passive victims of a totalizing patriarchal discourse tell us about his ideological vision? I would argue that here we find the key to unlock Mahfouz's concept of power, the state and the possibility of meaningful political action.

Within the framework of ideological concerns which taxed Egyptian intellectuals during the inter-war period, there was a gradual shift of emphasis from the question of identity and the external relationship to the British to an internal focus on Egyptian society itself and more attention to the question of power within it. As I have briefly explained, this shift was given impetus by, among many other things, the emergence of disfranchised groups on to the political field and the signing of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936. It was further stimulated by the increasing crisis within the political élite, among both the political parties and the monarchist forces. Mahfouz was writing at this historical juncture, and there is barely a mention of the one issue which had so exercised the minds of all Egyptian intellectuals until the late 1930s, namely the Sudan. There is, however, far greater visibility of the Coptic issue, which suggests that even with regard to the question of identity the main focus was now intra-Egyptian rather than inter-national. But the Copt issue was also a question of political representation, and thus a question of power and its distribution, and Mahfouz's treatment of such concerns as secularism and national identity is inseparable from and subordinate to his exploration of the nature of power. As Mahfouz has famously remarked, 'In everything I write you will find politics. You may find [among my works] a story without love or some other theme, but not without politics.'⁹⁷

Throughout the Trilogy, power is represented as absolute and is always centralized in one figure or concept which is distanced from those upon whom it is exercised. One thinks of Al-Sayyid, whose very distance from his wife and family is carefully emphasized time and again. It is this distance which maintains his awesome authority in the eyes of the family and, in turn, he seeks to carefully maintain his image as a man apart, nurturing a private image of absolute moral integrity whilst practising a debauched life outside the confines of the home. One also thinks of Aida and the unbridgeable chasm between her and the object of her power, Kamal. In the final volume it is history itself – distant, unimpeachable – which exerts its unchallengeable power upon the family. Against such power, individuals are rendered helpless. One notices in Mahfouz's historical determinism the presence of his Fabian socialism which in practice tended to erase the possibility or even the need for human agency in the process of creating historical change.⁹⁸ Change is visualized as part of the historical process and therefore inevitable. It is accordingly characterized as an external process which imposes itself upon people, as something that happens to people rather than because of them. Here is Israel

Gershoni accurately summing up the pivotal moment of change in the Trilogy, the irruption of history brought about the revolution of 1919:

The entire historical process is far from being chosen by them [the family] or desired by them; on the contrary, *it is forced upon them*, and they lose all capacity for controlling its course. It is not they who pursue political life out of a conscious desire to participate voluntarily in the national struggle; rather it is politics, revolutionary *events*, and the new militant nationalism that *invade* their closed world.⁹⁹

What is perhaps even more interesting is the implicit divergence of the concept of power and authority in Mahfouz's portrayal of the revolution – which portrays an ordered revolution, minutely controlled from the top down via the Wafd's subsidiary channels like the Students' Supreme Revolutionary Committee – and that of the historians' descriptions about the Wafd leadership's anxiety over the loss of control and direction of the uprising, their fear of people taking matters into their own hands, and any subsequent decentring of the political process.¹⁰⁰ We can contrast, for example, the narrative styles of *Awdat al-Rub* and the Trilogy in representing this same event; whilst the former offers a fragmented narrative reflecting this process of decentring, Mahfouz maintains complete authorial control and discipline over the narrative. In Mahfouz's narrative, the lack of agency which Gershoni notices is, it seems, the other side of the coin to his 'reordering' of those events which in effect retrospectively reimpose the nationalist élite's authority.

Taken together with the denial of agency to the 'people' (as represented allegorically by the family), this 'reordering' leads us to consider the explicit professions of anti-paternalism within the Trilogy – such as those voiced by Kamal in *Sugar Street*, 'their message [i.e. the political élite's] for the Egyptian people has been: "You're minors. We are your guardians."' (SS, p. 28), and 'In the final analysis, such people [i.e. the masses; Kamal is participating in a demonstration] were as responsible as intellectual giants for shaping the events of history' (SS, p. 29) – with a certain degree of scepticism. Even as Mahfouz criticizes the political élite of the inter-war period in the Trilogy, this criticism is tempered by a silent but nevertheless deeply marked respect for them.

The idea that it is time itself and not any human agency (indispensable for any meaningful theory of politics) which is responsible for change and progress is reinforced by the elapse of a significant period of time between the end of each volume and the beginning of the next, periods in which change is clearly marked as the dominant theme. All of the changes introduced at the beginning of *Palace of Desire*, for example, are therefore presented as *fait accomplis*, changes to which the characters have reacted but not contributed. In so far as such wider social changes are in fact the product of people acting as agents of History, they are not visualized as subjects but rather as midwives of social change – they merely aid its deliverance but do not engender it. These facilitators are nearly always

'great men' like Zaghlul, al-Nahas, Nuqrashi and so on (notice, always men) who 'shake the world' (PD, p. 55), an ideology of leadership which marginalizes the 'common man' and is paternalistic. Power is always present, but at a distance, until it is brought home, as it were, by Ridwan who 'prostitutes' himself to power (and here the parallels with the gender issue surface again: just as prostitution is institutionalized to reinforce the structure of patriarchal society, so too does Ridwan reinforce the institutionalized corruption of the political regime), but it is always liable to be distanced again when Ridwan's faction is replaced by another; power's location, therefore, is always 'elsewhere'. One might call this vision of history Carlylean inasmuch as it promotes a 'great men' school of history, but it is in fact even more deterministic since history is not the result of the efforts of great men but rather a teleological process determined by history's 'laws' of progress.

The 'top-down' nature of the historical ideology presented by the Trilogy represents, in fact, a displacement of agency from 'great men' on to the 'state' which emerges in Fabian discourse as the embodiment of historical progress. Fabians considered the modern state to be the 'logical instrument' through which historical evolution could be channelled.¹⁰¹ The Fabian obsession with the power of the modern state is clearly reflected in the writings of Salama Musa for whom anything to do with the state is seen as being 'socialist';¹⁰² conversely, socialism becomes primarily concerned with the formation of and maintenance of a powerful centralized state which could then pursue 'welfare state policies' for the benefit of the many. The corollary in Mahfouz's Trilogy seems to be his general concept of power as all-embracing, which the historical process will invariably shift towards investiture in the hands of an all-encompassing modern state, the shadow of which is evident at the close of the Trilogy. Paradoxically, therefore, Mahfouz's Fabian socialism espouses the very thing which was, and has been, such an obstacle to socialism in Egypt.

Before moving on to some of the implications of this, it is worth briefly stating that Mahfouz's Fabian socialism in this regard demonstrates significant overlaps with prevailing notions of absolute power, whether of the 'traditional' sultanate model, or of the model of the benevolent technocratic state staffed by 'scientific experts' which influenced such liberal intellectuals as Ahmad Amin.¹⁰³ *Étatisme* was thus an 'axiomatic' concept within all paradigms of political opinion in Egypt, undoubtedly determining the emergence of the Nasserite regime in particular and 'neopatriarchy' in Arab politics in general.¹⁰⁴

Mahfouz seems to be aware of the contradiction in advocating a model for the future which so closely resembles the autocratic models of the past. The metaphoric location of Ahmad's speech in jail – one of the satellite institutions of such an all-embracing state – and indeed the trope of the prison as a whole throughout the Trilogy, ranging from the household which imprisons Amina and Fahmy, to the tyrannical trap of desire for the young Kamal, to the trap of doubt for the older Kamal, to the literal prison itself, gestures towards a quite poignant self-reflexivity about the difficulties of elaborating a truly socialist discourse and

politics within the frame of such a conception of power, as well as representing a pessimistic submission to that power. As Mustafa al-Tawati has noted, the prison operates as a significant trope and metaphor in Mahfouz's fictional discourse throughout his career, 'as though incarceration were a predetermined and inescapable fate'.¹⁰⁵ The incarceration motif in his writing, therefore, perhaps also symbolizes Mahfouz's own imprisonment within the prevailing nationalist discourse in Egypt which would lead not to greater freedom and equality but to yet more oppression.

Notwithstanding this muted and perhaps unconscious self-reflection, Mahfouz's very pessimism with regard to the modalities of power in Egypt (a pessimism which is not congenital but based upon a long tradition of absolutism as expressed by (the equally pessimistic) Kamal, 'Father, you're the one who made it easy for me to accept oppression through your continual tyranny' (PD, p. 374)) renders his concept of politics problematic. This too leads us, as we shall see, to qualify Mahfouz's vision of an alternative socialist imaginary. Politics, for Mahfouz, seems to be encapsulated in the words of Ahmad Shawkat at the conclusion of the Trilogy (SS, p. 306). Unlike Trotsky's doctrine of 'permanent revolution', Ahmad Shawkat's notion of politics as 'perpetual revolution' is, in fact, excessively ethical and idealistic, a concept rather than a practice. Again, this shows the influence of Fabianism on Mahfouz for 'the Fabian method to remake society was by education and argument, not by direct confrontation'.¹⁰⁶ They believed in the notion of 'permeation': 'the didactic, argumentative, and "leavening" role in spreading ideas and as an agent for social change'.¹⁰⁷ Accordingly, there is no mention of class conflict throughout the entire Trilogy even though the period of the final volume coincides with a significant period of labour unrest in Egypt and despite the fact that during the period in which Mahfouz was composing the Trilogy industrial strikes, often communist inspired, reached a peak.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, the absence of any of Cairo's industrial quarters from the 'map' of the Trilogy seems to indicate that class conflict lay beyond the political radar screen of the novel. Moreover, the only two lower-class characters who occupy more than a marginal space in the narrative are either shown to find themselves a niche within the ruling classes, like Fuad al-Hamzawi, or are accommodated within the bourgeois family, like Sawsan. In their co-optation, the fates of both reveal that for Mahfouz the system, whether it be the political system, the patriarchal system or the class system (and part of the achievement of his allegory is to make visible the fact that each of these is a function of the other) is ultimately unchallengeable.

The lack of popular political action in the final volume of the Trilogy is coupled with the characterization of politics as a matter of debate and ideas. Politics is always located in such *topoi* as the coffee-house, the newspaper office, or the parlour room where discussion rather than activism is the key mode. Significantly, in the discussion at the end of *Sugar Street*, Ahmad Shawkat emphasizes the importance of 'winning over the minds of the intelligentsia' (SS, p. 276) for the communists. One of the consequences, therefore, of Mahfouz's very insistence on the all-embracing power of the state is to negate the very notion of politics itself

and to reduce it to a matter of the right personnel guiding the ship of state – a situation which replicates exactly the very *hizbiyya* which he attacks.

Here we can compare Mahfouz's political pessimism with that of Michel Foucault, another whose discourse asserts the all-pervasive and inescapable corrective and regulatory apparatuses of the state. Stuart Hall has said of Foucault that his notion of a totalizing and ultimately unchallengeable power means that 'he saves for himself "the political" by his insistence on power, but he denies himself a *politics* because he has no idea of the "relations of force".'¹⁰⁹ In other words, because power is everywhere Foucault and Mahfouz render any possibility of resistance to that power impossible because there is no possible locus or source of oppositional power, and hence they negate the very notion of politics itself. The problem for both is that they cannot therefore account for political or social change and this automatically forecloses any possibility of an alternative to the status quo. The implications are profoundly conservative. Indeed, 'power without politics' seems to have been an axiomatic concept within the political discourse of twentieth century Egypt. This led to the lack of full-scale attempts at political theorizing, and a lack of recognition that power structures rather than just political personnel need to change in order to bring about any sort of meaningful social, political or economic change.¹¹⁰ When change is imagined, therefore, it is not only limited but must logically be imposed upon society by an external force at moments of 'revolution', whether by the 'national spirit' or by an inexorable history as the socialists imagined.

This leads to an intellectual vanguardism in which the intelligentsia act as latter-day Delphic oracles capable of reading the signs and portents of forthcoming change whilst, of course, precluding any need for action to effect that change. It is, in effect, a rather comfortable ideology to hold for relatively privileged intellectuals for whom an ethical commitment to social justice need not necessarily mean a significant displacement in class relations, and, indeed, much the most significant fact about the political left in Egypt has been its largely petty bourgeois, intellectual character.¹¹¹ Such idealism also has dire effects on the political evolution of society, a fact to which the history of Egypt in the twentieth century has borne witness. It resonated not only through the secular-liberal and Islamic fundamentalist paradigms but also through the socialist imaginaries of the early twentieth century both of the Fabian variety and even of the revolutionary communist variety. In the Trilogy, therefore, there is a contradiction between the idealistic political form of the discourse and the aesthetic form of the narrative (its realism) which represents an ideological impasse.

One final point needs to be made with regard to Mahfouz's concept of power. Although he has said that religion is a crucial and central issue in his novels, he himself has refused to broach the topic in any interviews because it is a 'thorny question'.¹¹² This refusal is in no inconsiderable part due to his appraisal of the nature and sources of power in Egyptian society, and of the political problem that would ensue. It may well be that his evasiveness stems from the same conceptualization of power as we find in his Trilogy, that is, as incontestable and absolute,

and thus his strategy mimics in this respect characters like Zanuba whose micro-strategies also do not change anything.

Whilst his commitment to secularism – as represented by the greater visibility of Coptic characters, articulation of their point of view, the exploration of the minority/majority issue, and the figuration of the Muslim Brotherhood, rather than the Copts, as the ‘other’ – is beyond doubt, the effect of his discourse, both in his novels and in his interviews, leads one to look for connections between his concept of power and what I have called the ‘problem of Islam’. In so far as Mahfouz’s political pessimism forecloses upon a radical alteration of the existing patriarchal order, and in so far as this order in Egypt is specifically Islamic then Mahfouz’s implicit conception of the state which embodies this social order is *ipso facto* that the Egyptian state will always be ‘Islamic’ in emphasis, and majoritarian in mode, if not actually an Islamic state in a formal sense. His inability to see any possible challenge to the state and the social order it upholds suggests an acquiescence if not complicity to Islam’s dominance in Egyptian society, despite his awareness of the pitfalls of majoritarianism. This necessarily raises questions about his concept of religion and in the Trilogy, whilst both Ahmad Shawkat and Kamal draw a distinction between the materialities of religion (i.e. its institutions) and the matter of faith, it seems that the extent to which Mahfouz understands – or perhaps wishes to understand – the limits of secularism in Egypt (that is, the extent to which social practices are linked to the materialities of religion) is itself limited and he thus abstains from mounting a sustained and direct challenge to the centrality of religion in all aspects of social life, preferring cunning stratagems to outright confrontation.

These stratagems are themselves rendered problematic, however, by his deployment of religious idioms through which to explain his advocacy of what he clearly sees as religion’s necessary counter-force, namely science. Thus, whilst Mahfouz rather disingenuously suggests that religion is absolutely necessary to combat ‘ignorance, fanaticism and corruption, as well as promote people’s well-being’ he then goes on to reveal that, actually, religion must be subordinated to science and religion ‘cannot suppress reason or restrict its scope, or interfere in its activity’.¹¹³ He then goes on to advocate a concept of religion ‘that is not based on miracles alone, but also on reflection, investigation and rationality . . . a religion which makes seeking science an obligation of every believer, elevates scientists to a high rank, *and prefers the scientist over the worshipper*’.¹¹⁴ This sounds more like an advocacy of a religion of science as opposed to a synthesis of science and religion; religion and science, as his discourse unfolds, are quite clearly characterized as opposites. Yet, his refusal to say as much, to make it appear as if he is advocating both religion and science as being of equal importance merely contributes to the prevailing mode of discourse in which religion’s absolute dominance in Egyptian life is unquestioned and science must somehow be accommodated within it. He thus fails to confront, and perhaps even acquiesces in, the dominant anti-secular mode. This is compounded by his idealization of science which, like religion itself, is conceived of in idealistic, ethical terms – in terms of

values – not as a culture which possesses a sensibility (norms and modes of perception and comprehension, analysis and categorization) that is inimical to the religious sensibility. Thus, rather evasively, he tries to reconcile the religious and the scientific at the level of the ideal whilst thereby vacating the material field of conflict in which the case for secularism needs to be presented. This flight into the ideal is a parallel manoeuvre, of course, to his intellectualization of politics and his reticence to countenance political activism, never mind militancy.

Form

Hisham Sharabi has said of neopatriarchy that one of its features is the ‘persistence of clan or sectarian allegiance . . . Kinship and religious affiliation remain the ultimate ground of loyalty and allegiance, stronger than abstract ideology.’¹¹⁵ The strongest bond of kinship is, of course, the family and Andrea Rugh has similarly reminded us that the dominance of the family and kinship ties has social and political consequences,

The failure of Egypt’s experiment with socialism, however, has partly been due to the inability to build on the sense of corporate obligation to include entities of more extensive membership . . . As long as the sense of obligation to small groups of this kind [i.e. family] remains so strong, there will be difficulty in establishing a sense of allegiance to more embracing institutions.¹¹⁶

Likewise, is the use by Mahfouz of the family allegory, a covert indicator of his stronger affiliation to more ‘traditional’ foci of loyalty, in which the competing interests of these other ties, represented by the family itself, offsets his theoretical identification with the higher goal of socialism? Or is it perhaps another covert admission of the likely failure of achieving the socialist ideal? This section will explore the form of the Trilogy, namely the family allegory, for its impact upon and implications for Mahfouz’s political vision.

First, the impact of the form on questions of time in the novel bears upon the question of continuity and change. In *Palace Walk* we find a reference to ‘the terrible struggle raging between the laws of heredity, attempting to keep things the same, and the law of time, pushing for change and a finale. The struggle usually results in a string of defeats for heredity’ (PW, p. 203). Thus, continuity and change are posited as conflicting opposites. Ostensibly, the Trilogy celebrates a temporality of progress towards a telos imagined in socialist terms. But the form of the family saga introduces certain complications which, precisely because of the Trilogy’s allegorical nature, possess significance beyond the mere formal. Continuity emerges as a major theme here. We notice that each volume ends in a death and an anticipated birth, with the last volume no exception. The continuity of the life cycle which is intrinsic to the form of a family saga suggests a cyclical movement of time which is at odds with the discontinuous, linear temporality of

history that is associated with the socialist teleology. It is now that the logic of the form opens up a fissure in the apparatus of the novel because the allegory attaches the cyclical continuity of diurnal time to the linear discontinuity of historical time so that one is impossible without the other. The interdependence of the two opposing temporalities is precisely that which gives the allegory its significance but it is also this which reveals to us that there is a conservative force exerting pressure upon the socialist vision. The suggestion is that if anything can withstand the inexorable progress of history it is the family. The problem arises because the essential structural continuity of the 'traditional' family (i.e. its hierarchical and patriarchal character) is not challenged throughout the entire period of change that is narrated. This illuminates the extent to which his socialism is predicated upon the prevailing political ideologies within Egypt, for the patriarchal family is but a synecdoche of the wider political patriarchy of society as a whole.

Second, one may investigate the impact of the form upon Mahfouz's conception of space and in particular the politics of space, as well as political space. Diane Singerman has suggested that the regulation of social space into masculine and feminine spheres with the former being the 'public' sphere of politics, economics and so on, whilst the latter represents the private, domestic sphere, is central to the reproduction of the patriarchal order and a correspondingly patriarchal view of politics. Singerman thus argues that 'Redefining the "public" and "private" realms then becomes a crucial step in reinterpreting the dynamics of Egyptian politics.'¹¹⁷ Only then would we properly understand the role of women in Egyptian political life and recover their contribution for the historical record. As we have seen, by confining women to the domestic sphere and reinscribing patriarchy as an unchallengeable social order, Mahfouz replicates this patriarchal view of politics.

But, one may ask, in so far as the form of the allegory converges the public and the private does he not, therefore, challenge the public/private dichotomy on which that very patriarchy is based? On closer inspection, however, this proves to be an indicator of the conventionalism of his view of politics, rather than the opposite. For even within the domestic space women do not exercise any authority independent of their husband (even Khadija) so that the domestic space, in its absolute patriarchy, becomes a mirror of the patriarchy in society at large and not an alternative vision to it.¹¹⁸ Mahfouz could be said to be reproducing the rules of the political game as laid down by the secular-liberal and monarchist political élite rather than challenging them. In doing this, he is both representing the reality of political action in the 1940s by tracing the emergence of popular politics, and simultaneously misrepresenting it by wrapping it within the frame of prevailing notions of legitimate political action (i.e. intellectual and 'ethical' permeation) which structure his assumptions about how political challenges to the regime should be conducted rather than how they were. The only political vision suggested by these two contradictory poles of representation is empty, pessimistic and paralytic.

Mahfouz was, however, not alone in this. Until 1952, the nationalist discourse in Egypt, whatever the paradigm, had nowhere left to go; caught between contradictory conceptions of Egyptian nationhood – secular or Islamic, democratic or absolutist – ideological paralysis set in. The only alternative was to look beyond itself, to either Pan-Arabism or Pan-Islamism. In the event, Nasser directed Egypt towards a Pan-Arab nationalism but this was less a solution than a deferral, and as soon as the Pan-Arab project fell through, Egyptian politics was compelled to take up from where it had left off. Having never been successfully resolved within nationalist discourse, the ‘problem of Islam’ has resurfaced in the stand-off between a neo-patriarchal despotic state, and militant Islamist groups advocating the same in the name of freedom and justice – just as the nationalists themselves had done. The lineages of Egypt’s present dilemmas are clearly traceable to the legacy of its nationalist past.

REFLECTIONS ON NATIONALISM, CULTURE AND IDEOLOGY IN INDIA AND EGYPT

In October 1999, the results of the general election in India demonstrated that the Bharatiya Janata party (BJP) and its coalition allies had secured enough votes to form a relatively stable government; in the previous month, President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt was re-elected, unopposed, to yet another term in office. Although the specifics of each of these elections might have differed (one was a genuine election) both events constitute yet another significant point in the respective political trajectories of these two countries, trajectories which have their origins in the early nationalist period.

In taking such a long-term view we must resist the temptation to suggest that the triumph of these illiberal political ideologies represents proof of the commonplace within western theories of nationalism which suggest a dichotomy between ‘good’ and ‘bad’, ‘liberal’ and ‘illiberal’, ‘civic’ and ‘cultural’, ‘western’ and ‘eastern’ nationalisms. Rather, as David Brown has recently – and rather tentatively – suggested, we must uncouple the ‘liberal/illiberal’ dyad from the ‘cultural/civic’ one and search instead for the historical and political ‘variables’ which determine the development of a particular nationalism.¹ He falls short, however, of advocating a deconstruction of the ‘civic/cultural’ dichotomy itself. This study has insisted that such a deconstruction is vital if one is to avoid emphasizing the conformism of nationalisms to certain theoretical ‘ideal-types’ which usually do not correspond, in practice, to any nationalism at all.

Anti-colonial nationalisms developed in complex historical situations and within specific social, political and economic configurations. Yet by containing them within certain typologies – which usually carry within them derogatory, Eurocentric normative associations – western theorists of nationalism have, in effect, overlooked these complexities, and ignored the specificities of what are highly sophisticated and variegated societies. In so doing, they have effaced the complications which marked the development of such nationalisms and compromised any proper assessment of their legacy. If nations are imagined as solutions by political agents – not necessarily, of course, politicians – to certain socio-economic and political problems, then it is the nature of these solutions and

their effects upon the histories of their respective societies which must be investigated.

By comparing two highly important anti-colonial nationalisms, I have tried to focus upon both their similarities and differences. Superficial similarities between the two which are immediately apparent: both nationalisms began with a period of 'Girondist' or moderate nationalism which gave way to increasingly militant and radical challenges to colonial authority; both nationalisms offered qualified support to the British during the Great War in return for political concessions which never materialized, leading to almost contemporaneous uprisings against colonial rule – March 1919 in Egypt and April 1919 in India; both had to counter the colonial charge that they did not constitute nations; and both had to articulate a sense of national identity which reconciled modernization with their pre-modern cultural traditions. But there was a more profound similarity: the overwhelming importance of the issue of secularism. Indian and Egyptian society diverged from the European trajectory of modernization, and their secularization processes, as well as their ensuing conceptions of secularism, were accordingly modified. However, because their historical, social, political and cultural contexts were different to each other, as well as to Europe, the actual forms of nationalist imaginary developed differently in India and Egypt and the question of secularism impacted in contrasting ways.

In India, the question related to the relationship between religious communities and thus the issue of secularism was experienced as primarily one of identity. In so far as it was also a political one, however, the question of power and the state emerged as an extension to this fundamental problem of religious and cultural identity. Debates were conducted with regard to questions about the state and its relation to religious communities, i.e. whether it should arbitrate, or embody, or stand above India's religious divisions.² Even questions about 'vertical' cleavages within Indian society, such as the debate over caste, were assimilated into the debates about religious community since castes, and particularly 'outcastes' such as the untouchables, were considered only in their relation or otherwise to the religious community: in particular much Hindu nationalist rhetoric, then and now, displays an ambivalent anxiety concerning the relationship of the 'pariahs' to the 'Hindu' community: they are both beyond the pale and an integral part of Hinduism. There was and is little attention paid to the modalities of power as manifested in the relationship between the state, society and the individual. This is illustrated by the wholesale adoption of the mechanisms of the colonial state. Indeed, one of the reasons for the relative strength of democracy in India is precisely the fact that there was so little discussion, and therefore very little disagreement, as to the modes of politics and models of political authority most suitable for an independent India. It was simply assumed that post-independence politics could be accommodated within the political infrastructure vacated by the Raj, an infrastructure which had become increasingly democratized by the British themselves in response to the pressure exerted by nationalists. Gandhi, however, was something of an exception to this rule since he advocated the rejection of

these institutions. Nevertheless, as his leadership of the nationalist movement came to be challenged and eclipsed by more modernist-oriented leaders, his advocacy of 'indigenous' political institutions came to be increasingly ignored.

Using already functioning institutional channels 'embedded' democracy as a political practice because it obviated any need to construct new ones and thereby removed the potentially contentious possibility of making the process of politics itself a major ideological issue. By the same token, however, this has allowed the communal question to dominate the political agenda and has led, recently, to the increasingly sophisticated mobilization of democracy itself for the purposes of entrenching communalism at the very centre of Indian national politics, culminating in the electoral success of the BJP and its affiliates.

Interestingly, the one place in the subcontinent where political modalities have been open to serious and sustained contention is Pakistan, which has periodically alternated between democracy and dictatorship. Whether or not one can make any definitive claims about the impact of Islam on this process is open to argument. Nevertheless, the arguments raging within Pakistan since independence over the merits of a secular or Islamic state – a result of contradictions within the Pakistani national imaginary from the outset – offer some suggestive parallels with Egypt.

In contrast to colonial India, the different historical context in occupied Egypt (a much more 'homogeneous' society, religiously) meant that the issue of secularism was experienced primarily in its relation to the modalities of power and the principles which should govern the relationship between the state, society and the individual (and the question of where to place religion in this triad). This necessarily raised the question of religion's place in national life and thereby extended to the question of identity. The issue of whether Egypt was a western or an eastern nation, whether it had a separate Pharaonic spirit and identity, or whether it had any relation to the wider Islamic world – all these questions were inseparable from the fundamental problem of whether Egypt should be an Islamic state or a secular one, which in turn raised the issue of whether the principles of government should be derived from Islam or the example of the European nation-states. This argument would determine the very notion of correct government within the Egyptian national imaginary.

Thus, the seeming resolution of the identity question in the 1930s and 1940s following the signing of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936, which had itself facilitated the inward turn of Egyptian nationalism, was in fact a mirage. This was because, first, the fundamental problem of identity facing Egyptian nationalists at this point was not 'does Egypt as a nation exist?' – a charge to which they had already responded, in various forms, in quite a compelling manner – but rather, 'what kind of nation is Egypt?' This boiled down to the question, 'Is Egypt essentially an Islamic nation?' But this question was inextricably linked to the question of social and political modernization, a question over which the various paradigms of nationalist discourse, each of them circumscribed in some manner by the limits of secularization, arrived at an insurmountable impasse. The failure

to articulate a socio-political vision which did not also consolidate traditional Islamic principles of authority has led, throughout the twentieth century, to the paradoxical position of a nominally secular state both repressing and engendering Islamicist resistance. Islamic authoritarianism begat secular authoritarianism which in turn has sustained an equally authoritarian Islamic resistance.

Like Gandhi, the Egyptian secular-liberal nationalists in the 1920s proffered a 'solution' which in time furnished the opposing paradigms with the very principles that would be used to challenge them precisely because they articulated their solution from within the prevailing discourse on power. So overwhelming was the question of power that the solution they offered was itself narrowly political. This narrowness of political vision passed into the imaginaries of the nationalist left and led to the same result: an ideological paralysis which exacerbated rather than solved the problem.

This problem – the 'problem of Islam' – has re-emerged in recent years as a global political issue. Since 11 September 2001 it has, for some at least, assumed the mantle of the most urgent political problem of the twenty-first century, although it has been rather euphemistically named the 'war on terror'. Based on the not unreasonable assumption that the solution to this problem lies in a greater understanding of contemporary Islam, there has been a somewhat belated surge of interest in all things Islamic. Typically, the concerns of policy-makers, politicians and the press focus on the contemporary shape of Islam and its prospects; perhaps understandably they are most interested in the social, economic and political contours of the Islamic world in order to assess the terrain in which fundamentalism and jihadist terrorism have taken root and seemingly prospered. But such an appraisal is incomplete if the 'cultural' is once again lost in favour of 'hard' empiricism.

In particular, the roots of contemporary Islamic fundamentalism can be traced back to the struggles over defining and defending the principle of nationhood in the Islamic world in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I have suggested that the difficulties faced by the Islamic reformers and the secular-liberal nationalists in reconciling Islam with the perceived dominant features of modernity have led to aftershocks that they could not possibly have anticipated. Although not all fundamentalist groups are jihadist, and not all jihadist groups are terrorists, the growing influence of some form or other of Islamic fundamentalism in the world today – in the west as well as elsewhere – testifies to the long shadow cast on the history of modern Islam by the failure of that previous generation of intellectuals to adequately grasp the problems involved in modernizing Islam and, by the same token, developing secular ideologies.

It is unsurprising that the failure to develop secular ideologies in the Islamic world should have led to the resurgence of Islam, but it is less apparent – and very rarely admitted – that the form of the resurgence, namely fundamentalism, is in fact intimately connected to the modes of reasoning and rhetorical manoeuvres of 'liberal' Islam. In other words, the commonplace assumption that the early 'liberal' Islam of reformers such as Muhammad Abduh, Lutfi al-Sayyid and Qasim

Amin was eclipsed by its 'Other', the fundamentalism of a Hasan al-Banna or a Sayyid Qutb, overlooks the fact that the means by which those early 'liberal' reformers sought to reformulate Islamic thought actually helped initiate the mode of discourse known as fundamentalism. Rashid Rida is a particularly apposite case in point. In contrast to Lutfi al-Sayyid, who tried to address the issue of secularism by bypassing it altogether in favour of utilitarianism, accompanied by an assertion that utilitarianism was not contradictory to Islam, Rida sought to prove the necessity of secular legislation from within the terms of Islamic doctrine itself. Drawing on a distinction in the Shari'a between rules concerning devotion and worship, and those concerning social relations and mundane affairs, he argued that since it is remarkably precise and explicit with regards the former and rather imprecise with regards the latter, humans are invited to exercise their free will and reason in order to solve their contemporary social problems.³

In so doing, Rida came as close as anyone – except perhaps Muhammad Iqbal and Syed Ahmed Khan in India – to espousing secularism, and providing a specifically Islamic rationale for it. Ironically, however, he is also the intellectual who did most to clarify that set of arguments that would later take shape as 'fundamentalism'. Two things in particular explain his rather contradictory position as both the most 'secularist' of Islamic reformers and the 'father' of modern fundamentalism. First, his arguments for secular legislation were not so much based on an espousal of secularism as such but rather on the reformulation of Islamic doctrine so as to allow the possibility that secular legislation was not contrary to Islam. He thus had to work within the parameters of existing Islamic thought and he did so by embedding his arguments within the *salafist* thought that was almost axiomatic among Islamic intellectuals of the period. The first period of Islam, that of Muhammad and the first four caliphs – the *salaf* – was, it was argued, the 'ideal' period in Islam, a period that was both consonant with the principles of modernity and, in fact, anticipated it. Such a structure of thought was, of course, completely ahistorical. Second, then, it was the idealism of this kind of thinking that precipitated the translation of 'liberal' Islam into fundamentalism. As Leonard Binder has cogently pointed out, 'Fundamentalists hold that an ideal Islamic government is possible regardless of historical conditions. Indeed, among the purposes of Islamic government is the overcoming of historical conditions.'⁴ Their mode of reasoning is, therefore, idealistic and ahistorical. It is exactly the same mode of reasoning employed by Rashid Rida and other Islamic 'liberals'.

Although Rida was a Pan-Islamist, the Egyptian secular-liberal nationalists – who overlapped considerably with the Islamic reformers – also shared this idealistic mode of thought as did all the paradigms of Egyptian nationalist discourse. Emerging when Egypt was still formally part of an Islamic caliphate, maturing during a constitutional settlement which preserved most of the prerogatives of an absolute Islamic monarch, and confronted by the total dominance of religion in social life, nationalist imaginaries in Egypt, rather than challenging Islam's dominance outright, sought rather to elaborate new principles of political legitimacy

from within the framework of Islam itself. This theoretical and highly idealist rearticulation of Islam turned out to be politically disastrous for it led not to the democratization of Islam but to the consolidation of traditional Islamic principles of authority. It is not surprising, therefore, that the first Islamic fundamentalist movement should have emerged in Egypt in the shape of the Muslim Brotherhood. The ideological lineages of such contemporary jihadist movements as Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Al-Qaida can be traced back, along parallel lines, to this same inheritance.

In India, too, idealism as a mode of thinking within nationalist discourse has profoundly shaped and determined the emergence and ascendancy of Hindu nationalism. For Gandhi, utopian idealism was both a deliberate ideological strategy to overcome the impasse within Indian nationalist discourse in the early twentieth century and a product of one of the problematics which had led to that impasse in the first place. If the limits of secularization determined that the fundamental cleavages within Indian nationalism were to be religious then it also compelled an emphasis on a metaphysical 'transcendence' within Gandhian discourse, itself an indicator of the hold of religion on the political imagination in India. This was as true of the later generation of secular nationalists like Nehru whose national imaginaries employed the same trope of 'transcendence' in a slightly modified, historicist form; their own idealistic notion of an overarching 'syncretic' Indian civilization was analogous to Gandhi's concept of truth in so far as it also preserved the very categories that are 'syncretized' even as it purported to overcome them. In one sense, then, the re-emergence of a militant and entrenched communalism almost seems like a wake-up call to a secularist political élite much given to daydreaming.

The alarm bells rang too late, however, and the situation in contemporary South Asia is perhaps more fragile than it has ever been, both with respect to the security of the region and even the whole world. For it is here that the limits of secularism in both South Asia and the Middle East converge. The two largest religions in the area – Islam and Hinduism – have both developed fundamentalist versions which now not only see each other as implacably hostile but also have – or potentially have access to – the weaponry that can elevate that mistrust into mutual destruction and perhaps even draw co-religionists and outside powers into the *melée*. If we now live in a globalized world where it seems that the nation is being eclipsed, this potentially disastrous flashpoint over Kashmir should refocus minds in all quarters that this may well be – in addition to the situation in Israel/Palestine – the most significant political problem of the twenty-first century. For globalization – which draws together all parts of the planet into reciprocal bonds of conflicted intimacy – means that events of such magnitude cannot be considered distant or peripheral to the concerns of countries which may, at first glance, seem far removed from them. It should be a reminder to all that there can be no transition to a post-modern, post-national world that does not involve the spectral presence of a nationalist past.

Nationalism and ideology: problems of continuity and change

The theme of continuity and change has emerged throughout this study as one of major importance in assessing how the newness of the nation imposes itself upon the cognitive horizons of people unfamiliar with the concept. Since nationalism is a revolutionary ideology which seeks legitimacy through continuity, it is unsurprising that this dialectic between continuity and change, tradition and innovation, is one of the most conspicuous features of nationalist discourse. It is the manner in which nationalist discourse deals with this dialectic that determines the process of ideological and political development in those societies where nationalism has been the major political force in modern times (and there are very few, arguably none, in which it has not been). In other words, the way in which nationalists have dealt ideologically with the notion of continuity and change profoundly determined the wider processes of continuity and change within those societies as a whole. It is, therefore, important that we take into account the specificity of these processes rather than assimilating them into some grand meta-narrative of historical transition. The propensity to favour grand theorizing gestures which is implied in the desire for constructing typologies which 'explain' nationalism, as opposed to examining in detail the development of specific nationalisms, has been one of the most significant problems within the field of nationalism studies. This study has rejected attempts to construct a typology of anti-colonial nationalism, preferring instead to examine the specific processes of ideological development within nationalist discourse in colonial India and occupied Egypt. I have attempted to trace the matrix of historical, political and social pressures operating on nationalist discourse thereby restoring focus on the minutiae of cultural and cognitive developments which together made up the mosaic of the nationalist imaginary.

As my analyses have shown, change and continuity are not opposites but are implicated in one another. Newness cannot emerge *ex nihilo* but rather through the redeployment of existing cultural resources by political agents located in different positions within a highly complex social totality who engage in a dialogical process of ideological, political and economic struggle. In order to engage in this struggle, there must be a shared terrain of common understandings which provide the very basis for opposition in the first place; however, differences in social position – class, gender, race, caste, religion, etc. – open this shared terrain of understandings to contestation over issues which remain unresolved or which constitute fundamental social conflicts. We therefore find a paradoxical situation: social differences make ideological contest possible only because there is a common ground. Ideologies cannot, therefore, occupy a purely oppositional space 'uncontaminated' by the presence of their opponents. Any given social space is, at any given time, composed of a cluster of overlapping ideologies through which social agents make sense of that space and by means of which they contest the configuration of that space. Yet this contest is grounded in a field of power which

is asymmetrical and unequal, in which the terms of debate favour the dominant ideologies. Emergent ideologies are, therefore, always complicit with the dominant ideologies that they challenge but, by the same token, dominant ideologies furnish their opponents with the very resources which may eventually overthrow them. Every process of ideological struggle involves both contest and compromise, conflict and complicity; the 'overlap' between competing ideologies is therefore as important as the differences in determining the process of social and ideological change.

If all of this complies with the structuralist notion that all identities or social positions (and, by extension, ideologies) are relational, that no position can be independent of others, then any recognition of the inevitable overlap suggests a post-structuralist emphasis on the presence of the 'other' in the 'self'. There is no 'pure' identity or ideology which can exist in and by itself. As Derrida has pointed out, the identity of any signifier contains within itself the trace of all other signifiers, an endless chain which defers meaning and resists closure.⁵ By extension, the closure which an ideology offers is always resisted by others; the 'exclusivity' which any given ideology might present is thereby undermined. As ideologies struggle to monopolize legitimacy in the field of power, they must necessarily address their opponents and incorporate aspects of their opponent's discourse in their own. I have termed this constant process of negotiation, which fragments any given ideological position and disrupts its self-identity, interpolation. It is the process of interpolation which determines the extent to which change is possible. In other words, it is not the fact of the overlap so much as the nature of it which is important because this determines how a dominant ideology is challenged and whether this challenge is successful.

The ideological development of nationalism in India and Egypt was not a straightforward process; the extent of change has been very limited with radical-seeming positions often reinforcing rather than challenging or overthrowing the existing paradigms. Sometimes, when a major ideological displacement does take place, some latent complicity within the newly ascendant paradigm may unintentionally feed new paradigms which may effect a 'reversal', as did the Hindu majoritarian implications of Gandhism which facilitated the rise of communalism, or the Islamic ambivalences within Egyptian secular-liberal nationalism which facilitated the rise of the Islamicist ideologies. The process of change always, therefore, involves some degree of continuity. This overshadows the analysis of each of the texts in this study linking the ideological problems then to the political problems now. In order, therefore, to come to terms with the seemingly intractable political problems which, from a secular and progressive point of view, are represented at the start of this chapter by the re-election of Mubarak and the ascendancy of the BJP, it is necessary to look back and trace lineages spanning over a century.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

- 1 The marginality of a text such as Homi Bhabha (ed.) *Nation and Narration*, London: Routledge, 1990, to the theoretical discourse on nationalism exemplifies this.
- 2 See Jacqueline Rose, *States of Fantasy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 3: 'Fantasy is not therefore antagonistic to social reality; it is its precondition or psychic glue.' Later, in a discussion on Max Weber's *Economy and Society*, Rose suggests that Weber admits that 'the modern state's authority passes straight off the edge of the graspable, immediately knowable world.'
- 3 Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1983, p. 1.
- 4 See Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, London: New Left Books, 1974, p. 32.
- 5 Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990, p. 14.
- 6 Ibid. p. 21; p. 17.
- 7 Ibid. p. 20.
- 8 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso, 1983, p. 6.
- 9 Giddens, *Consequences*, pp. 72–3; p. 20.
- 10 Anderson, *Lineages*, p. 22.
- 11 Ibid. p. 18.
- 12 Rajah Shehadeh, a Palestinian lawyer, in his book *The Third Way*: this is the insight of a man located within one of the deepest and most intractable nationalist struggles over territory in modern history. Cited by Jacqueline Rose in *States of Fantasy*, p. 24.
- 13 See Roman Jakobson, 'The metaphoric and metonymic poles' in David Lodge (ed.) *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*, London: Longman, 1988, pp. 57–62.
- 14 Giddens, *Consequences*, p. 26.
- 15 Jakobson, 'The metaphoric and metonymic poles', p. 58. See also David Lodge's discussion of Jakobson's essay in his *The Modes of Modern Writing: Metaphor, Metonymy, and the Typology of Modern Literature*, London: Arnold, 1977, pp. 73–81.
- 16 For an interesting discussion of novelistic space and its relationship to nation-space, see Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel 1800–1900*, London: Verso, 1998, pp. 11–73.
- 17 As opposed to the participatory democracy of classical Athens, for example.
- 18 Compare, for instance, avant-garde symbolist poetry almost a century later where referentiality to an exterior reality is almost totally absent.

- 19 Amos Oz, *In the Land of Israel*, cited in Rose, p. 25.
- 20 One may speculate whether it was this that made Romanticism such a pivotal cultural movement within nationalisms everywhere.
- 21 In the course of what follows, I am indebted to Antony Easthope's discussion in his *Englishness and National Culture*, London: Routledge, 1999.
- 22 *Ibid.* p. 55.
- 23 *Ibid.* pp. 36–7.
- 24 *Ibid.* p. 46. It is interesting, he notes, that an ardent nationalist like Fichte should use the image of a mirror to articulate the 'unity' of the nation (p. 22).
- 25 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 11.
- 26 Giddens, *Consequences*, pp. 30–4.
- 27 *Ibid.* p. 97.
- 28 Easthope, *Englishness*, p. 18.
- 29 See Jacques Derrida, 'Différance' in Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan (eds) *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1998, pp. 385–407.
- 30 The tragic history of nationalisms is marked precisely by this obsessive attempt to expel the other in order to ground itself as a 'pure' identity. It is a constant feature of nationalist discourse, and has often manifested itself in forms of persecution ranging from suspicion and mistrust, at one end, through discriminatory institutional practices to genocide, at its extreme. In a telling phrase, Easthope talks of the 'aggressive correlate' of nations. *Englishness*, p. 224.
- 31 The doubleness of supplementarity and erasure can be linked to the double manoeuvre within nationalist discourse of memory and forgetting. See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, pp. 187–206.
- 32 Homi Bhabha, 'Of mimicry and man' in *The Location of Culture*, London: Routledge, 1994, pp. 85–92.
- 33 My use of the term 'articulation' is derived from Stuart Hall, 'On postmodernism and articulation' in D. Morley and K.H. Chen (eds) *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, London: Routledge, 1996, pp. 131–50; and Stuart Hall, 'Race, articulation and societies structured in dominance' in *Sociological Theories, Race and Colonialism*, Paris: UNESCO, 1980, pp. 305–45.
- 34 Rose, *States of Fantasy*, p. 29.
- 35 Comparison does, however, raise some significant theoretical and methodological problems over and above the need to balance fairly the objects of comparison. In particular, the means by which the comparison is made is particularly difficult if one has no access to the language of one of the parts compared. Since I regrettably lack a working knowledge of Arabic, the entire second half of this study was only possible through translation. It is worth pausing briefly here for some thoughts about the problems raised by working in translation and the impact it may have had upon my methodology, which in turn must qualify, in part, my conclusions.

The most obvious problem is that the scope of possible texts is restricted to those already in English translation. A related problem is that one has access to only those secondary materials and critical works which have either also been translated or which were written in English to begin with. As such, the extent of my engagement with the history, society and literature of Egypt is necessarily limited. Beyond this, however, some more fundamental questions were raised. Whilst there has been a steadily growing body of work in recent years on translation and translation theory (see for example, Susan Bassnett, *Translation Studies*, London: Routledge, 1991), and whilst the field of translation studies has grown into a discipline in its own right, there is little or no work which might guide literary studies in translation. The methodology in this study has been consciously adopted with this in mind and has been adapted throughout in order to cope with specific problems as and when they emerged.

Taking a cue from recent developments in translation studies which have emphasized the *process* of translation, on translation as trans-creation, it has been recognized in this study that the translated text is mediated by this process such that it is articulated by two subjects – the author and the translator. The ‘spectre’ of the translator thus hovers in the background in any translation. Thus, for example, the narrative of the Trilogy, whilst being mediated by the subject-position of the author, i.e. Mahfouz, also undergoes a secondary process of mediation via the subject-position of the translator. Throughout, I have endeavoured to keep the translation itself in focus whilst working on the assumption that a ‘structuralist’ analysis would minimize the effects of the translation process to a much greater degree than, for example, a hermeneutic one.

But structural analysis does not completely overcome the problem of double-mediation. If translation itself is a challenging process, then it is equally challenging for the analyst to account for the translated-ness of such features as metaphor, alliteration, neologisms, imagery, etc., in his or her interpretation. Whilst structural analysis in this context must overlook questions of style in order to concentrate upon form and content, there are nevertheless ‘grey areas’ in between the style/content distinction which pose significant problems. What about, say, metaphors, which possess a certain form but are expressed in words which need to be translated? The translation may or may not alter the form of the metaphor depending on the way it is translated. Another grey area concerns imagery; some images may not be translatable into an equivalent but yet, in the original, may possess a significance. However, if the same image is translated in the same way several times, the analyst working in translation may pick up the significance of the image precisely because it is repeated; yet, s/he may misread the significance because, in translation, the image itself may be altered.

In dealing with these grey areas it has been necessary to adopt a ‘context-specific’ strategy, assessing each problem on its own terms as and when it arose. In terms of a general strategy, for problems of assessing metaphor or imagery I have tried, as much as possible, to keep to the simple or communicative sense without being drawn into their associative or connotative complexities. Structuralist analysis, whilst not being a solution to the problem of translation, is at least a recognition of it and a means of coping with it. However, there is, in a sense, an ‘unknowable’ area for the analyst working in translation because even if one were to research the subject-position of the translator, there is still no basis from which to make judgements about the translation since one still does not have access to the original language.

Despite such challenges, the issue of translation should not of itself constitute a total handicap or obstruction to the comparison. Whilst much might be lost in translation, much else could be gained in attempting to bring two significant nationalisms, societies and literatures together in a manner in which they have not previously been. The interdisciplinarity of this book, in particular, has offset many of the forced exclusions imposed by working in translation by broadening the focus; such room for manoeuvre may not have been possible in conventional comparative literary analysis. Whilst recognizing the need for rigour, and whilst deferring to the necessary provisionality of the conclusions, it is hoped, nevertheless, that this has not unduly compromised the study. One may point out, after all, that all knowledge is never anything but provisional.

1 NATIONALISM AS CULTURAL POLITICS

- 1 Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1975, p. 2. Referring, of course to the French and Industrial Revolutions.
- 2 Anthony D. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism*, London: Duckworth, 1971.
- 3 Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity*, London: Penguin, 1991, pp. 10–15.
- 4 John Hutchinson, *Modern Nationalism*, London: Fontana, 1994, p. xiii.
- 5 Smith, *National Identity*, p. 7.
- 6 Ibid. pp. 14–15. I shall return to the implications of this below.
- 7 Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1983, p. 1.
- 8 Ibid. p. 4.
- 9 John Breuilly, ‘Approaches to nationalism’ in Gopal Balakrishnan (ed.), *Mapping the Nation*, London: Verso, 1996, p. 165.
- 10 Smith, *Theories of Nationalism*, p. 171.
- 11 Hutchinson, *Modern Nationalism*, p. 37.
- 12 Ibid. p. 40.
- 13 Ibid. p. 41.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Ibid. p. 47.
- 16 Hutchinson’s discussion of the revival movements in Ireland, *ibid.*, pp. 57–63, involves historians, folklorists, painters and poets.
- 17 Smith, *National Identity*, p. 20.
- 18 John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, 2nd edn, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993, pp. 1–2 (my emphasis).
- 19 Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, 2nd edn, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- 20 Ibid. p. 102.
- 21 Miroslav Hroch, ‘From national movement to the fully formed nation: the nation-building process in Europe’ in Gopal Balakrishnan (ed.) *Mapping the Nation*, p. 80 (original emphasis).
- 22 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd edn, London: Verso, 1991, p. 3.
- 23 Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 36.
- 24 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 6 (my emphasis).
- 25 Smith, *Theories of Nationalism*, p. 148.
- 26 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 6.
- 27 For a detailed exploration of the pre-modern social and political systems see Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Chapter 2 ‘Culture in agrarian societies’, pp. 8–18.
- 28 Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, London: New Left Books, 1974, p. 39.
- 29 Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*.
- 30 Bikhu Parekh, ‘Ethnocentricity of the nationalist discourse’, *Nations and Nationalism*, 1, 1, March 1995, 30.
- 31 Ibid. p. 29; Hence the idea of equality in the eyes of the law. The state, in this conception, is an entirely disinterested and benign presence.
- 32 Breuilly, ‘Approaches to nationalism’, p. 165. One could speculate as to how much the philosophers of the Enlightenment, with their commitment to a universal rationality, were predisposed to this citizenship solution, and how much they might have been made to concede given that this in itself would not provide an adequate basis for the legitimacy of the state, and of its authority.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Smith, *Theories of Nationalism*, p. 4.

- 35 Hroch, 'From national movement', p. 79.
- 36 Ibid. p. 86.
- 37 Ibid. p. 80.
- 38 Ibid. p. 79. Hroch breaks down the development of national movements into three structural phases. Phase A involves 'scholarly inquiry into and dissemination of an awareness of the linguistic, cultural, social, and sometimes historical attributes of the non-dominant group'. Phase B involves a new type of activist 'who now sought to win over as many of their ethnic group as possible to the project of creating a future nation, by patriotic agitation to 'awaken' national consciousness'. Phase C is the formation of a mass political movement 'once the major part of the population came to set special store by their national identity'. All quotes here taken from *ibid.* p. 81.
- 39 Ibid. p. 83.
- 40 Another great figure of the Marxist left, Otto Bauer, basically adopts a similar position as Hroch in that he attempts to mediate between a materialist study of the social basis of national movements and a ethnicist/culturalist position. However, the degree of concession to nationalist claims that such a position yields can be seen in the tension in both Hroch's and Bauer's writings which combine an emphasis on historical materialism with an ahistorical cultural essentialism. Thus, in Bauer we see many tropes commonly found in nationalist writings, e.g. 'the essence of the nation', 'community of destiny', or 'community of character'. Writing in the aftermath of the First World War, during the period in which the principle of nationality had been firmly established as the political norm, he is addressing what has been a vexing question for Marxists, namely the relationship between Marxism and nationalism. Given that the Great War had seemingly dashed any pretence of international proletarian solidarity, the challenge to the Marxist Left was to find a means of resolving the opposition between nationalism and socialism. Underwriting Bauer's theory of the nation is, first, the dominance of the nation and national loyalties as obvious political facts, and second, a need to construct a dialogue between nationalism and socialism in the context of the dialectic between capitalism and socialism. Half a century later, Hroch is addressing the same question, attempting to rescue the nation from capitalism and the political Right. Bauer's *Die Nationalitätenfrage und die Sozialdemokratie*, Vienna, 1924, has never been translated into English in full. However, significant excerpts have been translated and can be found in Balakrishnan (ed.) *Mapping the Nation*, pp. 39–77.
- 41 Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 8; see the whole chapter 'Culture in agrarian societies'.
- 42 Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution*, pp. 10–12.
- 43 See the work of V.N.Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, trans. L. Matejka and I.R. Titunik, Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1986, and Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- 44 Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses*, Delaware: The Consortium Inc., 1992.
- 45 The major theorist of this kind of hybridization is Homi Bhabha. See his *The Location of Culture*, London: Routledge, 1994.
- 46 Smith, *National Identity*, pp. 14–15.
- 47 Ibid. p. 24.
- 48 Ibid. p. 39.
- 49 Ibid. p. 32.
- 50 Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, pp. 31–40.
- 51 Ibid. p. 31.
- 52 Ibid. p. 38.

- 53 Modern imperialism could be seen in one sense as a ‘footloose’ nationalism in which ‘advanced’ nations take on the mission of modernizing the world.
- 54 Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 46.
- 55 Ibid. p. 120 (my emphasis).
- 56 Ibid. p. 61.
- 57 Ibid. p. 88.
- 58 Ibid. p. 97 (my emphasis).
- 59 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 22 (my emphasis).
- 60 Ibid. p. 24.
- 61 Ibid. p. 25.
- 62 Ibid. pp. 27–8.
- 63 Ibid. p. 80.
- 64 Ibid. p. 4.
- 65 A very significant exception is Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse*, London: Zed, 1986. I shall examine this work in Chapter 2.
- 66 Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 124.
- 67 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 5.
- 68 Miroslav Hroch, *The Social Conditions of National Revival in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups Among the Smaller European Nations*, trans. Ben Fowkes, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- 69 Notwithstanding the dissonance in his text between his theoretical locus and the ‘practical’ locus, what he calls the region of ‘classic’ nationalism: the eastern European nations within the former Hapsburg and Ottoman empires. Miroslav Hroch has shown that these loci of ‘classic’ nationalism had barely begun to reach the kind of industrial development that Gellner’s theoretical locus demands. In later work, Gellner has produced a ‘zonal’ typology in which western Europe is zone 1, Germany and Italy constitute zone 2, and these ‘classic’ nationalisms constitute zone 3. See ‘The Coming of Nationalism and its Interpretation: the Myths of Nation and Class’ in Balakrishnan (ed.) *Mapping the Nation*, pp. 98–145. One can see in the construction of his zones not only a firm commitment to locating nationalism only within Europe, but also further than that an establishment of primacy for western Europe.
- 70 Martin Thom, *Republics, Nations, Tribes*, London: Verso, 1995.
- 71 Anderson’s notion of ‘piracy’ is highly indicative of the assumptions underpinning his argument. Piracy is, of course, an essentially parasitic activity which depends upon the creativity of others as opposed to one’s own. Anderson speaks of all anti-colonial nationalisms in the ‘Third World’ as pirate copies of models always forever generated elsewhere.
- 72 Tom Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain*, 2nd edn, London: Verso, 1981; see especially Chapter 9 ‘The Modern Janus’.
- 73 Ibid. p. 343.
- 74 Ibid.
- 75 For a particularly trenchant critique of this structure of thought see Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought*, Chapter 1 ‘Nationalism as a problem in the history of ideas’, pp. 1–35. See also, David Brown, ‘Are there good and bad nationalisms?’, *Nations and Nationalism*, 5, 2, April 1999, 281–302.
- 76 Smith, *National Identity*, p. 11.
- 77 Smith, *Theories of Nationalism*, p. 158, my emphasis.
- 78 Ibid.
- 79 Though rarely cited by scholars of nationalism, the collection of papers assembled in Richard G. Fox (ed.) *Nationalist Ideologies and the Production of National Cultures*,

- Washington, DC: American Ethnological Society Monograph Series, Number 2, 1990, offers a similar, though less detailed, perspective to the present study.
- 80 See Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction*, London: Verso, 1991; Terry Eagleton (ed.) *Ideology*, London: Longman, 1994; David Hawkes, *Ideology*, London: Routledge, 1996; Jorge Larrain, *The Concept of Ideology*, London: Hutchinson, 1979; J.B. Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984.
- 81 This is why the notion of ideology as false consciousness is rejected by Gramsci who asserts that ‘all systems [of thought] have a historical validity’ and that ideas and ‘consciousness’ can be more significant than economic crises: ‘It may be ruled out that immediate economic crises of themselves produce fundamental historical events; they can simply create a terrain more favourable to the dissemination of certain modes of thought.’ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. and trans. by Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971, p. 184.
- 82 See also the theories of the Frankfurt School, particularly the work of Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno and Herbert Marcuse.
- 83 Eagleton, *Ideology*, pp. 86–7. The same is true for Lukacs’s theory of ‘reification’ precisely because he adopts Marx’s notion of commodity fetishism as its very basis.
- 84 Foucault accordingly rejects the concept of ideology altogether in favour of the term ‘discourse’. See Eagleton, *ibid.* p. 8; David Hawkes, *Ideology*, p. 166. However, despite Foucault’s protestations, it can be maintained that it is not his concept of ‘discourse’ which is incompatible with a theory of ideology, but his concept of power.
- 85 Eagleton, *Ideology*, p. 7.
- 86 *Ibid.*
- 87 *Ibid.* p. 194.
- 88 Pierre Bourdieu, *In Other Words: Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990, p. 127; Harker *et al.* have put it in perhaps simpler terms, ‘Social space refers to the overall conception of the social world. This concept views social reality as a topology (space). In this way, the social space may be conceived as comprising multiple fields which each have some relationship to each other, and point of contact.’ R. Harker, C. Mahar and C. Wilkes (eds) *An Introduction to the Work of Pierre Bourdieu*, London: Macmillan, 1990, p. 9.
- 89 Pierre Bourdieu, ‘Field of power, literary field, and habitus’, in *The Field of Cultural Production*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993, p. 162.
- 90 Randal Johnson, ‘Editor’s introduction’ in *The Field of Cultural Production*, p. 8.
- 91 Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, p. 36.
- 92 Johnson, ‘Introduction’, p. 17.
- 93 Bourdieu has been rightly criticized for the ‘static’ nature of his theory, and for the fact that whilst it explains the reproduction of systems of power it cannot explain the phenomena of change very well; that is, that his theory is too ‘synchronic’, which in turn undermines the ‘historicity’ of his theory. It is clear that a principle of change is crucial in examining the development of political discourses in their historical specificity and thus I have adapted Bourdieu’s theoretical paradigm in this and other respects. See C. Calhoun, E. LiPuma, and M. Postone (eds) *Bourdieu: Critical Perspectives*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993, and Harker, Mahar and Wilkes (eds) *An Introduction to the Work of Pierre Bourdieu*.
- 94 It is imperative to understand that when the political field extends broadly over the social field and is inclusive of many diverse and conflicting social groups, then it is almost certainly the legitimate discourse which constitutes the problematic with regard to which political encounters take place. Of course, there are ‘rules’ but these

tend to be less institutional, broadly being defined by the ‘rule of law’, and thus more fluid; procedure is thus not so important. This leads us to the Gramscian concept of ‘hegemony’, which, in a mature and expansive political field, corresponds to the ‘legitimate discourse’. Indeed, one of the main hegemonic strengths of parliamentary democracies is the relative strength of political institutions and thus a correspondingly large emphasis on political procedure. Such emphasis allows it to reproduce itself without much fear of its legitimacy being called into question. Hence also the obsessive anxiety over forms of politics which do not conform to its rules – ‘revolutionary’ politics, terrorism, and other forms of ‘extra-constitutional’ civil resistance.

- 95 Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, London: Sage, 1995.
- 96 Incidentally, this notion of ideology must insist that hegemony can never be absolute; it is always open to contest and negotiation. As Raymond Williams has suggested, ‘hegemony is always a process . . . It has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended and modified. It is also continually resisted, limited, altered, challenged’, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 112. The concept of ‘legitimate discourse’ can be seen as an analogy to Gramsci’s ‘hegemony’, although it is more specific to individual discourses and fields.
- 97 ‘Symbolic Power is a power of constructing reality . . . Symbols are the instruments *par excellence* of ‘social integration’: as instruments of knowledge and communication . . . they make it possible for there to be *consensus* on the meaning of the social world’. Bourdieu, ‘On symbolic power’, *Language and Symbolic Power*, Cambridge: Polity, 1992, p. 166 (my emphasis).
- 98 ‘The properly ideological function of the field of ideological production is performed almost *automatically* on the basis of the structural homology between the field of ideological production and the field of class struggle. The homology between the two fields . . . produce *euphemized* forms of the economic and political struggles between classes’, *ibid.* p. 169 (first emphasis added). There is a problem in Bourdieu’s theoretical structure which is unable to account for what may be termed ‘differentials’ which are spread across social classes such as race, gender, sexuality, religion. In Bourdieu’s scheme, conflict is premised upon the conflict between classes and he is unable to account for the dynamics of ‘difference’ as they might constitute conflicts and struggles in any given field.

2 THE PREHISTORY OF GANDHIAN NATIONALISM

- 1 Judith Brown, *Modern India: The Origins of an Asian Democracy*, 2nd edn, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, pp. 167–8.
- 2 *Ibid.* p. 168.
- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 Bipan Chandra, *The Epic Struggle*, New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1992.
- 5 Anil Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism: Competition and Collaboration in the Later Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971, p. 276; p. 245; p. 290; p. 277.
- 6 Anil Seal, ‘Imperialism and nationalism in India’ in A. Seal and J. Gallagher (eds) *Locality, Province and Nation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973, pp. 1–27. Notable members of this ‘school’ were Chris Bayly, David Washbrook, Francis Robinson and, later, Judith Brown.
- 7 *Ibid.* p. 4.
- 8 *Ibid.* p. 3.
- 9 *Ibid.* p. 21. One of the features of the early Cambridge School work is that political subjectivity seems to be almost exclusively in the hands of the colonial state so that

- Indian politicians are reduced to responding to the policies of the rulers, or acting in anticipation of the next set of legislative reforms. In this scenario, Indians seem to be marginalized within their own story. Another feature is that the colonial state's patron-client system seems to fit rather neatly into pre-colonial structures of political authority, thereby implying that colonialism had no significant impact upon the trajectory of Indian politics. These implications have led others to critique the school as 'neo-imperialist'. For a critique of the patron-client system and of the Cambridge School see John L. Hill (ed.) *Congress and Indian Nationalism: Historical Perspectives*, London: Curzon, 1991, in particular M. Torri, "Westernized middle class": intellectuals and society in late colonial India', pp. 18-55; and John L. Hill, 'Introduction'; see also David Hardiman, 'The Indian faction: a political theory examined' in R. Guha (ed.) *Subaltern Studies I*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982, pp. 198-231.
- 10 Seal, *Emergence*, p. 351.
 - 11 Guha (ed.) *Subaltern Studies I*, especially Ranajit Guha, 'On some aspects of the historiography of colonial India', pp. 1-8; and subsequent volumes of *Subaltern Studies*.
 - 12 A.R. Desai, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1948; R. Palme Dutt, *India Today*, London: Victor Gollancz, 1940.
 - 13 See Bipan Chandra, *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India*, New Delhi, 1979; *Essays on Indian Nationalism*, Delhi: Har-Anand, 1993; *The Epic Struggle*; see also, Bipan Chandra, Mridula Mukherjee, K.N. Panikkar, Aditya Mukherjee and Sucheta Mahajan, *India's Struggle for Independence*, New Delhi: Penguin, 1989. However, there is a conspicuous tension in the work of these historians between such an approach and an approach which is too often unitary. In many parts, their treatment of the history of Indian nationalism is idealized, and often reduced to the history of the Congress; the characterization of the nationalist leadership is also often idealized, and the struggles and differences between them minimalized. Furthermore, the claims to 'representation' of these leaders is often unquestioned. A significant indicator of this kind of unitary framework can be found in their notion of 'clear-cut' anti-colonial ideology for the nationalist movement which is uncontested until the rise of the Left in the 1930s.
 - 14 Torri, "Westernized Middle Class".
 - 15 Indeed, the Cambridge School never actually make it clear why, given that they suggest the new structure of politics meant that 'new intrusions into old immunities were balanced by the development of a system of representation' and that 'the spread of representation had now produced a legislative system which extended from the lowest to the highest level in India', why mobilization is not considered to be a new and significant factor in Indian politics. Thus, just because there is no westernized middle-class, does not mean that an intelligentsia, even an intelligentsia that may not have actually been nominated on to the councils (and they increasingly were), could not play a significant and relatively autonomous role in the development of Indian nationalism in general, and the production of a nationalist ideology in particular. Seal, 'Imperialism and Nationalism', p. 12, p. 14.
 - 16 *Ibid.* p. 4.
 - 17 See Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983. On the debates that have surrounded the 'autonomy' of peasant consciousness, see Vinayak Chaturvedi (ed.) *Mapping Subaltern Studies*, London: Verso, 2000.
 - 18 I use the term in both its political sense, and in its symbolic sense, i.e. discursive representation. Pierre Bourdieu has stressed the importance of 'recognition' in political discourse as a determinant of its effectivity. See Pierre Bourdieu, 'On

- Symbolic Power' in *Language and Symbolic Power*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992, p. 170.
- 19 Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse*, London: Zed, 1986. See also his *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993; and Shahid Amin, 'Gandhi as Mahatma: Gorakhpur District, Eastern UP 1921–22' in Ranajit Guha (ed.) *Subaltern Studies 3*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984, pp. 1–61.
- 20 Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought*, p. 11.
- 21 For an alternative critique of Chatterjee's book see Sumit Sarkar's trenchant 'Orientalism revisited: Saidian frameworks in the writing of modern Indian history', *Oxford Literary Review*, 16, 1 and 2, 205–24.
- 22 Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought*, p. 80.
- 23 Pierre Bourdieu, 'Social space and symbolic power' in *In Other Words: Essays towards a Reflexive Sociology*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990, p. 134.
- 24 Thus, by a circuitous route, Chatterjee's argument ends up reinforcing Brown's argument that such political conflicts as there were were not ideological but rather factional and personal, even though the stated intention, namely that "politics" necessarily operates in an ideological world' (Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought*, p. vii, is the exact opposite. See Judith Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power: Indian Politics 1915–1922*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972, p. 24.
- 25 See Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India: 1885–1947*, Madras: Macmillan India, 1983.
- 26 Peter Robb, 'Town and country: economic linkages and political mobilization in Bihar in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries' in Hill (ed.) *Congress and Indian Nationalism*, pp. 158–191.
- 27 Seal, *Emergence*, p. 194.
- 28 Chatterjee, *Nation and its Fragments*, pp. 92–3; Bikhu Parekh, *Colonialism, Tradition and Reform*, London: Sage, 1989.
- 29 Brown, *Modern India*, p. 155.
- 30 Such paradigms cannot adequately account for the heterogeneous complexity of nationalist discourse, nor does every enunciation included within one paradigm automatically conform in every respect to the constellation of axioms, emphases and rhetorical styles which delineate a paradigm.
- 31 Chatterjee, *Nation and its Fragments*, p. 18: the colonial state was 'a modern regime of power destined never to fulfil its modernizing mission because the premise of its power was the preservation of the alienness of the ruling group.'
- 32 Indeed, the 'progressives' were self-conscious pragmatists. No doubt this had much to do with their commitment to modern politics and to liberalism. One particular effect of this was that it fostered an illusion of activity as a substitute for ideology and thus the 'progressive' paradigm remained flaccid. This was possible, even sensible, so long as nationalist politics remained within the elite political field. Once this began to change, however, their ideological weakness stood exposed.
- 33 See Jim Masselos, *Indian Nationalism: An History*, 3rd edn, New Delhi: Sterling, 1993, pp. 97–9 on Tilak's acceptance of utilitarianism as a 'social and political language' viable for modern India. On the background of utilitarianism in India see Javed Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992, from which the above phrase is taken.
- 34 All nationalists, no matter what hue, took as axiomatic the 'economic critique' of colonialism undertaken by Dadabhai Naoroji in his *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India*, London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1901, and Romesh Chunder Dutt in *The Economic History of India*, 2 vols, New Delhi: Publications Division, Govt of India, 1960. Nationalists took to heart the 'Drain Theory' promoted by Naoroji in

- particular, so much so that Gandhi himself, though no economic modernist, would use it to advocate an economic argument for *khadi*. See Chandra *et al.*, *India's Struggle for Independence*, p. 93.
- 35 The 'moderate/extremist' conflict is the usual terminology within historiography for describing the schisms within the nationalist movement of this period. The terms, however, refer to differences over political tactics and strategy, and not of ideology. The terms are roughly homologous to 'progressive' and 'conservative', if only because it is difficult to disentangle tactics and strategy from the ideological vision that guides them. Nevertheless, there were some 'conservatives' that were 'moderate' in their politics such as Madan Mohan Malaviya, and some 'extremists' that were very 'progressive' in their ideology, such as Shyamji Krashnavarma, V.D. Savarkar and Lajpat Rai.
- 36 Brown, *Modern India*, p. 160.
- 37 Seal, *Emergence*, p. 254.
- 38 *Ibid.*, Chapter 6.
- 39 Chatterjee, *Nation and its Fragments*, p. 13. The work of Gyan Pandey, in particular, has done most to revise conceptions of Indian nationalism's relationship to communalism. See his *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- 40 Chatterjee, *Nation and its Fragments*, pp. 12–13.
- 41 Bipinchandra Pal, *The New Spirit: A Selection from the Writings and Speeches of Bipinchandra Pal on Social, Political and Religious Subjects*, Calcutta: Sinha, Sarvadhikari & Co., 1907; *The Spirit of Indian Nationalism*, London: Hind Nationalist Agency, 1910; *Indian Nationalism: Its Principles and Personalities*, Madras: S.R. Murthy, 1919; Bal Gangadhar Tilak, *Selected Documents of Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak*, 2 vols, ed. by R. Kumar, New Delhi: Anmol, 1992; B.G. Tilak, *Tilak's Speeches*, Poona: Hari Raghunath Bhagvat, 1908.
- 42 Tilak, *Kesari*, 24 April 1906, cited in Kumar (ed.) *Selected Documents*.
- 43 Pandey, *Construction*, p. 209.
- 44 *Ibid.* pp. 233–61.
- 45 Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1946. Although in the brief section entitled 'The variety and unity of India' he refers to regional identities, the book as a whole is structured with reference to the cultural influences upon Indian civilization by its major religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity. Interestingly, the trope of 'unity in diversity' which Nehru employs is echoed in the writings of some of the members of the Hindu Mahasabha, a communalist organization. See John Zavos, *The Emergence of Hindu Nationalism in India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 118.
- 46 The term has thus acquired a special sense with respect to India over and above that to which it refers in general. Generally speaking, communalism indicates any form of communal organization, identification or practice. In India, however, it has been sutured specifically to religion.
- 47 Brown, *Modern India*, p. 151; see also Seal, 'Imperialism and nationalism', p. 15.
- 48 Zavos, *Emergence*, p. 36.
- 49 Exemplary in this respect was Bal Gangadhar Tilak. The same was true, of course, for other religions as is evidenced by the work of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan.
- 50 On the codification of Hindu and Muslim personal laws, for example, see Thomas Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 12–15. See also J.D.M. Derrett, *Religion, Law and the State in India*, London: Faber, 1968.
- 51 Pandey traces this in some detail in his *Construction of Communalism*. See especially the Introduction and Chapter 1 'The colonial construction of the Indian past'.

- 52 The imposition of colonial knowledge here was by no means a straightforward process and, indeed, was fraught with difficulty and uncertainty. This was particularly true in the compilation of the census which caused colonial administrators and ethnographers severe problems, especially in relation to ‘placing’ certain tribes and castes against their ‘religion’. See Zavos, *Emergence*, pp. 74–6 and 107–11.
- 53 The numbers game again. Zavos has many interesting things to say about the impact of colonial policies and the census on the formulation of majoritarian idioms. For instance, ‘By quantifying caste and religious communities, the census inevitably placed the emphasis on numerical size as a means of assessing political importance.’ And later, ‘Progressively in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the idea that numbers, demographic majorities and minorities, were directly related to power in the colonial polity was becoming embedded as a feature of Hindu consciousness in the public space.’ *Emergence*, p. 76; p. 107.
- 54 Seal, *Emergence*; Brown, *Modern India*; Sarkar, *Modern India*; Torri, “‘Westernized middle class’”.
- 55 Achin Vanaik’s *The Furies of Indian Communalism*, London: Verso, 1997, is a welcome corrective to this imbalance.
- 56 See Ronald Inden, *Imagining India*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1990, pp. 185–7.
- 57 Ibid. Inden points to a structure of equivalence posited by colonial, and thence nationalist, historians contained within a parallel between the history of India and that of the West, ‘the ancient India that ran parallel to ancient Greece and Rome . . . the subsequent ‘medieval’ period, however, is a story of decline, one in which the real, underlying India, that selfish and quarrelsome *femme* . . . engulf[s] her male empire-builders’ (p. 185). One can read in the sign of the *femme* all the associations of irrationalism with which the medieval period in both India and the west came to be identified. Also note how, on p. 186, these historians reproduce the ‘unceasing wars’ of medieval Europe within its Indian counterpart. Such a parallel structure underpins a colonial ideology which justifies the intervention of the west in terms of reproducing the transition from ‘medievalism’ to ‘modernity’.
- 58 Asghar Ali Engineer, ‘Secularism in India: theory and practice’ in R.C. Heredia and E. Mathias (eds) *Secularism and Liberation: Perspectives and Strategies for India Today*, New Delhi: Indian Social Science Institute, 1995, p. 40.
- 59 Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1983, Chapter 1.
- 60 For a contrasting view see Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, p. 36. Whilst it is true that ‘[i]n India as well pre-colonial states derived much of their legitimacy from association with the institutions of religious faith’, there is nevertheless a qualitative distinction between a state deriving its legitimacy from certain religious groups and a state representing the executive arm of a more dominant religious authority.
- 61 The establishment of the Church of England was, in fact, an inversion of the medieval situation whereby the Church is now subordinated to the authority of the state, symbolized by the monarch as the keeper of the faith. As has been stated above, the colonial state’s efforts at maintaining a separation of religion from the state was fraught with ambiguity and difficulty.
- 62 It is important to state here that by drawing this distinction I am not implying that all European thought is dualist and that all Indian thought is monistic, or *advaita*. Nevertheless, the *advaita* tradition of thought in India did significantly limit the slow, and rather haphazard, development of western ‘dualist’ thought effected by the institution of modern education. The ideological impact of *advaita* thought far exceeded its cultural weight in terms of popularity or scope in so far as it was the dominant form of Hindu thought among the intelligentsia.
- 63 It is here that the limitations imposed by monistic systems of thought have most

- impact, since the idea that the 'religious' could be confined within the individual believer is a direct contradiction that all things form an aspect of the divine.
- 64 Achin Vanaik, *Furies of Indian Communalism*, p. 33.
- 65 Pandey, *Construction of Communalism*, p. 132.
- 66 Ibid. p. 133.
- 67 Pal, *The New Spirit*, p. 95, my emphasis.
- 68 Seal, *Emergence*, p. 280; Judith Brown tries to resolve this peculiarity by insisting that such political conflicts as there were were not ideological but rather factional and personal; see note 24. It is clear, however, that the Surat split, for example, had its basis in a deep ideological impasse within Indian nationalism.
- 69 Masselos, *Indian Nationalism*, p. 96.
- 70 Brown, *Modern India*, p. 160; see also Sarkar, *Modern India*, p. 71, who notes the interesting sea change in educated opinion since 1860 over this matter, when a similar proposal (with the age of consent being ten) hardly drew any comment – an indication of the effect of nationalist ideology and the incipient ascendancy of the conservative position on the emerging 'public sphere'.
- 71 The limits of secularism operated on all socio-religious reformers, from Rammohun Roy and Justice Ranade, to Vivekananda and Dayananda Saraswati, who all had to find sanctions for their reforms in the body of ancient religious law, whether the *shastras* or the *Vedas* or the *Gita*. Chandra *et al.* *India's Struggle for Independence*, pp. 82–90.
- 72 Bipinchandra Pal, 'Nation-building' in *The New Spirit*, p. 95 (my emphases).
- 73 Ibid. p. 93 (my emphasis).
- 74 Ibid. p. 95.
- 75 Pal 'The Ganges Bath', 16 October 1906. In *ibid.* pp. 10–11 (my emphasis).
- 76 'Rakhi Day', 10 October 1906. *Ibid.* p. 13.
- 77 See Sarto Esteves, *Nationalism, Communalism, Secularism*, Delhi: South Asia Publications, 1996, for an analysis of contemporary Hindu communal discourse and its ambiguous placing of the 'Scheduled Castes'.
- 78 Bal Gangadhar Tilak, 'The Bharata Dharma Mahamandala', Benares, 3 January 1906, in *Tilak's Speeches*, p. 72.
- 79 Pandey, *Construction of Communalism*, p. 224.
- 80 Surendranath Banerjea, 'Congress Presidential Address, Poona 1895' in *Speeches and Writings of Hon. Surendranath Banerjea, selected by himself*, Madras: G.A.Nateson & Co., 1920, p. 15.
- 81 Surendranath Banerjea, 'An Appeal to the Mahomedan Community' in *ibid.* p. 265.
- 82 See Brown, *Modern India*, pp. 167–76; Seal, 'Imperialism and Nationalism in India'.
- 83 Brown, *ibid.* p. 177.
- 84 This was precisely the basis of Nehru's *The Discovery of India*. For a general account of the history of mapping India, see P.L. Madan *Indian Cartography: A Historical Perspective*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1997; for more detail on the practice and politics of British surveys of India in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, see Matthew H. Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765–1843*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997. See Susan Gole, *A Series of Early Printed Maps of India in Facsimile*, New Delhi: Jayaprints, 1980, for a selection of maps from that period and earlier; for a glimpse of native mapping traditions, see her *Indian Maps and Plans from Earliest Times to the Advent of European Surveys*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1989. See also Pandey, *Construction of Communalism*, p. 247, where he suggests that this territorial aspect was advanced by the secular-liberals of the 1920s in opposition to the composite model. Yet it is clear

- that this territorial emphasis is not at all in opposition to the composite model but rather an integral aspect of it.
- 85 See Peter Robb (ed.) *The Concept of Race in South Asia*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995. See especially the following essays: Indira Chowdury-Sengupta, 'The effeminate and the masculine: nationalism and the concept of race in Bengal', pp. 282–303; Christophe Jaffrelot, 'The idea of the Hindu race in the writings of Hindu nationalist ideologues in the 1920s and 1930s: a concept between two cultures', pp. 327–54; Peter Robb, 'South Asia and the Concept of Race', pp. 1–76.
- 86 Rajendralala Mitra, *Indo-Aryans*, vol. 2, pp. 438–9, cited by Chowdury-Sengupta, 'The effeminate and the masculine', p. 296. According to Jaffrelot, Dayananda saw the Aryavarta as covering Punjab, the Doab, and the Ganges Basin, 'The idea of the Hindu race', p. 330.
- 87 The phrase is Peter Robb's, 'South Asia and the concept of race' p. 35, footnote 57.
- 88 Inden, *Imagining India*, pp. 186–7.
- 89 Pal, 'Ganges Bath', 16 October 1906, collected in *The New Spirit*, pp. 10–11.
- 90 Pal, 'Rakhi Day', *The New Spirit*, p. 12.
- 91 *Ibid.* p. 13.
- 92 'Nation Building', *ibid.* p. 99.
- 93 *Ibid.* pp. 100–2 (my emphases).
- 94 *Ibid.* p. 103.
- 95 B.G. Tilak, 'The Bharata Dharma Mahamandala', *Tilak's Speeches*, Poona, 1908, pp. 75–8.
- 96 Sumit Sarkar notes the difference between the 'intense storm' which resulted from the Age of Consent Bill in 1891 and 1860 when 'sexual intercourse with a girl below the age of ten had been declared to be rape without much protest from anyone'. The 'minor reform' of raising the age from ten to twelve in 1891 did, however, 'provoke massive opposition'. Sarkar notes that 'Frankly conservative and obscurantist sentiments mingled here with the nationalist argument, put forward most notably by Tilak'. *Modern India*, p. 71. One can note here the degree to which the balance of forces within Indian nationalism had shifted in the thirty or so years towards the 'conservatives'.
- 97 *Ibid.* pp. 114–15; 121; 124–5.
- 98 *Ibid.* pp. 121–3.

3 A TRAGEDY OF IDEALISM: UTOPIANISM AND THE IMAGINED COMMUNITY OF GANDHI'S *HIND SWARAJ*

- 1 Frank Manuel and Fritzie Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979, p. 24.
- 2 M.K. Gandhi, Letter to Jawaharlal Nehru, 5 October 1945, in *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 81, New Delhi: Publishing Division (Indian Govt), 1958–88, p. 319. All subsequent citations to the *Collected Works* will be abbreviated as CWMG.
- 3 Judith Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power: Indian Politics 1915–1922*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972, especially Chapter 2 'Gandhi and Indian nationalist politics, 1915–1916'.
- 4 Denis Dalton, *Mahatma Gandhi: Nonviolent Power in Action*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1993, p. 19.
- 5 Anthony Parel, 'Editor's introduction to *Hind Swaraj*' in M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings*, Anthony Parel (ed.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. xiii.
- 6 For select examples, see Joan V. Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence: Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965; Partha

- Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse*, London: Zed Books, 1986; Denis Dalton, *Mahatma Gandhi*; Nicholas F. Gier, 'Gandhi: pre-modern, modern, or post-modern?', *Gandhi Marg*, 18, 3, Oct.–Dec. 1996, 261–81; Raghavan Iyer, *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1973; Bikhu Parekh, *Gandhi's Political Philosophy: A Critical Examination*, London: Macmillan, 1989; Bikhu Parekh, *Colonialism, Tradition and Reform: An Analysis of Gandhi's Political Discourse*, London: Sage, 1989.
- 7 See Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought*; Sudipto Kaviraj, *The Unhappy Consciousness: Bankinichandra Chattopadhyay and the Formation of Nationalist Discourse in India*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995; Brown in *Gandhi's Rise to Power*, however, suggests that 'Both "Moderates" and "Extremists" [actually] shared far more than they cared to admit at the time, since they all owed their current and future prospects to the Raj, and since all faced equal danger . . . if they abandoned the politics of limitation.' Ideology, therefore, 'cloaked what was also a phase in a battle between personal groupings' (p. 24). As shall become apparent below, I agree with the former half of this passage but disagree with the latter. One notices here the lineaments of the 'Cambridge School' position, which Brown would later wholly adopt, in which political motivations are determined by self-interest and machiavellian alliances of 'factions' within institutionalized frameworks set by the Raj. This, however, denudes Indian nationalists of any political idealism and integrity.
 - 8 One of the few truly illuminating moments in Richard Attenborough's film is when Gandhi says to a journalist as he marches to Dandi, 'Something for your notebook. They are not in control, we are.'
 - 9 One can interpret his wilful rejection of political activity on his immediate return from South Africa as an exercise in political reconnaissance, an appraisal of the scope for mass political action and whether the means by which to sustain it – i.e. a possible public sphere – existed. By 1919, of course, he had decided it did. Much of the preparatory work for this had been done by Tilak and Annie Besant with their Home Rule Leagues, and in Bengal during Swadeshi by the *samitis* or 'national volunteer' movements.
 - 10 See M.K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography, or The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, London: Penguin, 1982; originally published by The Navajivan Trust, Allahabad in 1927.
 - 11 In this respect, Gandhi's translation of *Hind Swaraj* into English may be read as a sign of his desire to locate himself in an all-India arena, as well as to broaden the readership of the book. However, as Parel notes, the Gujarati edition of the text was proscribed in India for security reasons, and the first English edition in India, published under the title of *Indian Home Rule*, was published in 1919; see Parel, 'Editor's introduction', p. lxiii. Thus, the impact of the book at this stage was extremely limited. Its importance lies, however, in so far as it illustrates Gandhi's subsequent ideological strategy in its most systematic form.
 - 12 Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, p. 140.
 - 13 I do not mean, however, to suggest that there are no Indian sources in the text. For a summary of some of these Indian sources see Parel, 'Editor's introduction', pp. xlvii–l. Parel also states that the literary genre is 'the dialogue' and whilst not disagreeing with this, it will be pointed out below how *Hind Swaraj* possesses all the necessary features of utopian discourse whilst remaining generically distinct from narrative utopias. This suggests that narrative is not a fundamental prerequisite for utopian discourse.
 - 14 Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought*, p. 103. Chatterjee recognizes the utopian character of *Hind Swaraj* but implies that it was incidental to the later significance of Gandhian

- ideology to the political evolution of Indian nationalism, arguing instead that the reason the ideas of *Hind Swaraj* became historically and politically significant is because Gandhi decided to attempt to put them into practice. This is both true and obvious. It is precisely because *Hind Swaraj* is so clearly a polemical intervention into the political field that its form is not incidental. It is not so much that a utopian text was rescued from obscurity just because its author happened to be a politician but rather that it is a utopian text because its author was a politician.
- 15 Krishan Kumar, *Utopianism*, Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1991, p. 24.
- 16 Gandhi, CWMG, vol. 24, p. 548.
- 17 Kumar, *Utopianism*; Manuel and Manuel, *Utopian Thought*.
- 18 There are, I believe, no formal antecedents in India to the utopianism of *Hind Swaraj*. One might cite the celebrated concept of 'Rama Rajya' in the *Ramayana* which Gandhi was clearly conscious of throughout his career but, as has been pointed out, not all perfect or just societies qualify as utopias. One needs to be aware of this complete departure from the prevailing 'indigenous' forms of political discourse, whether 'traditional' or 'modern'. Like utopia itself, *Hind Swaraj* seems to emerge from 'nowhere' so to speak. However, it must be significant that during his time in London and in South Africa his closest intellectual contacts were predominantly with aspects of 'western' traditions of thought.
- 19 Iyer, *Moral and Political Thought*, p. 24.
- 20 *Ibid.* p. 151.
- 21 Although the text of the *Republic* clearly bears this out, it is not the orthodox interpretation of Plato's metaphysics. See Robin Waterfield's introduction to his translation of the *Republic* where he advocates it as opposed to the orthodox view: 'Introduction' to Plato, *Republic*, trans. Robin Waterfield, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, pp. xlvii-l. This interpretation also allows for a proper perspective on the Platonic legacy in utopian discourse, as we shall see.
- 22 Frederic Jameson has noted how this Platonism was at the root of the political failure of the Renaissance humanists since they could resolve the existing contradictions of their society only at the level of the symbolic through 'an over-emphasis on the power of rationality in general and a basic and constitutive overestimation of the role of rhetoric and persuasion in particular'. See his 'Of islands and trenches: neutralization and the product of utopian discourse' in *The Ideologies of Theory: Essays 1971-1986*, vol. 2, London: Routledge, 1988, p. 98.
- 23 *Ibid.* p. 81.
- 24 *Ibid.* p. 80. Jameson's argument here does, of course, reinforce the argument presented in the Introduction concerning the shift to metonymic modes of representation.
- 25 *Ibid.*
- 26 In this he follows Roland Barthes for whom the 'realist' novel, or as he calls it the 'readerly' text, occludes its own ideological function in upholding the status quo by giving the impression that representation and reality are congruent and that language is 'transparent'. Barthes favours the 'writerly' or modernist text which, by contrast, foregrounds its own process of linguistic production and abjures claims to representation, as does Jameson. See *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller, London: Cape, 1975; see also 'From work to text', *Image-Music-Text*, ed. and trans. Stephen Heath, London: Fontana, 1977.
- 27 Jameson, 'Of islands and trenches', p. 80.
- 28 Four years after this essay, Jameson produced his most significant contribution to Marxist literary theory, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, London: Methuen, 1981, in which novels are shown to 'symbolically' resolve social contradictions in a fashion analogous to myth in primitive societies. Both myth

- and novels, therefore, serve to ideologically reproduce the existing structure of dominance and social relations. I see this earlier essay as a prelude to *The Political Unconscious*. In the opening pages of this essay he spends a great deal of time establishing a ground from which Marxism could assimilate a theory of ideological production which can challenge existing structures of thought. He finds this in Julia Kristeva's 'semiology' which stresses linguistic process and production as opposed to representation and communication.
- 29 Kumar, *Utopianism*, p. 91.
- 30 George Taylor, 'Editor's introduction' in Paul Ricoeur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1986, p. xx.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960.
- 33 A salutary warning to those who, like Mannheim, would stress the realizability of utopias. For this very reason opponents of utopias could stigmatize utopianism as the basis of the 'realized' utopias of totalitarian states.
- 34 It may be true, as Slavoj Žižek suggests, that all ideologies possess some 'core' utopian element but this is not the same as collapsing all ideologies into utopias. *Laissez-faire* liberalism, for example, may be said to possess a vision of the 'good society' but this does not make it utopian. See Žižek, 'Multiculturalism, or, the cultural logic of multinational capitalism', *New Left Review*, 225, 1997, 30.
- 35 Jameson, 'Of islands and trenches'.
- 36 See Sudipto Kaviraj's fine opening chapter on Bankim's tragic vision in *The Unhappy Consciousness*.
- 37 Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, p. 116; all citations to *Hind Swaraj* will be taken from this edition and marked in the text.
- 38 Cited by Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought*, p. 82.
- 39 Parekh, *Gandhi's Political Philosophy*, p. 20.
- 40 The book was written after a visit to London in 1909 where he had discussed nationalist issues with people like Shyamji Krishnavarma (1857–1930) and V.D. Savarkar (1883–1966). These and other Indians based at India House in Highgate, London, were known to have close connections with and supported terrorist activity against the colonial state, both in India and in Britain. A few days before Gandhi's arrival in 1909, Britain was convulsed by the assassination of Sir William Curzon-Wyllie, the ADC to the Secretary of State for India by Madan Lal Dhingra, a revolutionary known to have been influenced by Savarkar and his journal, *The Indian Sociologist*.
- 41 Parel, 'Editor's introduction', p. lvii.
- 42 All this was highly significant for Gandhi for whom clothing was a remarkably potent source of symbolism. Indeed, the entire basis of *khadi* rests upon not only its symbolic rejection of modernity but also its actual identification with the 'true' spirit of Indian civilization. For a superb discussion of *khadi* and its importance to Gandhi see Emma Tarlo, *Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India*, London: Hurst & Co., 1996.
- 43 Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 59, pp. 83–112.
- 44 Ibid. pp. 66–72.
- 45 Bikhu Parekh is surely right when he says that he says that 'the hold of colonial ideology was such that even its shrewdest critic was a man who did not transcend but largely reinterpreted its terms of debate'. *Gandhi's Political Philosophy*, p. 21.
- 46 Gier, 'Gandhi: pre-modern, modern, or post-modern?', p. 264.
- 47 Ibid. p. 265.
- 48 Parel, 'Editor's introduction', p. lxi.

- 49 Gier, 'Gandhi: pre-modern, modern or post-modern?', p. 266.
- 50 See Parel, 'Editor's introduction', pp. lviii–lix for a brief indication of the contemporary response. Gandhi, in a letter to Gokhale on 2 May 1910 says, 'the booklet has been widely circulated here. Much criticism has been received. There appears today in *The Transvaal Leader* a signed criticism', *CWMG*, vol. 10, p. 239.
- 51 Shahid Amin, 'Gandhi as Mahatma: Gorakhpur District, Eastern UP, 1921–22', *Subaltern Studies* 3, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984, pp. 1–61; see also his later work, *Event, Memory, Metaphor: Chauri Chaura 1922–1992*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995, where he takes up from where he left off in the previous essay.
- 52 Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India 1885–1947*, Delhi: Macmillan, 1983, pp. 43–8.
- 53 Kaviraj, *Unhappy Consciousness*, p. 113.
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 cf. Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought*, pp. 100–2. Partha Chatterjee and I would only partially agree on this matter, however. Where we would disagree is over his implication that Gandhian ideology was somehow operating outside the 'thematic' of elite nationalist discourse, whilst decisively intervening in the 'problematic' at this historical juncture for 'the political appropriation of the subaltern classes by a bourgeoisie aspiring for hegemony'. Yet the logic of this intervention is based on the concept of mediation which would suggest that it would be impossible, therefore, for Gandhi to operate outside the 'thematic' of nationalist discourse. Indeed, I have shown, and will endeavour to show further, how his ideology was a reformulation of existing nationalist discourse and was thus suffused with prevailing assumptions.
- 56 Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power*, pp. 46–159.
- 57 Ibid. pp. 46–7.
- 58 Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, p. 172.
- 59 'I realised that the *true* function of the lawyer was to *unite* parties riven asunder.' *CWMG*, vol. 39, p. 111.
- 60 Gandhi had grown up in a Gujarati vaishnavite community which had been far more open in its contacts with neighbouring Muslim communities than was generally the case in India at the time. His work in South Africa, at the behest of the predominantly Muslim Indian mercantile community, became well known throughout the nationalist movement.
- 61 Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power*, pp. 158–9.
- 62 In a footnote, Anthony Parel points out that Gandhi had to apologise to the Assamese in 1921 for listing them here.
- 63 Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought*, p. 113.
- 64 Jameson, 'Of islands and trenches', p. 95.
- 65 Another, of course, is Marxism.
- 66 This is an especially significant problem with respect to religious discourse which, as history has shown, has had its imaginative potentiality appropriated and subsumed by dominant ideologies and political forces, and has had its sometimes radical charge defused.
- 67 In the next chapter I shall examine one of these appropriations, namely that of Raja Rao. Indeed, the implication throughout this chapter is that what I term the Gandhian paradigm was more than just Gandhi's own discourse but rather a collective body of discourse generally sympathetic to his original conception. It is important, therefore, not just to examine Gandhi's own words but also the reception and reproduction of his ideology by others. Gandhism's relation to other paradigms of thought must therefore be investigated in this light for the collective nature of ideological production facilitated the appropriation of Gandhian ideas by opponents as well as supporters.
- 68 Parekh, *Colonialism, Tradition and Reform*, p. 211.

- 69 Ibid. p. 216.
 70 Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power*, p. 56.
 71 See Jawaharlal Nehru's observations in *The Discovery of India*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981, p. 121.
 72 Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus*, trans. Mark Salisbury, London: Paladin, 1970; revised edn Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988.
 73 Chatterjee, *Nation and its Fragments*, p. 173.
 74 Ibid.
 75 Ibid. pp. 176–7.
 76 Ibid. p. 177 (my emphasis).
 77 Ibid. p. 176.
 78 Ibid. p. 177.
 79 Ibid. p. 178 (original emphasis).
 80 Jameson, 'Of islands and trenches', p. 100.
 81 Gandhi, *CWMG*, vol. 18 p. 275.
 82 The language of assimilation – in a much more militant and chauvinistic form – is clearly evident in the current rhetoric of the Sangh Parivar *vis-à-vis* Muslims.
 83 See Parekh, *Gandhi's Political Philosophy*, p. 188: 'With the exception of Akbar he saw little to admire in Muslim rule, and he could only think of the idea of equality as Islam's great contribution to India.' Yet even so he is known to have said, 'It was Hinduism that gave Mahomedanism its Akbar.'
 84 Shahid Amin, 'Gandhi as Mahatma'; Judith Brown, *Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope*, London: Yale University Press, 1989, p. 152.
 85 Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought*, p. 109.

4 THE MAKING AND UNMAKING OF GANDHIAN IDEOLOGY: RAJA RAO'S KANTHAPURA

- 1 Judith M. Brown, *Gandhi and Civil Disobedience: The Mahatma in Indian Politics 1928–1934*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977, p. xiii.
 2 Judith Brown, *Gandhi: A Prisoner of Hope*, London: Yale University Press, 1989, p. 215.
 3 Shahid Amin, 'Gandhi as Mahatma: Gorakhpur District, Eastern UP, 1921–22' in Ranajit Guha (ed.) *Subaltern Studies 3*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984, p. 29.
 4 Brown, *Gandhi and Civil Disobedience*, p. xv.
 5 Judith Brown, *Modern India: The Origins of an Asian Democracy*, 2nd edn, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, pp. 234–5.
 6 Brown, *Gandhi and Civil Disobedience*, p. 96; p. 100.
 7 Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990, especially Chapters 6 and 7.
 8 Gyan Pandey notes that 'what was perceived as a quite new and threatening level of Muslim organization, preparedness and militancy' during the Khilafat period and after was decisive in the codification of Hindu nationalisms, 'Which of us are Hindus?' in G. Pandey (ed.) *Hindus and Others – the Question of Identity in India Today*, New Delhi: Viking, 1993, p. 244, cited in Christophe Jaffrelot *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics, 1925 to the 1990s: Strategies of Identity-Building, Implantation and Mobilization*, London: Hurst & Co., 1996, p. 25.
 9 It is interesting, therefore, to read the row over the Nehru Report as a sign of how communalism and constitutionalism reinforced each other, both for Hindus and Muslims. Whilst the (overwhelmingly Hindu) Congress, having dropped the separate electorates scheme of the Lucknow Pact a decade earlier (which had facilitated

- Muslim participation in Non-Cooperation), welcomed the vesting of powers in the centre rather than the province, the Muslim League (now led by a rehabilitated Jinnah) rejected it arguing for powers to be vested in the province rather than the centre. See Brown, *Modern India*, p. 266. See also Brown, *Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope*, p. 185.
- 10 Pandey, *Construction of Communalism*, pp. 237–8; p. 235.
 - 11 Pandey points out, for example, that this ideology called for the privatization of religion in India in an attempt to make Indian secularism conform to the broader western conception. Ibid. p. 239. See also Ashgar Ali Engineer, ‘Secularism in India: theory and practice’ in R.C. Heredia and E. Mathias (eds) *Secularism and Liberation: Perspectives and Strategies for India Today*, New Delhi: Indian Social Institute, 1995, p. 42, where he discusses M.N. Roy and his school of secularism.
 - 12 Pandey, *ibid.* p. 240.
 - 13 Ibid. p. 233.
 - 14 Brown, *Gandhi and Civil Disobedience*, p. xvi.
 - 15 Shahid Amin has shown how the peasants of Gorakhpur, for example, assimilated the Gandhian ideology in a way which was ‘often at variance with those of the local Congress-Khilafat leadership and clashed with the tenets of Gandhism itself.’ See ‘Gandhi as Mahatma’, p. 55; I claim that the accumulation of such variances affects the trajectory of the ideology through time such that whatever Gandhi might have thought of his ideology, Gandhism possessed an altogether wider significance at once more diffuse and more concrete (because of its adaptation to local circumstances).
 - 16 Due to health problems he was sent to Aligarh where he met Eric Dickinson (a minor poet who taught English there) and came under his Francophile influence. Learning French there, Rao returned to complete his BA degree at Nizam’s College, Hyderabad. He then won the Asiatic Society scholarship for study abroad and he chose the University of Montpellier, followed by a period at the Sorbonne. See M.K. Naik, *Raja Rao*, Bombay: Blackie and Son, 1982, p. 3.
 - 17 This chapter is, in many respects, the complement of Shahid Amin’s superlative work on the peasantry and its relationship to Gandhi and Gandhism.
 - 18 See Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1983; *Ideology: An Introduction*, London: Verso, 1991; Terry Eagleton and Drew Milne (eds) *Marxist Literary Theory: A Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1996; Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, London: RKP, 1978; Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, London: Routledge, 1993.
 - 19 In particular, the claim that the village of Kanthapura represents India in microcosm because ‘the development of events in *Kanthapura* represents all that was happening in every village and every city at that time’ (Narsingh Srivastava, *The Mind and Art of Raja Rao*, Bareilly: Prakash Book Depot, 1980, p. 40), rests on an implicit assumption about the historical accuracy of the novel.
 - 20 S. Chandrashekar, *Colonialism, Conflict and Nationalism: South India 1857–1947*, New Delhi: Wiswa Prakashan, 1995, p. 36.
 - 21 Raja Rao, *Kanthapura*, New York: New Directions Paperback, 1967; all citations will be taken from this edition and placed in the text.
 - 22 S. Chandrashekar, *Colonialism*, p. 21.
 - 23 See James Manor, *Political Change in an Indian State Mysore 1917–1955*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1977; see also J. Schwartzberg (ed.) *A Historical Atlas of South Asia*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992, plate VIII. Chapter 2 ‘Political events of the nationalist period 1879–1947’.
 - 24 See James Manor, ‘Gandhian politics and the challenge to princely authority in Mysore 1936–1947’ in D.A. Low (ed.) *Congress and the Raj: Facets of Struggle*

- 1917–1947, London: Heinemann, 1977, p. 420. See also Manor, *Political Change* Chapter 5 ‘Activity under the Congress Banner 1920–1935’.
- 25 Manor, ‘Gandhian politics’, p. 420.
- 26 Chandrashekar, *Colonialism*, pp. 142, 185, 189.
- 27 Edward Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1985, p. 5 (original emphases).
- 28 Ibid. p. 14.
- 29 On myth and primordial beginnings, see Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1963, p. 5.
- 30 Gerard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980.
- 31 Dadabhai Naoroji, *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India*, London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1901.
- 32 Esha Dey, *The Novels of Raja Rao: The Theme of Quest*, New Delhi: Prestige, 1992, p. 32.
- 33 Note Gandhi’s statement, ‘the key to swaraj lies in fulfilling three conditions alone – in the spinning wheel, in Hindu–Muslim unity, and in the removal of untouchability’, ‘Answers to questions on his release’ February 1924, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 23, New Delhi: Publishing Division (Indian Govt), 1958–88, p. 195. As we shall see it is highly significant that Rao replaces the removal of untouchability with self-purification.
- 34 Chitra Shankaran, *The Myth Connection: The Use of Hindu Mythology in Some Novels of Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan*, New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1993, p. 33.
- 35 One also notes with interest the observation made by Sumit Sarkar that ‘A recurrent feature in tribal and peasant uprisings both in India and in other parts of the world has been the belief that bullets turn into water.’ Sumit Sarkar, ‘The conditions and nature of subaltern militancy: Bengal from Swadeshi to Non-Cooperation, c. 1905–1922’, in Ranajit Guha (ed.) *Subaltern Studies* 3, pp. 311–12. It is possible, although probably unlikely, that Rao may have been familiar with such tropes within peasant sensibilities.
- 36 Savitri V. Kumar, *The Pauranic Lore of Holy Water-Places*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1983, p. 6.
- 37 Ibid. p. 7.
- 38 Ibid. p. 16; see also Chapter 5, ‘Metamorphosis’ pp. 210ff.
- 39 Ibid. p. 8. See also the end notes provided by Rao himself to the 1967 New Directions paperback edition of the novel, p. 210.
- 40 Amit S. Rai ‘A lying virtue: Ruskin, Gandhi, and the simplicity of use value’, *South Asia Research*, 13, 2, November 1993, 132–52; Rai also cites, Rama Shankar Singh, ‘Elements in Gandhian economics’, *Gandhi Marg*, January–March 1991.
- 41 Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse*, London: Zed Books, 1986, pp. 88–9. I disagree with Professor Chatterjee’s implications here that *khadi* was, for Gandhi, fundamentally an economic issue. Rather, its main dimension was a moral one (see below), with a subsequent economic logic which Gandhi found strategically most useful.
- 42 On the dependency of the colonial state upon Brahmin pandits in interpreting what they perceived to be the scriptural basis for a ‘Hindu’ law, see J.D.M. Derrett, *Religion, Law and the State in India*, London: Faber, 1968, pp. 225–321.
- 43 On this dialectical process of legitimation see C.A. Bayly *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, Chapter 5, particularly pp. 155–68; see also Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. xi and pp. 11–12.
- 44 Dey, *The Novels of Raja Rao*, pp. 28–31.

- 45 Shahid Amin points out that the peasant sensibility is accustomed to 'oral and unauthored speech' and in a footnote cites Ranajit Guha's 'characterization of *rumour* as oral and unauthored speech' in his *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*. 'Gandhi as Mahatma', p. 48.
- 46 This is the central point made by Pierre Bourdieu in his studies of the French literary field. See *The Field of Cultural Production*, Cambridge: Polity, 1993, and *The Rules of Art*, Cambridge: Polity, 1996.
- 47 Raja Rao, *The Times Literary Supplement*, August 10, 1962 cited in Naik, *Raja Rao*, p. 13.
- 48 C. Shankaran, *The Myth Connection*, New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1993, p. 3; see also Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality*.
- 49 Brown, *Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope*, p. 197.
- 50 Gandhi, *Collected Works*, vol. 32, p. 67, cited in *ibid*.
- 51 *Ibid*.
- 52 Raja Rao, 'Books which Have influenced me', *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, February 10, 1963, p. 45.
- 53 Narsingh Srivastava, *Mind and Art of Raja Rao*, p. 41.
- 54 See Paula Richman (ed.) *Many Ramayanas: The Diversity of Narrative Tradition in South Asia*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.
- 55 Eliade, *Myth and Reality*.
- 56 Dey, *Novels*, p. 31.
- 57 Shahid Amin, 'Gandhi as Mahatma' pp. 29–30: 'What is important is that a series of 'extraordinary occurrences' were being read in a familiar way, that is, according to the conventions of reading the episodes in a sacred text but with their religiosity overdetermined by an incipient political consciousness.'
- 58 Dey, *Novels*, pp. 57–8. She cites Bakhtin, 'Discourse Typology in Prose', *Readings in Russian Poetics*, eds. K. Matjetka and K. Pomoroska, 1971, pp. 181–2.
- 59 Narsingh Srivastava, 'The Narrative Technique of Raja Rao' in A.N. Dwivedi (ed.) *Studies in Contemporary Indian Fiction in English*, Allahabad, 1987, p. 180.
- 60 A Purana (lit. 'Ancient Lore') is an encyclopaedic collection of popular myths, legends and genealogies written in simple narrative couplets. There are 18 Puranas and 18 'lesser' puranas.
- 61 Esha Dey, *Novels*, pp. 43–4.
- 62 *Ibid*. p. 50.
- 63 *Ibid*.
- 64 *Ibid*.
- 65 *Ibid*. p. 51.
- 66 There is also a sense in which this association goes beyond the internal dynamics of this novel. As Ian Watt has shown, narrative realism is itself a consequence of modernity. See Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964.
- 67 Rao was clearly an admirer of Nehru, as evidenced by his account of their meeting in Switzerland; see 'My first meeting with Pandit Jawaharlal' in *The Meaning of India*, New Delhi: Vision, 1996, pp. 29–43.
- 68 Narsingh Srivastava, *Mind and Art*, p. 5.
- 69 Mulk Raj Anand points out that Rao, in Paris, was familiar with the modernist avant-garde and was intimately connected to the journal in which Joyce was publishing his work in progress – later to be published as *Finnegans Wake*. Anand himself was, of course, very closely associated with the Bloomsbury group in London. See Mulk Raj Anand, *Roots and Flowers: Two Lectures on the Metamorphosis of Technique and Content in the Indian English Novel*, Dharwar: Karantak University Press, 1972.

- 70 Although some critics suggest that the novel was written earlier, it is nevertheless still possible that this more explicit reference, coming as it does in the short final chapter, was added in revision before publication. In fact, it is such a direct reference to the ministries of 1937 that it must have been.
- 71 These Princely States, of course, did not have Congress administered ministries in 1937 yet they too enjoyed a good deal of provincial autonomy.
- 72 S. Chandrashekar, *Colonialism*, p. 189; unsurprisingly, the Princely States also did not conform to the paradigm of good governance envisaged by the left either. See also Manor, *Political Change*.
- 73 Shahid Amin, 'Gandhi as Mahatma', p. 55.
- 74 Ibid. p. 54.
- 75 Chandrashekar, *Colonialism*, p. 141.
- 76 Shahid Amin, 'Gandhi as Mahatma'.
- 77 Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought*, pp. 131–67.
- 78 Brown, *Gandhi and Civil Disobedience*, p. 87.
- 79 The Dasi episode raises some interesting questions concerning gender, sexuality, race and communalism which I have addressed elsewhere. See Anshuman Mondal, 'The emblematics of gender and sexuality in Indian nationalist discourse', *Modern Asian Studies*, 36, 4, 2002, 913–36. For another reading of the gender ideology of *Kanthapura* see Rumina Sethi, *Myths of the Nation: National Identity and Literary Representation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- 80 Census, 1931 cited in James Manor, *Political Change*, p. 29.
- 81 Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement*.
- 82 Cited in *ibid.* p. 22.
- 83 Ibid. p. 23.
- 84 Ibid. p. 21.
- 85 Ibid.
- 86 Ibid. p. 61.
- 87 Pandey, 'Which of us are Hindus?' cited in *ibid.* p. 57.
- 88 See, for example, K.C. Belliappa, *The Image of India in English Fiction*, Delhi: B.R. Publishing & Co., 1991, pp. 214–15.
- 89 Tabish Khair, 'Caste in Indian–English fiction: more oppression?', *Kunapipi*, 19, 1, 1997, p. 82.
- 90 Suresht Renjen Bald, *Novelists and Political Consciousness: Literary Expression of Indian Nationalism 1919–1947*, Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1982, p. 41.
- 91 On the history, or pseudo-history as Peter Robb calls it, of Dravidianism see Dagmar Hellman-Rajanayagam, 'Is there a Tamil "Race"?' in Peter Robb (ed.) *The Concept of Race in South Asia*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995, pp. 109–45.
- 92 S. Chandrashekar, *Colonialism*, p. 4.
- 93 Ibid.
- 94 See James Manor, *Political Change*, where he points out that the mutual hostility and suspicions between the two groups were such that it was not until 1936/7 that brahmins in Mysore, who identified themselves with Congress, and non-brahmins, who had hitherto remained aloof from the Congress banner, came together to press for their mutual political advancement against the Princely authorities.
- 95 Brown, *Gandhi: a Prisoner of Hope*, p. 255.
- 96 Ibid. p. 267. It has been noted above that the Mahasabha had already passed a resolution to similar effect in 1923.
- 97 Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement*, p. 23.
- 98 Bikhu Parekh, *Gandhi's Political Philosophy: A Critical Examination*, London: Macmillan, 1989, p. 190.

- 99 A similar category is that of 'race'. See Javed Majeed, 'Pan-Islamism and "Deracialisation" in the thought of Muhammad Iqbal' in Peter Robb (ed.) *The Concept of Race in South Asia*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 304.
- 100 Achin Vanaik, *The Furies of Indian Communalism: Religion, Modernity and Secularization*, London: Verso, 1997, pp. 130–233.
- 101 Manor, 'Gandhian Politics'.
- 102 cf. Jaffrelot on Golwalkar's totalitarianism – in the proper sense of the term – through which he sought to abolish all intermediary institutions which stood in the way between the individual and his/her identification with the nation, including even the state. *The Hindu Nationalist Movement*, pp. 58–62.
- 103 Manor, *Political Change*, p. 93.
- 104 Pandey, *Construction of Communalism*, pp. 201–5 (especially p. 204).

5 AN ANATOMY OF EGYPTIAN SECULAR-LIBERAL NATIONALISM

- 1 That is, as opposed to Egyptian secular-liberal nationalism, which was one of its paradigms, as will become apparent below.
- 2 I concur with P.J. Vatikiotis that despite the best efforts of the Nasserite regime to claim the rebellion led by Colonel Urabi as a nationalist rebellion, the evidence points to the conclusion that it was not a specifically nationalist rebellion as such. See P.J. Vatikiotis, *The History of Modern Egypt: From Muhammad Ali to Mubarak*, 4th edn, London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1991, pp. 154–66.
- 3 P. Mansfield, *A History of the Middle East*, London: Viking, 1991, pp. 97, 112–13.
- 4 *Ibid.* p. 96.
- 5 Because, of course, at least four of the 'great powers' – the British, the French, the Austro-Hungarians and the Ottomans – had established empires while the others – Germany, Belgium, Italy and Russia – had imperial aspirations.
- 6 Mansfield, *History*, p. 96.
- 7 Thus, Lord Palmerston, 'We do not want Egypt for ourselves, any more than any rational man with an estate in the north of England and a residence in the south would have wished to possess the inns on the road. All he could want would have been that the inns should be well-kept, always accessible, and furnishing him, when he came, with mutton-chops and horses.' Cited in *ibid.* p. 87.
- 8 Israel Gershoni and James Jankowski, *Egypt, Islam and the Arabs: The Search for Egyptian Nationhood, 1900–1930*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1986, p. 4.
- 9 Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990.
- 10 Gershoni and Jankowski, *Egypt, Islam and the Arabs*, pp. 5, 7.
- 11 Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot, *A Short History of Modern Egypt*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 4.
- 12 Gershoni and Jankowski, *Egypt, Islam and the Arabs*, p. 8.
- 13 Interestingly, the British did not define Egypt's resident European minorities according to their religion but according to their nationalities, i.e. Greek, Italian, British, etc. One notices the logic of orientalism at work here whereby nationhood is denied to the 'Oriental' societies on the basis that (a) it is reserved for 'modernized' Europe; (b) that religion and nationality are in conflict, and since religion is the basis of 'oriental' society, such societies cannot become nations.
- 14 Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798–1939*, London: Oxford University Press, 1962, p. 198.
- 15 Vatikiotis, *History*, pp. 231–2.
- 16 For a full and detailed discussion of the terms, the concepts, and the debates

- surrounding them, see Achin Vanaik, *The Furies of Indian Communalism: Religion, Modernity and Secularization*, London: Verso, 1997, pp. 65–233. See also Chapter 2 above.
- 17 al-Sayyid Marsot, *Short History*, p. 60.
- 18 Nadav Safran, *Egypt in Search of Political Community: An Analysis of the Intellectual and Political Evolution of Egypt, 1804–1952*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961, p. 182.
- 19 Mansfield, *History*, p. 86.
- 20 al-Sayyid Marsot, *Short History*, p. 78.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot, *Egypt's Liberal Experiment: 1922–1936*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977, pp. 15–16.
- 23 Selma Botman, *Egypt from Independence to Revolution, 1919–1952*, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1991, pp. 30, 81.
- 24 Ibid. p. 24.
- 25 Vatikiotis, *History*, p. 335; see also al-Sayyid Marsot, *Short History*, p. 92.
- 26 al-Sayyid Marsot, *Egypt's Liberal Experiment*, p. 210: 'In brief, about 10,000 persons owned the larger share of the national capital.'
- 27 Ibid. p. 12.
- 28 Ibid. p. 27.
- 29 Ibid. p. 211.
- 30 Botman, *Egypt from Independence to Revolution*, pp. 20, 32.
- 31 Ibid. pp. 33–4.
- 32 Vatikiotis, *History*, p. 300.
- 33 Charles D. Smith, 'The "crisis of orientation": the shift of Egyptian intellectuals to Islamic subjects in the 1930s', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 4, 1973, 398.
- 34 Paul Salem, *Bitter Legacy: Ideology and Politics in the Arab World*, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1994, p. 11.
- 35 Botman, *Egypt from Independence to Revolution*, p. 21: 'Except where the rich were personally served by the poor, rarely did the two worlds converge.'
- 36 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. and trans. by Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971, pp. 5–8.
- 37 al-Sayyid Marsot, *Egypt's Liberal Experiment*, p. 16.
- 38 Charles Smith, for instance, notes that in his unpublished diaries Muhammad Husayn Haykal 'As early as 1910 . . . had explicitly rejected Muhammad's revelation as divinely inspired'. That he kept this secret is an indication of the social opprobrium which would have resulted if it had become known. 'Crisis', p. 392.
- 39 As we shall see later in this chapter, many of the most prominent of these intellectuals – Taha Husayn, Haykal, al-Hakim – underwent something of an 'Islamic turn' in their writings and participated in the semantic field of Islam in the 1930s by rewriting the biographies of important Islamic figures.
- 40 Vatikiotis, *History*, p. 199: 'In its reformist doctrine, the *Salafiyya* . . . argued for a return to purist origins . . . [whilst] upholding the Abduh reformist principle of utilitarianism in ethics and law.'
- 41 Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid, *Al-Jaridah*, 10 January 1914, cited in C. Wendell, *The Evolution of the Egyptian National Image: From its Origins to Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972, p. 226
- 42 Vatikiotis, *History*, p. 199.
- 43 Yousef M. Choucri, *Arab History and the Nation-State: A Study in Modern Arab Historiography 1820–1980*, London: Routledge, 1989, p. 11.

- 44 Wendell, *Evolution*, p. 124.
- 45 Ibid. p. 123; Gershoni and Jankowski, *Egypt, Islam and the Arabs*, p. 11.
- 46 'Among the many "firsts" to his credit is that of being the first of the modern "Pharaonists"', Wendell, *Evolution*, p. 123.
- 47 Husayn al-Marsafi, cited in *ibid.* p. 135.
- 48 Ibid. p. 127.
- 49 Rifa'a al-Tahtawi, cited in *ibid.* p. 128, my emphasis.
- 50 Ibid. p. 124.
- 51 Ibid. p. 163.
- 52 Al-Tahtawi, *Takhlis al-Ibriz fi Takhlis Bariz*, cited in *ibid.* p. 127.
- 53 Vatikiotis, *History*, pp. 114–15.
- 54 Ibid. p. 202.
- 55 Ibid. p. 214.
- 56 Safran, *Egypt in Search of Political Community*, p. 102.
- 57 Muhammad Abduh, cited in Wendell, *Evolution*, p. 188.
- 58 *ibid.* p. 247.
- 59 Cited in Paul Salem, *Bitter Legacy*, p. 210.
- 60 Wendell, *Evolution*, p. 228.
- 61 The facade of Muslim/Copt solidarity may have dropped briefly in an article Kamil wrote for an Italian agricultural journal in which he suggests that the Egyptians' generosity was due to the infusion of Arab blood – perhaps a 'concealed barb towards the Copts', *ibid.* p. 247.
- 62 Jamal Mohammed Ahmed, *The Intellectual Origins of Egyptian Nationalism*, London: Oxford University Press, 1960, p. 90.
- 63 *Al-Jaridah*, 4 May 1913, cited in Wendell, *Evolution*, p. 229.
- 64 Ironically, although the respective names of the parties suggest the opposite, the Watani party was less territorialist than the Umma party, although the irony is somewhat superficial since the Umma party was the party of the large landowners and thus deeply rooted in the territory.
- 65 *Al-Jaridah*, January 6 1913, cited in Wendell, *Evolution*, p. 233.
- 66 Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid, *Al-Jaridah*, 1 September 1912, cited in Wendell, *Evolution*, p. 230 (my emphases).
- 67 Gershoni and Jankowski, *Egypt, Islam and the Arabs*, pp. 27–8.
- 68 P. Mansfield, *History*, p. 112.
- 69 Ibid. p. 177.
- 70 A measure of such reform, introduced by Gorst and extended by Kitchener, had been experienced at first hand by this élite in the Legislative Assembly which briefly sat in session in 1913.
- 71 Vatikiotis, *History*, pp. 255–6.
- 72 al-Sayyid Marsot, *Egypt's Liberal Experiment*, p. 27.
- 73 Marius Deeb, *Party Politics in Egypt: The Wafd and its Rivals 1919–1939*, Oxford: Ithaca Press, 1979, p. 44.
- 74 Gershoni and Jankowski, *Egypt*, p. 74.
- 75 Often, the unconstitutional behaviour of the British encouraged King Fuad in his disrespect for constitutional practice. See al-Sayyid Marsot, *Egypt's Liberal Experiment*, p. 93.
- 76 Much of what I draw on in this section is taken from Gershoni and Jankowski, *Egypt, Islam and the Arabs*, pp. 34–9.
- 77 Ibid. p. 40.
- 78 Ibid. p. 154.
- 79 Ibid. p. 36.
- 80 Ibid. p. 35.

- 81 Ibid.
- 82 Ibid. p. 132.
- 83 Ibid. p. 177.
- 84 Ibid. p. 113.
- 85 Ibid. p. 104.
- 86 Ibid. p. 105.
- 87 Ibid. p. 111.
- 88 Safran, *Egypt in Search of Political Community*, p. 110.
- 89 Ibid.
- 90 Ibid.
- 91 See Zafar Ishaq Ansari, 'Contemporary Islam and nationalism: a case study of Egypt', *Die Welt des Islams*, 7, 1, pp. 3–4.
- 92 Ibid. pp. 113–14.
- 93 Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, pp. 22–4.
- 94 G. Hossein Razi, 'Legitimacy, religion and nationalism in the Middle East', *American Political Science Review*, 84, 1, March 1990, pp. 77–8.
- 95 Ibid.
- 96 Ibid. p. 79.
- 97 Ibid.
- 98 Cited in Safran, *Egypt in Search of Political Community*, p. 95.
- 99 See *ibid.* pp. 62–84 for a detailed analysis.
- 100 Ibid. p. 149.
- 101 al-Sayyid Marsot, *Short History*, p. 71. The phrase 'feudalism' with its echo of a feudalistic society is mine.
- 102 al-Sayyid Marsot, *Egypt's Liberal Experiment*, p. 15.
- 103 Aristotle, *Politics*, 4.11.1295b–1296a, cited in Wendell, *Evolution*, p. 282.
- 104 *Al-Jaridah*, 18 May 1907, cited in *ibid.*
- 105 al-Sayyid Marsot, *Egypt's Liberal Experiment*, p. 28.
- 106 Ibid. p. 111.
- 107 As Marius Deeb notes, 'Free elections based on universal male suffrage became anathema to the Liberal Constitutionalists, as it brought the Wafd to power', thus, 'The choice between the Palace and the Wafd was a choice between two evils. When the Liberal Constitutionalists co-operated with the Wafd against the Palace, they were acting in faithfulness to long cherished ideals of democracy and constitutionalism. On the other hand, when the Liberals were either participating in or supporting autocratic regimes . . . their conceptions of democracy and constitutionalism were accordingly modified.' *Party Politics*, p. 185.
- 108 Botman, *Egypt from Independence from Independence to Revolution*, p. 32.
- 109 Wendell, *Evolution*, pp. 183–4.
- 110 Ibid.
- 111 Wendell, *Evolution*, pp. 194–5.
- 112 Ibid. pp. 225–7.
- 113 Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, p. 183.
- 114 Leonard Binder, 'Ali Abd al-Raziq and Islamic liberalism', *Asian and African Studies*, 16, 1982, 46.
- 115 Ibid. p. 47.
- 116 Ibid. p. 49.
- 117 Safran, *Egypt in Search of Political Community*, p. 148.
- 118 Vatikiotis, *History*, p. 303.
- 119 William Sheperd, 'The dilemma of a liberal: some implications in the writings of the Egyptian scholar Ahmad Amin (1886–1954)', in Elie Kedourie and Sylvia Haim (eds) *Modern Egypt: Studies in Politics and Society*, London: Frank Cass, 1980, p. 89.

- 120 Salem, *Bitter Legacy*, pp. 212–13.
- 121 Saad Eddin Ibrahim, 'The socio-economic requisites of democracy', in Ali E. Hillal Dessouki (ed.) *Democracy in Egypt: Problems and Prospects*, Cairo: Cairo Papers in Social Science, American University in Cairo, 1978, p. 57.
- 122 Al-Sayyid Marsot, *Egypt's Liberal Experiment*, p. 110.
- 123 Gershoni and Jankowski, *Egypt, Islam and the Arabs*, pp. 94–5.
- 124 This was the phrase, *al-qabda al-hadidiyya*, which was popularly attributed to the authoritarian Liberal Constitutionalist government of 1928. Marsot, *Egypt's Liberal Experiment*, p. 111.
- 125 Smith, 'Crisis', pp. 384, 394. Smith's excellent essay was published as a rejoinder to Nadav Safran's argument in *Egypt in Search of Political Community* that the 'crisis of orientation' on the part of the secular-liberals was due to an apparently sincere and abrupt U-turn from their previous ideology, almost as if they had succumbed to a 'religious reaction'. Smith quite correctly argues that it was not an ideological recantation but rather a 'device to placate the religious and political opposition of the time'. Thus, he argues, the real crisis of these intellectuals was due to 'the results of their shift to Islamic themes rather than in their motivation.' With a few reservations, I concur entirely.
- 126 Leonard Binder, 'Ali Abd al-Raziq', p. 34. Binder asks the right question, i.e. 'whether the work of Ali Abd al-Raziq . . . helped instigate the fundamentalist reaction' (p. 57) but he is unable to give a definite answer because he fails to locate Raziq's work in the context of a struggle for power and the historical evolution of liberalism in modern Egypt.

6 TAWFIQ AL-HAKIM AND THE DARK SIDE OF EGYPTIAN SECULAR-LIBERAL NATIONALIST DISCOURSE

- 1 Ali B. Jad, *Form and Technique in the Egyptian Novel 1912–1971*, London: Ithaca Press, 1983, p. 38.
- 2 Israel Gershoni and James Jankowski, *Redefining the Egyptian Nation, 1930–1945*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 4.
- 3 Selma Botman, *Egypt from Independence to Revolution, 1919–1952*, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1991, p. 89.
- 4 Gershoni and Jankowski, *Redefining the Egyptian Nation*, p. 11.
- 5 Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot, *Egypt's Liberal Experiment: 1922–1936*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977, p. 211.
- 6 Nadav Safran, *Egypt in Search of Political Community: An Analysis of the Intellectual and Political Evolution of Egypt, 1804–1952*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961, p. 182.
- 7 Richard Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, London: Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 5.
- 8 *Ibid.* p. 37.
- 9 James Jankowski, *Egypt's Young Rebels: 'Young Egypt', 1933–1952*, Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1975, p. 17.
- 10 Charles D. Smith, 'The "crisis of orientation": the shift of Egyptian intellectuals to Islamic subjects in the 1930s', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 4, 1973, pp. 382–410.
- 11 All quotations taken from Tawfiq al-Hakim, *The Return of the Spirit*, trans. William Maynard Hutchins, Washington, DC: Three Continents Press, 1990.
- 12 See Chapter 5 above.
- 13 Gershoni and Jankowski, *Egypt, Islam and the Arabs: The Search for Egyptian nationhood, 1900–1930*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1986, p. 104.

- 14 al-Sayyid Marsot, *Egypt's Liberal Experiment*, p. 41.
- 15 Ibid. p. 116; Marius Deeb, *Party Politics in Egypt: the Wafd and its Rivals 1919–1939*, Oxford: Ithaca Press, 1979, p. 185.
- 16 al-Sayyid Marsot, *Egypt's Liberal Experiment*.
- 17 For more detail, see Gershoni and Jankowski, *Egypt, Islam and the Arabs*, p. 53.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Gershoni and Jankowski point to a ‘well-attended debate over the issue of whether Egypt’s culture was “Pharaonic” or “Arab”’, held at the Egyptian University in December 1930. In so far as the distinction between Pharaonic and Arab affiliations could be mapped on to Egypt’s affiliation with ‘western’ or ‘eastern’ civilization, the result of the debate is interesting since ‘by a sizeable majority (187 to 103) the Arabist position prevailed.’ By the way, this result during what, in their earlier book, they had called the high-point of Egyptian territorial nationalism (i.e. 1925–33) confirms my point in the previous chapter that secular-liberal territorial nationalism in Egypt never possessed significant political or ideological dominance during that entire period. See Gershoni and Jankowski, *Redefining the Egyptian Nation*, p. 28.
- 20 Gershoni and Jankowski, *Egypt, Islam and the Arabs*, p. 181.
- 21 Ibid. p. 130.
- 22 Ibid. p. 116.
- 23 See Chapter 5 above.
- 24 Jad, *Form and Technique*, p. 42.
- 25 Paul Starkey, *From the Ivory Tower: A Critical Study of Tawfiq al-Hakim*, London: Ithaca, 1987, p. 23.
- 26 For example, *Ahl al-Kahf* (The Sleepers of the Cave, 1933) and *Shahrazad* (1934). See Tawfiq al-Hakim, *Plays, Prefaces, and Postscripts*, 2 vols, trans. William Maynard Hutchins, Washington, DC: Three Continents Press, 1981–84, vol. 1, pp. 131–72.
- 27 Smith, ‘Crisis’.
- 28 Haykal cited by Gershoni and Jankowski, *Redefining the Egyptian Nation*, p. 42.
- 29 Ibid. p. 40.
- 30 Hillary Kilpatrick, *The Modern Egyptian Novel: A Study in Social Criticism*, London: Ithaca, 1974, p. 179.
- 31 Gershoni and Jankowski, *Redefining the Egyptian Nation*, p. 58.
- 32 Marius Deeb, *Party Politics*, pp. 315–20. See also Joel Beinin and Zachary Lockman, *Workers on the Nile: Nationalism, Communism, Islam, and the Egyptian Working Class, 1882–1954*, London: I.B. Tauris & Co., 1988, p. 259.
- 33 Cited in Gershoni and Jankowski, *Redefining the Egyptian Nation*, p. 66.
- 34 See Gershoni and Jankowski, *ibid.* pp. 83–4; see also Richard Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, pp. 264–7.
- 35 Hutchins, Introduction to *The Return of the Spirit*, p. 7.
- 36 Matti Moosa, *The Origins of Modern Arabic Fiction*, 2nd edn, London: Lynne Rienner, 1997, p. 306.
- 37 Andrea B. Rugh, *Family in Contemporary Egypt*, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1984, p. 43.
- 38 See Charles Wendell, *The Evolution of the Egyptian National Image: from its origins to Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1972, pp. 269–70; Walid Kazziha, ‘The Jaridah-Umma Group and Egyptian Politics’, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 13, 1977, 382; Gershoni and Jankowski, *Egypt, Islam and the Arabs*, p. 12.
- 39 This was indeed al-Hakim’s own experience. See Richard Long, *Tawfiq al-Hakim: Playwright of Egypt*, London: Ithaca Press, 1979, pp. 2–3.
- 40 Rugh, *Family*, p. 33.
- 41 Ibid. p. 37.

- 42 Long, *Tawfiq al-Hakim*, pp. 2–3.
- 43 Starkey, *From the Ivory Tower*, p. 122.
- 44 The same idea is more apparent in al-Hakim's later novel *Tawmiyyat Na'ib fi'l-Aryaf* (Diary of a Country Prosecutor, 1938). Thus, in describing the death of a woman in childbirth, a doctor relates to the prosecutor how 'he had observed a pile of filthy straw at the woman's feet and had asked the "midwife" . . . for an explanation. "Well, doctor" she said, "when I put my hand in to get the child out, I found the womb slippery, so I said to myself 'I'd better rub my hand with a bit of straw.'" She extended her hand to the doctor who observed that it was filthy with straw 'These midwives deliver a woman of a child as though she were a buffalo' said the doctor.' Tawfiq al-Hakim, *Maze of Justice: Diary of a Country Prosecutor*, trans. Abba Eban, London: Saqi Books, 1989, p. 88.
- 45 P.J. Vatikiotis, *The History of Modern Egypt: from Muhammad Ali to Mubarak*, 4th edn, London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1991, p. 335.
- 46 It is perhaps only valid to speak of the emergence of an Egyptian bourgeoisie at this juncture in so far as the Egyptian élite of large landowners and professionals had, up to this point, consolidated their social position by reproducing the landed social structure of pre-modern Egypt in a kind of 'neo-feudalism'. It is only towards the end of the 1920s and the early 1930s, encouraged by the pro-industrialist Ismail Sidqi, that this class began to diversify into industrial capitalism. I have correspondingly named this élite the 'national bourgeoisie', an appellation which will make apparent its contradistinction to the also emergent 'petty bourgeoisie'.
- 47 Botman, *Egypt from Independence to Revolution*, p. 28; p. 19.
- 48 Hutchins, 'Introduction', p. 13; see also Kilpatrick, *Modern Egyptian Novel*, p. 2.
- 49 Ibid.
- 50 Moosa, *Origins*, p. 309. Moosa cites the Egyptian critic Ali al-Ra'ï to back up his case.
- 51 Strangely, Moosa seems to believe that if anyone should correspond to Isis it should be Zaghlul! This follows from his mistake in trying to read *Awdat al-Rub* as a modern day rewriting of the Osiris myth, which it is not.
- 52 This, according to Richard Long, was the view of Shukri. Long, *Tawfiq al-Hakim*, p. 16.
- 53 This seems to be the view of Richard Long himself and Matti Moosa in his *The Origins of Modern Arabic Fiction*, p. 305.
- 54 Moosa cites Ismail Adham as being of this opinion, *ibid.*; Paul Starkey is also of this opinion in *From the Ivory Tower*, p. 25.
- 55 Cited by Long, *Tawfiq al-Hakim*, p. 16.
- 56 This is despite al-Hakim's later recollection in 1964 that the novel was 'lying in a drawer for a long time' before being 'discovered' by a friend and published. See Tawfiq al-Hakim, *The Prison of Life: An Autobiographical Essay*, trans. Pierre Cachia, Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1992, p. 114. How long it lay in the drawer is not clear. What seems apparent, though, is that there were some alterations before it was deposited there.
- 57 All the critics agree on the strong autobiographical content of the novel, and Richard Long points out that they also agree that 'the Saniyya episode gave him a shock from which he has never completely recovered', *Tawfiq al-Hakim*, p. 6. It seems that the Saniya episodes, as well as several others, were at least partially true events in al-Hakim's life and that this episode in particular seems to have created a strong psychological shock which may have determined his later notorious misogyny. If this is true then there is of course no reason to doubt that he would have written about it since he is one of those writers who does draw heavily on autobiographical material in all his work, especially in his novels.
- 58 Moosa, *Origins*, p. 309.

- 59 Cited in *ibid.*
- 60 Jad, *Form and Technique*, p. 50.
- 61 Hutchins, 'Introduction' p. 8.
- 62 Marius Deeb, *Party Politics*, p. 323.
- 63 See Mahmoud Hussein, *Class Conflict in Egypt 1945–1970*, trans. Michel and Susanne Chirman, Alfred Ehrenfeld, and Kathy Brown, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973, p. 36.
- 64 Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, London: Routledge, 1989. See especially his analysis of Claude Levi-Strauss' work with the Caduveo tribe, pp. 74–80.
- 65 Meenakshi Mukherjee points out that 'a subtle and certain link exists between the novel as a genre and liberal ideology as a way of life'. See her *Realism and Reality: The Novel and Society in India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985, pp. 36–7. One must qualify this slightly by stating that this is true of the realist novel in particular.
- 66 It has been suggested by many that much of the Muslim Brotherhood's success lay in their substituting new forms of community and kinship to replace those lost by newly uprooted peasants who found the disembeddedness of the city disorienting; Nadav Safran, *Egypt in Search of Political Community*, p. 202.
- 67 An example of this struggle between the incipient and barely visible ideological underground and the dominant ideology is the way that the folks' (especially Zanuba's) misrepresentation of Saniya's behaviour with Mustafa is rebalanced by al-Hakim who then spends the greater part of book two restoring her reputation.
- 68 Botman, *Egypt from Independence to Revolution*, p. 40.
- 69 Al-Hakim's own father was a close friend and associate of Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid and had close links to the Liberal Constitutionalist Party. See Long, *Tawfiq al-Hakim*, p. 2.
- 70 James Jankowski, *Egypt's Young Rebels*, p. 30.
- 71 Uri Kupferschmidt, 'The Muslim Brothers and the Egyptian village', *Asian and African Studies*, 16, 1982, 157–70.
- 72 *Ibid.* p. 160.
- 73 Deeb, *Party Politics*, p. 32. One might also add that this might have contributed to class tensions within such groups as the Muslim Brotherhood in so far as it appealed to both the petty bourgeoisie and the urban proletariat although, as W.M. Carson points out, among the proletariat the Brotherhood were admired but 'few actually joined the organization . . . [since it] required a lengthy initiation period spent in becoming literate and gaining a thorough knowledge of the Brotherhood's interpretation of the meaning of Islam.' W.M. Carson, 'The social history of an Egyptian factory', *Middle East Journal*, 11, 1957, 369. This was the same reason that, according to Kupferschmidt, the *fellah* were unresponsive to the Brotherhood's message since the Brotherhood promoted a 'scripturalist' Islam alien to the illiterate *fellah*. One may conclude, therefore, that the vast bulk of the Brotherhood's enormous membership was constituted by the urban petty bourgeoisie which tended to be educated and literate.
- 74 James Jankowski, *Egypt's Young Rebels*; Mitchell, *Society of the Muslim Brothers*.
- 75 One might suggest that this is similar to the 'suture' which Gramsci talks about, '[In England] the old landowning aristocracy is joined to industrialists by a kind of suture which is precisely that which in other countries unites the traditional intellectuals with the new dominant classes.' Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. and trans. by Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971, p. 18.
- 76 Over the course of their two books, Gershoni and Jankowski illustrate this transfer

because many of the intellectuals featured in their first volume are also featured in the second as having changed their earlier positions. They do not comment on this except in order to illustrate their concept of a 'feedback loop' which compelled those intellectuals to change in order to retain their popularity. This, however, is insufficient because they seem to suggest that these intellectuals 'hopped' from one discrete ideological position to another but not that there were latencies within their earlier positions which, in the context of Egypt's evolving social dynamics, would facilitate their transfer of allegiance. The idea of a straightforward 'feedback loop' is problematic in so far as it presumes one closed circuit of 'producers' and 'consumers' whereas, in fact, intellectual 'consumers' are more often than not producers themselves articulating the discourse from socially diverse positions. There is not one single 'intellectual market' but several, each coexisting and conflicting with the others.

- 77 Starkey notes that such attacks began in the early rather than late 1930s, *From the Ivory Tower*, p. 158. If so, this would reinforce the argument that al-Hakim's disillusionment with the political status quo would have been quite advanced by the time *Awdat al-Ruh* was published.
- 78 Gershoni and Jankowski, *Redefining the Egyptian Nation*, pp. 5–6; Safran, *Egypt in Search of Political Community*, p. 201; Long, *Tawfiq al-Hakim*, pp. 42–3.
- 79 Pierre Cachia, 'Idealism and ideology: the case of Tawfiq al-Hakim' in *An Overview of Modern Arabic Literature*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990, p. 157.
- 80 Jankowski, *Egypt's Young Rebels*, p. 37; Mitchell, *Society of the Muslim Brothers*, pp. 218–19, points out, for example, that for the Brotherhood 'all elections since 1923 . . . are spurious'.
- 81 Cachia, 'Idealism and ideology', p. 158; Starkey, *From the Ivory Tower*, p. 179.
- 82 Starkey, *ibid.* p. 158.
- 83 See Mitchell, *Society of the Muslim Brothers*, pp. 260–94; 295.
- 84 *Ibid.* pp. 234–5.
- 85 Leonard Binder, 'Ali Abd al-Raziq and Islamic Liberalism', *Asian and African Studies*, 16, 1982, 34.
- 86 Mitchell, *Society of the Muslim Brothers*, p. 261.
- 87 *Ibid.* p. 225.
- 88 *Ibid.* p. 248 (my emphases).
- 89 *Ibid.* p. 246.
- 90 Tawfiq al-Hakim, cited in Cachia, 'Idealism and ideology', p. 160.
- 91 *Ibid.* p. 161.
- 92 Mitchell, *Society of the Muslim Brothers*; Jankowski, *Egypt's Young Rebels*, pp. 26–8, 38.
- 93 See Achin Vanaik's interesting discussion of fascism in his *The Furies of Indian Communalism: Religion, Modernity and Secularization*, London: Verso, 1997, p. 239.
- 94 Cachia, 'Idealism and ideology', pp. 164–5.
- 95 Starkey, *From the Ivory Tower*, pp. 186–7.
- 96 Jad, *Form and Technique*, p. 55.
- 97 Cited in Long, *Tawfiq al-Hakim*, p. 65.
- 98 P.J. Vatikiotis, *Nasser and his Generation*, New York: St Martin's Press, 1978, p. 28.

7 NAGUIB MAHFOUZ, NATIONAL ALLEGORY AND NEOPATRIARCHY: THE *CAIRO TRILOGY*

- 1 The concept of an 'obstructed' capitalism is Mahmoud Hussein's; see his *Class Conflict in Egypt 1945–1970*, trans. Michel and Susanne Chirman, Alfred Ehrenfeld and Kathy Brown, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973, Chapter 1 'The Contending Classes' pp. 15–61, particularly pp. 20–4.
- 2 The first organized forms of socialism emerged in the early years of the 1920s and took shape in the Egyptian Socialist Party which was founded in 1921. It included Egyptian intellectuals such as Salama Musa among its ranks, in addition to radicals from the foreign communities resident in Egypt. Ideologically, it was a diverse conglomerate of leftist paradigms, ranging from gradualist social democracy and Fabian socialism to revolutionary communism. Eventually, this heterogeneity became unsustainable and led to the departure of all those elements opposed to Bolshevism. At the same time, the Party affiliated to Comintern and subsequently renamed itself the Communist Party of Egypt in 1922. The party was, however, ruthlessly crushed by Zaghlul's Wafdist government in 1924 and all forms of socialism, even moderate parliamentary socialism, were effectively outlawed. After 1924, socialism in Egypt did not emerge as a political force until the eve of the Second World War as social conditions became more propitious for its development. See Joel Beinin and Zachary Lockman, *Workers on the Nile: Nationalism, Communism, Islam and the Egyptian Working Class, 1882–1954*, London: IB Tauris & Co., 1988; Selma Botman, *The Rise of Egyptian Communism 1939–1970*, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1988; and Vernon Egger, *Salamah Musa and the Rise of the Professional Classes in Egypt, 1909–1939*, London: University Press of America, 1986.
- 3 Hussein, *Class Conflict*, p. 36. Beinin and Lockman concur; see their *Workers on the Nile*, p. 7.
- 4 Beinin and Lockman, *Workers on the Nile*, p. 6.
- 5 Hussein, *Class Conflict*, pp. 32–3.
- 6 Ibid. pp. 28–9.
- 7 Ibid. p. 36.
- 8 Ibid. p. 21.
- 9 Beinin and Lockman, *Workers on the Nile*, pp. 257–9.
- 10 Ibid. pp. 344, 337, 321, 259.
- 11 See Israel Gershoni and James Jankowski, *Redefining the Egyptian Nation, 1930–1945*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 89, 97, 137–8. In each of these cases, not only the integrity but also the supremacy of the Egyptian national state within the respective supra-national framework is emphasized.
- 12 Hussein, *Class Conflict*, p. 36.
- 13 Beinin and Lockman, *Workers on the Nile*, p. 7.
- 14 Naguib Mahfouz, cited in Matti Moosa, *The Early Novels of Naguib Mahfouz: Images of Modern Egypt*, Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1994, p. 11.
- 15 See Vernon Egger, *Salamah Musa*.
- 16 Gershoni and Jankowski, *Redefining the Egyptian Nation*, p. 11. Mahfouz graduated from the Egyptian University in the 1930s.
- 17 Egger cites Eric Hobsbawm's analysis of Fabianism in his *Labouring Men: Studies in the History of Labour*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1964.
- 18 Ibid. p. 22, my emphasis. It might be suggested that communism, for example, is more concerned with the means of production rather than distribution. Once production is communalized, the distribution issue, so it is argued, would be automatically taken care of.
- 19 Naguib Mahfouz, cited in Rasheed El-Enany *Naguib Mahfouz: the Pursuit of Meaning*, London: Routledge, 1993, p. 28.

- 20 Menahem Milson, *Najib Mahfuz: The Novelist-Philosopher of Cairo*, New York: St Martin's Press, 1998, p. 269. I have used the popularized western rendering of Naguib Mahfouz as opposed to the more conventional rendering among Arab linguists of Najib Mahfuz, thereby dispensing with the need for diacritical marks. However, quotations will be rendered as in the original.
- 21 Mattiyahu Peled, *Religion, My Own: The Literary Works of Najib Mahfuz*, London: Transaction Books, 1983. He suggests that Aisha represents the Turkish element in Egyptian society and that the annihilation of her branch of the family signifies the novelist's judgement on Egypt's Turkish past. I shall return to Peled's reading of the Aisha episode below.
- 22 On the use of the Trilogy as historical evidence, see Israel Gershoni, 'Between Ottomanism and Egyptianism: the evolution of "National Sentiment" in the Cairene middle class as reflected in Najib Mahfuz's *Bayn al-Qasrayn*', *Asian and African Studies*, 17, 1983, 227-63.
- 23 Rasheed El-Enany, *Naguib Mahfouz*, p. xii.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Ibid. pp. 70-90.
- 26 Milson, *Najib Mahfuz*, p. 133.
- 27 Naguib Mahfouz, *Sugar Street*, trans. William Maynard Hutchins and Angele Botros Samaan, London: Black Swan, 1995, p. 191. All citations will be to this edition and will be indicated in the text by the abbreviation SS. Note that the translation renders the point a little less clearly than it might; Milson translates the episode by using 'fiction' instead of 'short story' and adding that as a 'cunning art' it has 'unlimited artifices'. Milson, *Najib Mahfuz*, p. 132.
- 28 See Selma Botman, *The Rise of Egyptian Communism*, p. 64; see also Beinin and Lockman, *Workers on the Nile*, p. 349. The exact date of the crackdown was 11 July 1946.
- 29 Andrea B. Rugh, *Family in Contemporary Egypt*, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1984, p. 43.
- 30 See Frederic Jameson, 'Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism', *Social Text*, 15, Fall 1986, 65-88, particularly p. 69. One need not agree with Jameson's extreme and deterministic qualifiers which suggest that all 'Third world texts' are 'necessarily' national allegories to say that, in certain cases some novels written from the colonized or semi-colonized societies were indeed national allegories. For a trenchant critique of Jameson's theoretical position see Aijaz Ahmad, 'Jameson's rhetoric of otherness and the "national allegory"' in *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*, London: Verso, 1992, pp. 95-122.
- 31 Naguib Mahfouz, *Palace of Desire*, trans. William Maynard Hutchins, Lorne M. Kenny and Olive E. Kenny, London: Black Swan, 1995, p. 227. All future citations will be to this edition and will be indicated in the text by the abbreviation PD.
- 32 Naguib Mahfouz, *Palace Walk*, trans. William Maynard Hutchins and Olive E. Kenny, London: Doubleday, 1991, p. 319. All citations will be to this edition and indicated in the text by the abbreviation PW.
- 33 See also Rasheed El-Enany, *Naguib Mahfouz*, p. 81.
- 34 See Richard van Leeuwen, 'Love and the mechanisms of power: Kamal Abd al-Jawwad and Said al-Juhayni' in Roger Allen, Hillary Kilpatrick and Ed de Moor (eds) *Love and Sexuality in Modern Arabic Literature*, London: Saqi Books, 1995, pp. 97-8.
- 35 For more detail see Gershoni, 'Between Ottomanism and Egyptianism', pp. 242-53.
- 36 Ibid. p. 252.
- 37 Ibid. p. 254.

- 38 Fatma Moussa-Mahmoud, 'Depth of vision: the fiction of Naguib Mahfouz', *Third World Quarterly*, 11, 2, April 1989, 160.
- 39 Rasheed El-Enany, *Naguib Mahfouz*, p. 73.
- 40 Saeed N. Ahmed, 'The function of space in Najib Mahfuz's *Bayn al-Qasrayn*', *International Fiction Review*, 16, 1, 1989, 43; my emphasis.
- 41 See also El-Enany, *Naguib Mahfouz*, pp. 72-3.
- 42 See Sasson Somekh, *The Changing Rhythm: A Study of Najib Mahfuz's Novels*, Lieden: EJ Brill, 1973, pp. 129-31.
- 43 Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, London: Fontana, 1973, p. 265.
- 44 Richard K. Myers, 'The problem of authority: Franz Kafka and Naguib Mahfouz', *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 17, 1986, p. 82.
- 45 See Vernon Egger, *Salamah Musa*; Rasheed El-Enany: 'In the course of discussing techniques of dealing with time in the novel, he [Mahfouz] contrasts "logical time" with "psychological time" and he comes out mostly in favour of the first. He insists on the historicity of time.' *Naguib Mahfouz*, pp. 70-1.
- 46 See El-Enany, *Naguib Mahfouz*, p. 85; Milson, *Najib Mahfuz*, p. 21; Somekh, however, points out that 'The main character, Kamal, resembles the author in more than one detail, but the two differ in many others.' See Somekh, *Changing Rhythm*, p. 107. Matti Moosa asks, 'Does Kamal, as some writers suggest [i.e. Shukri], represent the mental paralysis of the petty bourgeoisie of his time? . . . Kamal may reflect Mahfouz's intellectual agony and that of others in similar situations, but he does not typify the young men of his class and time.' *Early Novels*, p. 221.
- 47 Milson, *Najib Mahfuz*, p. 21. In his book, Milson also notes Mahfouz's propensity to dissemble to his interviewers, as well as contradicting statements he might have made elsewhere.
- 48 Ibid. He also cites Mahfouz's defence of the novel as a form in 1945 against an attack from no less a literary personality than al-Aqqad. Al-Aqqad, it seems, had a distaste for the novel (perhaps because he was not very good at it).
- 49 'Used as a common noun, *shaddad* signifies any number of devices the purpose of which is to pull or tighten. The name Shaddad describes well the powerful attraction that Aida exerts on Kamal, and his attraction to her.' Milson, *ibid.* p. 213.
- 50 Richard van Leeuwen, 'Love and the Mechanisms of Power', p. 103.
- 51 Somekh, *Changing Rhythm*, p. 119.
- 52 These refer to the translated editions.
- 53 Egger, *Salamah Musa*, p. 25; El-Enany quotes Mahfouz as suggesting that Progress is an even stronger force than death! El-Enany, *Naguib Mahfouz*, p. 71.
- 54 El-Enany, *ibid.* p. 83.
- 55 See Israel Gershoni and James Jankowski, *Egypt, Islam and the Arabs: the Search for Egyptian Nationhood, 1900-1939*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1986, pp. 108-9.
- 56 Mahfouz, quoted in Rasheed El-Enany, 'Religion in the novels of Naguib Mahfouz', *British Society for Middle Eastern Studies Bulletin*, 15, 1, 1988, 22. See also Milson, *Najib Mahfuz*, p. 30; and Somekh, *Changing Rhythm*, p. 107.
- 57 M.M. Badawi, *A Short History of Modern Arabic Literature*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993, p. 11.
- 58 Selma Botman, *The Rise of Egyptian Communism*, pp. 40-50.
- 59 *Ibid.* p. 54.
- 60 Hisham Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy: A Theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988, p. 7.
- 61 Its most fundamental problem is that Sharabi seems to suggest that neopatriarchy is a structural corollary of dependent modernization limited to 'peripheral', semi-colonized and colonized societies in the wake of colonial expansion and European

- supremacy. It is, therefore, specifically non-western. Conversely, he seems to regard western modernity as 'authentic' and presumably free from patriarchy, as somehow 'beyond' patriarchy (see especially p. 22 and p. 26). Feminists in Europe and America, to pick one group, would beg to disagree. Moreover, the larger question of what makes any given modernity 'authentic' whilst others are not is not addressed.
- 62 Cited in Rasheed El-Enany, 'Religion', p. 21.
- 63 An exception to this is Sabry Hafez, 'Women's narrative in modern Arabic literature: a typology' in Roger Allen, Hillary Kilpatrick and Ed de Moor (eds) *Love and Sexuality in Modern Arabic Literature*, London: Saqi, 1995, pp. 154–74.
- 64 See, for example, Menahem Milson, *Najib Mahfuz*, p. 114; Ibrahim El-Sheikh, 'Egyptian women as portrayed in the social novels of Najib Mahfuz' in Trevor LeGassick (ed.) *Critical Perspectives on Naguib Mahfouz*, Washington, DC: Three Continents Press, 1993, p. 94.
- 65 Miriam Cooke, 'Men constructed in the mirror of prostitution', in Michael Beard and Adnan Haydar (eds.) *Naguib Mahfouz: From Regional Fame to Global Recognition*, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1993, pp. 106–25.
- 66 Ibid. p. 107.
- 67 Ibid. p. 111.
- 68 'Mahfouz's depiction of prostitutes make explicit what remains implicit in his other women – that men reify all women to avoid dealing with the reality of their lives and experiences . . . Mahfouz uses prostitutes to demonstrate his male characters' inability to deal with women except as masks and symbols', *ibid.* pp. 112–14.
- 69 Ibid. p. 112.
- 70 Both cited in Fauzi M. Najjar, 'Islamic fundamentalism and the intellectuals: the case of Naguib Mahfouz' *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 25, 1, 1998, pp. 144–5.
- 71 Cooke, 'Men constructed', p. 115.
- 72 See Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory*, London: Routledge, 1985.
- 73 Rugh, *Family in Contemporary Egypt*, p. 35; p. 37.
- 74 Peter Brooks, *Body Work: Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993, p. 25.
- 75 Ibid.
- 76 Ibid. p. 8.
- 77 Ibid. p. 25 (my emphasis).
- 78 See Milson, *Najib Mahfuz*, pp. 205–7.
- 79 Evelyn Accad, 'The prostitute in Arab and North African fiction', in Pierre L. Horn and Mary Beth Pringle (eds) *The Image of the Prostitute in Modern Literature*, New York: Ungar, 1984, pp. 74–5.
- 80 Ibid. p. 66.
- 81 El-Sheikh, 'Egyptian Women', p. 95.
- 82 Peled, *Religion, My Own*, pp. 110ff. See also Milson, *Najib Mahfuz*, p. 209 for a possible religious allusion: 'Khadija was the only wife by whom the Prophet Muhammad had living children, whereas Aisha bore him no child.'
- 83 Beinun and Lockman note that tobacco manufacturers were exclusively foreign and that they constituted the largest capitalist industry in Egypt prior to the Second World War.
- 84 It is noticeable that the question of female visibility and invisibility is connected to the process of embodiment. Respectable women, who are supposed to be invisible, are not sexually embodied in the way the disreputable women are. Here, again, the narrative process itself can be seen to be conforming to the discourse of respectability,

- averting its gaze from the bodies of respectable women yet feasting on the bodies of disreputable ones.
- 85 Cooke, 'Men constructed', p. 108.
- 86 See Beth Baron, 'Mothers, morality and nationalism in pre-1919 Egypt' in R. Khalidi, L. Anderson, M. Muslih and R.S. Simon (eds) *The Origins of Arab Nationalism*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1991, pp. 271–88.
- 87 El-Sheikh, 'Egyptian Women', p. 96.
- 88 Ibid. p. 97.
- 89 Ibid.
- 90 Diane Singerman, *Avenues of Participation: Family, Politics, and Networks in Urban Quarters of Cairo*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995, p. 15.
- 91 David Radavich, 'Man among men: David Mamet's homosocial order' in Peter F. Murphy (ed.) *Fictions of Masculinity: Crossing Cultures, Crossing Sexualities*, New York: New York University Press, 1994, pp. 123–36.
- 92 Fatima Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil*, cited in Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy*, pp. 33–4.
- 93 Radavich, 'Man among Men', p. 135.
- 94 Cited in Moosa, *Early Novels*, p. 155.
- 95 Singerman, *Avenues*, p. 16.
- 96 Ibid. p. 6.
- 97 Cited in Milson, *Early Novels*, p. 52.
- 98 Egger, *Salamah Musa*, p. 25.
- 99 Gershoni, 'Between Ottomanism and Egyptianism', p. 260, my emphases.
- 100 Selma Botman, *Egypt from Independence to Revolution, 1919–1952*, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1991, p. 28; Beinín and Lockman, *Workers on the Nile*, p. 149.
- 101 Egger, *Salamah Musa*.
- 102 Ibid. p. 49.
- 103 See William Shepard, 'The dilemma of a liberal: some implications in the writings of the Egyptian scholar Ahmad Amin (1886–1954)' in Elie Kedourie and Sylvia G. Haim (eds) *Modern Egypt: Studies in Politics and Society*, London: Frank Cass, 1980, pp. 84–97.
- 104 Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy*, pp. 3–14.
- 105 Mustafa al-Tawati, 'Place in three novels by Mahfouz' in Trevor Le Gassick (ed.) *Critical Perspectives on Naguib Mahfouz*, Washington, DC: Three Continents Press, p. 71.
- 106 Egger, *Salamah Musa*, p. 25.
- 107 Ibid. p. 36, footnote 111.
- 108 Beinín and Lockman, *Workers on the Nile*, pp. 218ff.; Botman, *The Rise of Egyptian Communism*, pp. 64ff.
- 109 Stuart Hall, 'On postmodernism and articulation' (interview with Stuart Hall), in D. Morley and K.H. Chen (eds) *Stuart Hall, Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, London: Routledge, 1996, p. 136.
- 110 Nadav Safran, *Egypt in Search of Political Community: An Analysis of the Intellectual and Political Evolution of Egypt, 1804–1952*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961, p. 149.
- 111 Botman, *Rise of Egyptian Communism*, p. xx., p. 19.
- 112 Cited by El-Enany, 'Religion', p. 21.
- 113 Cited in Najjar, 'Islamic fundamentalism', p. 162.
- 114 Ibid. My emphasis.
- 115 Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy*, pp. 28–9.
- 116 Rugh, *Family in Contemporary Egypt*, p. 45.
- 117 Singerman, *Avenues*, p. 6.

NOTES

- 118 The mirror image actually reinforces the public/private dichotomy just as in Lacanian psychoanalysis the mirror stage helps the infant to consolidate the distinction between self and not-self.

8 REFLECTIONS ON NATIONALISM, CULTURE AND IDEOLOGY IN INDIA AND EGYPT

- 1 David Brown, 'Are there good and bad nationalisms?', *Nations and Nationalism*, 5, 2, 1999, 299.
- 2 Achin Vanaik, *The Furies of Indian Communalism: Religion, Modernity and Secularization*, London: Verso, 1997, pp. 65–8.
- 3 Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought: The Response of the Shi'i and Sunni Muslims to the Twentieth Century*, London: Macmillan, 1982, p. 79.
- 4 Leonard Binder, 'Ali Abd al-Raziq and Islamic Liberalism', *Asian and African Studies*, 16, 1982, p. 46.
- 5 Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976.

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