THE CATEGORY OF 'CHILDREN'S CINEMA' IN INDIA

THE CATEGORY OF 'CHILDREN'S CINEMA' IN INDIA

AJANTA SIRCAR

GOLDEN JUBILEE SERIES

Indian Institute of Advanced Study
Rashtrapati Nivas, Shimla

I only hope that we never lose sight of one thing — that it all started with a mouse.

—WALT DISNEY, *What is Disneyland*
(television programme, 27 October 1954)

Contents

ψ

Acknowledgements

ψ

Prof. Jacqueline Rose, Department of English and Drama, Queen Mary College, London:

The initial idea of using psychoanalysis to work on children's films came from Prof. Rose's book, *Peter Pan: Or, The Impossible Case of Children's Fiction*. Prof. Rose's work and her support for my project is the very scaffolding on which it is cast. My very delighted 'thank you' to Prof. Rose for the tremendous confidence that her interest in my work has given me.

Dr. Lakshmi Holmstrom, Founder-Trustee, SALIDAA/SADA (South Asian Diaspora Literature and Arts Archive), Translator, Literary Critic, [32, Park Lane, Norwich]:

Dr. Holmstrom's scholarship and affection, her commitment to an idea of the world that I hope I share in some measure, have similarly been overwhelming. I have been most fortunate, since my student days, to have had my work enriched by her incisive comments. With characteristic generosity, she shared in my enthusiasm for the children's film project too and gave openheartedly of her time and learning to comment on the manuscript.

Closer home, several distinguished scholars have enriched my work with their insights. These include:

Prof. Gautam Bhadra, National Professor, National Library, Kolkata and formerly Prof., Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta:

Here also, as indicated in the body of the text, my interest in the 'Bengal Renaissance' has been many-fold enriched by Prof. Bhadra's enthusiasm for my work. Not only was the Visual Archive of the CSSSC that he headed an invaluable resource-centre, but it has grown to house a fine collection of children's literature in Bengali as well. But much more than the wealth of 'reference' material that Prof. Bhadra has always so generously shared is his encyclopaedic knowledge of the social history of modern Bengal which was an invaluable guide as I tried to find my way through a whole range of discourses by which 'Freud'/ psychoanalysis was woven into the fabric of its culture. Indeed over the years Prof. Bhadra has made Calcutta itself come alive in the way only the best teachers can.

Prof. Arup Ghoshal, Secretary, Indian Psychoanalytical Association, Kolkata:

I first met Prof. Ghoshal on my study tour in March 2007. Since then, he has been extremely encouraging and supportive of my work. And a truly rewarding entry point for me into the community of psychoanalysts in India.

The library of the IPS too has been very useful because it houses, among others, [almost] the entire corpus of the writings of both Melanie Klein and Anna Freud.

Ms. Mallika Akbar, Psychoanalyst:

Ms. Akbar was the training analyst recommended to me by the IPS. She kindly referred me to Dr. Ashok Nagpal, Director, Centre for Psychoanalysis, Delhi University, apart from also reading my Ray chapter. I am extremely grateful for the warm interest she showed and for welcoming into psychoanalysis in India.

Prof. T.R. Sharma, Former Fellow, IIAS:

Among the senior scholars I met at IIAS, Prof. Sharma always very kindly made the time to read my writing. I wish to place on record my gratitude for, especially, his knowledge of Marxist cultural theory that he so kindly shared.

Prof. Jaywanti Dimri, Novelist, Literary Critic, Former Fellow, IIAS and HoD, English, HP University:

All through my time at IIAS, Prof. Dimri was an enormous source of help and encouragement; an intellectual comrade. She also kindly commented my work on many occasions. I am grateful, above all, for her friendship which was among the most rewarding aspects of my stay in Shimla.

While those listed above gave me books, those below gave the boon of new life:

Residents of B-9, Stone Valley, where I spent those perilous months tucked away in the bosom of family: most especially, my mother for

Introduction: An Exploration of the Category of 'Children's Cinema' in India

ψ

> What did Australia force Freud to do with his thought? …If you try to confront another system of thinking or way of being in the world, what does it do to—what does it expose, unsettle, about your own? …Rather than ask what psychoanalysis might be able to tell us about Australia and its specific crisis of prejudice, my question is: what can Australia, … tell psychoanalysis, and the forms of Western thinking it both embodies and queries, about itself?
>
> —Jacqueline Rose, "Freud in the Tropics," *On Not Being Able to Sleep: Psychoanalysis and the Modern World* (2003)

In her discussion of *Totem and Taboo* (1913), in the essay quoted above, Jacqueline Rose revisits the place of 'Australia' in Freud's thought. *Totem and Taboo* is of course infamous as the text that marks the culmination of Freud's racist arrogance. This is from its first page:

> For external as well as internal reasons, I shall select as the basis for this comparison the tribes which have been described by anthropologists as the most backward and miserable of savages, the aborigines of Australia. (1913: 1)

However in a painstaking re-reading of *Totem and Taboo*, one which locates the text at undoubtedly one of the most fragile and historically poignant moments in the history of psychoanalysis, Rose tries to ask again what the trope of the now-notorious 'Australian aborigine' was being used to both evade as well as acknowledge by Freud at the time. For 'Australia,' as Rose points out, was also the site of the definitive

rupture between Freud and Jung. Not only did they both in the end not go to Australia to the conference they had been invited, they failed to collaborate and also did not send each other their papers. Moreover, while Freud started work on *Totem and Taboo* in 1911, Jung published *Symbols of Transformation* in 1912, where he decisively challenged the primacy of incest (and relatedly, of sexuality), in Freud's framework. 'Australia', thus, ecame the site on which battles over some of the most fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis were fought. (2003: 125-148)[1]

We will return to Rose's essay at length. My limited purpose here is to use Jacqueline Rose to signpost the central concern of my book: given recent social science debates on cultural specificity on one hand and charges of ethnocentrism on the other, how does one begin to formulate the whole question of the 'relevance' of psychoanalysis to the postcolonial world? And while it is, perhaps, no longer very original to say so, it was of course the figure of the non-Western 'savage' (the infamous 'Australian aborigine') and the figure of the child that came to increasingly haunt Freud's work in its later years.[2] But these are areas that have hardly got the same attention as Freud's preoccupation with female sexuality in his later work. The world of the non-Western child, then, becomes a very relevant site for raising questions about the unconscious of the classical analytical tradition itself. (Jacqueline Rose in fact at one point evocatively refers to 'Australia' as the 'phantom of psychoanalysis'.)[3]

---

[1]   While Jung has popularly been seen as more sympathetic to India, the context of the Second World War, however, gave his sympathies a rather different complexion. Jung's fascination for 'National Socialism' contrasted starkly with Freud's sympathies for the non-Western 'savage'. 'Australia', therefore, was also the site of the underlying conflict between Aryan and Jew.

[2]   My reading in this respect owes enormously to Jacqueline Rose, *On Not Being Able to Sleep: Psychoanalysis in the Modern World*, London: Chatto and Windus, 2003. See also Edward Said, *Freud and the Non-European*, London: Verso, 2003.

[3]   This is a theme that will run through the book. But as has been remarked upon by many recent scholars, infantilism, i.e., the idea that subjects of overseas colonial territories, (most especially the 'Oriental'), were≠was by nature as irrational as 'lunatics' or as immature as children, and therefore needed be brought under the care of the superior and rational West, would provide one of the major conceptual moorings for the liberal ideology of Empire.

Thus, while my project is framed around the category of children's cinema in India, this is because I find children's cinema a particularly useful entry-point into working with psychoanalytic theory. More specifically, I wish to pick up the threads from the epoch-making 'Controversial Discussions' between Melanie Klein and Anna Freud, 1943-44, and the ways in which debates around child-analysis brought the analytical tradition itself to its limit-point at a certain stage in its history.[4]

Moreover, as my entry-point into the project, I will begin with the children's films of Satyajit Ray. Not only are these films a very important part of Ray's oeuvre but they become especially significant given the Ray family's decisive literary influence in shaping the contours of the new genre of 'children's literature' in turn-of-century Bengal.[5]

As I will elaborate, this new figure of the child was crafted across a range of public debates: on education, medicine, population-control, the new discipline of 'home-science' and so on. Moreover, the significance of the 'Bengal Renaissance' was that it provided some critical blueprints for institutions and ideas that were carried over (with modifications, undoubtedly) into the new state that emerged in 1947: the idea of rights, citizenship, civil society, political nationalism and so on. Thus, while I begin with the children's films of Ray, my aim is nevertheless to

[4] We will have much more to say on this in subsequent chapters. But the 'return to Melanie Klein' in the 1980s, as it were, was signalled by pathbreaking books such as Juliet Mitchell, ed., *The Selected Melanie Klein*, London: The Hogarth Press, The Institute of Psychoanalysis and The Melanie Klein Trust, 1986.

[5] There has recently emerged a body of writing critically examining the new construction of childhood in Europe since the twelfth/thirteenth century. The new conception, which saw childhood as a prolonged period of 'innocence', was concomitant with the emergence of a new model of the family and especially a new system of education. See for e.g. Philippe Aries, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, trans., Robert Baldick, Vintage Books: New York, 1962. A small but recent body of work examining the new construction of childhood has also emerged in India such as Shibaji Bandhopadhyay, *Gopal, Rakhal, Dwanda, Shamash*, Calcutta: Papyrus, 1998 and Pradip Kumar Bose, "Sons of the Nation: Child Rearing in the New Family," in Partha Chatterjee, ed. *Texts of Power: Emerging Disciplines in Colonial Bengal*, Samya/CSSSC: Calcutta, 1999, pp. 120-144. I will engage with some of these texts in the third chapter and also [point out] the different entry-points into the world of the child that psychoanalysis opens up.

use him to argue a more general case. From Ray, the book moves to the debates that lead to formation of the Children's Film Society of India in 1955 and then to a close-analysis of a representative N'CYP/CFSI film, Santosh Sivan's *Malli* (1998), to examine in detail the ways in which the new state imagine(d)/(s) its child-spectator. As we will see, concepts of childhood fashioned in turn-of-century Calcutta are now subtly re-written, their ideological underpinnings re-inflected to suit the political imperatives of the postcolonial nation-state.[6]

But, as already indicated, the larger point of the book is not so much to trace the history of children's cinema in India. It is instead to analyze the ways in which *psychoanalysis*, as a conceptual apparatus, can be applied to better understand issues of citizenship, especially in the non-classical contexts of the East (as opposed to the classical democracies of Western Europe). The point to keep in mind from the outset is that South Asia is an important, but certainly not the only model of 'postcolonial' theory. A word about the overall structure of the book might be appropriate at this juncture. While the first two chapters map out the specific intersection of psychoanalysis and political theory at which my work is located, the close-readings of films in the third and fourth chapters are presented somewhat in the nature 'evidence' for/ of the same.

The broad intellectual background of the book is my interest in psychoanalysis, especially the classical analytical tradition represented by Freud. This is an interest that developed during my training as a doctoral student and which I have carried since. (At that time, of course, I was quite unaware of the name, Girindrasekhar Bose.) In a direct sense my research is also located at the intersection of science and social theory and seeks to widen the conceptual horizons of 'psychoanalysis' beyond the therapeutic and/or institutional domains within which it still largely exists.

There is now a very rich body of work documenting the ways in which the intellectual universe of Enlightenment Europe was radically transformed as it interacted with the intellectual-political worlds of

---

[6] A point about the chronology of films here: the 1980s mark the moment of economic liberalisation. My point in juxtaposing Ray and Sivan in the book, as major directors of children's films, is to highlight the traces of this rethinking of the idea of India in the domain of children's entertainment.

the East.[7] The point of crucial importance is that a re-reading of the founding texts of Western culture, in my case Freud, becomes inevitable as we begin to understand that the contours of the East, as they finally took shape, represented not caricatures but impassioned desires to recast the modernity of the West into dramatically different moulds.

Colonization, we know, was not only a matter of military conquest. It also involved the imposition of a whole new set of social institutions on the colonies; an imposition of an entirely new definition of 'legitimate' knowledge. Frantz Fanon represents perhaps the finest, most searing investigation into the *psychological* wounds that colonization inflicts:

> Because it is a systematic negation of the other person and a furious determination to deny all attributes of humanity, colonialism forces the people it dominates to ask themselves the question constantly, 'In reality, who am I?' (1967/1990: 200)

For the psyche of a colonized people humiliated and crushed into inessentiality, a re-reading of the founding myths of Western culture is therefore only the most basic, founding gesture towards reclaiming their humanity.

We also know now of the many inspiring initiatives in education, painting, theatre, literature, sculpture, etc., that emerged in India during the nationalist movement, as a new intellectual space was fought for, along with the more obvious demands for 'political' Independence. And as a recent body of work has documented, Bombay cinema represents an especially interesting example here because of the ways in which it emerged as a fulcrum around which a new idea of nationhood was articulated, one very different from the classical nation-state theorized by Benedict Anderson.[8]

---

[7]   My project, as is obvious, is indebted to the writings of political theorist, Partha Chatterjee. His analysis of 'postcolonial modernity', right from *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse*? Delhi: OUP, 1986 through to *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World*, NY: Columbia UP, 2004 and on to *The Black Hole of Empire: History of a Global Practice of Power*, ND: Orient Blackswan, 2012, has been formative to my own work.

[8]   See for example, Ashish Rajadhyaksha, "The Phalke Era: Conflict of Traditional Form and Modern Technology,' *Journal of Arts and Ideas*, 14-15 (1987): 47-78 for an early formulation. Rajadhyaksha has further developed many insights of his insights in, *Indian Cinema in the Time of Celluloid: From Bollywood to the Emergency*, ND: Tulika,

Drawing insights from the classical analytical tradition as well as film theory, my book hopes to bring current debates around 'realism' and narrative form in Indian cinemas to a new conjuncture. And for reasons that I will now elaborate, it is the category of children's cinema that I find to be especially useful in getting a handle on this problem. I have been interested, for some time now, in the Ray trilogy featuring the comic duo of Goopy and Bagha: *Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne* (1969), *Hirok Rajar Deshe* (1980) and *Goopy Bagha Phire Elo* (1991).[9] This interest in the Goopy-Bagha films has especially been to use them as entry-points into working with psychoanalytic theory, given the manifest homologies between the analysis of fantasy and the psychoanalytic technique of dream-interpretation.[10] Film theory, moreover, has

----

2008. For anyone working on Indian cinema, Rajadhyaksha's writing is an indispensable guide. *Indian Cinema* moreover raises questions around textuality/narrative form and the 'postcolonial modern', and the new/additional responsibilities that the technology of celluloid has to/has had to carry here, in ways that have far-reaching implications for ideas of citizenship as they are reworked in the East. In many ways, therefore, the book's larger concerns are deeply relevant for my project. We will discuss *Indian Cinema* at length in subsequent sections. The most substantive difference between his book and mine lies, of course, in the frameworks that we use as our primary analytical tools. In a somewhat related analogy, as Jacqueline Rose compares her project in *The Case of Peter Pan: Or The Impossibility of Children's Fiction,* (1984) rpt, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992, to Aries' classic book, she underlines that her attempt is not to sketch the historical/institutional contingencies that have shaped 'modern' conceptions of childhood in Western Europe. Rather, for her *Peter Pan* represents the whole problem of what sexuality is, can be, and to hold that problem at bay; the difficulty of the loaded relation between adult and child and the sexuality of each. As she reminds us, 'For Freud, the often contradictory and inconsistent ways childhood appears in analysis, undermines any straightforward notion of sequence and throws into crisis our relationship with meaning itself.' (1992:18). It is picking up the threads from this tradition that I wish to place my reading of fantasy/children's films beside Rajadhyaksha's distinctive rendering of the 'cinema-effect,' (2008: 84-129) for example, as one more entry-point into understanding questions of citizenship in the Eastern world.

    [9] The last of the trilogy was directed by Sandip Ray, although Satyajit Ray worked in all his son's films also.

    [10] I have presented versions of this formulation both at Jadavpur Univ., Calcutta, Nov. 1999 and the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, June 2000. A published version of the same also appeared as, "An 'other' Road to An'other' Ray," in the *Jadavpur Journal of the Moving Image*, I. (Autumn 1999): 53-67. My point here was

historically had a deep and fascinating relationship with the discipline of Psychology and at every significant moment of break from tradition avant-garde filmmakers and theorists have drawn critically on its insights in their attempts to create radically new *kinds* of cinema itself. This ranges all the way from Eisenstein's fascination with Ivan Pavlov's conditioning experiments in his formulation of the cinematic technique of 'montage'[11] to other iconic figures such as Orson Wells and Jean-Luc Godard. My interest is however in the classical analytical tradition and has everything to do with the direct line that Freud runs from the 'normal' to the 'pathological.' We have already noted the ways in which the 'Australian aborigine' and the child bring psychoanalysis to its limit-point. But my interest works the other way too: to use the world of the non-western child as an entry-point into studying the place of Sigmund Freud in decolonization.

As a film theorist, I am primarily interested in the formal analysis of narratives. In its broadest terms, my children's film project attempts to bring together questions of narrative form in cinema and sexuality (hence the crucial relevance of psychoanalytic theory), within the specificity of the post-colonial context. There are, therefore, three distinct but interrelated genres of critical theories I am working with: (i) narrative theory as indicated roughly by the tradition from Propp to Barthes, (ii) the 'ways-of-seeing'[12] debate within the visual arts which

---

to play on the different notions of 'fantasy': fantasy as imagination and as used with a 'ph' in psychoanalytic theory, to indicate the many levels at which the dream world of the child could be understood. For my purposes, this enabled the crucial move by which I could bring together the dream-world of the child and the scientific, analytical apparatus of dream-interpretation provided by psychoanalysis.

[11] Among the amazing range of his writings now available, see also here the text published as S.M. Eisenstein, *Eisenstein on Disney*, London: Heineman, 1989. Unfortunately, due to my health, this is an area of work that has remained unfinished. In the way the monograph was initially conceived, I had planned an entire section on animation. The new digital technologies have given this domain fresh resonance, especially vis-à-vis entertainment for children. Eisenstein's insights on animation were to be a significant part of this section. But this is an interest I now hope to carry forward at some later point.

[12] I refer of course to John Berger. My use of Berger is to indicate that this is a debate spread over the visual arts and includes references ranging from Guy Debord's classic, *Society of the Spectacle*, (1967) rpt. NY: Zone Books, 1994, to recent works such as Jonathan Crary, Techniques *of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the*

has tried to theorize viewing subjects/spectators of different kinds of visual art-forms and (iii) theories of post-coloniality.

The psychoanalytical notion of the sexual drive completely confounds all popular notions of sexuality. In fact, the crucial point about the *Three Essays in the Theory of Sexuality* was that here, Freud was laying out the difference between the psychoanalytical notion of the 'drive' and the biological notion of 'instinct.' As opposed to the biological instinct, the point about the drive is precisely that it does not have either a clearly defined aim or an object; does not have any straightforward notion of satisfaction. Further, and this the point to which Jacques Lacan makes the most emphatic return, Freud also constantly highlighted the fundamental link between sexuality and the unconscious; underlining repeatedly that the latter was consubstantial to the former. Moreover, the most crucial point about the unconscious is that it bears testimony to the fact of repression being a central aspect of human existence, universally. And among the primary acts of repression around which the unconscious comes to be structured are the tabooed, incestuous desires of childhood. (In fact, as early as *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud's interest was already centred on the ways in which dreams carry us back to the deepest recesses of our psyche, to the prehistoric 'infantile' period of our lives when we are gloriously unfettered, unabashed. We will take up this point in detail in the fourth chapter, in the analysis of *Malli.*)

However, although Freud identified certain universal features of human life such as the existence of unconscious mental processes, the fact of repression and the importance of sexuality, he was of course very aware that psychoanalysis was not in any way a 'completed' science. On the contrary, it was one which could only grope its way forward through experience, was always incomplete and always ready to modify its theories. And while *The Wretched of the Earth* undoubtedly

---

Nineteenth Century, Camb, Mass. & London: The MIT Press, 1992 and Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought,* Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1993. Within film-studies, specifically, the foundational works would undoubtedly be Christian Metz, *Psychoanalysis and Cinema: The Imaginary Signifier*, trans. Celia Britton, Anwyl Williams, Ben Brewster, Alfred Guzzetti, London: Macmillan, 1983 and Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen*, (Autumn 1975): 6-18.

remains one of the most passionate applications of psychoanalysis to the colonial world, there has recently emerged a new body of work on psychoanalysis and postcoloniality, most especially Homi Bhabha, to which my project is indebted.[13] Further, in terms of the specificity of the analytical tradition *per se* in India within which my project is located, the two best-known theorists at present are Ashis Nandy and Sudhir Kakar. It is beyond the scope of the Introduction to map the very different takes on analytic theory between Bhabha and the latter two. But as I will discuss in the first chapter, both Nandy and Kakar, even while they differ among themselves in their assessments of the 'relevance' of analytical theory to India, (Kakar of course operating within an explicitly Eirksonian grid), nevertheless miss Freud's central discovery: that human subjects are not pre-given entities. Rather, we become human within culture and the unconscious represents precisely the ways in which laws of human culture are acquired.

In this general background, I wish to use my children's film project as an entry-point into asking questions about the ways in which the classical language of liberalism, most crucially notions on sexuality, were reinflected in the East. While Wordsworth had said it before him, Freud provided a scientific apparatus to prove that the child is indeed the father of man. He persuasively demonstrated that it is the phantasies of the child that provide vital clues to the understanding of the 'reality' of the adult.[14] Drawing on Freud, my interest in children's films is

---

[13]   See for example, Homi K. Bhabha, *Nation and Narration*, NY: Routledge, 1994. I also especially want to mention here two essays by Gayatri Spivak, "Feminism and Deconstruction, Again: Negotiations" and "French Feminism Revisited," in *Outside* in *the Teaching Machine*, NY: Routledge, 1993, pp.121-140 &141-172, respectively. Here Spivak is engaging with the theorist who has been formative to my own project, as she takes up a sort-of Derrida against Jacqueline Rose's a sort-of Lacan. My reading of critical theory is quite elementary now. There is a whole tradition of radical psychoanalytic thinkers, in particular Kaja Silverman and Mary Ann Doane, with whose work I am only just making acquaintance. But these are the debates I hope to engage with more substantively, in the coming years.

[14]   This forms the body of my second chapter, but in all his major case histories Freud traces hysterical/neurotic behaviour in adult-life back to traumas of early childhood years. The case of 'Little Hans' is most directly relevant to our purposes. The data collected through Hans' case study was especially useful, Freud said, because it provided him direct and conclusive evidence of the existence of sexuality and neurosis

framed in the spirit that the category of children's cinema might provide us vital clues to an understanding of the category of 'realism' which not only emerged as the emblematic aesthetic mode of post-Enlightenment European high-art, (/the world of the adult), but also around which the entire history of cinema, in particular, has been woven.[15]

From this perspective it is interesting that while he is acknowledged as one of the great masters of 'realist' filmmaking in the world,[16] an often-ignored detail about Ray was that he also made famous children's films apart from writing prolifically for children as well as editing a famous children's magazine for almost three decades. It is also enormously significant, from an analytical perspective, that while in his 'adult'/'realist' films Ray almost always borrowed his narratives from major figures of modern Bengali literature, it was primarily in the genre of children's fiction that Satyajit Ray authored his own stories, spoke unambiguously in his own voice. A further point needs to be underlined: while Ray's 'realist' films, drawing on the literature of social-

---

in children. But even before this, with his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905) Freud had already fundamentally challenged the Romantic myth of the 'innocent' (read asexual) child. And increasingly after the *Three Essays*, in writings, which he developed across a range of themes, the childhood years appeared to Freud to hold the key to behaviour in adult-life. The emphasis on the child would then, of course, get a dramatic new turn in the work of Melanie Klein.

[15]   The most influential articulation of the position, of cinema as an 'objective'/'real' picture of the outside world, was Andre Bazin's, "The evolution of the language of cinema", where Bazin placed 'directors who believe in the image' against 'directors who believe in reality.' The former would favour montage as a technique and included directors such as Eisenstein while the latter favoured long takes and included directors such as Orson Wells. Bazin's sympathies were clearly with the latter. In fact Bazin was to compare cinema to a death-mask which would record a one-on-one impression of an age for posterity. Of special relevance to my project is also the new body of work documenting the early history of cinema such as Thomas Elsaesser and Adam Barker, eds, *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative*, London: BFI Publishing, 1990. This new body of work has comprehensively established that there was a whole spectrum of ways in which the technology of the moving image was used in its early years and that every aspect of the 'realism' of classical Hollywood of the 1910-20s emerged only after a terrific debate among a number of competing epistemological and technical paradigms.

[16]   In fact, conventional film-histories still date the coming-of-age of Indian cinema only at 1956,with the influential New York premiere of *Pather Panchali*.

reform, focus heavily on questions of female desire, his children's-world is a peculiarly masculine world.

So as opposed to the thrust of the existing Ray-criticism, my project tries to see him not only as a great neo-realist 'auteur' but also as Satyajit Ray emerges from the fantasy world that he created for children; a world of magic and adventure to which too Ray was deeply committed.[17] Of course Ray was very aware of the liberating possibilities offered by 'fantasy' as a narrative mode given that he emerged directly out of a literary tradition in Bengal which held Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll, outstanding critics of Enlightenment rationalism, as its acknowledged masters. In fact given the Enlightenment investment on rationality and the vast conceptual shift signified by the transition from a God-centred to a human-centred universe, 'fantasy' was conventionally seen as the 'other' of the Enlightenment consciousness; an outmoded reference to a world of gods and goddesses, spirits and fairies, ignorance and superstition, that the Enlightenment sought to banish in the clear light of rational thought.[18]

This combination of fantasy and children's stories then gains an added twist when the scenario is transferred to the East. Enlightenment notions of 'rationality', exported globally through the project of colonization, came to be dramatically contested by the anticolonial nationalist movements of the non-west. In Indian cinema, for instance,

[17] The point here is to underline that my project wishes to focus on a much-neglected aspect of Ray's oeuvre. The Goopy-Bagha trilogy, from this perspective, can be seen as the 'other' of the trilogy for which Ray is acclaimed worldwide, i.e., the Apu trilogy of *Pather Panchali* (1955), *Aparajito* (1956) and *Apur Sansar* (1959). Further the third chapter will map out in detail the ways in which my reading of Ray here differs from the existing criticism of Ray by some important scholars.

[18] This is an idea that will be fleshed out much further, especially in chapter three. But the actual *richness* of fairy-tales, their many-layered (subversive) histories and contexts, has been the object of excellent recent scholarship. In particular, we will have occasion to return to Marina Warner, *From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairy Tales and their Tellers*, London: Vintage, 1995, at several points in the book. Warner is another scholar whose work has enriched my project deeply. Her *Stranger Magic: Charmed States and the Arabian Nights*, London: Chatto & Windus, 2011 then dramatically locates this genre in close proximity to my own project. See also Philip Kennedy and Marina Warner, eds., *Scheherzade's Children: Global Encounters with the Arabian Nights*, NY & London: NY Univ. Press, 2013. Unfortunately my acquaintance with these books happened too late to incorporate here.

the critique of 'realism' became the defining criterion around which a distinctly 'Indian' aesthetic was sought to be constructed.[19] Similarly, tensions were evident in the way in which the novel, as a literary form and 'realism' as a literary strategy, were negotiated within existing genres of Indian literatures.[20] These fault-lines would erupt even in the heart of Bengal. Psychological realism was considered to be the hallmark of the giants of the early Bengali novel: Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay (1838-94), Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) and Saratchandra Chattopadhyay (1876-1938). However, in debates which are famous in the history of Bengali literature, a generation of modernist poets/critics associated with avant-garde magazines such as *Kallol* (1923), *Kalikalam* (1926) and *Pragati* (1927), chided the great Tagore himself for the alleged lack of 'realism' in his poetry.[21] This would, in turn, lead Tagore to assign different 'functions' to his prose and his poems. And while this particular debate did not directly result in any radical innovations in narrative style/form, the 'realist' emphasis of the new work would touch not only the IPTA-inspired films of the 1950s but also come to have special relevance for definitions of cinematic 'realism' of, among others, Satyajit Ray.[22]

As is by now well known, Satyajit Ray had little sympathy for the emerging 'New Wave' in Indian cinema. What is also striking is that

[19]   See among others, Geeta Kapur, "Mythic Material in Indian Cinema," *Journal of Arts and Ideas*, 14 -15 (1987): 79-108 and Ashish Rajadhyaksha, "The Phalke Era: Conflict of Traditional Form and Modern Technology," *Journal of Arts and Ideas*, op. cit.

[20]   See, for instance, Meenakshi Mukherjee, *Realism and Reality: The Novel and Society in India*, Delhi: OUP, 1985.

[21]   Needless to say, my knowledge of Bengali literature at this point is still developing. But I have in mind, among many others, landmarks of Bengali literary criticism such as Dines Chandra Sen, *History of Bengali Language and Literature*, 1911; Srikumar Bandopadhyay, *Bangla shahitye upanyaser dhara*, 1988, and Achintyakumar Sengupta, *Kallolyug*, 1988. Having said so, I do wish to underline a further point. Completely contrary to the ways in which it is generally mystified, as I research more into the area I find, as Freud discovered of the unconscious, that not only is Bengali literature perfectly knowable, it also contains normal human thought, simply transformed by (again, perfectly knowable,) historical-political circumstances!

[22]   While his underlying assumptions are quite problematic, see for an introduction to this general area Moinak Biswas, "Bengali Film Debates: The Literary Liaison Revisited," *Jadavpur Journal of the Moving Image*, 1. (Autumn 1999): 1-13.

'avant-gardism' for Ray was synonymous with permissive sex/unbridled Westernisation:

> I do not imply that all the new European film makers are without talent, but I do seriously doubt if they could continue to make a living without the liberal exploitation of sex that their codes seem to permit {cited in Chidananda Dasgupta, *The Cinema of Satyajit Ray*, p. 81}

This has, in fact, also been the standard charge that Ray has faced from the critical establishment: that unlike his avant-garde contemporary Ritwik Ghatak, Ray continued to be tied down to the conventional 'realist' narrative. Thus Ashish Rajadhyaksha[23], for example, suggests that pressures of the 'real' world, (signified in this instance by the political upheavals of 1968 and after), became at a certain point too intense for the Ray-aesthetic to handle:

> Ray, in direct response to the Emergency, quit making films set in the contemporary for the next fourteen years. Withdrawing into children's stories (at least one which, *Hirak Rajar Deshe*/the Kingdom of Diamonds, 1980, made veiled allusion to the Emergency) and period films including his trusty Tagore [...] When he returned to the contemporary.. it was as an 'armchair liberal' (1993: 16)

And this leads us, in turn, into the most hallowed debates of Film-Theory: around 'realism' and modes of looking in narrative cinema. Laura Mulvey has shown us most forcefully that the very form of the narrative cinema of classical Hollywood is informed by socially established meanings of sexual difference.[24] The importance of 'narrative' was one which Ray also stressed continuously. In the view of critics such as Rajadhyaksha, this 'realist' emphasis in some ways was also his major limitation.

This, however, is precisely the thrust of my argument: that it is the 'frame' that determines what we see. While Rajadhyaksha faults the Ray-aesthetic of inability to engage with the 'contemporary,' he is himself unable to conceive of 'fantasy' either as a significant narrative mode or of any possible 'political' engagement with the world. My point, on the

---

[23] Ashish Rajadhyaksha, "Satyajit Ray: Ray Films and the Ray Movie," *Journal of Arts and Ideas*, 23-24 (1993): 7-16.

[24] Mulvey, op. cit.

contrary, is that given the tension-ridden history of 'realism'[25] in India it might precisely be *fantasy* as a narrative form, and the vantage point that we get of it from the world of [the] child, and this especially so in the case of Ray, which might provide us vital clues to an understanding of the ways in which debates on sexuality were reworked in the East.

But this will, in turn, take us to a name we have so far mentioned only fleetingly: Girindrashekhar Bose. G.Bose, (1886 (?)- 1953), was not only the founder of the Indian Psychoanalytical Association, but also a central figure around whom the narrative of psychoanalysis in India can be woven. We will discuss Bose extensively in the first chapter. But we should underline here that G.S. Bose was one of the major figures of the 'Bengal Renaissance,' a key name to be reckoned with in public debates on sexuality that structured 'Bengali modernity.' Moreover, not only was his brother, Rajsekhar Bose, the manager of the illustrious nationalist enterprise, *Bengal Chemicals*, Rajsekhar was also a popular satirist on whose short-stories Satyajit Ray based some of his comedies. Interestingly, similar to Sukumar Ray's Nonsense Club, G.S. Bose also started the *Utkendra Samiti* or the Eccentrics' Club at his 14, Parsibagan, residence. In 1922, this would become the home of the Indian Psycho-Analytical Society (IPS). Thus, while on the one hand my manuscript will engage with debates on 'realism' in cinema (and, occasionally also in Bengali literary criticism), on the other it will engage with debates on 'sexuality' through Bose/the IPS/popular Bengali periodicals.

However, while psychoanalysis begins, it does not end with Freud. Moving on from Freud/G.S. Bose, the second chapter will introduce the work of the famous child-analyst, Melanie Klein (1882-1960). As mentioned earlier, in some ways this is the heart of my project: the epoch-making 'Controversial Discussions' between Mrs. Klein and Anna Freud, 1943-44. But the chapter will also raise the question: what is at stake in the journey from Freud to Klein today?[26] This is especially

---

[25] See for instance M. Madhava Prasad, *Ideology of the Hindi Film: A Historical Construction*, Delhi: OUP, 2000 for an analysis of the ways in which the 'realist' aesthetic is reformulated within Bombay cinema.

[26] I must mention here John Philips and Lyndsey Stonebridge, eds, *Reading Melanie Klein,* London: Routledge, 1998. This excellent collection of essays was among my earliest introductions to critical writing on/applications of Kleinian theory. The book was my constant companion through the writing of the manuscript.

so because Klein was not a theorist in the nineteenth-century tradition. The great theorists of the nineteenth century—Darwin, Marx, Freud—all explained the present by the past. In Freud, this is evident in the neurotic model of symptom-formation where the past returns, but displaced/condensed. However, not only was Klein observing something different, [the mind of the infant], but the most radical way in which her work has lead to a re-opening of the analytic archives has been her study of the psychoses. Most crucially, I will argue that Klein's insights into the process of infant/child-'development' provide new entry-points for history-writing in the postcolonial world. Only, as is said of Klein's innovations with classical analytical theory too, to do it *otherwise*. To establish this, the fourth chapter will close-read *Malli* and argue that the Kleinian framework offers insights into the 'postcolonial modern' that are imperative to a 'political' understanding of our present.

The larger aim of the manuscript, or my reading of children's entertainment in India, is to show how psychoanalysis might offer us a different mode of understanding social phantasies of the East. My final aim is to bring together my readings of children's films into a *general theory* of narratives. Or, to put this in another way, I am attempting a "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema: Part II", trying to push Freud into contexts Mulvey does not theorize. As Rajadhyaksha and Madhava Prasad have also noted, working within their own cultural-historical contexts, the normative 'individual' spectator of narrative cinema theorized by both Metz as well as Mulvey is that of Western Europe. Thus, the 'unauthorized scopophilia' of Metz and Muvley's crucial 'third look.' But debates on sexuality, indeed the very parameters around which the bourgeois individual of the West was historically imagined, were completely reworked in the non-classical locales of the East. And for reasons that I have tried to explain, my argument is that it is the fantasy narratives of children's films that might make this especially visible in Indian cinema.

When the project was first imagined, its aims were of course much more modest. In an almost school-essay mode, my aim then was to simply try and 'apply Freud' to Indian cinema. I realise with delight, in hindsight, that it has grown to become my tribute to one of the founding essays of film-studies. And while this may not be the place for official 'acknowledgements', for her affection and trust, for setting standards of

excellence in scholarship and for much more than it can ever possibly acknowledge, this project is indeed indebted to Prof Laura Mulvey.

Further, the immediate inspiration/'model' for my project is Jacqueline Rose's book, *The Case of Peter Pan: Or The Impossibility of Children's Fiction,* (1984) rpt, Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1992. From her generosity with her time and scholarship, the project has gained enormously in confidence. My very delighted and grateful 'thank you' to Prof. Rose as well.

Freud and the 'Postcolonial Modern':
Psychoanalysis in the Tropics

❦

[T]he academic must be free to say the opposite, in the long-term interest of social justice, perhaps always destined to be just around the corner. If the politician calculates to solve problems, it is the academic's obligation to keep the dilemma between … promise and fulfillment forever open.

—Gayatri Spivak, *"Thinking Academic Freedom in Gendered Postcolniality"* (1992)

In the Introduction, I have laid out the broad contours of my project. As we move into the body of the book, it is but natural that we begin with a name we have already mentioned: Girindrasekhar Bose.

G.S. Bose (1886 (?)-1953) was not only the founder of the Indian Psycho-Analytical Society, but is also a central figure around whom the narrative of psychoanalysis in India can be woven.[1] Bose wrote both in English and Bengali, much more in the latter. While his English papers appeared in journals such as the *Indian Journal of Psychology* and *Samiksha,* his Bengali papers appeared in periodicals such as *Pravasi, Bharatvarsa* and *Sanibarer Chithi.* His intellectual range was formidable—from authoring children's tales to a commentary on the

---

[1] For profiles of Bose, see Tarun Chandra Sinha, "A Short Sketch of Girindrasekhar Bose," *Samiksha*, Spl. No., ed., Nagendranath Dey, (1954): 62-74; Ashis Nandy, *The Savage Freud and Other Essays on Possible and Retrievable Selves*, Delhi: OUP, 1995, pp. 81-144 and Christinane Hartnack, *Psychoanalysis in Colonial India*, Delhi: OUP, 2001, pp. 87-150.

puranas. Interestingly, and as mentioned earlier, similar to Sukumar Ray's Nonsense Club, G.S. Bose also started the *Utkendra Samiti* or the Eccentrics' Club at his residence in 14, Parsibagan Lane. In 1922, this became the home of the Indian Psycho-Analytical Society.

For reasons that I hope will become clear, we will however begin with a detour. This chapter is divided into three sections. We will close-read some of Bose's technical papers in the second section. And begin instead with an 'evaluation' of Bose/psychoanalytic theory by some leading scholars in the first. And then, in the third and final section of the chapter, I will lay out the specific theoretical-intellectual lineages of my own project. Necessarily in my case too (as with that of postcolonial scholarship generally), this involves an intimate yet contradictory engagement with certain traditions of European thought, a tradition that one finds both indispensable but also insufficient. Writing within this location my hope is nevertheless that the book might open up some possibilities, however small, of imagining new ways of being human in the world.

The immediate context for my work is provided by a fascinating new body of research that has emerged over the last two decades or so, on the history and politics of 'Western medicine' in South Asia.[2] To borrow Daniel Headrick's now-famous phrase, the general concern here has been to interrogate the ways in which 'Western medicine' functioned in the colonies as a 'tool of empire'(1981). As part of this larger impetus, there have also emerged significant studies debating the institutional and theoretical contours of the new science of psychoanalysis as it took root in the tropics. By approaching Bose *through* some of this work, my aim is to more sharply differentiate my own take on psychoanalysis from some of India's leading psychoanalytic theorists.

---

[2] But this is not to gloss over the very significant differences in ideological and theoretical orientation, of scholars working in this area. So while David Arnold in, *Colonizing the Body: State, Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth Century India,* Delhi: OUP, 1989, locates 'Western medicine' in a clear relationship of power and domination vis-a-vis indigenous medical systems, Biswamoy Pati and Mark Harrison in their 'Introduction' to *Health, Medicine, Empire: Perspectives on Colonial Medicine*, eds., Pati and Harrison, Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2001, pp.1-36, argue that there was a large measure of choice/influence exercised by indigenous groups/local elites and therefore blanket terms such as 'colonial medical policy' are misleading.

Let us begin then with an 'evaluation' of Bose by Ashis Nandy, with the essay that is most directly relevant to our purposes, "The Savage Freud: The First Non-Western Psychoanalyst and the Politics of Secret Selves in Colonial India" (1995: 81-144). Nandy's overall position vis-a-vis psychoanalysis is that neither was it saying things that were in any way new to India nor was psychoanalysis, as a science, anywhere nearly as revolutionary as has usually been assumed. Nandy begins:

> Of the nineteenth-century schools of thought that have shaped our self-definition in this century, the two most influential 'in-house' critiques of the modern West are those offered by Marxism and psychoanalysis. They seek to bare the normative and institutional anomalies of the Enlightenment…, but they do so in terms of the values of the Enlightenment itself. This is what makes the schools internal, rather than external critiques of the modern west.
>
> The other aspect of this ambivalence is the tendency of both schools to own up to their cultural roots by building into their theoretical frames aggressive Eurocentric critiques of non-western cultures. …Through this second criticism, that of the non-west, the schools pay homage to their first target of criticism, the West, and atone for being dissenting children of the Enlightenment. (1995: 1)

The essay is long and densely argued. Let us follow it through. It is divided into two major sections, "The Psychology of Morality" and the "Morality of Psychology." It underlines at the outset important political-cultural markers such as the *swadeshi* and the non-cooperation movements which provided the context for Bose's efforts both to revalue indigenous systems of knowledge as well as question 'Western intellectual domination' represented in this instance, according to Nandy, by Freudian psychoanalysis.

Dramatically highlighting the distance of Bose's theories of the mind from that of Freud's, "The Psychology of Morality" section begins with the chilling story of Sarvilaka in the sub-section, "Sarvilaka's Gita."[3] Using Bose's treatise on the *Gita* to introduce what Nandy claims to be the distinctiveness of Bose's intellectual framework, Nandy observes:

---

[3] The gist of the story is that of a father, a man of status and learning by day, who is a robber by night, initiating his son into this dual life.

In a society where texts survive as living texts mainly through interpretation and reinterpretation, Bose could create a space for his new science only by enunciating and demonstrating its principles. Yet he ventures his interpretation of the Gita without any open reference to a psychoanalytic concept. […] [W]e must remember that while the story of Sarvilaka affirms the emergence of a new exegetic voice, that of an Indian psychoanalyst, it also enforces strange silences. (1995: 87-88)

And among the major silences that, for Nandy, Bose's interpretation of the *Gita* enforce are what he describes as Bose's silence on the 'passive resolution' (1995: 88) of the Oedipus complex as well as the 'inverted relationship' (1995: 88) of a weak son finally accepting the authority of a powerful, homicidal father. In fact, for Nandy, these are the framing questions that Bose's interpretation of the *Gita* raise not merely in terms of one particular essay but in terms of Bose's larger enterprise to contextualize the new science of psychoanalysis in India itself:

> Was Bose's psychoanalysis a negation of Pundarika's [the son's] weak, transient rebellion against a strong, amoral, paternal authority? Did that defiance of defiance make Bose's cognitive venture an ethical statement? Why does Bose refuse to consider the possibility that Sarvilaka's [the father's] secret self…represents unmediated primitive impulses of the kind psychoanalysis subsumes under the category of the id?

> […]

> It was as if the triumph of the therapeutic in South Asia heralded not so much a new bridge-head of the ego in the realm of the id as an empowerment of the super-ego through an abridgement of the unencumbered, psychopathic ego. (1995: 88)

I have quoted at length here because the "Sarvilaka" sub-section provides the overarching frame within which Nandy's essay then places what it considers to be the cultural specificities of Bose's theories of the mind. So let us now briefly unpack Nandy's usages of some crucial psychoanalytic concepts. We will return to them when we discuss Bose's technical papers.

The terms that immediately call for attention here are pivotal terms such as 'Oedipus complex', 'id,' 'ego,' and 'super-ego'. While the difficulties with Nandy's usage of these terms are many and indeed enormous, the most obvious perhaps is the *literalness* in the way he

seems to understand them. Let us, as an example, contrast Nandy's understanding of the 'Oedipus complex' with that of Jean Laplanche and J.B Pontalis. In a three-page entry detailing the ways in which Freud himself (as well as many others) continued to modify and develop the concept throughout his life, the editors of *The Language of Psychoanalysis* point out:

> [E]ven in the first formulation [of the Oedipus complex] Freud spontaneously refers to a myth transcending the history and variations of the individual life-experience.
>
> […]
>
> [But] the above description[s] do not do justice to the *founding* character which the Oedipus complex had for Freud. This idea is brought out particularly in the hypothesis proposed in *Totem and Taboo* (1912-1913) of the killing of the primal father --- an act seen as the first moment in the genesis of mankind. Questionable as it is from an historical point of view, the hypothesis should be understood primarily as the mythical transposition of the inevitability, for every human being, of being an 'Oedipus in germ'. The Oedipus complex is not reducible to an actual situation – to the actual influence exerted by the parental couple. Its efficacity derives from the fact that it brings into play a proscriptive agency (the prohibition against incest) which bars the way to naturally sought satisfaction and forms an indissoluble link between *wish* and *law* … Seen in this light, the criticisms first voiced by Malinowski and later taken up by the 'culturalist' school lose their edge. The objection raised was that no Oedipus complex was found in certain civilizations where there is no onus on the father to be repressive … [P]sycho-analysts have merely tried to ascertain which social roles—or even which institutions—incarnate the proscriptive agency, and which social modes specifically express the triangular structure constituted by the child, the child's natural object and the bearer of the law. [1973: 282-286]

We began our Introduction with Jacqueline Rose's reading of *Totem and Taboo*. We will discuss Rose's work in detail, on several occasions. Her readings of Freud have been foundational to the way my own project has been conceived. (The chilling connection between evil and temptation, a situation where the law/superego might actually instruct one to do what one would barely entertain in one's wildest dreams, as

in Nazi Germany for instance, is a theme she returns to repeatedly as she revisits significant moments of modern Jewish history.) The only point I wish to underline in this context is that Nandy's understanding of crucial psychoanalytical concepts seems restrictive. The Sarvilaka story for instance, where the father successfully initiates his son into a life of crime, (Nandy's equivalent of the domain of the 'id'), in no way represents a 'failure' or an 'inversion' of the Oedipus complex as Freud conceived it. [In the story the son's moral compunctions, (which Nandy correctly understands as the domain of the super-ego), and his horror at the discovery of his father's 'true' self, are finally won over.] But the Oedipus complex does not in any simple sense mean a 'defeat' of a father-figure by the son. In fact, on the contrary, it is a rivalry between the two where in the end the son accepts the law of the father out of fear of castration. And the fact that Pundarika finally accepts his father's violent moral code, (learns to be a man), may be read as a 'successful' case of Oedipaliaztion instead. In its most common forms the paternal position is defined precisely by values such as potency, aggressiveness, repressiveness and so on. Further, Pundarika not only identifies with his father but also accepts his own distance from this ideal, (he falls at Sarvilaka's feet). This is, in fact, a classical illustration of the ways in which the male subject resolves his Oedipus complex in the Freudian framework.[4] And the 'Oedipus complex', one of the founding taboos a child must internalize in order to successfully assume the cultural roles of 'male' or 'female' irrespective of whether the culture in question has family-structures or conjugal relationships identical to that of nineteenth-century Vienna.[5]

This point, about a possible cross-cultural relevance of psychoanalysis, is one Nandy also somewhat reluctantly concedes:

[O]ne must hasten to add that Freud's Eurocentrism, too, had its in-built checks…He did want the discipline to cross cultural barriers and become a truly international movement; when faced with a choice,

---

[4] It is beyond the scope of this chapter to go into details of the resolution of the Oedipus complex in the little girl. Moreover these concepts—of the bad object, threatening super-ego and so on—would take wholly different inflections in the work of Bose's contemporary, Melanie Klein.

[5] See among others Kaja Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics*, NY: OUP, 1983, pp. 130-151 & pp. 180-191.

therefore, the old war-horse did try to create a space for Bose's concerns within the mainstream of psychoanalysis… But that tolerance of Bose had its own limits. (1995: 118)

However, Nandy's overall position is that the 'fractured' self that psychoanalysis envisages was/is appropriate to only to a tiny minority—the new urban middle-classes of colonial/metropolitan India, torn between the two worlds they were/are forced to inhabit. To emphasize this, Nandy then provides a personal history and social background of G.S. Bose. Here he highlights the 'fractured' caste identity of the Bose family: they were prosperous *kayasths* who aspired to Brahminic scholarship. Consequently, they were looked upon with some ambivalence by the local Brahmins. Nandy suggests this might be the reason why the Bose family moved so closely with the world of reformist Brahmos in Kolkata instead. But here too we are told the family was an oddity and the Brahmos, in turn, made fun of the orthodoxies of the Boses.

This leads Nandy to admire Bose's catholicity in terms of the many systems of therapy that he used with his patients. The implicit suggestion here is that Bose understood well that not all his patients had the same kinds of 'fractured' selves as the Bengali urban, middle-class:

It is doubtful if for him [Bose] psychoanalysis was an ideological movement with a core of inviolable dogma. He used to say, an associate remembers, that psychoanalysis was a medical system like ayurveda or homeopathy; it worked with some people, while others worked better with others. (1995: 105)

In conclusion, while Nandy's understanding of central Freudian concepts remains problematic this does not, however, take away from the many insights his essay does provide. Apart from charting a detailed institutional history of the Indian Psycho-Analytical Society the essay also makes suggestive observations such as, for example, the fact that several of Bose's formulations need to be pitted against the grossly racist psychoanalytical theories of influential colonial analysts of the time like Berkeley-Hill. The essay also presents a useful overview of some important essays by Bose, such as "The Aim and Scope of Psychology" (1932), "A New Theory of Mental Life" (1933), "*Manuser Mana*" (The Mind of Man) (1930), "*Satva Rajah Tamah*" (1930) and "*Purana*

Pravesa" (A Commentary on the Purnanas) (1934). Here, Nandy notes that Bose's Bengali essays have a confidence and a willingness to take intellectual risks that is lacking in his English ones. He suggests that that might well be because Bose found it easier to reconcile classical Hindu philosophy with psychoanalysis more easily in Bengali.

Nandy's most insistent observation, however, is that Bose's attempts to interpret/re-locate psychoanalysis as a natural outgrowth of the introspective tendencies of a two-thousand-year-old tradition of classical 'Vedantic philosophy' must be seen as attempts by the pioneering psychoanalyst of the East to open up psychoanalysis itself to possibilities that its Viennese founder did not or, actually, was too inhibited to acknowledge, given the very language of post-Enlightenment science and rationalism. The following remarks neatly sum up Nandy's position:

> He [Freud] may have viewed himself as one of those who disturbed the sleep of the world, but he did not disturb many Indians even in their waking hours. [...] Most Indians, perhaps even most Indian psychoanalysts, would have been perplexed by Freud's famous statement to Jung on their way to Clark University as their ship approached the New York harbour in 1909, 'They don't realize we're bringing them the plague.' (1995: 112)

Closely echoing Nandy, (indeed the authors frequently refer to each other's work), is the reading of Bose/psychoanalytic theory by Christiane Hartnack in *Psychoanalysis in Colonial India* (2001). Hartnack prefaces her chapter on Bose's therapeutic techniques with the following remarks:

> What happens when … a complex and culturally rooted theory such as psychoanalysis 'travels'?...
>
> Clearly, there is a common set of human problems to which psychoanalytic methods can be applied … Moreover, the techniques of free-association or dream-interpretation … can be used independently of a patient's cultural background. Yet … there were also cultural obstacles to the transfer of psychoanalysis.

> [...]

> [B]eyond the splits and schisms that were created and aggravated by Western hegemony, a multifaceted inner world was also moulded by

gender, urban-rural, Hindu-Muslim, religious-secular, caste and class differences. Instead of transferring psychoanalysis as a whole to the Bengali conditions, Bose tried to build bridges between elements that were separated, and he aimed at the integration of these various aspects of Indian inner life. And he did one thing that Freud had not envisioned in his conquistadorial day-dreams: he replaced the famous couch with a deck char [chair] (2001: 120-121)

The point about the deck chair is important because it enables Hartnack to emphasize the range of modifications that Bose introduced, both in the theory as well as the clinical practice of psychoanalysis, as he attempted to contextualize it in India.[6] Nevertheless as with Nandy the major difficulty with Hartnack's formulations also is her understanding of Freudian psychoanalysis as a conceptual apparatus that was not only fundamentally 'determined' by, but also consequently deeply limited to, the social-historical context of nineteenth-century Vienna:

> The underlying assumptions of psychoanalysis are based on the dominant Western concepts of causality and linear-progressive development. In traditional psychoanalysis, the focus on the individual's unique life historical dimension and an emphasis on childhood experiences is thus a sine qua non. In line with these views is the notion that present problems are viewed in some kind of causal relationship to one's early traumatic experiences, this within a linear-progressive flow of time. (2001: 128)

We will discuss Freud's concepts of childhood throughout the book. Undoubtedly, for Freud the early years of life were formative. However, as the third chapter will elucidate in detail, it was precisely the linear-causal relationship and the sequential model of 'personality development' of 'traditional' Psychology that Freud would question. In fact, for Freud the enormous importance of childhood lay precisely in the fact that it is not something we ever simply leave behind or outgrow.

However, Hartnack then contrasts what she sees as the 'individualism' of the worldview of Freud's Vienna, (and the related

---

[6] Bose maintained transcripts of his patients' free-associations, giving very careful attention to grammatical structures of sentences used; his patients had their eyes open during analytical sessions and he was happy to make eye-contact with them, and Bose liked being addressed as 'guru', etc.

idea of the individual in a state of constant tension with the world), with the holistic worldview of the 'Vedantic philosophy' (a huge and general term) that Bose was indebted to. To do so Hartnack presents a detailed summary of "A New Theory of Mental Life" where Bose does, indeed, challenge Freud precisely on this philosophical ground: of an underlying unity between all things. Boses's theory of 'opposite wishes,' which he developed throughout his career, was based on the principle of an underlying unity among all manifestations of life. Consequently, Bose's idea of the human mind was also quite different from Freud's.

As I have mentioned earlier, we will read Bose's technical papers closely in the next section. But it might be appropriate to highlight here that in a sympathetic representation Hartnack then attempts to locate the central tenets of Bose's theory of 'opposite wishes' within prevailing notions of kinship-structures, modes of healing as well as the classical Hindu philosophical worldview of nineteenth-century Bengal. Thus, Hartnack reads not only the changes that Bose made in his therapeutic practice but also the theoretical changes that Bose introduced into the Freudian framework as initiatives emerging from the very different cultural contexts that the two men inhabited. She is deeply appreciative of Bose's self-confidence and, to the same measure, critical of what she reads as Freud's lack of genuine intellectual interest or passion for Bose/India. Thus, she sounds a cautionary note about dismissing Bose's psychoanalytic theories summarily and reminds the reader that Freud himself, in one of his last letters, had regretted not paying more attention to the differences between Indian and European cases that Bose had insistently drawn his attention to.

And this will, in turn, lead us into one of the central issues that we confront in attempts to 'relativise' psychoanalysis in India. Bose's most important paper in this respect is, "The Genesis and Adjustment of the Oedipus Wish". But this is also an idea that several major Indian psychoanalysts have insisted on. (We have discussed Ashis Nandy's understanding of the Oedipus complex earlier.) One of the major differences that Bose claimed from Freud also centred around the form and resolution of the 'Oedipus complex' in Indian patients. In 1924, Bose wrote, "I do not agree with Freud when he says that the Oedipus wishes ultimately succumb to the authority of the super-ego. Quite the reverse is the case. *The super-ego must be conquered*… The Oedipus

conflict is resolved not by the threat of castration but by the ability to castrate." In 1945, Bose then modified this to the idea that "[u]nder normal conditions of development Oedipus wishes are not adjusted by yielding to the threat of castration as has been supposed by Freud but by overcoming the obstruction imposed by the hostile father and mother-images and the subject's final *identification* with them." Further, Bose also repeatedly stressed that his male Indian patients had an overpowering unconscious desire to be female.

While the terms 'male' and 'female' are among the most dense and complicated of Freud's concepts,[7] the attempt to represent Bose sympathetically, however, leads Hartnack into awkward extrapolations. Within the specificity of the colonial encounter, Hartnack claims that the 'woman's sphere' was less obviously and less dramatically altered than the male. That it was not as brutally 'tainted' by colonialism. Consequently, Hartnack suggests: "Bose's theories about the unconscious desire of his male Indian patients to be female can also be read as a desire, 'to belong to a world imagined to be….untouched by the stresses and conflicts induced by foreign rulers, …an imaginary withdrawal into a presumably ahistorical pre-colonial time, where the contemporary demands for change were not an issue." (2001: 147)

It is common knowledge now that theories of colonialism did indeed argue that Indian men were effeminate, lazy and slothful.[8] The nationalist response to the colonial situation would be to then ideologically split

---

[7] As Freud says in *Three Essays On Sexuality*, op. cit.

It is essential to understand clearly that the concepts of 'masculine' and 'feminine,' whose meaning seems so unambiguous to ordinary people, are among the most confused that occur in science. It is possible to distinguish at least three uses. 'Masuculine' and 'feminine' are used sometimes in the sense of activity and passivity, sometimes in a biological and sometimes in again, in a sociological sense. The first of these meanings is the essential one and the most serviceable in psycho-analysis. … [o]bservation shows that in human beings pure masculinity or femininity is not to be found either in a psychological or a biological sense. Every individual on the contrary displays a mixture of the character-traits belonging to his own and the opposite sex…whether or not these last …tally with his biological ones. (p. 188)

[8] See among many others Waltraud Ernst, "Introduction," in *Race, Medicine, Empire*, eds, W. Ernst and Bernard Harris, London and NY: Routledge, 1999, pp. 1-28, for a 'medicalisation' of racial theories. See also Indira Chowdhury, *The Frail Hero and Virile History: Gender and the Politcs of Culture in Colonial Bengal*, Delhi: OUP, 1998, for

the domain of culture into analogous sets of dichotomies such as masculine/feminine, material/spiritual, the world/the home. (Partha Chatterjee, 1986) The 'masculine' in this construction was very clearly aggressive, outward-looking. Moreover, the cult of revolutionary terrorism as imagined in the writings of Bankimchandra, for instance, emerged precisely as a response to the humiliating conditions of colonial rule—imagined attempts to regain the lost virility of a glorious 'Hindu culture'. It is difficult then, given the evidence, to accept Hartnack's proposition that Bose's theory of the unconscious wish of his male Indian patients to be female (a regression into a womb-like space), be read as their 'muffled defiance' of the colonial situation.

Nevertheless, echoing Nandy, Hartnack's overall assessment is also that Freud was not truly interested in any substantive intellectual engagement with the non-West; that Freud's interest in Bose was mainly because of his 'expansionist strivings'.[9] But given that Bose remained steadfast in his ideas, Hartnack concludes with a sense of pride that Freud/Western Europe could not completely conquer the East after all.

Arguing from a very different ideological position, Sudhir Kakkar begins with similar questions about the relevance of psychoanalysis to the postcolonial context in his essay, "Clinical Work and Cultural Imagination" (2003: 116-131):

> The perennial question about the cross-cultural validity of psychoanalysis—which consists of two questions: Is psychoanalysis at all possible in a traditional non-Western society with its different family system, religious beliefs and cultural values? Is the mental life of non-Western patients radically different from that of their Western counterparts—evokes strong interest in intellectual circles. (2003: 116)

But beyond this broad similarity, the differences between Kakkar's position and those of Nandy/Hartnack are quite dramatic. To fast-forward slightly, Kakkar remarks in his essay a little later:

---

colonial stereotypes of the 'effeminate Bengali' and the social-intellectual responses to this.

[9] These conflicts over the legacy of psychoanalysis would play out in radically different ways in the heartland too and Melanie Klein would be one of the main characters around which they would unfold.

Contrary to the stance popular among many anthropologists of Indian society, the traditional Hindu villager is not the only Indian there is, the rest being some kind of impostors or cultural deviants. The urban Indian analysand shares with others many of the broader social and cultural patterns which are reflected in the cultural particularities of the self. (2003: 224)

But for Kakkar too, as already mentioned, it is Bose's centrality of the maternal image that powerfully recurs in his clinical observations. For Kakkar also, one of the defining characteristics of his Indian analysands, urban as well as rural, (by implication, of all class-backgrounds, but Hindu), is the following:

One of [the] particularities, frequently met with in case histories and a dominant motif in Hindu myths and other products of cultural imagination, is the centrality of the male Hindu Indian's experience of the powerful mother. (2003: 224)

Moreover Kakkar finds the prevalence of this maternal-image not only in individual case-histories of Hindu analysands but also in the general cultural imagination of India as evidenced in its myths, art, fiction, cinema. Thus, he reiterates:

Judged by its frequency of occurrence in clinical work and its pre-eminence in the Hindu cultural imagination, the theme of what I call maternal enthrallment and the issue of the boy's separation from the overwhelming maternal-feminine—rather than dilemmas of Oedipus appears to be the hegemonic…narrative of the Hindu family drama. (2003: 228)

However, as opposed to Nandy/Hartnack, for Kakkar this difference in the psychic structures of analysands from different cultural contexts is not an issue of either the desire for 'conquest'/domination by Western Europe or its salutary 'resistance' by the East. It is instead simply a result of the fact that different cultures highlight different aspects of the mind. The only word of caution Kakkar has in this respect is against assuming the Western model of 'psychological maturity' as the norm:

A core requirement of psychoanalysis, it is argued, is the presence of psychological modernity, an awareness at some level in the individual that to a large extent both emotional suffering and its healing have their sources in what may be called the mind, which is internal to the individual.

> Psychological modernity, the essence of individuation and individuality, is not limited to any particular historical period or geographic location but is also found in traditional non-Western civilizations such as the Hindu or Buddhist…. This does not mean that there are no differences at all between, say, European and Hindu patients. We find the mental life of the latter often highlighting themes … which, because of its different salience, ... in Western cultural imagination, may tend to be too easily or too quickly pathologized in Western analytical discourse. (2003: 230)

Moreover, the fact that in his male Hindu analysands he finds a marked prevalence of the 'maternal image' as opposed to the typical 'Oedipal motif' of the West is, for Kakkar, merely a result of the unique nature of the Hindu worldview which stresses both on individuation as well as requires extraordinary sensitivity to interpersonal relationships, given the context of the Hindu joint-family. And categorically *not* a product of the colonial situation. The crux of psychological modernity i.e., the ability to have a sense of a modern individual 'self' lies, for Kakkar, in the capacity to internalize. And this is an ability that Kakkar traces even in classical Hindu philosophy, albeit in a religious rather than secular idiom. Therefore, in order for clinical work to be effective in cross-cultural contexts, for Kakkar the crucial ability required of an analyst is that s/he be sensitive to the many and very different ways in which the mind expresses itself in different social and historical circumstances. The implication is that the underlying structure of the psyche is universal, whether the analysand is in Beirut or Bombay. It is simply that different facets of the same underlying structure find manifestation in different social settings:

> Clinical work in India is thus not radically different from that in Europe and America. An analyst from outside the culture, encountering the strangeness of the cultural mask rather than the similarity of the individual face, may get carried away into exaggerating differences. However, if he could listen long enough and with a well tuned ear… he would discover that individual voices speaking of the whirlings of passion [etc]…are as much evident [in India] as in psychoanalysis of Western patients. (2003: 229)

Outside its immediate therapeutic/institutional setting, Ashis Nandy and Sudhir Kakkar have been among the most influential psychoanalytic theorists in India over the last several decades. (We

will return to them continually as we discuss ideas of childhood in India in subsequent chapters.) But I have focused on their essays at some length because they have persistently attempted to contextualize psychoanalysis here, across a range of discourses, even though from differing intellectual positions. The most important aspect of their work for us is that they are both emphatic that this new-fangled and somewhat still-arcane 'Western' science can indeed be used, although judiciously, to better understand a range of issues in the postcolonial context. And while it is outside the scope of this chapter to deal with this at length, this engagement with Freud/psychoanalysis actually has a robust tradition in modern India's intellectual history generally. Many of modern South Asia's most incisive minds, from the cultural theorist A.K. Ramanujan[10] to the anthropologist Gananath Obeyesekere,[11] have used psychoanalysis to analyze Indian myths, folktales, kinship-structures and so on. Interestingly, the recurrent theme in their analyses too has been the insistence on the different form and resolution of the 'Indian Oedipus complex' that we have already discussed. However, as I will argue in subsequent sections, the fundamental error in all these earlier readings is that they miss the most central aspect of Freud's discoveries: that human beings/'individuals' are not pre-given entities. Rather one becomes human within culture and the unconscious, that *most* crucial discovery of Freud, represents precisely the ways in which the laws of culture are acquired universally.

We will end this section with an overview of another influential theorist, a scholar who has focused on the institutional history of the asylum as it took shape in the colonial world: Waltraud Ernst, "Colonial Lunacy Policies and the Madras Lunatic Asylum in the Early Nineteenth Century" (2001: 137-165). In this essay, Ernst provides an evocative history of the Madras Lunatic Asylum. Started as a profit-making enterprise by an assistant surgeon of the East India Company, over the course of a century, the institution not only changed hands several times but also witnessed enormous changes in both social definitions

[10] A.K. Ramanujan, "The Indian Oedipus," in *Vishnu on Freud's Desk: A Reader in Psychoanalysis and Hinduism*, eds, T.G. Vaidyanathan and Jeffery J. Kripal, Delhi: OUP, 1999, 109-136.

[11] Gananath Obeyesekere, "Further Steps in Relativization: The Indian Oedipus Revisited," in *Vishnu on Freud's Desk*, op.cit, pp. 147-163.

of lunacy in colonial India as well as the nature of inmates who were admitted to it.

Ernst marks three major moments in the colonial government's policies on insanity in Madras: the first, when its European inmates started being classified according to their class and the nature of insanity by an independent medical board, the second when the colonial government decided that a majority of the European insane should be sent back to England due to its more moderate climate and its supposed distance from the immoralities of India and the third where, as a consequence, the policy of racial segregation in asylums in India became much more rigidly defined and practiced. Thus, by the second half of the nineteenth-century, it was mainly the Eurasians and the Indian inmates who remained in the newly-established Native Lunatic Asylums while most European inmates were provided passage back to England. (Moreover while awaiting embarkation, Europeans were now kept in private asylums instead.) This was simply the most economical way of dealing with 'lunacy' from the point of view of the Company. And by transferring the problem of European lunacy back to England, as it were, Ernst documents that the colonial government in Madras could be almost completely indifferent to the condition and treatment of 'native' lunatics.

Ersnt's general theoretical position is that it is problematic to use phrases such as 'colonial policies of psychiatry' as blanket terms because their implementation on the ground showed marked variations depending upon a host of local factors, even within India itself. In an earlier but related reading, she has provided a sketch of the lunatic asylums in the three Presidencies of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay (2001: 80-100). She has documented here that policies on the classification and consequent internment as well as the prescribed 'treatments' for the insane at each of these asylums depended on a whole range of factors such as the subject's race, class-position. It was also significantly influenced by the social composition and ideological predilections of the local ruling elite. Important for our purposes, Ernst introduces Homi Bhabha's concept of 'hybridity' to describe the resulting situation. She also outlines the theoretical compulsions of post-colonial research that must necessarily be located at very specific sites, while at the same time not fall into the trap of excessive

'fragmentation'. We will return to these issues in the last section of this chapter. My project is deeply indebted to the insights provided by the body of work loosely grouped under the rubric of *Subaltern Studies*. It might suffice here to point out that my interest in this book is not the institutional history of the asylum in India as much as the theoretical transformations that occur as the *conceptual apparatus* of psychoanalysis is relocated in the tropics.

* * * * *

Discussing the emergence of the new disciplines of knowledge that emerged in colonial Bengal, political theorist Partha Chatterjee (1995) underlines a crucial difference between the ways in which the liberal arts (/social sciences) and the natural sciences were respectively institutionalized. In general the curricula in the new educational institutions at the time were heavily biased towards the liberal arts. Here, Chatterejee points out, the major concerns in the institutionalizing of the disciplines revolved around questions such as:

> Did the fact of the birth of the modern sciences of society in Europe rule out their application in societies that were fundamentally different? Could their methods be used in Indian conditions without modifications? Was it necessary to devise alternative theories? Or was science itself inappropriate in discussing matters [of] Indian society and culture? (1995: 16)

'However, with the natural sciences, the concerns were altogether different:

> The main point of debate in [the] writing on the natural sciences, unlike the literature on social theory and philosophy, was not the content or method of science but the problem of translation.
>
> […]
>
> The reason for this, it is obvious, [was] the absence, despite attempts at popularization, of any participation of the Indian languages in the formation of scientific discourse. From the early decades of the twentieth century, …English has been the professional language of Indian scientists. The function of science writing in the Indian languages has

been to make available at the lower educational levels and to the general reading public the materials of a 'translated science.' (1995: 17)

Using the case of Rajendralal Mitra, Chatterjee then argues that in this larger project of 'translating science' the resulting debate on whether to retain approximate terms from local languages or whether to coin new scientific terms in Sanskrit or whether even to retain the European/English scientific terms themselves shows that Mitra, for example, was not rejecting the consequent 'hybridization' of language that would necessarily happen. He was instead merely asserting the right to select the most appropriate hybrid.

On the other hand, and in parallel to this, there also emerged efforts by Indian scientists to revive indigenous/alternative systems of sciences. Thus, alongside the growing dominance of Western medicine, for instance, there emerged attempts to reorganize Unani and Ayurveda along 'scientific' lines. Similarly, the famous scientist, J.C. Bose, began a research project inspired by Vedantic philosophy to find out if there were underlying connections between animate and inanimate life. In these attempts too, and much more radically, the idea of the universality of science was itself being used in the larger attempt to define a 'native point of view'. To quote Chatterjee again, "The claim is not that the field of knowledge is marked out into separate domains by the fact of cultural difference; it is not being suggested that ayurveda is the appropriate system of medicine for 'Indian diseases'; it is, rather, a claim for an alternative science directed at the same objects of knowledge." (1995: 18)

The history of psychoanalysis in India is not quite the history of the new social sciences/liberal arts in colonial Bengal and not quite the history of the natural sciences either.[12] Of course it has more similarities with the latter. The establishment of the first Department of Psychology in the country, within the College of Science, Calcutta University, (1915), was the direct result of the patronage and inspiration of the

---

[12]   And while there are many fine histories now available, this is a point unfortunately not appreciated by a majority of the 'postcolonial' intelligentsia. The history of persecution faced by psychoanalysis in Western Europe, its denigration as 'Jewish science' in the growing tide of anti-Semitism, speaks of a viciousness of attack which few postcolonial scholars have cared to listen to.

fiercely nationalist Sir Asutosh Mukherjee. It was also Mukherjee's initiatives for post-graduate research and education in the sciences that enabled the relatively easy institutionalization of psychoanalysis there. Mukherjee's initial focus on experimental psychology, which he associated with science, also explains why he located Psychology in the Science rather than the Arts complex. Mukherjee's larger effort was to create an Indian intellectual elite, taught in Indian institutions. Thus, N. Sengupta, the pioneer of experimental psychology in India, was sent to study philosophy and experimental psychology at Harvard. (Hartnack, 2001)

G.S. Bose's initial association with the Department of Psychology was as a student. He was also the first person to be awarded a doctorate degree in Psychology in an Indian university in 1921. We will discuss his thesis, *The Concept of Repression*, at some length in this section. But from 1917 onwards, Bose was also a lecturer in clinical/abnormal psychology at the department. And while over the years his work here too, both theoretically as well as organizationally, was prolific,[13] all available accounts suggest that the *zeigtist* of anticolonial nationalism very much informed the Department of Psychology at Calcutta University as well. Thus, not only Bose but a whole team of his colleagues attempted to revive in various ways traditional models and schools of Psychology in India. The interesting fact for us is the way that this broader cultural interest in classical Sanskrit scholarship fed for example, in Bose's case, into the idea that the method of introspection developed by ancient men of learning was superior to the psychoanalytical method of free-association. Indeed Bose saw the latter only as an inferior variant of the former.[14] He was also emphatic that much more work needed to be done on traditional Indian psychology, mysticism and yoga. (This also accounts for the extensive references to classical Sanskrit texts and philosophy in his work.) He was also convinced that such academic initiatives could be very well accommodated within the institutional structure of the University and within a 'Western' discipline such as Psychology. Let us now read some of his works closely. From the

[13] Here Bose designed psychological tests on perception, intelligence tests for school children, aptitude tests etc.

[14] See for instance G.S. Bose, *The Yoga Sutras*, Calcutta: Indian Psycho-Analytical Society, date of publication not mentioned.

extensive range of his writings the four texts I have chosen are *The Concept of Repression* (1922), "The Genesis and Adjustment of the Oedipus Wish" (1928), *Swapna* (*Dreams*,1928) and "A New Theory of Mental Life." (1993)

The Concept of Repression is in many ways a landmark text in the history of psychoanalysis in India. As in now well-known, even though it was not particularly well-received in an Indian journal, Bose sent a copy of his doctoral thesis to Freud. As is well-known too, Freud was most pleasantly surprised to know of the spread of his ideas to distant India and therefore, (as sometimes suspected), sent Bose a warm reply commenting little on the technical aspects of the work, (which he perhaps did not entirely endorse), but attesting instead only to the work's 'general good sense.' And while Nandy/Hartnack have been most vocal about this—and it does represent a possibility—*The Concept of Repression* not only set in motion the intermittent correspondence between Bose and Freud which would last for the next twenty years but the fact of 'learned Hindus' being admirers of his theories was undoubtedly for Freud a matter of pride (another trophy of conquest?). Thus, Freud would underline in his very first reply that he was especially impressed with the philosophical bent of Bose's work. (This also explains for Hartnack/Nandy why, beyond superficial acknowledgement, Freud paid little heed to the significant *theoretical differences* that Bose tried insistently to draw Freud's attention to.)

The Concept of Repression, as the title suggests, deals with one of the central tenets of psychoanalysis. Bose's theory of repression however, as we already have noted, is different from Freud's and centred around his theory of 'opposite wishes' which Bose would develop throughout his career. The book is also at times opaque and in many instances, self-contradictory. It begins with debates on body-mind dualism but its major chunk, expectedly, deals with the theme of 'repression' itself. Here too Bose says emphatically, "Strictly speaking, the term 'repression' should be used in connection with only those processes where contradictory impulses have been in operation." (1922: 28)

However, as has been observed by commentators earlier,[15] while Bose was certainly aware of the centrality that Freud accorded to the

---

[15]   Nandy, *Savage Freud* and Hartnack, *Psychoanalysis in Colonial India,* op. cit.

childhood years of a person's life, the thrust of his 'opposite wishes' theory meant that childhood/children would not receive the same primacy in his own framework. Thus, although he notes that Freud, in an obvious sense, 'discovered' the unconscious as he was dealing with childhood, this fact is pushed to the corner and Bose moves on instead looking for what he calls the 'inner' as opposed to Freud's 'organic'/ biological factors causative of repression. In the chapter, 'Inner Factors of Repression,' Bose elaborates his notion of 'opposite wishes':

> [I]mpulses usually go in pairs and are to be found in the same individual. Most of the present day observers are agreed on the point that pure sadism, masochism, peeping mania, exhibitionism etc. never occur alone; they are always associated with their respective contradictory traits although the one or the other may be the more prominent… If we widen our field of enquiry to include non-sexual spheres it would be possible to classify a large number of instinctive impulses under such opposite headings. For want of a better name let us call the impulses of the active type X impulse and their opposites the Y impulse. I would urge that all our life activities be classified under these two headings… In reactions of the type X the characteristic is a tendency to modify the environment. Whereas in reactions of the type Y the tendency is to be modified by the environment.
>
> […]
>
> It is strange that our nature should have been made up of these two contradictory traits, but all the variety of reactions and the complexity of human psychic apparatus are the direct outcome of this contradiction. (1922: 41-43)

In fact, Bose suggests as part of this discussion that repression operates vis-à-vis the sexual instinct and not vis-à-vis the craving for food, for example, because the latter cannot have an 'opposite wish' of the same kind as the former. Moreover, he says slightly earlier in the same chapter that he was lead to the formulation of this theory by his clinical observations:

> My attention was directed to this problem [of 'opposite wishes'] in a case where in spite of the unearthing of the buried complexes the disease persisted. All resistance had not been overcome. In trying to find out these resistances, I hit upon the nature of the original factors which caused the repression (1922: 35)

Further, for Bose a wish is, 'a peculiar psychic process, conscious or unconscious—which precedes or accompanies the tendency of the organism in its efforts so as to have an adjustment different from the existing one' (1933: 154). And the larger principle that should guide the analytical process, and that for Bose is manifested in a 'well-balanced' personality, is the achievement of an equilibrium between 'opposite wishes'. Thus, he says:

> I would say that originally all wishes are pleasurable and it is only when they are in conflict that unpleasantness arises. Academic psychology postulates both pleasantness and unpleasantness as primary. In fact to ordinary introspection unpleasantness appears as a primary attribute, but from the view of the subconscious it would be more profitable to assume only pleasantness as primary... (1922: 55-56)

Moreover as opposed to what he views as Freud's 'split-subject,' for Bose the state of bliss purportedly enjoyed by men of wisdom in ancient India is testimony that a 'well-balanced personality' can achieve a psychical state absolutely free from repression and consequently also, be without any sense of unpleasantness even in this 'miserable world' (1922: 62). (In the next chapter we will deal at length with this idea of the 'split subject' which was Freud's central discovery and which would subsequently be carried much further/deeper with Melanie Klein). Additionally, in the chapter, "Mechanism of Repression", Bose suggests that the development of wishes follow physiological trajectories quite similar to that of motor organs. Just as organs grow stronger through regular use, so also the repeated satisfaction of a wish charts out a psychic path (almost like 'memory traces' of habitual actions). The book then moves on to discuss the other important tenet of his theory—the 'see saw mechanism'—in the chapter, "Cure of the Psychoneurosis". As Hartnack (2001) has also pointed out, Bose proudly claimed that he had used the mechanism of forced fantasies in his analytical work before Ferenczi. The 'see saw mechanism' basically involved an analysand alternately putting him/herself, imaginatively, in positions that would evoke each of the opposing wishes of a pair till both could be consciously acknowledged at the time same time. It was only then, according to Bose, that a neurosis was finally cured.

Moreover, in *The Concept of Repression,* Bose is anxious right through to ground his theories on 'scientific principles'. He highlights at the very outset that Freud has also drawn attention to the fact that, in repression, cultural/outer factors can only be of significance to human action insofar as they interact with 'inner factors'. Early on he also acknowledges his direct debt to Pfister's account of repression and equal and opposing wishes. (1922: 30) He then begins the chapter, 'The Theory of the Opposite Wish,' thus:

> From the standpoint of determinism, the development of any particular wish is the result of environmental conditions….It is therefore all a question of stimulus and reaction… In science we can never draw any hard and fast line between the living and the non-living and the researches of Sir Jagadish Bose have amply proved that inorganic things respond to stimuli as much as organic and living things. A biological stimulus with its resultant reaction is represented in the physical level by the principle of the Newtonian action and reaction. In fact I would [s]ay that there is absolutely no difference between the two. The biological reaction is only a complex type of physical reaction. Therefore whatever holds true of the physical reaction must also hold true of the biological reactions. (1922: 115)

We have noted earlier Partha Chatterjee's comments on J.C. Bose's experiments.[16] Let us put this point aside for the moment. We will move on to note that in the chapter, "Reality and Causation", Bose further suggests that it is *projection* that forms the basis of the 'reality principle' because it allows for a subject to 'identify'[17] with an external object. And in the penultimate chapter, "Repression in Normal Life", Bose then

---

[16] Not just deep intellectual affinity, but the Bose residence was also *physically* located in the heart of the 'Bengal Renaissance' in Calcutta, a stone's throw away from both the Science College as well as J.C. Bose's research centre and home.

[17] The question of identification is in a sense, the crux of the whole analytical project—who one identifies with; how; the ruinous seduction of identification with the analyst and so on. For an excellent overview of this difficult concept in psychoanalysis see Jacqueline Rose's, "Introduction," in Mustafa Soufan, *Jacques Lacan and the Question of Psychoanalytic Training*, trans, J. Rose, London: Macmillan Press, 200, pp. 1-48. For Klein too, projective identification would be a central concept. However, for her the idea would have a completely different resonance.

makes the logical extension of his theories onto domains such as 'female liberty':

> Owing to the presence of repression, such questions as female liberty, female emancipation, female voting etc. are seldom discussed dispassionately by males. There is a polygamous nature in our sexual constitution in both its male and female aspects… If the repression be perfect [a man] becomes an ardent champion of chastity in the female and would not like his female nature to come into contact with other male elements, i.e., he becomes a strict defender of the purdah system… The hankerings of a certain class of married men to visit prostitutes would be explainable on the grounds of the repression mentioned above. All of them were ardent advocates of female chastity. When such a person visits a prostitute, he really gives vent to his polygamous female nature….
>
> […]
>
> In those persons in whom the repression is less intense the idea of female liberty gains an almost obsessional intensity. They become violent advocates of female liberty and would always exaggerate the evils of the purdah system. (1922: 157-159)

We will put aside again, for the moment, the scandal of these formulations and move ahead to note Bose's analysis of 'modesty', perhaps *the* defining characteristic of 'Indian womanhood' in nationalist discourse:

> I believe that both male and female modesty owe their origin to the operations of the same factor, *viz*, repression. Modesty is the expression of a struggle between two opposite desires. It is only on such a view that we can explain certain aspects of modesty, e.g., the pleasure of being violated… I have mentioned before that exhibitionism is opposed by the contradictory desire to look (peeping tendency). In modesty the exhibitionism becomes latent and the wish to see is rendered more or less impotent. Both these factors are discernible in all modest situations. When a modest girl is suddenly confronted in some delicate situation there is an involuntary effort in hiding the face in the hands; but at the same time there is a tendency in her to look between the fingers… The evolution of the feminine dress gives us a very clear insight into the workings of the repressed exhibitionistic tendency. It hides the naked charms but at the same time it imparts prominence to the secondary

sexual organs such as the bust and the nates. (1922: 159-161)

The problems with such formulations on female sexuality are too many. We will return to them repeatedly in the book. Psychoanalysis is often described as casting light on the unknown. Yet there are many areas in Freud's writing when he seems to brush against the limits of his own thought. The now-notorious question, 'what does a woman want?' is only symptomatic, of course, of the great urgency with which the question of female sexuality came to haunt Freud's work in its later years.[18] But to offset Bose's formulations such as the 'polygamous female nature' or 'the pleasure of being violated', 'commonsense' (!) observations which Bose accords the status of scientific truth with quite shocking insensitivity, let us place beside him Laura Mulvey's observations on female sexuality, albeit in the Western context, in her foundational essay on psychoanalysis and feminist film-theory:

> We are still separated by a great gap from important issues for the female unconscious which are scarcely relevant to phallocentric theory: the sexing of the female infant and her relationship to the symbolic, the sexually mature woman as non-mother, maternity outside the signification of the phallus, the vagina…" (1975: 7)

Keeping these enormous intellectual differences in mind, let us move on to Bose's paper, "The Genesis and Adjustment of the Oedipus Wish". This paper will take us back to a point we have already noted at some length in the last section, and which in some crucial ways carries the burden of 'cultural specificity' within Bose's oeuvre too—the point about the different forms of the resolution of the Oedipus complex in Indian and European males respectively and the importance of the maternal element in the former.

The paper begins with Bose's assertion that even though it sounds shocking, Indian mythology and folklore, indeed even classical Indian philosophy, acknowledges the existence of sexual undertones in the most hallowed of relationships. While acknowledging the existence of incestuous desires, Bose however says that his analysis

---

[18]   I refer to Freud's famous 1931 paper, "Female Sexuality", where he follows the little girl to her mother. Moreover, the story of women in the psycho-analytical movement in India has also only just begun to be told. See for an important contribution, Ajita Chakraborty, ed., *My Life as a Psychiatrist*, Kolkata: Stree, 2010.

of the phenomenon will be different from Freud's and is, predictably, grounded in his 'opposite wishes' theory:

> Besides [the] hostile attitude directed towards the father, the Oedipus situation invariably reveals other traits which have not received attention from psychoanalysis…. [A] careful scrutiny will always uncover other less prominent traits which are of equal importance in the make up of the Oedipus fabric. The connections between the different traits gradually come into view as cases are analysed in large numbers (1956/2003: 22).

Thus while ostensibly similar to Freud, indeed Freud would himself rework the initial model of the Oedipus complex throughout his career, Bose's formulations however follow a completely different trajectory. The thrust of Bose's 'opposite wishes' theory lies in the way in which a subject, gradually, comes to 'identify' with the external object/agent that has provoked/caused the opposite wish. For Bose, the process by which the subject 'identifies' with the object is moreover achieved in three stages—an initial splitting of the ego by which the subject unconsciously identifies with the object, the 'identity of action phase' where only the act is replicated but now from the opposite position and finally the 'identity of ego' phase where the subject completely 'identifies' with the external object/agent. [19] We have noted Bose's somewhat unproblematic use of the concept of 'identification' earlier. It might be appropriate to underline here again that in the neat, three-stage model of identity acquisition that Bose proposes vis-à-vis the 'adjustment' of the Oedipal crisis too, the 'ego' is conceptualized almost as a mask that one slips off or into. But this also means that Bose's model of the Oedipus complex was radically different from Freud's. To fast-forward the argument, Bose's final conclusion is that the Oedipal complex *is neither a necessary nor a universal moment in the development of*

---

[19] Bose's idea of the splitting of the ego does recall Klein. So also his thesis of a porousness/continuity between inner and outer worlds. For Klein as well, the two-way traffic between unconscious phantasy and external reality is incessant. The obvious difference, as already mentioned, is that for Bose these are all in the service of the unified or 'well-balanced' ego. It is perhaps worth underlining how dramatically their careers overlapped, chronologically. Bose however makes no reference to Klein at all, at any stage of his career. Klein too, we must assume, remained quite unaware of her contemporary in Kolkata.

the human psyche. It only occurs when the 'opposite wishes' concerned are not properly balanced off each other:

> Under normal conditions, the satisfaction of one attitude leads to the satisfaction of its opposite by the mechanism of unconscious identity… [W]hen conditions are one-sided, repression and failure of the mechanism of identification occurs, leading to an internal struggle between the opposite types of wishes. It is only under these conditions that the Oedipus complex makes its appearance. When the identification works without a hitch there is perfect sympathy with all the three standpoints. (1953/2003: 29)

As in the definition above, Bose seems fairly confused as to what the exact nature of the 'opposite wishes' are that can, at least in theory, be perfectly 'adjusted.' In the paper he begins his description of 'The Oedipal Triangle' with the opposite wishes that arise in what he calls 'the child-mother craving'—the desire to be fed by the mother, for instance, giving rise to the 'opposite wish' to feed her (which the child enacts in play). And it is from here onwards that Bose's theorization of the 'Oedipal complex' takes a completely different turn. For Bose the cathexis of the child on the mother, following the three-step model of the see-saw mechanism, ultimately leads to an 'identity of ego' with the mother so that the father is seen *not as a rival but as love-object instead*. But Bose then overlooks the magnitude of the difference he has just sketched out from Freud's and goes on to nonchalantly remark that if the father is as affectionate as the mother, a similar situation is played out vis-à-vis the father too so that in an optimal scenario it is "possible for the child to appreciate the threefold relationship of child-mother-father from three different angles" (p. 28)

Moreover, because of its initial attachment to the mother, the male child comes to adopt what Bose calls 'a true feminine attitude' (p. 30) towards the father and wishes to have its phallus removed. Therefore, for Bose, "The castration wish is the natural outcome of the desire to be a woman" (p. 30). We have discussed at some length in the last section the emphasis on the maternal, as the signature line of the analytical tradition in India. For Bose, this castration wish is the definitive marker of difference between the psyche of his Indian and European male patients. Here are the prophetic lines:

The desire to be a woman or its modification, the castration wish, is regularly discernible in all analyses. The castration dread is a later product and a defence against the corresponding wish… [T]he castration threat as described by European observers is seldom seen in Indian patients. In my European cases the castration threat has regularly come up during analysis but here also it has almost invariably been traced to the desire to be a woman.

Summing this up, he says a little later:

[I]n the case of Indian patients the castration complex is never prominent, although the castration threat is almost a daily admonition in Indian homes. This will serve to support my contention that the castration threat is not the essential factor in the Oedipus adjustment. Superficial analysis of European patients seems to show the importance of the castration complex; but whenever the analysis is pushed deeper, the desire to be a woman is found to be the central element of the castration situation (p. 35).

In fact, the three main sections of the paper are, "The Oedipus Triangle", "Oedipus Reactions" and "The Oedipus Wish". For Bose, the Oedipus 'disturbance' only occurs in situations where a host of factors make it impossible for the child to completely identify with all the three points of the Oedipal triangle. If a male child becomes fixated in a feminine attitude towards his father, it results in the formation of passive homosexuality:

Castration ideas, menstruation ideas, dreams of impotency are frequent manifestations. [But] owing to the working of the repression there is always a struggle even in the imaginary satisfaction of… feminine cravings so that some form of defence is always attempted… The phantasies of sexual aggression by the father, who is a revered person, are modified by bringing in the images of low-class people and roughs playing the aggressive sexual role… The castration wish becomes transformed into the castration dread… (p.33)

Through a similar set of somewhat convoluted moves between his theory of 'opposite wishes' and the stages of 'identity of action' and 'identity of ego', respectively, Bose then argues that while in the first phase the child imaginatively puts the father in the feminine role, in the second and final stage the child comes to 'identify' with the father

and the Oedipus complex is adjusted as he learns to view his mother from his father's point of view. From this, derive Bose's most celebrated difference with Freud:

> The Oedipus wish thus does not succumb to the threat of castration but to the ability to put the ego in the position of the mother in the mother-father relationship and to the ability to defy the father and to castrate him, i.e., to make him into a woman. (p. 34)

Freud's response, as is well known, was to disagree with Bose's main arguments while admitting, simultaneously, that his own theories on the point were not definitive. (For Nandy/Hartnack, this 'admission' is clinching 'evidence' of the tentativeness of Freudian concepts themselves. And undoubtedly they are, although as I will discuss in the next chapter, for entirely different reasons.) But to recall for a moment the relevant sections of Freud's letter:

> You directed my attention on the Oedipus wish especially and you were right in doing so. It made a great impression on me. In fact I am not convinced by your arguments. Your theory of the opposite wish appears to me to stress rather a formal element than a dynamic factor. I still think, you underrate the efficiency of the castration fear... On the other side I never denied the connection of the castration wish with the wish to be female nor that of the fear with the horror of becoming a female. [...]
>
> But I must confess I am by no means more convinced of the validity of my own assumptions. We have not yet seen through this intricate Oedipus matter. We need more observations. [20]

We will move ahead now to Bose's last English paper that we will analyze, "A New theory of Mental Life," (1933, published posthumously in 1966), as it brings together, in a systematic manner, all the elements of the new intellectual framework of the human mind that Bose had been trying to develop for two decades. As indicated in the title, Bose's 'new' theory of mental life differed from Freud's in crucial respects. But the paper is important also because in its first section, Bose lays out a summary of his understanding of Freud. Consequently, it makes evident to us that some of the problems inherent in Bose's theory of

---

[20] The Beginnings of Psychoanalysis in India: Bose-Freud Correspondence, The Indian Psychonalytical Society,Kolkata, 1964, (pg.17)

mental life result directly from his misunderstanding of central Freudian tenets. As with many of his other papers/essays, "A New Theory ..." begins with discussions on mind-body dualism, the challenges and the status of Psychology as a 'science', etc. But the technical discussions pertaining to psychoanalysis begin with the section, "Unconscious". After brief historical details on the origins of psycho-analysis and the fundamental interrelation between sexuality and the development of the unconscious, the paper proceeds to the section, "Childhood Sexuality". The major premise underlying Bose's reading of Freud here is that 'normal' sexual development in childhood leads to heterosexual object-choice in adult life:

> Why a man should love a woman and a woman a man are questions that might appear silly. It is supposed to be the natural order of things. But psycho-analysis has shown how very complicated the whole problem is. Hetero-sexual love of the adult type, that is love for a person of the opposite sex, is the culmination of a series of events depending on the smooth working of the psycho-sexual mechanism. Development may be retarded at one phase or other resulting in the production of sexual perversion and incapacity for normal love (p. 19).

He reiterates slightly later:

> Freud has described the child as polymorpho-perverse which means that in the child are latent possibilities of all sorts of perverse sexual development. It is the environment which determines in a great measure whether the child's psychosexual life is to have a normal growth or not. Once the mischief is done, the results may be far-reaching influencing the adult life (p. 20).

Then, in the subsequent section, "The Libido Theory", Bose elaborates on this further:

> The sexual instinct, ... shows a tripartite make-up. It is resolvable into three components viz, the sexual feeling which determines the pleasure in the sexual act, the sexual aim which guides the nature of the act and sexual object which forms the source of sexual stimulation and towards which the sexual aim is directed. [...] In the early stage of development the libido flows through the autoerotic channel and subsequently as development proceeds new beds are formed and the libido turns towards narcissism, homo-sexuality and finally heterosexuality which is the culmination of normal sex development, (p. 21)

Moreover, the tripartite structure of the sexual instinct forms, for Bose, the typical structure of any wish and his 'opposite wishes' theory, (as we have seen in his paper on the Oedipus complex), is similarly grounded on the division of a wish into its three aspects—subject, object and act, (p. 25) Over the next few sections, Bose then lays out his understanding of Freud's topography and mechanisms of the human mind. We have already noted Bose's ideas on the mechanisms of 'identification' and 'projection'. The crucial sections for our purposes in this paper are those of, "The Ego," "The Id," "The Super Ego" and "The Pleasure, Reality and Repetition Principles". The most important point to note here is that Bose quotes Freud himself in outlining the contours of the ego thus, "We have come up [with] something in the ego itself which is also unconscious, which behaves exactly like the repressed, which produces powerful effects without itself being conscious and which requires special work before it can be made conscious" (p. 31). Bose uses this formulation to argue the case for his 'opposite wishes' theory a little later :

> Freud's ideas about the constitution of the ego, the id and the super-ego rest finally on the antithesis between what is repressed and what produces the repression. It is because of this necessity that the Freudian ego was originally separated from the id. But the facts of resistance and punishing conscience proved the inadequacy of this conception and the super-ego, which is ultimately a derivative of the id, was taken to be an institution of the ego itself... The original position that the ego was the sole censoring activity could only be maintained by the inclusion of what was really opposed to the ego as a constituent part of it (p. 35)

Further the overarching framework of 'opposite wishes' within which Bose reads Freud leads him to stress not only the pleasure and reality principles as cardinal principles of the human mind, but also a third—the repetition principle. And he cites Freud again to back his claim that the compulsion to repeat is more primitive than even the pleasure principle. The 'new' theory of mental life that Bose proposes, consequently, begins with an elaboration of the opposition between repressed and repressing forces that, he says, regularly come up in his analyses and the 'see-saw mechanism' through which these opposing tendencies erupt into the mind. He is moreover quite clear, by now, of the importance of this phenomenon:

The see-saw mechanism has either escaped the notice of most psychoanalytic observers or sufficient importance has not been paid to it... It frequently hides itself behind grammatical forms of expression... The see-saw phenomenon forms one of the basic facts of my theory... It is not an isolated phenomenon in individual patients but a regular occurrence to be discerned by careful analysis in almost every mental case. (p. 46)

To substantiate this, Bose provides three short case-histories. He ends his analyses of the case-histories thus:

Any number of cases could be cited in support of my deductions... Any situation can be studied from three different stand-points viz, those of the subject, the object and the act. If the attention of the analyst is directed solely towards the act the see-saw mechanism is likely to escape observation. The see-saw mechanism gives us an insight into the operations of the contending forces of the mind and any theory that neglects to take an account of it is bound to be incomplete, (p. 58)

Moreover, for Bose, his theory of the see-saw mechanism is not restricted solely to the therapeutic/'clinical setting. He therefore proceeds to explicate the workings of 'opposite wishes' in such everyday phenomena as the desire for revenge and retaliation, the development of the conscience, the processes of imitation and identity, the development of 'sexual modesty' and so on. In the context of our larger argument that the anticolonial nationalism of his times fundamentally informed Bose's efforts to locate psychoanalysis as part of the classical Vedantic tradition, it might be interesting to note that Bose also extends this theory to the 'identification' of a subject with inanimate objects. We have already noted earlier Bose's tripartite division of the 'elements' of a wish and his classificatory scheme of wishes. But for our purposes the most far-reaching consequences of Bose's 'new' theory of mental life is that he fundamentally re-defines some key Freudian concepts such as the 'ego':

The Freudian ego mobilizes the repressing forces and maintains the censorship…

[…]

The ego that I would posit for the purpose of the theory of the opposite

wish may be called the theoretical ego....It is the average man's 'I'... It includes within itself the Freudian ego, the id and the super ego, in fact, all manifestations of mental life. It harbours within itself contradictory elements that may come into conflict with one another, and still it usually maintains the unity that constitutes personality (p. 80).

Let us underline this observation. As mentioned before, we will discuss at length the work of psychoanalytic theorist, Jacqueline Rose. The most challenging aspect of Rose's work is the way she carries the threads of Freud's thoughts beyond their 'originary' framework. In a fascinating essay on Marcel Proust and Virginia Woolf, Rose follows Freud to the edges of the mind, as it were; to a place where sharp distinctions between the self and the world seem to similarly dissolve. Yet, and this is a point that cannot be emphasized enough, for Rose the most central of Freud's discoveries is that of the unconscious and the related insight, that identity is always most profoundly fractured, always a fundamentally 'failed' project. (2003: 72-87)

Bose, however, has a very different evaluation of his 'new' theory premised on the well-balanced/'unified' personality. Outlining several aspects of what he considers 'shortcomings' of the classical Freudian framework he sums up his own theory thus:

The theoretical ego with its opposite tendencies, as posited by me, will enable us to dispense with the three anomalous entities, namely the Freudian ego, the super-ego and the id without sacrificing any of the advantage of the tripartite conception of the personality. [...] It is by the unconscious opposite counterpart of the conscious wish that the ego appreciates the characteristics of external objects and adapts itself to reality. There is no need to assume any separate reality principle. ... It is the opposite wish that leads to identification with the object in real life. The theory of opposite wish[es] thus enables us to understand normal experience along with the repressed and give[s] us definite information of the manner in which repression is removed (p. 91).

To conclude this section, let us turn to one of Bose's Bengali texts on psychoanalysis. *Swapna* (Dreams, 1928) is Bose's attempt to introduce psychoanalysis to his Calcutta audience. While Bose's writings in Bengali were extensive, *Swapna* is not a sustained theoretical engagement with either the range or subtlety of Freud's thoughts. It is a limitation of my

current stage of research that it is not able to deal with Bose's Bengali writings as intimately as his English prose.[21] I am aware that the task of attending carefully to cultural-linguistic translations, especially in the realm of science, would be much more challenging in precisely this domain.[22] But what follows here is a beginning.

In the 'Preface' to *Swapna*, Bose warmly acknowledges Freud's discoveries, suggesting that Freud's analyses of the human mind are as epoch-making as those of Darwin. But in the body of the text it is largely with the Freud of *The Interpretation of Dreams* that Bose stays, emphasizing that dream-interpretation is inextricably intertwined with psychoanalysis; the method discovered by Freud. This is coupled, in places, with his 'opposite wishes' theory where Bose points out his differences with Freud.

I will not present a detailed reading of *Swapna* here. However, some points may be of interest. In the history of psychoanalysis, the 1920-30s are famous for what is now known as the 'Freud-Jones' debate.[23] The 1920s also mark a major shift in Freud's own work. Represented most forcefully through his, "Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes", Freud would now definitively discard his theory of the parallel development between the sexes. And the new area to which the second phase of his work would insistently lead him would be that of female sexuality. Conceptually while it was the 'Oedipus complex' that had earlier been the cornerstone of psychoanalysis, Freud would now increasingly emphasize the importance of the castration-complex instead.

We have mentioned in the Introduction the 'Controversial Debates' of 1943-44, between Melanie Klein and Anna Freud. Specifically in

---

[21] See for a discussion of Bose's Bengali works Amit Ranjan Basu, "The Coming of Psychoanalysis in Colonial India: The Bengali Writings of Dr. Girindrasekhar Bose," *Culture and the Disciplines*, *Enreca Occasional Paper Series*, no.5, ed, Tapati Guha-Thakurta, CSSSC: Calcutta, 2000: 36-54.

[22] I would maintain nevertheless that Bose's Bengali writings, even while operating in a social-intellectual space quite distinct from his English prose, do not still quite win the case for psychoanalysis being a natural outgrowth of Vedantic philosophy.

[23] See for an outstanding analysis of the way the echoes of ~~the~~ this would play out in the debate between Klein and Lacan, Lyndsey Stonebridge, *The Destructive Element: British Psychoanalysis and Modernism*, NY: Routledge, 1998.

terms of child-analysis this was enormously significant. However, according to Lacan (and it is important to mention this here because this is the version that has become famous), it was the way in which the 'Freud-Jones' debate was resolved that laid out the terms of psychoanalytic theory for the next three decades, shifting its focus to the relationship between mother and child/infant. Moreover according to Lacan all subsequent object-relations analysts, from Melanie Klein to D.W. Winnicottt, therefore assumed the existence of pre-given identities. Conventionally, this has then marked Lacan's famous 'return to Freud' in the 1960s; his reintroduction of the crucial third term, the 'Symbolic', through the castration-complex, and a return to the 'original' aim of psychoanalysis: the inquiry into how human subjectivity is constituted.[24]

But as mentioned earlier, the 1980s have seen a 'return to Klein' in psychoanalytic theory. A series of path breaking studies since then have defended Klein's work against both: charges of reductive biologism as well as a denial of the importance of outside agency when dealing with children (which was Anna Freud's charge against her). Freud's notion of the 'death drive,' the notion of 'anxiety,' the crucial importance of the first few months of an infant's life are consequently all concepts that have now moved to the psychoanalytic centre stage. [25]

Returning to *Swapna*, it is interesting that it is with the early Freud that Bose stays. The book is in fact almost in the nature of primer, introducing in short passages basic analytical concepts such as the nature of dreams, their manifest and latent content, the technique of free-association, the nature of censorship in dreams, childhood memories etc.[26] In the context of Bose's engrossment in classical Vedantic philosophy mentioned earlier, it might also be relevant to point out that there are brief sections towards the end of the book on the relationship between dreams and prophecy, the manifestation of

[24]

[25] For excellent discussions see Juliet Mitchell, ed., *The Selected Melanie Klein*, op. cit; Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose, eds, *Feminine Sexuality; Jacques Lacan and the ecole freudienne*, trans. Jacqueline Rose, NY: Pantheon Books, 1982.

[26] In English too Bose has a similar text, *Everyday Psychoanalysis*, Calcutta: Suchil Gupta, 1945, which is a collection of lectures introducing basic concepts of the new science to a range of Calcutta audiences.

spirits of the dead in dreams (for which Bose uses Freud's example of the burning child), dreams of animals/'sub-human species and so on.

Yet, as I will discuss in the third chapter, this was a context when there was an intense public debate on 'sexuality' in Bengal located at the intersection of a range of concerns such as the new family, new discourses on medicine, population-control, nation-building, etc. A range of popular periodicals of the time dealt with themes of the new companionate marriage, gave advice to women on scientific ways of home-management and child-rearing.[27] In fact a whole new pedagogy and a new system of schooling was being put in place to mould the character of the future citizen of the nation.[28] Moreover, as we already have seen from his paper on the 'Oedipus complex', Bose was fundamentally and passionately involved in the whole cultural project of 'translating science' that was then apace. Yet it is his Bengali book on dreams that seems curiously bereft of this intellectual-political charge and reads more like a sanitized science textbook. Undoubtedly, as I work more on Bose's Bengali writings, it is the details of this life-world that will emerge with more clarity and help me etch in with more precision the contours of 'Bengali modernity.' This is a task for the immediate future. For the moment, let us look at some of the larger theoretical concerns that emerge from the trajectory of psychoanalysis in India that we have charted so far.

* * * * *

I have, on several instances, mentioned the psychoanalytic theorist, Jacqueline Rose. This might be the appropriate context to lay out in some detail my indebtedness to her work. I refer especially to the essay, "Freud in the Tropics" (2003: 125-148). Here, in a painstaking analysis

---

[27] See Pradip Bose ed*., Samiyiki: Purano Samayikpatrer Prbandha Sankalan*, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers, 1998. Grateful thanks here to Prof. Gaut[a]m Bhadra for the wealth of reference material he has pointed out.

[28] Catalogues of children's fiction such as Bani Chakrabarty's *Bangla shishu shaitya* give us an indication of the idea of childhood that was emerging then. See also Buddhadeb Bose's landmark essay, "*Bangla shishu shahitya*," 1966, which however generally reiterates a very sanitized notion of childhood in Bengal.

of *Totem and Taboo*, Rose demonstrates that instead of reading the book as a cardinal text of Western prejudice (as has conventionally been done), it is also possible to read it, "[A]s Freud's dissection—albeit tentative and anxious—of authority, one of the texts in which, for all the drive in the opposite direction, he knows the precariousness of his own reason. *This would make the journey of the book not from primitive to civilized, from Australia to Europe, but into the heart of a civilisation that is aware, if only unconsciously, just how shaky it is on the ground.*" (2003:167, emphasis mine)

The tensions within *Totem and Taboo* over non-Western belief systems, in Freud's engagement with sacrifice and ritual, make it just as possible, Rose argues, to see the Australian aborigine/the 'primitive' as in fact someone who has retained a valuable psychic capacity that the 'civilized' West has had to repress at great cost to itself. More importantly, in the equation between aborigine and infant, it is not clear according to Rose that it is a straightforward stagist history that Freud is proposing—that non-Western societies represent a stage of history/culture that the West has left behind. Much more crucially, Rose underlines that in this book ostensibly on non-Western belief systems, Freud is actually struggling with the question, *what is a child*? Since this fundamental theoretical interconnection between non-Western societies and the child in Freud's thought is the scaffolding on which my own project has been cast, I will quote Rose at some length here:

> If *Totem and Taboo* has been criticized, … it is for its apparent equation between Aborigine and infant, for suggesting that non-Western cultures contain the raw, undeveloped, relics of a former stage of civilisation otherwise only discernible to us in the omnipotent animistic world view of a child's mind. From the outset, however, this project is highly ambiguous. Is Freud assuming, as has often been argued, that primitives are childlike? … Or is it that we have something to learn from the rituals of primitive society that we can uncover, get closer to, by observing what we have had to repress (have to go on repressing), at great internal cost, in the psychic life of the child?
>
> … The 'Preface' in fact suggests that the child is there to teach us the original meaning of primitive ritual, a meaning recalcitrant to our observation and which study of the so-called primitive cannot in some easy and obvious way be relied on to disclose. (2003: 132)

Further, one of the most crucial areas where Freud finds in the 'primitive mind' a capacity that the 'West' has lost is the ability of primitive emotion to sustain ambivalence. (The fundamental importance of this emotion to Freud's insights on the nature and formation of collectivities/groups will be our object of study in the next chapter.) But with meticulous attention to the development of the different strains of Freud's thought, Rose reminds the reader that while it would not be until the Great War that Freud would derive the origins of ethical life from the ambivalence of mourning, yet he was already groping here with notions of belonging and subjectivity quite different from the forms of collective identity through which the 'West' defines itself. Freud's claim to have uncovered the origins of society in the Oedipal struggles of primitive man can in fact be read, Rose argues, as Freud's conviction that there is something ineradicably violent about the social tie itself. From this perspective Rose suggests that for Freud, (even though he struggled with himself to admit this), the ability of primitive emotion to sustain intense ambivalence was indicative of a capacity to move back and forth across the different strata of the mind that the 'civilized' man has had to repress. The animistic soul could thus show us something about the fundamentally unreasonable nature of law/authority itself.

Placing *Totem and Taboo* in the context of the historic Freud-Jung rupture (another dissection of authority), Rose further points out that the (mournful) underlying link between authority and identification (with the neurotic) that Freud finally proposed in response to Jung, is absolutely central to the entire analytical project:

> It all depends—the problem we have seen Freud struggling with in *Totem and Taboo*—on whether you think psychoanalysis is a myth of progress, of civilised advance and advantage, a way of leaving something distasteful (primitive?) behind. One man's privilege is another man's shame. Or to put it in another way, is losing your authority—your distance, your normality, your belief in the logic of your own thought—something to be ashamed of? To whom does the neurosis, and the shame, properly belong? (2003: 139)[29]

[29] Rose develops these arguments further in her Introduction to Mustafa Soufan's, *Jacques Lacan and the Question of Analytical Training*. The central questions that the book raises are: what does the process of training-analysis actually involve, what is

I want to now bring this essay in conversation with a book that emerges from a different theoretical lineage, primarily Marx and Heidgger: Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincilaising Europe: Postcolonial thought and Historical Difference* (2001).[30] Placing in retrospect the intellectual inheritance of the *Subaltern Studies* project from which this book too emerges, Chakrabarty reminds us that *Subaltern Studies* emerged out of a deep sense of unease with the very idea of the 'political' in established traditions of English-language Marxist historiography. Thus he recalls Ranajit Guha's criticism of Eric Hobsbawm's category of the 'prepolitical' in Guha's 1983 book, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*. For Hobsbawm the world of the peasant and his forms of action mobilized, more often than not, along axes of kinship, religion, caste and involving gods, spirits and supernatural agents were evidence of the 'pre-political.' For Guha, on the contrary, peasant consciousness in India was very categorically and explicitly political. Chakrabarty recounts:

> By explicitly critiquing the idea of peasant consciousness as "prepolitical," Guha was prepared to suggest that the nature of collective action taken by peasants in modern India was such that it effectively stretched the category of the "political' far beyond the boundaries assigned to it in European political thought.

> [...]

> South Asian political modernity, Guha argued, brings together two noncommensurable logics of power, both modern. One is the logic of the quasi-liberal legal and institutional frameworks that European rule introduced into the country... Braided with this, however, is the logic of another set of relationships... that articulate hierarchy through practices of direct and explicit subordination of the less powerful by the more powerful. The first logic is secular...The second has no necessary secularism about it; it is what continually brings gods and spirits into the

---

the analysand encouraged to identify with and at what cost? For Lacan, according to Sofouan, at the end of the training analysis all that one learns is the shared ability to mourn (along with the analyst).

[30] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincilaising Europe: Postcolonial thought and Historical Difference,* Delhi: OUP, 2001. But in doing so I am aware that this is in many ways quite contrary to Chakrabarty's own theoretical impulse, which has on many instances seen psychoanalysis as indeed the cardinal text of Western prejudice.

domain of the political. (2001: 12-14)

Over a series of essays, Chakrabarty then traces out some of the social-intellectual implications of the way these non-commensurable logics structure the very shape and texture of 'politics' and 'modernity' in the postcolonial world. The idea of 'history' was of course central to Marx's philosophical understanding of 'capital' itself. But here, Chakrabarty reminds the readers, there are actually *two* notions of history at work. The first history is what Marx calls capital's antecedent 'posited by itself.' This is the history that is 'established' by capital i.e., the sum of those elements which are the logical/structural presuppositions to the reproduction of capitalist relationships.

But as opposed to this Marx posits another history, another kind of a past which also is encountered as an 'antecedent' but which does not have any natural or necessary connection either to capital's life-process or to the past posited by it. And it is at this interstice located at the very heart of Marx's idea of 'capital', that Chakrabarty suggests the postcolonial scholar can wrench possibilities of inscribing *differance* in history:

> Marx thus writes into the intimate space of capital an element of deep uncertainty. Capital has to encounter in the reproduction of its own life-process relationships that present it with double possibilities. These relationships could be central to capital's self-reproduction, and yet is also possible for them to be oriented to structures that do not contribute to such reproduction. History 2s are thus not pasts separate from capital; they inhere in capital and yet interrupt and punctuate capital's own logic (2001: 64).

To read Marx in this way is to account for modes of being human in the world where the empty, 'homogenous' time of secular history coexists intimately with the world of gods and spirits. It is to argue for a contemporary that is, 'so radically plural that it is not possible for any aspect or element to claim to represent the whole in any way (even as possible future' (2001: 88).[31] This is essentially the theoretical-political

---

[31] Chakrabarty finds, for instance, that the jute mill workers of Calcutta in the 193s and 40s retained their identities of religion, caste and so on even as they organised under communist trade unions against their employers, *Rethinking Working Class History: Bengal 1890-1940*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989.

connect that the next chapter will attempt to carry forward: from Marx under conditions of historical difference to *Freud* under conditions of historical difference.

In a by-now celebrated response to Vivek Chibber, Partha Chatterjee further sums up the framing questions that have animated the *Subaltern Studies* project over the last twenty-five years thus:

> The historical problem confronted by Subaltern Studies is not intrinsically a difference between west and east …The geographical distinction is merely the spatial label for a historical difference. That difference is indicated – let me insist emphatically – by the disappearance of the peasantry in capitalist Europe and the continued reproduction to this day of a peasantry under the rule of capital in the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America.
>
> […]
>
> Should we assume the same trajectory for agrarian societies in other parts of the world [as in Europe in the period of ascendancy of capitalism]? Does a different sequencing of capitalist modernity there not mean … that the historical outcomes in terms of economic formations, political institutions or cultural practices [here], might be quite different from those we see in the west? (2013: 74-75)[32]

This will, in turn, lead us back to Freud/J. Rose/psychoanalysis. Apart from the more popular notion of resistance—as something/ someone who opposes orthodoxies of nationhood/race/religion, Rose underlines that resistance also has a very specific connotation in psychoanalysis. For Freud/psychoanalysis 'resistance' is a block in the psyche; something that enables one to repress or deny things that are disturbing or traumatic. Moreover in *Civilisation and its Discontents*[33] Freud also gives us what remains among the most chilling accounts of fear as the driving force of social life. Yet as capital in the non-west follows a trajectory that has never been followed before, so too subaltern classes here find ways of resisting capital in unprecedented ways. As Chatterjee reminds us, the outcomes are unknown, unpredictable. However as the next chapter will show it is surprisingly,—(or perhaps not surprising

---

[32] Partha Chatterjee, "Subaltern Studies and *Capital*," *EPW*, vol. XLVIII.37 (Sept. 14. 2013): 69-75

[33] Freud, Sigmund, *Civilisation and Its Discontents*, Std. Ed, Vol. XXI (1929 -1931).

at all?),—through Melanie Klein, who carries Freud's darkest insights into the deepest corners of the mind, that new openings might emerge to acknowledge the deeply ruptured histories and the horrific *symbolic* violence constitutive of the 'postcolonial modern.'

The 'Controversial Discussions', Again

ψ

> "Remembrance of things past is not necessarily the remembrance of
> things as they were."

—Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time: Swann's Way* (1913)

This chapter is in the nature of a history of psychoanalysis. Or, rather,
it is an attempt to trace the journey of some of Freud's [most difficult?]
ideas as they found their way into the writings of Melanie Klein. But it
also raises some related questions: what is at stake in reading Melanie
Klein today? What is to be gained for social science scholarship in
returning to this early, though very influential practitioner of child-
analysis? Why did Klein produce such a violent and destructive vision of
our beginnings? And finally, even if psychoanalysis has seen something
of a 'return to Klein' since the 1980s, how does one draw the line from
inter-War Britain,[1] (which provided the most generative context for
Klein's work), to mid/late-twentieth-century India?

Freud's key text on childhood is *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*
(1905). But he returned to the formative influence of the childhood
years continually in his work. [In addition to the *Three Essays* was the
case-study, by paternal proxy, of 'Little Hans', the five-year old boy who

---

[1] Beginning her analytic training un in Budapest with Sandor Ferennzci in 1912,
Klein moved to Berlin in 1921. There, she trained with Karl Abraham from the
beginning of 1924 to the summer of 1925, deciding to settle permanently in Britain, on
Ernest Jones' invitation, after Abraham's death that December. She died, still working, in
1960. My purpose in highlighting a particular period of her career is simply to underline
that these years were formative to the concepts she would continue to develop till the
end of her life.

had a phobia of horses (1909), where Freud obtained 'direct' evidence of sexuality and neurosis in childhood.][2] However, conventionally, it is his formulation of the 'polymorphously perverse' sexuality of the child in the *Three Essays* that has been seen as the most radical. Yet, recent scholarship in psychoanalysis has also opened up entirely new areas in Freud's work. I have mentioned earlier Jacqueline Rose's book, *Peter Pan: Or, The Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (1984; rpt.1992). Since this book was in many ways the starting point of my project, I will discuss in some detail the new dimensions in Freud's thinking that the book uncovers.

Beginning with the observation that Freud was brought up against the unconscious when he was dealing with the question of how we remember ourselves as children, Rose points out that the most explosive of Freud's insights here is that childhood for him, (unlike Piaget or 'developmental' Psychology), is not a stage that we ever simply outgrow or leave behind. It is rather something that persists, something that we endlessly rework, that is formative to the notions of 'identity' we construct but which also constantly shows us that there is a part of our minds over which we have no control. She says:

> That moment [Freud's first analysis of a memory of childhood] was the starting point for two sets of questions which would be closely related throughout Freud's work and which are crucial to any consideration of fiction for the child: the question of the unconscious—its constant pull against our seeming identity; the question of childhood—its threat to the idea that we have neatly picked up and resolved everything that came before on the way to where we are now. The issue of childhood sexuality is subordinate to these two questions (1992: 12-13).

Hence importantly, Rose points out, as Freud analyzed that first childhood memory and laid out—not so much what it meant as the process of transformation that lay between the original event and what

---

[2] Freud's gradual disagreements with—Adler, Jung, Stekel, Erikson…—are all now the stuff of legend. It would be the primacy of the sexual instinct in Freud's framework over which all these dissensions would take place. For a study, *in contrast,* of the case of 'Little Hans' see for example, Erich Fromm, "Individual and Social Origins of Neurosis". Fromm is important also as a representative of the 'Frankfurt School' and for attempting a dialogue between psychoanalysis and Marx, although from a different intellectual trajectory than mine.

was recalled, he was demonstrating the divisions and distortions which are characteristic of our psychic life. Later, he would formulate these same processes more precisely in relation to dreams, jokes and slips of the tongue,—phenomena which could not be discussed as neurotic, but which revealed an essential continuity between the disturbances of his patients and the psychic mechanisms of 'normal' adult life. A third and equally momentous discovery vis-à-vis Freud's analysis of that childhood memory was the fact of childhood amnesia; the enormously significant fact that as adults, we remember so little of our earliest years. For Freud this indicated that there are aspects of childhood which one part of our mind, a part over which we precisely do not have any control, would rather forget. (We will return to this point at length in the next chapter, in our analysis of Satyajit Ray's children's films).

And of course, as already mentioned, Freud also uncovered in the sexual life of children the same 'perverse' sexuality that his analyses revealed in the symptoms of his patients and which was expressed indirectly in their dreams. Here, the line ran in both directions. By stating that 'perverse' sexuality was quite normal (to the extent that it could be located in the sexual life of the child), and by also insisting that 'perverse' sexuality acquired the form of a symptom only because it was a form of sexuality which had to be totally repressed, Freud effected a radical break both in conventional notions of sexuality as well as of childhood. But not only that—the ideas of subjective cohesion, linear development, identity, all come apart completely under pressure from this unsettling conception.[3]

---

[3] This view is the opposite of a book such as for instance Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy-Tales,* NY: Vintage/ Random House, 1997, which though distinguished by its attention to the complexity of unconscious process for both child and adult, argues that the final function of the fairy-tale is to *fortify* a child's personality. Specifically in the context of psychoanalysis in India, such an 'integrated' conception of childhood also emerges in Sudhir Kakkar, *The Inner World: A Psychoanalytic Study of Childhood and Society in India*, N. Delhi: OUP, 1978. However, for Freud the unconscious is the hallmark of the divisions that constitute the human mind and the weakness of the instincts in the human infant as well as the biphasic nature of human sexuality are responsible for the inevitable predisposition of human beings to neurosis.

Moreover, as Rose underlines, Freud also directed attention to the idea that language might be a *problem*, that it is never something we can simply use to communicate. This includes speaking to children:— what it might mean to address them, to speak to them, to write them down. In fact as she points out, these ambiguities are interwoven into the very definition of 'children's fiction'. Popular notions of 'children's literature' not only leave the 'adult' completely out of the picture, by that same token they are always ambiguous on the point of *who* authors this fiction, i.e., is this fiction produced by children or given to children by adults?

Over a series of essays, Rose has subsequently explored how the idea of the child, in many ways, takes Freud to the limit-points of his thought: to the origin of ethics, even in dreams and the condition of sleep. The picture is further enriched with the connections Freud would himself make between the child and the non-Western 'savage' (the infamous 'Australian aborigine') in *Totem and Taboo*, where he would insist that both children and the 'Australian aborigine' have a delicacy of feeling that the West has greatly underestimated. (I have indicated some of the enormous intellectual-theoretical ramifications of this in the last chapter.)

However, while psychoanalysis starts, it does not end with Freud. Indeed, many of the framing questions of *Totem and Taboo* around legacy and filiation would find uncanny echo within the institutional history of psychoanalysis in the famous 'Controversial Discussions' between Melanie Klein and Anna Freud.[4] These discussions, relatively unknown outside analytic circles, took place at the scientific meetings of the British Psychoanalytical Society between 1943 and 1944. Invited to England by Ernst Jones in 1926, twelve years before Freud himself arrived accompanied by Anna Freud in 1938, Klein found herself both heiress as well as usurper of his legacy. However, as Rose lays out, at stake in the row over child-analysis between Anna Freud and herself were issues that were/have been central to the analytical institution: the

---

[4] In 1991, the full edition of the 'Controversial discussions' was published as Vol.11 of the New Library of Psychoanalysis. See Melanie Klein, Paula Heinman, Susan Isaacs and Joan Riviere, *Developments in Psycho-Analysis*, ed. Joan Riviere, London: Hogarth Press, 1952. See also special issue of the *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis,* vol. 75. (1994), for a series of articles on the 'Controversial Discussions.'

problem of how to transmit knowledge of the unconscious. And what happens when this problem turns into the question of whether one can, or indeed should, analyse a child? This is also therefore that moment in analytic history where the issue of power in the analytic scenario reveals/(-ed) itself most starkly, since the analyst's intervention in the mind of the child is/was disputed according to the alternatives of education or violation, moral control or abuse. Thus the controversy over the work of Melanie Klein was crucially about the political import of psychoanalysis too (It was, of course, also about who controlled power and funding within the British Society.) (1993: 15-40).[5]

While Klein was initially anxious to stress that her work was a direct and loyal extension of Freud's work, by the 1930s it had grown into an independent body. The atmosphere in the British Society was also changing perceptibly by then. One of the turning points was when Edward Glover, who till then had been a Klein supporter, changed his views and contended that as a lay person[6] Klein did not have the requisite expertise to discuss psychosis. (This was after Klein read her paper on the 'depressive position.') At the 'Controversial Discussions', as they later came to be known, there were four papers read to clarify Klein's position. The end-result of the Discussion was that they lead to the emergence of three distinct schools within the British Society: the followers of Anna Freud, those of Klein and the majority, who were prepared to accept some of Klein's findings, but not all.

The thrust of Klein's work lay in her application of the analytical technique to children, especially the first few months of an infant's life.[7]

---

[5] Jacqueline Rose, "Negativity in the Work of Melanie Klein," in *Why War?— Psychoanalysis, Politics and the Return to Melanie Klein,* London: Blackwell, 1993. See also the essay, "War in the Nursery," pp. 137-190

[6] The debates around 'lay analysis' have been at the heart of the psycho-analytical movement since its inception. For the specific contours that this debate took in the context of the British Psycho-analytical society, especially given Ernest Jones' inclination towards medical degrees as opposed to Freud's insistence that psychoanalysis was a branch of 'Psychology' see, among others, Gregorio Kohon, ed, *The British School of Psychoanalysis: An Independent Tradition,* London: Free Association Books, 1986. However, the British Society continued to be among the most receptive to 'lay analysts' as Jones himself was, to Melanie Klein.

[7] An introduction to the major concepts of Kleinian theory, along with Klein's important writings on each, is available at the website of the Melanie Klein Trust, www.

(We will discuss her work in some detail in the following sections). But the important fact here was that this was also a period in its life when a child could not speak. While speech was always 'symptomatic' for Freud, with Klein's work whole new areas opened up for analysis: the analysis of play, of feeding and sleep disorders, bed-wetting—in short, a whole gamut of ways in which psychic trauma is inscribed on the body. Moreover there were four psychic mechanisms that were central to Klein: splitting, projection, introjection and projective identification.[8] And her work revolved around the ways in which the neonate uses these to interact with a world it finds both satisfying and frustrating. But of course it was as she developed Freud's concept of the 'death instincts'/'thanatos' into the central tenet of her work, that she has been most famous/controversial.

Freud introduced his notion of the 'death instincts'[9] in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). And while he continued to uphold and elaborate on it till the end of his life, it remains one of his most difficult, speculative as well as controversial ideas. It is not often noticed that Freud was very much a war-writer. And increasingly after 1914, (the date is also important as he would set out the terms of his new topography of the mind),[10] as dark clouds gathered over Europe new themes emerged

---

melanie-klein-trust.org.uk, accessed 2nd Dec, 2013. In India, the major resource for work with/on Kleinian theory is the Psychoanalytic Therapy and Research Centre, Mumbai. In fact the PRTC offers an entire program on child psychotherapy based on the Tavistock Model. Even though my acquaintance with the PRTC is only very recent, I was delighted to discover many familiar points of reference, including contemporary Kleinians such as Edna O'Shaughnessy. This is undoubtedly a resource I will explore much further. The PRTC also has a useful website, www.psychoanalysis-mumbai.org, accessed 2 December, 2013 with details of theorists they use in their teaching and work in child therapy.

8 This last has been among Klein's most popular concepts. For a brilliant analysis of the concept as well as its popularity, as it were, see Elizabeth Spillus and Edna O'Shaughnessy, eds, *Projective Identification: The Fate of a Concept* (The New library of Psychoanalysis), Sussex & NY: Routledge, 2012.

9 For a useful introductory history of the concept of the 'death instincts' in Freud's writing see Laplanche and Pontalis, *The Language of Psycho-Analysis*, op. cit, pp.97-103. This is not, however, an account that does justice to the theoretical lineage of this concept as it develops in the work of Melanie Klein.

10 This is with the publication of *The Ego and the Id* but the 1920s marked a more general revision in Freud's thought too.

as the focus of his work. We will return to them in the final section. But they could broadly be clustered around questions such as: what drives people to hatred? What is the origin of aggression? Relatedly, how are collectivities formed? What is the nature of a 'mass'? Is there a distinction between a 'mass' (in the sense of the uncontrollable mob) and 'groups' which claim to be more rational such as the church and the army? (We may recall here that *Totem and Taboo* was also published in 1913). As psychoanalysis itself has moved from the study of sexuality to the study of nation-states, it is these new dimensions in Freud's writings that have assumed centrestage.[11] As Rose reminds us, in our dark times one could say it is self-evident, as one tracks the psyche across the terrain of the social, the march of the 'thanatos' in contemporary life. It is also precisely for this reason—the brutalism of our era—impossible to avoid Melanie Klein. (1993:15-40)

But even for Freud himself, while the actual postulation of the 'death instincts' only happens after the First War it is important to relate this concept to the gradual evolution of his thought and appreciate that despite his own conviction that he was breaking radically new ground, the need for such a theoretical concept had already existed in his earlier models. Even in his early models of the mind, it had seemed impossible to Freud that hate could be derived from the sexual instincts. Moreover, especially after his introduction of the concept of narcissism, the earlier opposition between the sexual instincts and the ego instincts tends to disappear.[12] This, apart from the clinical experience of obsessional neurosis, melancholia,[13] the 'compulsion to repeat' and so on led Freud to put forward this concept, above all, because of its theoretical value. However, gradually it imposed itself, as it were, upon him despite the

---

[11] Several other works of J. Rose will be referred to in subsequent sections. But see for an early formulation of this, especially, Jacqueline Rose, *States of Fantasy*, Oxford & NY: OUP, 1996.

[12] The reference here is to the crucial paper, "On Narcissism: An Introduction " (1914). With the discovery of the problem of narcissism, a subject's erotically charged relationship to her/himself, the previous neat line dividing the impulses directed towards the self (hunger) and the other (love), starts to blur.

[13] The paper on melancholia appears the very year next, "Mourning and Melancholia" (1915)

resistance it ran into and despite the difficulties of anchoring it in concrete experience:

> To begin with, it was only tentatively that I put forward the views I have developed here, but in the course of time they have gained such a hold upon me that I can no longer think in any other way. (1925:67)

Consequently, in the final conceptual model of his work especially as it developed after the 1920s, the 'death instincts' appear as an entirely new model of instincts which are opposed now to the 'life instincts' (Eros). Yet, at the same time, Freud also looks upon them as instincts *par excellence* in that they typify the repetitive nature of instincts in general. Conventionally, it has been assumed that what Freud was trying to express by the term 'death instincts' was a fundamental aspect of instinctual life, the return to an earlier state and, in the final analysis, the return to the absolute repose of the inorganic. I will elaborate on this in the next section, yet it would be precisely around these questions that Melanie Klein would contest, while at the same time also claiming, to be Freud's true intellectual heir. Moreover, one of the major criticisms of Klein during the 'Controversial Debates' would be that she could not get a 'development' story straight. In a fascinating discussion on the concept of 'regression' in Klein's work, Jacqueline Rose remarks, citing Susan Isaacs, in a comment that is overloaded with resonance for our times:

> 'The 'status quo' is a frequent phrase heard today… The full phrase is 'status quo ante.' How many people still hope that the end of the war may mean a restoration of the pre-war conditions for which they are most homesick, although progressive minds on every hand warn us that restoration of old conditions could only lead to renewed disaster?' What clearer statement of the political provenance of theory? What clearer indication that … if psychoanalysis concentrates on the restorative, it heads straight into a theoretical blind? [Rose's reference here is to the Gulf War] (1993: 37)

As Proust reminds us repeatedly in his epic, going back/returning and 'before' are not necessarily the same things at all.

* * * * *

The Psycho-Analysis of Children[14] begins with an introduction by Ernest Jones of the gradual, imperceptible but ultimately shocking recognition of the novelty of Melanie Klein's ideas within the British Psychoanalytical Society:

> For a time Mrs. Klein was given attentive hearing… Before long, however, cries began to develop that in the views she rather vehemently presented she was 'going too far' which I think simply meant she was going too fast.
>
> […]
>
> To her…is due the credit of carrying psychoanalysis to where it principally belongs --- the heart of the child.
>
> […]
>
> Freud had shown that the child's mind contained in its depths much besides the innocence and freshness that so entrance us. There were dark fears of possibilities that the most gruesome fairy tale had not dared to explore, cruel impulses where hate and murder rage freely…: in short a world that reminds us of Belsen or of Walt Disney at his most grotesque…Mrs. Klein went further than this by maintaining that the Cimmerian picture Freud had drawn of the unconscious mind of a three year old was at least as valid of an infant of the first months of life. (1932: 9-11)

This question of legacy, this anxiety over being the 'true' bearer of Freud's word, would haunt Melanie Klein throughout her life. She begins her own 'Introduction' thus:

> The beginnings of Child Analysis go back more than two decades, to the time when Freud himself carried out his analysis of Little Hans. The first analysis of a child was of great importance in two respects. Its success

---

[14] This is undoubtedly her classic, *The Psycho-Analysis of Children*, London: The Hogarth Press, 1932. While this books lays out her main theoretical principles of child-analysis and the innovations/radical changes she thereby introduces into the classical canon, detailed notes of the analytical sessions with one of her child analysands are collected in *Narrative of a child analysis: the conduct of the psychoanalysis of children as seen in the treatment of a ten year old boy*, London: The Hogarth Press, 1961. Her two other major works are *Love, Hate and Reparation*, London: The Hogarth Press, 1937, with Joan Riviere and *Envy and Gratitude (1946-1963)*, London: The Free Press, 2002.

in the case of a child under five showed that psycho-analytic methods could be applied to small children… In addition, the results obtained from it held out the hope that further analyses of small children would give us a deeper and more accurate knowledge of their psyche than analysis of adults had done, and would thus be able to make important and fundamental additions to the theory of Psycho-Analysis.

[…]

In Anna Freud's opinion children do not develop a transference-neurosis so that a fundamental condition for the analytical treatment is absent. Moreover she thinks that a method similar to the one employed for adults should not be applied to children because their ego-ideal is too weak.

These views differ from mine… My clinical experiences have … taught me that in children of every age it is very hard even for deep analysis to mitigate the severity of the super-ego. Moreover, in so far as it does so without having recourse to any educational influence, analysis not only does not weaken the child's ego, but actually strengthens it. (1932: 17-19)

Has the script for the 'Controversial Debates' already been written?

It is important nevertheless to return to this early formulation of Klein's positions to appreciate the theoretical rigour of her views. The book is divided into two major sections. The first is, "the Technique of Child Analysis" and the second, "Early Anxiety-Situations and their Effect on the Development of the Child". The "Technique" section is, moreover, divided into seven chapters. The initial one lays out the psychological foundations of child analysis in the chapter of the same name. The next is on techniques of early analysis. The third is an account of her six-year-old obsessional patient, Erna.[15] This is followed by two chapters on the techniques of analysis to be adopted for the latency and pubertal periods, respectively. The sixth is a broad outline of neurosis in children while the seventh lays out, in broad sketches, their sexual activities.

---

[15] As with Freud, Klein's case-histories too have become classics of psychoanalytic literature and there is now a massive body of research, re-reading of each. But to my mind one of the finest recent articles on Erna is by Claudia Frank, "The Origins of Disquieting Discoveries by Melanie Klein: The Possible Significance of the case of Erna," *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, vol. 77. (1996): 1101-1126.

As it is in this first chapter on, "Psychological Foundations…" that Klein spells out some of her most revolutionary techniques and discoveries, it might be appropriate to quote her again at some length:

> It is clear also that this anxiety refers not only to the child's real parents but also, and more especially, to its excessively stern introjected parents…Early analysis shows that the Oedipus conflict sets in as early as the second half of the first year of life and that at the same time the child begins to modify it and to build up a super-ego.[16]
>
> […] And yet many conditions for their successful treatment seem to be absent. Their relation to reality is a weak one; there is apparently no inducement for them to undergo the trials of an analysis, since they do not as a rule feel ill; and lastly, and most important of all, they cannot as yet give, or cannot give in a sufficient degree, those associations of speech which are the principal instrument of an analytic treatment.
>
> […] These special characteristics of the child's psychology have furnished the basis of the technique of Play Analysis which I have been able to work out. The child expresses its phantasies, its wishes and its actual experiences in a symbolic way through play and games. In doing so it makes use of the same archaic and phylogenetic mode of expression, the same language, as it were, that we are familiar with in dreams; and we can only fully understand this language if we approach it in the way Freud has taught us to approach the language of dreams. … [H]owever if we wish to understand the child's play correctly in relation to its whole behaviour during the analytic hour, we must not be content to pick out the meaning of the separate symbols … but must take into consideration all the mechanisms and methods of representation employed by the dream-work, never losing sight of the relation of each factor to the situation as a whole. Analysis of children has shown again and again how many different meanings a single toy or single bit of play can have. (1932: 28-29)

---

[16] Klein's fundamental paper on this was, "Early Stages of the Oedipus Complex" (1928), which she read at the Tenth International Psychoanalytical Congress in London in 1927, and where she revised Freud's view that the Oedipus complex develops in the phallic phase, between the third and fifth years of life. Through this Klein may be said to have developed the full implications of Freud's idea of the Oedipus complex for the first time. It would be subsequently elaborated to its logical limits by her successors, who postulated that the oedipal configuration already existed in the baby's relation to the maternal breast.

While the recurring anxiety over fidelity to Freud marks these lines as heavily as always, I will elaborate in what follows precisely why Klein's notion of the unconscious, for instance, was *not* identical to Freud's. Consequently, the implicit equation being made here between play-analysis and free-association needs to be rethought too. But the point of crucial importance that Klein goes on to underline is that behind every play activity of the child lies a process of discharge of masturbatory phantasises and that this process, acting as a repetition-compulsion, constitutes a fundamental mechanism in its play and in all her/his subsequent sublimations. We have already noted that the question of power in the analytical scenario would be at the heart of the 'Controversial Discussions' and that this would revolve, in turn, on the ethics of intervention into the infant mind. But Klein is quite firm on the goals that she sets for the psycho-analysis of children:

> Neurotic children do not tolerate reality well, because they cannot tolerate frustrations. They seek to protect themselves from reality by denying it. But what is most important and decisive for their future adaptability to reality is the ease with which they tolerate those frustrations which arise out of the Oedipus situation. … For this reason one of the results of early analysis should be to enable the child to adapt itself to reality. If this has been successfully done the child's educational difficulties will be lessened, for it will have become able to tolerate those frustrations entailed by reality.

> […]

> Further, full sexual enlightenment, … like a full adaptation to reality, is one of the consequences of a completed analysis. (1932: 34-35)

As analysis proceeds, and Klein is emphatic that 'deep interpretations' should be attempted as early as possible, the child's play expands, her/his anxiety decreases and its imagination finds a new lease of life. But as the child's ego develops there are, of course, necessary modifications to be made vis-à-vis the analysis of children in the latency and pubertal periods respectively. However, the techniques of 'Early Analysis' form the bedrock for the methods to be adopted, analytically, for children of *all* ages. Klein sums up:

> Children and young people suffer from more acute anxiety than do adults, and therefore we must gain access to their anxiety and to their

unconscious sense of guilt and establish the analytic situation as rapidly as possible. In small children this anxiety usually finds an outlet in anxiety attacks; during the latency period it more often takes the form of distrust and reserve, while in the intensely emotional age of puberty it once more leads to acute liberation of anxiety which now, however, in conformity with the child's more developed ego, frequently finds expression in obstinate and violent resistances…

[…]

The analysis of the transference-situation and of the resistance, the removal of infantile amnesias and of the effects of repression, as well as the uncovering of the primal scene --- all these things Play Analysis does. It therefore not only conforms to the same standards of psycho-analytic method as do adult analyses, but also leads to the same results. The only difference is that it suits its mode to mind of the child. (1932: 37-38)

With a richness of detail that matches those of 'Early Analysis,' *The Psycho-Analysis of Children* then goes on to describe the typical games and activities of patients in the latency period, a stage where repression is much more severe. The importance of the rational element in the play of children at this age is not only because their imagination is much more repressed, but the obsessional over-emphasis on 'reality' is often matched by obsessional and monotonous drawing, building or making things, in play. And the analyst has to find access to the unconscious of children at this stage through representations which appear, on the manifest level, quite devoid of phantasy.

 Analyses at puberty, again, differ in many ways from children in the latency period but have many points of similarity with analyses of small children given that at puberty there is yet again a greater dominance of the emotions and the unconscious and a much richer life of the imagination. But since the child at adolescence is much more successful at warding off anxiety than the small child, in part by assuming the attitudes of defiance or rebelliousness, the analyst needs to gain access to the patient's unconscious especially early to counter the negative attitudes in the transference typical of children at puberty.

The chapter on neurosis is, similarly, fascinating for the range of activities that Klein insists are, in fact, neurotic symptoms: nose-picking, unruly behaviour while being bathed, tendency to plaintive behaviour, habit of falling down, attitude towards presents and festivals,

coughs and colds, etc. And here her observations do make her, to my mind, the true and glorious inheritor of Freud when she concludes:

> From what has been said above, then, we see that the difficulties which are never lacking in the development of the small child are neurotic in character. In other words, every child passes through a neurosis differing only in degree from one individual to another.
>
> [...]
>
> [Moreover] in judging what is neurotic in a child we cannot apply the standards proper to adults... Thus, for instance, a small child which fulfils all the requirements of its upbringing and does not let itself to be dominated by its life of phantasy and instinct, which is, in fact, to all appearances completely adapted to reality and moreover, shows little sign of anxiety—such a child would assuredly not only be a precocious being and devoid of charm, but would be abnormal in the fullest sense of the word. (1932: 151)

And with this we pass into the second major section of the book, "Early Anxiety Situations...", where Klein will not only locate the Oedipal moment much earlier than Freud, but also the emergence of the ego and the super-ego—in the mind not of the child but of the *infant*. Further, these concepts of internal objects, the process of introjection, instinctual anxiety, the notion of a primary aggression, [it is here Klein that will develop furthest Freud's notion of the 'death drive'], the idea of the emergence of the ego and the super-ego in the pre-verbal years, have been the central contributions of Melanie Klein to the world of psychoanalytic theory.[17] It would be simplistic to try to summarise them. But the concepts of Freud that have most relevance to Melanie Klein are his theory of infantile sexuality and his account of the 'unconscious as a hypothetical area that is always unfathomable.' And, of course, his later concepts of the 'death instincts' and the super ego.[18] We will

---

[17] Klein's theory of object relations, indeed the 'object relations school' in psychoanalysis, itself has the most fascinating history. See for instance the essays in the collection Elizabeth Bott Spillus, ed., *Melanie Klein Today: Developments in Theory and Practice*, (2 vols.), London: Tavistock/Rooutledge, 1988, for a demonstration both of the richness of Kleinian theory and practice and the extent to which it has developed.

[18] Freud introduced this term in his second topography of the mind in, *The Ego and the Id* (1923). According to Freud, the super-ego is the heir of the Oedipus complex

discuss these in some detail in what follows but it might be appropriate to reiterate here that Klein was well aware that the destructive, violent picture of the mind of the infant that she was proposing was not for the feeble-hearted:

> The idea of an infant of from six to twelve months trying to destroy its mother [and especially her breast] by every method at the disposal of its sadistic tendencies --- with its teeth, nails and excreta and with the whole of its body, transformed in imagination into all kinds of dangerous weapons --- presents a horrifying, not to say an unbelievable picture to our minds. … But the abundance, force and multiplicity of the imaginary cruelties which accompany these cravings are displayed before our eyes in early analyses so clearly and forcibly that they leave no room for doubt. (1932: 188-189)

Thus, in many ways Klein takes us to the limits of what is imaginable about psychic life. It is also always the infant, or more generally the child, who is at the centre of her work. And while on one hand this immediately brings centrestage the controversy around the tenuous line dividing education from child-abuse on the other it highlights the difficult relationship between adult and child in Klein's work. For Klein the adult is never free of infantile processes and the mechanisms of paranoid anxiety and depressive guilt remain in operation throughout.[19] Moreover, her version of early Oedipal life also provides a language

---

in that it is formed when the child stops trying to satisfy his Oedipal wishes and internalises parental prohibitions.

[19] Anxiety was central to Klein's notion of the infant-mind. Her attention was especially on the ego's early defence mechanisms as it copes with the impulses, drives and body-feelings on one hand and the outside world on the other. Moreover, there were two main types of anxiety that she described. Klein argued that the baby's early destructive feelings—emanations of the death drive—make it very anxious. It fears that the object on which it vents its anger (the maternal breast) will retaliate. In self-protection, its ego then splits itself into a good and a bad part and projects all the badness onto the external world. Klein described this as the paranoid-schizoid position. However, as the ego gradually becomes able to take in the whole person, to see that the good and the bad can exist together, it continues to rage against the mother but now, instead of fearing retaliation it feels guilt for the damage it has itself done in phantasy. Klein calls this the depressive position. Additionally for her, while these positions develop in the first few months of life, they remain part of our personality, part of our 'normal' (/psychotic) development. Her seminal papers here were, "A contribution

to talk about those areas of psychic experiences that seem to resist symbolisation. In the final section, I will extrapolate some larger theoretical issues that Klein's writings throw up not only for the study of childhood but crucially, for history-writing, drawing thereby the line from Melanie Klein to the 'postcolonial modern'. As we shall see, central to this will be Klein's theorisation of the infantile experience of time.

The comments that follow immediately are indebted to the writings of Juliet Mitchell.[20] Mitchell was instrumental in initiating the 'return to Klein' with her pathbreaking, *The Selected Melanie Klein* (1986).[21] Mitchell's introduction to Klein also meticulously distinguishes between the ideas of Freud and Klein. Additionally, her elucidation of Klein's central tenets has been invaluable in defending Klein against two of the most commonly levelled charges against her: of reductive biologism and of the denial of outside agency (which was Anna Freud's charge).

Vis-à-vis the centrality of anxiety in Klein's theory, Mitchell perceptively notices that by the 1920s Freud had himself revised his understanding of this affectual state. Whereas he had earlier thought that anxiety is the result of the repression of sexual desires, by the mid-1920s Freud began to argue that although this does happen to a degree, in most cases the feeling of anxiety comes first and warns of the dangers inherent in certain sexual desires and ideas. Klein, in conformity with Freud's early work, initially assumed that anxiety was the result of prohibited desires. But as her work progressed, she began to see it as the manifestation of the 'death drive.' It was then that she specified different types of anxiety (paranoid-schizoid and depressive).

---

to the psychogenesis of manic-depressive states" (1935) and, "Notes on schizoid mechanisms" (1946).

[20] My debt to her classic, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, London: Basic Books, 1974, in the very conceptualisation of my project, is perhaps too obvious to be stated.

[21] Juliet Mitchell, ed., *The Selected Melanie Klein*, London: The Hogarth Press, The Institute of Psychoanalysis and The Melanie Klein Trust, 1986. As mentioned, my introduction to critical writing using Kleinian theory was through the excellent collection, John Philips and Lyndsey Stonebridge, eds., *Reading Melanie Klein*, op. cit. Mitchell introduces Klein here too, pp. 11-30. This is a selection I have returned to constantly, in my attempts to apply Klein to Bombay cinema as well.

Moreover, Klein's concept of the unconscious was also quite different from Freud's. As Mitchell points out, by the time of her later writings Klein's concept of the unconscious is almost equivalent to the instincts: the life drive, the death drive and their associated affects. Additionally, the Kleinian unconscious is a container full of contents, not another system of thought with its own, utterly distinct laws (what Freud called the primary processes). In fact, for Klein there is no sharp distinction between the unconscious, the preconscious and the conscious. (This is completely consistent with the fact that in the minds of children the distinction between the three is not clear.) For Klein, it is the content, not the dream-work that is central in the interpretation of dreams.

Most crucially for Freud, his discovery of the unconscious and of the formative importance of infantile sexuality came together in his theory of the Oedipus complex and its destruction by the castration complex. But as Mitchell points out, Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex revolved vitally around the question of a past:

> Psychically speaking, there is no past until after the repression of Oedipal wishes by the castration complex. The castration complex destroys the phantasy of an eternally satisfying relationship with the mother, it introduces the command that the Oedipus complex be over and done with: if you accept it you will be able to have a new version (be a father in your turn with a woman of your own) in the future. …The castration complex, bearing the injunction of human history, inaugurates history within the individual. (1986: 25-30)

In contrast to this is the strangeness of the infant's experience of time—not a division into a past, present and future but as abrupt and unpredictable comings and goings [initially of the maternal breast] that punctuate the infant's experience of the world. This is not historical or developmental time—the 'empty, homogeneous time' of the classical nation-state theorised by Benedict Anderson. Instead, it is a concept of time constituted entirely by contingency, externality. In fact, the infant's concept of time is nearer to spatial relationships: here, there, come, gone… It is more akin to a horizontal experience of space where terror and agony are permanent. Thus, for Klein past and present are one and her observations of normal children leads to the analysis of points of *psychosis* which are always current, which represent continuing

possibilities of a personality and are not determined by a person's history as in the neuroses. Mitchell further observes:

> In placing anxiety at the centre of the theoretical elaboration of the clinical picture Klein is dealing with present-day or persistent, potential actuality. …Whereas in Freud repression is a defence that creates a past and a symptom is a return of that past, Klein is appropriately more interested in the defences which have no such dimension of time past and with atemporal inhibitions of the ego, not with symptoms.
>
> […] By definition, the pre-Oedipal child, but also the psychotic, whether child or adult, has not negotiated the Oedipus complex, has not acquired a history. Klein's contribution is to chart an area where the present and the past are one and time is spatial, not historical, This area has all the characteristics of a descriptive unconsciousness, an unconscious that has not been constructed by repression (1986: 29).

Crucially, therefore, Klein not only effected a shift of interest from neurosis to psychosis, but also from sexuality to the death-drive. Moreover, as they were figured in the debates during the 'Controversial Discussions', the key paper of Freud's which became the reference-point for Klein and her supporters was his paper on 'Negation' (1925). As several commentators have noted[22], it is also on this paper that Klein and Lacan would converge, with Klein's concept of negativity, an externality at the origin, being uncannily close to (even if distinct from) Lacan's notion of the 'Real' that resists symbolisation.[23] Indeed, for Klein as much as for Lacan the question of origin and the question of knowledge/aggression are completely intertwined.

Additionally, as Jacqueline Rose (1993: 15-40) observes, the concept of negativity in Klein has also effected a paradigm-shift in the dialogue between psychoanalysis and politics. In some ways, Rose argues, it has actually been too easy to politicize psychoanalysis so long as the structuring opposition has been that between a repressive ego and the unconscious seen as the site of emancipatory desires. But what this has

---

[22] I especially refer here to Jacqueline Rose, "Negativity in the work of Melanie Klein," *Why War?—Psychoanalysis, Politics and the Return to Melanie Klein*, op. cit, pp. 15-40. See also Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection,* Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997.

[23] Lacan's discussion of Freud's article takes three chapters in, *Ecrits: A Selection,* trans, Bruce Fink et.al, NY: W.W.Norton & Company, 2004.

done is to veil the much more difficult opposition between the *superego* and the unconscious, where what is hidden is aggression as much as sexuality, and the agent of repression is as ferocious as what it is trying to control. For Melanie Klein, the infant and its world emerge on the basis of loss, self-alienation. It is the loss of the object [the maternal breast] which causes a breach in the primitive narcissism of the subject and which, in turn, also produces the persecutory object as its effect. However, the destructive instinct in Klein is not a simple biological impulse. Central to Klein's notions of introjection, incorporation, projection is the role of phantasy. And the crucial debate around Klein's work revolves on the question: what happens when a clear distinction between identity and object cannot be maintained? Or, to put this in another way, how can incorporation, for instance, be the foundation of identity when it implies, by definition, a dissolution of the very separateness on which identity relies? The issue, to recall Rose again, is not whether these distinctions can or cannot be maintained but the uncertainty that emerges when they fail. In fact, what emerges as one of the most troubling implications of Klein's theories is the very status of psychoanalysis as a science. And when this is further turned into the question of whether one can or in fact, should, analyse a child, the question of psychoanalysis as science/knowledge is further braided into the question of development. Do children develop from point A to point B, or do they evolve according to a different sequence, one which throws into crisis our very idea of what a sequence should be?[24]

[24]   This point is also beautifully highlighted by Mitchell in her introduction to Klein's paper, "The Psychogenesis of Manic-depressive States." Mitchell incisively points out:

> In this major paper… Klein first formulates the idea of a depressive position. […] For Klein, the depressive position comes to incorporate and replace the same psychic centrality that Freud had accorded to the later Oedipus complex. In some ways, … it held the same place among Kleinians that the Oedipus complex held among Freudians—acceptance of the concept of a depressive position distinguishes the Kleinian psychoanalyst. Retrospectively we can that its introduction marked the beginning of a disagreement. … In place of the emphasis on libidinal stages,—oral, anal, phallic—deployed by Anna Freud and other analysts, Melanie Klein introduces a concept that presents the moment of ego organization—she substitutes a structural for a developmental notion. This facilitates making the connection between adult psychosis and infant development—a 'position' is an always available state, not something one passes through (1986: 115-116).

This observation will take us back to the infantile experience of time in Klein that we have just noted. We noted then that in contrast to a linear division into past, present and future the infant's experience of time is a random and terrifying series of comings and goings of objects/part-objects. Moreover, with reference to the process of incorporation which is constitutive of its identity, Joan Riviere, (as cited by Rose), describes the vicious circle which is the infant's/child's first apprehension of cause and effect [remember, this is a stage where the integrating power of the go is very weak] "You don't come and help and you hate me, because I am angry and devour you; yet I must hate you and devour you in order to make you help."[25] Incorporation not only takes things in, it abolishes the object. Moreover, what is lost is a persecutory object. Yet the only way of being an object is by being devoured or expelled. The child is caught in an unbearable anxiety of destroying its mother in the very act of expressing love for her. Moreover, the early psychic mechanisms are not only inherently contradictory, for Klein they are relentless. Love, reparation, comes as requirement, necessity, not as simple affect or reaction-formation to persecutory-anxieties. And the necessity emerges from Klein's theory of anxiety itself, "Each of the fixations and pathological symptoms apt to appear at successive stages of development have both a retrogressive and progressive function." Which is to say, this is not a 'developmental' paradigm in any straightforward sense. The movement is constantly in two directions—progression being threatened by the very mechanisms which move it on.

I mentioned in the introductory section the recent shift in psychoanalysis from the study of sexuality to the study of nation-states. In the final section of this chapter it is this trajectory that I will now follow through in Freud's writings as well as through the broadening of the horizon of psychoanalysis enabled by Melanie Klein, attempting thereby to draw the line from Klein to the 'postcolonial modern.'[26]

* * * * *

[25] Joan Riviere, *Developments in Psychoanalysis*, op. cit., p. 47.

[26] This is, needless to say, keeping in mind the difficulties that Klein's theories make only too evident in joining dots, or tracing 'lineage.'

In the final section of the previous chapter, I quoted at some length from Rose's essay, "Freud in the Tropics". Contrary to its popular image, we saw that Rose argues here that Freud's infamous *Totem and Taboo* can just as much be read as a critique of 'Western' racial/cultural authority. She also teases out in meticulous detail the intricate underlying connections in the text between Freud's engagement with non-Western belief-systems and the question—what is a child? More specifically, instead of a linear stagist version of history which unproblematically assumes that non-Western cultures represent merely the childhood/infancy of the West, according to Rose the project for Freud in *Totem and Taboo* is much more ambiguous/complicated. She proposes that Freud can equally be read here as suggesting that the omnipotent, animistic world of the child can teach us something about the original meaning of primitive ritual i.e., the inherently relentless and unreasonable nature of law itself. Let us return to the essay:

> [I]n *Totem and Taboo* the law is a mystery—to its adherents, to its enforcers and to itself. …That a law should operate without reason might tell us something about the unreasonable nature of law. On this topic too the distinction between primitive and civilised man, from the opening pages of the book, immediately breaks down.
>
> […] The myth of primal murder will be Freud's way of trying to give back substance to this distinction. Instead of law's origins being unknowable, which implicates all cultures equally, they become unconscious --- it is modern man's legacy to bear the repressed history of a more primitive world (guilt is our reluctantly inherited memory of the original crime.) …But Freud knows that his thesis is 'monstrous'… He knows, that is, that you cannot ask the 'primitive' to carry the weight of what is most inscrutable and paradoxical about the law. (2003: 136-37)

Therefore the question of the origin of law leads into the nature and status of psychoanalysis as a science—is proximity to the unconscious a good or a bad thing? Does psychoanalysis/the analyst gain or lose by entering into the disorder it aims to analyse? As Freud engages with the emotions and rituals of the 'Australian aborigine,' he is lead to speculate on forms of collective life which are not defined through lineage, possessive familial continuity. He is convinced, for instance, that the denial of paternity amongst the Arunta, is not simply a matter of 'primitive' ignorance. In fact biological paternity Freud conjectures,

might actually be an obstacle to forms of being and belonging not limited to the here and now. And here Rose, citing Australian anthropologist Tony Swain, makes the most explosive point in her essay. In his book, *A Place for Strangers: Towards a History of Australian Aboriginal Being*, Swain hypothesizes that only a driven people have to mark time:

> [L]inear time was a 'fall' from place. History, associated quintessentially with the Hebrews, was something which intervened when the Israelites lost their place. ... From the moment God said to Abraham 'Leave your country' instead of their place, the Hebrews had history and a promise of land --- and *Zakhor*, remembrance [...] For Aborigines, as indeed it may have been true for the ancient Hebrews, cosmic time emerged with the breaking of a connection between a land and its people. (cited in Rose, 2003: 135)

So it is only when the earth has been plundered by the violence of colonial contact does power come to reside in the sky.[27] And this leads us back, in turn, not only to the fact that 'developmental' stories never follow straight lines but also that, 'our contemporary itself may be radically plural.' (Dipesh Chakraborty, 2001: 88) Indeed going back to Chakraborty's book cited in the last chapter, we may recall that this is

---

[27] We will carry this point further through Partha Chatterjee's analytical distinction between the three types of overseas European empires that came to be globally established in the nineteenth century: the white settler colonies, most prominently of the North Atlantic seaboard, the plantation colonies of Brazil, the Caribbean etc. and the third type established through territorial conquest in South, Southeast Asia and Africa. (2012: 50-51) Israel, the latest white settler colony in Asia, fits the first type. The analytical distinction is critical because the actual everyday practices of government and constitutional principles would vary enormously between the first two and the third. The question of law/legality would additionally be central to these distinctions. In fact the unique achievement, if we may call it that, of the British ideology of empire was the way it was able to represent its control over/possession of overseas territories not as tyrannical rule or founded on violence but as entirely consistent with the requirements of liberty. In fact Chatterjee's larger contention in this path breaking book is that it is the evolving practices of imperial power, especially in Asia and Africa, that most profoundly shaped the very form of the modern state in Europe and America as we know it today. It is in the theatre of the Orient that Europe would hone/discover the ideologies and institutions that would enable it to construct this dual structure: of liberalism at home and authoritarian rule in the colony. See especially for this the chapter titled, "For the Happiness of Mankind," where Chatterjee lays put the implications of Bentham's two senses of the norm, pp. 159-184.

one way of describing the initiative of the *Subaltern Studies* collective in India: to account for the many idioms that constitute the domain of the 'political' in the postcolonial world, where the homogeneous time of secular history co-exists seamlessly with the ['primitive'] world of gods and spirits.

I will now run these ideas, on heterogeneous time and the formation of collectivities, in two directions. On one hand, as an example of the interrogation of the homogeneous time of the classical nation-state, I will draw on the work of Partha Chatterjee. To my mind the idea of the *heterogeneous* time of the postcolonial nation-state that he has been developing in his current work, and especially as this is woven into his idea of 'political society' (as opposed to 'civil society') as the representative social formation of 'postcolonial modernity,' is the most challenging development of the early impetus of *Subaltern Studies*. [Chatterjee of course borrows the term 'political society' from Gramsci.] On the other hand, I will read closely some of Freud's own writings on the nature and formation of collectivities. As has been commented on already, along with his notion of the unconscious and infantile sexuality, it was Freud's concept of 'the group' or 'the mass' (the 'mob')—or actually, his attempt to understand how one changed into the other—that was so unsettling. In the final analysis, then, this is the conversation that challenges me most at present—between political theory and psychoanalysis—and as the intersection of the two enriches a reading of cinema.

Chatterjee has debated with Benedict Anderson for over a decade now. But the essays that I especially wish to use for purposes of this chapter are "The Nation in Heterogeneous Time" and "Populations and Political Society" from his *The Politics of the Governed*[28] which bring together his reflections on the theme. Let us hear him lay out his central propositions:

> Citizenship will take on two different forms—the formal and the real. And unlike the old way … of talking about the rulers and the ruled, I will invite you to think of those who govern and those who are governed.

---

[28] Partha Chatterjee, *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World*, op. cit, pp. 3-27 & 28-52.

…Democracy today, I will insist, is not government of, by and for the people. Rather it should be seen as the politics of the governed.

… [L]et me begin by posing for you a conflict that lies at the heart of modern politics in most of the world. It is the opposition between the universal ideal of civic nationalism, based on individual freedoms and equal rights irrespective of race, language, or culture, and the particular demands of cultural identity, which call for the differential treatment of particular groups on grounds of vulnerability or backwardness or historical injustice, or indeed for numerous other reasons. This opposition … is symptomatic of the transition that occurred in modern politics in the course of the twentieth century from a conception of democratic politics grounded in the idea of popular sovereignty to one in which democratic politics is shaped by governmentality (2004: 4).

Chatterjee then points out that the most significant addition that Anderson has made to his analysis of nationhood in *Imagined Communities* is the attempt to distinguish between nationalism and the politics of ethnicity. Moreover, he underlines that Anderson does this by identifying two kinds of seriality that are produced by modern imaginings of community: the unbounded seriality of the everyday universals of modern social thought (nations, citizens, revolutionaries, intellectuals…) and the bound seriality of governmentality. And that Anderson hangs his argument about the residual goodness of nationalism and the unrelieved nastiness of ethnic politics on the kind of progressive universalist critical thought characteristic of the Enlightenment that Anderson is keen to preserve. The aspiration here is to affirm an ethical universal that does not deny the variability of human lives but rather acknowledges them as the ground on which the universal must be established. But it is this very universalism that for Chatterjee, also leads Anderson into a theoretical blind:

Anderson sees the politics of universalism as something that belongs to the very character of time in which we live. He speaks of the 'remarkable planetary spread, not merely of nationalism, but of a profoundly standardized conception of politics…" Such a conception of politics requires an understanding of the world as *one*, so that a common activity called politics can be seen to be going on *everywhere*. …[P]olitics, in this sense, inhabits the empty homogeneous time-space of modernity.

I disagree. [E]mpty homogeneous time is the time of capital. …It is not located anywhere in real space --- it is utopian. The real space of

modern life consists of heterotopia. … Time here is heterogeneous, unevenly dense. …Politics … does not mean the same thing to all people (2004: 7).

As a striking example of the tension between the homogeneous time of capital and the heterogeneous time of governmentality that shapes the postcolonial world, Chatterjee then cites, among others, the contradictions that marked certain moments in the career of Ambedkar as too he struggled to resolve the rival demands of universal citizenship on one hand and the protection of particularist rights for certain groups on the other. The impasse of the present moment for Chatterjee is that there is no available historical narrative that can resolve these contradictions. However, as terms of political justice are invented anew through the contestations between mass-democracy and class-rule, Chatterjee speculates that it is the domain of 'political society' that will decisively rewrite the language of classical liberalism. Since this is most his crucial idea, let us return to him again. Recalling the *split*, in the domain of politics (in the colonial period), between the realm of the elite and that of the peasantry that informed the early work of the *Subaltern Studies* collective, Chatterjee emphasizes that 'political society' is a much more recent formation—the product of the democratic process in India bringing under its influence the lives of subaltern classes and the resulting *new* forms of entanglement of elite and subaltern politics. This is his description:

> …[I] mean by political society and how it works … [the] politics emerging out of the developmental policies of government aimed at specific target groups. Many of these … transgress the strict lines of legality in struggling to live and work. …Yet state agencies and nongovernmental organizations cannot ignore them … since they are among thousands of similar associations whose very livelihood or habitation involve violation of the law.
>
> These groups on their part accept that their activities are often illegal… but they make a claim to habitation and livelihood as a matter of right.
>
> […] What happens then is a negotiation of these claims on a political terrain where, on one hand, governmental agencies have a public obligation to look after the poor and the underprivileged and, on the other, particular population groups receive attention from those

agencies according to calculations of political expediency. Groups in political society have to pick their way through this uncertain terrain by making a large array of connections …They often make instrumental use of the fact that they can vote … But this is possible only within a field of strategic politics. This is the stuff of democratic politics as it takes place on the ground…. (2004: 40-41)

The real stuff of democracy then, in a country like India, is neither the constitutional model of the state nor the domain of the rights-bearing bourgeois individual/citizen of 'civil society'. On the contrary, in postcolonial nation-states these are both restricted to the small enclave of the cultural elite.

The terrain of 'political society', on the other hand, is the terrain of 'populations,' a category that is the target of state-policies. 'Populations' are moreover empirical and descriptive. Further, in describing them, the postcolonial state often continues to use classificatory criteria used by colonial regimes. Thus, caste and religion, for example, continue to remain the dominant criteria for identifying communities as objects of state-policy in India. Moreover, demands that emerge from this terrain are collective/communitarian and crucially involve transformations of property and law within the existing state. However, the collectivities in question here are not 'primordial' and do not seek legitimation on these grounds. Yet they do seek to invest themselves with moral content. What is more, not only may the collectivities in question here be in implicitly competitive relationships vis-à-vis each other but they may also be imaginatively defined *in opposition* to the community of the nation.

Additionally, while groups in 'political society' only form 'for the moment,' as it were, for Chatterjee the distinct character of mobilization of collectivities in this terrain, since roughly the last three decades in India, emerges out of two very specific conditions. One is the rise to dominance of a notion of governmental performance that emphasizes welfare and protection of 'populations' (rather than citizens). [Invoking Foucault, Chatterjee calls this the 'pastoral' function of government.] The second is the widening of the arena of political mobilization itself. The resulting historical contradiction of the present is thus the resistance that the postcolonial elite encounter in their attempts to

'modernize' subaltern subjects into national citizens.[29] However, as the subaltern classes resist, and in the process transform, the modernizing project imposed upon them, they also embark on a process of internal transformation. But most importantly for Chatterjee, "in carrying out their pedagogical mission in political society, the educators— enlightened people like us—might also succeed in educating themselves. That he submits would be the most enriching and historically significant result of the encounter between modernity and democracy in most of the world" (2004: 51).

Chatterjee's explicit debt to Homi Bhabha in his conceptualization of the heterogeneous time of the nation makes it very easy for me to dovetail arguments emerging from political theory into psychoanalysis. But there is, I would argue, another thread one could tease out: between Chatterjee's idea of the heterogeneous times of the 'postcolonial modern' whose imagined futures (and, of course, possible pasts) might be radically incommensurable and the Kleinian notion of 'development'/ sequence that moves in both directions and draws, additionally, on 'atemporal' aspects of personality. History too is only changed, in parts, by new modes of seeing.

To substantively reclaim this 'psychoanalytic' debt it might be appropriate to return, in conclusion, to Freud's writings on the nature and formation of groups. The two critics who have been formative to my thinking here are Edward Said[30] and again, Jacqueline Rose.[31] Referring both to *Totem and Taboo* and *Moses and Monotheism*, Said reiterates that one can reject the flawed (?) historical arguments in both

---

[29] It is also at this interstice that Rajadhyaksha locates the new visibility/the additional responsibilities (other than storytelling) that the filmic text in Bombay has always had to carry, which then find completely new prominence in the period of its 'Bollywoodisation' (2008: 107-126)

[30] I refer, of course, to Said's brilliant reading of *Moses and Monotheism* in, *Freud and the Non-European,* London: Verso, 2003. But the questions of state-formation and psychoanalysis resonate equally powerfully in Said's work as far back as, *The Question of Palestine*, Times Books: NY, 1979.

[31] While my reference here is explicitly to *The Last Resistance*, Seagull: Calcutta, 2008 the question of Israel/Zionism has been the theme of much of Rose's work over the last few years beginning perhaps with *States of Fantasy*. In fact her, *The Question of Zion*, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005, is also a tribute to *The Question of Palestine.*

these texts while still accepting Freud's underlying thesis that there is no sociality without violence. For Freud what a 'people' have in common is a trauma. What unites them most powerfully is what they agree to hate. But in addition, Said points out, in Freud's writing there is a dimension which also suggests that as one investigates a trauma psychoanalytically, far from generating freedom, it might lead to a very different kind of fragmentation. It might be devastating and cause identities to flatten down, lead towards dogma and coercive faith. Such a fragmentation might lead (formerly oppressed) people to justifying, in their turn, the violence of the state, because the most historically attested response to trauma is to repeat it. In some ways, this is also the most stubborn and self-defeating psychic terrain, where a people can be both loving (towards themselves) and lethal (towards others). In a passionate invocation of the situation of the Middle East, Said then argues that there can be no progress without a shared recognition of pain. That all critics of Israel (Arab or Jewish) need to hold together in their minds the polar opposite emotions of empathy and rage (however reluctant the first, however legitimate the second, for the Palestinians).

Rose carries forward this dialogue with Freud (and Said) as she re-visits the trajectory of Freud's writings, from *Mass Psychology* to *The Future of an Illusion* to *Moses the Man*. She points out that Freud was faced with two radically different concepts of nationalism in his time: an expansionist German nationalism and the nationalism of a dispossessed people. Insistently underlining that Auschwitz should not be monumentalized, Rose points out that the signifier 'Palestine,' was as much a phantom of psychoanalysis as the infamous 'Australian aborigine.' [The importance of sustaining ambivalence that Said invokes of course resonates directly with the 'primitive' ambivalence of *Totem and Taboo*.]

But Rose also traces Freud's writings on the 'group' back to his crucial paper on "Narcissism."[32] Here she points out that Freud's discovery that the subject could be her/his own love-object not only challenged his earlier distinction between self and other, but it also brought him to confront the question: if not for the satisfaction of sexual drives, how

---

[32] I refer here especially to the chapter, "Mass Psychology," *The Last Resistance*, op. cit, pp. 62-92.

and why do we connect to others? Here, Freud's answer is that what we most yearn for is to be recognised, acknowledged; that we need others to fashion ourselves. She cites Freud on the process of identification that happens here:

> Identification […] behaves like a product of the first *oral* stage of the libido organisation in which the coveted, treasured object was incorporated by eating and annihilated in the process (2008: 63).

Moreover, identification is ruthless; we devour those we wish to be. Rose points out that it is central to Freud's thinking on the topic that what binds people together, for better or worse, is their commitment to an internal ideal. Further, since we are all narcissists, we will only give up our self-love if there is something or someone we can put in the same place; something that makes us feel good about ourselves. Additionally, Freud's originality in his thinking on this topic is his insight that even while part of a group, we feel we are a cut above the rest. Rivalrous hostility is integral to the very formation of the group. More chillingly, the two groups that are the objects of Freud's analysis are the army and the church. Thus in the face of the randomness and helplessness of our lives, religion, for instance, soothes our narcissism by suggesting that we are protected even when we are unaware.

So not only does Freud place murder at the origin of the group, but by making Moses into an Egyptian (/a non-Jew) in *Moses the Man*, he also suggests that identity, while necessary, is always provisional. Most importantly, as Rose so eloquently puts it, Freud's insights on collectivities, right from *Totem and Taboo* to *Moses and Monotheism* pose the question: "how do you save a people both from the hatred of others *and* from themselves" (2008: 87)?[33]

We have especially highlighted in this section Partha Chatterjee's idea of the heterogeneous time of the 'postcolonial modern'. Or, to recall his formulation from an earlier context, the 'passive revolution' that resulted from the marriage between Enlightenment Reason and metropolitan capital. Further the imperial practices developed in the nineteenth century, he has proposed, would amount to a completely new educational project of normalization or disciplining in the

---

[33] She has further developed these ideas in *Proust among the Nations: From Dreyfus to the Middle East*, Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 2011.

Orient. The techniques used to accomplish this would range between a pedagogy of violence, (/use of imperial force whenever deemed necessary), and a pedagogy of culture (2012: 187). In fact his entire oeuvre is, in a way, to theorize the systemic violence of our 'everyday'. Consequently for Chatterjee, evolving new intellectual and theoretical frameworks is imperative to any notion of post-colonial resistance. This journey then takes him to unexpected destinations such as football and popular theatre and, in effect, to fundamentally re-think the idea of 'resistance' itself. Taking issue with Sumit Sarkar's evaluation of the 'failure' of revolutionary terrorism in early twentieth-century Bengal, for instance, Chatterjee squarely poses the question:

> This assessment is entirely reasonable if one takes revolutionary terrorism as one particular organized form of nationalist struggle contending with other forms such as liberal constitutionalism and Gandhian noncooperation or agrarian agitation. [...] Modern Indian historiography has, for the most part, followed that framework by continuing to evaluate the relative successes and failures of those competing tendencies. But if all these movements are regarded as components of a single formation of anticolonial connections, then any judgment on 'successes and failures' would no longer be so straightforward. Thus even the apparent failure of one tendency, judged by its own terms, might produce the effect, through unforeseen discursive possibilities, of enabling the success of another tendency (2012: 283).

Chatterjee then goes on to show us how popular culture is almost completely indiscriminate in the way it judges between/remembers ideological differences among events/movements/heroes/martyrs. (2012: 222-310). While Chatterjee here directly acknowledges his debt to the path breaking work of Benedict Anderson on the crucial role of imagination in forging large anonymous communities, in keeping with the larger theme of my book I, however, wish to place him beside Freud.

A 'symptom', (in the psychoanalytical sense), similarly never has a one-on-one correspondence with the unconscious psychic scars from which it erupts. Moreover, a dream, as Freud states in the first chapter of his epoch-making *The Interpretation of Dreams*, "appears as a reaction to everything that is simultaneously present and active in the sleeping psyche" (1898: 176). Dream-analysis, therefore, always carries a certain

uncertainty, involves a necessary risk. Freud writes a little later, "Indeed, the dream-thoughts we come upon as we interpret cannot in general but remain without closure, spinning out on all sides into the web-like fabric of our thoughts" (1898: 341). Using Freud's notion of the 'uncanny,' I will now read *the* most famous children's film of Satyajit Ray, *Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne*, as a 'symptom' of the turbulence of Bengal in 1968. As I will show, *Goopy Gyne* also registers '1968' not in the idiom of conventional political theory/'Naxalbari'. Rather, it is on the 'manifest' level simply an adventure set in a magical kingdom, where ghosts and wizards play wondrous games…

An 'other' Road to An 'other' Ray or, the Psychoanalytic Childhood and Bengal

ψ

"Our conclusion could then be stated thus—an uncanny experience occurs either when infantile complexes which have been repressed are once more revived by some impression, or when primitive beliefs which have been surmounted seem once more to be confirmed. When we consider that primitive beliefs are most intimately connected with infantile complexes, and are, in fact, based on them, we shall not be greatly astonished to find that the distinction is often a hazy one."

—Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny" (1919)

This chapter is organized into two sections. The first section derives in large measure from a paper on Ray that was written some years ago (when the project was first conceived), but whose broad arguments, I believe, still hold.[1] Undoubtedly, that paper has grown as my reading of Ray has travelled in the light of Melanie Klein. Additionally, the paper has developed in another direction, as my acquaintance with the social history of modern Bengal has deepened. Social histories of the 'new' family in India, for instance, are still emerging. So also histories of childhood in the non-west, which is an area that is still massively under-researched.[2] But as my own engagement with the 'Bengali modern' has

---

[1] Ajanta Sircar, "An'other' Road to An'other' Ray." op. cit.

[2] I have indicated some of this new work in the body of the text. But there is, additionally, a vast amount of material that has served as my archive: popular Bengali periodicals of the time. The National Library, Kolkata, has been an invaluable resource

strengthened, I hope it has added substance to my earlier reading of Ray.

The second section is structured around my engagement with some seminal pieces of Ray-criticism. The aim here is twofold. In the first instance, it is to continue the dialogue begun in the first chapter and distinguish my own reading of Ray from the existing 'psychoanalytic' criticism on his children's films. As we saw in the first chapter, the way in which the whole 'cultural relativism' debate has been configured in India has meant that the analytical tradition here has not given the child *theoretical* primacy. The essays I will discuss in this context are Mihir Bhattacharya's "Conditions of Visibility: People's Imagination and *Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne*" in Moinak Biswas, ed., *Apu and After: Revisiting Ray's Cinema*, Calcutta, NY & London: Seagull, 2006, pp. 140-191, and two essays by Ashis Nandy, "An Intelligent Critic's Guide to Indian Cinema" and "Satyajit Ray's Secret Guide to Exquisite Murders: Creativity, Social Criticism and the Partitioning of the Self" from *The Savage Freud*, op. cit., pp. 196-236 & 237-267, respectively.

Picking up the threads from there, the second aim is to further broaden the canvas and engage with a corpus of work that has read Ray in terms of the whole formation of the 'postcolonial modern' that is also the larger object of interest of my book. Given Ray's stellar role in the

---

for this. Needless to say, while I have read some of this material, this is an area of scholarship that is for me still 'work in progress'. However, the fact that many of these idealized notions of childhood continue into the present is evident, for instance, in the list of publications of the *Shishu Sahitya Parishat*. Additionally, I must mention here an entire dossier on Ray in Bengali, including many special issues in leading literary journals such as *Desh*, which was put together by the Visual Archives Library of the CSSSC. Among many other acts of kindness and help throughout the writing of this manuscript, in his [former] capacity as chief mentor of the same Prof. Gautam Bhadra, (assisted by Shri Kaliprosad Bose), made this whole collection available to me. Mention must also be made here of scholars on education like Prof. Krishna Kumar and policy documents such as the Yash Pal Report, *Learning Without Burden*. More recently, 2006 saw the release of four important sets of data pertaining to children in India: the *National Sample Survey*, 6th round; the *National Family Health Survey*, Round 3; *FOCUS on children under six* and the *ASER Report 2006*, by the NGO, *Pratham*. These have since been complemented by the *National Survey on Child Abuse*, virtually the first of its kind. But in general, the areas of children and education have not been a priority in any sense in India. Finally, for the generosity with which he has also always given of his time and scholarship in the area, I am most delighted to acknowledge here the many incisive comments offered by Prof. Gautum Bhadra.

landscape of Indian cinema, scholars across the board have engaged with the Ray-film and assessed his contribution to the forging of a 'national' aesthetic. The two scholars whose work on Ray I will engage with in this regard are Ashish Rajadhyaksha and Ravi Vasudevan. The theoretical frameworks here are explicitly not psychoanalysis. However through their insights into Ray-films and the critical concepts of cinematic 'realism' and melodrama respectively, they have enriched ideas of textuality and narrative form in ways that have critical bearing on concepts of citizenship/politics in the East. As I engage with *this* larger body of work, I will underline again not only how psychoanalysis itself has moved beyond Freud but also how a conversation between political theory and psychoanalysis might provide yet another avenue to imagine ideas of citizenship in the postcolonial world.

An 'other' Road to An 'other' Ray:

This section will present a close reading of, especially, the first in the fantasy films of Satyajit Ray, i.e., the Goopy-Bagha trilogy of *Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne/The Adventures of Goopy and Bagha* (1969),[3] *Hirok Rajar Deshe/In the Kingdom of Diamonds* (1980) and *Goopy Bagha Phire Elo/The Return of Goopy and Bagha* (1991). As I have tried to indicate through the title , I hope it will not merely add to the huge already-existing body of Ray-criticism but be both, one more and one *different*—an 'other'. My aim, therefore, is to see Ray not only through *Pather Panchali/Song of the Little Road* as the great neo-realist 'auteur' which he undoubtedly was, but also as Ray emerges from the fantasy world that he created for children, a world of magic and adventure to which also Satyajit Ray was deeply committed.[4]

---

[3] It is a mark of its richness that the film was again screened at the just-concluded 18th International Children's Film Festival of India, Nov. 14-21st, 2013, Hyderabad.

[4] I especially wish to mention here Marina Warner, *From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairy Tales and their Tellers*, London: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1996. My reading of this book as well as my acquaintance with Warner's work, in general, has not only immeasurably enriched my understanding of this genre but the book has almost been the mould on which I have then cast my Ray-analysis. The point to note at the outset is that Warner's framework is also not overtly psychoanalysis. But the range and the ambition of the book are formidable. Warner's founding proposition is that the possibilities of

Among other things, then, my reading of Ray is also meditation on 'fantasy', in the many and loaded resonances that the concept evokes— 'fantasy' as it refers to the world of the imagination, especially in the incarnation it was given by nineteenth-century German philosophy; 'phantasy' with a 'ph' as used in psychoanalytic theory to refer to the desires and the activity of the unconscious mind as it erupts through dreams/jokes and a whole range of other phenomena; 'fantasy' as hallucination; fantasy as *false*-belief and finally, also of 'fantasy' as utopian aspiration.

---

change that fairy-tales offer, through their improbable plots, sudden swerves of destiny or fantastic metamorphoses of shapes, are not to be dismissed as foolish. Beginning with the collection which inaugurates the fairy-tale as a genre for children in Europe as her epicenter, Charles Perrault's *Histoires ou contes du temps passé* (1697), she goes on to close-read the historical contexts and themes/variations/diffusion of an astonishing variety of fairy-tales. (Warner is also well aware of the possible significance of ancient Eastern collections such as the *Panchatantra* or *The Arabian Nights* in providing inspiration for these). Most crucially however, for Warner the fairy-tale tradition *as a whole*, is especially allied to women in terms of both authorship as well as audience. She lays out the aim and scope of her magisterial work thus:

> [T]hese are stories with staying power, as their antiquity shows, because the meanings they generate are themselves magical shape-lifters, dancing to the needs of their audience.
> The first half of the book looks at storytelling, at its practitioners and images, in art, legend and history from the prophesying enchantress who lures knights into her false paradise to the jolly old beldame, Mother Goose .... The rich and fluctuating perceptions of women's relation to fancy and fairy tale became, as my work progressed, the absolutely necessary ground on which familiar figures like Cinderella and her wicked stepmother stepped into place. Prejudices against women, especially old women and their chatter, belong in the history of fairy tales' changing status. ... I found that I was discovering a kind of fairytale origin for Mother Goose herself [...] which led me on, deeper into the character of the traditional narrator. ... [However I found that] once this imagined voice was established as legitimate for certain purposes—the instruction for the young— writers co-opted it as their own, using it as a mask for their own thoughts, their mocking games and even sedition ... .
> The second half of the book, The Tales, takes up a handful of the most familiar fairy tales themselves and, in the light of the tellers' position and interest, examines the painful rivalry and hatred between women in tales like 'Cinderella' and 'the Sleeping Beauty.' Somewhat like the pardon letters which criminals wrote from prison in the sixteenth century, in which they tried to move the king to a reprieve by describing their plight ... the violence in fairy tales about family strife can often be read as offering a plea of extenuating circumstances. (pp.xix-xx)

So the defining 'other' against which all the different senses of the term 'fantasy' operate is a certain notion of the 'real'/the 'rational'. With the Enlightenment, as the last shreds of superstition and religion seemed to retreat into the past, 'fantasy' was the 'other' of the Enlightenment consciousness; an outmoded reference to a world of gods and spirits, ignorance and irrational belief, that the Enlightenment sought to debunk through its supreme confidence in the human mind and its capacity for rational thought. And yet, as a startling example of psychoanalytic notion of 'the return of the repressed', in the same stroke as Enlightenment rationality sought to dismiss the world of ghosts and spirits as mere figments of human imagination, the 'marvellous' and the belief in the supernatural returned with a vengeance to haunt the popular-cultures of post-Enlightenment Western Europe. Moreover as an exciting body of cultural theory is now documenting, this entire 'culture of enchantment' has particular relevance to the history of cinema. I will quote at some length now from an essay by Laura Mulvey, "Netherworlds and the Unconscious: Oedipus and *Blue Velvet*" (1996: 137-154). Pointing out this contradiction between the Enlightenment impetus on rationality and the persistent fascination for the supernatural in 18th century England, Mulvey reminds us that it was very much in the midst of the Augustan ideals of restraint, order and decorum that the Gothic novel of Horace Walpole or the 'fantastic' art of Sade or Goya or the horror fiction emerge. Tracing almost a 'genealogy' of the popular taste for phantasmagorias in England, Mulvey says:

> The Enlightenment, illuminating the dark relics of religious belief with science and reason, banished ghosts and other terrifying manifestations only to have them crowd back through the culture of the Gothic. So, just as the old beliefs of the spirit world were swept away, their forms materialised onto magic lantern screens. The Gothic is closely tied to the protocinematic. Just after Matthew Lewis had become a best-selling author with the publication of *The Monk* in 1795, the Belgian showman Etienne Robertson was entertaining Paris with his phantasmagorias [...] The lineage then leads to the London showman, John Maskeylene, who understood the public taste for such spectacles and opened the Egyptian Hall in London as a permanent magic theatre... And it was Georges Melies's visit to the Egyptian Hall that led him to bring together the different strands in his trick films. Christian Metz [too has] identified

the fascination with illusion as specific to cinema. [As] suspension of disbelief... 'I know these images are not real, but all the same...' And it was as Freud was working on *The Interpretation of Dreams* that the first film projection took place in 1895. Just as Freud extended rational investigation to the world of dreams, they returned to the world of the movie screen with the phantasmatic stories and scenarios that can recreate the 'marvellous and make any hybrid monster come to life (1996: 149-150).

To bring Mulvey 'home' as it were, her argument about the paradoxical belief in 'reason' and ghosts, rational order as well as irrational superstition in post-Enlightenment England, seems uncannily close to a description of the world of Upendrakishore Raychowdhuri (1863-1915), a printer/publisher as well as writer of children's fiction in Bengal who embraced the 'rationality' of the Brahmo Samaj explicitly as an act of defiance against orthodox Hinduism in his youth but nonetheless went on to write, indirectly, the 'original' script of one of the finest fantasy-films ever produced by Indian cinema-*Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne* (written by Upendrakishore in 1914, film version released by Satyajit Ray in 1969). This is, of course, apart from also writing 'children's editions' of both the *Ramayan* as well as the *Mahabharat*.

Indeed, the two contrary strains signified by 'science'/'rationality' and the world of the 'fantastic' reach their apotheosis in Upendrakishore's son, Sukumar Ray (1887-1923). Popularly regarded as the greatest writer of children's fiction in Bengal ever, Sukumar Ray, a B.Sc. Honours graduate from Presidency College, who went on to become the first Indian to be a Fellow of the Royal Society of Photographers, similarly not only established his famous 'Nonsense Club' already in his undergraduate years but also wrote, among many others, classics such as *Abol Tabol* and *Ha Ja Ba Ra La*. Of course, the 'fantasy' world of Sukumar Ray also draws on another tradition of the critique of Enlightenment rationality as represented not only by Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll, Sukumar's acknowledged 'masters', but has a lineage going back to the satires of Jonathan Swift and continues into the present through one of the most beautifully written 'children's-fantasy' of our times, Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*.

So Satyajit Ray was clearly very aware of the potential afforded by this almost alchemical mixture of 'fantasy' and 'children's fiction' in

terms of being able to say things that might not be overtly expressed within a 'realist' mode of narration. In fact when Ray decided to revive *Sandesh* in 1962, the children's magazine started by Upendrakishore in 1913 and subsequently edited by Sukumar, one of his first forays into the world of children's fiction was through a translation of Edward Lear. And while speaking of *Hirok Rajar Deshe*, Ray actually argued that 'fantasy' bears a direct, inverted relationship to 'politics', "In *fantasy* one can be forthright...but if you're dealing with contemporary characters you can be articulate only upto a point because of censorship. You simply cannot attack the party in power." (cited in Andrew Robinson, *Satyajit Ray: The Inner Eye*, 1990, p. 188, emphasis mine) But of course as Freud has shown us, there is no such one-to-one referencing between 'fantasy'/dreams and 'reality'. Instead, the content of a dream is one that has already been censored—displaced/condensed—in order for repressed traumas of the unconscious to be able to surface to the conscious mind at all.

Indeed for Jacques Lacan, the French psychoanalyst considered to be the most illustrious intellectual heir of Freud, narrative is itself a primordial fantasy. Lacan argues that we tell ourselves stories to give an imaginary sense of coherence to our lives; arrange things in a temporal cause-effect fashion to cover over the traumatic 'lack'/the lost-object-petit-a that actually marks the place of the subject. Somewhat analogous to the Derridean notion of 'writing' as trace, as something that has to be written and then erased/written over, Lacan too denotes the subject through the [S] suggesting that what is in me more than myself, the so-called 'essence' of the subject, is not some positive ontological *thing* but only a phantasmatic support with which the subject identifies and which gives an imagined sense of consistency to her/his life. And as is evident, by now we have already made the transition from 'fantasy' in its commonsensical usage to 'phantasy' with the 'ph'.

Drawing on Lacan's notion of phantasy, the cultural theorist Slavoj Zizek makes a further break with the Althusserain position which defines 'ideology' as mere 'false consciousness'. Just as in the Lacanian logic the sleeping subject awakens to escape the reality of the desire he encounters in his dream, the Lacanian Real, so too in the social realm, ideological fantasy does not simply provide an 'escape from reality'. Rather, it masks the traumatic social antagonism which cannot be

symbolised, i.e. rather than providing the positive ground, for Zizek 'reality' is itself grounded on a phantasmatic support. According to Zizek (1997), then it is '*fantasy*' that teaches us how and what to desire in the 'real' world.

To illustrate Zizek's point I want to narrate a minor personal incident. A friend of mine, with whom I often discuss my work, suddenly told me one day that I should cut my hair. Obviously, had I thought it to be an outright case of male chauvinism I would have simply ignored the comment. From acquaintance over time, however, I did not think so. So I asked him why he had suddenly said what he had. He told me then that he thought I was reasonably well informed. And that all 'intellectual' women, (especially in India), have short hair. That being so he was now suggesting that I cut my hair short too. So, it had actually been as a complimentary gesture that he had asked me to change my hairstyle! What this very trivial incident shows, of course, is that even our smallest and most 'natural' seeming interactions are propped up by phantasy-supports. As Zizek says, "[F]antasy does not simply realise a desire in a hallucinatory way: rather... [it] constitutes our desire, provides its co-ordinates... that is to say, it provides a 'schema' according to which certain positive objects in reality can function as objects of desire filling in the empty places opened up by the formal symbolic structure" (1997: 7). And within the co-ordinates of the fantasy-structure on which my friend was drawing, being 'intellectual' (for a woman) was integrally related to short hair so that even as he thought my writing to be not-too-bad he was not being able to *see* me as such, a conflict in his mind strong enough to be overtly articulated through the suggestion: "You know, why don't you cut your hair short, then you can *really* be an intellectual."

To relate this continuous traffic between 'reality' and its phantasy-support to our earlier discussion of ghosts and nonsense-rhymes, it is in the writings of Sigmund Freud that we find a bridge across the whole range of such phenomena—from slips-of-tongue to jokes and bungled actions, phenomena that Freud classified under 'psychopathologies of the everyday', to more extreme 'abnormalities' such as neuroses and hysteria, and right across, into the world of artistic creativity. In the article cited earlier, Laura Mulvey proposes that just as the Enlightenment sought to sweep away the world of spirits and ghosts in the clear light of rational knowledge so the belief in the supernatural or the 'irrational'

now came to be re-located within the interiority of the human mind, as 'mental disorders'.[5] Similarly Terry Castle observes, "The rationalists did not so much negate the traditional spirit world as displace it into a realm of psychology. Ghosts were not exorcised...only internalized and reinterpreted as hallucinatory thoughts" Cited in Mulvey, 1996: 149) "From this perspective," for Mulvey, "Freud's theory of the unconscious appears on the intellectual scene as the final act of the Enlightenment and psychoanalysis, from this perspective, constitutes a rational theory of the irrational, which could bring human fears, anxieties and credulities into a framework of articulate explanation. Even dreams could be translated out of their enigmatic language, interpreted and revealed to 'make sense" (1996: 146).

Psychoanalytic theory defines as 'fetishism' this ability of the human mind to simultaneously maintain contradictory ideas, the structure of feeling which says 'I know very well it is not true, but all the same I believe...', a structure of feeling which, according to Christian Metz, is a particularly apt description of the suspension of disbelief characteristic of the spectator of the cinema. It was indeed on this contradiction between knowledge and suspension of disbelief on which the earliest showmen played, as they relocated the world of ghosts on their mechanical screens. With this of course we come right onto our Goopy-Bagha films because we have in them the master neo-realist, the director who revolutionised film-making in India by shooting in 'real light'/'real rain', using 'real people', exploiting every trick of *mise en scene* to conjure a world of ghosts and magic.[6]

---

[5] We are obviously reminded here of Foucault's *Madness and Civilisation: The Birth of Insanity in the Age of Reason*.

[6] In her haunting analysis on cinema's encounters with new media such as the video (/the electronic) and the DVD (the digital), Laura Mulvey in *Death 24 X a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image*, (2006), rpt. London: Reakton Books, 2012, has used the idea of fetishism to describe the ways in which the experience of film-watching has been completely transformed in the [current] technological context. In the tension between stillness and the moving image, the arrival of new [electronic/digital] technologies has meant that ~~film's~~ [cinema's] hidden stillness has come to the fore. To understand the philosophical significance of the new mechanisms of delay made available by the new media, she uses both Freud's concept of deferred action (*nachttraglicheit*) as well as Freud's essay, 'The Uncanny' (1919), but gives the concept a breathtakingly original reading from the much more conventional way in which I have used it in this section.

To recall a point made earlier, Ashish Rajadhyaksha (1987) and Geeta Kapur (1987), in their work on the 'mythologicals' and the 'saint-films', respectively, have done fine readings of the way in which the very

---

Especially pertinent to our discussion here is the chapter, "Uncertainty: Natural Magic and the Art of Deception," pp. 33-53. We will return to this essay, but Mulvey perceptively points out here that the cinema's ancestry consists of two contradictory strains. While its indexical nature/imprint of 'reality' comes from the tradition of the camera obscura, its movement comes from the tradition of optical illusions that exploit a peculiar ability of the human eye to deceive the mind. Carrying forward her arguments in the essay quoted earlier in this section, she outlines here the ways in which this human credulity was exploited by a whole tradition of illusionists in the aftermath of the Enlightenment, even when the sacred was on the retreat. For Freud, needless to say, the experience of the uncanny was related ultimately to that most rational of fears: death, the stillness that lies 'beyond the pleasure principle.' In a painstaking reading of Freud's essay and his dialogue with Wilhelm Jentsch, she then maps both the differences as well as the overlaps between their ideas on the 'uncanny.' In a brilliant move, she subsequently brings them into dialogue through the idea of the 'technological uncanny,' in this instance, the cinema, which similarly plays on the uncertainty between animate and inanimate through its play on movement and stillness:

> The uncertainty of phantasmagoria also suggests various ways in which Freud's and Jentsch's differing approaches… might be brought into dialogue. First of all, Jentsch's uncanny of 'the new and unfamiliar' leads to the disorientation caused by a 'technological uncanny.' The most rational mind experiences uncertainty when faced with an illusion that is, if only, momentarily, inexplicable. … It is instantaneous and produced by a particular encounter. Jentsch's argument then meets Freud's uncanny, the persistence in the human mind of belief in the supernatural and the return of the dead. To bring the two sides together: archaic beliefs and superstition are able to return within the popular cultures of illusion that are not only disorienting but also exploit this particular repressed fear of the dead. As new technologies are often outside popular understanding when they first appear, the most advanced scientific developments can, paradoxically, enable and revive irrational and superstitious beliefs in an animate world.

> […]

> 'The Uncanny' was written in 1919, when many of the bereaved attempted to 'reach the other side' after the appalling loss of life during World War I. But cultures of and around death were deeply ingrained in the nineteenth century.

> […]

> [With photography], the uncanny of the phantasmagoria … in which technology and lingering superstition had been so closely entwined, was recast in rather different terms. The photograph actually preserved, mechanically, a moment of life stopped and then held in perpetuity.

technology of cinema in India, in the context of the *swadeshi* with its impetus to recover a lost 'Indian tradition', used an entire gamut of trick-effects to 'realistically' re-create on screen the 'miraculous' world of Indian mythology as an act of *nationalist* self-assertion. Philosophically, such a take on Enlightenment 'rationality' as it is now possible for us to see, points to a central contradiction within the Enlightenment programme itself where even as it promised universal self-determination it was also the obverse of the entire project of the colonisation of the non-West. As Zizek points us, this internal contradiction is evident within Immanuel Kant's famous essay on the Enlightenment itself where, even as Kant passionately argues for independent/critical thinking, he finally says 'but obey'! (1989: 80)

The crucial difference between Phalke's films and the Goopy-Bagha trilogy is, however, that rather than being situated within a discourse of anticolonial nationalism or 'Indian history', the world of magic is invoked by Ray through the label of 'children's films'. I indicated earlier that when I began researching on Ray, I was interested primarily to see how the Goopy-Bagha films might provide me an entry-point into psychoanalysis, given the obvious parallels between the psychoanalytic technique of dream-interpretation and an interpretation of fantasy. Gradually, however, it seemed necessary to also look more closely at Ray's concept of the 'child', i.e. the category of the '*non-adult*' insofar as it maps onto Ray's concept of 'fantasy' i.e. the category of the '*not-real*'/the imagined/the utopian (?). Moreover, given my entry-point through psychoanalysis, it is also both very useful as well as hugely significant that whereas in his 'adult' films Ray almost always borrowed his narratives—from Tagore/Bibhutibhushan/etc.—it was in the genre

---

[…]

If the contemporary response to the Lumiere films aligns them on the side of Freud's ghostly uncanny, Melies transfers to cinema many characteristics associated with Jentsch's uncanny, exploiting technological novelty… (2012: 42-46)

Moreover, bringing this entire debate on the uncanny vis-à-vis cinema into a context which generates enormous resonance with Satyajit Ray's, Mulvey then presents a close-reading of two landmark essays on realism and photography/cinema in the Western context, Bazin's, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," 1945 and Barthes' *Camera Lucida*, (1970), in the chapter, "The Index and the Uncanny: Life and Death in the Photograph," pp. 54-66.

of *children's fiction*[7] that he directly authored his own stories, spoke unambiguously in his own voice. (Of course one could reconstruct this 'authorial voice' even in cases where Ray borrowed stories from other writers, given the modifications Ray introduces in their narratives and so on. In fact, Ray's choice of authors is itself an important clue in this reconstruction. The point is it would be a different enterprise reconstructing 'Ray' as he speaks through Tagore, for e.g.)[8]

[7] The enormous conceptual difficulty/uncertainty of this term is powerfully established by Jacqueline Rose in, *Peter Pan*, op. cit., as she sketches in meticulous detail the many editions/authorial revisions/authors that fed into what is today considered the definitive version of J.M. Barrie's classic. (Barrie published *The Little White Bird*, a novel for adults in 1902. *Peter Pan* is one of the stories that the narrator of *LWB* tells a little boy who is addressed in the book.) See especially Rose's chapters titled, "Peter Pan and Freud" and "Peter Pan Literature for the Child," pp. 20-41 & 66-86. The whole point of Rose's path breaking analysis is to identify behind *Peter Pan* a fantasy of childhood which she traces right through the history of children's fiction:

Behind *Peter Pan* lies the desire of a man for a little boy.

[…]

…I am using desire to refer to a form of investment by the adult in child, and to the demand made by the adult on the child as a result of that investment, a demand which fixes the child and holds it in place.

[…]

The sexual act which underpins *Peter Pan* is neither act nor fantasy in the sense in which these are normally understood and wrongly opposed to each other. It is an act in which the child is used (and abused) to represent the whole problem of what sexuality is, or can be, and to hold that problem at bay (p. 4).

Rose also makes the point that precisely as Edward Lear is covered over by the fact that he wrote poems specifically designated as nonsense or Carroll's play on language seen as merely the author's eccentricity, that the two central problems—of our relationship to childhood and to language --- have traditionally been pushed to the outer limits of children's fiction. (p. 40)

[8] For the analyst, the speech of the analysand is the primary means of access into her/his psyche a fact which led Freud to evocatively characterize psychoanalysis as a 'talking cure', a cure fundamentally dependent on the almost 'magical' power of words: . Nothing takes place in a psychoanalytic treatment but an interchange of words between the patient and analyst. The patient talks...The doctor listens...Words were originally magic and to this day words have retained much of their ancient magical power. By words one can make another blissfully happy or drive him to despair...words provoke affects and are in general the means of mutual influence among men [Standard Edition of complete works, Vol. 1, p. 41].

But as we shift our emphasis from a theoretical discussion on 'fantasy' to an analysis of Ray's concept of childhood/the world of the 'child—reader/viewer', we are confronted with some immediate methodological problems. Ray's children's writings span three decades—a vast amount of material that I still need to look into. As an entry-point into Ray's concept of the 'child' however, and for the purposes of this essay, I have used a volume of Ray's children's fiction brought out by Ananda Publishers, Calcutta, to commemorate his seventieth birthday, *Shera Satyajit* (Satyajit, the Master Storyteller, 1991). I find this volume particularly useful for my purpose because this is a collection of children's fiction that Ray himself selected from among his writings of thirty years. And to have such an author-made selection, with the author himself telling us what he thinks were his best, (Ray also chose the title of the volume), is an unusually self-conscious gesture.

Shera Satyajit begins with *Jokhon Choto Chilam* (*When I was a Child*, 1981), a long essay which appeared in two parts in *Sandesh*, of Ray's recollections of his own childhood for his non-adult readership. This might be an important point for us to keep in mind because there are obviously many ways in which one can reconstruct one's past. To refer to a recent example, Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* is also a book about childhood memories, but one categorically intended for an adult readership. However, rather than beginning with *Jokhon Choto Chilam* directly, I want to approach it via a little detour.

The rest of the *Shera Satyajit* collection comprises a selection of ten stories from Ray's various short story collections, a selection of four stories from Prof. Shonku's diary, a translation of Arthur Conan Doyle, two short pieces on the shooting of *Jai Baba Felunath* and *Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne* respectively, three Feluda adventures, a collection of Mulla Nasruddin jokes and a selection of limmericks. Several of the pieces in the collection hinge on tropes of memory/recognition/of seeing 'differently' and so on. But the one piece where Ray explicitly uses the discourse of 'psychology' and places it in direct relation to childhood memories is, of course, the famous Feluda adventure, *Sonar* Kella (The Golden Fort, written in 1971, film version released in 1974). So I want for us to take a closer look at Ray's definition of 'psychology' in *Sonar Kella* first.

Interestingly, *Sonar Kella* actually begins with an exposition on geometry. As Feluda explains to his cousin Topse, 'geometry' is not something that can be compartmentalised into any one discipline. Rather, everything in life has a definite form, a well-defined shape, a 'geometry'. The point for us is to actually unravel what this 'geometry' is (quote, p. 407):

একটা চারমিনার ধরিয়ে পর পর দুটো ধোঁয়ার রিং ছেড়ে ফেলুদা বলল, 'জিয়োমেট্রির বই বলে আলাদা কিছু নেই। যে-কোনো বই-ই জিয়োমেট্রির বই হতে পারে, কারণ সমস্ত জীবনটাই জিয়োমেট্রি। লক্ষ করলি নিশ্চয়ই – ধোঁয়ার রিংটা যখন আমার মুখ থেকে বেরোল তখন ওটা ছিল পারফেক্ট সার্কল। এই সার্কল জিনিসটা কীভাবে ছড়িয়ে আছে বিশ্বব্রহ্মান্ডে সেটা একবার ভেবে দ্যাখ। তোর নিজের শরীর দ্যাখ। তোর চোখের মণিটা একটা সার্কল। এই সার্কলের সাহায্যে তুই দেখতে পাচ্ছিস আকাশের চাঁদ তারা সূর্য। এগুলোকে ফ্ল্যাটভাবে কল্পনা করলে সার্কল, আসলে গোলক – এক-একটা সলিড বুদ্বুদ, অর্থা জিয়োমেট্রি। সৌরজগতের গ্রহগুলো আবার সূর্যকে পরদক্ষিণ করছে এলিপটিক কার্ভে। এখানেও জিয়োমেট্রি। তুই যে একটু আগে জানালা দিয়ে থুক করে রাস্তায় থুতু ফেললি – অবশিষ্য ফেলো উচিত নয় – ওটা আনহাইজিনিক – নেক্সট টাইম ফেললে গাঁট্টা খাবি – ওই থুতুটা গেল কিন্তু একটা প্যারাবোলিক কার্ভে – জিয়োমেট্রি। মাকড়সার জাল জিনিসটা ভালো করে দেখেছিস কখনো? কী জটিল জিয়োমেট্রি রয়েছে তাতে জানিস? একটা সরল চতুষ্কোণ দিয়ে শুরু হয় বোনা। তারপর সেটাকে দুটো ডায়াগন্যাল টেনে চারটে ত্রিকোণে ভাগ করা হয়। তারপর সেই ডায়াগন্যাল দুটোর ইন্টারসেক্টিং পয়েন্ট থেকে শুরু হয় স্পাইরাল জাল; আর সেটাই ক্রমশঃ বাড়তে বাড়তে পুরো চতুষ্কোণটাকে ছেয়ে ফেলে। ব্যাপারটা এমন তাজ্জব যে ভাবলে কূলকিনারা পাবি না।…

This trope of 'geometry' then becomes the defining motif around which the entire process of investigation in *Sonar Kella* is woven.

This discourse of 'rationality', of a mathematical precision of forms, is then juxtaposed with a certain discourse of 'psychology.' Of course, the point of crucial importance is that the discourse of 'psychology' used here is that of 'parapsychology', very similar actually to the discourse of the 'para-normal' as used in the now-hugely-popular television series, the 'X-files' and similar to FBI agents Mulder and Scully, Ray's Feluda along with parapsychologist Dr. Hemanga Hajra, set forth to find 'the truth out there'! If we go back for a moment to the many senses

of 'fantasy' with which we began, then the crucial difference between 'psychoanalysis' and the discourse of the 'para-normal' is that whereas the entire process of analysis is about delving into the interiority of one's mind, to confront the most intimate and traumatic experiences of one's past, (as Freud might have said, 'the truth is in here'?), the discourse of the 'para-normal' completely distances this act of remembering from the personal and the everyday. In fact the 'past' that Mukul Dhar, the child-protagonist of *Sonar Kella* actually recollects, has nothing to do with his life as a middle-class child in mid-twentieth-century Calcutta at all but is the memory of another life in another time.

This gesture of distancing in *Sonar Kella* is then further reinforced through the setting of the adventure in turn-of-the century Rajasthan with its forts and peacocks, its camels and its men in ethnic Rajasthani turbans, all drawn to evoke an atmosphere that is clearly the 'other' of metropolitan Calcutta. Topse's first sight of the Jaisalmer Fort captures this sense of mystery that 'Rajasthan' is meant to connote (Quote, p. 474):

একটা স্টেশন এল – জেঠো চন্দন। আমি ব্র্যাডশ খুলে দেখলাম এটার পর থাইয়ে হামিরা, আর তার পরেই জয়সলমীর। স্টেশনে দোকান-টোকান নেই, লোকজন নেই, কুলি নেই, ফেরিওয়ালা নেই। সব মিলিয়ে মনে হয় যেন কোনো একটা অনাবিস্কৃত জায়গায় এই ট্রেনটা কেমন করে জানি এসে পড়েছে – ঠিক যেমনি করে রকেটে গিয়ে হাজির হয় চাঁদে।

এবার গাড়ি ছাড়ার মিনিটখানেক পড়েই লালমোহনবাবু উঠে পড়ে বিরাট একটা হাই তুলে বললেন, 'ফ্যান্ট্যাসটিক স্বপ্ন দেখলুম মশাই। একদল ডাকাত, গোঁফগুলো সব ভেড়োর শিঙের মতো প্যাঁচানো – তাদের আমি হিপ্নোটাইজ করে নিয়ে চলেছি একটা কেল্লার ভিতর দিয়ে। সেই কেল্লায় একটা সুড়ঙ্গ। তাই দিয়ে একটা আন্ডারগ্রাউন্ড চেম্বারে পৌঁছালুম। জানি সেখানে গুপ্তধন আছে, কিন্তু গিয়ে দেখি একটা উট বসে জিভিগেজা খাচ্ছে।'

'গজা খাচ্ছে সেটা জানলেন কী করে?' ফেলুদা জিজ্ঞেস করল। 'হাঁ করে দেখাল?'

'আরে না মশাই। স্পষ্ট দেখলুম আমার দালদার টিনটা খোলা পড়ে আছে উটের ঠিক সামনে।'

থাইয়ে হামিরা স্টেশন পেরনোর কিছুক্ষণ পরেই দূরে আবছা একটা পাহাড় চোখে পড়ল/এ-ও সেই রাজস্থানী চ্যাপটা টেবল মাউন্টেন। আমাদের ট্রেনটা মনে হল সেই পাহাড়ের দিকে যাচ্ছে। আটটা নাগাদ মনে হল পাহাড়টার উপর একটা কিছু রয়েছে।

ক্রমে বুঝতে পারলাম সেটা একটা কেল্লা। সমস্ত পাহাড়ের উপরটা

জুড়ে মুকুটের মতো বসে আছে কেল্লাটা – তার উপর সোজা গিয়ে পড়েছে ঝকঝকে পরিষ্কার সকালের ঝলমলে রোদ। আমার মুখ থেকে একটা কথা আপনা থেকেই বেরিয়ে পড়ল – 'সোনার কেল্লা!'

What happens in effect is that while the discourse of 'psycho1ogy' is still associated by Ray with 'memory'/'recollection'/'rational investigation' into one's past, it is however invoked in a manner as to suggest that as a form of knowledge, 'psychology' has nothing to do with the 'norma1' life of 'ordinary people' at all. Instead, as Feluda explains to Topse: [p. 414]

ফেলুদা বলল, 'মানুষের মনের কতগুলো বিশেষ ধরণের ধোঁয়াটে দিক নিয়ে যারা চর্চা করে তাদের বলে প্যারাসাইকোলজিস্ট। যেমন টেলিপ্যাথি। একজন লোক আরেকজন লোকের মনের কথা জেনে ফেলল। কিংবা নিজের মনের জোরে আরেকজনের চিন্তার মোড় ঘুরিয়ে দিল। অনেক সময় এমন হয় যে, তুই ঘরে বসে আছিস, হঠাৎ একজন পুরানো বন্ধুর কথা মনে পড়ল - আর ঠিক সেই মুহূর্তেই সে বন্ধু তোকে টেলিফোন করল। প্যারাসাইকোলজিস্টরা বলে যে ব্যাপারটা আকস্মিক নয়। এর পেছনে আছে টেলিপ্যাথি। আরো আছে। যেমন এক্সট্রা সেন্সরি-পারসেপশন – যাকে সংক্ষেপে বলে ই এস পী। ভবিষ্যতে কী ঘটতে যাচ্ছে সেটা আগে থেকে জেনে ফেলো। বা এই যে জাতিস্মর – পূর্বজন্মের কথা মনে পড়ে যাওয়া। এগুলো সবই হচ্ছে প্যারাসাইকোলজিস্টদের গবেষণার বিষয়।'

But this connotation of the term 'psychic' in *Sonar Kella*, as some(one)thing that is 'strange'/'abnormal' is, needless to say, the polar opposite of Freud who categorically believed that the operations of the psyche as revealed by analysis show the same underlying mechanisms in the most 'normal' aspects of the 'everyday' such as dreaming and jokes as they do in 'extreme' conditions such as neuroses and hysteria.

[T]he study of dreams is not only the best preparation for the study of neuroses, but dreams are themselves a neurotic symptom which, moreover, offers us the priceless advantage of occurring in all healthy people. Indeed, supposing all human beings were healthy, so long as they dreamt we could arrive from their dreams at almost all the discoveries which the investigation of the neuroses has led to. [. . .] once again ordinary phenomena, with little value set on them, and apparently of no practical use—like parapraxes, with which indeed they have in common the fact of occurring in healthy people [standard edition of complete works, vol. 1, pp. 111-112].

However, against Ray's conception of 'psychology' in *Sonar Kella*, let us now place Ray's recollection of his own childhood in *Jokhon Choto Chilam*. The memoirs begin with a preface:

ছেলেবেলার কোন্ ঘটনা মনে থাকবে আর কোন্টা যে চিরিকালের মতো মন থেকে মুছে যাবে সেটা আগে থেকে কেউ বলতে পারে না। মনে থাকা আর না-থাকা জিনিসটা কোনো নিয়ম মেনে চলে না। স্মৃতির রহস্য এখানেই। পাঁচ বছর বয়সে আমি চিরিকালের মতো আমার জন্মস্থান গড়পার রোডের বাড়ি ছেড়ে ভবানীপুরে চলে আসি। এই পুরানো বাড়ি থেকে নতুন বাড়ি চলে আসার দিনটা আমি বেমালুম ভুলে গেছি, কিন্তু গড়পারে থাকতে আমাদের রাঁধুনী বামনীর ছেলে হরনের বিষয়ে একটা খুব সাধারণ স্বপ্ন দেখেছিলাম সেটা আজও স্পষ্ট মনে আছে।

আমার এই স্মৃতিকথায় তাই অনেক সামান্য ঘটনার কথা আছে, যেমন আছে কিছু নামকরা লোকের পাশে-পাশে অনেক সাধারণ লোকের কথা। সাধারণ-অসাধারণের প্রভেদ বড়দের মতো করে ছোটরা করে না; তাই তাদের মেলামেশার কোনো বাছবিচার থাকে না। এ ব্যাপারে গুরুজনের বিচার যে ছোটরা বোঝে বা মানে, তাও নয়।

Childhood for Ray then is clearly an idyllic state, a stage of imaginary plenitude (the analogue of the 'mirror-phase' in psychoanalytic theory), a stage before a subject internalizes socially constructed boundaries of class/status and so on. Yet, what the rhetorical move in the preface actually enables is that by conceptualising childhood as a state of 'innocence', one which has ostensibly not been contaminated by various forms of social 'discrimination', Ray is able to argue that it is therefore of no consequence, i.e., a completely random stroke of chance, that he can remember only certain childhood incidents and not others; that there is similarly no 'discrimination' in his memory which unfairly chooses to retain only certain incidents from childhood into his adult years. It might be interesting to juxtapose again Ray's argument with Freud's observations on 'childhood memories', Freud says:

In an earlier paper I started from the fact that a person's earliest childhood memories frequently seem to have preserved what is indifferent or unimportant, whereas...no trace is found in an adult's memory of impressions dating from that time which are important, impressive and rich in affect. I had assumed from this that in childhood the selection of memories is conducted on entirely different principles which apply at the time of intellectual maturity. Careful investigation however shows

that such an assumption is unnecessary. The indifferent memories of childhood owe their existence to a process of displacement: they are substitutes in (mnemic) reproduction, for other impressions which are really significant. The memory of these significant impressions can be developed out of indifferent ones by means of psychical analysis, but a resistance prevents them from being directly reproduced. As the indifferent memories owe their preservation not to their own but to an associative relation between their content and another which is repressed, they have some claim to be called 'screen memories', the name by which I have described them [standard edition of complete works, vol. 5., p. 83].

Freud then goes on to discuss different types of 'screen memories', i.e., those where the screen memory shields an experience which has happened chronologically before the memory retained in adulthood and those where the repressed content is of an experience that is chronologically after. In either case, Freud argues that one's so-called 'childhood memories' are not genuine memory traces but later revisions, caused by a host of later influences. He concludes:

In my opinion we take the fact of infantile amnesia—the loss of memories of the first years of our life—much too easily; and we fail to look upon it as a strange riddle (...) [W]e ought to be positively astonished that the memory of later years has as a rule preserved so little of these mental processes, especially as we have every reason to suppose that these same forgotten childhood achievements have not, as might be thought, slipped away without leaving their mark on the subject's development, but have exercised a determining influence for the whole of his later life. (vol. 5, p. 86)

Still later in the explosive *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), Freud went on to not only fundamentally challenge the entire post-Romantic myth of childhood 'innocence' (read as *absence* of sexuality in children), but also traced underlying connections between 'childhood memories' and certain kinds of neurosis. Closer home, since the middle of the nineteenth-century there had emerged an intense public debate on 'sexuality' in Bengal too, a debate located at the volatile intersection of a range of concerns on nation-building, the 'new' family, new discourses of 'medicine', 'population control' and, of course, an

emerging bourgeois morality.[9] The sexuality in/of children, moreover, was an area of particular interest. The point is that in this context Ray's idealization of his childhood, his repeated insistence that it was a period of 'innocence', seem obvious instances of denial; as instances of the 'screen memories' that Freud describes.[10]

We can argue that this was so by even a cursory analysis of *Jokhon Choto Chilam*. The essay is divided into four sections—*Gadpar, Bhabanipur, Chutite Baire (Going on Vacation) and School-e (At School)*. The first and most obvious point of significance for our reading is Ray's repeated insistence that the death of his father when he was only two, and the consequent drastic change in circumstance this meant not only for the entire Ray family but especially for him and his mother, were really not traumatic events at all.

And yet, as Ray himself says at the end of the first quote, and as evident from the four 'sections' into which Ray narratively partitions his childhood, memories of the house of his birth at *Gadpar* as well as the fact of leaving this house have clearly been retained as being of very rich affective content in his adulthood. While we will not go into the essay in detail there are several similar other—from a psychoanalytic perspective—crucial omissions. For instance, the fact of Suprava Ray's widowhood is never expressly articulated. So also the undoubtedly humiliating fact that after Sukumar Ray's death mother and son had to take 'refuge' in the *maternal* uncle's home, is glossed over in the picture

---

[9] I am extremely grateful to Prof. Pradip Bose for introducing me to new research being done on the social history of the 'family' in Bengal. (Pradip Bose. ed. *Samiyiki: Purano Samayikpatrer Prabandha Sankalan*, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1998.)

[10] One of the most disturbing themes that runs through Rose's *Peter Pan*, op. cit., is similarly that the idea of a pre-Freudian state of childhood sexual innocence is a violent collective fantasy:

> *Peter Pan* is a front—a cover not as a concealer but as a vehicle—for what is most unsettling and uncertain about the relationship between adult and child. It shows innocence not as a property of childhood but as a portion of adult desire.

> […]

> *Peter Pan* lays bare a basic social and psychic structure --- that so-called perversion resides in the house of innocence, alarming not because it is alien to innocence but because it is already there. (1992: xii)

of a large and happy joint-family with uncles and aunts and cousins and holidays. Similarly, the fact that Suprava Ray was not only a widow but also a working woman, a woman who travelled almost from one end of Calcutta to the other to teach at the Sadharan Brahmo Girls High School in order to bring up her son, gets just one line of narrative space and of course as already mentioned, throughout the entire period of time till the end of Ray's school-days, this is a completely asexual childhood that we are presented with.

The point of placing *Sonar Kella* and *JCC* side-by-side in this fashion is to underline that while the readers of *Sandesh* were meant to believe that *Sonar Kella* was an 'imagined' story and *JCC* was a recollection of Ray's 'real' life, i.e. it was not a product of Ray's imagination, I am suggesting on the contrary that *JCC* is as much a fantasy as *Sonar Kella*. There are actually these fault-lines present within *JCC* itself so that although for the major part the narrative is not at all self—conscious about the fact that the 'memories' being presented might have become distorted over time, the memoir ends with a beautiful evocation of how Ballygunge Government High School had seemed very different when Ray went back to visit it some ten years after leaving school:

ইস্কুল ছাড়ার বছর দশেক পরে কোনো একটা অনুষ্ঠানে, বোধহয় পুরানো ছাত্রদের সম্মিলনে – আমাকে বালিগঞ্জ গভর্নমেন্ট হাই স্কুলে যেতে হয়েছিল। হলঘরে ঢুকে মনে হয়েছিল – এ কোথায় এলাম রে বাবা! এ ঘর কি সেই ঘর – যেটাকে এত পেল্লায় বলে মনে হত? দরজায় যে মাথা ঠেকে যায়। শুধু দরজা কেন, সবই যেন ছোট ছোট মনে হচ্ছে – বারান্দা, ক্লাসরুম, ক্লাসের বেঞ্চিগুলো।

অবশিষ্য হবে নাই বা কেন। যখন ইস্কুল ছেড়েছি তখন আমি ছিলাম পাঁচ ফুট তিন ইঞ্চি, আর এবার যে ফিরে এলাম, এখন আমি প্রায় সাড়ে ছ'ফুট। ইস্কুল তো আছে যে কে সেই, বেড়েছি শুধু আমিই। এর পরে আর ইস্কুলে ফিরে যাইনি কখনো। এটাও জানি যে যে-সব জায়গারা সাথে ছেলেবেলোর স্মৃতি জড়িয়ে থাকে, সে-সব জায়গায় নতুন করে গেলে পুরানো মজাগুলো আর ফিরে পাওয়া যায় না। আসল মজা হল স্মৃতির ভান্ডার হাতড়ে সেগুলোকে ফিরে পেতে।

I began the section proposing that rather than presenting a 'finished' reading of the Goopy-Bagha films, I would lay out my framing questions. This took us into a discussion of the mutually related notions of 'fantasy'—of 'fantasy' as it refers to the world of ghosts and magic, of 'fantasy' as 'imagination' in the post-Romantic sense of the term, and of

'phantasy' as a more technical notion as used in psychoanalytic theory to refer to the ways in which unconscious memories continuously erupt into the present. Ray's marking of the Goopy-Bagha trilogy as 'children's films', moreover, led us to place the many notions of 'fantasy' in relation to the world of the child-reader as conceived by Ray. Here, through a reading of *Sonar Kella* and *JCC*, we were led to note two things. The first that although in one of his stories Ray negotiates the discourse of 'psychology' as a trope for memory/recollection, for a 'rational' investigation into the 'past', this is however done in a way which completely distances 'psychology' from any relevance to the personal and the everyday. Second, that by drawing on a certain notion of 'innocence', Ray is also able in the genre of children's fiction to erase the distinctions between his own, i.e., his 'real' life and the world of his imagination.

However, as Zizek reminds us, the crucial point about 'innocence', the impossible gaze which is one of the defining features of a phantasmatic narrative, is that it falsely exempts its subject from her/ his concrete historical location (1997: 17-18). In this context, as we ask ourselves how the notion of 'fantasy' as the not-real is related in Ray to the world of the 'child' as the non-adult, we also need to recall another earlier observation. We noted earlier that it was primarily in the genre of 'children's fiction' that Ray wrote his own stories. And if, as we have suggested, that in the world of the child-reader *JCC* is as much a fantasy as *Sonar Kella*, might we also speculate the opposite, that *Sonar Kella* is as much a 'screen-memory' of Ray's 'real' childhood as *JCC*? And if indeed the latter is the case, i.e., it is the idealized world of the 'child' that gives us a certain vantage view of Ray, then the crucial question that would follow would be, why is it that the master neo-realist actually chooses to be 'personal' primarily in the fantasy mode. And does the concept of 'fantasy' in turn provide us any pointers to Ray's negotiation of the hugely charged category of 'history' that are not visible when Ray is approached merely through debates on 'realism'.[11]

---

[11] This is in many ways the crux of my argument, that it is the 'frame' that actually determines what is visible and what is not. In this context, it is actually amazing that in almost the entire body of existing film-criticism on Ray not only have his children's writings usually been completely ignored but even when they haven't, the genre has usually been read in terms of escapism or worse, as 'regression' from the contemporary.

In the course of his *Introductory Lectures*, Freud draws a rather beautiful analogy between an analyst and a lover. When in love, one becomes peculiarly sensitive to the smallest world and gesture of the loved one. So also for the analyst, says Freud—everything is of significance, especially all those details that one would normally consider 'small' or 'irrelevant'. In our case, the apparently 'minor' detail of whether or not Ray wrote the stories of his films and in what way did he modify those that he borrowed.

In this background the first point about *Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne* is that the 'original' story here is Upendrakishore's. And while we all know that Ray ostensibly made the first of the Goopy-Bagha trilogy because Sandip Ray also wanted his father to make children's films, as analysts we would need to ask—why did Ray choose this particular story of his grandfather? And also, why in 1969? This is more so because when we compare the film version with the original, then the modifications that Ray introduces are so substantial as to make the film almost a different story from Upendrakishore. And I also want to speculate now on this difference and its significance.

One particularly intriguing aspect of *GGBB* has to do with the protagonists themselves. If we use Feluda and Shonku as emblematic Ray protagonists, then Goopy and Bagha are clearly '*pre*-modern', belonging to the world of the 'archaic'. Unlike the former two, obviously

---

Thus, to repeat the quote, even as insightful a critic as Ashish Rajadhyaksha says:

> Ray, in direct response [to the Emergency and the new definitions of nationhood/modernity that were emerging] quit making films set in the contemporary for the next fourteen years. Withdrawing into children's stories (at least one of which, *Hirak Rajar Deshe/The Kingdom of Diamonds*, 1980, made veiled allusion to the Emergency) and period films including his trusty Tagore [...] When he returned to the contemporary...it was as 'armchair liberal'...(1993: 16).

> Representing the general view of 'realism' as the defining parameter of the Ray-movie 'fantasy' then, as a possible narrative form, or the fantasy-world of the 'child', are neither seen as 'political' nor even visible as having any significant bearing on the 'contemporary' or Ray's engagement with it. It is perhaps also equally significant that while theoretically very different from mine but nevertheless emerging from a 'psychoanalytical' perspective, the one other critic who also acknowledges this entire 'other' Ray oeuvre and places it vis-a-vis the more conventional terms in which Ray has been seen is Ashish Nandy in, *The Savage Freud and other essays on possible and retrievable selves*, Delhi: OUP, 1995

post-Enlightenment men who rely only on their powers of rational thinking Goopy and Bagha need help from the king of ghosts.

Then there is the music of the film. Ray composed the music himself and it was also among the film's major selling points. And of course music is also one of the boons that Goopy and Bagha ask for, from the king of ghosts. If we recall the story up to this point, in the film it is not only because Goopy and Bagha are bad musicians that they are banished from their respective villages, but 'music' also has connotations of class. *Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne* begins with a sequence of the *brahmins* of Amlaki, Goopy's village, the custodians of the 'classical' music, making fun of this simple and foolish son of a grocer who is jubilant even though he has been cheated by another *brahmin* from another village, another custodian of 'classical music', who has given Goopy only a useless and out-of-tune *tanpura* as payment for a day of hard labour.

In their cruel sense of fun, the brahmins advise Goopy to practice his music close to the royal palace so that the king might hear him sing. As expected, when the king does hear Goopy singing the *bhairavi rag*, he not only breaks the *tanpura* but has Goopy thrown out of the village itself. And while we are not told this directly, it is implied that Bagha has a similar story too. It is very important then that after they have received the boon of music, Goopy and Bagha choose to sing in a 'folk' idiom at the crucial musical contest in Shundi as opposed to all the other contestants. In fact, it is their 'simplicity' that touches the king's heart.

I want to place, besides this, a further point that Upendrakishore was himself a fine musician, who had been pressurised by his adopted parents into giving up his interest. And in a touching obituary to his father, Sukumar Ray narrates an incident in Upendrakishore's childhood where Upendrakishore had apparently broken his own *behala* to assure them that he was not going 'wayward'.

But perhaps the most important change that Ray introduces in Upendrakishore's story is that the rival kings of Halla and Shundi are made into twin brothers. For Freud, the experience of 'the uncanny' does not have to do merely with intellectual uncertainty. The recurrence of the same—the theme of the 'double'—is also a mechanism of denial. For Freud, what is denied is a certain vision of the female body as signifier of castration. The theme of 'the double' then, the repetition

of the same, is actually a displacement of an originary trauma.[12] I mentioned earlier that it might be important to look not only at which story Ray goes back to and what changes he introduces, but also when does he do so. And given the huge significance of '1968', discursively, I wonder if the introduction of the theme of 'the double' within Ray's version of the story might be read as symptomatic of such a register of denial.

I am especially interested in such a reading because in Ray's modification of the story, *Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne* also has to do crucially with the ('magical') power of words, and who talks and who listens. Curiously, it is in the otherwise utopian kingdom of Shundi, that the people have mysteriously lost their power of speech. But even so, the good king can 'hear' the pulse of his people. But in the kingdom of Halla, while the true king is impotent and therefore unable to hear anyway, the evil General pays no heed to the anguish of his people. And yet, the General is clearly very conscious of the power of words

---

[12] As has been used extensively in film-theory, in this essay Freud dwells at length on the theme of the double, its treatment by Otto Rank as well as the specific condition under which such a doubling can give rise to the uncanny feeling. Here are the introductory ruminations:

We must … [select] those themes of uncanniness which are most prominent, and [see] whether they too can be traced back to infantile sources. These themes are all concerned with the phenomenon of the 'double' which appears in every shape and in every degree of development. Thus we have characters who are considered identical because they loo alike … Or …the subject identifies himself with someone else …. [so that] there is a doubling, dividing and interchanging of the self.

[…]

… Such ideas, (/the reference here is to death masks of Ancient Egypt), however, have sprung from the soil of unbounded self-love, from the primary narcissim which dominates the mind of the child and of primitive man. But when this stage has been surmounted, the 'double' reverses its aspect. From having been an assurance of immortality, it becomes the uncanny harbinger of death.

[...]

….. When all is said and done, the quality of uncanniness can only come from the fact of the 'double' being a creation dating back to a very early mental stage, long since surmounted – a stage, incidentally, at which it wore a more friendly aspect. The 'double' has become a thing of terror, just as, after the collapse of their religion, the gods turned into demons. (Std. Ed., Vol. 17, p. 234-35)

because he instructs his magician, Barfi, to devise a potion that will banish Shundi's curse. As he tells Barfi, silence is much more dangerous for a ruler. Words provide people the cathartic outlet for their anger/ dissatisfaction.

To bring these disparate strands of homage to the 'archaic', the play on class, the theme of 'the double' etc. under the overarching umbrella of 'fantasy' and its location within a specifically non-adult world in Satyajit Ray, let us recall that one of the major charges Ray has faced from the critical establishment in recent times is that of being the non-political filmmaker, Rajadhyaksha's 'armchair liberal.' And undoubtedly the Ray-aesthetic differed dramatically from his avant-garde contemporary, Ritwik Ghatak. Yet part of the aim of this essay has been to suggest that the frames we use already determine what we see. And as we move away from the general obsession with Ray's 'realism' and specifically as we approach Ray through psychoanalysis, a different Ray-world emerges. To read Ray politically, then, I would argue that we, perhaps, need to use different frames.

It is well documented that Ray had little sympathy for the emerging 'new' Indian cinema. What is also striking is that 'avant-gardism' for Ray was synonymous with permissive sex/unbridled 'Westernisation':

> I do not imply that all the new European film makers are without talent, but I do seriously doubt if they could continue to make a living without the liberal exploitation of sex that their code seems to permit [cited in Chidananda Dasgupta, *The Cinema of Satyajit Ray*, p. 81]

It might be important for us also to remember here that among the many radical political currents that '1968' was synonymous with, was also a new wave of the women's movement, globally. Indeed, feminist theory has had particular interest in narrative forms such as the gothic novel or the 'horror'—film/fiction—forms located at the margins of the 'realist' narrative. And while this must remain in the realm of conjecture, can we speculate that the traumatic 'other' that the theme of 'the double' in a fantasy such as *Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne* with its longing for the world of the archaic represses, is precisely a world where women were no longer willing to be merely prize-money? [After the turbulence caused by Monimala's great height is resolved with the arrival of her shorter cousin and the peasant-heroes have donned regal clothes, the

film changes into color in the final scene ending with the couples now gazing adoringly at each other.] [13]

The larger point of this section has been to argue the case for psychoanalytic theory vis-à-vis study of cinema in India. For me, psychoanalysis has been hugely enabling conceptual tool because it dramatically highlights the provisional nature of all truth-claims, puts one continuously under pressure to read-between-lines. I mentioned earlier in the section the theorist Slavoj Zizek who inverts the commonsensical dichotomy between phantasy and reality, arguing instead that 'reality' is grounded on a phantasy-support. Describing psychoanalysis Zizek says that it is sterner than Christianity because here in the end there is no divine father to forgive. But that is also exactly where, for Zizek, psychoanalysis links with 'fantasy' as utopian aspiration. Precisely because there is no divine father, one is forced to take responsibility for oneself in a very profound sense. At the end of analysis the one thing that the analysand/patient *cannot* say is 'I didn't really mean it'. With psychoanalysis, one is forced to confront what one really meant and take responsibility for that knowledge.

---

[13] Earlier in this section, I have quoted at length from Laura Mulvey's essay, "Uncertainty: Natural magic and the Art of Deception," (2012: 33-53), where she uses the concept of the uncanny to describe the complicated ways in which the technology of cinema, inheritor of both the arts of reality as well as the arts of deception, plays on the human difficulty of understanding time and death. In an inspired close-reading of Freud's essay, 'The Uncanny,' she also brings out a striking parallel between Freud's misreading of the E.T.A. Hoffman story, Freud's consequent lack of interest in the character of the beautiful female automaton, Olympia and Freud's resistance to the cinema itself:

> Freud's lack of interest in Olympia … has certain connections to his rejection of the cinema, associated not only with newfangled spectacle but also with the urban culture of the young modern woman. The fashionable flapper … erased the maternal features … of the female body cultivating a boyish flat chest and slim hips. […] Just as the beautiful automaton has no 'inside' …, these bodies, artificially pre-pubescent, mechanized and modern, are eviscerated. […] An eviscerated, mechanized, femininity masks and marks disavowal of both the site of castration anxiety and the womb, the 'first home.' (2012: 50-51)

Poignantly, Mulvey ends by noting that the very technology and femininity that had seemed so ephemeral/modern to Freud have now aged and thus, paradoxically, seem much closer to his idea of the uncanny and metaphorically, the archaic body of the mother.

Since this piece has been about fairy tales and how we might read them differently, it might be appropriate to end by illustrating this idea of 'taking responsibility' through *The Beauty and The Beast.*[14] From a Zizekian perspective the whole point of the story is that Beauty questions herself fundamentally, to face the traumatic fact that she has fallen in love with a hideous monster. This knowledge is traumatic because it radically changes her entire conceptual world. Beauty has to then accept the idea that being 'beautiful' does not have to do with a person's face. By having the courage to acknowledge this, as in when Beauty tells the Beast 'I love you', she takes responsibility in Zizek's sense. Immediately, there is a miraculous transformation. The Beast turns into a handsome prince. Of course, I am saying here that they get it all wrong in the comics when they show that the Beast physically changed in appearance at the end. He didn't. Beauty just saw him differently now. And this is also one definition of utopia. When Beauty, the female protagonist, begins to see differently.

* * * * *

[14] This is undoubtedly one of the best-loved fairy tales of all times. For an outstanding analysis of the same see Marina Warner, "Go! Be a Beast: Beauty and the Beast II," *From the Beast to the Blonde*, op. cit, pp. 298-318. In her extraordinary reading of this fairy-tale, which in all its variations focuses on the theme of a bridegroom redeemed from monstrousness, Warner reads a microcosmic history of the entire re-evaluated relationship between human beings and animals. The idea of the Beast whose horrible features are repellent, has changed historically from the wild boar, among others, to the bear. Here Warner traces a lineage from the wild bear who was the king of beasts in medieval legend all the way to Ted Roosevelt's fascination for big-game hunting and the new masculinity of early twentieth-century America, down to the point where the Ideal Toy Company started marketing 'Teddy's bear,' after a fateful failed expedition in 1902. The success of the teddy bear since then has been unbelievable, including now Rupert Bear, Winnie the Pooh and many others. But just as the rise of teddy bears matches a decline of real bears in the wild, so too many other animals which feature in the soft toy market face a similar fate. Warner ascribes a totemic function to these soft toys. Tellingly, in a complete reversal of fortunes, by the time of the Disney productions, Warner points out that it is now Beauty who stands in need of the Beast; the attraction of the wild having taken on a wholly new resonance. Moreover in the cuddliness of the teddy bear and the appeal of domesticated sexuality, Warner sees a larger cultural trend, (mirrored in Hollywood), of celebrating the male in a way which 'domesticates' feminism.

All Roads Lead to Ray

This section represents my engagement with selected pieces from the vast, existing oeuvre of Ray scholarship. It is organized into two broad clusters. In the first instance, I will do close readings of essays by two critics who are immediately of relevance to us: Mihir Bhattacharya's "Conditions of Visibility: People's Imagination and *Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne*"[15] and Ashis Nandy's "Satyajit Ray's Secret Guide to Exquisite Murders: Creativity, Social Criticism, & the Partitioning of the Self" as well as his, "An Intelligent Critic's Guide to Indian Cinema,"[16] Both critics explicitly engage with psychoanalysis as they deal with Ray's children's films. In the second set of essays/scholarship, I engage with two scholars whose work on Indian cinema, in general, has been of considerable importance, Ashish Rajadhyaksha and Ravi Vasudevan. (As already mentioned, the theoretical frameworks here are *not* psychoanalysis.) Furthermore, they have both approached Ray differently; one sees Ray through the frame of nationalist authentication and the other through melodrama respectively. Nevertheless, as I dialogue with these many roads to Ray, I hope to also map the possibilities generated by the specific tradition of analytical theory I am drawing on.

But to begin with, Mihir Bhattacharya, the major burden of Bhattacharya's essay is to explain the 'disappearance of women' in *Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne*.[17] This is not only the title of its first section, but the theme to which the author repeatedly returns. He proposes several reasons for this. One of them, according to Bhattacharya, is the exigencies of film-making that Ray had to negotiate or, to put this in another way, the generic conventions of film-making that were extant in Bengal/popular Indian cinema at the time. Here the author mentions

---

[15] Mihir Bhattacharya, "Conditions of Visibility: People's Imagination and *Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne*," in Moinak Biswas, ed., *Apu and After: Re-visiting Ray's Cinema*, Calcutta, NY & London: Seagull, 2006, pp.140-191.

[16] Ashis Nandy's, "Satyajit Ray's Secret Guide to Exquisite Murders: Creativity, Social Criticism, and the Partitioning of the Self," and "An Intelligent Critic's Guide to Indian Cinema," in *The Savage Freud and Other essays on Possible and Retrievable Selves*, op. cit, pp. 237-267 & 196-236, respectively.

[17] In this context it is disappointing that M. Madhava Prasad, in his review of this essay, seems almost nervous about mentioning any of its obvious theoretical limitations in, "Book Review: *Apu and After*," *Economic & Political Weekly*, Jan. 19 (2008):28-32.

several important points. He mentions the fact, also noted in my essay, that Ray's 'adult' films do very emphatically highlight women as protagonists. He further underlines that the 'All India' idiom developed by the mainstream commercial cinema accommodates the idea of romantic love primarily through tyrannical song-dance sequences. In this context Ray's decision to not have women in his children's fiction, Bhattacharya speculates, was perhaps a desire to avoid this. He also suggests that Ray was following the classical format of boys' tales where women do indeed have only a marginal existence.

In fact, the author contends that Ray's larger attempt in *GGBB* is to defamiliarize both, the folk tale as well as the boys' story. We will come back to this point later, but it is important to note here that as the author traces the lineage of boys' tales in Bengali to which Satyajit Ray belongs, he makes this observation about Sukumar Ray substituting a male protagonist in his Bengali version of *Alice in Wonderland*:

> This is not the place for a comparative estimate, but perhaps one ought to mention the darker undertones of the Carroll text which the figure of the girl-child helps generate, whereas the Sukumar text is exclusively gendered, and perhaps gains in sheer fun and dialogic exuberance what it loses in resonance. (2006: 149)

It is not clear how a girl child 'helps generate' dark undertones in *any* text! Indeed psychoanalysis, since it always puts the reader under pressure to read between the lines, as it were, would read equally dark undertones in boys' tales also. The idea of 'innocent' fun is one that my essay has dealt with at length, and precisely as a troubling marker of denial/repression that analysis would seek to negotiate. To suggest that women are the source of trouble, psychic/textual or otherwise, is not my idea of gender-sensitive reading.

Returning to the point about defamiliarization, to make his case, the author mentions several instances in *GGBB* where, he argues, the conventions of the folk tale are being deliberately challenged. In this context he mentions the sequence at the end where Bagha insists on a glimpse of the face of the princess he is about to marry, questioning the classical pattern of the folk-tale where the obligatory gift of a princess is always respected. By doing so, according to Bhattacharya, Ray is gesturing to conventions of filmic 'realism' and to really existing

practices in rural Bengal where men do indeed choose their brides from a number of suitable girls in this manner. It is not evident what is being defmaliarized here because feminist history would surely question both, the apparent 'realism'/naturalness of such social practices as well as the conventions of the 'typical' folk-tale which only has male protagonists.[18]

But the point about 'realism' is again taken up in the essay through the sequence where Goopy and Bagha first see the princess on the balcony and where Ray uses conventions of shot-reverse-shot/continuity editing. Here too it is not clear how, by sharing the protagonists' point of view (and deep-focus does not contradict principles of filmic 'realism'), the spectator is being interpellated more democratically. Prizes are never routine in folk-tales. On the contrary the transition in the folk-hero from the time he sets out on his journey (the initial situation), till the time order is restored (final situation), is typically one where he has to encounter and overcome obstacles. Also, making the princess the only woman in the landscape does not necessarily make either her or her suitor(s) more worthwhile. Throughout the essay however the author runs arguments about 'realism', (and here he holds up the 'realism' of *Pather Panchali*/the Italian neo-realists), into arguments for people's pleasure, democracy, the common man (the elision between 'people' and 'man' is his). In the final analysis he proposes that the 'elimination of women' (p. 185) is merely a small price to be paid for the pleasures of a journey which have much more important objectives such as the elimination of war and hunger.

Leaving aside obvious questions such as, 'why war?' and 'whose hunger?' (*Totem and Taboo* is after all about a primal murder too), let us now read the section where the author directly engages with psychoanalysis:

> [W]ithout avoiding or bracketing the deep insights of psychoanalysis … it may still be necessary to see pleasure as implicated in history, desire involved in the class struggle. Surely the meanings to be found in literature, cinema, theatre… cannot be exhausted by the model of one story…
>
> […]

---

[18] For an excellent discussion of this see Teresa De Lauretis, *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema,* London: Macmillan, 1984.

When the Oedipus story is represented in a text, and when that text is read by at least one reader, it enters a history from which the narrative cannot be extricated. Ray takes full advantage of the non-realistic representational devices of the folktale, …but these are not merely confronted by the repertoire of 'reality effects; the relationship between the two is secured by … very deft touches which sketch in a version of the history of the underdog. (2006: 176-177)

Since this reading of psychoanalysis directly resonates with Bhattacharya's concluding lines as well, let us place them together. Observing the general absence of 'formal' wars in folktales (although he admits the presence of 'violence') and the importance of food in the imagination of 'ordinary' people, Bhattacharya concludes:

Saying no to war is not easy in possible realist versions of the story of Goopy and Bagha because the *hoi polloi* do not decide these matters … The story used by Ray proposes that given a choice the representatives of the poor would stop wars and give food to everybody. […] With their supernatural gifts they [Goopy and Bagha] have responsibilities thrust upon them; they have to think out options and work towards the fulfillment of missions. The narrative in the film therefore demands a realist format for the proairesis and a technical means for the passage between fantasy and mimesis. This is done by foregrounding the ordinariness of fantasies. […] The submission to the conventions of the boys' story is transcended at the level of frankly avowed artifice. If visibility is denied to women, the viewer has the right to ask what she gains from this tactical submission. Being able to see dreams as ordinary events is one possible gain. And then the giving of food is placed at the centre of the utopian universe. And this act banishes war (2006: 186-187).

I have discussed at length in the first chapter the question of the 'relevance' of psychoanalysis to the postcolonial world and problems with notions of an 'Indian' version of the 'Oedipus complex'. It might suffice here to reiterate that Freud was indeed emphatic about some universal features in the psychic life of humans. Moreover, contrary to what Bhattacharya maintains, Ray does make very significant modifications to the original *GGBB* tale. As my paper highlights, the most important in this respect is that the kings of the warring kingdoms are now made twin brothers. And this is, of course, done by Ray

unconsciously. In 1968. In Bengal. And from this, as my reading has argued, it is not just a minor oversight at all that women are so invisible in Ray's children's world.

In the first chapter we have also discussed at some length Ashis Nandy's general evaluation of the 'relevance' of psychoanalysis. The essays discussed here can be mapped on a direct line from those assumptions/speculations. Broadly, the founding proposition of Nandy's essay on Ray is that a creative artist needs to partition his/her self as a survival strategy in this world. This almost results in two faces in the creative person and his/her work: one where the imagination is free and unencumbered by 'political correctness' and the other which must conform to dominant notions of morality in some way. Let us hear Nandy summarize his thoughts:

> Creativity—to the extent that it involves the interplay of the conscious and the unconscious …—must at some point encounter the creative person's own moral self. Behind this clinical platitude lies the fact that over the last three hundred years the structure of morality in the dominant culture of the world has gradually come to include a number of Baconian values… In the dominant global culture today, these, too, are part of our socialized … modern superego …
>
> As a consequence, it appears that creativity has begun to demand from the creative person both defiance of conventional morality and also some conspicuous conformity to an aspect of morality which is not overtly conventional. To meet this demand, the creative person sometimes creates a kind of shadow self which is perfectly compatible with dominant social ideals … but wears successfully the garb of unconventionality. This shadow self allows freer play to one's undersocialized self, having greater access to the primitive, the nonrational and the intuitive.
>
> The partitioning of the self we have seen in Ray and others is, it seems to me, part of this larger dynamic. (1995: 225-226)

To paraphrase Nandy, the modern superego or the 'moral self' of modernity's everyman demands allegiance to certain Baconian values. As a consequence of these demands, although it is not clear why, the creative person in the modern world has to split his/her self into two and create a shadow persona which is manifestly unconventional but is actually deeply conventional. And behind this seemingly unconventional

persona lies the true creative self which is in closer communication with the domain of the id, i.e., the primitive, the nonrational, the intuitive.

We will unpack the many contradictions of Nandy's passage in what follows. But to get to the heart of his analysis: the seeming discrepancy about the creative person actually being conformist when he seems to be unconventional is easily explained by the primary object of Nandy's criticism—'the ageing Left' (1995: 238) (in India). While this point in the essay is made specifically vis-à-vis Salman Rushdie, we may recall from our discussion of the last chapter too that for Nandy, Marxism and psychoanalysis represent in-house critiques of the West which ultimately reinforce a 'Western' rationality/science that social science discourse has increasingly come to question. Thus, Rushdie, for instance, is suggested as being at his sensitive best in his fiction while most predictable (and 'politically correct') in his non-fiction:

> When I read *Midnight's Children*, I had not even heard of Rushdie. […] Rushdie's novel recognizes the inner dynamics of India's upper-middle-brow metropolitanism better than almost anyone else's—… the peculiar, shallow mix of East and West which defines many western-educated Indians…
>
> Rushdie's formal social and political comments are a direct negation of these sensitivities. They have all the 'right' values in a predictable social democratic format but, on the whole, what he has to say in his non-fiction is cliché-ridden and pathetically dependent on categories derived from Anglo-Saxon philosophy of the inter-war years. …He speaks in a tone that may be very comforting to the aging Left, but that is not even good radical chic, being at least thirty years out of date. (1995: 239)

However the article also suggests that Rushdie's predicament, (and Ray's), is universal to the extent that it begins and ends by underlining similar 'partitioned selves' in H.G. Wells (as well as Arthur Conan Doyle). But the shadow selves of Wells and Conan Doyle most certainly cannot emerge from the 'shallow mix of East and West' that defines middle-class India. Yet apart from descriptive statements at the beginning and the end, the article is silent about the specific reasons for such contradictions in 'Western' creative artists. What is important for Nandy is that while both Wells and Conan Doyle champion Baconian science and rationality in one aspect of their work, they critique the same in another. And going by the definition of creativity that he outlines in

the first paragraph cited in this article, it is of course when Wells and Conan Doyle critique science and reason that, for Nandy, they are most creative. This is in the nature of a diagnosis:

> [B]y now I had begun to suspect that this partitioning was something Wells and Rushdie had to do to protect their creative insights … from being destroyed by their 'normal', 'sane', rational self. […]
>
> Perhaps psychoanalysis tells only part of the story. …[T]he pathologies of irrationality today are more vividly recognized than the pathologies of rationality and intellect. …The great minds of Europe after the Enlightenment—from Govanni Vico to Karl Marx to Sigmund Freud—have all been more keen to unravel the pathologies of human irrationality.
>
> Both Wells and Rushdie, professed champions of western modernity and Enlightenment, demonstrate in their own ways the perils of this intellectual imbalance. (1995: 240-241)

We have discussed at length the direct line that Freud runs from the 'normal' to the 'pathological.' But at issue here is not only a fairly dramatic misreading of Freud on the issue of sane versus irrational. At issue here is also Nandy's exalted status of the creative artist and his/her vulnerable/sensitive self which needs to be protected from the ruthless demands of the 'real' world. Here too we only need recall the trajectory of Freud's writings: beginning with Jensen's *Gradiva* to the studies of Michelangelo's *Moses* and Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, Freud found that the same mechanisms operate in works of art as they do the formation of dreams, i.e., repression and sexual neurosis. Moreover the domain of the id/nonrational/the unconscious which Nandy opposes to the domain of the ego is not necessarily the seat of emancipatory desire. In fact as we discussed at length in the second chapter, the much more difficult opposition to theorize is that between the super-ego and the unconscious, the structuring opposition in the work of Melanie Klein. And of course the most fundamental point of all—the unconscious is the mark of a fundamental division that structures the human mind universally, one moreover which brooks no distinction between peasant and philosopher.

Nandy's analysis of a 'partitioned self' in Satyajit Ray is, however, grounded in the idea that the Rays were products, *par excellence*, of the bicultural world of the Westernized cultural elite of turn-of-century

Calcutta. While at the vanguard of social change, they were also formed by the unique mix of East and West which defined the 'Bengal Renaissance':

> [T]here persisted in the Rays an inner tension between unfettered imagination and disciplined rationality, perhaps even a tendency to live at two planes, which they could not fully reconcile. Their imaginativeness was primarily reserved for what they wrote, drew and fantasized for children; the rationality for organized intervention in society and for defining their social responsibility in an adult world in which children, too, were part of one's trust. (1995: 246)

Continuing the family tradition, Nandy proposes that Ray also 'partitioned his self into two neat compartments' (!) (1995: 250). Into his classical self, Ray fitted his film-making ventures. (And here, by 'classical' Nandy broadly means 'art cinema'.) And into the other, he fitted his 'popular' low-brow self which was purportedly the space where Ray gave expression to his 'true' creativity, unburdened by the family-tradition of being self-conscious exemplars/social reformers. Moreover, Nandy also notices that in the former realm where Ray was allegedly playing the more 'politically correct' role, there is a centrality given to women's issues. This, Nandy suggests, is not only in continuity with the 'social reform movement' of Bengal but also Ray's desire to play the role of the Renaissance man. Further, his film-making is also the domain where the Ray aesthetic is very restrained, (especially in terms of depiction of sexuality and violence); where there is an almost extraordinary attention to technical detail and so on.

In contrast, not only is Ray's 'popular' world almost completely an all-male world, but Nandy underlines that it is also one in which several elements of the so-called 'commercial' style predominate. These include racy plots, predictability of storyline and so on. They also emphasize Baconian science and rationality given that the genres that Ray writes in are the detective-story and the science fiction. (In theory, this point actually contradicts Nandy's larger polemic since science and rationality, he has suggested earlier, are markers of conformism to the modern superego). However, while in general the above observations are very valid, Nandy then goes on to make this most problematic

assumption about the ways in which different spheres/modes of work relate to the 'partitioning' of selves in Ray:

> The result is … an uneven distribution of certain qualities between Ray's films and his popular fiction. There are in his films reflections of what appear to be conspicuous forms of anxiety-binding strategies— enormously detailed technical work and workmanship and a search for complete dominance or control over the entire technical process of film making. In popular fiction, however, his commitment to the worldview of science is romanticized. Especially in his science fiction, the events on which he builds his stories reveal an openness to experiences [paranormality, etc.] that might be taboo to the other Ray. Ideologically, he may be more closed in his popular works, methodologically he is much less encumbered. Even a casual reader quickly finds out that Ray is not a perfectionist in his popular writings: he is less careful about his workmanship and his imagination is less controlled (1995: 258).

This, then, is Nandy's final analysis of Ray's 'popular' writings—as being more 'truly creative' because of being less hemmed in by socially normative roles and expectations.[19] This is, of course, a conclusion in dramatic opposition to mine. My reading of *GGBB* argues, in contrast, that while Ray does indeed speak unambiguously in his 'own voice' in his children's fiction, it therefore becomes a particularly relevant site for registering psychic traumas, personal as well as social, of Ray as well as contemporary Bengal. And that Ray's popular fiction/children's films is categorically not a site of 'liberation' from a repressed ego, in any sense of the word. This, of course, apart from my disagreement with Nandy's evaluation of technical innovation/experimentation in cinema as anxiety-binding strategy.

Moving on to Ashish Rajadhyaksha, in the last section I have referred to an earlier essay on Ray where he, in a sense, faults the Ray aesthetic for its inability to register the gruesome violence, physical as well as symbolic, that marked the Bengal countryside in the turbulent decades

---

[19] Nandy also reads the theme of 'the double' as performing an integrative role, especially in relation to self-concepts fragmented by uprooting and deculturation of the Indian middle-class in "An Intelligent Critic's Guide to Indian Cinema," *The Savage Freud*, pp.196-237.

leading up to the Partition (and even beyond, into the Calcutta of the 1960s). I will concentrate here on his recent book, *Indian Cinema in the Time of Celluloid*[20] where he has developed the critical concept of the cinema-effect in its specifically postcolonial/Indian incarnation to radically expand the idea of the cinematic narrative. The Ray-aesthetic/ realism functions, in some ways, as crucial metaphor for him here too. He concludes the chapter, "Administering the Symbols of Authenticity Production," thus:

> The insistence on realism in Ray's work was, even to his own chagrin, distilled by the Indian state into seeming purity, as an unchanging genre of the slow, poetic, humanist story of ordinary people, iconized, black-and white cinema. …What we might call Ray's version of the cinema-effect, quintessentially 'Indian' because 'human' story of identifiable characters was for a while even named as the exemplary template for a genre of propaganda film by the Indian state. [The reference here is to the 'Film 20' series produced by the Films Division during the Emergency]
>
> […]
>
> … The 'pure-symbolic' of the cinema-effect, if sufficiently dissected, can now reveal something of the basis of its authority and its fascination: the elusive content of the symbolic-national. …I suggest that what we have called 'symbolic nationalism' proposes a way of looking at the cinema that does not especially require realistic filmmaking; [instead] it is a way of looking at any film as though it were a film by Satyajit Ray. (2008: 164-166)

Let us now turn back a little and reprise Rajadhyaksha's formulation of the cinema-effect in Bombay. The fulcrum of Rajadhyaksha's argument is his observation that the cinema, particularly in the postcolonial context, repeatedly gets named and evoked of course within the film itself but also, crucially, *outside* the screening paraphernalia of celluloid. (Thus, Bombay cinema's traditional discomfort with straight box-office returns, for instance.) Moreover, the period of 'Bollywoodisation' has made this phenomenon dramatically evident as cinema is now invoked across a range of sequel technologies in music, fashion, food and architecture. To account for this hypervisibility, Rajadhyaksha daringly

---

20   *Indian Cinema in the Time of Celluloid: From Bollywood to the Emergency*, op. cit.

proposes that we need a more inclusive/expanded notion of cinematic narrative itself, one that would bring in a lot of material that might conventionally be considered 'extra-textual.' Since this is a key recent intervention in film-theory, let us study Rajadhyaksha's notion of the cinema-effect in some detail.

Rajadhyaksha notes that the term has a dual ancestry: on the one hand, the term 'cinema effect' originates classically with reference to the excess of realism on celluloid, the fugitive historical content. Here he is especially indebted to Jean-Pierre Oudart's (1971/1990)[21] formulation of the same insofar as Oudart is able to account for the process of spectatorial inclusion into his expanded idea of narrative by conceptualizing this 'effect'/excess as very decisively produced by the text. On the other hand, the term cinema-effect also has an ancestry which views such excess from the paradigm of minority-histories, as content that has remained inexplicable, simply there. Drawing on this dual lineage, Rajadhyaksha develops his specific inflection of the idea thus:

> In both formal terms, as non-realist special effects and as marginal historical content, I propose that the Indian cinema as a whole—and especially, though by no means uniquely, the Hindi cinema—demonstrates par excellence the cinema's capacity to produce such pure-symbolic structures. […] I further make the following claims about such production. One, that cinema effect productions appear to be capable of simulating the cinema, in its entirety, as an apparatus of social imaginary. Two, … the cinema-effect comes into its own with the invention of post-celluloid production systems … Three, a key aspect of the production in the way Bollywood has fashioned this effect, is the cinema's capacity to make such symbolic structures socially ubiquitous. Four, resisting any linear move of recent theory to rewind to an earlier moment in celluloid's history when realism still ruled, there is direct evidence, even in the era of classic realist productions, of a 'textual feint' … And five, this also provides us with other means to overcome the otherwise crippling linearity of 'backwardness' narratives in the Indian cinema. (2008: 107-110)

21

While several recent scholars have discussed the radical import of the ways in which the new media are decisively altering the experience of cinema (classical Hollywood) in Europe,[22] Rajadhyaksha's formulations draw the line to the ways in which this changed technological context/ experience of film in India, specifically, also opens up possibilities to think through an entire earlier history of what had always been seen as the lack of 'realism' of the Bombay film; its inability to adequately tell a story. The formulations are dense and richly textured; I will attempt signpost some significant nodes.

In an exciting formulation, political theorist Sudipta Kaviraj has proposed that democracy can also be treated as a language or a kind of narrative that brings into being a specific narrative community which then confers rights and contractual obligations on its members as it demarcates its boundaries, decides who belongs and who doesn't.[23] Drawing on Kaviraj, Rajadhyaksha underlines the fact that for Kaviraj the critical point is that this kind of narrative is not universal. Instead, it privileges the here-and-now capacity to create divides between those who are 'in the narrative' and those who are outside, looking in. (Kaviraj's formulation will undoubtedly remind us of Partha Chatterjee's idea of 'political society;' indeed Rajadhyaksha is indebted to both and explicitly also to Chatterjee's idea.) Placed beside this is Kaviraj's landmark essay[24] which underscores the fact that for specific historical reasons, few nations have defined the symbolic concept of the nation as itself constituting the new sovereign subject as India has done. Rajadhyaksha now lays out the implications of these insights

---

[22] Laura Mulvey, for instance, touches on many similar concerns, but from a specifically psychoanalytical perspective of the uncanny (and the Peircean index), vis-à-vis photography/cinematic 'realism' in her dialogue with Bazin/Barthes in context of the new media in Europe in the essay, "The Index and the Uncanny: Life and Death in the Photograph," (2012: 54-66), op. cit. Rajadhyaksha also cites Elsaesser (1990) and Tom Gunning.

[23] The reference here is to Sudipta Kaviraj, "Democracy and Development in India" in Amiya Kumar Bagchi, eds, *Democracy and Development: States, Markets, and Societies in Their Context*, NY: St. Martin's Press, in association with International Economic Association.

[24] Sudipta Kaviraj, "The Imaginary Institution of India," in Partha Chatterjee and Gyanendra Pandey, eds, *Subaltern Studies VII: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, Delhi :OUP, 1992, pp. 1-39.

in theorizing the distinctive nature of the cinema-effect produced by Bombay, its interpellative double-take:

> [For Kaviraj], it was not the Indian *people* but symbolic *India* that sought independence. […] By Kaviraj's argument, then, a specific perception of the sovereign national subject had to be assembled that could stand for the 'national community' as a whole. As this negotiated subject-in-narrative came, so to say, 'to tell her story,' an additional quite distinct burden fell upon realism's biographical capacities. Exploring the ramifications of the widespread deployment of a centralized and privileged 'realist' register … that outlines how texts ought to be read, Susie Tharu (1998)[25] makes the link with the narrativized performing citizen, another important ancestor to the cinema-effect.

> […]

> [Tharu's (ibid: 210-220)] protagonist-performers --- the 'nationalists' --- are … at a cross between subjective self in its usual (identitarian) sense and an explicitly symbolic mode where that self is reproduced *in* narrative. … Among the storytelling requirements that emerge is one capable of bringing together the trajectories of how such people 'come to be' and how they 'come to be *before* us' … and, thereafter, how 'we' who watch may do the same, as our authorizing, supervisory gaze upon the narrative replicates the authenticating mechanism of the state.
>
> Most significantly, this representation draws attention to a historically new spectatorial gaze, the new standpoint from which such representations 'make sense' to the language of liberal rationality. […] For Tharu, (1998: 224), the privileged mode of representing this symbolically replete terrain is realism, not as it is classically understood, but 'an indigenous, and in many ways different realism, and a naturalized order of things … that bodies forth this executive avant-garde.' (2008: 123-126)

It is following on from this meditation on the unique nature of 'realism' in Bombay cinema that Rajadhyaksha then tracks back to the mechanisms/apparatuses through which this/these cinema-effect (/ symbolic constructs) is/are initially attributed with certain meanings and then as these attributes are further legitimized/authenticated by the

---

[25]   The reference here is to Susie Tharu, "Citizenship and its Discontents," in Mary E. John and Janaki Nair eds, *A Question of Silence? The Sexual Economies of Modern India*, Delhi: Kali for Women, 1998, pp. 216-242.

spectator-state nexus. In Rajadhyaksha's narrative of Indian cinema, it is at this point that Satyajit Ray makes his entry. Rajadhyaksha's provocative thesis is that the cinema, *as a whole*, became the apparatus *par excellence* in India that mass-produced such symbolic presentations/constructs of reality as well the narratives through which these constructs were then circulated, to produce the statist version of authentic 'national culture' at a certain period of its history, roughly from the 1950s-1980s. A key part of this, as Rajadhyaksha brilliantly reminds us, was the representation of 'technology' itself in a particular way (2008: 141-143), as something that would enable the seamless stepping over of a millennial civilization into the contemporary. Satyajit Ray's extraordinary achievement, in Rajadhyaksha's account, was the way in which Ray was able to use the technology of the cinema to usher in a representational idiom/'realism' by which previously unfilmed objects and events now arrive before the camera and are elevated into significance/meaning.

I am, needless to say, broadly in solidarity with Rajadhyaksha's position; indeed his idea of 'symbolic realism' as one of the key cinema-effects of Bombay is a seminal intervention. But we will move on shortly to an essay by Ravi Vasudevan where Vasudevan interrogates, specifically, such a framing of Ray as playing out the destinal narrative of 'Indian modernity.' Vasudevan's reading, by aligning Ray much more decisively with the popular, is also closer to my own reading of *GGBB*. But there is a different point to which I wish to draw attention here as well. In discussing ways in which 'technology' was generally symbolically figured with all the wonder/mystique of science and rationality, Rajadhyaksha notes that technologies of reproduction had to additionally shoulder distinct sorts of responsibilities here. Vis-à-vis the cinema, one of the primary attributes from which it derived its authority was its ability to document, its status as record. And here, discussing the qualities of the photograph, Rajadhyaksha engages with Bazin (along with Jean Mitry), as does Laura Mulvey (2012: 54-66), but from a somewhat different perspective. Noting as Mulvey also does, Bazin's idea that the photograph is always dynamic, has extraordinary richness at the margins and exceeds any unitary idea of significance, Rajadhyaksha routes his idea of 'symbolic realism' through Mitry's formulation of the analogon:

I want to expand on two key elements in Mitry's analogon. …Let me name the somewhat chaotic edge of masking that represents the outermost limit of the field of vision as the mechanical frame, and suggest that there also exists a second inner frame, which I call the frame of attention… [I] think we will be able to demonstrate a two-way structure where, first, the external frame and the sum total of 'objects that compose and reflect the setting' are differentially pulled into a series of inner spaces, as the 'meaning' of the image gets gradually distilled into coherence. This distilling extracts from the image its symbolic content. To this we may add a second, hegemonic dimension, where the inner frame keeps pushing outward, seeking to appropriate, attribute meaning, contain everything that is outside it.

Let me equate the mechanical frame with the first look of the cinema, and propose the 'frame of attention' as equivalent to its the second look. It follows that, contrary to appearances, the two frames/looks will only coincide in rare instances.

[…]

These circumstances… [moreover] develop an explicitly political dimension when the degree or extent of the spectator's gaze 'coincides with the frame itself and operates a vertical control over the space of the narrative'[26]… (2008: 159-161)

It is such instances of coincidence which, Rajadhyaksha proposes, provide the founding moments for imagining the 'Indian modern,' one such version of which he then proceeds to read in Satyajit Ray.

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to do a comparative study of Mulvey's and Rajadhyaksha's readings of Bazin. I will end the discussion of his work through Mulvey's observation that even in the European context, the two frames (as Rajadhyaksha describes them) rarely coincide; indeed Mulvey underscores Bazin's insistence of the near-impossibility of their doing so.[27]

[26] The reference here is to M. Madhava Prasad, *Ideology of the Hindi Film: A Historical Reconstruction*, Delhi: OUP, 199, p. 64

[27] The reference here is to Mulvey, (2012: 54-66). The Bzain essay that is the focus of her attention is, "Ontology of the Photographic Image," 1945. I cannot do justice to the subtle, many-layered arguments that she weaves into her meditations on the photograph and, by extension, celluloid cinema. (because that is what Bazin was writing

We will now move on the concluding essay of the chapter, Ravi Vasudevan's study of Ray[28]. As already noted, by aligning Ray much more with the 'popular,' Vasudevan's essay echoes with my own reading. Importantly, Vasudevan here problematises Ray 'adult' films themselves i.e., locates references to the popular in the heart of Ray's oeuvre beginning with the Apu trilogy, through *Charulata* (1964) to *Aranyer Din Ratri* (1969) to *Jana Aranya* (1975). In consonance with the larger thesis that he has developed over some years now, of the nuanced and sophisticated ways in which 'melodrama' weaves many different kinds of narrative codes/cognitive worlds into its richly patterned universe, Vasudevan then shows us that Ray's status as the high-priest of 'realism' has often meant an overlooking of this entire dimension in Ray's work. Let us hear him lay out his central proposition:

> Rather than see Ray playing out a 'destinal' narrative that provides for a redemptive and authenticating identification with modernity for the protagonist, I want to suggest that he was involved in a rather more complicated dialogue with the modern, showing it to be necessarily and irreducibly split in the forms of subjectivity it gave rise to. In a sense this is the condition of modernity … .

> […]

> Ray's grappling with the emergence of the present can be seen as engagement with a Bengali public's massive investment in the history of literary form, but also an invention in the category of genre. Often, art cinema is not subject to categorizations along these lines … However, my suggestion … is that there is an active working over of the category of genre in Ray's practice, one perhaps quite distinct from popular film

---

about here), in her essay. But given the limitations of an awkward footnote, I will only underline that Mulvey delicately brings out that for Bazin too, the photograph/cinema was more than just an indexical sign. Even as for Bazin the photograph is an indexical sign that 'embalms' time, it is equally for him an index that literally blurs the boundary between life death. Here, she brings C.S.Pierce in conversation with Freud's notion of the uncanny, to emphasize (via Derrida) the mechanical aspect of photography, the point at which the photographic at is not an artistic act, a point at which the camera/mechanical eye registers passively over and above human intervention.

[28] Ravi Vasudevan, "A Modernist Public: The Double-Take of Modernism in the Work of Satyajit Ray," *The Melodramatic Public: Film Form and Spectatorship in Indian Cinema*, Delhi: Permanent Black, 2010, pp. 163-198.

genres but, like them, often immersed in the difficulties of finding a route, of finding the images and sounds and narratives to articulate the present into perception. (2010: 165)

This very new way of reading Ray, through a different kind of genre-theory as it were, comes after another point that Vasudevan has already made in the essay by now—that the false paradigmatic opposition that has been constructed between Ghatak and Ray, with Ghatak seen as someone better equipped to deal with the fault-lines that shape our contemporary, has not only been the bane of Indian film-studies but also pushed it into a stifling narrowness of intellectual positions. He then lays out a further proposition that directly resonates with mine:

> … I will surmise that we cannot fully attend to Ray's oeuvre without at the same time seeing it as having to deal with the formal energies arraigned at the boundaries. In particular I will call upon the register of the popular as specifically worked out within Bengali culture, that body of caricatural representation available through bazaar productions in which respectable society is cast in bizarre and irreverent light. Of course, high art forms can draw upon such energies through quotation … at issue here is what these energies are aligned with in the dominant perspectives of the narrative world. […] There is also the possibility that such a dominant narrative does not successfully contain these energies. …This 'failure' of the film may be read as the failure of a form whose moment has passed … The result is a shift in the terms of authentication away from the privileged middle-class recipient of Ray's imagination. (2010:166)

In a series of close readings from *Pather Panchali* to *Jana Aranya*, Vasudevan then shows us this gradual waning of confidence in Ray's auteurial perspective, the stress that the iconic Ray-aesthetic steadily comes under as it registers the Calcutta of '1968.' Critically, is the figure of the woman (figuration of repressed feminine desire) through which this allegiance to the world of the popular/the 'other' is invoked and also the figure which becomes of the limit-point of his 'realism.' Especially interesting for me is Vasudevan's analysis of *Aranyer Din Ratri* where he unpacks Ray's invocation of the 'the tribal woman' and the way this functions as a crucial trope/stylistic vector against which Ray bounces off different forms of de-authenticated, middle-class urban subjectivity. Vasudevan persuasively argues here that the trope of the 'tribal woman'

releases turbulent energies which destabilizes the central authorial/moral perspective articulated through the Sharmila Tagore character and brings Ray's relationship to the contemporary to productive crisis. (We will pick up this thread of the 'tribal girl/woman' in our analysis of Santosh Sivan's *Malli* in the next chapter.) But in conclusion, Vasudevan suggests that by the end of his city films, it was almost as if the Ray aesthetic was combining a cinema of narrative integration with a 'cinema of attractions' (as in early Hollywood.)

As we follow the Yellow Brick Road to Ray, then, nodes criss-cross, leading in many different directions. Cultural 'symptoms' can neither be straitjacketed within a concept of ideology nor understood as simple reflective theory of historical representation. Nevertheless, just as the great Wizard meets an entirely new *kind* of challenger in Toto, Dorothy's little dog, I have suggested that the trail to Ray through Freud and the world of the child brings to light certain social blind spots of the 'postcolonial modern' in its classical phase; makes evident traces of unassimilated historical traumas that have been typically covered over. Vladimir Propp has shown us that stories can outlive the historical moment that gave rise to them if relevant historical and psychic structures keep them alive. The gallery of ghosts and monsters in *GGBB*, I have argued, similarly marks the fault-lines that shaped Bengal in the Naxalite years. As we proceed we will now see how the new social and economic crises of the 80s/90s would give new life and also further shift the terms of reference of our collective phantasmagorias.

The Nation and its Child-spectator:
Revisiting the CFSI

ψ

> "If you have the words, there's always a chance that you'll find the
> way."

> —Seamus Heaney, *Stepping Stones: Interviews*
> *with Seamus Heaney* (2008)

As we trace the changing contours of children's cinema in India, we move now, in both a real and metaphoric sense, into the nation's heart. Indeed, the need for a separate category of films for children was envisaged by the new state in India at its very inception. Directly inspired by Nehru, the Children's Film Society of India was set up as an autonomous body as early as 1955. This interest in children was, needless to say, in line with the enormous concern over child-rearing and moulding the character of the new citizen that had animated so much of the public debates in turn-of-century Calcutta, for instance, and in which the Ray family had played such a vanguard role. But as we will see, while in many ways Satyajit Ray does still provide a template yet in many others the new challenges and imperatives of postcolonial politics also now subtly re-inflect notions of childhood crafted in turn-of-century Calcutta. And while there are no separate legislations defining what 'wholesome entertainment' for children might mean, a catalogue of CFSI productions, among others, gives us an indication of how the new state conceptualised/(s) its 'child-spectator.'

This chapter begins with a brief recap of the debates and ideas that marked the formation of the CFSI, undoubtedly a utopian moment in the history of Indian cinema when it was assumed that the new citizen

of the new nation should have a new kind of cinema too. However, in general, it is symptomatic of the low priority accorded to a critical engagement with children's entertainment that so little of this material has been preserved or is available for archival research. Critical appraisals/ writing of/on the children's cinema movement in India are also very scanty.[1] And while in theory the CFSI has been an 'autonomous body' under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting since its inception, this autonomy too needs to be heavily qualified. For over forty years of its existence, the CFSI has not had even the most basic things such as its own office building. While the main administrative office of the CFSI is located in an out-house of the Films Division Building at Pedder Road in Bombay, its equipment and property are stored in another place, the editing room is in the third, while the main vault is on the city outskirts.

However, formally, the CFSI came into existence on 11 May 1955 with Pandit Hriday Nath Kunzru as its founding President. Dr B.V. Keskar was then the Minister of Information and Broadcasting. (A profile with a fairly exhaustive picture of its current activities, the films in its library, films under production and so on are available on its official website: www.cfsindia.org).[2] Further, like several of its visionary founding figures, Dr Keskar was committed to the idea that films for children could not be a commercial proposition and declared in the Parliament that the government would help in the production of such films. The tasks of the CFSI, as they were imagined at this founding moment, were threefold: to produce original films made specially for exhibition to children; to edit feature films made in the country so as to make them suitable for child-spectators and thirdly to adapt, by dubbing into Indian languages, foreign films for children. But despite the nobility of its stated objectives and the goodwill of the initial days, the CFSI has never been able to live up to the promise of its founding moment. Thus,

---

[1]   In fact, the other only work of research on the CFSI was one commissioned by the NFAI, by Bela Raval, *Children's Films in India: A Study*, NFAI, Pune, 1989.

[2]   In a happy change of fortunes, the CFSI has however had something of a revamp over the last few years. This has included charismatic chairpersons such as Nandita Das and, currently, Amol Gupte, who have had longstanding commitment to children/children's entertainment. Apart from the website itself now being much more imaginative and informative, there have been several new activities undertaken as well as funding of new films and so on. (Website accessed on 2 December 2103.)

for instance, while its Executive Council has the mandate to involve a range of experts, from educationists to child-psychologists, this has never been implemented. Similarly, it has had a list of distinguished Chairpersons. Yet, none of them has been able to effectively synergize the activities of the CFSI with the I&B Ministry. This even lead one of its chairpersons, Amol Palekar, to resign in protest.

But in the setting-up years, the Government of India committed itself to sanctioning grants for one full-length feature film and the adaptation of two others. And in the Second Five Year Plan, a grant of Rs 25 lakh was made to the CFSI for the production of five original feature films and adaptations of seven others. Moreover, at the time that it was instituted, provision was also made for membership in the CFSI for parents, teachers, local bodies, associations and any others who might wish to associate themselves with it. The annual subscription fee for an ordinary member was only Rs 10. Yet there were also obvious disadvantages/oversights. For instance, one of the basic needs of the CFSI was for a continuous supply of original stories. To meet this most essential need, however, the payment offered by the CFSI was Rs 2,000 per story! It was assumed that authors would find creative fulfillment in the idea that they were helping build future citizens of the country instead. Similarly, a regular slot for the exhibition of CFSI films on *Doordarshan* has not yet materialized. (Satellite TV, on the other hand, has been quick to exploit children's entertainment as a billion-dollar niche market. More on this in the Conclusion.)

Yet, despite the completely erratic government support, the stifling bureaucracy of the I&B and the obvious lack of communication between the CFSI and I&B officials, some significant milestones have been crossed: V. Shantaram, during his tenure, introduced the CFSI mobile vans that cover rural areas where children do not normally have access to such films. This was then greatly extended by Amol Palekar. Palekar also changed the funding pattern of CFSI productions so that instead of a fixed budget of Rs 6 lakh per film, the budget of a CFSI production is now decided according to its theme. Moreover, he introduced the idea of co-producing films with the State Film development Corporations. Additionally, while the idea of organizing International Children's Film Festivals was proposed in the early years itself, (Kamini Kaushal claims it was hers), the CFSI now organizes an International Children's Film

Festival once every two years at Hyderabad. This is apart from also regularly holding festivals in the different states, conducting workshops and 'awareness weeks' for school children across the country and so on. In fact, some states such as Andhra Pradesh and Kerala have exempted all CFSI productions from entertainment tax while others such as Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra have put in place extensive distribution and exhibition networks for CFSI productions. But much work, obviously, remains to be done. In what follows, I will attempt a close-reading of *Malli* (1998), a representative N'CYP/CFSI production, directed by one of its Star-directors, Santosh Sivan, to better understand the way in which the nation imagines its child-spectator.[3]

Working in films in multiple languages, Santosh Sivan is one of Indian cinema's most accomplished and awarded cinematographers. Winner of eleven national awards, Santosh was one of the founding members of the Indian Society of Cinematographers, established in 1995. In 2103, Santosh was offered membership of the prestigious American Society of Cinematographers as well. An alumnus of the FTII, Pune, where he studied cinematography, Santosh is the second son of Malayalam director, Sivan.[4] Sivan (Snr.) owns the *Sivan Studios* in Thiruvananthapuram. There is one line in Santosh Sivan's filmic career, therefore, that runs right into the heart of Malayalam art cinema. Santosh's brother, Sangeeth Sivan, is a director and screenwriter too. *Sivan Studios* has now produced three generations of the best photographers in Kerala. Beginning his Bombay career as cinematographer in Aditya Bhattacharya's *Raakh (1989)*, Santosh has been closely associated with virtually all the 'auteur' directors of Indian cinema today: Shaji Karun, Mani Ratnam (especially), Kalpana Lajmi, M.F. Hussian, Meera Nair,

---

[3] An earlier version of this has appeared as, "Psychoanalysis and the Evil Wthin," Prasenjit Biswas and C.Joshua Thomas, eds., *The Construction of Evil in Northeast India: Myth, Narrative and Dsicourse,*, Sage: N.Delhi, 2012, pp. 81-99. My grateful thanks to the IIAS, Shimla, for nominating me to participate in the ICCSR conference at Kohima out of which the book emerged and to all participants for their comments and suggestions.

[4] The association of the Sivan family with children's entertainment is stellar. The 2013 CSFI festival had as one of its opening films *Keshu*, a film by Sivan [Snr]. about a 'special' child who finds his voice through art, as it were. The theme of the 'special child' is a significant one in many of Santosh Sivan's films too.

Gurinder Chadha and many others.[5] He is a 'mentor' to students at Mira Nair's *Maisha Film Lab* in Uganda. Along with actor Prithviraj Sukumaran and entrepreneur Shaji Nadeshan, Santosh Sivan has also now formed his own film production and distribution company, *August Cinema India Pvt Limited*. The first production venture of the company in 2011 was *Urumi*.

Santosh's directorial debut, in terms of 'adult' film-making was *The Terrorist* (1989), which also marked the cinematic debut of Ayesha Dharker. This was followed by the *magnum opus*, *Asoka* (2001). His subsequent directorial ventures have been: *Navarasa* (2005), *Anandabhadram* (2005), *Prarambha* (2007), *Before the Rains* (2007), *Tahaan* (2008) and *Urumi* (2011). *Tahaan* was his big Bombay-style entertainer. Even so, it revolved around an eight-year old boy of the same name. *Tahaan* also won the Best Feature Film award at CIFEJ (*Centre International du Film pour l' Enfant et la Jeunesse*), as well as the UNICEF Award at the 11th Olympia International Film Festival for Children and Young People in 2008, Greece. Rumours of a foray into Hollywood were very strong at one point as well, with Sivan himself confirming that John Malkovich had asked him to direct Coetzee's, *Waiting for the Barbarians*. (This project has however not materialized to date.) We will return to the Malkovich connection later but it might be appropriate to underline here that Malkovich became a huge fan of Sivan after seeing *The Terrorist*, the film Sivan was directing at the same time as *Malli* and which was released immediately after. Moreover, Sivan's commitment to film-making for children also makes for special comparison with another very talented director in Indian cinema, Vishal Bhardwaj. Indeed, the two are warm admirers of each others

---

[5] As cinematographer, Santosh Sivan's filmography is as follows: *Nidhiyude Katha* (1986), *Raakh* (1989), *Perumthachan* (1990), *Indrajaalam* (1990), *Dr. Pasupathy* (1990), *No: 20 Madras Mail* (1990), *Midhya* (1990), *Thalapathi* (1991), *Yodha* (1992), *Roja* (1992), *Rudaali* (1993), *Gardish* (1993), *Pavitram* (1994), *Nirnayam* (1995), *Barsaat* (1995), *Kala Pani* (1996), *Indira* (1996), *Halo* (1997), *Darmiyan* (1997), *Iruvar* (1997), *Dil Se* (1998), *Malli* (1998), *The Terrorist* (1999), *Phir Bhi Dil Hai Hindustani* (2000), *Pukar* (2000), *Fiza* (2000), *Asoka* (2001), *Tehzeeb* (2003), *Bride and Prejudice* (2004), *Aparichithan (2004)*, *Meenaxi: A Tale of 3 Cities* (2004), *Anandabhadram* (2005), *Navarasa* (2005), *The Mistress of Spices* (2005), *Silsilay* (2005), *Prarambha* (2007), *Before the Rains* (2007), *Tahaan* (2008), *Urumi* (2011), *Thuppakki* (2012), *Rangrezz* (2012).

work and on being awarded the 'Best Film on AIDS' by the Bill Gates Foundation, India, 2007, Bhardwaj acknowledged Sivan's *Prarambha* as the better film.

Malli was Sivan's second directorial venture for the N'CYP/CFSI, the first being *Halo* (1997), about a little girl who has lost her dog. *Malli* won five major awards: Best film on Environment Conservation/ Preservation, 46th National Film Festival; Best Child Artist, 46th National Film Festival; 2nd Prize for Feature Films & Videos, Adult Jury, Chicago International Festival, 1999; the Poznan Goats for Best Director; India Poznan Goats for Best Child-actress and Poznan Goats for Music.

Malli is loosely based on the story of the 'Blue Bead' from Norah Burke's, *The Jungle Picture* (1960). Norah Burke was a British author who wrote several books of stories for young people about India and Sri Lanka, many of them concerning the wildlife found in the more remote regions of the Indian subcontinent. *The Jungle Picture* is a collection of twenty-two short stories about the Himalayan foothills based on Burke's experiences and memories of her years in India where her father was a forest officer. [Sivan's other favorite reading from his childhood days was *The Jungle Book*.]

Apart from his general love of making films for children, Sivan repeatedly and warmly recalls in many interviews the lushness of the visual landscape of Kerala and its peculiar mix of constant rain and sunshine which defines notions of light and shade that he continues to use in his cinematography:

> Kerala is a place where it's always raining ... . We have lots of elements of water. Either there is a pond, or it's raining all the time; we have sea water or backwater. So the presence of water is very much in our life. And I am always very fascinated by this. … [W]e used to play hockey and all that. So it was my job to stand on top of the terrace and look at the clouds. … All my friends would call up and ask, '*Do you think it will rain today or not?*'
>
> Slowly I realized that I could time it very well. But unconsciously what it did was while watching these clouds build up or disappear I also started seeing different shades of green and blue and how this plant will look against this kind of blue or against this kind of cloud that green is beautiful. I started seeing magical moments in it. Suddenly when the sun

would burst through after a quick shower and light up the whole damn thing. Or then a new freshness of green or things like that. So you start understanding about nature and that the best thing about nature is its constant change.[6]

This, apart from his many fond memories of childhood, of the richness of the folk-cultures of Kerala which surrounded his growing-up years and most especially, of the many wonderful stories he heard from his grandmother. There is one particular interview where he describes, in evocative terms, the amazing transition opened to his young mind when he was first introduced to these vibrant folk-arts after the strict, black–and-white 'missionary school' days at Loyola:

> I studied in a school called Loyola … And what's most interesting is that everything from [the] blackboard to the priest's dress to the school uniform to the pencil to the pen … everything has a black and white quality to it. Everything!! […] Then you have someone like me having this kind of education … taken to a place called Haripad which is like a center of all cultural activities where there are festivals for 10 days, where 10 elephants come, they bathe, there is lush green backwater and there is this whole visual culture of art forms like *kathakali*, *theiyam* ... .
>
> Because you have come from a black and white kind of scenario into this wonderful world, you are able to understand it on a very subconscious level. And then in Haripad you meet your grandmother. Because my grandmother used to sketch and draw. She [also] had all those tales to tell. All kinds of tales of good and evil, how the *yakshees* and ghosts wearing those old fashioned clothes would appear suddenly […] Maybe these are the fist kinds of visuals that you imagine. These kinds of stories which you have heard but not seen in real life.
>
> All your influences make you imagine some things … many things … . When in school I read a book called *The Jungle Book*. And then there was this amazing story called Blue Bead … which I thought was visually very good. I made that into a film called *Malli*. This is very funny, because after I made that film, a lot of my old school friends met after 25 years and we all caught up because we all share the same stories.[7]

Childhood for Sivan then is clearly the unsullied, Wordsworthian time of bountiful Nature; of enchanting dreams and tender memories.

[6] Warrior, Shobha, "The Journey from Hockey to Cinematography," *Filmfare*, 13
[7] David Walsh, *Filmfare*, 9 October 1998: 36

It is also a world of wonder—of adventure and ghosts and all manner of magical beings that a child's mind, (in the Romantic imagination), fantasizes about. Or, to put this in another way, a world that is the polar opposite of that theorized by Freud/psychoanalysis. It is significant, therefore, that *Malli* is bracketed between two dream-sequences. The film begins with the eponymous heroine covering her eyes with her hands as she says to herself, 'As soon as I shut my eyes I see a beautiful dream.' Of course in technical, psychoanalytic terms this is not a dream but a conscious wish-fulfilling fantasy as little Malli closes her eyes and wishes for the things most precious to her heart: a red *choli*, a green *ghagra* with silver spots (like those on the spotted deer) and a sky-blue *dupatta*.

However, this inaugural sequence is enormously significant. Little Malli is dressed here in her usual 'tribal' attire of the white *sari.* But before she closes her eyes to begin dreaming she makes a crown of weeds for herself which she places on her head. Yet her crown recalls uncannily the biblical crown of thorns. To anticipate the conclusion— my analysis will argue that this burden of the cross that the 'tribal'girl[8]/ child carries (in the nation) will take her, *within* the trajectory of Sivan's films, precipitously close to a very violent denouement. However, this is not a reading Sivan will accept. Indeed, in many ways it is the opposite of his stated views. I will argue my case nevertheless through the entry-points into new the modes of history-writing enabled by the insights of Melanie Klein discussed in the second chapter. As much as an 'application' of Klein, therefore, my film-analysis here also tries to illustrate what a 'return to Klein' might achieve.

---

[8] This is how Malli is referred to in the film by the Forest-officer who is not only the representative of the idealized State but also Cukoo's father. However, in critical writing in India today, this term has received a whole new political charge especially through Gayatri Spivak's translations of Mahashweta Devi. This lineage, of a *different* understanding of 'tribal' history, of course extends all the way to Ranajit Guha's classic, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial Iindia*, Delhi: OUP, 1986. My understanding of this term has been deeply enriched by this new scholarship. Mainstream Bombay cinema has however typically portrayed the 'tribal,' especially in its popular motif of the rural belle, as the exotic, the Noble Savage. But there has also been a more nuanced, politicized representation of this world in 'parallel' cinema through films such as Mrinal Sen's *Mrigaya* (1976).

Malli begins as a story-within-a-story. Little Malli, who is eight years old, is narrating a story to her friends: the trees and animals of the forest. In fact, the opening shots of the film are of the lake in the forest, [recall Sivan's memories of the ubiquitous presence of water in Kerala], and a massive tree-trunk in the foreground. Malli's arm appears from behind the trunk as she starts her story. This is the story of how the monkeys were jumping on the trees and how the river was formed by the gathering of the dewdrops. [This gathering of dewdrops will be of importance in the narrative too.] Narrated in future/-continuous tense, Malli then informs her forest-friends (and the audience) that she is the queen of the forest. She bathes in the river and after this ritual of purification, leans against a tree-trunk and begins to 'dream.'

The 'dream' is, moreover, intensely prophetic. As she shuts her eyes Malli sees herself in her fantasy attire. As this imagined Malli dances in her new clothes, she catches sight of a deer-calf that is standing by and watching. The Malli in the dream walks towards the fawn. She notices it has no spots. But she tells the fawn not to worry because she will give it silver spots from her own *ghagra*. However, at this point, the dream suddenly becomes extremely disturbing. In the dream Malli can smell fire in the forest, see trees being burnt, nests destroyed and the fawn itself caught in the forest-fire. But she is relieved when she sees herself finally saving the calf in the dream too. Exhausted by the distressing elements that have erupted into and interrupted her reverie, Malli wants to open her eyes. But the imagined Malli, now literally represented as her double, stands in front of the 'real' Malli and sternly warns her not to because the dream will end if she does. However, Malli decides to open her eyes anyway and with this the main narrative of the film begins. Very importantly, as she cuts short her daydream and runs into the forest, Malli throws off the 'crown' on her hair too.

It is as Malli is walking home that she meets Cukoo who has run away again and is hiding behind some boulders by the lake. Since Cukoo cannot speak she throws a bunch of reeds to draw Malli's attention. As the two friends hide behind the stones, Cukoo gestures to Malli to tell Muthuswamy, her father's orderly who has come looking for her, to go away. Malli tries, but is unsuccessful. Muthu knows well that the little girls are friends. And to force Malli to reveal Cukoo's whereabouts, he starts hitting Malli with a reed. Enraged, Cukoo emerges from behind

the rocks and physically fights with Muthu till she is carried away. Malli is deeply touched by this show of affection and recalls, in flashback, her initials meeting with Cukoo.

The first meeting between the two girls is at an unspecified location. On the roof of the remnants of what appears to be a hut, Malli finds a soft-toy. She picks it up, very curious. As she is examining the toy Cukoo appears and snatches the doll back. She then blows a paper-trumpet loudly into Malli's ears. Malli is annoyed and retorts. In reciprocation and to mark the peace, Cukoo offers her chocolates. Malli accepts and tells Cukoo her name, asking Cukoo for hers. It is when Cukoo cannot respond that Malli realizes that her new friend can neither speak nor hear. The second meeting, also in flashback, is when Malli spots Cukoo playing in the open fields by herself. A gift is offered this time too, but now by Malli to her friend. Malli offers Cukoo the honey she is carrying with her and the friendship between the two little girls is cemented from this point.

But from our perspective it is of enormous import that the friendship in *Malli* is between two little girls, one of who has severe speech and hearing impairment. This is of consequence at several levels. At the 'manifest' level is Sivan's own liking/desire to work with 'special children.' In one of the interviews cited earlier he recalls actually modifying the script of *Halo* to provide a part to a physically challenged girl who wanted to be a part of the film.[9] Similarly in *Prarambha*, Sivan's short-film on AIDS in Kannada, the child-artist plays a key role. *Malli* also ends with an acknowledgement to child-artist Vanitha, who plays Cukoo, informing the audience that despite her severe speech and hearing impairment she is now in Class 5. (P. Shweta, the internationally awarded child-actress who plays Malli has herself acted in two of Sivan's subsequent films, *Navarasa* and *Kutty*.)

However, the fact of Cukoo's speech and hearing impairment has other kinds of narrative significance too. From a classical analytical perspective, speech is always 'symptomatic'. But in the light of our readings of Melanie Klein and her radical modifications of classical analytical theory, especially of the many non-verbal ways in which psychic trauma finds expression and etches itself on the body, this

---

[9] Walsh, *Filmfare*, op. cit.

friendship between two little girls which develops primarily through play (and despite the lack of verbal communication), can be unpacked at many levels. [A point to note here is that Cukoo does not use, or seem to need to use sign-language, either at home or with Malli. She 'speaks' through rudimentary sounds and gestures and understands (lip-reads?) her friend and father.]

Further, it is after the second meeting, as Malli too shuts her ears and tries to enter Cukoo's silent world, (Malli's attempt to 'identify with her friend), that the first ominous elements burst into the narrative. Malli is unaware because she has shut her ears but the soundtrack changes dramatically, warning the audience of imminent danger. Still oblivious, Malli is walking under the trees with her ears shut when she suddenly comes up against a large pool of blood. Terrified, she looks up to see poachers with guns shooting at the elephants. The sequence ends with Malli darting away to the old woman, the timekeeper of the forest.

We discussed in the second chapter Partha Chatterjee's idea of the heterogeneous time of the 'postcolonial modern.' To my mind *Malli* is an exuberant but in the end also a beautifully elegiac evocation of the inability of the postcolonial state in India to connect/psychically identify with any of these. The old woman, Moya *dadi*, represents the hoary voice of 'Tradition.' The keeper of old-world secrets and wisdom, she is outside time and of the forest. Within the narrative she represents the most dramatic counterpoint to the poachers who symbolize greed/'Bad Modernity'. Like the prototypical witches of fairy-tales, Sivan's fondness for exotica, she looks wizened and prehistoric; has no family or home. And is regarded with wariness even by the village-folk. (Malli's aunt, for instance, is deeply suspicious of her.) Moya *dadi* has no structural links with the 'empty homogeneous time' of the nation.[10] Instead, she recalls the occasion, in the ancient past, when the jungle had become arid and all the animals had lost their voice. And how then the little rabbit had prayed to the God of the Peacocks for the magical

---

[10] We have referred to Marina Warner's brilliant reading of fairy-tales in the last chapter in, *From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairy Tales and their Tellers*, op cit. The idea of the wizened witch is, needless to say, one of the central motifs around which this genre itself is woven. Warner traces the significance of the changing historical representations of this figure, from the Ancient Sibyl to Mother Goose to the Queen of Sheba. See especially, Chs. 1-6, pp. 3-90.

blue bead to restore their 'speech.' It is she who tells Malli of the magical bead that will give back to Cukoo her power of speech too.

Malli's family and, by implication, her village, are however represented as being on the very threshold of the city.[11] They have a completely harmonious relationship with it. Not only does Malli's father work there but Malli goes to a 'modern' school and has homework she must complete during the vacation. 'Modernity' has entered the village gently and unobtrusively. There is no mention here of why Malli's father has had to leave his family or the hardships he has faced in his search for work away from home. It is only the aunt's bitterness that reminds the audience of the huge difference of privileges that marks the lives and worlds of the two little girls. Cukoo and her father inhabit the heart of the 'modern.' The blue bead is the Kleinian 'good object'/the good breast that must travel across the three worlds, from *dadi* to Cukoo, to make good the traumatic lack with which 'modernity' is scarred. Malli is the agent who will forge the link between these worlds, but this only at a tremendous cost to herself. So while in the end the little 'tribal' girl has indeed acquired the blue bead for her middle-class friend and also saved the spotted deer (an animal, again, of 'national importance'), the *ghagra-choli* that she so passionately longed for are completely torn.

Yet Cukoo understands none of this. She knows neither Malli's secret desire nor the enormous courage and fortitude of her little 'tribal' friend in saving the deer-calf from the poachers. Their friendship too is a strange fusion of intimacy and distance. The circumstances of their relationship—she is an only (deaf and dumb) child of a Forest Officer visiting her father during her vacation when she befriends the 'tribal'

---

[11]   Given the thrust of this paper, I cannot not develop this argument here. But even so it is necessary to mention the landmark Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Bill, 2006, which recognized the rights of 'tribal' and other forest-dwelling communities in 'protected areas' too, for the first time since the colonial state appropriated all forest land in 1850. From this perspective the whole question of 'poaching' and the obvious class-markers of the poachers is, in fact, the most problematic aspect of the film. The film moreover creates a false ideological distinction between the 'good' village folk, represented by Malli and her family and the 'evil' poachers who appear as if from nowhere to plunder and kill. Most importantly, through such a representation, the ruling elite are completely absolved of any complicity in this billion-dollar illegal trade. The very politically charged debate over displacement of traditional communities is also completely glossed over.

girl—encourage them both to break taboos. They both perform rites of entry that are almost suicidal, a loaded word, as we will see. [Malli almost runs into the poachers as she tries to impersonate Cukoo's deafness; Cukoo is almost caught by the poachers when she goes to the forest at night, on Malli's suggestion, to get the blue bead]. Both go a bit too far—geographically, physically, psychologically, or all three—as if atoning for the disconnection of the nation. Or, striving for intimacy in a new form. This is why the dominant motif of the film is of both girls running, either away from their respective homes and together into the forest or to each other's houses. (Not standing still is one way of saving oneself from despair. Besides, as we know from Klein, the over-emphasis on reality or the apparent lack of phantasy is typical of games played by children in the latency period. Malli and Cukoo's games too primarily involve simply running into the forest.) But the process of entering other worlds is riddled with difficulties and misunderstandings. And as Malli experiences repeatedly, it is she who usually gets into trouble on Cukoo's account.

Yet it is also Cukoo who takes the initiative, most of the time, in running away from home despite the disapproval and concern of her father. At the 'manifest' level we are meant to understand this as Cukoo's delightful new-found freedom from her constricting middle-class city-life. (Yet this can also be understood within Kleinian terms of reference of infantile ambivalence and the splitting of objects, including parents, into good and bad.) Cukoo repeatedly runs to the village to seek Malli out. In the only sequence of the film where their games take the form of role-plays, she washes Malli's hair and, subsequently, takes Malli on a jeep-ride through the forest. What is more, in the most dramatic instance of this constant running away, Cukoo slips out of the jeep when her father stops for a moment to talk to his subordinates. This is after her night-out in the forest with Malli when she was almost caught by the poachers. Her father has decided to take her back to the city. But by the time he turns around, Cukoo has vanished. She runs to the riverside to hide among the tall grass. But to her great dismay Malli, whom she has seen and furiously tried to silence, gives her away. (Malli on the other hand is simply wary of getting into trouble on Cukoo's account yet again). Defiant and angry, Cukoo refuses any further communication with Malli till she leaves and throws away the necklace (without the

blue bead at this point) that Malli gifts her. And then promptly comes down with temperature.

But if Malli is repeatedly misunderstood—by Cukoo's father and the veterinary doctor—this 'adult' failure directly mimics the failure of the state. And while this is now of no use the veterinary doctor, who belatedly realizes that it was indeed Malli who had saved the fawn, admits as much with regret:

> Just as mistakes of adults are not visible so also, many times, the goodness of children.[12]

Little Malli is forced to grow up before her time. The *ghagra-choli* is again the trope around which this is woven. Malli asks letter-*mama* (letter-uncle) to write to her father to bring her a new dress from the city. Yet when he arrives, Malli's father has only brought her bangles. Letter-*mama* hadn't written the letter at all, so her father didn't know. But he promises Malli he will bring her the *ghagra-choli* when she attains puberty the next year. However, the *ghagra-choli* does arrive, posted by letter-*mama* from his new town, before Malli has had the natural time to become a 'woman'. But the new dress arrives and immediately imposes responsibilities—of saving the fawn and giving the blue bead to Cukoo.

Let us juxtapose this to a previous sequence in the film. This is Malli's first meeting with letter-*mama*. As she passes by the post-office, little Malli wants to know if it is only Gandhiji whose face appears on Indian stamps. Letter-*mama* informs her then that it could be anybody who has done noble deeds for the nation. Immediately, little Malli shuts her eyes and 'dreams' that her picture is on the Indian stamp too. As representative of the state authorizing this dream, letter-*mama* playfully stamps her forehead.

I now want to link this sequence to Malli's 'dream' at the very end of the film. She has saved the fawn and given Cukoo the blue bead. But her *ghagra-choli* are completely torn. She is sad and exhausted. As Cukoo's jeep drives away the little 'tribal' girl sinks to her knees and cries. She has been incredibly brave and generous. And while Cukoo is delighted with the gift, (she has already gifted Malli her soft-toy), neither the Forest Officer nor the veterinary doctor (even though he

---

[12]   The translations of dialogues from Hindi are all mine

realizes it was she who saved the fawn) have any idea of the tremendous sacrifice Malli has made. Her picture has not made it to the Indian stamp. The film ends nevertheless on an intensely positive note: little Malli shuts her eyes and begins 'dreaming' a new 'dream.' In spite of this, it is not a criticism to suggest that Malli is a deeply let-down child. The two children have connected, clumsily but fiercely. The question still remains: will this generation survive its parents? When a nation fails its children (one child, especially) so violently, what does this say of a culture that encourages not proximity but ignorance across fault-lines?

We have discussed in the second chapter Freud's insights into the formation of groups; the deeply disconcerting idea that a collectivity if formed, above all, on a shared trauma; that a 'people' are most powerfully united through what they agree to hate. I want to draw on this insight to speculate on the dream that little Malli possibly dreamt at the end of the film but that we, in the audience, do not see. I have mentioned earlier that at the same time that he was shooting *Malli* Sivan was also filming *The Terrorist*.[13] From an analytical perspective it is very significant that

---

[13]   In fact, in a curious coincidence Sivan has returned to this theme after fifteen years in *Ceylon* (currently filming; release date 2014). This is how he describes the film in a recent interview to *NDTV*:

I had done *The Terrorist* much earlier [than Shoojit Sircar's *Madras Café*]. It … got an international release, with John Malkovich and Michael Ondaatje presenting it. *Ceylon* is quite different from Shoojit's film. It is the story of six youngsters, who grow up in an orphanage together and get caught in the war. The youngsters are full of fun and life, so it's their story of survival. The story unfolds with the huge canvas of the war in the background. It's a universal story that could happen in any place where there is a political conflict.

Many kids have lost their parents to the ethnic conflict. So the orphans become a big family. It is the story of youngsters growing up together, many wanting to join the rebel forces, mainly due to personal loss. Finally, the war breaks out. My film details what happens to these young people.

Santosh emphasizes that his protagonist here too is inspired by a real character:

I was quite touched by the story of a refugee girl from Sri Lanka, who came to Chennai. India is home to a great number of refugees from all over. The stories of refugees often portray an extreme will to survive and a journey through violence. For a woman refugee, the struggle to survive is much more intense. Sugandha [the actress who plays the lead] plays a refugee, who goes through tremendous suffering. (Website accessed 10th Dec, 2013)

the suicide-bomber in *The Terrorist* is called Malli too. And while this is almost certainly a reading that Sivan will contest, I will argue that (by association) and unconsciously, (of course!), Sivan himself imagines a biography for his little 'tribal' girl—of what it is like for young people (children, adolescents) who grow up feeling they have very little hope. The link between children/martyrdom/suicide-bombers is additionally especially horrific given the history of the Tamil Tigers and their child battalions, cannon fodder who go into battle with cyanide capsules around their necks.[14] (This theme of the child, unwittingly caught in the ruthless and cynical manipulations of 'terrorist' groups, is also the focus of Sivan's *Tahaan*, but set in the context of Kashmir.)

Sivan was already very familiar with the themes of both 'terrorism' and suicide-bombers, given his association with Mani Ratnam. Nevertheless *The Terrorist* is loosely based on the woman suicide-bomber who assassinated Rajiv Gandhi in 1991. Malli (played by Ayesha Dharker), an orphan brought by up the cadres, is a beautiful female guerrilla who knows of no life outside the struggle. Her father was a famous Tamil nationalist poet; her brother a fighter who gained notoriety by swallowing cyanide to evade capture. But most crucially, in Sivan's retelling of the events, Malli chooses in the end *not* to become a human bomb.[15]

---

[14]   As I was writing this piece, Jacqueline Rose's essay, "The Deadly Embrace," in *The Last Resistance*, op. cit, pp.125-136, was a constant companion. She distinguishes here between suicide and martyrdom in the Palestinian context. As stated already, my project has taken shape around her work. It was still gut-wrenching to recognize the horrific parallels between the Israel-Palestine conflict and Sri Lanka. Rose also points out that the difference between the suicide-bombings of the Tamil Tigers, for instance, and the second *intifada* is that while the former is sect-based the latter comes from below, from the people, as it were, as a reaction to an invading army. The simple conclusion is that when the armies pull out, the strategy will cease as has happened following the Israeli pull out from Lebanon. (p.130) There is much truth to this observation; indeed the suicide bombings in Sri Lanka have dramatically decreased with the decimation of the LTTE. The state-violence against Tamils is of course a wholly different matter and continues to be an issue of grave concern. But my trajectory here is slightly different. Rather than an analysis of the Sri Lankan situation per se, Sivan's film uses the ethnic conflict there more as 'backdrop' to represent his generalised idea of a 'terrorist.' We will return to the implications of this.

[15]   In fact, following *Roja* there was a lively debate on the theme of 'terrorism' carried on in the pages of the *Economic and Political Weekly*.

In the opening moments of the film we see her calmly execute a collaborator before distinguishing herself in the capture of a Sri Lankan army base. She is consequently selected for the prestigious suicide bombing of a high-rank Indian politician. Once she reaches the mainland, however, she begins to lose the courage of her convictions. The simple kindness of the Indian farmer she stays with, (who dutifully cares for his ailing wife and is completely unaware of her true identity), touches her deeply. But most damaging to her resolve is her suspicion that she has become pregnant after a desperate battlefield coupling with a dying comrade. These dilemmas, as she prepares for her mission, persuade her of the futility of such acts and she finally decides it is better to build a normal life for her child than to sacrifice both their lives in the service of a political ideal.

The film uses beautiful landscapes as delicate contrasts to the violence of its characters' lives. In particular, water becomes a repeated theme again, whether in the jungle-streams of Malli's home (where she washes away the blood of her enemies), or the cleansing shower of the farm where she stays. Some of the Tigers' sacrifices are poignantly highlighted too. Malli's battlefield lover, for instance, describes the day he left for the camps after burying his books, vowing not to read another word before securing victory. Others are represented as having fallen into the movement through the sheer hopelessness of their lives such as Lotus, the 12-year-old boy, whose entire village was massacred by the authorities. As the hardships and the oppression of the Tamils' lives are revealed, we are asked to appreciate the irony of the film's title. (This notwithstanding the fact that the movement's leader and Malli's mainland contacts are all portrayed as one-dimensional, sinister characters).

Let us hear Sivan himself, in one of his many interviews,[16] discussing his inspiration for *The Terrorist*. This is in the popular film magazine *Filmfare:*[17]

---

[16] In fact, running through the press-coverage of *The Terrorist*, Sivan highlighted what he described as this duality in his career: while he makes his bread-and-butter shooting big-budget commercial films, the films he directs will however be 'realistic', i.e. very low-budget, without song-and dance sequences, with non-professional actors and so on.

[17] M.G. Radhakrishnan, , *Filmfare*, 22 Nov, (2001): 7

SS: I was there when the Rajiv Gandhi assassination happened. I couldn't believe that somebody could actually go in and do it like that, however committed she was. It also made me wonder, what would have made her *not* do it? So I wanted the film to be about what you might feel like at that moment rather than making a very violent film or a political film.

Question: You don't provide much information on the bomber's background. Is she supposed to be Tamil?

SS: When you talk about a suicide bomber in India, this is what comes to your mind. But there are so many others, all over the world - it's not really about a particular group of people or any particular movement. I was watching on television about that guy who did the Oklahoma bombing; it could be someone like that.

This is another interview, this time in the other popular film-magazine *Stardust*, where Sivan restates his views:

When we talk about someone like a suicide bomber, what comes to one's mind immediately is the Rajiv Gandhi assassination, which was actually the starting point for me to make the film. I was wondering what kind of person would actually be able to strap a belt of explosives on herself and then...

I used to wonder, how would someone do something like this? And what possibly could make her *not* do it? From a very human point of view. Supposing she got exposed to all the laws of nature that a woman normally confronts, or a man ...

Here you have a group of young people, mostly teenagers. They are deprived of any kind of education; sex life, smoking, everything is considered harmful, and invariably most of them go off by the time they're 22. All of them are made to believe that being a martyr is the biggest thing to happen and they're given fantastic funerals. It is like the ultimate high for a person in that kind of environment.[18]

Putting aside a close-reading of the interviews for the moment, the two halves of the statement, 'Supposing she got exposed to all the laws of nature that a woman normally confronts, or a man…,' already do not add up. (Recall that little Malli had to grow up before her 'natural' time too). But is it being implied that a man is as inevitable as 'the laws of nature' to a woman's life? As J.Rose (2008 :125-136) notes in the

---

[18] Said, S.F., *Stardust*, 11 May (2001): 22

context of women suicide bombers in Palestine, is the only possible explanation for a woman to become a suicide bomber that she is sick of life because of lack of marriage prospects or simply, 'a man'? The problem with such statements is that the more Sivan generalizes his analysis, the more it loses its power to explain individual cases. If life is so unbearable for Tamil women in Sri Lanka generally, then why did only *this* particular woman choose to become a suicide bomber? We may recall here the speculation in the popular press at the time that the 'real' suicide bomber of Rajiv Gandhi, Thenmozhi Rajaratnam, had been gang-raped by soldiers of the IPKF. Her decision to join the movement, it was strongly implied, was her way of avenging this humiliation. [19]

Analysing descriptions of women suicide bombers in Palestine, Jacqueline Rose speculates on why the idea of a woman suicide bomber is felt to be so inhuman; why the popular press in both Palestine *and* Israel similarly insist on personalizing the motives of the female martyr:

> Why… should there be only one motive? Is a political act degraded by being drawn from the deepest wellsprings of an individual life? Does a personal story forfeit its quality as personal if it finds its way, through the complex detours of history, to a political act?
>
> […]
>
> We need to find a language that will allow us to recognise why, in a world of rampant injustice and inequality, people are driven to do things that we hate. (2008: 133-135)

Is it the theme of revolutionary violence then, and especially the idea of the woman as agent of revolutionary politics, that is the monstrous dream that the Indian nation is too terrified to confront?[20] [Sivan's

---

[19] In the meanwhile the 'real-life' story of *The Terrorist* continues to play out dramatically, with Priyanka Vadra's recent visit, in 2009 to Vellore Jail. to meet Nalini Sriharan, one of the members of the Rajiv Gandhi assassination squad who was spared the death-sentence after she delivered a baby girl in prison. A plea of clemency from Sonia Gandhi was instrumental in this commutation of Nalini's death-sentence to life-imprisonment in 2000. Nalini's husband's plea for clemency is still pending.

[20] We have mentioned, in the second chapter, Partha Chatterjee's influential thesis on the three types of overseas European colonies that came to be established in the nineteenth century and how it was especially the third, i.e., the territories of Asia and

magnum opus, *Asoka*, is similarly his statement on the pointlessness of war and the infinitely greater 'strength' of non-violence].

With this, let us return to another point we have noted earlier. The narrative structure of *Malli* does not unfold along a straight line either. The base-time of the narrative is of Malli closing her eyes to 'dream.' Then there are two flashbacks, in roughly chronological order, where Malli recalls her initial meetings with Cukoo. Subsequently, at the end, the film returns to its beginning roughly closing a circle. This is moreover done through the trope of Malli closing her eyes to 'dream' again. Thus, the story plays with time (using devices specific to the cinema) to merge time and place. But most importantly, I have argued, the film's use of the trope of the 'dream' can be read as a device to evoke the language of the collective unconscious, inhabited by objects and

---

Africa, where the liberal ideology shaped its dual structure of democracy at home and despotism abroad. We have also noted that the whole question of law/legality was central in the way in which this duality was worked out. Operating specifically within this framework, Chatterjee analyzes the figure of the 'terrorist' in somewhat different, but for us crucially relevant, terms from Rose. Chatterjee reminds us that the early decades of the twentieth century initiated another global process—the acceptance of the nation-state as the universally normal, legitimate for of the modern state. Moreover there were two dimensions along which the nation-state was normalized; one was the concept of sovereignty and the other, of a standardized set of governmental practices. Analyzing the 'terrorist' organizations of the early swadeshi period, Chatterjee highlights that the true achievement of this movement was the wide moral legitimacy that was now given to the idea of exemplary action/the sacrifice of the martyr. In fact, the idea of sacrifice was then invoked by the nonviolent Gandhian activists too. To make the exercise of imperial power overseas seem consistent with norms of democracy at home, colonial governments were consequently forced to invoke the rhetoric of law/legality. State-violence was therefore represented as police action, for instance. "But the effect of this pervasive legalism," he astutely remarks, "was, paradoxically, the relative immunity of the body of positive law from nationalist critique. .... Indian nationalists rarely questioned the positive content of the judicial and penal system built by the British ... What they criticized was the moral legitimacy of the founding power that had made the law. (2012: 308) Not only does this explain the apparent contradiction of the new sovereign nation to preserve the entire edifice of positive law designed by the colonial state after Independence, it also perforce meant that across the ideological divide 'terrorism' would now be officially condemned even as the memory of the martyr of this earlier time, cherished. See for this the chapter, "Bombs, Sovereignty and Football," in *The Black Hole of Empire,* op. cit, pp. 264-310.

memories which act as markers of determinant moments of the nation's history.

So using the trope of little Malli closing her eyes I want to want to now run a line from the first 'dream' in *Malli* to the last, and also carry it forward to *The Terrorist*. [Recall that for Klein such an attitude is not a marker of incoherence or inconsistency. The unconscious is outside time. The psychic reality of infancy is not the vertical time of chronology but a perpetual present.] I want to run this line, moreover, through the question that haunts Freud right through *The Interpretation of Dreams*: what happens when someone closes their eyes?[21] J.Rose points out that at the time that he was writing *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud still instructed his patients to close their eyes. Not quite sending the patient to sleep, analysis aimed to freeze or suspend the patient at sleep's threshold. Four years later, as a footnote in the *Standard Edition* points out, this requirement had been dropped, 'he does not even ask them to close their eyes.' Along with many other things it would relinquish— such as hypnosis and male hysteria—Freud/psychoanalysis would, therefore, also ask his/its patients to let go of sleep.

Like the infamous 'Australian aborigine', Rose draws attention to the fact that in this classic text the condition of sleep is another of the limit-points of Freud's thought. Although Freud identified all the features of the dream-work not only in symptom-formation but also in jokes and slips of tongue, the dream—because of the condition of sleep—partly escapes these. Or, to put this in another way, it is the state of sleep which makes a special case for the dream. In sleep, our unconscious thoughts take on hallucinogenic form. It is sleep, therefore, which brings dreams closer to psychosis than neurosis.

Following this, the central question for Rose is: what was sleep for Freud? What kind of problems did it present him with, where did it lead? To what else may someone be alluding, even if unconsciously, when they are talking about sleep? In a painstaking reading of the very difficult of Chapter 7 of *The Interpretation*, Rose teases out the massive uncertainty that stalks this most 'psychological' of chapters. Freud

---

[21] My reading of *The Interpretation of Dreams* here owes deeply to J. Rose's essay, "On Not Being Able to Sleep: Rereading *The Interpretation of Dreams*," in *On Not Being Able to Sleep*, op. cit, pp. 105-124.

says repeatedly, 'from here onwards all our ways lead into the dark.' As soon as sleep becomes the focus, the fear of the dark, instead of a metaphor for the limits of knowledge, a salutary condition, becomes— precisely—fear. Like a night-terror, something a child goes to sleep, afraid of confronting. We have mentioned earlier Rose's reading of *Totem and Taboo* as a critique of authority. I want to now place this beside her reading of *The Interpretation of Dreams*:

> Could it be then that the greatest fear for the analyst is not the fear of not knowing, one's loss of omnipotence, but another, more tangible, more physical fear, the fear of slipping backwards (regression is of course also central to this chapter), of turning—with awesome, hallucinogenic vividness—into a frightened child? […]
>
> Once you start thinking of it like this, then sleep appears, less as a metaphor for, more as a pathway *into* something else. When we go to sleep we close our eyes. … [Yet] sleep, as all insomniacs know, cannot be willed. It only comes inadvertently. … [F]alling asleep is one the ways we pay tribute to the unconscious, to the idea of something vital and uncontrollable in our minds. If sleep cannot be willed, crucially we never know what will happen—or where exactly we are going—when we go to sleep. (2003: 110)

In an outstanding reading of *The Interpretation of Dreams,* Rose then underscores that the central concern for Freud in this epoch-making book was that of the child. From the dream of Irma's injection to [the] famous the dream of the burning child to the dream of the mother who rushes to protect her child from the vision of the insane uncle, it is repeatedly the child who takes Freud to the boundaries of the mind. In fact, the overwhelming wish of the dreamer is simply that—to dream. Because while dreaming it is the living psyche, the soul of the child that awakens. Moreover, Rose points out that when Freud speaks of infantile wishes here it is, above all, a wish *for* infancy; the wish to go back to a time when we were uninhibited and unashamed. Additionally Rose emphasizes that at this stage in his writing Freud himself referred to the period of infancy re-evoked by the dreamer as 'prehistoric': 'Biologically, dream life seems to me to derive entirely from the residues of the prehistoric period of life (between ages one and three)' (1898; cited by Rose in 2003: 118). Carrying Freud forward on the same ground,

Rose then asks, if part of our mind which travels back is unconscious to us, how can we be possibly sure just how far back we may go? She then links her question to Freud's comment on the very last pages of *The Interpretation:*

> Do not the unconscious impulses revealed in dreams possess the value of real forces in our inner life? Is the ethical significance of our suppressed wishes to be treated as unconscious trifle, for just as they create dreams, they may one day create other things? (cited by Rose, 2003: 120)

For Rose, Freud's question here not only links back to the ancient wisdom of dream as prophecy. But she [also] concludes by observing [in tribute to Klein?] that although dreams are not prophetic they are generative, forward-looking, but in an unpredictable sense. Precisely because they lead us back into the deepest recesses of our psyche, they may lead forward into something else.

The attempt in this chapter has been to close-read Santosh Sivan's *Malli* as a representative case of the way that the nation, through the institution of the CFSI/N'CYP, imagined/(s) its child-spectator at a specific moment in its history. At the 'manifest' level *Malli* is a story of two little girls and a magical blue bead. The CFSI describes the film on its website it as a story of the trials and tribulations of friendship and the powers of the imagination. Yet, as I have also attempted in my reading of *Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne*, Freud/psychoanalysis provides us a conceptual apparatus to read between the lines of the narrative, as it were. Doing so, and carrying Freud further along paths which he was sometimes reluctant to tread, through the work of Melanie Klein for example, I have argued that a Kleinian reading of *Malli* might give us insights into possible biographies of childhood that the nation (and, of course, Sivan himself) would find difficult to confront. In his conclusion to *The Interpretation of Dreams* Freud similarly attempts to absolve the reader from the appalling unconscious desires he uncovers in dreams; from their uninhibited murderousness, fear and/or sexual jealousy. (Recall that the blue bead lies in the eternal present of the unconscious, not the vertical time of chronology). But for Freud, to recoil in horror from the violence of the dream is psychic death. The task of psychoanalysis, Rose has insistently reminded us, is not so much

to undo the forgetting of traumatic pasts as to put poetry back into the mind. As a tribute to the intensity of Freud's vision, my reading of *Malli* urges that we too transform our psychic realities into a 'political' understanding of our present.

Conclusion: Childhood in the
Time of Rupert Murdoch

᠅

This book is situated between past and future. It looks back at two significant templates for imagining childhood in India. The first is represented by early-twentieth-century Bengal and the second by the CFSI and the classical years of nation-building under Nehru. But there is, of course, a further reconfiguration of 'Indian childhood' that has already been underway for the last three decades or so, roughly contemporaneous with the program of economic liberalization undertaken since the late-1980s. Implicit in the intellectual ambition of the book is to look ahead that moment too.

Culturally, the 1980s in India mark the moment of television.[1] Or, to put this in another way, the moment when cinema is already seen

---

[1] The facts are now common knowledge. Till about the mid-70s the thrust of state-policies in India was to use television primarily for 'national development.' The abuses of the media during the Emergency however highlighted the urgent need for an 'independent' body and the *Prasar Bharati*, (the Broadcasting Corp. of India), modelled on the BBC was conceptualized and the *Prasar Bharati* Bill introduced in Parliament in 1979. By the mid-80s however, these 'developmental' priorities had been quite decisively sidestepped as *Doordarshan* itself started selling broadcast time to multinational companies for sponsored serials. This was simultaneous with the introduction of color television in 1982 and the Special Extension Plan of 1984 that aimed at reaching '70% of the Indian population.' Subsequently, 1991 saw the launch of *Star TV* whose major shareholder is Rupert Murdoch.

Currently, *Doordarshan* exists not only in competition with channels such as *Star, Sony, CNN* or *NDTV* but also regional networks such as *Sun TV* or *ETV*, making for an extremely complex and differentiated system of broadcasting networks. Current battles over terrestrial and satellite broadcasting are, of course, completely changing the [\

as, in some ways, a dying art-form. In 1995, cinema celebrated its 100th birthday. Chris Petit comments in his video *Negative Space* (1999) on a similar phenomenon in Europe: "The cinema is becoming increasingly about what is past. It becomes a mausoleum as much as a palace of dreams."

Further the new electronic/digital technologies are putting in place new notions of spectatorship. And alongside, new notions of community as well, defined now not in terms of the classical nation-state (whose 'centralizing' tendencies were crucial to the growth and development of the many 'national' film-industries) but in terms of satellite-footprints instead. 1997 saw the first marketing of films on digital format.

An understanding of the very *nature* of these new mass-cultural forms is, therefore, crucial to an understanding of the changed nature of the state in India too. In one of the most incisive analyses of the massive aesthetic-political implications of the new media for celluloid cinema in the European context, Laura Mulvey observes:

> The resonance of ageing, and of death associated with cinema's centenary [in 1995] coincided with the arrival of a technology that created a divide between the 'old' and the 'new' media. However significant the development of video had been for film, the fact that all forms of information and communication can now be translated into binary coding with a single system signals more precisely the end of an era. …[T]he digital, as an abstract information system, made a break with analogue imagery, finally sweeping away the relation with reality

---

contours of the imagined community of the nation as conceptualized by, for instance, Vikram Sarabhai, father of Indian television.

Television-studies is itself a huge and exciting new field of research. The classic study here for me remains Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form,* London: Routledge, 1990. Important studies in the Indian context include, Ashish Rajadhyakha, "Beaming Messages to the Nation," *Journal of Arts and Ideas*, 19 (1990): 33-52 and also the Special Issue on "Gender, Media and the Rhetorics of Liberalization," *Journal of Arts and Ideas*, 32-33 (April 1999). See in addition Nilanajana Gupta, *Switching Channels: Ideologies of Television in India*, Delhi: OUP, 1998; Binod C. Agarwal, *Children's Television in India: A Situational Analysis*, N. Delhi: Content Publishing, 1999; Arvind Rajagopal, *Politics After Television: Hindu Nationalism and the Reshaping of the Public in India*, N. Delhi Cambridge University Press 2001 and Melissa Butcher, *Transnational Television: When* Star *Came to India*, N. Delhi: Sage, 2003.

which had, by and large, dominated the photographic tradition. The sense of the end of cinema was thus complicated aesthetically by a crisis of the photographic sign as index. (2012: 17)[2]

Specifically vis-à-vis children's entertainment in India, the most obvious marker of this changed cultural-political moment has been the explosion in the animation industry.[3] This has occurred both in the form of outsourcing as also the development of indigenous cartoon characters: films such as *Hanuman* (2005), *Ghatotkach* (2008) or *Chhota Bheem*, who is now one the most successful franchises of our times. [The recent tie-up between *Disney* and *Yash Raj Films* for the production of *Roadside Romeo* is symptomatic of the first.] Further, the world of animation has had its spin-offs in cinema too as *KRRISH*, India's first super-hero, was born in 2006.[4]

This is in addition to a whole new expertise in niche-marketing/ merchandising for children that perhaps has no parallels in recent history. The larger philosophical implications of these developments raise questions such as, what happens when Barbie starts wearing 'Indian' clothes? How do we make sense of the new cartoons from East Asia? How do current battles over terrestrial versus satellite broadcasting impact the field of entertainment for the child?

In fact, the broader concern that the new media have dramatically foregrounded is the 'relevance' of the template provided by the Bengal Renaissance (Satyajit Ray) to national self-definition in the new millennium. But ends, they say, rewrite beginnings. And as new work emerges to analyze the ways in which the new electronic/ digital technologies impact notions of childhood in late-twentieth-

---

[2] Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x A Second: Stillness and the Moving Image*, op. cit.

[3] Animation is, of course, a world in itself. Classics here range all the way from Eisenstein's fascination with Disney, *Eisenstein on Disney*, op. cit, to Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart, *How to Read Donald Duck: Imperialist Ideology in the Disney Comic,* London: International General, 1984 to Airel Dorfman, *Empire's Old Clothes: What the Lone Ranger, Babar and Other Innocent Heroes Do to Our Minds*, Rpt. ed, London: Penguin, 1996.

[4] This is the work that I was doing when ill-health struck. So I have not been able to give my reading here more concrete shape. But almost as a teaser to this vibrant, beautiful world of animation, I have included some publicity posters/stills of the films and characters mentioned.

century India, this will inevitably also mean a rethinking of concepts of childhood crafted in, for instance, turn-of-century Bengal. My case here, moreover, seems to be quite dramatic. While we will not be able develop this theme, we will conclude by noting that the show-stopper at the 18th International Children's Film Festival of India, 14-20 November 2013, was the animated version of *GGBB*, Shilpa Ranade's *Goopy Gawaiyya Bagha Bajaiyya.*

So even as the book looks back (wistfully?) at the end of an era, it looks ahead to challenging work on childhood in India in the new millennium.

Bibliography

(1999), Agarwal, Binod C, *Children's Television in India: A Situational Analysis*, N. Delhi: Content Publishing.

(1962), Aries, Philippe, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, trans., Robert Baldick, Vintage Books: New York.

(1989), Arnold, David, *Colonizing the Body: State, Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth Century India,* Delhi: OUP.

(1998), Bandhopadhyaya, Shibaji, *Gopal, Rakhal, Dwanda, Shamash*, Calcutta: Papyrus.

(2000), Basu, Amit Ranjan, "The Coming of Psychoanalysis in Colonial India: The Bengali Writings of Dr. Girindrasekhar Bose," Tapati Guha-Thakurta, ed. *Culture and the Disciplines*, *Enreca Occasional Paper Series*, no. 5, CSSSC: Calcutta: 36-54.

(1997), Bettelheim, Bruno, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy-Tales,* NY: Vintage/Random House.

(1994), Bhabha, Homi K, *Nation and Narration*, NY: Routledge.

(2006), Bhattacharya, Mihir, "Conditions of Visibility: People's Imagination and *Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne*," Moinak Biswas, ed., *Apu and After: Re-visiting Ray's Cinema*, Calcutta, NY & London: Seagull, 140-191.

(1999), Biswas, Moinak "Bengali Film Debates: The Literary Liaison Revisited*," Jadavpur Journal of the Moving Image*, 1 : 1-13.

Bose, G.S, *The Yoga Sutras*, Calcutta: Indian Psycho-Analytical Society, date of publication not mentioned.

(1921),———, *The Concept of Repression,* Phd. diss, University of Calcutta.

(1945), ———, *Everyday Psychoanalysis*, Calcutta: Suchil Gupta.

(1998), Bose, Pradip, ed*., Samiyiki: Purano Samayikpatrer Prbandha Sankalan*, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers.

(1999), ———, "Sons of the Nation: Child Rearing in the New Family," Partha Chatterjee, ed., *Texts of Power: Emerging Disciplines in Colonial Bengal*, Samya/ CSSSC: Calcutta: 120-144.

(1998), Bott Spillus, Elizabeth, ed., *Melanie Klein Today: Developments in Theory and Practice*, (2 vols.), London: Tavistock/ Rooutledge.

(2012), ——— and Edna O'Shaughnessy, eds, *Projective Identification: The Fate of a Concept* (The New library of Psychoanalysis), Sussex & NY: Routledge.

(2003), Butcher, Melissa *Transnational Television: When* Star *Came to India*, N. Delhi: Sage.

(1997), Butler, Judith, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection,* Stanford: Stanford UP.

(1989), Chakrabarty, Dipesh, *Rethinking Working- Class History: Bengal 1890-1941*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

(2001), ———, *Provincilaising Europe: Postcolonial thought and Historical Difference,* Delhi: OUP.

(2010) Chakraborty, Ajita, ed.,*My Life as a Psychiatrist*, Kolkata: Stree.

(1986), Chatterjee, Partha, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse*? Delhi: OUP.

(2004), ———, *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World*, NY: Columbia UP.

(2012), ———, *The Black Hole of Empire: History of a Global Practice of Power*, ND: Orient Blackswan.

(2013), ———, "Subaltern Studies and *Capital,*" *EPW*, vol. XLVIII.37. Sept. 14:69-75

(1998), Chowdhury, Indira, *The Frail Hero and Virile History: Gender and the Politics of Culture in Colonial Bengal*, Delhi: OUP.

(1992), Crary, Jonathan, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*, Camb, Mass. & London: The MIT Press.

(1967; rpt. 1994), Debord, Guy, *Society of the Spectacle*, NY: Zone Books.

(1989), Eisenstein, S.M. *Eisenstein on Disney*, London: Heineman.

(1990), Elsaesser, Thomas and Adam Barker, eds, *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative*, London: BFI Publishing.

(1999), Ernst, Waltraud and Bernard Harris, eds, *Race, Medicine, Empire*, London and NY: Routledge.

Freud, Sigmund, Standard Edition, London: Hogarth Press

(1914), ———, "On Narcissism: An Introduction "

(1915), ———, "Mourning and Melancholia"

(1919), ———, "The Uncanny"

(1931), ———, 'Female Sexuality,'

(1931), ———, *Civilisation and its Discontents*

(1996), Frank, Claudia, "The Origins of Disquieting Discoveries by Melanie Klein: The Possible Significance of the case of Erna," *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, vol. 77: 1101-1126.

(1986), Guha, Ranajit, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*, Delhi: OUP.

(1998), Gupta, Nilanajana, *Switching Channels: Ideologies of Television in India*, Delhi: OUP.

(2001), Hartnack, Christinane, *Psychoanalysis in Colonial India*, Delhi: OUP.

(1993), Jay, Martin, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought,* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

(1987), Kapur, Geeta, "Mythic Material in Indian Cinema*," Journal of Arts and Ideas*, 14 -15: 79-108

(1978), Kakkar, Sudhir, *The Inner World: A Psychoanalytic Study of Childhood and Society in India*, N. Delhi: OUP, 1978.

(1992), Kaviraj, Sudipta, "The Imaginary Institution of India," in Partha Chatterjee and Gyanendra Pandey, eds, *Subaltern Studies VII: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, Delhi: OUP, 1-39.

(1995), ———, "Democracy and Development in India" in Amiya Kumar Bagchi, eds, *Democracy and Development: States, Markets, and Societies in Their Context*, NY: St. Martin's Press, in association with International Economic Association.

(1932), Klein, Melanie, *The Psycho-Analysis of Children*, London: The Hogarth Press.

(1961), ———, *Narrative of a child analysis: the conduct of the psychoanalysis of children as seen in the treatment of a ten year old boy*, London: The Hogarth Press.

(2002), ———, *Envy and Gratitude (1946-1963)*, London: The Free Press.

(1937), ——— and Joan Riviere *Love, Hate and Reparation*, London: The Hogarth Press.

(1952), ———, Paula Heinman, Susan Isaacs and Joan Riviere, *Developments in Psycho-Analysis*, ed. Joan Riviere, London: Hogarth Press.

(1986), Kohon, Gregorio, ed, *The British School of Psychoanalysis: An Independent Tradition*, London: Free Association Books.

(2004), Lacan, Jacques, *Ecrits: A Selection,* trans, Bruce Fink et.al, NY: W.W. Norton & Company.

(1984), Lauretis, Teresa De, *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema,* London: Macmillan.

(1983), Metz, Christian, *Psychoanalysis and Cinema: The Imaginary Signifier*, trans. Celia Britton, Anwyl Williams, Ben Brewster, Alfred Guzzetti, London: Macmillan.

(1974), Mitchell, Juliet, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, London: Basic Books.

(1986), Mitchell, Juliet, ed., *The Selected Melanie Klein*, ed. London: The Hogarth Press, The Institute of Psychoanalysis and The Melanie Klein Trust.

(1982), ———, and Jacqueline Rose, eds., *Feminine Sexuality; Jacques Lacan and the ecole freudienne*, trans. Jacqueline Rose, NY :Pantheon Books, 1982.

(1985), Mukherjee, Meenakshi, *Realism and Reality: The Novel and Society in India*, Delhi: OUP.

(1975), Mulvey, Laura, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen,*: 6-18.

(1992), ———, *Citizen Kane*, London: BFI.

(1998), ———, "Notes on *Citizen Kane*," in *Reading Melanie Klein*, eds., John Philips and Lyndsey Stonebridge, London &NY: Routledge: 245-250.

(2006; rpt. 2102), Mulvey, Laura, *Death 24x A Second: Stillness and the Moving Image,* London: Reaktion Books.

(1995), Nandy, Ashis, *The Savage Freud and Other Essays on Possible and Retrievable Selves*, Delhi: OUP.

(1999), Obeysekere, Gananath, "Further Steps in Relativization: The Indian Oedipus Revisited," in *Vishnu on Freud's Desk: A Reader in Psychoanalysis and Hinduism*, eds, T.G. Vaidyanathan and Jeffery J. Kripal, Delhi: OUP, 147-163.

(2001), Pati, Biswamoy and Mark Harrison, eds, *Health, Medicine, Empire: Perspectives on Colonial Medicine*, Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2001.

(1998), Philips, John and Lyndsey Stonebridge, eds, *Reading Melanie Klein*, London: Routledge.

(2000), Prasad, M. Madhava *Ideology of the Hindi Film: A Historical Construction*, Delhi: OUP.

(2008), ———, "Book Review: *Apu and After*," *Economic & Political Weekly*, Jan. 19, 28-32.

(2001), Radhakrishnan, M.G., *Filmfare*, 22 Nov: 7

(1987), Rajadhyaksha, Ashish, "The Phalke Era: Conflict of Traditional Form and Modern Technology,' *Journal of Arts and Ideas*, 14-15 :47-78.

(1990), ———, "Beaming Messages to the Nation," *Journal of Arts and Ideas*, 19: 33-52

(1993), ———, " Satyajit Ray: Ray Films and the Ray Movie," *Journal of Arts and Ideas*, 23-24: 7-16.

(2008), ———, *Indian Cinema in the Time of Celluloid: From Bollywood to the Emergency*, ND: Tulika.

(2001), Rajagopal, Arvind, *Politics After Television: Hindu Nationalism and the Reshaping of the Public in India*, N. Delhi Cambridge Univ. Press.

(1999), Ramanujan, A.K. "The Indian Oedipus," in *Vishnu on Freud's Desk A Reader in Psychoanalysis and Hinduism*, eds, T.G. Vaidyanathan and Jeffery J. Kripal, Delhi: OUP: 109-136.

(1989), Raval, Bela, *Children's Films in India: A Study*, NFAI, Pune.

(1990), Robinson, Andrew, *Satyajit Ray : The Inner Eye*, Calcutta: Rupa and Co.

(1984; rpt, 1992), Rose, Jacqueline, *The Case of Peter Pan: Or The Impossibility of Children's Fiction,* Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press.

(1993), ———, *Why War? Psychoanalysis, Politics and the Return to Melanie Klein,* London: Blackwell.

(1998), ———, *States of Fantasy*, NY: OUP

(2003), ———, *On Not Being Able to Sleep: Psychoanalysis in the Modern World*, London: Chatto and Windus.

(2005), ———, *The Question of Zion*, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press.

(2008), ———, *The Last Resistance*, Seagull: Calcutta.

(2011), ———, *Proust among the Nations: From Dreyfus to the Middle East*, Chicago & London: The Univ. of Chicago Press.

(1979), Said, Edward, *The Question of Palestine*, Times Books: NY

(2003), ———, *Freud and the Non-European,* London: Verso.

(2001), Said, S.F., *Stardust*, 11 May: 22

(1983), Silverman, Kaja, *The Subject of Semiotics*, NY: OUP.

(1954), Sinha, Tarun Chandra "A Short Sketch of Girindrasekhar Bose," *Samiksha*, 62-74.

(2003), Soufan, Mustafa, *Jacques Lacan and the Question of Psychoanalytic Training*, trans, J. Rose, London: Macmillan Press.

(1993), Spivak, Gayatri, *Outside* in *the Teaching Machine*, NY: Routledge.

(1998), Stonebridge, Lyndsey, *The Destructive Element: British Psychoanalysis and Modernism*, NY: Routledge.

(1998), Tharu, Susie "Citizenship and its Discontents," in Mary E. John and Janaki Nair eds, *A Question of Silence? The Sexual Economies of Modern India*, Delhi: Kali for Women: 216-242

(2010), Vasudevan, Ravi *The Melodramatic Public: Film Form and Spectatorship in Indian Cinema*, Delhi: Permanent Black.

(1998), Walsh, David, *Filmfare*, 9 October. 36

(1996), Warner, Marina, *From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairy Tales and their Tellers*, London: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1996.

(1999), Warrior, Shobha, "The Journey from Hockey to Cinematography," *Filmfare*, 13

(1990), Williams, Raymond, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form, London: Routledge,* 1990.

(1997), Zizek, Slavoj, *The Plague of Fantasies*, London: Verso.