



Day One, Session Two
Special Presentation

Teaching Godard

Colin MacCabe

Moinak Biswas

As you have seen, we are not inviting people to chair sessions, unlike the earlier seminars. So I won't go into long introductions, and Colin MacCabe does not need one. For a long time now, our students have been reading his essays and answering questions about his essays. It's really an honor and a privilege to have him amongst us on this occasion. I'll hand over the mike to Colin and he will speak for about forty five minutes or so.

Colin MacCabe

My great teacher Raymond Williams used to say that "I offer this not as biography but as history". I am afraid to say, I am not really sure where biography ends and history begins so it's up to you to decide which of this is interesting history and which narcissistically irrelevant biography. But I thought, in talking about film studies and in talking about the abandonment of Screen theory it might be worth telling you about my own engagement with Screen theory and to track that against Godard, because they run together in various ways. And perhaps that will relate to other topics we have been discussing so

interestingly today. I must confess that when I was told this was a conference on 'teaching film studies' I thought that I would be asleep by this stage. In fact the discussion has been much more interesting than I anticipated. And indeed my whole period in India at the English and Foreign Languages University in Hyderabad has re-interested me in questions about film and cultural studies. I had rather given up on both fields despite having been part of the moment when they were founded but India has made me think that I should revise this over-pessimistic view.

In some ways it's very odd that I have spent so much of my life in the cinema because film was not a major part of my childhood or my adolescence in London of the 1960s, although it was a central part of Western rituals of courtship. Film was much less interesting than pop music in the period 1963 to 1966. But even more important was television. British television of this period had got all the most interesting and vital creative works going on in it. The greatest British film directors of the second half of the twentieth century Ken Loach, [Stephen] Frears and Mike Leigh were all working for the television. So although film was a major part of my childhood and adolescence, it was television and pop music which had captured my intellectual attention. The first time I realized the potential of cinema was when I was seventeen and had left home and school and was travelling to Geneva via Paris and thought I would go and see a film. I didn't speak French then and I saw that there was a film playing called *Made in U.S.A.* So I thought I will go and see *Made in U.S.A.* and I went to see *Made in U.S.A.* I now know it is an incomprehensible thriller but at that stage I presumed that it was an incomprehensible thriller because despite its title it was in French. If I couldn't follow the plot I was aware that I was seeing colour and light as I had never seen them before. So I was hooked on Godard and over that year I went to see as many of his films as I could.

In January '67, I see *Made in USA*. In October of that year I start university. 1967/68 is the year of worldwide student unrest but is also the moment when to be a student is to immerse yourself in the cinema. I think it is difficult to underestimate the extent to which cinema was an integral part of that moment. It is very difficult to really understand the changing relationships between technologies and audience but when I was a student at Cambridge in the late 60's there were something like thirty film societies functioning. Any night you could go and educate yourself in the classics of world cinema. And in Cambridge you had the figure of Tony Rayns who was in close contact with Warhol so one could also see what was coming out of The Factory at that time. And now we approach the bit that it most difficult both to remember and to understand.

We claimed we were revolutionaries: that the contradictions of capitalism together with the incredibly new energies released by the music, by the drugs, by the sex, were going to actually build a different and more equal world.

I find it constantly perplexing as to whether we really did believe that for more than a hallucinogenic nano-second. What is certain is that when I came back from Paris as a graduate student in the summer of 1973 having studied with Althusser and Derrida at the Ecole Normale Superieure, I knew that in its more apocalyptic form it was not true, it was over. But I thought that there was a form which historically is known as Euro-Communism in which it might be possible to link a representative democracy to this transformation in a way which was less apocalyptic but which seemed at least for a moment more realistic. It was just after I returned from Paris in the summer of 1973 that I was invited out to lunch by Peter Wollen and Sam Rhodie. Not just any lunch but lunch in the extremely chic, extremely cool Lee Ho Fook. It was the first really good Chinese restaurant in London and I thought, 'that's impressive'. And they said to me "would you like to join the Board of 'Screen' magazine?" and I said "yes". I mean I was interested in film. The fact that I knew nothing about film didn't bother me for two reasons. One, you could read everything written on film over a weekend roughly (I exaggerate but I mean you read Kracauer, Eisenstein and Bazin) and the second thing, which is much more important than that, is that I really did know Godard's films; he was one filmmaker whom I followed absolutely. That was absolutely key because the importance of Godard was that he was, I think I am right in saying, the only major European artist who had really committed to student revolution and he was talismanic for that reason. But he was important for another reason. Our revolution by then, I must say, was pretty minority affair. It was one articulated in the magazine *Tel Quel* in Paris and it put together Althusserian Marxism. Althusser was interesting for many reasons but most importantly it insisted on taking the disciplines seriously. Further *Tel Quel* conjugated Lacanian psychoanalysis with modernist writing to produce a theory in which art was a key part of the revolution.

I think one of the best ways of understanding the contradictions of that period is to re-read Laura Mulvey's famous article on the gaze. From one perspective it is a brilliant analysis of the relation between narrative and shot in classic Hollywood cinema. From another it espouses the ridiculous political project of dispensing with Hollywood spectacle and narrative in favour of a pure revolutionary cinema. The idea, bizarre as it now seems is that through a certain kind of revolutionary artistic practice one would completely change

the way people enjoyed cinema.

Did we actually believe that? Well, we sort of believed it. But it is also the case that this quasi belief had a very short life. From '73-'74 to '77-'78. That's the period. And it's actually got a political name, which is Euro-Communism and the end comes politically with Euro-Communism. But its demise in *Screen* was also theoretical. *Screen* basically depended on aligning the textual with the audience through psychoanalytic structures. So that whatever you found in the text you automatically found in the audience. In fact once one starts looking at audiences that position becomes untenable. I remember Paul Willemen wrote an article which in typical Leftist form said that everything depended on the audience and now we should all just decide to read films in a Leftist manner and then the revolution would follow from that because the reading couldn't be derived from the text.

That article was I think in 1977 and it signaled the end of that moment which coincided with the political end of Euro-communism. In Portugal where a Communist Party which had led a genuine revolution revealed itself as irredeemably Stalinist. And else where in Europe – in Italy, for example, where effectively large sections of my generation was opting for terrorism rather than for the parliamentary processes. We could talk about that but anyway it was over.

It was over. And I'm not sure that I thought I would ever write another word on cinema. But then Paul Willemen who had been my greatest enemy on the *Screen* board whose proceedings began more and more to resemble the Soviet politburo in the early 30's, asked me to do a small pamphlet on Godard's unknown films which would gather together some of the very few essays devoted to Godard's political films. It is important to remember that Godard, who had enjoyed a stellar career as a critic in the fifties and as a director in the sixties, disappeared after sixtyeight to begin making films signed by the Dziga Vertov group which were extremely difficult to get hold of. Both Godard and his films had disappeared. Above all Paul wanted an interview with Godard to conclude this little collection.

Now Godard was legendarily difficult to approach. But Simon Hartog who had worked with Godard in Mozambique gave me some very good advice: if you're going to meet Jean Luc then go with money. There's no point in going without money'. I think at that stage I was still woolly minded enough to believe that was not a very nice way to talk. And then by chance Ian Christie, who was then working at the BFI, asked me if I could help him acquire Godard's television material for the BFI. After the Dziga Vertov period, which lasted

from '68 to '72, Godard made one very big budget movie with Yves Montand and Jane Fonda called 'Tout va Bien' and then he disappeared again and made television work which was as difficult to see as the Dziga Vertov material. So I set out with a cheque for \$2000 which seemed a lot of money to me then. The idea was that he would sign the contract, that I also carried, the I would give him the cheque and he would give me the video cassettes to take back to the BFI. Godard arranged to meet me in the waiting room of the train station of a little town called Nyon. It was also rather weird and made even weirder by Godard's extraordinary powerful presence. It was like meeting a very powerful shaman – psychic power came off him in waves. Even more disconcertingly the business discussion which I thought would take between thirty minutes and an hour took thirty seconds. Godard is a brilliant businessman: really efficient, really effective. So then I started mumbling about the book. Godard cut through my mumbles: "Is it going to be a proper book?" "Yes", I lied. He said: "If it's a proper book when you come and see me to tomorrow to pick up the video tapes I will give you access to all my papers. Also I am just about to shoot a film and you can come to the shoot and I will help you with the book in any way I can". Immediately after I left the meeting I rang a publisher in London and when I turned up the next day I was indeed commissioned to write a 'proper book'. And I did postpone all of my then scholarly plans in order to write this book. To me it was astonishing- this man who had hidden from the world for ten years was suddenly making himself visible. Of course what I now know is that he just made the decision that after ten years when he has tried to work outside the traditional cinema, he was now going back into that cinema and he was preparing a new commercial film *Sauve qui peut* and my book would be a tiny little part of the release, which indeed it was.

Some six months later I found myself spending two days on the set of *Sauve qui peut*. *Sauve qui peut* is a film about a man at the end of every kind of tether in the audio-visual industry, whose girlfriend is leaving him and the film tracks their lives. The major scene I witnessed was of a peasant game called Hornuss, which is a traditional Swiss game but which noone outside Switzerland has ever heard of. It's a bit like basketball plus golf combined. A guy stands at one end of the field bangs a ball about two hundred yards and down the field and people with huge placards jump up and try and stop the ball. There was a train line running along the field and every now and then a train would rumble by. Not one of the modern trains of which there are many in *Sauve qui peut*, but a little Swiss country train. Godard was trying for a shot where the camera would begin on the train and then pan round 270 degree and reveal the Hornuss

field. And then into the shot would come Nathalie Baye playing the girlfriend who has decided to move to the country and she would begin a conversation with an old friend who had been a leftist but is now running a local paper and reporting the game of Hornuss. Godard wanted to get all that in one shot. What he wouldn't do was either direct the actors or synchronise anything on the playing field to coincide with the train time table. The assistant director had a time table and he kept saying to Godard "all right, go now". But Godard wanted to capture the scene but he did not want to stage it. At that time I felt totally embarrassed that I had written a lot about the cinema but I didn't understand anything that was going on. And then something happened. The actor who was playing the newspaper editor was talking to Natalie Baye about the past and why he had given up the revolution. It's a film exactly at the end of this period I was talking about and at a time when everybody realized that they had to go back and what did that mean. And Godard couldn't stand the fact that the actor was performing from what one might call a liberal humanist position of total comprehension. But Godard wouldn't tell the actor what to do he just exploded in rage and anger because he wasn't doing it. The violence of the encounter was shocking.

For me the lesson of that day was that the number of variables of work in any image is so vast that almost all the theories we had been using were completely inadequate. And I was determined that I wouldn't actually write anything more after I finished this book I had committed to do until I'd actually worked in film. And that was the next thing I did. I really had nothing to do with film studies after that book. From then on my focus was on film production. I continued to see Godard always for work, always to do an interview or to do something but never just socially. And I thus saw him relatively closely in the rather underrated phase that includes *Prenom Carmen*, *Hail Mary*, *Passion* and others, which I'm not sure are not better than the period of '59-'67, the *A bout de Soufflé* to *Weekend* sequence.

I then started working in films and producing films, I was producing Derek Jarman, Terence Davies, Issac Julien. And this period solved one theoretical problem. If you go back to the Screen theory its weak point was the notion of 'auteur'. Because *Screen's* program should have done away with the *auteur* but it absolutely couldn't do away with the *auteur*. It's not simply that the *auteur* is necessary as a principle of classification. It's necessary for any serious account of film. The single greatest work of that period, in my opinion, is Stephen Heath's long, two part analysis of *Touch of Evil*. The neuralgic point of that analysis is of course that Quinlan, the detective is trapped through his cane.

Now it is impossible think of Orson Welles without thinking of *Citizen Kane* and Kane and 'cane' are homophones. So the analysis should really continue through to the biographical but the article shies away from that. So the *auteur* remains a theoretical problem. And, as important, the *auteur* comes back practically. In the making of any film, what's very interesting when you're shooting is that the cameraman, make-up and wardrobe crew, actors are all focused on the director. The minute the cry of 'cut' is heard everyone turns to the director to determine whether the scene was correctly captured. The director is there as final authority. And actually I don't know how you would make a film without that authority. So in that sense of an author, every film has an author. And any film that didn't have an author the producer would be very unhappy indeed.

The question then comes of whether you want to distinguish seriously between commercial films where in the pre-production and the post-production the director does not have that control, and films in which the director has that control from the beginning to end. I mean that as a question to be asked. That was the theoretical lesson of film production.

It was while I was engaged in production that Godard asked me to write his biography. In retrospect it's a moment when he's casting around for a way to undertake his own biography and he has various false starts, of which I was one, before he begins his masterpiece *Histoire(s) du cinema*. After that he lost all interest in my biography. But there was a moment in which he was interested in it and we spent two days together talking from beginning to the end of each day going through his life. But at this period I was really not thinking about academic film studies and then in 1989 when Wilf Stevenson replaced Tony Smith as the head of the BFI, he asked me to turn the British Film Institute into a graduate research institution. There were two reasons why I thought I should do it. The first was that the film institute itself was dying and I mean that in the literal sense. It had been formed by people in the 1940s and the 1950s who were by and large not very highly or formally educated but who were passionate about the cinema. And they were passionate about the cinema at a time when cinema was generally considered to be an uninteresting, boring, vulgar form. They were also passionate about 'accuracy' because one of the things, which again young people can't imagine, is how difficult it was at that time to see films which weren't in current circulation. Not just before the digital revolution but before the video tape revolution. So there had been this whole generation of people in the BFI deeply knowledgeable about cinema who had founded it, really got the library, the archive and all these things

going and they were either retiring or dying. It seemed to me crucial to find ways of passing on their knowledge to a new generation. And that knowledge is very diverse, film is a very odd form of culture because there are so many different activities, so many different business activities, so many different stages of production— that the range of knowledges you need to bring to film is considerably broad.

The second reason I said yes was that I thought up an M.A. which would offer that range of knowledges. The crucial element in this M.A. was a four month placement within the Institute. The placement wouldn't be just like stamping or stuffing envelopes but would depend on two things 1) a genuine need within the department which the student could fulfill and 2) the student had a genuine intellectual question to which the placement would provide answers.

The M.A. was regarded unfavourably by the existing film studies programmes but I raised all the money for it privately and under Laura Mulvey's direction it was a huge success. On the basis of that successful collaboration with Birkbeck College we then set up a Ph.D. programme together with new partners at The Architectural Association and the Tate Gallery which attempted to rethink film studies with the broadest context of the humanities and in relation to both practices and audiences.

Unfortunately in 1997 the Labour Party was elected to power in Great Britain. Pleased as I was to see the Conservatives defeated I already knew that this was going to be a terrible government for culture and education – everything was to be defined in terms of inward investment and social exclusion. However, I had no idea how terrible. The new minister Chris Smith appointed as Chairman of the BFI Alan Parker, the well known film director, whose hatred and loathing of the BFI was matched only by his hatred and loathing of me. Parker wasted no time in sacking me, which I didn't mind, I'd been too long at the Institute. But he also closed down absolutely every activity with which I had been associated both in production and educational innovation. His abolishing the M.A. program is something which at nearly two decades of distance still seems reprehensible.

Parker did however give me the best professional moment of my life because the BFI wrote to the Tate Gallery, the Architectural Association and Birkbeck College and said that if they had any more to do with Colin MacCabe, the BFI would be forced to withdraw from the London Consortium. The three institutions wrote back and said, 'Thank you very much for withdrawing from the London Consortium'. So luckily the London Consortium survived the

Parker purge but without the BFI film was no longer at its centre instead it is contemporary art and its new spaces and practices which have been the single most dominant interest of the Consortium.

In the Consortium we decided not to go for the teaching approach where you do coverage courses of all kinds. Instead we give them a set of courses which confront with cultural objects or texts that require the students to think in ways for which there is no authority. Each course is taught by two people and we feel that's very important in terms of making sure that people understand that authority in the academy is both real and always in some sense imaginary. To emphasise this the two teachers should be from two different disciplines. We decided on four core courses and in the first year they were as follows:

- 1) Kant's 'Critique of Judgement'. We chose this text because we wanted them to learn what it was to read a very hard, tough philosophical text.
- 2) Whiteness. We wanted the students to look at a concept across a set of heterogeneous fields. We chose 'whiteness' because one could track this across race, hygiene and art.
- 3) Planning the Tate Modern. We were determined to think about how audiences were constituted and we started the Consortium as the Tate was planning the Tate Modern so we had a perfect case study.
- 4) The Satanic Verses. We took the Satanic Verses not just as a great literary text but also as a perfect example of a text which raises the problem of how you begin to study fields about which you know nothing – in this case Indian cinema and the early history of the Prophet.

Two things to end with. First, when Godard made his *Histoire(s) du cinéma* in the he needed the resources of a fully equipped film archive and a fully equipped editing studio. Twenty years later anyone with access to the internet and an editing programme can undertake a similar history. I have been immensely encouraged here in the last two days to listen to film academics who have really understood the magnitude of this change. Second, and this is a constant of my position, neither film or cultural studies can really set themselves up as separate disciplines. Their interest in the 70's was the way in which they forced one to mix social and aesthetic forms of analysis. The way in which both subjects have developed in America has lost sight of this as well as of the historical perspectives that the founders like Williams, Thompson and Hall would have considered crucial. One reason that my stay at Hyderabad

as well as the two days of this conference have been so stimulating is that in India neither of these mistakes have been made.

S. V. Srinivas

We could start with the joke among film studies people that after cinema there is no more theory, there is no television theory, no internet theory, like the cinema. Is there something about textuality in the novel or the narrative forms like the cinema or like the works of literature that allows us to impose us a whole society's burden on individual texts which in some ways you can't take to any other form?

Colin MacCabe

That's a fantastically interesting question. But I think it is a question directly about television; it's not about other forms.. There were great hopes. Indeed one of the things that people thought that Screen was going to do was to produce the theory of television like Cahiers and French cinema. And there was quite a lot of interesting work done most importantly in Screen Education on individual things and it's certainly the case that individual television program can be analyzed, but entirely within the terms of film theory. But I think there's something much worse than that which is more difficult to think about. Which is we still believed in the 70's quite strongly that television was potentially the great democratic medium; that television was going to inform, entertain and instruct in a wide format even going beyond the cinema because of cinema's lack of access to remote areas etc. Particularly when the Channel Four started in 1981, such feelings were very high indeed. I don't understand why television has not only collapsed in Britain, I could give you an account of how that has happened, but with the 24 hours news round, game show, quiz show, lottery show, make-over show, life style show- television now seems a major part of political blockage. But it's very difficult now; I mean I don't know if there still are people who will come and tell me that somebody watching a lifestyle show is basically resisting capitalist ideology. When I came to India and turned on the television - it's naturally the same everywhere now. Somehow those popular sentiments are politically unspeakable. The Iraq War was a very good example of that in the sense that, the opposition had no historical parallel in terms of numbers. Two million people marched against the invasion in London which was ten times more than any previous demonstration, from the Vietnam war or the Depression but it was of little significance in television terms. I don't know whether we desperately need a theory of television, I think we just need to be able to switch it off.

Moinak Biswas

In Screen theory, for example you cited Mulvey's essay, I was thinking that it has a life in theoretical thinking, application, practice or practical analysis - the courses that we now teach. Through your discussion one was reminded of the critical models developed in that time, in the 70's for example, which would be still applicable and relevant. I was wondering of course it was very important to remember the ideological matrix that created all that, but at the same time, does this discourse also have a life beyond all that? For instance if we take the Mulvey's article, and I think what happened to it later on, the most important application it found, sometimes without direct acknowledgement, is not actually so much the distraction of a certain kind of bourgeoisie pleasure or criticizing pleasure but the opposition that she sort of set up between that dimension that arrests the flow of image and those which releases them. This immediately informed the early cinema paradigm and research and whole lot of other things. So ...

Colin MacCabe

No , look at that level I still think that if you look at *Screen* of the 70's, at that moment it contains many of the best articles I've ever read and they're still there. What unites them in the sense what's still interesting about them is not the political moment, though without that you can't understand how they got written. But very simply the relationship between narrative and shot. I think Mulvey's article stimulates so much discussions because it made me think of gender and sexuality in relation to the relationship of narrative and shot. And that is completely independent of a particular political idea. And I would say more generally that *Screen* came at the end of the great advance in the 60's and that the real advance was all that narrative analysis. And that itself got taken up by the *Cahiers* and Bellour's analysis of *The Birds* etc. And *Screen* actually took all that a considerable stage further. As I said Heath's analysis of *Touch of Evil* still has no rival.

But yes, I think the simple answer is yes. But at the same time the project failed, the irony is the project was making Revolution and then we failed miserably at that and what we did was make film studies.

Moinak Biswas

In our case what happened was that films failed to make revolutions and then we had the film society movement in a very real sense.

Colin MacCabe

The irony is the relationship between cinema and politics has still not been properly articulated, I mean the fact is that the early film enthusiasts in France were fascists, they were really major fascists. Fascism was enormously interested in cinema. And if you then go to the other end and this is better known, the first riot of 68, February 68 where the history of cinema and the history of politics reconnected, certainly in Europe- there's a much closer and interesting history, which as far as I know, hasn't been written

Ranjani Mazumdar

I was just wondering, since the morning we've been discussing a lot of these issues and now your very engaging narrative, I am wondering whether we are not discussing what we should be discussing which is the crisis of Marxism, and it has affected everything actually.

Colin MacCabe

For me there is no crisis of Marxism. In the sense that, on the one hand just open a news paper today and if you want a picture of that read volume 3 of *The Capital*, the theory of crisis. Coming through right in 2013 and Marx has never seemed more accurate.

On the other hand, why there is no interest in Marxism today is because there is absolutely nothing in Marx which tells you what the collapse of capitalism is going to be followed by. If you try to read the books there are less than ten sentences in the 1000 pages of *Capital*. He basically thinks there's going to be a rational allocation of resources and unfortunately by 2011 the rational allocation of resources doesn't seem like much of a starter. So we need to be thinking about that because Marx actually seems to have got it right about the present economy.

Ranjani Mazumdar

I don't know if anyone of you has seen the poster circulating on net. It's a poster of Marx, and it says "I hate to say it, but I told you".

Colin MacCabe

Yes, yes. As I say, during the 90's and particularly the early 21st century, people regarded me as an absolute Marxist, I'd say I am the last Marxist. But the trouble is, at least what I worked out when I wrote that first book on Godard, that there was never a Marxist politics of any kind, and in fact there is a Leninist politics but there are lots of very good reasons why you don't

want to engage in it. So there's a crisis about what we do politically but I don't think one should underestimate the moment, the extent to which these endless attempt to tell us, all we gotta do is..do this, do that. The problem is capitalism will only produce crisis, but on the other hand how you organize it differently is a difficult question.

Ashish Rajadhyaksha

This is really a specific question about Godard, and I suppose a larger question about the non-Western reception to the Western practices and theories. Godard of course as you know circulates in India, for instance, and many parts of Asia in a way that I don't know of any other filmmaker had done. More importantly, the use of Godard as a marker of a certain kind of European radical cultural presence that actually defines his work, whatever that work was. In addition to being available he is also apparently aware of himself being used as a cipher, I was thinking really about the conversation with Glauber Rocha and that entire interaction with the Latin American Cinema Novo filmmakers that he had. He seems to have lent himself to this kind of use, offered himself as it were to be used in a curious way in which a radical Europe was expected to or imagined to play this kind of a role in global politics.

Colin MacCabe

Film remains the most important international medium, whereas television is very national, it's not an international medium. So films anyway circulate very fast right from the beginning. But in the 60's it became a lot easier and I'm sure you can trace it up. Godard does one of his films, it goes around the festivals, and next year [Nagisa] Oshima remakes it in Japan. You know I think there's a sense in which, if you compare it with the speed at which literature travels or art travels, cinema is traveling far more places far more quickly, and exactly at the moment when Godard becomes, at least for you I think important, the only one who seems to go with 68, and he was the one who was interesting beforehand. I think there might be a lot more complicated account of this. But I think what I'm saying to you is in that regard there is no difference between Europe and the rest of the world.

Ashish Rajadhyaksha

Well, one is that not all films circulated. Second, more interestingly the kind of debates within what I call the modernist—avant-garde practice. For example the opposition of De Sica to Rossellini or in France of Truffaut and

Godard, which as Frederic Jameson suggests originated by the Brecht-Lukacs sort of debate, separate positions within radical practice. And even in Calcutta its Ghatak and Satyajit Ray who occupied two very radically different positions and seemed to be mapped on to those kinds of European oppositions. It would be interesting to find out how those oppositions accrued intelligibility here.

Colin MacCabe

That I can't speak for you, but then at that level, at that time, communism was still a serious global fact and nowhere more than in India. It amazes me when you live through seeing something like the Italian Communist Party disappear overnight, one of the most important ideological formation that existed. Then you come to India and there are three still functioning communist parties. But India is unusual. If you go back to the end of the 60's and beginning of the 70's you have enormous international links both through original Soviet Parties and then through emerging Maoist ones as well. I mean I don't know the answer of your question, but I'm just suggesting, wasn't there lots of materials around the ground to try on? ...

Ranjani Mazumdar

I don't think it's the material on the ground, but I think it's a very active Left oriented intelligentsia seeing Europe as a center of action. This is actually a European story. Indian Marxists are unwilling to recognize that part of this transaction is actually because of a very developed intelligentsia.

Colin MacCabe

But then you're saying that communism is a European story, which I think it is. But that's a very complicated question.

Ashish Rajadhyaksha

I don't think it's 'any' Europe, for example this is not Dipesh Chakrabarty's Europe. This is the Europe of the Latin American Third Cinema, this was the 'other' of third world radicalism, this was the kind of supporting arm that radical Europe was going to now give to the third world. So it was a third world device to form a complete third world fabrication of what Europe was now going to do for them, and there you could place the Solanas manifesto as well. And I think Godard plays that role, he offers himself to third world radicals within that particular paradigm. That's what I'm suggesting. He sees himself as they think he is and lends himself to it.

Colin MacCabe

That's very interesting. If you are going to say this is all European, then you certainly also have to say it's not a self representation or its rhetoric. If you are saying that very dream of world revolution in that way is a European dream, that may be true. That's a very interesting argument. But I actually don't know.

Ranjani Mazumdar

No I'm not saying this European dream at all. I'm just saying any re-visitation of 60's now perhaps has to recognize something fundamentally, a fundamental crisis in the history of Marxism. It can't be a simple return.

Colin MacCabe

I completely agree with you. Marxism's problems since day one, I mean since 1848, has been why the majority of people don't see that they are being exploited and oppressed and yet you get more and more sophisticated accounts of ideology to deal with this. I would say *Screen* was absolutely the last serious attempt to actually produce that. The other way round there is no crisis because it is over; I mean the economics isn't over but all that stuff about how you're going to analyze the idea of ideology is over. There are just too many variables.

Anindya Sengupta

When you started and you were talking about Laura Mulvey's essay, which had this sub heading, 'the political use of psychoanalysis'. There was always this idea of a counter cinema and a kind of avant-garde which was fuelling academia. Do you think that notion of avant-garde is lost by now? Or that the driving force is gone in academic film studies?

Colin MacCabe

I think you're suggesting that this [avant-garde] is more alive than I thought. Well, if you take the notion of counter cinema, I mean on the one hand there is endless counter cinema. And if you take it, as I think Mulvey seriously does that this is a cinema which is going to challenge and replace the mainstream cinema, then I don't think there is any counter cinema at all. But speaking of the avant-garde there are endless experimental works, particularly in the galleries, there's lot of interesting works. But there are very few people who will now read that into a vanguard politics. I mean in the end when you map the avant-garde art against the vanguard politics, then the vanguard politics

isn't there. So then the avant-garde becomes, it's not that it's not there but it's not exactly [there in] the way I [would ideally] describe it. But then it seems to me that Third Cinema itself is lost, it seems to me now a historical term.

Audience 1

You just mentioned about counter cinema that it cannot coexist with the dominant paradigm.

Colin MacCabe

No didn't say that. I said certain notions of counter cinema would be that it couldn't exist with the dominant paradigm but you could have another notion of counter cinema, which was something that was happening against the side etc ?. I said in the second sense, the process counter cinema I'm not sure whether there is counter cinema in the first sense .

Audience 1

No, you just said whether the counter cinema or avant-garde, can they compete with the dominant structure. Sir, considering the present time, what would you call a phenomena called New French Extremity, or this whole bunch of video pornographic films which have completely eroded the dominant porn industry because of piracy and internet download. Don't you think its actually eating into the market?

Colin MacCabe

I think that's a very interesting question. If you are saying is piracy counter cinema? the answer is yes. In Hollywood they are convinced that cinema is coming to an end and they think that they're losing so much revenue from piracy that they can't go on. Now if you are saying is piracy is destroying the porn industry? maybe it is. In fact the porn industry would seem more risk prone to piracy than the mainstream. I agree with you.

Audience 1

I gave this example merely to illustrate that if it's the economic angle, if it's about the market that you're talking about that nothing can replace it may exist just exist as a counter...

Colin MacCabe

No, I'm only saying that in the 70's some of us thought that you could produce a cinema that will replace dominant cinema. I have to say looking

back that was a slightly silly thought and certainly faulty. So I'm agreeing with you.

Audience 2

From the perspective of someone who has produced so many films, do you think film studies as a discipline needs to engage more with the craft that was behind film making?

Colin MacCabe

What I used to think was that anybody who studies film studies had to have an experience of shooting and editing sound and image. But I did not think they needed any professional training of any kind. I thought they needed very simple, low level, low tech production course in which they just learn the basics. It's an incredibly illuminating experience, wasn't anything to do with professional training. That's what I used to think.

I don't quite know what I believe now. There seems to be a clear distinction between a professional training and an academic course. On the other hand the technology has become so powerful that actually the argument you gave before where, I would say to my Dean, 'don't even bother to get involved into any expensive kind of production because only USC can afford to have proper sound studios etc.' But that argument is not just true anymore, I mean it's unbelievable how little you need now, like thousand dollars for a camera, two thousand dollars for a laptop and another few hundred for an editing program and actually you're up there. I think what students of film studies should now be doing now are to have much more editing exercises or audio-visual exercises. Like write your video essay on *film noir*. You put in a compilation film where you show your ideas on *film noir* by editing some of them together. I still think you need to have that very basic training but I don't think one should be thinking of the idea of getting everyone into making movies. But the other thing is and this is this is not only to do with film studies, everybody now can make movies. The interesting thing for me is how little that is translated into the viewing experience and that is actually true for ten years. There are some examples of films made very cheaply that have gained large audiences, but not very many. The other thing that does not go away is remember that cinema's major economic asset is stars, and that means there is a level at which we are just as far from Hollywood as we ever were.

Moinak Biswas

Thank you very much.