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Seeing through the Sound : Certain Tendencies of the Soundtrack in Satyajit Ray's Films of the 1970s

The normative models of realist cinema followed in the West not only suggest a particular organization of the images but also a typical arrangement of the soundtrack, designed to draw attention primarily, and many a time only, to the narration, which again, demands attention towards the image-track. There had been critical arguments against such a hierarchy between the visual and the aural[1] . Many critics have tried to argue that a closer look at classical cinema might reveal the opposite; but as a general premise this assumption helps us to approach the broader formal particularities of realist cinema. In a fluid world of influences and exchanges of cinematic forms and ideas, realism in cinema has been practiced outside the western world too, where one can discern certain formal shifts in the paradigm, and the sound-image relationships in those cinemas also bear such instances of reworking the normative model of cinematic realism.

I will focus on the films by Satyajit Ray, one of the most important filmmakers from the Third World, to whom the realist paradigm in cinema was an authorial choice, apart from being a historical drive, opposing other currents, experienced by the art-world contemporary to his films. Ray not only imbibed formal ideas from the dominant and emerging practices of

realist cinema, but was also informed by other kinds of cinemas. He can certainly be credited for creating a model of narrative realism which will be loosely followed by the succeeding art-cinema movements in India. In course of producing such a modular form, the soundtrack in Ray's cinema became naturalistic (particularly in his use of 'voice', 'speech' and incidental 'noise'), reticent (in his famous use of silences or suspension of speech, variations in set themes and motifs of non-diegetic music) and auteuristic (i.e. it became eminently recognizable), compared to the more ornamental, generic and over-wrought instances of the mainstream melodramas.

Still, one can easily discern certain shifts in the latter half of his career. The films made after 1970 not only sound more verbose to ears habituated to his earlier films, but also have instances of voice-overs, a markedly increased use of off-voices, which were not particularly evident in his earlier films. Primarily citing examples from his 'urban trilogy' of the 1970s and comparing with those from his earlier phase, one can show that he was portraying a new milieu but not entirely new diegetic situations, which may force occasional changes in styles. One must also notice that these changes of aural devices were not convergent with a re-modelling of the realist paradigm by the auteur; the paradigm hardly changed in its stresses and tendencies. Thus they can only be cited as interesting deviations from the norm.

I will argue that these symptomatic deviations can throw light on the structure of images in the films as well: a particular orientation of the soundtrack forcing the images towards particular registers and arrangements (sometimes the image-track also tries to disavow it). Thus, the realist process of critical objectivity in *Pratidwandi* (1970) is undermined by the structure of the internal monologue, in which the film ends and which is the unacknowledged mode of the image-track too, as I will argue. Similarly, *Seemabaddha* (1971) is limited to the structure of a moral confession, unwittingly started by the introductory voice-over and then immediately disavowed by the images, which try to achieve a sort of documentary rigour, but affirmed at the end by the narrative. Finally, in *Jana Aranya* (1975) one can see how the structure of gossips, vignettes and loose anecdotes determine the images, the episodic nature of which vie with that of the more linear moral drama which is the main narrative strand. This 'overdetermination' of the image-track by the soundtrack destabilizes a certain balance which classical exercises of realism always try to achieve. In other words, it might suggest that realist cinema is dependent on a certain 'contract' between the soundtrack and the image-track, in the lapse of which might erupt symptoms that cannot be easily accommodated into the framing Symbolic. In retrospect then, one can look at Ray's earlier films to understand how the 'contract' was more well-grounded in them and therefore was more stable. In the later films this particular contract was

either destabilized or the terms and conditions of such a contract became uncertain.

I.

Seemabaddha, one of the three films made by Satyajit Ray in the 1970s, now considered by many as part of a trilogy of sorts, featured for the first time in Ray's oeuvre a voice-over narration through which the lead character introduces himself and describes his rise from a relatively humble small-town origin to that of a corporate executive. A long collage sequence, consisting mostly of documentary images, graphs, trees and split-screens, accompany the narration. The preceding film, *Pratidwandi*, ended in a long voice-over. The next film set in a similar urban context, was *Jana Aranya*, where visual cutaways following words were evident, many a time featuring or following anecdotal gossips by minor characters. This draws the film away from a strictly chronological character-centric narration, the fluidity and ease of which had already become Ray's hallmark in the earlier films. Incidentally, *Shatranj ki Khilari* (1977), his only venture into big-budget Hindi cinema, also featured a voice-over narration similar to that of *Seemabaddha* (accompanied this time by animated footage) introducing the historical backdrop of the film.

The pre-credit sequence in *Seemabaddha* is particularly successful in depicting the growth of the protagonist through compressed time. *Aparajito* (1956), in a classic example of compression of time depicts the growth of Apu from his childhood to his late teens, but a voice-over like *Seemabaddha* was not deemed necessary in 1956. Memorable minor characters are also encountered in Ray's earlier films, their verbal and vocal idiosyncrasies and nuances were similarly relished, but cutaways taking cues from the speech of minor characters, as found in *Jana Aranya*, were never seen before. One can also notice the absence of shots in his earlier films where voices are not thoroughly anchored to the images for a considerable duration, as they are evident in his trilogy of the '70s (in shots of streets seen through window screens of travelling cars or the numerous shots which are largely documentary in nature, recording fleeting images of the city). Definitely, the sound-image correspondence was changing in Ray's cinema to a large extent, pointing towards a revision of his realist mode which he so thoroughly assimilated over the first couple of decades.

One can notice that even *Pratidwandi*, the first film made in an urban context in the 1970s, shows 'disturbances' in Ray's method of using images. The film started with negative shots, and numerous sequences can be weakly described as flash-backs, largely because of their oneiric nature. Incidentally, all of these sequences are mindscreens[2] of the protagonist, and Ray explained that these devices were necessary to portray Siddhartha's

'imaginative' mind[3]. But, one can argue that Apu was imaginative too, but such cutaways were not considered necessary to portray the cerebral individual in the Apu Trilogy. In an important precursor to such sequences, Charu's visions in *Charulata* (1964), before her decisive venture into literary production, came as elaborations portraying a process of writing and was more of an auteurist comment than a 'mindscreen'. This sequence was predominantly visual accompanied by non-diegetic music and 'connotative' sounds, while those in the latter film are associated with 'diegetic' dialogues and 'associative' sounds, uneasily hovering between 'memories' and 'daydreams' (unlike the more conventional and overtly dramatized dream-sequences of *Nayak*, 1966). My contention is that these exercises, pointing towards formal experiments into which Ray was venturing though keeping himself thoroughly grounded on the broader realist paradigm, bear signs of a loosening of the earlier rigour of the sound-image correspondence within the local realist cinema of which he was one of the primary harbingers.

In comparison to this earlier, much canonical cinema, the films made after 1970 not only sound more verbose, but also, for example, throw instances of using certain aural devices which were not particularly evident in his earlier films. Thus they can only be cited as interesting deviations from the norm. One can easily explain these deviations as milder influences of the French Nouvelle Vague, but we should also recall that this was also the period when, ironically, he was turning more conservative and controversial in terms of prescribing a typical mode of cinema, and denouncing avant-garde exercises which might provoke such stylistic forays[4]. Therefore, the standard description of a Third World filmmaker creatively assimilating First World artistic devices won't be particularly fruitful in this case.

I will argue that these symptomatic deviations can throw light on the structure of images in the films as well: a particular orientation of the soundtrack forcing the images towards particular registers and arrangements (in a sort of ventriloquism by the soundtrack, to use Rick Altman's playful trope[5]), and sometimes the image-track also tries to disavow it. Therefore, a kind of battle over primacy ensues. In the 70s films of Ray this particular contract was either destabilized or the terms and conditions of such a contract became uncertain. One can look at his earlier films to understand how the 'contract' was then more well-grounded and therefore was more stable.

II.

I wish to consider these observations as a sort of platform from where I can have detours through theoretical observations on the sound-image

relationship, particularly in realist cinema. I wish to find out accounts of a kind of 'stability' towards which such a relationship must veer in the normative realist cinema and of conditions when such a relationship might be disturbed. In one of the earliest attempts at a poststructuralist account of the Classic Realist Text and Classical Hollywood Cinema, Colin MacCabe settled on a predictable binary between the 'soundtrack' and the 'image-track' to establish 'the dominant specularity' of conventional realist cinema[6]. MacCabe's thesis had the generalization which is necessary when a preliminary model of critical inquiry is attempted, but unfortunately, his concept of cinematic 'metalanguage' was not further elaborated by others or even by him, though it was thoroughly critiqued by many[7]. But the thesis was important to the extent that MacCabe was talking about the discursive dimensions of cinema and how the image-track is primarily designed in Classical Hollywood Cinema to present the metalinguistic level validating the reliability and readability of the soundtrack, and presenting the co-ordinates within which sound is to be placed and judged.

MacCabe's theorizations may help us to further work on this notion of the sound-image contract through the concept of the metalanguage: the level of the unassigned narrative discourse which poses as the 'histoire', to borrow Emile Beneveniste's term, commenting on and explaining the nameable 'discourses' (or 'object languages', as MacCabe describes them) within the larger narrative. The equivalence between the MacCabean 'object language' and 'voices' in cinema is apparently too easily derived, since he illustrates this 'language' with sentences from 19th Century realist novels which are within quotation marks[8]. MacCabe explains that the 19th Century realist novels are structured as hierarchies of discourses categorized by him as the singular metalanguage on top and 'object languages' beneath. Therefore, the 'object languages' in the classic realist novels are grounded in a material world, contextualized in a definite space and time, articulated by characters with defined regional, gendered, ideological or class identities. The 'metalanguage' behaves in an opposite way, one cannot name the voice (therefore, should not be conflated with the 'authorial' voice) which resides outside the fictional-diegetic universe of the world portrayed, shorn of the above mentioned identities, therefore, not 'material productions' *per se*. But this is the voice which portrays, explains, connects the other discourses in the novel, and its lack of identity renders this voice omniscient, all-pervading, all-knowing. Thus, this voice in the novel presents a discourse which cannot be questioned within the diegetic universe; it presents a portrait as the man, a report as the event, an interpretation as the fact; in other words, a particular perspective/interpretation of the world as *the truth of the world*, where truth transcends the contingency of an interpretation. In the process, it cannot

'show/reveal' its status as production, therefore the metalanguage is not made self-conscious; style, devices, tropes are things which should not be foregrounded or made self-reflexive in these texts, not to be presented as historical/material productions. To an Althusserian Marxist like (the then) MacCabe, such a formal structure of voices in the Classic Realist Text is authoritarian, conservative and utterly anti-Brechtian. And this structure is replicated in the normative realist cinema where the metalinguistic function is carried through this cinema's 'dominant specularity', i.e. positioning the spectator in such a way from where the image-track will seem too obvious (rather than being a construction, distinct shots joining distinct shots following a particular set of rules). A seamless world is presented, where narration gets primacy via a typical mode of editing tellingly described in common parlance as 'the continuity editing' or 'the invisible editing', which does not present cinema as a language or a performance, but as an 'event' happening out there, as snatches of other people's lives to which we are privy. So it is a homogeneous world of flowing images which incorporates the 'sounds' within it, sound being things that are happening *inside* the images. Ironically, MacCabe's choice of illustration is contentious. *Klute* happens to be a classic Neo-noir, and noir was one of the genres which introduced complexities at the level of 'voice' within the broader ambit of Classical Hollywood Cinema.

Argument against the binary opposition hinted in the essay is unnecessary and an establishment of its inverse is now irrelevant. Cinematic realism's general emphasis on the visuals can be easily established. One can readily cite examples of Italian Neorealism where the liberation of the camera was conditioned by the sacrifice of indexicality in the soundtrack. The absence of the appendages of sound-equipment facilitated the mobility of the Neorealist camera, taking it to places hitherto unreachable. The famous example of *La Terra Trema* (Luchino Visconti, 1948) illustrates how Italian cinema had to be dubbed into the Northern Italian dialect to make it more accessible to urban viewers. The presence of a huge dubbing personnel in post-war Italian film industry also forced the dissociation of the voice from the body, while the image was populated by the famous influx of non-professionals the soundtrack was defined synthetically, inside the studio, by skilled professionals. Therefore, instead of a theoretical argument against MacCabe's thesis one may probe into the sound-image contracts which made a certain stability of the realist mode viable: namely the thorough grounding of the soundtrack within diegesis, a regimentation of the possibilities of voices, a narrative conditioning where sound will be harmonious, if not sometimes complementary, to the image-track. An analogy to music might be helpful: in classical realism, the sound-image relationship can accommodate the 'contrapuntal' if it can veer towards a

'resolution' of the 'sound-image chordal structure'; an instability in the realist mode can result in a series of 'discords' or atonality giving rise to a sort of unstable equilibrium within the structure.

One can elaborate on MacCabe to state that the metalinguistic level is achieved not only through classical cinema's visual narration, its act of *showing* instead of telling, as proposed by MacCabe, but also at the level of the constant striking of a consistent 'contract' between sounds and the image, maintaining a regulated chordal structure, defining each other's possibilities. A lapse would occur if the 'object language' determines the metalinguistic, if the latter is pushed towards a shift of style for the time being; if the spectre-like metalinguistic level, by the process, gets revealed. The enunciatory nature of the discourse is revealed once this contract lapses, and instead of a horizontal resolution of the discord the contract is re-established via a vertical recursion to the earlier paradigm of sound-image contract. In other words, the crisis occurs when the laws of horizontal syntax are weakened and we notice distinct shifts between different paradigms of sound-image relationships. Satyajit Ray's 'urban trilogy', I will argue, brings such an instance of a crisis into view, because the usage of visual and aural devices which are different from those of the normative authorial model, did not actually rewrite the model through such an exercise, i.e. after using such devices in flashes, the films again regress to the earlier normative model.

III.

In Ray's earlier films this contract was maintained through a strict avoidance of the 'free indirect speech' or the subjective, the intrusion of which may result in a stylistic shift, and a readiness of a discourse which is finalized. One may cite *Aparajito* in this context, recalling the famous refrain of *Pather Panchali* which appears once the train from Benaras carrying Sarbajaya and Apu enters Bengal. The refrain, using the memory of the earlier film of the trilogy, begins a discourse, via the soundtrack, about a plenitudinal relationship with the rural land which has been already severed or loosened. It is followed by Apu's sincere recitation of a well-known nationalist eulogy to the land in the school. This shot starts the sequence of 'education', through which the previously mentioned compression of time is achieved. It may be recalled that the sequence does not resort to a conventional temporal collage of Apu's growth, but maintains a thematic uniformity regarding the broadening of his mental horizon along the years through education, stressing the child's increasing awareness of geography, natural sciences and astronomy. The paternal approval of the school inspector on hearing the recitation is accompanied again with the *Pather Panchali* refrain, immediately followed by another

paternal comment, now from the headmaster, that one's consciousness must not be confined within the "remote corner(s)" of Bengal. The 'broadening' starts with a series of names: places are named, which immediately expands the local map to a global idea, effectively initiating the aura of explorations and expeditions, culminating in the shot of Apu introducing a Copernican world to his mother. The image of the globe now stays as the visual motif of a metalinguistic discourse which started in the soundtrack. *Apur Sansar* will carry forward this contract through several means: visually, it begins with the close-up of the title of Apu's first published work – *Matir Manush* (People of the Land). As the charmingly new urban self of Apurba Kumar Roy is established leading on to his friend Pulu's very urban parade of cliches sketching the rural and Apu's more urbane amusement.[9] This scene in a restaurant cuts to the two friends strolling by a railroad when Apu is heard reciting a poem[10] which actually is about the alienation of the son from the maternal land. Moments later, as the setting changes from the urban to the rural, we hear Apu playing *Amar sonar Bangla* (Rabindranath Tagore's song eulogizing the motherland which will be the anthem of Bangladesh after a decade and half) on his flute. The strains of riverine folk-songs will emerge twice in the film: in the bridal night and later when Apu meets his estranged son in the same room. The imagetrack will complete the discourse about the man and the land in a visual crescendo of the bereaved Apu roaming amidst forests, mountains and by the sea, signifying a geographical everywhere and regional nowhere, a being rudderless and dislocated.
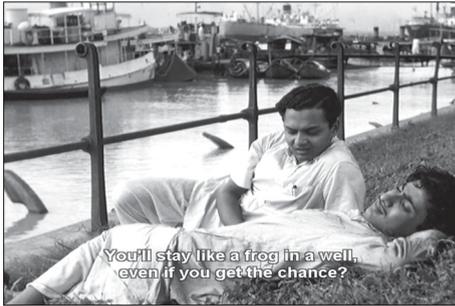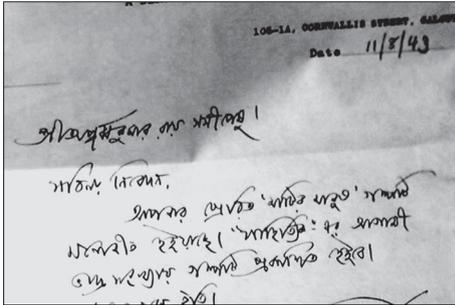

Aparajito
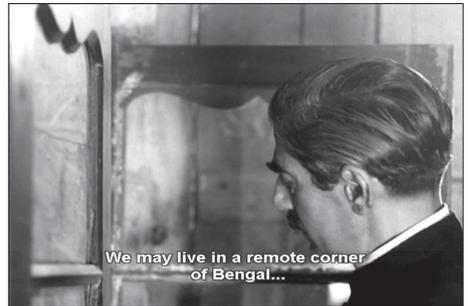
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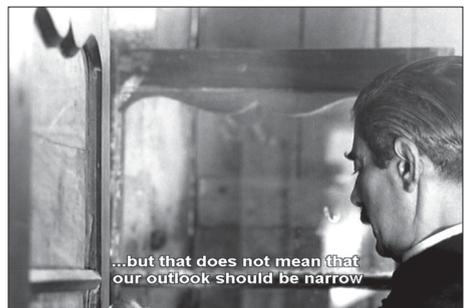
Aparajito

The laying down of this thoroughly consistent thesis is poised on a stable relationship between the soundtrack and the imagetrack, which I am describing as the 'sound-image contract'. The metalinguistic discourse

is always 'ready'; in other words, it does not need to be diegetically evoked primarily through characters' speech. This contract maintains the novelistic objectivity of the narration and avoids the 'free indirect speech' or its cinematic equivalents. In other words, a classical realism is maintained where the discourses are not to be 'named' or 'assigned' or 'articulated', rather the dominant discourses provide the structural base of narration. The discourse does not get framed within quotation marks– recalling MacCabe, as 'object languages'. The image-track and the soundtrack do not merely present elements in counterpoint but there is a consistent and complex rapport between the aural and the visual. The ready authorial discourse structures the metalinguistic arrangement; the metalanguage maintains the concerted rally between the visual and the aural. A lapse of this contract would have necessitated the articulations of the characters' 'inner speeches' or conversations to present the authorial discourse; intrusions of 'object languages' would have to be contained and conditioned further by the metalinguistic.

Aparajito: "You will stay like a frog-in-the-well, even if you get the chance?"

Apur Sansar: Apu's first published story: 'Matir Manush'.

Apur Sansar: The picturesque rural Bengal.

At this point one may also recall the ornithologist uncle's speech regarding environmental disasters in *Kanchenjunga* (1962). I am not citing this as an instance of a lapse where a discourse is articulated via a character's speech: the film's structure as an ensemble allows such articulations *not to be* qualified by the metalinguistic (the film can hardly be called a meditation on environment). The ensemble maintains a thematics of harmony and marriage which is structured via visuals of flowing in and fading away of the fog. *Kanchenjunga* is one of the earliest films made by Ray which is structured around (but importantly, not *by*) conversations (*Aranyer Din Ratri*, *Ghare Baire*, *Shakha Prasakha*

and *Agantuk* being the other instances) Visually, this structure is established by circular walks and framings where depth-of-field and lack of depth is stressed rhythmically.

One may also recall the gothic visuals of *Devi* (1960) and its baroque use of language where the iconicity of Dayamoyee is underlined in the opening sequences by the recursive use of the word 'Ma', capturing almost all of its nuances in the Bengali language. This contract enables the devotional *Shyamasangeet* not to appear as an intrusion. A self-conscious paradigm of images lays the ground of the oneiric-expressionist and pre-rational pivoting around Dayamoyee's father-in-law, ultimately leading to the counterpoints of liberal-rationalism of the western-educated husband. Thus, the sequences before Kalikinkar's dream would, in retrospect, appear aurally over-wrought, playing on the motif of the 'Ma'. It has the effect of the apparatus laying down, primarily through the sound, the substance of Kalikinkar's hallucinations. Therefore, once again, the discourse of the affective *structures* the initial sequences instead of being merely presented by characters, presented in reported speech, etc. Now the soundtrack and the image-track can simultaneously present the rational-liberal and the feudal-conservative as contending registers. Thus an apt instance of what I am trying to describe as the readiness of the metalinguistic discourse is provided here.

IV.

But the sound-image relationship in the urban films of the 1970s indicates shifts which are too broad to be subtle. The density of elements in the images of the city, the feel of a jostling crowd and the wider distractions which issue, now force the director to define the 'individual' through means which the reticence of Ray's style avoided earlier. The uncertainty of the contract renders primacy to the soundtrack not merely by making the films verbose but also by structuring the image-track in terms of the verbal. I am using the term 'verbal' instead of 'aural' because now the soundtrack will be primarily defined and determined by human speech. The images will now face a crisis of sorts: the previous novelistic objectivity of vision will succumb to subjective visions in the first film, the second will deny the overwhelming verbal structure of a moral confession; and while the last film will turn out to be more heterogenous in its registers, the image-track will suffer an inability to accommodate such heterogeneity: as in a scene which I will try to describe at the end of this essay. In the process, certain moments of breakdown will occur in both of the tracks.

Pratidwandi (1970) is largely structured like an internal monologue. The film ends in one such monologue, and it is the unacknowledged mode of the image-track too, I will argue. The flashbacks, dreams, negative-

shots, etc., that crowd *Pratidwandi* were necessary to portray the protagonist's interiority (or, in other words, his cerebral nature), according to Ray[11]. The film ends in a longish voice-over, which almost literally summarizes the film's depiction of the rift between Siddhartha and the city.

My contention is, this enhanced use of the 'voice-over' is a sort of contingent strategy. While in the earlier films the individual was the object of inquiry, in a changed political scenario, the individual has become a contingency which is to be re-defined and re-asserted. The penultimate scene of *Pratidwandi* is a classic example of the assertion of an individual's action in times of collective political programs, a sort of nervous and veiled political statement. Therefore, this assertion shapes the form of the film. The 'voice-overs' become the primary means to underline the individual who is now not objectively and critically studied – like in the 'Apu Trilogy' – but is posited by the text as a 'pre-given position' *from where* the auteuristic discourse would be discernible. The 'interior monologue' structures the visuals of the film as well. The flashbacks, dreams, negative-shots, etc. are visual equivalents to aural devices, namely, interior monologues, dramatic asides, etc. These instances in the image-track are rendition of the character's 'inner voice', paying heed to which becomes necessary to distinguish Siddhartha from the city (his is the only mind which we can see and hear). Ray's film sticks to the normative 'histoire' mode of conventional realism, but the pressure of 'naming' discursive statements (in other words, the political discourses) and stances starts becoming evident.

In *Pratidwandi* the problem is somehow resolved by assigning the 'voice' to the leading character: a narrative structure which goes through Siddhartha's mindscreens culminating in a long letter read by him in voice-over, ending in the visual equivalent of the naming of the discourse ('Iti Siddhartha'). This 'structure of interior monologue' was necessary so that political discourses need not be named in the film; we are not *within* the world here but *inside a mind* which refuses to name the discourses. Unfortunately, the film was being made in a context where such a naming was also necessary; the liberal humanism of Ray's turning out to be problematic in that moment, and Ray's famous stance of novelistic objectivity facing a contradiction: he cannot take sides, but he must name discourses.

Here we can recall T. G. Alea's *Memories of Underdevelopment* (1968), another film about one man and the city during times of political trouble (and a film, one can speculate, which inspired many films like *Pratidwandi*). This film exploits the fiction/non-fiction dualism where voice-overs and 'mindscreens' of the fictional character and its contrapuntal juxtaposition with 'historical' voice-recordings, veer towards irony, and

reveal layers of named discourses, giving the historical viewer the coordinates within which the individual and his views can be placed. The politicized viewer is given the scopc to become judgemental. I would like to mention certain symptomatic sequences, evident in all three of the trilogy films, where the authorial apparatus reaches a crisis, comes to the verge of breakdown. Just after the famous climactic protest by Siddhartha, travelling shots show blurring of political graffitti and wall-writings, obviously shown from his point-of-view. These shots can be cited as symptoms of the breaking down of the image-sound contract. The writings on the walls which would have been readily recognized by contemporary viewers could place Siddhartha's act of individual protests within the coordinates of contemporary political discourse. But that also necessitates the presence of aural equivalents, naming of political voices, which is avoided in the film[12], maintaining a sort of 'unity' where we remain trapped within Siddhartha, aurally or visually. Therefore, these blurring shots of the graffitti mutate from indexical documentary shots to the previous series of oneiric images, subjective visuals, completing a series of devices, deviant in Ray's registers. And sound, more particularly, speech, comes to rescue, as Siddhartha's 'voice-over' emerges to sum up, as a sort of explanatory caption to the visuals, the message of his refusal of and alienation from the city.

Similarly, *Seemabaddha* (1971) is limited to the structure of a moral confession, unwittingly started by the introductory voice-over and then immediately disavowed by the images, which tries to achieve a sort of documentary rigour. But the confessional structure is affirmed at the end of the narrative. *Seemabaddha* starts where *Pratidwandi* ended: in a first person narration. But importantly, it is the individual which faces the critique in this film, unlike the earlier one where the individual asserts himself. *Memories..*, to compare again, achieves the same effect: the off-voices and voice-overs by the protagonist continuously explain things; but his discourse is rendered weak and unreliable as 'documentary footage' and 'non-fictional voices' gain dominance in the film. But in *Seemabaddha* this initiating structure is almost immediately abandoned (something that is consistently maintained in *Pratidwandi*) and the film takes recourse to the dominant third-person narration. Moreover, a historically grounded perspective contrapuntal to Shyamalendu's is missing. In another significant lapse, a sort of crisis in image-sound contract is evident again. Tutul, the female protagonist, who is positioned as the fulcrum of a largely moral drama, receives a letter from his boyfriend, supposedly a radical young man. It is implicit that her views are largely shaped through interactions with this unnamed man. But contrary to the expectation raised by the narrative, we never 'hear' the letter, either in Tutul's voice or in an anonymous

male voice. This exclusion in the sound-track eliminates the naming of a discourse which has a distinct perspective on the corporate world of which the film presents a critique. This illustrates precisely what I earlier tried to describe as 'a vertical recursion to the earlier paradigm of sound-image contract' instead of 'a horizontal resolution of the discord'. A chance to use the device of 'voice-over' is missed here, though this film makes other kinds of use of the sound track, namely, conversation or *adda* about contemporary politics, something which was absolutely necessary in *Pratidwandi*, or the Tutul-Shyamalendu conversations ("Is it good or bad?") which underlines the semi-documentary sequences about the upper crust of the city. Therefore, a fresh use of the soundtrack is attempted, but it collapses at some point.

Incidentally, voice-overs and off-voices did appear in *Nayak* (1966) much *before Pratidwandi* and *Seemabaddha*, but hardly as a device to portray the individual's interiority. I would argue that *Nayak* is not structured as a third-person rendition of a first-person confessional account. It is a variation of the ensemble motif of *Kanchenjunga*, a journey providing the bedrock of the structure like that of tourism in the earlier film. In *Nayak* the superstar is to be seen as one among many, flanked by numerous characters, anecdotes, stories and sketches which fail to provide supplements to the hero's story. The portrayal of one man's interiority is not at issue here, he is just one man with an eagerness (albeit being injected by the heroine as the conscience-keeper) to tell his story. Therefore, the flashbacks, always conventionally initiated by a voice-over, are just audio-visual selections of one among many stories carried by the men and women on the train.

Finally, in *Jana Aranya* (1975) one can see how the structure of gossip, vignettes and anecdotes determine the images, the episodic nature of which vie with the more linear moral drama which the main narrative carries. As Somnath goes through a contingent education on the urban underbelly, the Calcutta within Calcutta, the film completes a sort of trajectory from *Pratidwandi*, where the 'individual' was redefined and affirmed, through *Seemabaddha*, where he is critically looked at, to *Jana Aranya*, where he is rendered redundant and peripheral. As the story of Somnath gets reduced to a moralist, sentimental and woeful tale, a gallery of characters emerge from the netherworld of the enlightened zone of the erstwhile 'Bengal Renaissance', of which Ray is said to be the last figure – from those darker places of Calcutta where the Enlightenment never reached. These people ridicule, jest with the weak remains of the bhadralok. Whereas in the first film the visual cutaways consisted of the protagonist's mindscreens, in the final part of the trilogy they project a world beyond his vision, twisted and acerbic. Images now follow the speech of peripheral characters. A certain

contract between the soundtrack and the image-track seems to be re-established. We meet numerous characters, numerous registers of language, and many ways of speaking. As the languages turn more and more strange the images turn out to be denser. The indexicality of the photographic image explores with a new-found relish a new world in the marketplace. But in a climactic moment there is again a sort of collapse in the image-track.

In the final sequences of the film, the fall of the Somnath is narrativized through a desperate search for a 'woman' for a prospective client. The camera, along with Somnath and 'public relations officer' Natabar Mitter, hurtles through the nocturnal city, and also down the scale of the quality of saleable women. Ultimately, as Natabar Mitter's time runs out, he leaves Somnath at the disposal of a cheap pimp who procures a sex-worker who turns out to be the sister of Somnath's close friend.

But just before Natabar Mitter leaves, he disapproves of a few 'specimens' offered by the same pimp. This apparently inconsequential scene throws into relief a strange crisis of Ray's apparatus. Mitter enters a deserted room of a school and shrugs his disapproval with irritation: the girls are not up to the mark. But strangely, Ray's camera does not show the girls. While the rest of the film meticulously documents images and sounds of another city within the capital, the camera fails to show certain bodies marked with poverty and hunger and possibly camouflaged under garish make-up. Lack of representative non-professionals? Lack of available extras during a busy day of shooting, or self-censorship in visualizing the lurid underside of the market? A 'truth of the bodies represented', which Ray inherited from Italian Neorealism, comes to a halting stutter in this scene. This is the only instance in Satyajit Ray's oeuvre which elaborately 'talks' about the body of woman as a means of exchange, but Ray fails to visualize this 'non-fictionalized body', something which he thoroughly fabricated in a body-painted Simi Garewal in *Aranyer Din Ratri.*

References:

[1] For a representative collection of essays see *Film Sound: Theory and Practice*, ed. Elisabeth Weis and John Bolton (1985), Columbia University Press, New York; and *Yale French Studies*, No. 60 (1980) and Rick Altman ,'Introduction: Four and a Half Film Fallacies', in *Sound Theory Sound Practice*, ed. Rick Altman (1992), Routledge, London.

[2] I borrow the term from Brnce F. Kawin, *Mindscreen: Bergman, Godard, And First-Person Film* (1978), Princeton University Press, New Jersey.

[3] See Ray's interview with Christian Braad Thomsen in *Sight and Sound*, Winter

1972/3, pp. 31-3.

[4] See Ray's 'An Indian New Wave?' written in 1971, in *Our Films Their Films* (1976), Orient Longman, Hyderabad.

[5] Rick Altman, 'Moving Lips: Cinema as Ventriloquism', *Yale French Studies*, No. 60, (1980), pp. 67-79.

[6] In his brief discussion on the final sequence of Alan Pakula's *Klute* (1971) in 'Realism and the Cinema: Notes on Some Brechtian Thesis', (*Screen*, 15:2, Summer 1974, pp. 7-27) he says: "The camera shows us what happens – it tells truth against which we can measure the discourses" and illustrates how in the final scene of *Klute* the heroine's off-voice monologue is validated by the image which shows an immediate future: "Indeed Bree's monologue is even more interesting – for in relation to the *reality of the image* it marks a definite advance on her previous statements (presented simultaneously in the monologue)" (emphasis added). In classic realist cinema, he concludes, "[the] text ensures the position of the subject in a? relation of *dominant specularity*" (emphasis added).

[7] One notable and elaborate critique can be found in David Bordwell , *Narration in the Fiction Film*, (1986), Routledge, London, pp. 18-20.

[8] "A classic realist text may be defined as one in which there is a hierarchy amongst the discourses which compose the text, and this hierarchy is defined in terms of an empirical notion of truth. Perhaps the easiest way to understand this is through a reflection on the use of inverted commas within the classic realist novel. While those sections in the text which are contained in inverted commas may cause certain difficulty for the reader – a certain confusion vis-a-vis what really is the case – this difficulty is abolished by the unspoken (or more accurately the unwritten) prose that surrounds them. In the classic realist novel the narrative prose functions as a metalanguage that can state all the truths in the object language – those words held in inverted commas – and can also explain the relation of this object language to the real" (MacCabe 2004, p. 52.)

[9] "An old world village, a lovely river with boats on it, fields with grass and paddy, bamboo groves, mango orchards, trees full of birds: magpies, thrushes, nightingales,and in the evenings, fireflies and oil lamps aglow..." (from the subtitles.)

[10] "Take me back to thy lap, O Mother Earth/ Take back thy son and wrap him in thine ample robe/ Let me be one with the soil and spread myself/ Far and Wide, like the joys of the spring/ Let me burst the heart's narrow cage/ Brcak down the stonewalls of the self and the cheerless prisons of the mind/ To rush forth in a rapture of delight/ And flow to the far ends of the earth/ Surging, billowing, rolling on/", (from the subtitles.)

[11] See footnote 3.

[12] Incidentally, Ray himself dubs the voice of a political leader whose patronizing counsel leaves Siddhartha utterly cold. Voice plays an interesting role in this scene where the face of the leader is never shown, is presented in off-voice, and Siddhartha's disapproval is heard in voice-over. It is difficult to recognize the political identity of the voice, whether he is a leftist leader (considering Siddhartha's gifting

his younger and politically committed brother a book on Che Guevara) or someone from the Congress (considering the tone of the leaders speech as someone who is in the power and has connections). This scene is discussed in Moinak Biswas's essay in this volume.