CONCLUSION

Reflections on Fractured Modernity

How do we account for the world the middle class made in colonial north India? How do we understand what drove the people who sought to define themselves as a middle class toward politics that appear to have been quite contradictory? How, for instance, could they simultaneously represent a theoretically equal public yet so blatantly exclude the lower classes from any imagination of that public? How could middle-class discourse simultaneously applaud the achievements of women in public life, yet also insist that women remain confined by a stridharma whose most evident characteristic was husband-worship? How could it simultaneously call for a Hinduism above caste differences, yet reinforce these distinctions in other, contemporary, writing? How could middle-class political activists simultaneously subscribe to plural nationalist and an exclusivist Hindu nationalist agenda?

To answer these questions, the preceding chapters suggest, we first need to better understand the middle class. To be middle class in colonial Lucknow (and probably elsewhere in the world too) was not simply a result of having a certain income, occupation, or even educational training. Undoubtedly these factors limited who could or could not be classified as middle class, but ultimately being middle class was a project. It was through defining their distinction from other social groups, through their activities in the public sphere, that a group of educated men, and later women, were able to define themselves as middle class. Distinction here worked in both senses of the word; not only did cultural projects of the middle class distinguish it from other social groups, the Indian middle class also contended that the norms and values it was seeking to propagate were superior to those of the existing aristocratic elites, lower classes, and ultimately, to those of the British rulers. Empowerment—both against established social and political elites, and over other subordinated sections of society—was at the heart of the projects constituting the middle class.

Critical to this project of empowerment were cultural strategies that sought to recast respectability. Whether it was critiques of lifestyles followed by the nawabs or taluqders, or new notions of patriarchy, or reconstructed notions of being Hindu, or indeed novel ideas about Indian-ness—middle-class efforts at empowerment sought to transform existing cultural norms, and invent new ones which would better reflect their own ideas and social positions. Many of these efforts at reconstructing norms of respectable conduct drew heavily on western ideas and institutions. In fact, there is little doubt that the idea of a middle class was itself derived from existing British models. It was the appropriation and deploying of what may well have been a mythical model created first in Britain (Wahrman 1995), that initially allowed educated men to represent themselves as a progressive, virtuous, and modern middle class in colonial India. A significant part of the agenda of improvement that the Indian middle class deployed in the public sphere borrowed heavily from that of their Victorian counterparts in Britain. New ideas about the value of public opinion, notions of bourgeois domesticity and the vilification of the courtesans, a new anthropocentric religiosity, and nationalism were certainly products of a 'derivative discourse' (Chatterjee 1986). Yet, the middle class in colonial India was not simply a result of transplantation of English or western values and attitudes, and given the circumstances, could not be that.

Middle-class Indians quickly adopted those aspects of the western model which best suited their own interests and life situations. Thus a wide variety of middle-class representatives came to stress the importance of individual achievement over birth, or the desirability of thrift and industry over conspicuous consumption. The middle class of colonial Lucknow, for instance, found the critique of the 'idle' or 'decadent' upper classes particularly useful in its attempt to contest the cultural, economic, and political significance of nawabs and taluqders in the city, and it was equally quick to appropriate the vocabulary of the British social purity movement in its desire to diminish the role of the courtesans. Yet, as important as its derivative agenda, were the ways in which the middle class of colonial Lucknow did not conform to the ideal-type of a progressive, liberal, and meritocratic class. Such 'deviations' too need to be located in the circumstances of their lives. Once again, ideas of respectability are critical to any understanding of how and why the middle class of colonial Lucknow came not only to share agenda with the ideal-typical western middle class, but also embraced positions quite at variance from that model. It is important to note, for instance, the upper-caste and Ashraf background of the men who fashioned themselves as a middle class in colonial Lucknow. Though they may not have been a part of the elite in nawabi society, neither were they from families without some social
standing in pre-colonial Lucknow. Their new ideas about respectability, new strategies of empowerment, also utilized these existing resources of status and prestige.

Thus, while middle-class activists embraced ideas of a public sphere, in their imagination only people like themselves, below the amra (nobility) yet above the aawam (commoners) constituted the public, as Sarshar's comment in Chapter One makes apparent. There was no way that respectable men like themselves would consider discussing issues of public import with khansamas (cooks), orderlies, barbers, or others of that ilk. In fact, the mere thought of sitting at the same table with them, or even the prospect of having to deal with lower-class men in positions of authority was an abomination to them. Similarly, while new ideas about women's rights, as well as their own changing lifestyles, directed the reconstitution of gender relations, these changes did not usher in a simple discourse on equality of the sexes. Rather, middle-class interventions produced new ideas (shared in many cases, by men and women) that blended bourgeois domestic 'freedom' with notions of gendered respectability drawn from much older patriarchal traditions like the Manusmriti. Similar contradictions are evident in the middle-class ideas about religion. New compulsions of defining their distinction from the British led middle-class activists towards constructing identities based on religion. This entailed the construction of a new Hinduism, shorn of divisiveness, its contradictions, and myriad social and cultural practices. Yet it became impossible for even the most ardent votanes of 'publicized' Hinduism to repudiate their upper-caste status, and endorse this vision of Hinduism unambiguously. Similarly, middle-class nationalist activists or commentators on the national movement, found they could garner or vicariously enjoy a certain kind of respect by supporting either a plural anti-colonial nationalism, or a more sectarian anti-Muslim Hindu nationalism. In short, though cultural entrepreneurship in rewriting norms of respectability empowered the middle class over other social actors in Lucknow, and in that sense was central to its very constitution, such cultural reinscriptions were not recorded on a tabula rasa. Their efforts very obviously deployed newer ideas and used new possibilities that opened up with colonial rule, yet also retained many older resources of respectability, not quite consistent with the rhetoric of Enlightenment freedoms. The modernity which the middle classes constructed in colonial India, therefore, used the new and the old, looked ahead as well as back. A fractured modernity produced the sort of contradictions noted in this study of colonial Lucknow.

But how are we to understand these contradictions of middle-class politics, and their fractured modernity? Are they simply pointers to the impossibility of a 'true' modernity in a world peopled by homo hierarchicus, as Louis Dumont's work suggested, echoing the sentiments of many generations of Orientalist scholars and colonial administrators before him (Dumont 1970a; also, Appadurai 1988; Dirks 1992; van der Veer 1993)? Do these contradictions, does the fractured nature of their modernity, alternatively, prove right those critics who argue against using the category of middle class in Indian history altogether? Colonial India never had an Industrial Revolution, which these scholars assume as a necessary precondition for a strong and vibrant middle class (Torri 1991; Oberoi 1994). Or, should we follow the lead offered by Partha Chatterjee, among some other scholars of the Subaltern Studies collective, and trace the contradictions of the middle class to the colonial milieu which compelled the Indian middle class to define its modernity in ways very different from that of the West (Chatterjee 1997)? Underlying all these questions, ostensibly about the peculiarities of the Indian case, are comparisons between the failures, lacks, or deviations of the Indian case, and certain 'originary' models of middle class-ness. To try and answer such questions then, we too need to undertake a comparative exercise, to contrast the Indian experience with the metropolitan middle class, which operate as the standard against which this Indian case is being implicitly judged.

Even a cursory examination of the literature on the middle class in England, for instance, reveals significant variation between a messy and complicated historical reality and the model of a progressive, enlightened, middle class emerging 'like the rising sun' out of the Industrial Revolution (Wahrman 1995: 1). Such scholarship, for one, questions the causal connection between rapid industrialization and the emergence of a 'middle class society'. But it also reveals that public-sphere interventions were critical in establishing certain myths about middle-class formation, which now stand as models against which non-western historical developments are judged (Owensby 1999). General surveys of European history, moreover, reveal that much like the Lucknow case, hierarchy was very much part of the domestic as well as public life of the mid- to late-nineteenth-century European bourgeoisie. Eric Hobsbawm notes that ideas about representative government, and civil rights and liberties were a part of the political vocabulary of the middle class, but only so long as they were 'compatible with the rule of law and with the kind of order which kept the poor in their place' (Hobsbawm 1989: 287). If we take into account attitudes towards women, children, and servants, then 'the structure of the bourgeois family flatly contradicted that of bourgeoisie [public] society' (ibid.: 280). In fact, Hobsbawm goes on to argue that a sense of superiority was central to the constitution of the bourgeois man, and 'the monopoly
of command—in his house, in his business, in his factory—was crucial to his self definition’ (ibid: 288). Evidently then, concerns with empowerment, and the retention of older (albeit transformed) social prejudices were as much characteristic of the-European middle classes, as they were of those in India.

These are, of course, fairly well known facts about European nineteenth-century history, and could well be elaborated upon in more detail. The model of a liberal, democratic, progressive middle class which seizes power from a decadent, enfeebled, feudal order to reorder society and politics along the lines suggested by the *philosophes* of the Enlightenment, is a myth which has been undermined repeatedly by historians of Europe (Mayer 1981; Blackboum and Eley 1984). The really interesting part about all of this, of course, is that even masses of counter-factual examples have not dented the power and persistence of the model. Thus, despite recognizing differences between different European middle classes, despite acknowledging the importance of self-constitution in the making of this class, despite surveying literature that points to the persistence and power of older ideas, institutions, and classes in European society in the 'long nineteenth century', a recent review article on the subject concludes that the existence of the middle classes in Europe depended on 'certain historical constellations, among them the tradition of the Enlightenment' which were specific to European history. 'It is not very likely', Jurgen Kocka concludes, 'that they will be found in many other parts of the world' (Kocka 1995: 806 and passim).

One may dismiss this as yet another example of Eurocentric historiography, but the issues that such reviews raise are of greater significance simply because of the assumptions which underlie Kocka's understanding of history, and its implications for those of us who work on non-European histories. If the import of such essays was simply to point to the specificity of historical experience in different parts of the world, there would be no reason to disagree. However, despite recognizing the regional variations within Europe, and the different meanings and political valency that equivalent words carry in different European languages, and even the fact that the category in fact has been used 'as a polemical or affirmative code word in public debates', Kocka affirms the existence of a pan-European middle class (ibid.: 783). What allows him to do this—despite plenty of evidence to the contrary even from the authors he reviews in this essay—is the notion of a shared liberal tradition to be traced back to the European Enlightenment, which apparently makes industrialists and professionals, living under different economic and political circumstances across a large continent, 'a middle-class'. Implicit in this formulation, however unintentionally, is also the assumption that other social groups who constitute themselves as middle classes in other parts of the world, must ultimately also be judged by these standards.

This, of course, is exactly the point Dipesh Chakrabarty makes in his thoughtful, much cited essay discussing the impact of modern historical categories on subaltern histories (Chakrabarty 1992b). Chakrabarty argues that in the world of scholarly knowledge, only 'Europe'—by which he means a model of modernity derived from western history—is 'theoretically (i.e., at the level of the fundamental categories that shape historical thinking) knowable'. Dominance of the West over the rest of the world has meant that models derived from the history of this 'Europe' are universalized, so that histories of the aptly termed non-western regions of the world are always compared to supposedly universal models, and found wanting. The universalization of western modernity perpetuates the dominance of 'Europe' over Others through 'the representations of all histories as History' (Prakash 1994: 1484). Even more problematically perhaps, the universalization of modernity means that historical developments that are different can only be evaluated either as emulations, deviations, or as failures. Chakrabarty's approach certainly helps to rethink solutions to one of the central problems in understanding Indian middle-class projects—namely, the persistence of the ideal-typical model. Or, to paraphrase that famous song, why couldn't the Indian middle class be more like the English? Chakrabarty's analysis helps explain how Kocka can confidently assert the middle class-ness of Europe, while denying its 'exportability'. It also explains why historians of the non-western world, and I include my own work in such characterizations, find it impossible to do the same. Even while pointing out the limits of European modernity, I cannot but engage extensively with the history of Europe, thus pointing to the strength of Chakrabarty's argument.

Acknowledging the impossibility of escaping modernity, or of constructing a historical discourse outside of these categories of modernity, Chakrabarty rejects the possibility of a history framed by 'indigenous' or nativist categories, and instead asks historians to 'provincialize Europe', by showing 'the ambivalences, contradictions, the use of force, and the tragedies and ironies' that necessarily form a part of the universalization of modernity (Chakrabarty 1992: 21). As one part of establishing the 'provinciality' of the claims of modernity, Chakrabarty demonstrates aspects of radical difference between constructions of a modern domesticity in colonial Bengal, and the ideal-type of bourgeois modernity. This is a theme he takes up in more detail in a later essay where he shows the
Bengali modern, exemplified here by the neologism, *grihalakshmi* (to translate this as ‘goddess of the home’ would be to undermine the point Chakrabarty wishes to make). This modern construction, he argues, is constituted by tensions, as it seeks to incorporate both the historical and modern as defined by the ideal-type of western modernity, and the anti-historical modern, ‘tied to mythico-religious time’ which ‘escapes and exceeds bourgeois time’ (Chakrabarty 1994: 81). There is much in the Bengali modern which is derivative of the modernity brought by colonialism, he argues, but it is also a modernity which seeks to evoke ‘formations of pleasure, emotions and ideas of good life that associated themselves with models of non-autonomous, non-bourgeois and non-secular personhood’ (ibid.: 84-5).

In pointing to both the complicity and difference of Indians with the ideal types of modernity, Chakrabarty reflects the orientation of the current Subaltern Studies project, in which a ‘notion of the subalterns’ radical heterogeneity with, though not autonomy from, the dominant remains crucial’ (Prakash 1994: 1482). Much of what this book says about the nature of the modernity constructed by the middle class of colonial Lucknow draws heavily on the ideas of the Subalternists. Yet there are also important points of difference. But let me begin with some extended excerpts from a wonderful lecture by Partha Chatterjee, which sums up his position on the subject of modernity. Chatterjee begins by making the unimpeachable argument for acknowledging different modernities. The forms of modernity will have to vary between different countries, depending upon specific circumstances and social practices, he says, and in fact ‘if there is any universally acceptable definition of modernity, it is this: that by teaching us to employ the methods of reason, universal modernity enables us to identify the forms of our own particular modernity’ (Chatterjee 1997:8-9). Within this particular modernity Chatterjee, like Chakrabarty, identifies important points of difference, including profound ambivalence towards the modernist enterprise itself. The reasons for this ambivalence? ‘There must have been something in the very process of becoming modern that continues to lead us, even in our acceptance of modernity, to a certain scepticism about its values and consequences’ (ibid.: 14). The answer, in other words, is colonialism. ‘Somehow, from the very beginning, we had a shrewd guess that given the close complicity between modern knowledges and modern regimes of power, we would forever remain consumers of a universal modernity; never would we be taken seriously as its producers. It is for this reason that we have tried, for over a hundred years, to take our eyes away from this chimera of a universal modernity and clear up a space where we might become the creators of our own modernity’ (ibid.). Or, to quote another passage:

Ours is the modernity of the once-colonized. The same historical process that has taught us the value of modernity has also made us the victims of modernity. Our attitude to modernity, therefore, cannot but deeply be ambiguous .... But this ambiguity does not stem from any uncertainty about whether to be for or against modernity. Rather the uncertainty is because we know that to fashion the forms of our modernity, we need to have the courage at times to reject the modernities established by others (ibid.: 20).

The presupposition through this entire lecture, and in fact through much of the formally ‘post-colonial’ writings of the Subaltern Studies collective, is the essential difference in ‘our modernity’.

But was ‘our modernity’ really so different from ‘theirs’? The history of Lucknow, examined in this book, certainly does not suggest that the colonial context created a middle class and a modernity that was so different from that of the West as to forbid comparative exercises altogether. One important similarity that we can note between the Indian and English middle classes is that in both cases, a small and relatively privileged group of men, and later, women, made their distinctions from other social strata, by virtue of being representatives of a modern social order. There is no doubt that middle-class visions of modernity in India were contradictory. Thus, modern politics unleashed by the middle class in colonial India simultaneously spoke in the voice of reason and sentiment, of the need to preserve tradition and initiate radical change, advocated liberty and authoritarianism, equality and hierarchy, often at the same time. All the public-sphere projects of the middle classes were shot through with these inconsistencies and contradictions, and these were constitutive of middle-class politics, indeed of the modernity they initiated in colonial India. Yet, such anomalies were not unique to the Indian case.

There is little doubt that in the exclusion of the lower orders of society from participating in the public sphere, as in many other aspects of the modern that was created by the middle classes in Lucknow, they drew upon assumptions based on an older hierarchical tradition of social relations. Yet this was hardly a unique prerogative of the middle classes of colonial Lucknow, or for that matter of colonial India. Their European counterparts too had little room for women or the lower classes in the public they represented. Like the European bourgeois public sphere examined by Habermas, theoretically, the public sphere of colonial north India was a forum open to all. Yet practically, both public spheres were the province of literary adepts who set or could follow new norms of public
conduct (La Vopa 1992). Given the class and gender exclusionary nature of bourgeois practice, Habermas's model of the public sphere has been assessed 'as an ideal of critical liberalism that remains historically unattained' (Eley 1993: 289). The formation of Birmingham's later-eighteenth-century associational networks, the creation of an elite club in early-nineteenth-century German small towns, and the creation of literary societies in mid-nineteenth-century Bohemia as much as the associations, clubs, and societies of colonial Lucknow, 'all involved questions of interest, prestige, and power, as well as those of rational communication' (ibid.: 307). A contradictory historical practice, at odds with the ideology of egalitarianism it propagated, remained at the heart of the public sphere in both cases. For much of the same reasons as their European counterparts, the Indian middle class too initially excluded subaltern groups, and based this exclusion on the presumed natural inferiority of these groups, or excluded them on account of their lack of education on matters of public import. Both in Europe and India, the public sphere thus became the site where, for most part, educated professional men constructed a highly gendered, exclusive, and hierarchical middle class.

The exclusion, marginalization, and recasting of women through institutions of the public sphere is yet another instance of the way in which this quintessential modern institution worked in comparable ways in India and Europe. Joan Landes made a forceful case for the way in which the public sphere was gendered at the moment of its production in revolutionary France. Though there were certainly important differences created by time and place, one can see, for instance, a parallel in the marginalization of the courtesans of Lucknow and the aristocratic women of the salons of pre-revolutionary France, as a new gendered public sphere emerged in both contexts (Landes 1988). Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall's work also demonstrates some important parallels in the way the emergence of public associations 'increased the confidence of middle-class men and contributed to their claims to political power', and deliberately excluded women from this public world. In fact, the authors argue that the power and confidence of middle-class men was predicated upon their position 'as heads of households, representing their wives, children, servants, and other dependants' (Davidoffand Hall 1991: 416). This rich study of the making of a middle class in nineteenth-century England has as its focus family life and new ideologies of domesticity, which became an integral part of the formation of a gendered middle-class world. Parallels between the domestic ideals articulated in texts like Stirisubodhini and the didactic literature aimed at the inculcation of new ideas of domesticity in nineteenth-century England, are quite striking.

The point of these comparisons is not of course to suggest an identity between two quite dissimilar contexts. There were important differences in historical and cultural context between the groups who constituted themselves as middle class in Birmingham and Lucknow, as indeed there were between the middle classes of Lucknow and say, Calcutta, Madras, or Surat which did not have quite the same history of either British occupation or indeed the recent history of an indigenous ruling elite. The important position occupied by merchants in Surat as opposed to Lucknow where the richer merchants had historically kept a low profile, is just one instance of these differences (Haynes 1991; Oldenburg 1989; Sahai 1973). The objective then, is not to claim that middle classes across the world were identical, but to point to the similarities in the nature of middle-class modernities constructed in different parts of the world; to point to the extent to which all such politics deviated from the ideal-type usually attributed to a 'hyper-real Europe'.

Rather than reinforce the binary oppositions between the West and the rest, the comparisons suggest that we take into account the extent to which serious social historians of western modernity themselves point out that middle-class ideas involved a 'jostling together of the concepts of liberty with those of patronage and deference . . . [and] the contradictory ways in which purer discourses of philosophers and ideologues are reworked within common sense' (Davidoff and Hall 1991: 16). We also need to take into account the extent to which the ideas about domesticity and separate spheres which Davidoff and Hall see as purely modern phenomena, in fact had a much longer history (Vickery 1993). Following this critique of Davidoff and Hall, it seems that, like the middle-class men of colonial Lucknow, the English middle class too reworked existing, older ideas about patriarchy, and also no doubt patronage and deference, to produce a modernity where the old and new 'jostled together'.

The best instance of such jostling perhaps comes when we consider the role of religion in the formation of a modern class, and the modern nation. The presence of religion in politics of the public sphere is normatively regarded as a failure of modernity, or its lack. Religion, almost by its modern definition, if we follow Talal Asad (1993), should remain confined to the private realm. When religion refuses to behave in its appointed role, it is usually dismissed with labels like 'fundamentalism', or 'communalism' which question the modernity if not the morality (are they really that different?) of the practitioners of such politics. Western commentators on Indian history or politics have found it easy to dismiss such politics as a result of 'primitive' or 'primordial' attachments of non-western peoples,
and such historical stereotypes have been reinforced by representations in the contemporary media (Ludden 1996; Pandey 1990). This of course is the ideal-type of modernity. The lived reality has been considerably different. Davidoff and Hall point to the centrality of the Church in the production of middle-class identities in Britain, and identify 'religious belonging' as 'a central plinth of middle class culture' (Davidoff and Hall 1991: 73). Though the narrative of modernization emphasizes the decline of religion and growing secularization of society as an essential part in the emergence of the 'modern West', recent scholarship questions such assumptions. There is, on the one hand, Jose Casanova's work on the place of religion in modern society, which points out that 'deprivatized' religion can, under certain circumstances have a formative role to play in modern politics (Casanova 1994). Peter van der Veer (1999) cautions against accepting the secularization thesis too easily by pointing to the important role played by Evangelical Christianity and the revival of Roman Catholicism in producing the modern subject and shaping political culture in Victorian Britain. In fact, he makes a case for arguing that modernity was 'sacralized' at the moment of its production, not just in India, but also in Europe.

Once we accept that modernity in the West, despite its ideal-type representations, did not automatically usher in a new secular order, but indeed was constituted by existing religious discourses, the case for Indian exceptionalism—whether based on backwardness and primordialism, or guided by the intent of demonstrating the radical heterogeneity of a colonial modernity—becomes weaker. Rather than understand the religiosity of Lucknow's middle class as a lack or failure, where it strove for and ultimately failed to achieve the secular-modern ideal, we can look at it as an active producer and product of a sacralized modernity which in turn produced a modernized religiosity in colonial India. This was a modernity shaped by its own concerns and contexts, and its rhetoric and politics were in turn shaped by it. Religion, or rather self-definitions based on religious categories, became a critical part of the modern self created by the colonial middle class. This self-definition also helped shape the later political commitment to a more militant anti-Muslim Hindu nationalism. Yet the contrary impulses at the heart of the middle-class agenda also prevented it from articulating a full-throated Hindu chauvinism. The identities produced by modern politics were thus protean and impermanent. Rather than a lack of modernity, therefore, there is a good case to be made for understanding the sort of impermanent identities we see in colonial Lucknow as products of a fractured modernity it shared with its counterparts in Europe and elsewhere.

Based on this comparison then, it seems that neither India nor the West actually live up to the ideal-typical model of modernity. Given the similarities between the experience of historical modernities in India, the West, and indeed other parts of the world as well, it seems that we do need to reconceptualize this model. Starting from our study of the middle class of Lucknow and then comparing the contradictions in its politics with similar phenomena elsewhere, suggests that despite a more or less singular ideal-type of modernity derived from a very selective reading of a 'western' historical experience, in practice, 'modern' politics and social relations always reveal their fractures and disarticulations. It was a 'fractured modernity' that created the circumstances for and set limits to the various cultural and political projects of the middle class in colonial India. Looking at how the middle classes were constituting themselves and the world around them in colonial India, therefore, not only presents an opportunity to better understand the nature of modernity in India, but also helps formulate a category to comprehend this phenomenon in other parts of the world.

This is not to say that the idea of a fractured modernity is absolutely novel. Traditionalism, even anti-modernism has been recognized as very much a part of the making of the modern in the United States, and a valorization of 'the simple life', as well as a fascination with the 'tradi-
tional' and the 'primitive' was an important component of this middle-class ideology (Lears 1981; Shi 1985; Hinsley and Wilcox 1996; for India, see Ghosh 1999). Marshall Berman, whose work is one of the best known celebrations of modernity, submits that modernity, as it is experienced, is full of contradictions, dissonance, and conflict (Berman 1988). It should come as no surprise, however, that it is primarily historians and scholars of colonized or subaltern groups, often struggling to define and sometimes defend the modernity of the societies they study, who are more alert to these fractures in the practice of modernity, its variations from the ideal-type, and in the attempts to rethink the category. Writing about the middle class in Brazil, Roger Owensby observes:

the changes generally thought to be characteristic of modernity have been deeply intertwined with what are usually called traditions. In Brazil, thus, the market mentalities, meritocracy and egalitarianism, professionalization, consumer culture, and social identities typically connected with the notion of the middle class are inseparable from a disdain for manual labor, an insistence on social hierarchy, and the presumed naturalness of patronage, time tested values and practices constantly renewed and folded into modern social life (Owensby 1999: 7).

Lila Abu-Lughod in an introduction to a set of essays about feminism and
modernity in the Middle East, suggests that the best way to understand the developments there would be to 'ask how modernity—as a condition—might not be what it purports to be' or what 'the language of enlightenment and progress' tell us it is (Abu-Lughod 1998: 7).

Of course, at least two generations of nationalist, Marxist, and now, Saidian scholarship, have made us aware of the ways in which the self-styled representatives of western modernity in the colonies revealed the illiberal stratum of ideas, practices, and institutions that comprised their modernity. It is, however, more recently that these histories are being used to question the categories upon which so much of colonialism itself rested. Ann Stoler and Frederick Cooper argue that colonial projects 'showed up the fundamental contradictions inherent in bourgeois projects and the way universal claims were bound up in particularistic assertions' (Stoler and Cooper 1997: 3). Paul Gilroy in his fascinating study of the 'Black Atlantic' suggests a more fundamental reconsideration of the category, one that would put slavery and terror at the very heart of any definition of modernity (Gilroy 1993). Ann Stoler's own work on colonialism and sexuality, along with many others', demonstrates that much of what we know of modern bourgeois identities, was formed in relation to colonial encounters in which ideas of racial distinctions were central (Stoler 1995; Burton 1999). Uday Mehta goes as far as to argue that ideas about race were built into the philosophy of eighteenth-century liberalism itself (Mehta 1997). Middle-class Englishmen excluded women as well as non-white people from the benefits of liberalism which they clearly deployed for their own empowerment (Hall 1992). Antoinette Burton's work on the other hand shows us the extent to which British feminism, which drew upon the legacy of liberalism and modernity to shape its concerns, was deployed to empower middle-class British women at the expense of Indian women (Burton 1994). In all of these cases, a close examination of the discourse of modernity deployed reveals its illiberal and perhaps non-modern sub-strata.

The point of this comparative exercise is to argue that if our goal is to destabilize the categories derived from a selective reading of western history, in other words, to provincialize Europe, one does not have to abandon comparative history altogether. One does not necessarily have to dichotomize the historical experience of the West and the rest, because this strategy may itself reinforce ideas of an originary, unfractured, and monolithic western modernity, and its derivative and hence necessarily lesser non-western counterparts. This book suggests an alternative. Closely examining the construction of modernity in a specific context, it shows that far from being a totalizing or monolithic ideology, modernity in colonial India was built upon an existing set of ideas, which it transformed in new ways. Emerging through the public sphere, this modernity was very much a product of middle-class activists, and reflected the contrary pressures of the constitution of that class. Deploying their cultural capital to maximum effect, middle-class men were able to transform existing ideas of social conduct, cultural preferences, and politics, in ways that allowed them to emerge as the representatives and leaders of Indian society. Middle-class ideas, though they were certainly novel, were not a monolith. Not only were there competing opinions on issues among the middle class, a close examination of middle-class ideas reveals a number of contradictions. Thus its modern ideas about politics contained elements drawn from much older and hierarchical ideas about political and social organization. Its belief in secularism coexisted with the importance of religious identities, its belief in progress was simultaneous with its advocacy of tradition, its nationalism was complicit with what has been termed 'communalism'.

A comparison with the modernities of the western and other parts of the non-western world suggests that similar, though obviously not identical fractures, contradictions, anomalies were constitutive of modern ideas, institutions and practices as well. In Lucknow, as in other parts of the world, modernity was built with a variety of resources, including much that modernity labels either tradition or non-modern. The 'traditional' and the non-modern, whether it is in the form of patriarchal ideas, racism, notions of patronage and deference, or religion, never quite disappears, but does become a resource for the modern. Moreover, if, following the example of Lucknow, we recognize the deployment of the ideal-typical modernity more as a strategy of empowerment over various others, than a reflection of lived reality, then we can also better understand its evident contradictions. To enforce or maintain power over subordinate groups—whether it was the middle class over lower classes in the public sphere of Lucknow, Europeans over colonized natives, or their 'own' working classes, the Hindu middle class over Muslims, or indeed British feminists over their Indian sisters—it became necessary in certain situations to also resort to the darker side of the discourse of modernity, to take recourse to the language of race, hierarchy, and 'communalism', over that of egalitarianism, improvement, liberal nationalism or global sisterhood.

In contrast to the dichotomizing of modernities, I suggest that a better way of 'provincializing Europe' is by highlighting the fractured nature of modernity itself. Rather than see the operation of modern politics in India as yet another case of Indian exceptionalism, this book argues that modernity in India was neither inadequately modern nor a special-case
scenario of a 'colonial modernity'. The middle-class shapers of modernity in colonial India worked in ways that were similar to their counterparts in other parts of the world, including the West. Cultural projects of becoming middle class ensured that they used a variety of resources to construct notions of being modern that emulated but were also at variance with the ideal-type, in other words their modernities were inherently fractured. Examining the emergence of a middle class in India, therefore, not only allows us to comprehend the apparent inconsistencies of middle-class politics in the colonial milieu, but perhaps also suggests a theoretical framework to better understand the working of modern politics in much of the world today.

To argue for a fractured modernity is not to deny the extent to which ideas, practices, or institutions associated with modernity have contributed to possibilities of power and freedom not only for elites, but also subordinate groups across the world. Especially as illiberal and chauvinist politics appears to be taking a prominent place in many parts of the world, whether it is India or the western world, the norms and values associated with ideal-typical modernity seem particularly attractive. Whether it is Jurgen Habermas calling for the completion of an unfinished project of modernity, Marshall Berman contrasting the freedoms offered by modernity against the Grand Inquisitor-like religious leaders of Iran, or prominent cultural historians turning their back on their own critiques of modernist paradigms, the growth of intolerance, the seeming acceptance of right-wing agendas as common sense, appears to be driving them all back into the arms of 'progressive' histories. Contemporary political crises make the ideals of the Enlightenment seem particularly attractive (Habermas 1997; Berman 1988; Hunt 1989; Appleby et al. 1994). 2

In India too, the growth of Hindu supremacist forces, intolerance, and the lack of dialogue between political elites and those they claim to represent, has led to calls for regrouping around modernist and secularist ideals (S. Sarkar 1993; also S. Sarkar 1997). Certainly, in times like this, there is great comfort to be derived from being able to have a clearly mapped out political agenda around which to regroup and fight the good (and necessary) fight. But will the invocation of modernity help? Is that the answer? Drawing broadly from the study conducted in this book, I would like to suggest otherwise. Even more so than at other times, a time of crisis like the present probably calls for a clear recognition that modern liberalism or the ideas of the European Enlightenment do not provide us with all the answers, or even a clear alternative to emerging right-wing politics. This is not just a 'third-world view' which suggests that 'western' modernity has been oppressive for those whose histories are 'different'. On the contrary, it is time to recall, with renewed emphasis the paradoxes and fractures that inhabit the heart of modernity. Invoking classical Enlightenment thought certainly has the potential to be liberatory, but also oppressive, as Foucault's work has demonstrated beyond doubt. Constructions of a modernist enlightened Hinduism produced a Vivekananda, who invoked the daridranarayan, the idea that God resides in the humblest of folk, and a scathing critique of brahmanal ritualized Hinduism. Yet, the same Vivekananda also left a legacy which can be appropriated by present-day Hindu supremacists, as Sarkar's own work demonstrates (S. Sarkar 1992b; also Raychaudhuri 1988). The history of twentieth-century nationalism, witnessing both Nazism and decolonization, evidently demonstrates both liberatory and oppressive possibilities of modernity (Nairn 1975).

In colonial Lucknow, this book has attempted to argue, authoritarianism, chauvinism, and inequity were as much constitutive of middle-class modernity as democracy, secularism, and egalitarianism. Rather than look for the roots of illiberal politics in a lack of modernity, in disenchantments with the promises of modernity (Fox 1996), or even a 'different' and 'colonial' modernity, this book suggests that such politics finds its origins in the very constitution of the modern. Ideal-typical modernity never has and nor at present provides us with a necessarily democratic and inclusive alternative to the politics of illiberalism. That is an alternative towards which we have to struggle, without blueprints from a mythicized past.

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1 It is interesting to note that though Berman is quick to note a resemblance between Khomeini and the Grand Inquisitor, his index to this study of modernity since the sixteenth century has no entry for 'religion', or indeed a place for terms like 'race' or 'rascism', 'slavery', or indeed 'Nazi', or 'Hitler'—all ideas, institutions, or individuals, which must surely figure in any serious discussion of modernity.

2 As one instance of the change in position, note the contrast in the evaluation of the contributions of Foucault (or for that matter, Joan Scott) in Lynn Hunt's introduction to her earlier collection of essays (Hunt 1989: 1-22), with those in the later text (Appleby et al. 1994: 198-237). Admittedly, the latter is a co-authored text; one must, however, presume that all authors, including Hunt, also individually endorse the positions they together argue for in the text.