

## Editorial Note, **JMI** 5

The essays collected here are based on papers presented at our annual seminar of 2005. The theme was 'Currents in Indian Popular Cinema: Liberalization and after'. The only exception is the essay on *Maqbool*, which was written for a seminar held in Pune in 2004.

We wanted to approach what is now distinguishably a new historical phase in Indian cinema with a historical narrative in mind rather than treat it as an obvious and regular phenomenon. We wanted to bring to the discussion the longer story of institutional mutation of Indian cinema in order to avoid the unproductive Bollywood culture survey that much writing on the subject has been reduced to. The question before the seminar was both what is new and what is old in the Indian cinema that has come to be since the new economic order took hold in 1991. Some features of the industrial organization, some generic compulsions, representational and narrative strategies of this cinema have a long life, dating back sometimes to the post-independence years; some elements and forces are radically new. But the more interesting question that emerges from the material collected here is if the new is sometimes fulfilling an older mandate in a way that was not possible before. The question lurks behind [Ashish Rajadhyaksha](#)'s presentation of the economic map of Bombay cinema; it is central to [S V Srinivas](#)'s analysis of the dynamics of re-feudalization in Telugu cinema. Rajadhyaksha's piece should be read in conjunction with his other recent essays, including 'Rethinking the State after Bollywood' (**JMI** 3, 2004), which underlines the continuities in the mutation of Indian cinema over the last five decades in terms of formal paradigms and the ideological projects of the state. We feel specially happy to present his new work (which will soon appear in a book) in a fairly regular cycle over the last few seminars.

Srinivas's essay is also part of a forthcoming book. It adds the important perspective of another location to the analysis of industrial articulation in Indian cinema as it looks at the intersecting processes of financing, star system, political movements and regional differentiation of the social imaginary within the regional cinema of Andhra Pradesh. [Sovan Tarafder](#) talks about another region, Bengal, in order to see how its own metropolitan imagination has changed in relation to the new representational energy mobilized around Bombay. Here, there is singular emphasis on the departures that characterize the current phase. Speaking of the new compulsions and possibilities, [Jeebesh Bagchi](#) and [Abhijit Roy](#) draw attention to two aspects of a cinema that is embedded more firmly in a mediatic field than ever. Bagchi's presentation gives an idea of the exciting work being done by young media scholars in Delhi and Bangalore on the new flows and forms forged at the cusp of cultural and economic production. The cinematic object comes to us here as something unfamiliar since it is conceived as lost in an expanding circle of effects and use. Abhijit Roy focuses on the central transaction between cinema and television in the post-1991 era, and talks about the interesting way temporality is reconfigured in contemporary cinema as it tries to negotiate the television-inspired live coverage mode. The essay tries to understand the way publics are imagined by the new cinema under the impact of this temporal image.

[My essay](#) on *Maqbool* is concerned with the artistic possibilities that may come out of the new representational accumulation taking place in popular cinema since it entered the contemporary media matrix. It talks about temporality from a different angle, by considering the way in which the cinematic emerges out of the mediatic context of realism. In the film under discussion, it seems to be happening through a contact with the past - a Shakespeare classic, but also a past that the film brings into play through its story, characters, and its echo of an old genre of Indian cinema. The student paper by [Neha Chaddha](#) brings up the familiar theme of consumerism, but by presenting what seems to be a paradox - the disappearance of the middle

class that Hindi film would often put at the centre when it decided to find a niche for love.

We hope this collection will contribute usefully to the ongoing investigation of the contemporary Indian cinema, and will provide points of departure for the sequels to the seminar that will take place, in Jadavpur and elsewhere.

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