CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Aesthetic and the Political:
Problems in the Philosophy of Culture

The owl of Minerva flies at dusk; research projects, pale shadows of the original bird, yield up their animating ideas perilously near the last deadline. Under the impression that I was reconstructing a specific, neatly demarcated history--that of the transformation of sadir into bharatanatyam--I inhaled the dust of archives from time to time for some three years, browsing through speeches, documents, belles lettres, pamphlets and fiction; through anything, in short, that seemed to cast light on the subject. But with all my watchfulness, 'the subject' ramified, insidiously attaching tendrils to concepts (the bloated old chestnut 'modernity,' for instance, or 'aesthetics') that I would have been well-advised to avoid. Inevitably, by the time I began drafting this thesis, I was conscious of that sinking sensation familiar to academics everywhere, of having taken on infinitely more than I could handle.

More than halfway through the actual writing I worked it out that what I had on my hands was not so much the discursive elaboration of 'the Nautch Question,' as an abstract problem:
the relation between cultural production and its socio-political context; or, more specifically, the relationship between cultural artefacts and the power relations that control their forms, their audiences and the lifestyles of their makers. If one may think of something as a 'philosophical' problem without necessarily evoking transcendental overviews, the relationship between art and politics may be considered a problem in 'the philosophy of culture.'

There is some consolation in the fact that my thesis may have a bearing on this problem. To the extent that it addresses itself to studying something more than a particular historical conjuncture, it may be of interest to culture-fanciers of any persuasion. 'Cultural artefacts,' in the above formulation of this problem, could be read as shorthand for anything from high art to propaganda to popular cinema, and how the phrase is used would depend on the aesthetic and cultural predilections of the person who uses it; and depending on her ideological inclinations, 'politics' may mean either power relations (oppressive, productive, or simply 'natural') or emancipatory practices, or both. She may agree enthusiastically with the idea that art is bound up with politics in this broad sense, or she may deny it vehemently; but if she is an artist or a performer, a historian or critic, a writer or cultural activist, her practice is irreducibly caught in the web of causality and correspondence that connects these two phenomena.

So by the light of dusk, rather late for the purposes of good organization if not for wisdom, I saw the ramifications of the problem I had undertaken to study. As a result, this thesis has one fixed eye (trained on sadir/bharatanatyam) and one roving one (glancing at English studies, the historiography of
culture and feminist theory). Hindsight suggests that the invasion of my 'subject' by these disciplinary practices ought not to have surprised me: though what initially motivated my research was my interest in imagining, in as much detail as possible, a contemporary and feminist practice of bharatanatyam. It was the engagements between traditional English studies and feminist criticism that gave something like theoretical rigour to my obscure dissatisfactions with the current practice of classical dance.

These other subjects did not, it must be noted, crowd the history of sadir out of its central position in my argument. On the contrary, sadir functioned as the touchstone case for most of the issues that I wanted to consider in relation to English or to feminist cultural studies. In order to get a picture of what an alternative version of bharatanatyam might look like, it was necessary to work through

1) the relationship between the intersecting histories of nationalism and women's emancipation in India, since the campaign against sadir was avowedly pro-women, the product of a proto-feminism that became a reference point for most subsequent moves towards women's equality; and

2) the relationship between feminist practice and the aesthetics of dance (since some aesthetic codes would have to be decided on in the process of re-imagining the form), the idea of the aesthetic being the target of one of feminism's most convincing and timely critiques.

Though the relationship between cultural production and politics had been problematized by marxist critics, it was feminist criticism that really put it on the agenda of English
studies. From A Room of One's Own onwards, feminist polemics on literary norms have focused on the hidden political motivations behind the many ideologies of the aesthetic, ideologies so constructed as to make women's writing invisible, marginal, uncanonical, or just incompetent. These polemics, half-buried in oblivion in the decades since they were produced, were recovered and aired by the Anglo-American feminist critics of the 1970s and 1980s. Since the post-sixties phase in the development of feminist criticism, the idea that 'the aesthetic' is an artificial construct, apt to enshrine the interests of those who invoke it, has passed into the realm of received wisdom for feminists. Contiguous theoretical/critical developments--post-structuralism, postcolonial theory, some African American criticism--have also taken the constructedness of the aesthetic to be a critical commonplace; in India, the nascent dalit critique would probably endorse this argument.

All particular versions of cultural production, or particular ideologies of the aesthetic, are undoubtedly 'socially constructed.' The unravelling of these ideologies, under the stress of recent critiques, reinforces--somewhat monotonously, perhaps, since one cannot scorn to repeat a point that ought to be so obvious but is so resolutely disavowed--the conviction that there is nothing 'behind' the construct. Since no 'essence' of beauty or taste can be proved to persist through historically contingent aesthetic codes, all ideas about the aesthetic seem reducible to power-play. That is to say, it becomes difficult to maintain a distinction, even for purely analytic purposes, between, on the one hand, philosophical aesthetics (which frequently sets itself to answer some such
question as 'What is Beauty?,' hardly an auspicious beginning for a historicized or culturally situated study of perception) or the celebration of literary taste; and, on the other, 'the aesthetic,' if one wants to invoke for this word not the sedimentations of privilege, but the resonances 'kinaesthetic,' 'sensory,' 'perceptual,' 'affective,' or 'sexual.' The very contingency of the aesthetic, its dependence on social and political norms, becomes the theme to ruminate upon, and to posit or investigate the sensory, bodily or emotional dimensions of human response to cultural artefacts appears misguided, to say the least. Thus the cultural critiques I am concerned with in this thesis, critiques influenced by the theories of the contemporary academic Left, and produced under the rubric of cultural studies, tend to structurally exclude the investigation of the aesthetic except as a manifestation of ideological investments.

How does one work the concerns of artists or performers, compelled by the very nature of their practice to grapple with notions of the aesthetic, into the available models of studying culture, without abandoning hard-won insights into the politics of art? I had no desire to reify art in the typical and unprepossessing ways that a middle class background and an English education encourage. It did not seem self-evident to me, for instance, that art embodied universal values; that it was what special individuals, blessed with good taste, naturally created or appreciated; that it was uncontaminated by the sordid influence of the market or by the gross realities of power and politics. On the other hand I did not want to leave out of the reckoning too many of the elements--grammar,
craftsmanship, training, style, emotional investments, perceptual and kinaesthetic and bodily responses—that go into the making and reception of works of art. These elements carry political traces too, as I will argue when I describe the aesthetic of bharatanatyam; but they are also, in a sense, the undertheorised, undecidable residue of 'subjective' feeling in the presence of art, and need to be dealt with as such, rather than as mere projections of the sociology, ideology, or post facto discursive justification of taste, objectively available for tabulation or deconstruction.

Significantly, and discouragingly for a feminist, the affective aspects of cultural production or reception have been most conscientiously and elaborately studied by critics one would describe (and perhaps regretfully reject) as either 'liberal' or 'conservative.' For instance, the project that Elaine Showalter calls 'gynocritics,' the constructing of aesthetically and politically sensitive responses to women's writing, has figured prominently in liberal feminist criticism. But liberal feminists doing gynocritics are tilling soil that has already been leached by more theoretically sophisticated feminists. Given the emphasis the most prestigious cultural critics now place on the hazards of any aesthetic judgement ('value' is out, even as 'pleasure' creeps back in), the project of the post-sixties generation appears, by implication, anachronistic, politically dubious. Cultural critics on the post-structuralist, postcolonial feminist Left are in no mood to naively celebrate an alternative aesthetic, and they have logic on their side: to take the feminist critique of existing aesthetic codes seriously is necessarily to look with suspicion
on all ideas that rub shoulders with philosophical aesthetics. This justifiable suspicion is my point of departure in the consideration of the link between art and politics; only, unlike contemporary post-structuralist cultural theorists, I am not sure that it is my destination.

The academic Left's belated recognition of the persistence of culture as affect, despite the obsolescence of the intellectual categories used to describe this, is expressed in the new-found interest in the idea of 'pleasure.' The association of pleasure with subversion is made as a matter of course in French literary and social theory of the 1970s and early '80s. To perpetrate outrages through the uninhibited pursuit of eros is the bohemian avant-garde's answer to marxist praxis on the one hand and to bourgeois moral strictures on the other. Critics in the Anglo-American academy have been, on the whole, more sceptical than the French about the theory that one could topple class structures by challenging accepted libidinal economies, though some of them have nevertheless introduced versions of it into their own work. Barring French writers like Helene Cixous, feminist critics have taken up the question of pleasure, especially of sexual pleasure, in an altogether more responsible and more prosaic way, since it is so deeply implicated in the way women are perceived and treated in a world where ideas of what constitutes pleasure tend to be defined by men.¹³

I would take it as axiomatic that the expression of the sexuality or of the pleasure of a subordinated group is profoundly disturbing to a dominant group (as witness the middle class anxiety over the unreconstructed sexuality of the
devadasis). but I believe the question of pleasure has to be handled with the kind of caution feminists bring to it; it would be too easy to celebrate the devadasis as exemplars of French-style subversion through jouissance.

To recapitulate: imagining a feminist practice of dance has meant, for me, studying the area of convergence of three overlapping fields: that of the history of the dance in India, which adds to what we know about the way women and their bodies were represented and instrumentalized by the discourses of nationalism; that of the women's question in India; and that of feminist critical practice, which, as I encountered it, happens to be tethered to the discipline of English, but might function as a bridge to a contemporary rethinking of dance. This eccentric project involves different disciplinary spaces: 1) sadir/bharatanatyam, of course; 2) English studies in India, one version of which mediates the Foucauldian model of genealogy that I find useful; 3) the emerging field of feminist cultural studies in India, which poses the questions of history, politics and aesthetics within a large theoretical framework whose pivotal categories are gender, culture and the nation. I will consider, in the rest of this chapter, how each of these fields in turn is implicated in my arguments about politics and art.

I also want to lay out, in some detail, an argument for studying the history of dance (or of similar cultural practices) alongside the history of English studies in India. What appears to be a startling juxtaposition of themes, I will argue, might begin to appear entirely sound if one could get out of the deep-
rooted, colonially inculcated, uncritical habits of reading that have been institutionalized in English studies. The point of entry into this argument is my own negative response to the idea of applying 'Indian aesthetics' to English literature. In a sense, this chapter is about the admissibility of such projects as mine in English departments; in other words, about the reasonableness of doing cultural studies as part of English studies.

The Nautch Question

The controversy about sadir developed in the context of both national and local power struggles. I will try to give, below, a quick overview of the cast of characters in this drama, the stakes they had in the issue, and their motives for favouring the positions they took.

Around the mid-nineteenth century the Christian missionaries in South India began to worry about the moral implications of the dance form called sadir. Sadir was traditionally performed by women (the devadasis) who, after being symbolically married ('dedicated') to the deity of the local temple, performed certain services for the temple and enjoyed customary honours as well as land tenure in return. The missionaries were shocked and disturbed by two features, culturally unfamiliar to them, of the devadasis' way of life: firstly, that they contracted non-conjugal sexual relationships with men; secondly, that they performed what appeared (to the missionaries, at any rate) to be 'erotic' dances, in places of worship, in full view of a mixed audience that included the very young. The cry of 'religious prostitution' went up among those who were concerned about the moral codes of the heathen, both in
India and abroad.

The missionaries had mixed motives in figuring the widely prevalent practices of dedication and temple dancing as coercive and evil. Genuine moral outrage, no doubt, was one of these. Missionary campaigners believed that the dance, and the non-marital sexual relationships that went with it, were repugnant alike to God and to European civilization. (Indeed, some of them liked to think that there was no difference between the last two.) The unregenerate cultures of the Orient were, on the whole, ripe for the righteous interventions of more civilized races; exemplars of this moral recalcitrance, the souls of the 'fallen' devadasis simply called out to be saved. They were committed to their irregular lifestyles in the innocence of childhood, by indifferent or positively immoral parents; they could be made to see the light even in the fulness of their adulthood.

To the extent that the missionaries in the colonies were also imperialists, and that many of the battles between the colonizer and the colonized took place over the question of religious and moral superiority, the campaign against the devadasis served both the British empire and the Christian church very well indeed. In spite of the fact that relations between Church and Empire were far from harmonious in the colonies, both drew their legitimacy from the promises of the European Enlightenment. The authority of Christ, as missionaries frequently pointed out, was underwritten by scientific truth and enlightened morals, while Indian faiths were superstition-ridden, rankly amoral and therefore forever benighted: the devadasi murai illustrated these points most satisfactorily. The
missionary attack on sadir as an index of the degeneracy of Indian religion worried at a tender spot in the nationalist psyche. As I suggest in chapter 2, with reference to Katherine Mayo's book *Mother India* (1927), the discrediting of Hindu religion was a blow to the Indian nationalists, who held on fiercely to the notion of India's impeccable record in the realms of the spirit.

Oddly enough, the one party that might have been expected to capitalize on the campaign against sadir—the colonial government—did not put this issue on its civilizational agenda for a considerable stretch of the nineteenth century. The early generations of European settlers in India tolerated and sometimes patronized the dance, though one doubts that there was any informed appreciation in this quarter. It was all one to the nabobs whether the dancers were from Lucknow or from Thanjavur; happily indiscriminate, they applied the term 'nautch' (from the Hindustani naach. to dance) to all the highly differentiated classical and folk dance forms they encountered. Thus what they did contribute to the debate, initially, was a name: the controversy about the continued existence of sadir was dignified in the English language press and the Legislative Council debates by the rather unlikely title of 'the Nautch Question.'

Though there were sporadic bursts of anti-sadir activity from the 1860s onwards, the official Anti-Nautch movement in Madras was launched in 1892. By this time nautch was already perceived as a 'national' issue. William Miller (1838-1922), founder of the Madras Christian College, was a key figure in the initial stages of this campaign and many of his students went on to become anti-nautch firebrands in the next few decades.
By the 1890s, with widespread conscientization about the Nautch Question, the missionary campaigners were no longer in a minority. The question brought to the fore deeply felt anxieties about the convergence, in Hindu practice, of religious ritual, art, and female sexuality. It also received publicity as an aspect of the woman question. The 'woman question' was, at least since the controversies over sati, the touchstone of governmental legitimation in colonial India: Hindu nationalists had to prove their concern for Indian womanhood while the colonial administrators systematically and complacently pointed to illiberal or cruel Hindu religious/cultural practices to justify the extension of their own rule. The intersecting of the religion question and the woman question in the nautch issue decided the identity of the group that would inevitably gravitate towards it: the advocates of social reform.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, Hindu social reformers, shaken out of a cultural universe in which dance and religion mixed perfectly well, added their voices to the general clamour for the outlawing of sadir, and of those degraded women, the devadasis. Social reform groups (like the Women's India Association) in Madras, some (though not all) brahmin nationalists, the Madras Theosophists, the non-brahmin ideologues of the Suya Mariyadhai Iyakkam (E. V. Ramaswami Naicker's Self Respect Movement), and various caste associations like the Sengunthar Mahajana Sangam all climbed on the anti-nautch bandwagon in the next few crucial decades, wearing out the opposition. This opposition, represented chiefly by orthodox brahmin Madras Congress members under the leadership of C. Rajagopalachari and S. Satyamurthi in the 1930s was completely
overshadowed by the 'enlightened' activism of the anti-nautchers. Afflicted by a sense of their own retrogressive appearance, the members of the Music Academy of Madras, who were part of the cultural wing of the Congress, and who were projecting devadasis as performers of bharatanatyam, called themselves the 'pro-art progressives.'

The person who, more than any other single individual, made sadir a cause celebre for nationalists in Madras was Muthulakshmi Reddi, Madras University's first woman medical graduate, social activist and Member of the Legislative Council between 1926 and 1930. Reddi's main argument for the abolition of sadir, partly borne out by fact and partly sustained by gathering prejudice, was that it was inseparable from prostitution. Using rhetoric whose shifts of register (from the pitying to the condemnatory) betrayed their ambivalence and anxiety about the issue of publicly visible female sexuality, she and her middle class compatriots made rapid and inexorable progress towards the abolition of sadir. The discourse of public hygiene and racial purity as well as the discourse of 'true' (i.e., 'spiritual') art contributed to this progress.

Despite the clear evidence of the wealth of the devadasis, despite their ritual status as nityasumangalis (ever-auspicious women) and their high social status in the secular world, the anti-nautch reformers portrayed them almost exclusively as miserable victims needing to be 'rescued' (a word most routinely used to describe them was 'wretches') or, occasionally, as scheming, degraded, uncultured deviants whose art was only a pretext for prostitution. The damage to the self-conception and public image of the devadasia was done over a period of some
decades by a particularly virulent rhetoric; legislation, when it came, only put a few finishing touches to what was already a damning and permanently disabling *indictment*. With the passing of the Madras Devadasis (Prevention of Dedication) Act by the Legislative Assembly in 1947, these women, once powerful members of the community of artists, officially lost their livelihood and their hereditary rights. The reviling, ghettoizing and impoverishment of the *devadasis* were among the lasting practical effects of the discourses that led to the Anti-Nautch Act of 1947.

Throughout this period, and with heightened urgency as the campaign against them intensified, the *devadasis* made counter-arguments and appeals for assistance. The social reform arguments had, however, become such common currency that there was almost no public sympathy for the *devadasis’* side of the picture. Parallel developments such as the decline of princely patronage and of the aura of religious ritual, and the administrative regulation of *prostitution*, only hastened the legislating away of the *devadasis*.

The story might have ended at this point, with the decay of a community and the death of an art form, had it not been for two developments: the setting up of the Music Academy of Madras, and the appearance on the scene of Rukmini Devi Arundale (1904–1986). The Music Academy, an important institution for the promotion of classical music and dance started in 1928, took issue with Muthulakshmi Reddi and her adherents over her handling of the Nautch Question. Emphasizing the accidental nature of the ‘evil’ to which *sadir* had succumbed, the ‘pro-art’ activists of the Music Academy urged that the dance form be
restored to its earlier respectability. These activists--among them the Madras lawyer and theatre performer E.Krishna Iyer (1897-1968), brahmin dance teachers like Bharatam Narayanaswami Aiyar, and later, connoisseurs like V.Raghavan--contributed to this restoration by seeking out some of the numerous practising devadasis of exceptional talent and presenting them under the Music Academy's auspices, by writing about the form, and even by presenting dance recitals themselves.¹⁹

For a while, between 1930 and 1935, it seemed as if the tide of public opinion would turn in favour of the devadasis, though the opposition to the Academy's efforts at revival was bitter enough. But in 1935, a new factor emerged, which accelerated the pace of their decline as a performing class: a group of brahmin women associated with the Theosophical movement, who offered themselves as the ideal vehicles of dance-as-cultural-nationalism, and who, by emphasizing their respectability, effectively wiped out the competition over the next few years. They had the ideological support of such figures as Annie Besant and James Cousins, who were attempting to create a more 'Swadeshi' brand of cultural nationalism, rejecting the brand derived from Enlightenment discourses of human equality, freedom and self-determination. Swadeshi, as they mediated it, and as it was taken up by the brahmin dancers, had explicit allegiances to upper caste values; a fact that becomes significant when one contrasts it with non-brahmin protest, which at this time was deploying the language of political equality.

Thus even as the devadasis were being driven into the margins of society as defined by the emergent middle class, a
drastically modified version of sadir made its public appearance for the first time. Naming it 'Bharata Natya' and defiantly proclaiming their worthiness to rescue this form from its own 'vulgar' antecedents, these brahmin women, led by Rukmini Devi Arundale in breaking the caste taboo, began to present dance recitals. These recitals were woven into the politics of the time, and were framed by cultural nationalism on the one hand and an elaborate metaphysical-aesthetic doctrine on the other. As the mood took them, or as it was convenient, the inheritors of the form emphasized or disavowed the rupture between sadir and Bharata Natya: they alternately boasted of its unbroken 'two thousand year old tradition' and disclaimed all continuity with the practice of the devadasis. What is most interesting about all this is that the elimination of the devadasis from history and the recasting of the role of sadir/bharatanatyam in national and middle class culture turned on a new definition of correct gendering.

These parallel discourses—one seeking to dismantle the practice of sadir, the other seeking to give it a new respectability and social role—appear at a crucial moment in our history: the moment of the simultaneous formation and entry into modernity of the nation. The timing is what makes the points at issue so interesting.

A major part of my thesis, then, is devoted to examining the imbrication of the discourse generated by 'the Nautch Question,' approximately between 1850 and 1950 in what was then the Madras Presidency, in a series of interconnected events (the nationalist movement, the advent of the Indian 'modern,' the definition of the normative female citizen) and in certain
disciplinary practices (the classical dance form bharatanatyam, and the study of aesthetics, art and culture in the past as well as in the present). I want to place these events within the clashing or overlapping fields of force created by the colonial powers, the brahmin intelligentsia, the Christian missionaries, the Self-Respect Movement and the Theosophists.

Research relating the history of the devadasis to the nationalist movement has been going on in different disciplines. The devadasis have been understandably fascinating to ethnographers, anthropologists and sociologists, and a good deal of extremely interesting work has already been done by women scholars. An important ethnographic study documents the lifestyle, social codes and the ethos of devadasis in South India: Saskia Kersenboom-Story's Nityasumangali: Devadasi Tradition in South India (1987). Amrit Srinivasan's doctoral thesis, "Temple Prostitution and Reform: An Examination of the Ethnographic, Historical and Textual Context of the Devadasis of Tamil Nadu," summarised in " Reform and Revival: The Devadasi and Her Dance" (1985) is another outstandingly useful source.

The most substantial evidence for my arguments about the anti-nautch movement is provided by the Proceedings of the Madras Legislative Council (cited in this text as PMLC) from 1927 onwards, and later, the Proceedings of the Madras Legislative Assembly (cited as PMLA), a collection that includes the Devadasi Act of 1947; and by the speeches, pamphlets and autobiographical writings of Muthulakshmi Reddi, chief architect of the Act. Other archival sources include the Native Newspaper Reports (documented in the text as NNR) for the first few decades of this century, since the Press made its presence felt
in this debate; the *journal* Stri *Dharma*, official publication of the Women's India Association, edited for some years by Muthulakshmi Reddi; missionary publications; memorials produced by devadasi associations; publications of the Self-Respect Movement; statements made by casteorganizations; and novels and short stories written in the period I am studying.

Secondary sources (including Census Reports, ethnographic studies and readings of temple inscriptions) provide information on the status of devadasis prior to the intervention of the missionaries.

So much for the discourses that rang *sadir* out. The literature that announced its successor—*bharatanatyam*—includes the writings of Rukmini Devi Arundale, in pamphlets and books put out by the Theosophical Society and in the *journal* published by her institute of dance (*Kalakshetra*), t*he* *Kalakshetra Quarterly*. The *Journal of the Music Academy, Madras*, and *Sangeet Natak*, the journal published by the Sangeet Natak Academy, also provided useful *information*, especially about E. Krishna Iyer's and T. Balasaraswati's contributions to the nati *nalist* revival of dance. A great deal of what I know about the *history* of the dance and its current practice comes from my personal interaction with the scholar and dance guru, Thanjavur K.P. Kittappa *Pillai*.

"What one would try to reconstitute would be the enmeshing of a discourse in a historical process" (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* 38). The historical process started by the discourses of social reform continues into the present. The concepts that evolved in the heat of nationalist and regional politics at this moment (and that are exemplified in the
anti-nautch controversy) are not merely of 'historical' interest in that they give us a glimpse of our past; they frame our thinking today no less than in pre-independence India, on a range of matters from national sovereignty to the women's question to aesthetics.

English Teachers: Orthodox Brahmins or Liberal Humanists?

On the face of it, bharatanatyam has nothing to do with English literature, and the meshing of themes in this thesis--politics, cultural history, English studies, dance--is an effect of my own idiosyncratic position. English professors of the old school, sorely tried by the new generation's violations of disciplinary boundaries, may be understandably outraged: whatever happened to Shakespeare and Milton? I would not, indeed, wish to evade the question of why I am doing this kind of study in an English department. I will also refrain from whipping out that serviceable weapon in the post-structuralist arsenal, the well-worn (but still pretty nearly irrefutable) argument about the fragility of the idea of the 'literary'; I will not ask, except in passing, the old question: if the Gettysburg Address and Areopagitica are literature, by what edict is Muthulakshmi Reddi's moving Legislative Council speech barred from being literature too?

English studies in India happens to be going through one of those (possibly epochal) convulsions in which disciplinary norms are disrupted anyway. This convulsion has nothing to do with the efforts of individuals. It has partly to do with the careers of alternative critical paradigms (feminist, post-structuralist, postcolonial, marxist) in British and American academia which
have the aide-effect, in India, of focusing uncharitable attention on the tattered remnants of the 'affectionate' approach to English. These developments confirm what English teachers and students have always dimly suspected: that there is something odd and impractical about studying the literature of another country, in an alien language, in a nation which, strictly speaking, cannot afford to finance higher education in the humanities. And as it often happens when the future of an institution is uncertain, the recognition that something is definitely rotten in English studies has resulted in attempts to reconstruct its history. As studies of the history of English proliferate—studies which dwell on, rather than slur over, its embarrassing complicity in the colonial scheme—major changes in the discipline may be imminent. It seems a likely moment, therefore, for my project, which looks again at the history of English, but from a new angle: in its interactions with the history of sadir—bharatanatyam. In many ways, these histories were identical, and that fact is of some relevance to English.

The period in which sadir fell gradually from grace—the 1840s onwards—was roughly the period in which education in English came to stay in India. The people who transformed sadir from dance form into social evil—the missionaries—were also the agents of this education. The introduction of English literature as part of the educational regimen took place in a particular context: the British government's proscription of open interference by missionaries in Indian religious affairs. Teaching Indian children (and later, Indian university students) English literature was a way of getting around this proscription; the discipline at once served the purpose of moral
uplift and did ideological work to the detriment of Indianfaiths. The \textit{transformation} of the 'native' world view by these
means was so successfully managed that when the missionaries
began to clamour for reform, they could appeal to the values
they themselves had helped disseminate.

The class that answered the call for reform was the class
that had benefited from English education and from the kind of
scientific thought that displaced religious faith. It would be
accurate to say, then, that those who produced and consumed
English literature in Madras Presidency at this time were as a
class virtually coeval with those who produced and consumed
bharatanatyam, but distinct from those who produced and consumed
sadir. In a sense, sadir was driven out of the public sphere by
the increasing availability of English as the medium in which
subjects were schooled into modernity.

The values that the brahminical Indian intelligentsia could
most easily assimilate to its own lifestyle and needs were those
of the evangelical Victorian middle class. It is hardly
surprising then that the class composition of both the social
reformers and the producers of fiction in English, the
overlapping constituencies that cleaved to English education,
reflected this cultural predisposition. The names of the authors
who were best known for their work in English, and who used
their writing to promote social reform--Panchapakesa Ayyar,
K.S.Venkataramaneni, Manjeri Isvaran, R.K. Narayan--bespeak their
caste origins, as do the invariably brahmin themes and setting
of their fiction.\footnote{28} The other category of writer who produced
fiction in English was the convert to Christianity, whose origin
was also often brahmin (Krupabai Satthianadhan is an obvious
The interaction between Indian upper castes and European missionaries produced its own share of improving literature, by brahmin writers like the above. The fiction was set in local and familiar landscape, but embodied new moral values. The Indian middle class writer was responding for the first time, as Susie Tharu puts it, "to an ideological ambience in which a totally new sense of the responsibilities of the writer as well as the social function of literature and literary study figured prominently" ("The Arrangement of an Alliance" 168). The end-product was pre-eminently a literature of transition: the civilizational values that it purveyed were often partially assimilated, sometimes shown as clashing with hoary Indian traditions, at other times shown as identical or compatible with the latter. Whatever the case, it suited the missionaries that the native advocates of cultural reform should air their ideas, and the missionary presses promoted this literature.

One of the features of the 'modernity' package that immediately struck a chord among the brahmin social reformers was the separation of the public sphere from the private one. To those who valued seclusion in order to maintain ritual purity, the demarcation of the domestic sphere offered, in all probability, the reassurance of the familiar. Urbanized and professionalized brahmins, especially, began to sanctify the domestic sphere in their writing, so that it was no longer merely the effect of a particular (sexual) division of labour (a division apt to be overlooked, in non-urban contexts, in the busy periods of agricultural work), but an ideologically saturated space.
The indigenous version of the domestic woman, formed in the crucible of social reform, was given definition and life in turn-of-the-century fiction in English. In the stories in which middle class heroes wrestle with the social problems of the time—enforced celibacy for widows, child marriage, untouchability, education of girl children, dedication of girls to temples: the woman question was ever a social problem—one institution comes shining through: the companionate marriage. The helpmate in this fiction is no rebel; she negotiates, gracefully, triumphantly, the minefields of ritual purity, caste segregation, sexual norms, and the socialization of children, while her male counterpart girds his loins to build the nation or to perpetrate reforms. Woman keeps the covenant with tradition while Man takes on the challenges of flux. This (natural) allocation of duties preserves the family and keeps Indian culture—in some people's view, keeps the cosmic order itself—safe while the nation itself negotiates the crisis of modernity.

Krupabai Satthianadhan's two novels Kamala: A Story of Hindu Life (1894) and Saguna (1895), the first novels in English by an Indian woman, demonstrate the connections between Christian evangelism, social reform, the woman question and English education. The novels were serialized in the Madras Christian College journal; Kamala in 1893, the year after the anti-nautch campaign was launched by William Miller, Principal of Madras Christian College. The introductory memoir (appended to Kamala) by Mrs. H.B. Grigg solemnly declares that Satthianadhan "will ever be a standing reproach to those who deny the effect of Western teaching and who would meet [sic] out
grudgingly to Indian women the benefits of Western education" (xxxv).

Female happiness is imaged in the new discourse as a sort of heroic but cosy conjugality: "There is a good deal to show that in Vedic times women had lived a free and healthy life," says Mrs. Grigg, "sharing often in the pursuits and interests of their husbands" (ii). Such enviable felicity, lost since Vedic times, is now recaptured, as "the work of enlightenment of women consequent on the spread of English education amongst men" gets underway (ii-iii). This kind of self-assurance and this effortless detection of continuities between mythic figures of the golden age and the kindly educational effort of the British missionaries and government were among the features common to the anti-nautch campaign and English learning.

Having learnt from British models what fiction really meant, and especially what realist fiction meant, Indian writers in English took up the work of translating across cultures. Given the power relations in place under colonial rule, this invariably meant making Indian 'customs'—quaint, mystical and charming, or nasty and retrogressive—intelligible to the European mind. Promoting Manjeri Isvaran's short story collection No Anklet Bells for Her (1949), John Hampson writes: "This volume should gain many new readers for Isvaran, among them, surely others like myself, specially grateful...for his exquisite interpretations of Southern life and custom, in a language which can play still an important and legitimate part in adding to the world's knowledge and understanding of India" (Hampson xvi).

A popular genre at this time was the vignette, the sketch
of a personality, custom, or scene which claimed to typify the Indian ethos. K.S.Venkataramani, author of the novels Kandan The Patriot and Murugan The Tiller, also produced a volume called Paper Boats: Sketches of Indian Village Life in which he presented for the western gaze a number of tropes for India from "The Hindu Temple" to "The Indian Beggar," from "Saraswati's Marriage" to "Village Cricket." "[N]othing so much actuates him," writes his friend and admirer K. Chandrasekharan, "as the desire to interpret every bit of our life and tradition to the outer world" (91). Venkataramani's sketches are steeped in nostalgia and in the peculiar ambivalence imaginable only in the situation of the native subject who is making his own dying culture intelligible, on their terms, to the very people who are destroying it.

The vignette also represents an attempt to document and preserve impressions of the organic society, displaced by the spread of urban-modern culture, as an inspirational resource for the writer's own people. Here is Chandrasekharan again, recalling that Venkataramani's prose "was like the shower of manna on the parched-up soul of South India. It cleansed our putrid notions.... Everything belonging to us assumed a dimension altogether different. Everything gained a prestige and value...(89).

As is evident from all this, the two structures of feeling and belief under discussion—brahminical Hinduism and European Enlightenment—were interlaced with each other, but in a very untidy way. The anxious desire to emulate or claim as their own what were seen as civilizationally more advanced values was offset, for upper caste Indians, by nostalgia for the organic
community and, perhaps more crucially, by the prospect of a loss of power in their own immediate context, if these values were to be taken seriously. Attempts in Indian art and writing to achieve a fit between 'modern' values and Hindu lifestyles were defeated by the fact that most Enlightenment discourses about freedom and equality were by definition unassimilable to the caste system and to the maintenance of the range of hierarchies within which Indians had grown accustomed to functioning. This dependence on a notion of modernity that had its built-in reasons for certain kinds of conservatism (with regard to whatever was classified as inviolable tradition) is another feature that the discourses on sadir and the discipline of English in South India have in common; this being the effect, as I have suggested above, of their common roots in a colonial situation, in missionary programmes for social transformation and in the class composition of their purveyors. In brief, the overlapping histories of dance and of English studies in the South bear the marks of the needs, interests and beliefs of this half-Hindu orthodox, half-westernized cultural formation to which both belonged.

It would seem that such an argument is refuted by the kind of standard wisdom Indian students are fed, usually at the beginning of their English Literature course, about why they study English. The reason usually offered is that in literary work we are exposed to the most universally valid thoughts and emotions, so that we not merely tolerate or understand cultural difference, but actually welcome it, because we see so clearly the common humanity that binds diverse cultures into the Family of Man.
This kind of reasoning suggests that if disciplines were to be apportioned to the categories 'tradition' (relatively closed, culture-specific) and 'modernity' (relatively open, liberal, universalist), the latter category would receive the 'humanist' discipline of English literature (dance, however, may be placed by some people in the former category). Some recent critiques of English in India have also suggested that English is a 'liberal humanist' discipline; again, this would set the discipline squarely in the realm of the democratic-modern. Is this description, however, justified? Is there, inside the insular self of the brahmin professor of English, a liberal humanist struggling to get out?

Accounts of the recent history of English studies in the Anglo-American academy (such as feminist ones, for instance) have characterized the traditional practices and ideas associated with the discipline (close reading, dehistoricized interpretation, a belief in the 'human essence') as liberal humanist. Of course, neither in the Anglo-American context nor in the context of the Indian academy do English teachers think of themselves as liberal humanist—in a range of locations from backwater to metropolis, English scholars have, on the whole, been innocent of any reflection on the philosophical underpinnings of the discipline. The label is thus usually applied to them, and applied pejoratively, by groups trying to enlarge the scope of the discipline or to make it self-critical.

There are degrees of criticism implicit in the description 'liberal humanist.'

1) There is the view that the discipline is insufficiently liberal and humanist—i.e., that its liberalism does not run to
a capacity for fostering any genuine freedom of thought or expression, even pedagogically speaking, or its humanism to a
genuine concern for any identifiable section of humanity.

2) There is the view that while English studies is, in fact, liberal humanist, neither liberalism nor humanism, inchoate and woolly as both world-views are, even begins to offer adequate ways of understanding--leave alone intervening in--realities other than those of a very small class of people. That is, well-intentioned though humanists are, they stupidly and sometimes perniciously assume the sameness of human nature all over the world. Linked with this idea is

3) the harsher view that 'humanism' is by definition an exclusionary rather than an inclusive ideology, intended to enable the privileged to separate the grain ('the truly human,' which usually means the life and work of white males or other 'civilized' people) from the chaff (the sub-human, people from the margins). These critiques, whose common factor is the suggestion that the 'liberal humanism' of the English studies establishment is nominal rather than authentic are obviously well founded, if the ostrich-like or affronted disciplinary responses to them are anything to go by.

At first glance, the origins of the discipline in the colony and its institutionalization in the British academy may seem to have taken place in identical circumstances. Both in India and in Britain, English studies was developed as a recuperative measure rather than as a revolutionary departure. In Britain, English studies evolved--in Sunday schools, in mechanics institutes, in women's colleges--out of plans for the moral uplift and social control of the working classes. The
middle class, as it demarcated the concerns of the discipline, was grimly conscious of providing against the cultural disintegration of a nation and, incidentally, against an erosion of its own new-found power. Literature was to bring the working classes within the 'human' fold, giving them stability and rootedness; it was to inoculate the middle classes against loss of faith.\(^{33}\)

While an amorphous sort of liberal humanism became, in this context, the unspoken justification of English literature, this formation, as it occurred in Britain, was not merely a literary ideology. It was an offshoot of a political Zeitgeist of transition—of the democratic and the industrial revolutions, of the discourse of rights, of the emergence of the individual self, of disenchantment following the waning of religious authority, of the 'discovery' of the unconscious. As Susie Tharu observes, liberal humanism represented "the ideas of freedom, equality and autonomous individualism" that grew out of the collapse of feudal and religious orthodoxies and alongside the definition of the interests of the new middle class. One might, precisely because of its origin in such a climate, contest the finality of what Tharu thinks follows from this: "a subordination and closing off of all other aspirations for liberty and equality as the bourgeois-mercantile (but also imperial and patriarchial) agenda of this emergent class is ... designated as embodying the aspirations of all humanity" (Tharu, "Government Binding" 8). In other words, liberal humanist discourse is indelibly marked by its inception at a particular political conjunction, in that it sets up norms that eventually destabilize its own authority structures; and the organization
of modern societies in the West shows some of the signs of this destabilization.

What I want to consider here is how far the term 'liberal humanist,' which may be applicable in the Anglo-American context, can be appropriated, as it has been, to describe English studies in India. Do the normative or procedural or ethical checks and balances associated with liberalism and humanism, reference to which sharpens the critique of English studies elsewhere, really operate in the Indian academic context? In other words, does the idea that there may be a shortfall, that certain standards may not have been met, which would obtain in a context where liberalism was part of political culture, ever strike most teachers of the discipline in India?

If liberal humanist political norms had no resonances in the disciplines of English and dance in India, and if humanism entered the picture only as an aspect of literary/artistic culture, the reason must be sought partly in the way they were set up. The most obvious fact about the establishment of English as a discipline in India, was that (like English in Britain) it was intended to be an instrument of control; the story of how a comprador class was to be created through this educational instrument is too familiar to need rehearsing here. The strategy was to provide a conduit for moral instruction, as to Sunday school children, without necessarily placing in Indian hands the tools of political analysis or judgement. As Gauri Viswanathan notes:

What interested the British in the years following the actual introduction of
English in India was Grant's shrewd observation that by emphasizing the moral aspect, it would be possible to talk about introducing Western education without having to throw open the doors of English liberal thought to natives; to aim at moral improvement of the subjects without having to worry about the possible danger of inculcating radical ideas that would upset the British presence in India. ("The Beginnings of English Literary Study" 15)

The educational effort was intended to harness whatever was most conservative and status-conscious in the Indian ethos to the pursuit of moral and social reform. Communicating a sense of the living conflicts within which European literature was formed, or encouraging independent critical enquiry were, therefore, never among the objects of English education (or of English studies) in India. This put the recipients of English education in a singularly disadvantageous position: in addition to feeling the compulsion to accept an ideology and a distribution of power that made European culture paradigmatic and the diverse Indian cultures 'inferior,' they also found that they had enough of the colonizer's language to speak but not enough to curse.

Annie Besant (1847-1933), a critical observer of British educational policy in India, and a key player in the sadir controversy, struggled during much of her Indian sojourn to persuade the 'natives' that their culture (or whatever re-imagined version of it she had in mind) was superior to that of the colonizers. In a caustic mock-address to the British
educators, she enjoins caution upon them:

Stop all this revolutionary teaching of English history, and take care what you teach an Indian. Select your poetry carefully: Mrs. Hemans, now, is a nice safe writer; perhaps Longfellow; but no, he wrote about the Pilgrim Fathers—very dangerous. Have selections... selections are best for really no English poet is safe all through. "The Curfew Tolls" will do, and "We Are Seven." ("The Danger of Education" 142)

English teachers in India took her advice. In contrast to the conditions that influenced English studies in Britain, then, what was formative for English studies here, as for the discourse against sadir, and the aesthetic of bharatanatyam, was the logic of colonialism. For all the distinctly middle class overtones literary studies had in Britain, there was no great cultural gap to be bridged when it came to the actual contents of the texts, nor a sense of helpless subordination to unfamiliar values. The adoption of English and the making of bharatanatyam in India happened in the shadow of colonial oppression; the shape these disciplines acquired was, therefore, dictated by the exigencies of nationalist resistance.

The key move in the nationalist resistance to colonial domination was the separation of the public and conflictual sphere of politics and legality from the private sphere of culture and its affects. To the extent that sadir was banned in the name of national hygiene (there was talk of the 'racial
poison' of venereal disease), it appears as if a 'modern' medical discourse was being put to public, political work, purging the nation of regressive customs; but one must not forget that this medical discourse in its turn mobilized notions about the 'traditional' place of Indian women. We get a glimpse here of the ramifications of the century-old confusion arising from the identification of India as, on the one hand, a spiritually or mystically identified entity, and, on the other, a scientifically advanced modern nation.

However one reads the instance of anti-sadir discourse, it was clear at any rate that bharatanatyam and English studies had lodged themselves in the sphere of culture, which was unequivocally dedicated to the active invention of 'tradition.' Thus, in spite of the fact that these disciplines were reshaped in the thick of the struggle against colonialism, they are both reference points for entirely quietist, conservative views on culture, gender and class. Far from registering the intensity of the agon of national self-determination, they actually thrive on the snob value of transcendental distance from all conflict.

What I am suggesting is that the discourses and disciplines of nineteenth and early twentieth century India could not in any simple sense offer an education in liberal humanist (universalist) principles, since these were continually undercut by the tremendous urgency of national self-definition, which required the mobilization of an exclusive tradition, distinct from that of the colonizing nation. The nation-in-the-making obviously needed discursive and ideological support, both in order to imagine itself as a unified whole and in order to set up relations of reciprocity with the colonizers where there were
only relations of domination and subordination.

Until the nation was imaged as a unity, its potential members could not recognize themselves as citizens. As Benedict Anderson observes, it is an important characteristic of nationality that it has to be sustained in the imagination of the citizens concerned: "The members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion." (Anderson, 15). Nor was it enough to image this communion as taking place in the present; it had to be proved to have existed from the beginning of time. Anderson draws attention to the puzzling fact that regardless of the actual modernity of nations (from the point of view of their objective history) they are projected (subjectively) back into a hoary antiquity: "If nation-states are widely conceded to be 'new' and historical, the nations to which they give political expression always loom out of an immemorial past, and, still more important, glide into a limitless future. It is the magic of nationalism to turn chance into destiny" (19). It was also the destiny of the cultural productions of the incipient nation to provide the magical reassurance of great antiquity. Securing the past thus became the approved role of disciplines like bharatanatyam or English studies, subsumed under the category of 'culture,' since the sciences could only be indices of the nation's future achievements.

This circumstance has had its effects on the post-colonial trajectory of English studies as well. In independent India, most academic disciplines took shape within the logic of nation-building and self-consciously served this end. If active
contribution to nation-building, now marked as 'development' rather than as 'self-determination,' was the justification of their existence and their methods, disciplines like the physical sciences and, to a slightly smaller extent, the social sciences, naturally took priority. English studies, like a few other colonial remnants, survived on in the decolonizing nation owing to a careful demarcation of the realm of 'culture' and owing to the idea that it was indeed only through this demarcation that contributions to the nation would be forthcoming from such fields. 'Humanism,' in this context, was not a sign of engagement with any particular human concerns, so much as a vindication for the very maintenance of English studies in the curriculum despite its signal lack of use-value.

To give a fuller answer to the question of why a normative liberal humanism never really took root in English studies in India, we have to relate this disciplinary division of labour (the past/the inner world of culture/spiritual investments vs. the future/the public world of the state/science) to the class privilege of those who embraced English literature here as opposed to that of the groups on whom it was imposed in Britain. As I have suggested in my argument about sadir/bharatanatyam above, what was happening simultaneously with nation-building in the nineteenth century was class formation. The feminist cultural historian Kumkum Sangari has noted "the close articulation of class formation with self designations of the early nineteenth century colonial state and with emerging cultural categories--specifically as these categories are constituted in descriptions of gender, definitions of literature and the situating of literary genres in India and England"
The interactions between British nationalism and emerging cultural nationalism in India, while consolidating the position of the middle classes, created "a cultural grid through which social practices [were] interpreted and notions of selfhood and culture [were] formed" (Sangari, "Relating Histories" 33). We might see the setting up of an ideology of the aesthetic in relation to both dance and Sanskrit poetics as part of the 'cultural grid' that helped the nationalist and social reform leadership consolidate its power over the nation-in-the-making. Many things were significant here: an English education first; an understanding of the moral responsibilities of the modern subject; a notion of who was to be identified with the projects of the nation; a notion of 'Beauty'; an idea of the role of English literature, which brahmans were assumed to have mastered. Thus 'literature,' like bharatanatyam, was constituted as an object at a particular social conjuncture; in turn it helped constitute the identity of its (upper caste, middle class) consumers. As it happened, despite the occasional rebelliousness of a Derozio, and despite the occasional progressive writer who carried his copy of Dickens to work, the largely brahmin or Christian educators perpetuated the authority-reinforcing rather than the iconoclastic elements in the English critical tradition, because these elements chimed well with their own conservatism.

The label 'liberal humanist,' given this class's more or less conservative practices of interpretation and teaching, does not seem at all applicable, even nominally, to English studies in India. One sign, not always visible to teachers of English,
of the absence of liberal humanism even as court of appeal, is the inability of English studies to disturb the rigid institutional hierarchy of omnipotent teacher and powerless student. As far as pedagogic power relations are concerned, teachers rarely concede the existence, on the other side of the podium from themselves, of "the integrated unified Self that is the free agent of its actions and the source of meaning and knowledge" (Tharu, "Government Binding" 9) that liberal ideology is said to enable. Deference to the sanctity of the text and to the authority of the teacher's interpretation is preferred to critical thinking that threatens authority. The special position given to the textual explication produced by a particular caste was culturally familiar to brahmins; the idea of critical interpretation as the product of 'free,' individual, meaning-producing enterprise was not. Moreover, as Gauri Viswanathan suggests,

... if in blurring the lines between literature and religion, the native ruling classes had arrogated all power to decipher texts unto themselves, would not an erosion of that power base ensue if the authority vested in the explicator were relocated elsewhere--that is, if authority were reinvested in the body of texts presented as objective, scientific, rational, empirically verifiable truth, the product not of an exclusive social or political class but of a consciousness that spoke in a universal voice and for the universal
The phrase 'liberal humanist' must, then, be read as functioning in postcolonial critiques of English as a trope: it stands for the reconstitution of the traditional Indian subject (embedded in a complex hierarchy of caste, religion, linguistic group, gender, age, occupation and so on) as the unencumbered, free-floating modern subject. This subject's pre-modern affiliations still benefit him socially, but the process of rearticulation renders them invisible, leaving him with no other mark than that of the 'self-made' (and therefore infinitely deserving) individual. The traces of political conservativism in English studies, including its perpetuation of caste, gender and class inequality, are obscured when it is served up as aesthetic fare in the 'modern' academic context.

To summarise the advantages offered to the nationalist middle class by English studies, by anti-nautch discourse, by bharatanatyam and by English fiction: these discourses were among those which filled out and vindicated this class's move to take over power from the colonial government. The problem of legitimation, for this class, was solved partly by the appeal to the correct sexuality of its women, as opposed to, say, the unregulated sexuality of the devadasis; partly by its cultural and intellectual capital, as exemplified by its absorption of modern values through the discourses of science and literature.

The factors (enumerated above) that shaped the disciplines of English studies and dance— their establishment as instruments of manipulation, their involvement in the process of national self-definition, their isolation in the apolitical sphere of
culture, their colonization by a conservative middle class—had consequences for:

1) the way women were imaged in the approved cultural productions. In general, as Cora Kaplan puts it, "the languages of class ...are steeped in naturalized concepts of sexual difference" (Sea Changes 11). In this instance, a particular model of upper caste, homebound and motherhood-identified femininity was set up as natural, as the norm for female citizenship; projected into a cosmic scheme, this figure gave rise to the trope of the nation itself as mother: Mother India. The second chapter of this thesis is chiefly concerned with examining how women were 'recast' in these discourses.

2) the formal, aesthetic, pedagogic principles of the disciplines under consideration. Chapter 3 is an analysis of how this concatenation of circumstances affected the aesthetic of bharatanatyam: in what follows, I will consider briefly how it affects English studies.

One essential feature of disciplines shaped under the kinds of pressures I have been describing is that they structurally rule out all historicization of their own origins. Transparency about the colonial or class investments in maintaining these disciplines as pockets of privilege obviously does not aid their continuing to do so. This necessary forgetting of origins—the kind of forgetting that makes historical projects like mine anomalous—makes English studies ahistorical, uncritical, stagnant; periodization, thematics and methodology all encourage a strenuous and sustained denial of the reality principle.

The substantive content of an English Literature course is actually in conflict with the ideology it helps promote; it is
the interpretation of this discipline that is invincibly traditionalist in India. There is matter enough, even in the canon, for a genuinely liberal humanist critique to thrive on. For instance: Milton, when not engaged in justifying the ways of God to man, was producing on behalf of the Roundheads a piece of viciousness that we read as a 'classic' prose text. Addison and Steele, whom we read as essay-specialists, were actually closely observing and commenting on the everyday life of their class in eighteenth century England. Shelley was advocating free love and revolution in writings we encounter as 'nature poetry.' Virginia Woolf was writing A Room of One's Own, about literary culture and the exclusion of women from higher education, and Three Guineas, about male aggression and war; but we read To the Lighthouse--as a study in stream-of-consciousness technique.

The English literary critics who had the greatest influence on academic curricula, and who took it upon themselves to comment critically upon European culture--Matthew Arnold, Walter Pater, F.R. Leavis--have also been domesticated for use in English departments in India. While these writers are by no means revolutionary, and had limited ideas about what was 'human' and thus worthy of 'humanist' study, any reading of culture as a politics, even from a clearly articulated conservative viewpoint is, as a model, preferable to the kind of banality waffle that is produced when interpretation is divorced from history on the one hand and from conceptual clarification on the other.

Close reading was the obvious critical method to use in the circumstances, since it is the least connected with history. The words-on-the-page approach precludes any engagement with
concepts, while it nourishes the extraordinary belief--
extraordinary because so patently false, given the second-hand
nature of most scholarship in English studies—that students of
English spontaneously and individually respond to texts.

A discipline that was so committed to escapism had to,
sooner or later, find itself overwhelmingly in intellectual
crisis. The derivativeness of most of the work produced in
English departments is one sign of the stagnation of the
discipline. Indian pundits, with only a very few exceptions, did
with English literature whatever could be done with an alien
literature whose moving forces remained opaque to them--learning
by rote (there is an apocryphal tale about one professor in
Madras who was famous for being able to recite Paradise Lost--
backwards): respectful, sometimes sycophantic appreciations;
rehashings of the 'critical traditions' around individual au-
thors; dilettantish psychological studies of 'character'--all
the stuff, in brief, of the uncritical criticism familiar to
anyone who has ever sat in an English Literature classroom in
India.

Redemptive Discourse, Site of Privilege:
'Indian Aesthetics'

The 'legitimation crisis' in English studies is of
respectable vintage, though perhaps it was not mulled over, in
the past, in quite the way it has been recently. A subliminal
awareness of the discipline's origin and role in the processes
of colonization and modernization has, no doubt, nagged its
purveyors almost since its parameters were defined. The
troubling implications of the contrast between the benevolence
of the English studies project and the brute fact of colonialism
are habitually repressed, but might come to the surface with very little coaxing. Their need to protect the discipline by disavowing the epistemic violence at the point of its origin, as well as their habituation to close reading, makes most English teachers react negatively to projects such as my own.

My research is an attempt to contribute to the 'archaeology' of the discipline: i.e., it seeks to uncover the cultural substratum that caused its formation in a specific way; its choice of themes and techniques; the political, social, aesthetic assumptions shared by the constituenciea that made this choice. This means, as I have suggested above, studying the complicity of English in the colonial project, its place in Indian cultural life, the authenticity of its universalist claims, the power relations set up, by its deployment, between different classes, and so on. Much more interestingly, it means studying how all these features of the discipline's history were disavowed or elided--i.e., (extending a Freudian notion that has already done service in many fields) studying the unconscious of the discipline.

What I have taken as a point of entry into the unconscious of English studies is a proposal that I encountered and found rather disconcerting a little while before I began this research, a proposal that also engages with the discourse of dance: to apply 'Indian aesthetics' to English literature. The Natyasatra and its successor texts, reference points for 'Indian aesthetics,' are, by the activation of this portmanteau idea, caught in the cusp of the two disciplines of dance and English; what is made of these texts expresses something about the political and cultural substratum of both disciplines.
This idea was not exactly a new departure. 'Indian aesthetics,' understood as a timeless and transparent category, has long been dear to the heart of one school of Indian academics in English studies. As they conceive it, 'Indian aesthetics' has these advantages: it is indisputably Indian, in that it invokes the textual authority of Bharata, who compiled the *Natyasastra* in the heyday of Hindu civilization (c. 200 A.D.?), and whose name bears a convenient if accidental resemblance to India's other name (the sliding from 'Indian' to 'Hindu' marks an ideological blind spot, not malice aforethought); in that, moreover, it carries the weight of a '2000 year old tradition' and yet is perennially meaningful, as witness its (imagined) conceptual affinities with European concepts (*bhava* = 'psychological states', *anukarana* = 'representation' or 'mimicry').

Indigenising old style English studies by filtering it through Indian aesthetics is a hopeful way of dealing with the former's terminal illness. Invoked to perform this task, 'Indian aesthetics' may be read as a bid to achieve continuity; to smooth over all those kinks in the discipline that postcolonial theorists and post-structuralist critics have pointed up: the national history that the postcolonial subject can never view as a continuum; the universalist assumptions underlying English studies, as opposed to the national pride of those who profess it; the unfamiliar culture or sensibility that informs the canonical English texts as opposed to the realities of the lives of students who must read them; orientalist and indigenist perceptions of the past. Indian aesthetics presents itself as a likely alternative to the abrasive style of postcolonial or
feminist criticism; it is at least a more demonstrably home-grown product.

There are two questions to be dealt with here, even leaving in abeyance the problem of the cultural misrecognitions that will bestrew the path of the Indian scholar who brings the Abhinayadarpanam (for instance) into alignment with Look Back in Anger: first, what does ‘Indian’ signify in this context? Second, what are the associations of the idea of 'aesthetics'? It makes sense to answer the first question historically, rather than sub specie aeternitatis. As I have argued above, the definition of Indianness that remains with us emerged from the discourses of cultural nationalism in their nascent and decisive phase, which was also the phase that saw the consolidation of upper caste, middle class cultural dominance. Deployed against the civilizational claims of the colonizers, the idea of an 'Indian' culture was, and continues to be, a sign of liberation; but put to work against the right of marginal groups to express themselves, it has also been a sign of exclusivity and intolerance.

The same ambiguity may be found in the idea of the aesthetic. If we understand the discursive field of aesthetics in the broadest possible way, we may see its origins in the breakdown of the (more or less) consensual understanding of the relation between the sensate world, human sensations and the sacred: a process that threw the question of judgement into the lap of individuals, which in turn led to attempts to rationalise this type of judgement. Thus in Europe, it coalesced as a field of enquiry in the mid-eighteenth century; its home was Germany at a time when social authority that was rigid and lacked
consent left a frustrated middle-class contemplating the meaning of lived (therefore bodily) experiences of community or of personal satisfaction. Since the disenchantment of technological rational societies is endemic, and likely to intensify, the demarcation of a realm in which the alienated individual body is reconnected, through art, to the world of sensation or experience, can be seen as liberating.

On the other hand, cultural critics have noted how well a particular ideology of the aesthetic served the interests of the middle class in nineteenth century Europe. This ideology enabled, for this class, self-definition (and self-aggrandisement) in terms of a universalist framework which also concealed the violence of this class's rise to power. A plausible view of its ideological motivatedness would have it that aesthetics, as a branch of philosophy, was merely the formalization of individual taste, which was projected as something one just naturally and instinctively had if one belonged to the right background. At the very least, having 'good taste' was a necessary element of a person's high social value; carried a little further, this could mean, as Tony Bennett suggests, that "the subject who fails to appreciate correctly is regarded as incompletely human rather than merely being excluded from full title to the membership of a specific valued and valuing community" (165).

In India, the purported pursuit of the 'aesthetic' as an end in itself (rather than of aesthetic judgement or technique as an adjunct to theatre, art, literature or music) began when the traditional links between art and 'religion' broke down in the process of the transition from a feudal life-world to a
modern one. The aesthetic codes that dictated the lineaments of English studies and of bharatanatyam have historically been tied up with the normalization of the values and sexuality of the upper caste/middle class during the nationalist movement. In both, a 'classicism' that entails a reified understanding of Sanskrit poetics, coupled with a strong desire to repress the memory of the bodies and sexualities of less privileged groups of people led to the setting up, as I hope to prove, of a particular caste-specific, 'spirituality'-based, body-denying aesthetic which nevertheless claimed to be uniquely Indian. Aesthetic experiences that did not grow out of upper-caste norms for living, and by extension those who underwent such experiences, were marked as vulgar, lacking taste, contemptible.

In bharatanatyam (as will become evident in chapter 3) as well as in English studies, aesthetic codes show the influence of the cultural imperialism of the colonizers, despite the vociferously articulated claims to antiquity. Resuscitating the Natyasastra, for instance, meant not only ironing out the irregularities which are the traces of its many commentators, but also making its contents culturally intelligible in a completely different situation from the one in which the work was composed. Translators of the Natyasastra, then, were conveying concepts across cultures; as it usually happens in such cases, the descriptive and prescriptive concepts in the Natyasastra began to be 'adjusted' against the conceptual vocabulary of modern European aesthetics, resulting in a blandly universal theoretical terminology unanchored in any specific cultural formation.

Angelika Heckel gives an example of the effects of such
translation: the interpretation of the key term *rasa*, which began to be identified, in nineteenth-century translations, either as what is 'produced' through the *medium* of the play, or as what is subjectively *felt* by the audience. These 'aesthetic' or 'psychological' explanations go against the *Natyaśastra*’s positioning of *rasa* in the space between the audience and the stage, an attribute of responses on both sides to the successful putting across of a narrative (Heckel, 34-35).

In the sphere of English studies, 'Indian aesthetics' has been adapted to fulfil the specific function of cathecting away the discomfort caused by the history of the discipline. As one might have expected, it is usually invoked to underscore the message that art is 'universal,' that differences between western and Indian cultural paradigms are of negligible importance, that in the realm of the aesthetic, all cultures unfailingly understand each other.

No one reverts to the idea of the aesthetic melting-pot as insistently as C.D. Narasimhaiah, the eminence arise of Commonwealth Literature. But he is fastidious about what he will allow into the melting-pot: only high culture will do. "English is no more, if any, less, foreign," he proclaims, "to the highly educated modern Indian than Sanskrit which is our devabhasha and which in the past signified the first flowering of Indian sensibility and, in the centuries, when it spread, represents the mainstream of Indian culture" (8). The confident *identification* of classical (Sanskrit) culture as 'the culture of the mainstream' is the kind of characteristically brahminical touch familiar to students of English in India. Clearly, when we use the term 'Indian aesthetics' quite casually to designate
what may more accurately be called 'Sanskrit poetics,' and when this label becomes a hindrance to identification with other kinds of aesthetics, also indisputably Indian, but not Hindu-Sanskritic-Brahmin-modern, we are dealing with the legacy of cultural nationalism in its formative phase.

Cultural Studies in India

The thoroughgoing displacement of the disciplinary boundaries around English, which happens when the 'archaeology' of the discipline is investigated, causes the traditional English teacher in India to suffer agonies of nostalgia. There was a time when the curriculum of English studies was autonomously defined; surely the 'crisis' in the discipline (being at least as old as the discipline itself), did not worry anyone too much until all the historians and sociologists suddenly began to ask overwhelming questions?

The upheaval that so depresses the good professor is partly the outcome, in India, of the emergence of what may be termed 'cultural studies' or 'cultural history': a theoretical-interpretive enterprise with no specific disciplinary affiliations, which is burrowing its way into many disciplines, but most insistently into English studies. Work on these lines may well be the destiny of English departments. This body of theory interests me enormously, and if I 'place' my own research anywhere at all I would place it—though with many reservations—within the framework of cultural studies in India.

The kind of cultural theory I am referring to is represented by the essays in the anthologies Recasting Women (Ed. Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, 1989) and Interrogating
Modernity (Ed. Tejaswini Niranjana, P. Sudhir and Vivek Dhareshwar, 1993); work by some of the same authors in the Journal of Arts and Ideas, and in the Economic and Political Weekly: Real and Imagined Women (1993), the volume of feminist 'theory' by Rajeswari Sunder Rajan; and the Introductions by Susie Tharu and K. Lalita to the two volumes of Women Writing in India (1991/1995). There has been a recent attempt (in Seminar 446, October 1996) by some of these theorists to clarify and elaborate the group's agendas, after self-consciously assuming the mantle of cultural studies. What adds to the interest I feel in this group of critics is the fact that many of them are also English teachers, involved in the debate about overhauling English studies. This dimension of their theoretical effort is set out in the volumes Rethinking English (Ed. Svati Joshi, 1991) and The Lie of the Land (Ed. Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, 1992).

Being 'showcased' together at seminars and in publications gives this group of theorists an appearance of consanguinity. There are however, other, more serious reasons why their work constitutes a problematic (i.e., a set of related questions) for students and theorists of culture in India, and I consider these reasons below.

What holds this problematic together is the group's common project of "thinking the nation out," of unravelling the themes of cultural nationalism. The second volume of Women Writing in India is called "Women Writing the Nation"; Interrogating Modernity is subtitled "Culture and Colonialism in India." Since studying cultural nationalism in its incipient phase has meant focusing on its engagement with colonialism--i.e., on its effort
to realize the **reversal** of the logic of colonialism for the ends of the nation state, the theorists I am thinking of also gaze over their shoulders at the origin of these themes in the conflicts of the last century: **Recasting Women** is subtitled "Essays in Colonial History" and **Real and Imagined Women** "Gender, Culture and Postcolonialism."

There are many reasons for this renewed interest in the colonialism-nationalism complex. Globalization, as much a cultural and intellectual phenomenon as an economic or military reality, has complex effects in the academy. On the one hand it opens up opportunities for Third World intellectuals to interact freely with their First World counterparts. In this context 'studying the nation' takes on the aspect of a Third World 'speciality,' since for some unfathomable reason the once-colonized Third World is taken to have a monopoly on nationalism. It appears as if the area of intellectual expertise now labelled **postcolonial theory** could develop only out of a perspective **external** to each nation, in the mixing bowl of global **theory.'** On the other hand, 'thinking the nation out' also assumes a perspective **internal** to the nation, since many of the problems cultural theorists are now concerned with have developed out of struggles—of minority communities, dalits, women—within the nation. Perhaps this is not a paradox after all: the very ability to identify with the subaltern implies an achieved disorientation from the project of cultural nationalism. The eminences of Anglo-American academia afford an unprecedented view of the subaltern's space, which Gayatri Spivak describes as "the displaced shadow space" that renders **meaningless** the terms of the "Empire-Nation reversal," thus
"undoing" the name "India," by its foregrounding of colonization within the nation. Mainstream Indian cultural historiography, at least before the publication of the Subaltern Studies volumes, barely paused to notice this space.

The cultural theory I am considering is topical in two contexts. In the Anglo-American academy, where multiculturalism is the keyword, it is a kind of protest against the excesses of post-Cold War capitalist triumphalism. In India and other nations beleaguered by neo-imperialism, it seems the moment to study the cultural logic of the old imperialism, and cultural studies in India shows a marked partiality for historical reconstruction.

Cultural studies is also involved in stepping back from and studying the issues raised by the spate of 'new social movements' that are threatening once-stable hierarchies within the nation. These movements express the legitimate but conflict-producing demands of subordinated groups for a full recognition of their citizenship. Reconstructing the ways in which these groups were subjugated or left out of the dominant projects of the nation is an intellectual contribution to the process of their self-assertion. Studying national cultural history is one way of answering the question: how do the groups that occupied most of the potentially democratic space of the nation (Hindus, upper castes, middle class men, professionals) justify their privileges and protect their territory? The self-justification of these groups invariably has a subtext: the appeal to, and the alignment with, one or the other of the variegated discourses of nationalism, which determined (and still determine, in Hindutva ideology, for instance) the
authorized version of the Indian.

The cultural theorists discussed above share a sense of the urgency of the tasks they are undertaking. The description of their goals and the tone of their writing suggests that this group of theorists is grappling with a politics: they close with cultural practices not to interpret culture but to change it. In the production of a programmatic cultural history that is at once scholarly and interventionist, rather than relaxed and contemplative, their predecessors in India might be writers like Jawaharlal Nehru, whose Discovery of India was an exercise in literary nation-building, consciously opposed to the images of India in colonial discourse; or D.D. Kosambi, who took on board the question of the class-specificity of Indian cultural forms.

To the extent that the theoretical resources contemporary cultural critics draw on are varied and colourful (much more so than those of their predecessors), they do not quite belong in the same framework as these predecessors or constitute an entirely coherent problematic among themselves. To give an idea of the plenitude in this area, one might point to the influence of: Marx and marxist critiques in the line through Georg Lukacs and the Frankfurt school on the one hand and in the line through Antonio Gramsci and the Birmingham School on the other; Fredric Jameson, who combines the ideas of French theorists (especially Jacques Lacan and Louis Althusser) with those of the Frankfurt school; the theoretical/methodological model of 'history from below,' exemplified by the work of the British historians Eric Hobsbawm and Christopher Hill and by that of the Subaltern Studies collective; and, most recently, Jacques Derrida, Michel
Foucault, Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, feminist literary theory and post-structuralist/psychoanalytic film studies. This sample collection also indicates that cultural studies in India draws on theoretical advances in, and political critiques of, several disciplines, from anthropology and history, to sociology and political theory. Many of the beliefs that have animated the various 'political' movements in criticism such as the marxist and the feminist—the belief that texts and practices are material and have effects in the world; the belief that they can be read in ways that could change the existing order and that such a change is desirable—are tacitly agreed upon by these theorists.

The fact that most of the outstanding work of this kind is produced by feminists or is pervaded by an awareness of gender as an issue is, for me, its greatest attraction. The critics and historians whose work has influenced my research seek not so much to 'frame' women by providing 'background,' as to actively intervene in the making of knowledge. The objectives are: one, to recover what Foucault termed 'subjugated' knowledges, the self-definitions, narratives and crafts of marginal groups, especially of the women of these groups; two, to "understand the construction of gender difference—through ideologies, concepts and behaviour—and their relation to class [caste] and colonial economy" (Sangari and Vaid 3).

A closer consideration of the trajectory of cultural studies in India suggests that something like a generational shift is already taking place in this newly constituted field. As I see it, feminist cultural studies in India is becoming more 'theoretical'—i.e., it is responding to the pressures of post-
structuralism in the academy, and this is probably going to change its relationship with feminist praxis or politics. In fact post-structuralism redefines the very meaning of 'politics,' taking it out of its original association with the State, the public sphere and class struggle, holding it poised in, for a moment, in the sphere of domestic relations or disciplinary formations, only to lose it again in a textual, self-enclosed pursuit that strangely resembles the reality-transcending self-referential work of aesthetic appreciation in English departments. The extension of the meaning of 'politics' to include the power relations of everyday life or disciplinary and cultural conflicts is hard won. Feminists have legitimized such a broad usage in the face of bitter opposition or sheer contempt, from apolitical humanist scholarship on the one hand and from dryly economistic marxist commonsense on the other, the latter being particularly difficult to contend with since it occupied most of the available moral/political space. Paradoxically, given the largely textual engagements of their work, consideration of the politics of interpretation makes feminist post-structuralists in India reluctant to take up subjects that have primarily 'aesthetic' resonances.

If the history of sadir that I am presenting here is to be 'effective' history, it should at least interrogate in its turn the theory that makes it possible. A crucial question that arises here, given that feminists seek to intervene in political issues, is: what are the political consequences of this history? The question becomes significant when one considers the textual turn given to feminist criticism by its alliance with post-structuralism. While post-structuralist theory usefully
deconstructs foundational thinking, western rationality, progressive models of history (which are mediated in our context by the 'development' model of social action), and the normativity of the essentially human but autonomous subject, it also raises serious problems for feminists: how will the goals of any interventionist efforts be determined, if not by reference to the wishes and choices of (agentive though not autonomous) subjects? With what degree of conviction could we intervene at all in 'women's issues' or in any other questions, if the binary regressive/progressive is completely discredited? What principles will underwrite democratic initiatives if the space of political modernity (of human rights, decisions through debate, the public sphere) has to be vacated? How can the ends of political justice be served by an analysis of power relations that elides the question of the legitimacy of those relations, that sees both legitimate and illegitimate power as 'productive' (where 'productive' is a neutral term to describe the causing of effects)? While one needs to complexify received ideas of historical causation and political motivation, how can one function entirely without ethical-political frameworks that apportion blame?

The answers post-structuralists offer to questions like these are barely satisfactory (I will try to explain why I think so in the last chapter). For this reason I would place my research on sadir outside strictly post-structuralist parameters, despite my heavy borrowings from Foucauldian methodology. Theoretically, I see my thesis as the beginning of my own project to articulate cultural studies with a kind of liberal-humanism-under-correction.
While it seems inaccurate, for reasons laid out earlier in this chapter, to describe either English studies or the English teacher as 'liberal humanist' even in a nominal sense, I believe it would be interesting and constructive to use this label as a political strategy in the present. In the restricted context of English departments, bringing liberal humanist norms to bear on pedagogic structures may help the student relate to the teacher on terms of parity. But liberal humanism, conscientiously enforced or applied, may have consequences for civil society at large that may be satisfactory from a feminist point of view.

I have pointed, in this chapter, to the liminal placement of the discourse of nationalism between tradition and modernity. The distinctly modern promise of political freedom can of course be called 'resistance to oppression'.... [T]he formulation of the rights of man at the end of the eighteenth century was inspired by a demand for freedom which destroys the representation of power as standing above society and as possessing an absolute legitimacy.... Right and power are no longer condensed around the same pole. If it is to be legitimate, power must henceforth conform to right, but it does not control the principle of right. (Lefort, 31)

This disentangling of right from power is by no means complete in Indian civil society, with the effect that democracy and liberal freedoms remain constitutional guarantees rather than active social principles. Here, by and large, democracy
remains a governmental form that has failed to penetrate society as a whole, and the consequence is a range of attitudes and political positions with premodern, prehumanist survivals at one extreme, and postmodern posthumanist or anti-humanist discourse at the other, with several shades of opinion in between. In practice, marginal groups already suffer from the exclusionary effects of the rationalizing of social structures that was part of the nation-building project (as the instance of the devadasis suggests); there is no reason why they should not draw political benefits from the percolation of democratic-modern norms. The posthumanist rejection of modernity thus makes sense as nostalgia, or, better still, as a warning against the relentless and inhuman logic of progress, but not necessarily as a blueprint for the reconstruction of social relationships. Indeed, precisely because the procedures or norms of liberal democracy may be one of the few safeguards--however tenuous or unreliable--against the overwhelming battery of modernization, a discourse that implies a fundamental rejection of these norms cannot provide the framework for a praxis. In any case, it is not as if the possibilities of either liberalism or humanism have been explored and exhausted; if we open up these formations, extending their scope and compensating for their inadequacies, they might yet function as instruments of political critique.

The most exciting and impressive efforts to extend liberal theory are now being made not in English studies, but in the field of political theory. Recent debates in this field, sparked off by the work of John Rawls, among others, are, to me, among the most stimulating and productive across the whole spectrum of
academic work in the humanities and social sciences. What is most interesting is the process by which defenders of liberalism have been forced to concede territory, negotiate, admit to weaknesses in their theories and so on by communitarians, feminists, poststructuralist pragmatists and others who together constitute the formidable opposition to the refurbished liberalism. Liberal self-critique following from these interventions ensures that the formulations that are now emerging are distancing themselves from laissez faire theories, while maintaining their allegiance to the fundamental idea of political freedom. There is also a new tendency to balance the demands of equality and freedom, whereas in earlier liberal theory the primacy of freedom was unquestioned. What we have, as a result, is a liberalism that is, potentially at least, hospitable to the aspirations of both sexes or of different classes and castes, a liberalism that could certainly sweep away some of the self-delusions of English classrooms and present an intelligent alternative to the kind of post-structuralist theory that has flowed into the political vacuum at the core of disciplines like English and bharatanatyam. Both liberalism and humanism now, with the accumulated knowledge we have of their exclusions and the accumulated demands for genuine universality, may well come to express the needs of a politically-slanted cultural theory more completely than post-structuralism.

I would clarify my own use of the terms 'liberal' and 'humanist' in relation to a conception of democracy that is being widely debated in the field of political theory. If we see democracy as a form of society (instead of seeing it as a form of government) whose logic must extend into our lives; if we see
its goals as *freedom* and equality; then liberalism and humanism could function as normative and discursive mediators of these ideals, working them into the fabric of everyday life. A humanist cultural studies could explore the Utopian side of human freedom (creativity, emotional and aesthetic plenitude) without cutting these possibilities away from the exigencies of equality, i.e., from the political. In other words, in place of the shallow *aestheticism* of English studies, and complementing the political focus of some versions of cultural studies, we would have a discipline that can take account of the sphere of political norms, the power relations of everyday life, as well as the embodying in culture of human self-extension or *aspiration*.

If all speculation about 'human' creativity must be labelled *essentialist*, I want to be attentive in this thesis to the dangerous as well as to the productive uses of *essentialism*. My own reading of the history of *sadir* no less than the theoretical protocols of post-structuralist criticism enjoins vigilance against the occlusion of difference, or the assumption of the universality of cultural norms that actually embody the desires of a small class of people. I would not, however, entirely discount certain articles of humanist faith, and will continue—for instance—to talk of authors or performers or groups of women as agents, which assumes a form of *personhood*; or to assume that language communicates while taking seriously the idea that this communication is not simple; or to take for granted *some* universals, such as the rights guaranteed by democracy, or the common though differently nuanced experience of the body's materiality.
Methodologically, 'humanism' may be considered shorthand for a kind of scholarly generalism that can balance the claims of histories, concepts and texts; for an appreciation of context as well as of detail; for an awareness of mythic resonances and artistic traditions; for a taking seriously of the subjectivity of the artist and critic. I find such a method helpful in the context of my project for reimagining dance. The last chapter of this thesis should further clarify my reasons for locating myself on the borders of humanism rather than squarely within post-structuralist cultural theory.

A Note on Chapterization

Each chapter of this thesis is an attempt to develop a dimension of the problem I set out at the beginning of this chapter (how does the political relate to the aesthetic?). Chapter 2 ("A Most Objectionable Class of People") may be read as a narrative about the short way modernity, with its linear conception of history and time, has with the order of cosmology and the nuances of art-as-worship (sadir). The agents of modernity were, in this case, the Christian missionaries in South India, whose gross misunderstanding of the aesthetic of sadir neatly complemented their evangelical opportunism. When Indian social reformers inherited this misreading, the public campaign against the devadasis began in earnest. The replacement of the context in which sadir made sense (the pre-modern ethos, with the temple as the crucial site of economic, religious and emotional investments, where the aesthetic was not necessarily an end in itself) with the key installations of modernity
(science, nationhood, the domestic sphere, art 'for art's sake,' among other things) resulted in the complete subjugation of the traditional performers of dance in South India.

Chapter 3 ("A Respectable Aesthetic: The Making of Bharatanatyam") is about the honing and deployment of a particular ideology of the aesthetic as a mode of political intervention by upper-caste, middle class, English-educated women. This ideology allowed them to appropriate the dance without losing their status. It was probably not accidental that this intervention in the aesthetic sphere boosted the cultural capital this group already had, at a time when their fortunes were sagging because of hostile political activity. The right to pronounce on matters of taste and culture remained theirs long after their political power base was eroded. Conversely, the colonization of sadir by brahmin women transformed its aesthetic completely; its almost complete dependence on a very small, very exclusive, very status-conscious class of people has led to a congealing of the form. The ideological insularity of the upper caste group that now claims it as its own has meant that all change is regarded as sacrilegious; only a few maverick performers have really fundamentally challenged the reinvented 'tradition' set in place by brahmin exponents. (In this introductory chapter, I have suggested how the invention of a tradition for bharatanatyam resembled the invention of a tradition for English studies.)

In chapter 4 ("Studying Culture, Performing Dance: Engagements with Feminism and Post-structuralism") I return to the imbrication of aesthetics and politics as a theoretical problem: how does post-structuralist theory in India inflect
political practice, and how does it affect the relationships between teachers and students within the academy, and between critics and artists or performers outside it? Of more immediate interest to me, does it help me at all in imagining an alternative, feminist deployment of dance in the present, and in conceiving of an alternative aesthetic that must necessarily go with this?

What my chapterization reflects is the fact that my thesis remained a process and would not, to the very end, become a product. Exploring several disciplinary areas—dance, English, cultural studies, feminist historiography and theory—in their interactions with each other, I found that most of the opinions I formed about each of them had resonances for the others, which is one reason why my arguments in this thesis develop rather tortuously. It also complicated matters that this thesis, like most, was produced over a period of some years, and that nothing remained static during this period. The feminist criticism I was reading at the beginning of my research period was produced in somewhat different circumstances, and had different emphases, from the theory that is now becoming dominant, and that may dictate the framework of cultural studies in the next few years. I tried, perhaps misguidedly, to keep responding to these changes—some of them barely acknowledged as changes by the theorists themselves. This meant that there was little hope of triumphantly resolving the issues at stake and emerging with a finished product. I have made a virtue of necessity and let the rough edges stand, on the assumption that work-in-progress is usually interesting in a way completed work hardly ever is.
NOTES

1. I have borrowed this phrase from the title of Kwame Anthony Appiah's book: In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture. It suggests a generalism that is full of possibilities. Appiah's book was, overall, one of the most exciting ones I read in the course of my research.

2. I have explained the terms sadir and bharatanatyam in detail in my Note at the beginning of this thesis. I will not repeat myself here, except to point out that 'bharatanatyam' (the commonly used name for the dance form in the present) is the usage of my choice; the form 'Bharata Natya' is Rukmini Devi Arundale's coinage and is used in this chapter and in chapter 3 specifically to refer to her use of it.

3. Marxist writers from Marx onwards have displayed much insight into the embedding of art in the economy. Georg Lukacs is, of course, the classic marxist writer on the connection between art or cultural production and politics, especially as exemplified in the contrasts between the realist novel of the nineteenth century and the twentieth century modernist novel. See for instance, the essays in The Meaning of Contemporary Realism. The Frankfurt School critics, especially Theodor Adorno (in, for instance, The Dialectic of Enlightenment or Prisms) and Walter Benjamin (Illuminations), and more recently Fredric Jameson (in The Political Unconscious, for instance), have all in their different ways taken up this question. Pierre Macherey (A Theory of Literary Production) and Louis Althusser (Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays) applied ideology critique in a different style (that of the 'symptomatic reading,' astructuralist/psychoanalytic notion) to literary texts. Terry Eagleton gives a condensed but useful overview of the marxist contribution to theories of artistic and literary production in his Marxism and Literary Criticism.

4. I have in mind landmark feminist texts like Ellen Moers's Literary Women, Elaine Showalter's A Literature of Our Own. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's Madwoman in the Attic, which represent the early liberal feminist recovery of a women's literary and political tradition in the Anglo-American world.

5. This is often the result of a two-step process. The first step consists in emptying art of all content except what belongs in the sphere of the cognitive; the second step is to declare that the cognition encoded in art is false, inaccurate. If art were cognition in any simple sense, we would have to consider it 'knowledge,' but practically no one believes it to be so except in a very special sense. See Raymond Geuss's painstaking unravelling of the themes of ideology, cognition and belief in The Idea of a Critical Theory.

6. Michele Barrett suggests that the "dominant interest in cultural studies at the moment is in a conception of meaning stripped of traditional aesthetic questions, one that does not engage with the issue of the senses," because it has a
primarily **semiotic** focus ("The Place of Aesthetics" 712).

7. Marxist critics, starting with Marx himself (see The German Ideology), have refused to privilege certain human activities as 'mental' or 'cultural' and to devalue certain others as 'manual'; feminist critics have pointed to the continuities between women's work in the home or outside it and the art or literature women have produced. I see dance as interestingly located in the grey area between manual and mental labour.

8. This is a rather wild remark, but I am thinking of a writer like Martin Heidegger, whose *Origin of the Work of Art* is one of the most brilliant texts I know on the meaning and significance of art; or of a writer like Sigmund Freud, whose *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, for instance—rather than the works more conventionally associated with art and *artists*—may generate fascinating readings of cultural products. I am entirely sympathetic to aesthetic theories that pay close attention to the actual details of either the production or the **effects**—bodily, emotional, cultural, ideological—of art on its consumers. *Merleau-Ponty*’s work, though by no means 'conservative', is generally neglected because he is not trendily subversive. I find his writing useful, and I state my reasons for this in the last chapter.

9. Showalter lays out this **project** in her 1986 essay "Towards a Feminist Poetics." Tharu and Lalita in their Introduction to *Women Writing in India* point out some of the limitations of Showalter’s understanding of gender: her separatism, her tendency to pull gender out of the matrix of subject positions or identities within which women lead their lives (Tharu and Lalita, 18-19). Tharu and Lalita, interestingly, take issue with Showalter not for her attempts to arrive at aesthetic formulations, but for her politics; but after this entirely justified attack, leave the question of aesthetic projects such as hers begging, and the impression one is left with is that such projects necessarily go with dubious political **positions**.

10. This suspicion of the aesthetic is often expressed more through the omission of any consideration of the aesthetic dimension of texts than by actual repudiation. As Michele Barrett suggests, the "dominant influence of the concept of ideology" on the one hand, and the recent "deconstruction of the human subject that underlies the **reconstruction** of the text as subject" on the other, have both contributed to the repudiation of questions of reception and response to art ("The Place of Aesthetics" 699-700).

In this context see the response by Rajeswari Sundar Rajan to Susie Tharu and K. Lalita’s *Introductions to Women Writing in India*, quoted at length in her introduction to her own book *Real and Imagined Women*. 2-5.

Some feminists do, however, explicitly **problematize** the whole realm of the reception of cultural productions, especially by women. Laura Mulvey, in *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, makes the most uncompromising version of the
argument (in relation to the cinema) that women have to inflict psychological violence on themselves in the process of consuming male-oriented art.

French feminist writing, especially as it is exemplified in the work of Helene Cixous, is centrally concerned with the **figuring** of an alternative aesthetic (l'écriture feminine) purportedly arising from women's 'writing their bodies,' producing *female-sexed texts.* But this kind of writing "is impossible to define.... It will be conceived of only by subjects who are breakers of automatisms, by peripheral figures that no authority can subjugate" ("The Laugh of the Medusa" 313). The reader of Cixous's text encounters a welter of images for women's writing, both seductive ("flying is woman's gesture"; women produce "bisexual," "volcanic" texts, free from phallic logic, "heterogeneous," sweeping away syntax, "on the side of jouissance") and confusing (is 'feminine' to be identified with biological women—in which case, Cixous's position is more or less essentialist—or with an ontological or creative state that may on occasion emerge in men's writing as well as women's?).

11. The **post-structuralist** celebration of the pleasures of the text make sense when they are seen as extensions of the romantic project of individual artist vs. social norms. If it is normative--for example--to respect copyright law, or to speak of the 'expression' of individual desire, the romantic (post-structuralist) writer will talk of the death of the author (without necessarily failing to collect his royalties) or of the impersonal, insatiable desiring machine whose frenzied working impersonally and insatiably expresses itself through human acts and texts. I am thinking of the late work of Roland Barthes, of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus,* Jean-Francois Lyotard's *Libidinal Economies.* Herbert Marcuse (Eros and Civilization), from a rather different angle, brought up the question of the repressive society's control over human desire; adapted to American conditions, he became the guru of the sixties sexual revolution.

12. See Fredric Jameson, "Pleasure: A Political Issue"; or Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late capitalism which is a sustained examination of how aesthetic/cultural forms change when the mode of production changes.

13. See Carole Vance ed., *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality* or Cora Kaplan's essays in *Sea Changes: Essays on Culture and Feminism.* The French feminists, of course, have taken *jouissance* on board in a big way: see Cixous' "The Laugh of the Medusa."

14. One of Miller's students, Raghupati Venkatataratnam, helped start the Social Purity movement in what later became Andhra Pradesh, along with Kandukuri Veeresalingam. The movement aimed to put an end to *sadi* concerts, to dedication of girls, and to the drinking of liquor in Andhra. The princely states outside the direct jurisdiction of colonial law also began to respond to the anti-nautch rhetoric and by the turn of the
century many of them, including Mysore, Pudukottai and Travancore had passed orders banning sadir. The spread of interest in the question was made easier by the fact that the practice of 'nautch' had innumerable parallels, and the performers innumerable counterparts, all over the country. Frederique Marglin documents the ethos of the devadasis of Orissa in her book *Wives of the God-King*: the tawaif of North India, though not dedicated to a temple or deity, was also considered a custodian of the arts.

A good deal happened between the launching of the anti-nautch movement and Muthulakshmi Reddi's entry on the scene. For an abbreviated chronology of the developments in the period under review, see the Appendix at the end of this thesis.

15. Muthulakshmi Reddi, the daughter of a brahmin father and a devadasi mother, was a remarkably capable and resourceful woman. She insisted on studying medicine and, with the help of the Pudukottai Raja among others, had her way; graduated from the Madras Medical College and went on to spend most of her time on voluntary work in causes that involved women and children. She was nominated member of the Legislative Council in 1926, and was elected Vice President of the Council; was active in this period in getting the Sarda Act (for increasing the Age of Consent to 15 years for boys and 12 for girls) and the Prevention of Immoral Traffic Act passed. She founded the Avvai Home for widows; was part of a committee that demanded franchise for women; helped set up hospitals for women and children, and the Cancer Hospital in Madras; was member of the State Social Welfare Advisory Board between 1954 and 1957; and received the Padma Bhushan in 1956.

16. Muthulakshmi Reddi was an active campaigner for the Bill on the Suppression of Brothels and Immoral Traffic (passed in 1928). Like Josephine Butler in England, she fought against the forced examination of prostitutes by male officers enforcing state control over prostitution. Herself the daughter of a devadasi, she broke several rules by becoming a doctor. The parallel between her endorsement of 'modern' domesticity and that of Rukmini Devi, another rebel, is an instructive one.

17. The devadasis did not constitute a caste by themselves, though they are frequently referred to as a caste. They were drawn from a number of middle-level castes—melakkaras, nattuvar, and so on. They formed something of a professional community, however, with a well-regulated internal structure, which brought them into relationships with men of their castes—the gurus, especially—but also allowed them a relative independence. Their unusual lifestyle and codes, Amrit Srinivasan argues, were aspects of their professional need to specialize and evolve the best possible ethos for the perpetuation of their art. See the Note at the beginning of the thesis.

18. Rukmini Nilakanta Shastri shot into prominence when she was sixteen years old, in 1920, as a result of the scandal surrounding her marriage to George Arundale who, in addition
to being white, was about forty years old at the time. Protege of Annie Besant and Leadbeater at the Theosophical Society, Rukmini Devi was being groomed to take on the messianic role of World Mother, a project that did not quite materialize. In 1926, she met the ballet star Anna Pavlova during a voyage by ship to Australia, grew fascinated by the idea of dancing, and even had lessons from one of Pavlova's soloists, Cleo Nordi. In the early 1930s, Rukmini Devi watched devadasi performers of sadir at the Music Academy, and decided to learn the art and to use it as a vehicle of cultural nationalism. The rest of her story is laid out in chapter 3.

19. Krishna Iyer was a lawyer by profession as well as a trained musician and dancer, participating in amateur theatre in his college days (he usually took female roles) and going on to train seriously under Madurantakam Jagadambal, a famous devadasi performer and teacher, and under A.P.Natesa Iyer, a Brahmin natyacharya. Becoming fiercely enthusiastic about the preservation of the form, he lectured on bharatanatyam and performed it in female costume. As a member of the Congress Committee, he was one of the moving forces behind the initiative to start the Music Academy of Madras. Krishna Iyer was partly responsible for Rukmini Devi's interest in sadir, and he persuaded the dance guru Meenakshisundaram Pillai to accept her as a student. From the 1940s onwards, as the revival gathered momentum, his influence on the Madras cultural scene gradually declined, though he continued to promote individual dancers and dance teachers.

20. Annie Besant, for instance, expended much energy in the early years of her sojourn in India trying to convince Indians about the beneficial rationality of the caste system; she found her audiences intransigent, however, and was forced to abandon this project. The person who made the most explicit connections between art and Swadeshi was Ananda Coomaraswamy, and he too tended to idealize and justify the caste system as creating a 'co-operative society' whose perfect harmonies he was even tempted to identify with the repose of the icon dancing Shiva-Nataraja (see The Dance of Shiva 19). His own aesthetic theory was beholden to Benedetto Croce on the one hand and to Sanskrit poetics on the other; he also hypostatized the 'spirituality' of Eastern art in a way that had its uses for the brahmin bharatanatyam dancers of the 1930s onwards.


22. Theoretically there is no limit to the archive I could consult; if in practice there has been one, it has to be admitted at once that it has been arbitrarily set. Two things dictated the cut-off point. One was the practical consideration of the limited time available for research. The
other was a more respectable consideration. The early fixing
and relentlessly monotonous occupation of positions on either
side of the nautch question, I felt, relieved me of the
responsibility of indefinitely researching my subject. When
the shape of this controversy became so clear that more
evidence could only reinforce the same arguments, I stopped
rummaging in the archives. I am convinced that fresh material
can only, if anything, throw up an exception or two to the
general rule.

23. Thanjavur Balasaraswati (1918-1984), one of
bharatanatyam's last and most celebrated isai Vellala
exponents, was responsible in some measure for keeping
audience interest in the dance alive even in its leanest
years. She collaborated for a considerable stretch of her
career with the Music Academy, where she eventually set up a
school of dance.

24. Kittappa Pillai is a descendant of the Thanjavur
quartette--the four brothers who established a stage-format
for the dance in the Maratha court at Thanjavur. He is one of
the few surviving isai Vellala teachers who continue to teach
the form.

25. By this time the conflicts between the Orientalists and
the Anglicists had been more or less resolved in favour of the
former. Macaulay's Minute of 1835 was, of course, one decisive
moment in this sequence of events.

26. Part of the understanding between the British crown and
Indian subjects, as expressed by the Queen's Proclamation of
1858, was that religious tolerance would be extended to the

27. What the middle class established around this time and
subsequently, were more or less brahminical values,
refashioned to meet the demands of modernity. To refer to this
class as a class/caste each time is cumbersome; to use only
the caste designation without mentioning the class position of
the group under discussion means buying into an 'outside'
perspective of the kind that stresses the primacy of caste,
and to stow away one's own professional class position beneath
the politics of caste; and to use 'class' by itself suggests
the resolute blindness, exemplified by certain orthodox
marxists, to the caste composition of elite and subaltern
groups. I have simply steered around this problem by using
different terms in different places to refer to the
patriarchal, brahminical bourgeoisie that assumed power in the
wake of decolonization.

28. Some novel-writing contributors to social reform also
wrote in Tamil, but were translated for the edification of
English readers. A. Madhaviah, for instance, was the author of
the historical novel Clarinda (1915); his Tamil novel
Mythumeenakshi, written some years earlier, appeared in the
Social Reform Advocate in 1915, in his daughter's English
translation. K.S. Venkataramani wrote fiction and essays
(Murugan the Tiller. 1927; Kandan the Patriot. 1932; Indian
Village: A Ten Year Plan. 1932) that popularized Gandhian thought, and was especially concerned with the village as organic community. Panchapakesa Ayyar also wrote a historical novel called Baladitya (1930), and several volumes of short stories. Manjeri Isvaran's short story collections, No Anklet Bells for Her (1949) and Angry Dust (1944) also comment on 'social evils'. Of the writers named, R.K. Narayan is the least inclined to preach; his sketches and novels may nevertheless be seen as part of the endeavour to capture in print a fading ideal of communal existence.

29. One might consider the number of books with eponymous heroines who are moulded, in the course of the narrative, into carriers of both tradition and modernity. This phenomenon cut across languages, as witness, strikingly, Madhaviah's Muthumeenakshi (Tamil); Chandu Menon's Indulekha (Malayalam) and Krupabai Satthianadhan's Kamala (English).

30. R.K. Narayan has produced similar collections of homely sketches in Malgudi Days, for instance, or in Swami and Friends, but without the disquisitions on the value of the joint family, Hindu tradition and so on that are part of Venkataramani's offerings.


32. See, for instance, Terry Eagleton, Literary Theory: An Introduction and Catherine Belsey, Critical Practice, published in the 1980s; or essays in Peter Widdowson, ed., Re-Reading English: in Svati Joshi ed., Rethinking English, and in Rajeswari Sundar Rajan ed., The Lie of the Land. The last two volumes are recent critiques specifically of English in India.

However, given the sheer vagueness of the term 'humanist' and the energy of the recent debates in political theory around liberalism, what are our current referents for each of the words in the compound 'liberal humanism'? For that matter, do they always go together? There are, for instance, marxist teachers of English who are humanist but anti-liberal.

33. See Matthew Arnold's Culture and Anarchy. for instance. Chris Baldick gives a good account of how English was used in the strengthening of the establishment in The Social Mission of English Criticism.

34. Besant was of Irish birth and had lived in England for many years, involving herself in a campaign to spread awareness about contraception among women. She came to India in 1893, and initially her work was largely religious and educational in intent (she founded the Central Hindu College, now the Benaras Hindu University, in 1898), and in accordance with the doctrines of the Theosophical Society, of which she was President from 1907 until her death. In 1913 she delivered her famous "Wake Up India" lectures; for some years, from 1914 onwards, ran a journal called New India which had an astonishingly high circulation; in 1916, founded the Home Rule Movement, and in 1917 was made President of the Indirn
National Congress. In that year she founded the Women's India Association with Margaret Cousins, and campaigned, in India and in Britain, for women's suffrage. With the rise of Gandhi as a national leader, Besant's importance in the freedom movement diminished and she went into retirement in her later years.

35. Partha Chatterjee argues, in The Nation and Its Fragments, that this division was to be marked not in terms of the public vs. private spheres of liberal discourse, but as a distinction between the 'outer' world where the rule of colonial difference had to be resisted, and Universalism demanded, and the 'inner' world where difference from the colonizing culture was the saving barrier against total assimilation and was therefore fiercely maintained.

36. The transmogrification of English studies into cultural studies is a sign that the Nation beckons disciplines in a variety of ways. There is an increasing feeling that the discipline should align itself, in the way sociology or the natural sciences have, with the project of the nation (or with the project of the Left: which is in some ways the mirror image of the nation-building project). The move in the direction of cultural critique that 'thinks the nation out' was, therefore, prefigured at the very inception of the discipline.

The entry into a field (the study of the nation) whose parameters have already been defined by the social sciences exerts specifically disciplinary pressures on English. The demands that it be practical and that it be political find English studies barren of theoretical models as well as of ways of reading; it has to borrow these from the philosophy or from the social sciences. The social sciences rely on progressivist theoretical models (of either national development or class struggle); they are also, in India, largely fact-based and intolerant of textual, speculative and interpretive labour. To the extent that English scholars-turned cultural studies specialists want full participation in the nation-(re)building project, they are under pressure to either accept the progressivist model or to set up a competing theoretical claim; and the turn to historical materialism or post-structuralism in cultural studies is at least partly a response to the demand for methodological rigour.

37. The restlessness of the middle-to-working-class teachers of this discipline is responsible for much that is dynamic in English criticism. F.R. Leavis's odd relationship with Cambridge, and, of course, Raymond Williams's pathbreaking cultural critiques are cases in point.

38. The connection English education (especially literary knowledge) had with the aesthetic/moral values that fed into the making of bharatanatyam is particularly obvious in the memoirs of S. Sarada. Reminiscing about the early 'dance dramas' performed at the International Academy of Arts, which appeared to have been partly in English, she remembers being struck by Arundale's performance: she had to ask someone who
the fisherman was who "spoke in chaste English" (3). She also remembers Sankara Menon, one of the founder-trustees of Kalakshetra, as an expert on English literature--"he used to take classes on Shakespeare's plays" (39).

39. This is how I read the use of 'humanist,' in Tharu and Niranjana's essay "Some Problems for a Contemporary Theory of Gender," to characterize the environment of the dominant
subject not merely of the English classroom but of the nation at large.

I am not sure if this formulation is precise enough to capture the nature of dominance from the feudal-agricultural to the industrial to the metropolitan-professional settings. Thus if one were to use 'liberal humanist' to describe 'the dominant subject' the description probably needs to be qualified by a description of the provenance of the subject; i.e., 'liberal humanist' is not coeval with 'modern.'

40. I do not think close reading in itself a bad thing. It is the method I use more than any other in this thesis, and it can produce extremely interesting results when used in the light of historical facts. Close reading in isolation from every other kind of interpretive effort, however, is usually both trivial and boredom inducing, a specialist's skill.

41. I have purloined the term 'archaeology' from Foucault (see The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences) but it is put to much humbler uses here than Foucault's grand methodology demands.

42. The proposal was made at a seminar on the Teaching of English Language and Literature in India, held at the University of Hyderabad (in Hyderabad), in the year 1991. Comparative literature departments in many universities are preoccupied with underwriting authentic Indianness in their own way. The operative theory in this case is that one has only to scrape away the incidental crust of linguistic and cultural variations to recover the pure, shining core of our (pan Indian) culture. For instance, a set of Tamil texts may have very different formal features, histories and thematic concerns from a set of Gujarati texts, but their deep structure, revealed by the conscientious labour of the scholar, is one of geographical and temporal continuities. Thus a 'unified' canon of Indian texts is obtained by what has been called 'the aggregative principle.' The government's endorsement of these exercises in cultural nationalism illustrates (in a very obvious way) one of the axioms on which my thesis is grounded: that cultural projects, such as the recovery of an aesthetic or the teaching of English are inextricably involved in negotiations for, and maintenance of, power, dominance and control.

43. See Eagleton's discussion of Baumgarten's aesthetics in The Ideology of the Aesthetic. 24. See also the Introduction to Schiller's Aesthetic Education by Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L.A. Willoughby.
44. 'Religion' is not the right word to describe the complex transactions between myth, social institutions like the temple, the legitimation of kingship, the arts, and the everyday ritual that made up the Hindu lifestyle; nor does it express the types of activity that included everything from demonic possession to philosophical monism. However, I use this peculiar, colonially-derived term for want of a better one.

45. Angelika Heckel cites M. Ghosh's translation to make her point. But since cultural difference is the problem, the same negotiation between European and Indian categories may be found in any other translation.

46. Krishna Rayan's essay on "Rasa and the Objective Correlative" is an example of attempts in this style to update Sanskrit poetics.

47. I have found it useful to study the trajectory of this group in slightly greater detail; this is done in the first section of chapter 4.

48. See Susie Tharu, "Thinking the Nation Out: Some Reflections on Nationalism and Theory," for an overview of this project.


50. See Kosambi's Myth and Reality, for example; or his Exasperating Essays, in contrast to the relaxed tone of a book like A.L.Basham's The Wonder That Was India. In his sharp analysis of Nehru's Discovery of India, Kosambi observes that the author "could have asked himself one question with the greatest of advantage, namely cui bono: what is the class that called for or benefited by a certain change in a certain period of history?" (12-13). An obvious anticipation, here, of one of the guiding principles of cultural studies.

51. Norberto Bobbio suggests the following connection between the institution of political rights (embodied freedom) and democratic procedures:

   There are...good reasons to believe that
   (a) the procedures of democracy are necessary to safeguard those fundamental personal rights on which the liberal state is based; and (b) those rights must be safeguarded if democratic procedures are to operate (38).

52. The anthologies generated by the feminist revisiting of the work of major political theorists of the western world were among the most interesting texts I encountered during my research. See, for instance, Feminists Theorize the Political, ed. Judith Butler and Joan Scott; Feminist Interpretations of Political Theory, ed. Mary Lyndon Shanley and Carole Pateman; and Feminists and Political Theory, ed. Judith Evans, et al.
The most interesting single author publication more or less in this category was Nancy Fraser’s *Unruly Practices*.

53. See John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice*. Robert Nozick's *Anarchy, State, Utopia*. Communitarian critiques include Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue*. Charles Taylor's *Sources of The Self*. Among the most interesting feminist interventions are those of Nancy Fraser and Seyla Benhabib. Fraser’s *Unruly Practices*, for instance, raises the question of women’s disadvantaged and unequal access to the public sphere, the much touted locus of liberal debate.

54. One's time and location, naturally, dictate one's concerns. It is clear that the theoretical terrain I want to explore has already been mapped onto the discipline by forces beyond individual control, including, here, the crisis of humanism and theoretical developments elsewhere; I do not choose it of my own accord. No one can feel any longer that theoretical debates about power, about nationhood, about gender fall outside the field of English studies. It is clear too, that this theory will, or should, affect practice—the framing of curricula, the working out of relations between teachers and students, and so on, and that therefore the questions recent political critiques raise cannot be evaded.