

EDITORIAL
NOTE

The main body of articles here is transcribed from audio recordings of the Departmental Annual Seminar on *Teaching Film Studies in India*, held in the form of a colloquium in October 2011. We departed from our usual conference mode to freely share our concerns about film studies pedagogy with a wider teaching community. We were engaged in the process of revising the syllabi at Jadavpur, which had already led to a series of conversations in workshop format (a state level workshop on ‘Teaching Film Studies in West Bengal’ in February 2009, followed by a four-day orientation programme on ‘Teaching Films Studies’ in July 2011, both organized by our extension research facility, The Media Lab). In those prefatory events, we were joined by teachers from various institutions in West Bengal that had some component of Film Studies in their curricula to discuss the challenges posed by technological and other developments in the field.

We found that the problems range from the shortage of vernacular texts for students to the choice of audio-visual materials to suit their orientations and locations. Above all remains the difficult task of defining how film studies as a method differs from the myriad programmes that use film as their object - the film appreciation courses and mushrooming media related and professional courses offering quick familiarity with the medium, or social science/humanities courses using films as illustrations.

We all can see what is happening to our object of teaching, and to the learning communities, in the wake of the digital explosion, but do not usually create the scope for thinking what it should mean for classroom pedagogy. The colloquium was a much-awaited occasion to contemplate ways in which we could

connect to the new generation of students and assimilate the shifts in the social circulation of film. We wished to revisit our earlier findings at regional level workshops by opening out to a broader group of scholars from national institutions offering postgraduate courses in film studies. It was a matter of great joy to all of us that Colin MacCabe, the pre-eminent film and cultural theorist, could join us. His wonderful presentation on 'Teaching Godard' tells us about the rise of film studies in Britain amidst the countercultural explosion in the 1960s.

The conversational mode facilitated unexpected movements of thought. Ashish Rajadhyaksha's ideas about analog/digital divide, coupled with his take on the issue of archiving and medium specific transfers of film, put the problem of textual analysis into a new light. On the other hand, Madhava Prasad's rigorous defense of the Humanities approach to film studies put back into perspective the concrete thing we continually grapple with - the mind of the student. Critical perspectives and practical institutional issues often become inseparable requiring new kinds of thought processes to negotiate them. Many others such as Ranjani Mazumdar, Ira Bhaskar and S.V Srinivas reminded us about the protocols of teaching and attendant anxieties not only regarding course design but also regarding the nature of training required to enable a disciplinary grasp in students. The articles are slightly revised versions of individual presentations and the two panels.

We are happy to mention that the series of conversations on teaching film studies that culminated in the colloquium has produced some concrete result in the form of a major curricular revision in the Department. A new set of postgraduate and undergraduate syllabi are being introduced even as this issue is being printed. We would like to use this publication as an occasion to thank all those who have shared their ideas on the task of bringing the study of cinema to the classroom.

Veena Hariharan's essay on Chris Marker's *La Jetée* appears as a tribute to the recently departed filmmaker. In the 'Special Feature' section, we present Aryak Guha's research paper on the *Amar Chitra Katha* comics. Both read as curious counterpoints to a major drift in the preceding conversation - they indulge in deep textual engagement combined with ideological/cultural contextualization.

Subhajit Chatterjee
Moinak Biswas