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NATIVE MOTION PICTURE KARMA: SOUTH ASIAN FOUNDATIONS OF MODERNISM AND SENSUOUS KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION CONTRA EUROUNIVERSALIST PRACTICES

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

FILM AND DIGITAL MEDIA

by

Ebadur Rahman

June 2022

The Dissertation of Ebadur Rahman is approved:

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Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies

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Abstract

NATIVE MOTION PICTURE KARMA: SOUTH ASIAN FOUNDATION OF

MODERNISM AND SENSUOUS KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION CONTRA

EUROUNIVERSALIST PRACTICES

Ebadur Rahman

Native motion picture karma proposes a critical study of European

Modernism as a performative model for thinking about South Asian film and art.

The principal thrust of my dissertation is to delineate the erased and suppressed

minor[1] South Asian histories through the lens of South Asian art and cinema,

practiced as what Karl Marx dubbed sensuous knowledge or "practical, human

sensuous activity,"[2] contra the systemic violence of Euro-universality and, the

modernism-fascism complex.

My original contribution to the field of cinema study and art history would

be to evidence that interwar Modernism is a Eurasian production; this modernism

is founded on the heady mix Vedantic goddess worshipping, tantra and syncretic

and riverine Islam of the larger Bengal-Balkan Islamic Complex —not the desert

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[1] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a minor literature* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

[2] Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach." Accessed August 20, 2018. https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/theses.htm

Islam of the Arabia—with its deep and radical emphasis on spiritual ecology or *ziraat* (زراعة) in relation to *insaf* (انصاف) or justice and development of spirit or *ruhaniyat* (شروع) trafficked as Traditionalist knowledge.

My dissertation is not only a critical study of the muted matrix of fascism in Modernism, but a historical accounting for key erased events that mark what Gilles Deleuze called the shift from the "true" grand narratives—of Europeanness, nationalism, subjecthood—to an eliminated history in Eurasian cultural memory vis-à-vis modernism-fascism complex.

Entangling cinema study, art history, and media archeology, my theoretical endeavor will identify and interrogate the protocols and procedures that enable a politics of erasure, as well as the historical blind spots that have maintained the coherence of Anglo-Eurasian art history and film study within the context of modernism. Using key figures like renowned Oscar-winning Indian filmmaker Satyajit Ray and Dutch artist Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn, I will trace an alternate polluted history, susceptible to plurality and heterogenous influences of the native practices as soft philosophy machines performing a unique form of sensuous knowledge contra the Eurouniversality of modernism and art history.

I started this project with the premise that, research is a process, not just a product[1]. This act of examining the research process in the context of my positionality can be described, at least in part, as reflexivity. This reflexivity involves constant self-scrutiny on the part of a non-Anglo-European, minority

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[1] Bloor, M., Frankland, J., Thomas, M., & Robson, K. (2001). Focus groups in social research. London, England: Sage Publications.

researcher discoursing on European modernism and its fascist roots; a self-conscious awareness of the relationship between the researcher and an "other"[2]. The self-reflexive mode of my methodology demonstrates how the construction of the "other" is intrinsic to the self-making process of European subject hood, race theory, whiteness and European-ness.

In the process, I have deployed theory not only to describe a certain historical reality, but also, as a prescription of a particular approach—which, more often than not, is paradigmatic and deterministic—to media studies and art history. Albeit I draw on cinema studies, art history, post-colonial, cultural, visual, media studies and findings from the interviews, but sensitive to the ongoing struggle between cultural modes that seek to determine and confine the visual subject, as a minority and non-European scholar from Bangladesh, in my work I have underlined the potential challenges and opportunities of being cognizant of one's South Asian, minority, and non-European positionality vis-à-vis Anglo-Eurouniversalist supremacy and biopolitics. On a tangential register, let me add that South Asian or Indian subcontinental art historical and visual cultural practices are established by "colonial archaeologists," often driven by the detheologized Christian expectation of empirical truth—as opposed to what Christian philosopher Kierkegaard would call relativism and fideism[3]. Indian art historian and theorist Partha Mitter critiques that, these colonial archaeologists, the first generation of art writers and historians, conjectured and believed, their practice engendered "value-free scholarship." Antiquated and ideologically tinged desire of "objectivity" notwithstanding, the chronological telos of the Euro-universalist art historical texts, too, has been rooted in Christianity, and the Enlightenment's paradigm of history has been propelled by notions of progress.

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[2] Chiseri-Strater, E. (1996). Turning in upon ourselves: Positionality, subjectivity, and reflexivity in case study and ethnographic research. In P. Mortensen & G. E. Kirsch (Eds.), *Ethics and Responsibility in Qualitative Studies of Literacy* (pp. 115-133). Urbana, IL: NCTE.

[3] Erin Manning, "Waltzing the Limit" in Evans, Brad, and Julian Reid. *Deleuze & Fascism: Security, War, Aesthetics*. London: Routledge, 2014, p. 121.

In the Art historical telos, to follow influential German idealist philosopher Friedrich Hegel's edict—time is self-motivated; time's passage corresponds with unfolding of Sprit as it courses through eternities—constructed a developmental model of writing about art with a purposive direction. While art historians—since the publication of the Jacob Burckhardt's influential Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy (1860) through Clement Greenberg's mid-twentieth century oeuvre on the progressive realizations and triumphs of avant-garde—consolidated the Hegelian developmental model. My research and theorization owe immense debt to George Kubler in the USA, Gottfried Boehm, Horst Bredekamp, Hans Belting in Germany, and critics and theorists like Mieke Bal, Ernst van Alphen et al. who have hemmed the network of multiple contradictions of the institutions and protocols of interpreting arts to reclaim the art fields in the vicinity of art history, visual studies, and other disciplines qua history. But, I particularly attempted to tame and renew a telos of media archeological analysis—impacted by French philosopher Michel Foucault, and Jussi Parikka—which seeks "to describe the history of discourse, the set of 'things said' in all its interrelations and transformations. These processes occur at a very specific level, which is neither the level of the events of history, nor the level of a teleological 'progress' of ideas, nor the level of an accumulation of formal knowledge, nor the level of the popular or unspoken 'spirit of the times.'"[4]

Most importantly, the media archeological analysis of discourse, for me, commenced with constructing a framework to interrogate historical a priories and presuppositions and to break down the illusion of smooth historical transition, unity and, continuity, i.e., true narration[5] exposing, in the process(es), the ideological operation of discourse-building by leveling, erasing, and suppressing disruptions, thresholds, differences, and complex taxonomies. Also, as we will see in the third chapter of the dissertation, media archeological

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[4]Foucault, Michel, *Archaeology of Knowledge,* London: Routledge, 2009.

[5] Manning, Erin, "Waltzing the Limit" in Evans, Brad, and Julian Reid. *Deleuze & Fascism: Security, War, Aesthetics*. London: Routledge, 2014, p. 121.

intervention enables a mobilization of the procedures to situate historical blind that have maintained the coherence of the Eurouniversalist true narration. This theoretical trajectory illuminates one of the key traveling disciplinary telos of media archaeology, in terms of both its practical application as a form of 'theoretical circuit breaking' and its most imaginative speculations as a material approach to media while meta-critiquing the value of media archaeology as a creative methodology for media research in relation to more established methodologies like art history or cultural studies to tease out both the political stakes of the field and its potential contribution to studies of digital media.

DEDICATION

Cui dono lepidum novum libellum

arida modo pumice expolitum?

Bérénice tibi … …

Introduction: Modernism and Its Monsters

This dissertation proposes a critical study of European Modernism— its foundational premise, praxes, and axioms—as a performative model for thinking about South Asian film and art. My makeshift interdisciplinary performative model, and itinerant theorization will attempt to delineate an alternative genealogy and legacy of European Modernism to make it susceptible to polyphony and minor histories of the other. This dissertation will animate not only how through suppression, erasure, and violence the grand narratives of European Modernism maintain its Euro-universality but it will also exhibit a localized native cinema practice from within the heart of modernism that resists modernism's erasure.

I have foregrounded my argument that the interwar European high modernism is a Eurasian production. I will demonstrate that modernism and fascism are undergirded by the same foundational infrastructure. Linking disparate historical moments and staging what Roger Griffin calls the "methodological empathy"[1] of the kinship of modernism and fascism, in the following introductory sections of my dissertation, I will delineate a pre-history of Eurasian modernism, rooted in mother worshipping cults and Vedanta philosophy trafficked from the Bengal-Balkan complex in the forms of Spiritualism, perennial philosophy, Traditionalism, etc. To be clear, Bolshevik-modernism, not unlike "reactionary modernism"[2]— a term coined by Jeffrey Herf to specify the Nazi and the German

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[1] Griffin, Roger, *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

[2] Herf, Jeffrey, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

Conservative Revolutionary movement's heady fusion of technology-fetish with irrationality and *Völkisch* movements—are mirror analogues of the high aesthetic interwar *modernism-f*

    Fascism complex in their denial of Enlightenment values and institutions of liberal democracy. But for the purpose of my dissertation, the principal thrusts of my interrogation are to clearly delineate and critically account for a set of key events and moments that mark what French philosopher Gilles Deleuze called a shift from *false narration* to true narration vis-à-vis the history of the modernism-fascism complex[3]. Here, the notion of false narration is a reference to Deleuze, in

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[3] Fascism and modernism are interlinked vital phenomena. Overhauling the prolix hypothesis of the fascist quantization in modernism, Roger Griffin writes, in his intellectually expansive and influential, *Modernism and Fascism*, "fascism is a revolutionary species of political modernism whose mission is to combat the allegedly degenerative forces of contemporary history…by bringing about an alternative modernity and temporality…based on the rebirth, or palingenesis, of the nation…(fascism is) a form of programmatic modernism that seeks to conquer political power in order to realize a totalizing vision of national and ethnic rebirth." Later in an interview Griffin brings in his heuristic outlook that, fascism aggressively advanced to "integrate more and more fully within non-fascist aspects of modern history…with a whole number of interrelated phenomena relating to modernity and modernism." Embracing Roger Griffin's theoretical premise on polyvalent Fascist imports and their collision and correspondence with modernism scholars, most notably, David Roberts, Fernando Esposito, Marshall Barman *in All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*, Modris Ekstein in *Rites of Spring*, Peter Osborne in *Modernity and Avant-Garde*, Mark Antliff in *Avant-Garde Fascism* interrogate an array of fascist apparatuses articulated through modernism and modernist language. Here, I feel that, neither Griffin nor his adherents of the culturist historiographers of fascism have forwarded a refined and clear taxonomy of fascism-modernism, combined, mostly due to Griffin's dispassionately reductive methodological and interpretive reach that fail to locate the artery that connects the Lebenwelt or lifeworld and metaphysics of modernism-fascism, hyphenated and inextricably conjoined but at the same time retaining separate autonomies. To describe the hyphenated, autonomous, conjoined, metaphysical conditions and impassioned lifeworld of modernism-fascism, I have lifted and transplanted Ludwig Wittgenstein's concept of "complex." In 5.5423 plasm of Tractatus, Wittgenstein formulates that, "perceiving a complex means perceiving that its components relate to each other in such or such a way." Not unlike Wittgenstein's complex, the components of modernism and fascism in my modernism-fascism complex are together; separately detectable; and relatively autonomous. Modernism-fascism complex is both modernist and fascist but never only modernist or only fascist.
See: Griffin, Roger, *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. P. 181-2.
Griffin, Roger, Fascism's Modernist Revolution: A New Paradigm for the Study of Right-Wing Dictatorship, *Fascism 5*, no.2, p.105-29.
Wittgenstein, Ludwig. Trans. Ogden, C. K., *Tractatus, Logico-Philosophicus*, London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co, Ltd.,1922. p. 71

his second volume work on *Cinema*. Deleuze argues that the problem of European fascism was rooted, at its source, in the classically and widely perpetrated political belief in the unanimity of the people and its organic capacity to become true unto itself. It was the danger of that belief in the united collectivity of the people that was, he argues, destroyed by the experience of fascism in Europe during the mid-twentieth century, as well as the exposure of the extent of the European colonial legacy, the racism, and exclusions on which US sovereignty remained settled. That experience, Deleuze says, in turn generated in the cinematic medium, a shift from "*true*" to "*false narration*," reflecting a relative loss of faith in the potential for unity on which the ideal of the people had classically drawn. Historically, fascist aesthetics are underwritten by a suicidal myth of *true narration*. True narration is the idea of a world in which the contingencies of life will be gradually subject to order so that the transcendental truth of the fascist subject will eventually be secured and the stories of the past will gradually be given their coherence through the completion of action in the present.

Here, it is important to emphasize that the fabulist true narration—of the unanimity of Europeanness and European people and their organic capacity to become pure and true unto itself –could only be made coherent by systematic erasure and rewriting of the Eastern roots and Eurasian production of modernist-fascist complex. These are the primary endeavors of both fascist aesthetics and the aestheticization of fascist politics.[4] In the process of illuminating the Fascist-Modernist transference of the *false narration* to true narration and its motives, I

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[4] Evans, Brad, and Reid, Julian. *Deleuze & Fascism: Security, War, Aesthetics*. London: Routledge, 2014, p10

will stage some of the historical blind spots of Modernism, and the violence of erasure that have maintained the coherence of the "true narration" of the Anglo-European art and film history. One of my most important foci is to evidentially analyze and exhibit how the Eurouniversalist true narration's individual protagonists— e.g., Rembrandt— are represented as synchronized in European cultural memory. I will go into the theoretical motifs and details of Modernism's pre-history and how its key themes of Traditionalism, Theosophy, Perennialism are symptoms of an anxious quest to counter the rationalism of the Western Enlightenment in the other sub-sections of the Introduction of my dissertation.

In those sections I will also demonstrate how Eastern and *occult* ferments are not only foundational to Modernism and Fascism and systemically impacted the European Avant Garde since the 1920s, but also how they fuel the ideological formula of modernist-fascist Desiring-machines. But, before visiting those sections, I would like to comment on and expound my bid for a coherent methodology that I have adopted and adapted.

0.1 Methodology: A Monstrous Intervention

Etymologically broken down, *meta* the first half of the Greek word *methodos*—the root word for method—not only means a quest but also a journey, which is important to underline in writing my dissertation. I propose an itinerant method—a nativized media archaeology as a creative and travelling discipline—susceptible to theorization. But this journey is meandering and often leads to cul-de-sacs; my theorization is not neat or methodological but rather messy. Because,

not unlike John Law, "I'm interested, in particular, in methodologies for knowing mess…Indeed, it is that dominant approaches to method work with some success to repress the very possibility of mess. They cannot know mess, except in their aporias, as they try to make the world clean and neat. So, it is my concern to broaden method."[5] For the purpose of this dissertation, my broadening of the uneven diachronic methods leads to theorization which is, in essence, stichomancy. In other words, my theorization is divination; a divination which is discursive and logical, a logic, that is, susceptible to certain ideology. I have deployed theory not only to describe a certain historical reality, but also as a prescription of a particular approach—which, more often than not, is paradigmatic and deterministic—to media studies and art history.[6]

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[5] Law, John *After Method: Mess in Social Science Research,* Routledge, 2004, p.18

[6] On a tangential register, let me add that, South Asian or Indian subcontinental art historical practices are established by "colonial archaeologists," often driven by the detheologized Christian expectation of empirical truth—as opposed to what Christian philosopher Kierkegaard would call r*elativism* and *fideism*. Indian art historian and theorist Partha Mitter critiques that, these colonial archaeologists, the first generation of art writers and historians, conjectured and believed, their practice engendered "value-free scholarship." Antiquated and ideologically tinged desire of "objectivity" notwithstanding, the chronological telos of the Euro-universalist art historical texts, too, has been rooted in Christianity, and the Enlightenment's paradigm of history has been propelled by notions of progress. Art history, following influential German idealist philosopher Friedrich Hegel's edict—time is self-motivated; time's passage corresponds with unfolding of Sprit as it courses through eternities—constructed a developmental model of writing about art with a purposive direction. While art historians—since the publication of the Jacob Burckhardt's influential *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860) through Clement Greenberg's mid-twentieth century oeuvre on the progressive realizations and triumphs of avant-garde—consolidated the Hegelian developmental model. George Kubler in the USA, Gottfried Boehm, Horst Bredekamp, Hans Belting in Germany, and critics and theorists like Mieke Bal, Ernst van Alphen et al. have hemmed the network of multiple contradictions of the institutions and protocols of interpreting arts to reclaim the art fields in the vicinity of art history, visual study, and other disciplines qua history.
See: Mitter, Partha. Preface. In *Much Maligned Monsters*, 1992nd ed., xiv. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1977.
See: G.W.F. Hegel, Aesthetics. Lectures on Fine Art, trans. T.M. Knox. Clarendon Press, London, 1998

Following French philosopher Michel Foucault, Jussi Parikka traces a

telos of media archeological analysis as a discipline seeking "to describe the

history of discourse, the set of 'things said' in all its interrelations and

transformations. These processes occur at a very specific level, which is neither

the level of the events of history, nor the level of a teleological 'progress' of ideas,

nor the level of an accumulation of formal knowledge, nor the level of the popular

or unspoken 'spirit of the times.'"[7] Thus, the media archeological analysis of

discourse commences, for me, initially, by erecting a creative framework to

interrogate historical a priories and presuppositions and to break down the illusion

of smooth historical transition, unity and, continuity, i.e. true narration[8] exposing,

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[7]Foucault, Michel, *Archaeology of Knowledge,* London: Routledge, 2009.

[8] "In the English translation of Deleuze's cinema books, fabulation is translated as story-telling, which in its common definition departs from the way Deleuze is using the term. Fabulation or the '"function of fabulation" is a concept Deleuze takes from Bergson that departs from the idea of narrative to touch on the question of what Deleuze calls 'the power of the false." It is also implicitly aligned to the notion of intercessor, which Deleuze defines as the conduit for expression. Deleuze writes: "Whether they're real or fictional, animate or inanimate, we must create our intercessor. It's a series. If we do not form a series, even completely imaginary, we are lost. I need my intercessors to express myself, and they could never express themselves without me: when we work, we are always many, even when it is not obvious." Fabulation follows directly from this notion of a manyness of expression. In Deleuze's text on intercessors, it is though Pierre Perrault's work that Deleuze activates the concept of fabulation. He writes: '"The Fabrication of intercessors in a community stands out in the work of the Canadian cinematographer Pierre Perrault: I gave myself intercessor, and this is how I can say what I have to say. Perrault thinks that, if he speaks alone, even if he invents fictions, he's bound to come out with an intellectual discourse, he won't be able to get away from a 'master's or colonist discourse', an established discourse. What is needed: to catch someone else, 'legending,' 'caught in the act of legending.' Then minority discourse, between two or several, begins to form. Here, we come upon what Bergson calls 'fabulation…To catch people in the act of legending is to catch the movement of the constitution of a people. People do not pre-exist." This ties in with what Deleuze writes in *Cinema 2*: '"When Perrault is addressing his real characters of Quebec, it is not simply to eliminate fiction but to free it forms the model of truth which penetrates it, and on the contrary to rediscover the pure and simple function of fabulation which is opposed to this model. What is opposed to fiction is not the real; it is not the truth which is always that of the masters or colonizers; it is the fabulatory function of the poor, insofar as it gives the false the power that makes it into a memory, a legend, a monster."
See: Erin Manning, "Waltzing the Limit" in Evans, Brad, and Julian Reid. *Deleuze & Fascism: Security, War, Aesthetics*. London: Routledge, 2014, p. 121.

in the process(es), the ideological operation of discourse-building by leveling, erasing, and suppressing disruptions, thresholds, differences, and complex taxonomies. Also, as we will see in the third chapter of the dissertation, media archeological intervention enables a mobilization of the procedures to situate historical blind spots and the violence of faciality[9] —here, in the case of Satyajit Ray—that have maintained the coherence of the Eurouniversalist true narration. I would underline that it is through these true narrations the lineage, and the default Euro-universality of the Anglo-European art history, cinema study and its individual protagonists are represented as synchronized and organic. In the process of my intervention, I would attempt to make cognizance of de-Westernized and native art and cinema practices as "practical, human sensuous activity." [10]

Now, according to Gayatri Spivak, art is not a specific field within culture, but just another ideological practice.[11] Thus, artistic and media practices are as good as any other activity if one wants to analyze society and take action.[12]

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[9] A Deleuzian trope, "faciality" is a key modernist signal; modernism-fascism complex's formulation of the Other is a systematic "faciality": a process that juxtaposes the formal and formulaic presumptions of the culture-machine to an ethnocentric facialized reenactment, as a coherent identity-formation, based on a hierarchy of incongruity from the colonizer's face, and redeem this idea of the identity of the *other* in objects: art, literature, iconography, and especially cinema.
See: Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Felix, "Year Zero: Faciality," in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi, Athlone Press London, 1987, pp. 167-91.

[10] Marx, Karl. "Theses on Feuerbach." Accessed August 20, 2018.
https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/theses.htm.

[11] Art Orbit Spivak. Accesses June O5, 2018
https://www.artnode.se/artorbit/issue1/f_spivak/f_spivak.html

[12] I have disseminated the term media in the inclusive and much wider sense of Siegfried Zielinski. He says, the "contemporary concepts of media are either under-determined to the point of complete triviality or, from a historical perspective, much too narrow. We have become accustomed to viewing the origin of the media in connection with connection with the

Contiguously, almost apropos Spivak's notions of art and analysis, and healing the fracture and trauma of modernizing telos, German media archeologist and historian Siegfried Zielinski says,

> Media are spaces of action for constructed attempts to connect what is separated…. If the interface of my method and the following story are positioned correctly, then the exposed surfaces of my cuts should reveal great diversity, which either has been lost because of the genealogical way of looking at things or was ignored by this view. Instead of looking for obligatory trends, master media, or imperative vanishing points, one should be able to discover individual variations. Possibly, one will discover fractures or turning points in historical master plans that provide useful ideas for navigating the labyrinth of what is currently firmly established.[13]

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development of photography and phonography in the nineteenth century, or to connect the origins of media arts with the Fluxus movements after World War II. Yes since classical antiquity in Europe and before—in the Byzantine, Arabic, and Chinese civilizations—there have been both artistic and scientific praxes of technical experimentation realized with and through media. Code systems, channels for transmitting and receiving messages, apparatus for producing special visual and acoustic effects, devices for generating, transforming, and modulating texts, images, and sounds are part of the rich legacy of generations of philosophers, medical doctors, engineers, physiologists, and mathematicians before their categorical splits from the performing and fine arts. … However, techniques of production, distribution, and consumption of images, sounds, and texts that had formerly been separate were now bundled together. This is what made the media into a central phenomenon. In recent decades the arts, too, entered into a tactical alliance with them." See Zielinski, Siegfried, and Silvia M. Wagnermaier. "Introduction." In *Variantology 1: on Deep Time Relations of Arts, Sciences and Technologies*, Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walter König, 2005, p. 10.

[13] Zielinski, Siegfried, *Deep Time of the Media: Toward an Archaeology of Hearing and Seeing by Technical Means*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005, p.7.

The deployment of media archaeology opens up a horizon for understanding cultural and historical landscapes. Media archaeology sees cultures as sedimented and layered, a fold of time and materiality where the past might be suddenly discovered anew.[14] Through the media archeologist lens, the modernism-fascism complex—as veritable sources, settings, touchstones, and compendia of affects and meanings—can be conceived of as a *terrorist assemblage*. This assemblage smooths out differences and kinks in history and world-making through violence. The *terrorist assemblage* of the modernism-fascism complex's enforced erasure and suppression sutures live fractures to proclaim for itself the vector and the teleology of its process, which are not only oriented toward re-imagining messy futuristic presents but also toward a terrain of political contestation as highly circulative, limiting, and legitimizing definitions and histories.

The emergence of the modernism-fascism complex and the modern *European subject* hinge on splitting the cultural fields into many Eurouniversalist, phallogocentric binaries, and the erasure and/or suppression of their all historical and objectal counterparts which disappear but remain present—affective—from unconscious "unthought."

The media archaeological methodology, as I will demonstrate in the following chapters, will perform a theoretical circuit that aims to break open the art historical and media/film studies doxa and to stage the foundational South Asian elements of interwar modernism, which are actively unacknowledged and

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[14] Parikka, Jussi, *What Is Media Archaeology?* Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2012, p. 14.

coded to invisibility. In this process, the European subject is correlative to an

"impossible" non-European object whose existence has moved to what Freud

referred to as "*acheronta movebo*,"[15] *moving underground*, in his *Interpretation of*

Dreams. In other words, media archaeological methodology will enable me to

reveal how the smooth exterior of the explicit reality in so-called Eurouniversalist

art history and cinema/media studies is sustained by strategic erasure and systemic

suppression of its non-European participants in the reality, the labor, and the

resources of erecting and running it.

Also, it is helpful that my media archaeological operation in the cultural

fields—conceived as complex dispositifs and cultural epistemes—is designed to

effectuate *epistemological ruptures*, which are "like a zero degree that allows one

to reflect upon one's present understanding of both history and theory."[16] I am

attempting to activate an "heuristic device"[17] or a focus for thinking through

media history in new ways[18] because the pre-, de-, and, post-colonial South Asian

history and its localized hagiography are unstable and fragile proto-rational

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[15] Zizek, Slavoj. "Move the Underground!" Slavoj Zizek—A Pervert's Guide to Family. Accesses June O5, 2018.
https://www.lacan.com/zizunder.htm

[16] Elsaesser, Thomas. *Film History as Media Archaeology: Tracking Digital Cinema.* Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008.p 232

[17] Ibid.

[18] Also, the hybrid and intersectional media archeological approach demonstrates that, South Asian art-cinema has reinstated a reincarnation of sovereign power in the cultural and digital realms and have their roots, not unlike the modernism-fascism complex, in Eurasian occult and Eastern religious practices—hinted at by Joseph Beuys and the Fluxus artists, among many others. These Eastern roots of European modernism are under erasure, and in most cases, invisible in Eurocentric art historical/cinema studies' discursive models. My operation will exhibit how a mere art historical or cultural studies approach, or the toolkit afforded by media studies, are incapable of accessing the discursive fields to make useful meaning of the media detritus, objects and artifacts of my study.

proceedings. It is almost impossible to force its logic into a metalogic without losing *history* itself into perversity and the revisionist, anecdotal clutter of received propaganda. More often than not, the perversity in the body of my dissertation text unmakes and disuses argument as a rhetorical apparatus.[19] This procedure is not only as problematic as colonizing the *master's tools*, but also, in the context of my hybrid mythopoeic and episto-diverse methodology, the "linguistic totalitarianism"[20] of this approach might demand evidence to stand testability. In which case, I put forward Karl Popper's point that "historical approaches" and/or "points of view" are impervious to methodological appraisal.[21]

Unpacking the suppressed or disappeared parts of modernism's fractured histories and disseminated ethical futures in the medialities of the media offers an operational canon. These can be especially made susceptible to the archaeological interrogation of the media and the arts. Siegfried Zielinski, in his *Deep Time of the Media*,

> intensifies and extends strands of the archaeological interrogation
>
> of the media with a wide range of scholarship from Stephen Jay

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[19] I have intended my "perversity" to align with Ludwig Wittgenstein's sense of the same word: perversity as "certain monsters lurking in the familiar countryside of familiar facts": monsters being the erased and suppressed facts as the seamy undergrowth or blind spots on the smooth surface of Euro-universalist and Euro-centric (arts) history. The monstrous thesis that pervades the following chapters are, after Karl Popper, a "selective point of view or focus of historical interest… [which] cannot be formulated as a testable hypothesis" and, can be more accurately called "a historical interpretation"
See: Pitcher, George, *The Philosophy of Wittgenstein*, Englewood Cliffs NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1964, p. 2; Popper, Karl, *The Poverty of Historicism*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974, p. 151.

[20] Nordmann, Alfred, *Wittgenstein's Tractatus: An Introduction*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 216.
[21] Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*, p. 6.

Gould's "punctuated equilibrium" to Georges Bataille's "general economy" …Discussing Foucault's concept of an archaeology of knowledge, Rudi Visker used the term "anarchéologie" more than ten years ago to describe a method that evades the potential of identifying "standardized object of an original experience." A history that entails envisioning, listening, and the art of combining by using technical devices, which privileges a sense of their multifarious possibilities over their realities in the form of products… Such a history must reserve the option to gallop off at a tangent, to be wildly enthusiastic, and, at the same time, to criticize what needs to be criticized.[22]

While it is not fully naturalized or unfolded as a discipline in American academia, my adoption—and appropriation—of media archaeology intervenes in the evolving forced alliances between hypermodern and techno-fetishistic cultural theories. This particular brand of media archaeology takes into account, how a dromological logic—to juxtapose Paul Virilio appositely—of acceleration reformats and organizes terrains of art historical and cinema study's inertia. This archaeological interrogation evidences, e.g., the transition from feudalism to capitalism, had never been as economic or technological, nor, as magical and mythical, as the Marxists would have us believe. This methodological aspect of acknowledging and framing the irrational is absolutely paramount to my approach, as my appraisals will attempt to not only execute a desublimation—a reduction of the higher intellectual content to its lower economic or libidinal

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[22] Zielinski, *Deep Time of the Media*, pp. 27-28.

cause—but also such an approach will aim to achieve a very concrete de-centering of the interpreted object/notion/formation/event. Such an approach will excavate—from the teleological history of the European renaissance—its *unthought*, its disavowed presuppositions and consequences, and perhaps more importantly, its pluripotent, multi-temporal storying processes.

In other words, as a creative, poetic methodology, for my purposes and intents, media archaeology is a privileged instrument of such an approach, whose underlying premise and purpose is to illuminate the politics of erasure and the suppressed history in the formation of sub-object,[23] canonical text, and standard history/event; to effectuate procedures and protocols of a theoretical short circuit which confronts object and history with its own hidden presuppositions and thus reveals its surpassed interior regulations and disavowed truth.

Inherent in my approach to make cinema study, the history of modernism, and art history susceptible to a polyphonic and polluted "false narration" is the desire to de-center the status of a certain reality in order to impact the comprehension and visibility of South Asian arts and films, including its new registers of experience, and to bring to light its *unthought*, its disavowed presuppositions, and their consequences. The aporetic nature of the methodological approach I have adopted—and adapted—strives toward coming to terms with the transcendental gap at the Anglo-European origins of art history and cinema studies. The Anglo-European phallogocentric[24] grand narratives are at best exclusionary and

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[23] A sub-object is an object situated inside another object of the same category.

[24] Dely, Carole. "Jacques Derrida: The Perchance of a Coming of the Otherwoman, The Deconstruction of 'Phallogocentrism' from Duel to Duo." Sens Public. Accesses August 20, 2018.

rational and cannot be aware of their self-framing gaps. My makeshift

methodological architecture attempts to bypass the fear of messy hypothesis and the

unquestioned conviction of the supremacy of the academic sterility and supremacy

of reason.

0.2 The Link of Modernism and Fascism, Its Underlying *Traditionalist* Rationale

In this section, I will briefly trace the links of modernism and fascism and

demonstrate how they share a deep foundational "kinship"[25] and "methodological

empathy."[26] It is worth mentioning that, in the terrifying thesis of French

philosopher Paul Virilio—who begins his argument by quoting the slogan of a

primary modernist document, the First Futurist Manifesto of 1909, "War is the

world's only hygiene" —it is the modernist project[27] which culminated in the

shower block of Auschwitz-Birkenau.[28] Right at the outset, it is important to

emphasize that, as Roger Griffin goes on to proclaim, "fascism as the offspring of

modernism."[29] Both modernism and fascism are revivalist movements supposed to

replicate values and conditions of "former, more glorious healthy eras," not

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http://www.sens-public.org/IMG/pdf/SensPublic_CaroleDely_JDerrida-The_perchance_of_a_coming_of_the_otherwoman.pdf

[25] Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism* p. 1.

[26] Ibid.
[27] For the sake of my argument and to be absolutely clear about my argument's trajectory, from here on, I will refer to interwar *modernism* as a *modernism-fascism complex*.

[28] Virilio, Paul. *Art and Fear*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 2010.

[29] Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*, p. 6.

profaned by progress resulting from Enlightenment.[30] It was the belief of the

fascists and modernists that the "transformation of Europe and the world following

the Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the birth of

democracy in the wake of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution of 1789,

and the globalization of capitalism"[31] have corrupted Europeans and robbed them

of essence and vitality. In their drive to go back to restorative original traditions

that would revitalize and awaken the polity, both modernism and fascism strive to

restore the "*traditionalist*"[32] spirit of European men—against the progressive

decadence and erosion of essential values—and to renew and reawaken purer

revolutionary Europeans. These are core themes of both interwar European

modernist and fascist uprising.

Fascism—being a deeply romantic and "*traditionalist"* reaction against the

rationalism emanating from the Enlightenment and the modern world—is,

fundamentally, a modernist project. As I mentioned before, Jeffrey Herf coined the

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[30] Antliff, Mark, *Avant-Garde Fascism*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007, pp. 7, 27-28.

[31] Ibid.

[32] The word tradition derives from the Latin verb *tradere,* to hand over or to hand down, and in an etymological sense a tradition is "a statement, belief or practice transmitted (especially orally) from generation to generation." The Traditionalist movement takes "tradition" primarily in this sense, as belief and practice transmitted from time immemorial—or rather belief and practice that should have been transmitted but was lost to the West during the last of the second millennium CE. According to the Traditionalists, the modern West is in crisis as a result of this loss of transmission of tradition, as was explained in 1927 in *The Crisis of the Modern World*. The solution? Most frequently, *Oriental Metaphysics* (1939), but sometimes *Revolt Against the Modern World*(1934). *Crisis of the Modern World* and *Oriental Metaphysics* were the work of Rene Guenon. During the second stage, attempts were made to put the Traditionalist philosophy into practice, principally in two very different contexts: Sufi Islam, as an example of Oriental metaphysics, and European fascism, as a form of revolt. During the third stage, after the 1960s, Traditionalist ideas began to merge unremarked into the general culture of the West and to pass from the West to the Islamic world and to Russia.
See Sedgwick, Mark, *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century*, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 22.

term "reactionary modernism" to clearly identify how the Nazis and the German conservative counter-movements responded to the pressures of Eurasian modernities with a *traditionalist* desire for renewal or *Aufbruch*: breaking into a new phase.[33] The apotheosis of this *traditionalist* fervor—drumming up ultra-nationalism and at the same time pan-Europeanism—for national cleansing and regeneration, which Roger Griffin refers to as a "war-fever," has been "both an elite and mass movement of *modernist* reactions to the historical crisis."[34] Consequently, it becomes increasingly clear that both the first and second world wars and the post-colonial independence movements—especially in the Indian sub-continent—were epiphenomena of this war fever: these wars are modernist events too. Hayden White confirms: "modernism appears less as the denial of the realist project and a denial of history, than as an anticipation of a new form of historical reality, a reality that included, among its supposed unimaginable, unthinkable, and unspeakable aspects, the phenomenon of Hitlerism, the Final Solution, total war, nuclear contamination, mass starvation, and ecological suicide."[35]

But at the same time, the modernism-fascism complex has been a rhizomic cultural development, which apotheosized in many micro-fascist trajectories— i.e., totalitarianism, colonialism, orientalism, etc.—and was readily accepted in the Eurasian cultural mainstreams. Both modernism and fascism are ultimately rigorously formulated to be *traditionalist* global revolutions against the clock,

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[33] Herf, *Reactionary Modernism*.

[34] Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*.

[35] White, Hayden. "Historical Emplotment and the Problem of Truth," in Friedländer. Saul, and White, Hayden eds., *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the "Final Solution"*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016. pp. 37-53.

which is to say, against the rationalism and logical positivism, which emerged from the Enlightenment and overtook European institutions and establishments in the end of the nineteenth century.

American art historian, curator, and professor Mark Antliff delineates the role of both fascism and modernist aesthetics as the foundational ethos of anti-Enlightenment movements to counter democracy and the other legacies of Enlightenment. For the proponent of *traditionalist* values, democratic materialism was associated with a political tradition grounded in the Enlightenment rationalism. The fascists and modernists, therefore, endeavored to inaugurate a movement to turn back the clock to adhere to anti-rationalism—of pre-Enlightenment time and figures such as the sociologist Gustave Le Bon, or philosophers Henri Bergson and Friedrich Nietzsche—to justify their theories of spiritual transformation. Hayden White, in his seminal essay, "Historical Emplotment and the Problem of Truth," characterized the turn thusly: "Indeed, the rise of fascism in Europe responded to a widespread search for spiritual values and organic institutions capable of counteracting what was considered the corrosive effects of rationalism (and capitalism) on the body politic."[36]

Prominent Marxist scholars Michael Lowry and Robert Sayre have coined the term "Romantic anti-capitalism"[37] as the main attribute of modernist-fascist complex. "Romantic anti-capitalism" is a formula that is anti-democratic, but, more importantly, the modernist-fascist complex's "romantic anti-capitalism"

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[36] Ibid., p. 42.

[37] Lowry, Michael and Sayre, Robert, "Figures of Romantic Anti-Capitalism," *New German Critique* 32, Spring-Summer 1984, pp.42-92.

finds its strength by grounding itself in pre-Enlightenment and pre-capitalist values first and foremost. This "romantic anti-capitalism" moves on to establish intellectual associations with the broad political spectrum, including Marxism, anarchism, and capitalism. For Lowry and Sayre, this is a worldview that is hostile toward a capitalist present that reduced human relations to a matter of "exchange value" with no regard for a "pre-capitalist past, or at least for one in which capitalism is less developed…The marshalling of human values identified with that past served either to resist a capitalist present or as a springboard for "a dreamed-of future beyond capitalism" …in the name of a non-capitalist future is a key characteristic of fascism."[38]

Concurrently, prominent Western scholars devoted their lives' work to exploring the modernist-occult and especially fascist-occult themes in relation to the *Völkisch* movements that developed to bolster European identarian politics and Indo-Aryan racial ideas against the threat of liberalism, capitalism, and the rise of subject nationalities at the end of the nineteenth century onwards. One would recall that, Walter Benjamin's angel of history, as well, seeks refuge from "the storm of progress." This Benjaminian formula, too, seeks "the continuum of history" to revise and appropriate the kabalistic, super-historical "messianic time."[39] The modernist contrarianism and rejection of the rational Newtonian worldview and the "obsession with Non-European lifeworld and spirituality,"[40] as

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[38]Antliff, Mark, *Avant-Garde Fascism*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007, pp. 7, 27-28.

[39] Benjamin, Walter, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, London: Fontana, 1992, p. 249.

[40] Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*, p. 134.

Roger Griffin opines, is indicative of a profound sense of lack, which Fredrich Nietzsche called "the loss myth, the loss of the mythic homeland, of the maternal womb."[41] But the regenerative and nourishing modernist concoction of "Europe's new occultism, mysticism and religion were not forms of modernism themselves, but merely symptoms of cultural crisis that produced it."[42] As it happened, the crisis-driven regenerative movements absorbed disparate Eastern ingredients, but in the process perverted these very foreign materials and practices to fit them within a particular variant of the modernist vision of social transformation. Nevertheless, the recourse to occultism in this regenerative spirit became so widespread that cultural historian Frances Saunders can claim that "from *fin de siècle* Paris to 1950's New York a fascination with magic, the occult, and the supernatural were integral to the Modernist spirit."[43]

Of course, themes of pristine Aryan bloodlines and Indo-European races are not modernist, but pre-modernist occupations, which found most credence with European romantic authors and classical Indian scholarship. These racist themes, eventually, found favor with German politicians, theorists and propagandists: since the end of the eighteenth century, both famous and obscure European philosophers, philologists, poets, and scholars had carefully fabricated the Aryan myth. Max Muller, a classically trained scholar and the founder of Indology in Germany, iterated that, "the purity with which Indian scholars had preserved the Aryan language and religion showed that those Aryans who had

[41] Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Birth of Tragedy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 122-23.

[42] Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*, p. 134.

[43] Ibid.

migrated to India has been the last to leave their highlands in Central Asia." Based on Indologists'[44] and especially Max Muller's treatise, in 1933, Himmler founded a new research group of scholars in humanities (prehistory, archaeology, linguistics, ethnography, and symbology), natural science, and medicine—all directed toward the theorization and exoneration of the Aryan worldview. This research group had sent an expedition team, under the leadership of the notorious Dr. Ernst Schafer, to India and Tibet in search of the origins of Aryan man.[45]

It is worth mentioning that it was German Romantic philosopher Friedrich Schlegel who had applied the term Aryan to the anonymous "Indic-Nordic master race." In his extremely popular and influential essay *Uber die Sprache und Weisheit der Inder*, published in 1808, Schlegel had elevated the logic and the philosophical tradition of Sanskrit and the Indo-Aryan race, which was reinforced by Julius von Klaproth (who coined the term Indo-Germanic), Fredrich Hegel, Jacob Grimm, et al. The outlines of the Aryan-Semitic binary logic were clearly iterated in the work of Christian Larsen, a protégé of Schlegel, who ascribed the faults of "egotistical attitude" and "disharmonious soul" to the Semitic populace. Such notions were soon combined with a virulent anti-Semitism by Richard Wagner, the renowned composer and writer.[46]

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[44] Hale, Christopher, *Himmler's Crusade: The Nazi Expedition to Find the Origins of the Aryan Race*, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2003.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Poliakov, Leon, *The Aryan Myth: A History of Racist and Nationalist Ideas in Europe,* London: Sussex University Press and Heinemann, 1974, pp. 190-92.

0.3 Eurasian Roots of Modernism: Eastern Religions, René Guénon and Julius Evola

As I have outlined in the first section, modernism and "its offspring,"[47] fascism, is desired and designed to be a regenerative spiritual revolution or *Aufbruch*. However, this revivalist spiritual movement's *traditionalist* development and the incentive to return to Aryan roots, are rooted in Indo-Bengal Vedic, spiritualist and other occult practices. These *oriental*[48] practices were almost entirely induced in the foundational core of the modernist-fascist complex, primarily by René Guénon and Julius Evola. I should add that I have deployed the term *traditionalist* in the precise and historical way Guénon and Evola used it. In Evola's *Revolt Against the Modern World*, the traditionalist movement—with no formal structure, no authoritarian figure or central leadership—only consisted of a number of extremely sovereign individuals inspired and instigated by their mutual loyalty and love for the Guénonian corpus. Guénonian traditionalism has a time frame divided into three clear periods: during the first stage, up to the 1930s, Guénon developed the traditionalist philosophy, wrote various articles and book and gathered a small group of followers. During the second stage, attempts were made to put the traditionalist philosophy into practice, principally in two very different contexts: Sufi Islam, as an example of Oriental metaphysics, and European fascism, as a form of revolt. During the third stage, after the 1960s,

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[47] Griffin, Roger, *The Nature of Fascism*, London: Routledge, 1994, p. 46.

[48] The term is in italics as I am using it critically and at the same time not rejecting its rich history in relation to Indology.

traditionalist ideas began to merge unremarked into the general culture of the West and to pass from the West to the Islamic world and to Russia.[49]

But, let us recall that both Guénon and Evola were turned traditionalist by the Theosophical Society, which has been perhaps, the most impactful spiritual ingredient in modernism's revolt against modernity and paved the way for the great occult revival that fomented middle and upper-class occidentals to seek Eastern wisdom in the late nineteenth century. Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky founded the Theosophical Society, in 1875, in New York, and purveyed Indian and Egyptian traditional wisdoms to Westerners and Easterners alike. Blavatsky's key text was only written after the Theosophical Society was banned in India, in 1879. Blavatsky's text had been presented as a commentary on "Stanzas of Dzyan" which she claimed to have found in an underground monastery in the Himalayas.

The modernist-fascist complex imbibed the Theosophical Society's new pagan brand of Völkisch revivalism and arcane, Ariosophical[50], racist, pseudo-science and distilled it into the new Germanic nationalism. Roger Griffin analyzes, with impressive empirical details, how the European occult revivalism that swept the continent, constructed important theoretical configurations like Theosophy and Anthroposophy to reclaim the dominance of lost traditionalist soul-kinships to foment socio-political mobilization. At the same time, the other

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[49] Ibid.

[50] Ariosophy refers to the wisdom of the Aryans. Ariosophical writings and ideological systems were pioneered by Guido von List and Jorg Lanz von Liebenfels respectively, in Austria between 1890 and 1930.
See: Goodrick-Clarke, Nicholas. *The Occult Roots of Nazism: The Ariosophists of Austria and Germany, 1890-1935*.

revivalist pulse moved towards more individualistic "life reform movements."[51] These movements conscripted alternative medicine, yoga neo-paganist practices and Eastern daily rituals as localized articulations of pan-European forms of social realism and manifested "in the emergence of a cultic milieu which worked towards a new modernity, but which was itself based on variants of occultism that emerged in reaction to communist and liberal or anarchist ideas of universal social justice."[52]

Important interwar public intellectuals like Aldous Huxley—in his *The Perennial Philosophy*, published in 1938—and perhaps more importantly Frithjof Schuon—in *The Transcendent Unity of Religions*, published in 1948— independently produced the unified platform of different strands of "traditionalism." But in the esoteric circles and among the hardcore activists, Guénon, as early as the 1920s, called for a return to the spiritual tradition to resolve the decline of the West. His infamous work *La Cries Du Monde Moderne* is a condemnation of Enlightenment rationalism, capitalism, democracy, and materialism. Like all his other books, this very important traditionalist treatise contained a conspicuous component of elitism, anti-liberalism, anti-communism, and anti-democracy.[53] With Evola, "traditionalism" allied itself overtly to totalitarianism, misogyny, anti-Semitism, racism, imperialism, and biopolitics,

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[51] Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*, pp. 138, 258.

[52] Ibid., p. 138.
[53] Ibid.

and hence became the accomplice to the most elitist, uncompromising, and terroristic forms of fascism and Nazism.[54]

But to maintain our foci strictly on the aesthetic modernist tenor, Theosophy systemically impacted the European avant-garde so much that important texts like Russian modernist painter and theorist Wassily Kandinsky's *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* were unthinkable without not only the influence of the Theosophical worldview but also direct engagement with the Theosophical Society itself. Now, it is important to understand that Theosophy's wide-ranging influence and reach was not only due to "the authenticity of any of the cosmic insights or occult techniques it offered, but by understanding its social dynamics as a modern revitalization movement. Against the increasing spread of individualism, Theosophy proposed to link personal redemption to a collective vision of the rebirth of humanity from the decadence of materialism and Western sciences."[55] Another aspect of the upsurge of interest in accessing a metaphysical reality beyond personal morality was an increased openness to Eastern thought. "Theosophy was the main vehicle of the dissemination of knowledge of non-Christian religions, but the high international profile of South Asian art historian and leader of the traditionalist crafts movement Anand Coomaraswamy and the success of Swami Vivekananda's first World Parliament of Religions held in Chicago, an epicenter of American modernism, in 1893, are symptoms of a search for non-Western enlightenment that extended beyond the lure of arcane

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[54] Ibid.

[55] Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*, p. 130.

knowledge."[56] Within a few years of the World's Fair and World Parliament of Religions in Chicago, Swami Vivekananda and his Eastern and Western followers were able to orchestrate an Anglo-European Vedantic movement with key Vedantic centers in New York City and London. Swami Vivekananda also managed to secure a yearlong lecture tour, lecturing at major U.S. universities, which also enabled him to kindle Western interest in Eastern religion and philosophy. Both Theosophy and Anthroposophy were variants of noncanonical and highly nonsectarian humanism derived and designed from corpuses of perennial laws—governing lives and life forces—which traditionalists and their followers strongly believed were revealed in the world's occult and esoteric traditions.

> The blend is exemplified in the rampant eclecticism discernible in Wassily Kandinsky and in an even more elaborated version in Ananda Coomaraswamy's intellectual synthesis in which Theosophical ideas were conjoined seamlessly with an enthusiasm for anti-colonialism, Kropotkinite anarchist syndicalism, the utopian socialism of the Arts and Crafts movement pioneered by William Morris and John Ruskin, and the "post-industrial" theory of Arthur Pentry as well as elements of Hindu and Buddhist idealism.[57]

[56] Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*, pp. 132-35.
[57] Ibid., p. 34.

Most importantly, and in particular for traditionalists, craftspeople, and a middle class disenfranchised by industrial revolution, as well as for a whole generation of anti-colonialist and anti-capitalist revolutionaries, Theosophy illustrated and emphasized a new design of modernism. This new and improved modernism paradoxically represented a new kind of built-in futurity which attempted to construct an unbroken continuation with the lost traditionalist sources of spirituality, which envisioned and endeavored to go *back to the future* "in a process which the Conservative Revolutionary Moeller van den Bruck was to call a 'reconnection forwards.'"[58] And, not surprisingly, the traditionalist turn in Modernism claimed that it is only by reconnecting with the truest, most organic, unadulterated and primordial human wisdom and antediluvian belief, which had been outflanked and outmoded by modernity and progress, that the West could be saved from its decline and fall.

This telos and topos of the traditionalist modernist-fascist complex undergirded and produced a wide range of forms and could be experienced and/or discerned in the Primitivism of Picasso and Gauguin; the importance of both Nietzsche and Heidegger of the pre-Socratic Greeks and the world of myth generally before the curse of modern reflexivity; the cult of sub-rational, primitive energies in such movements as Fauvism and Expressionism, or the key role played in Surrealism and Dada by the "primitive" unconscious as postulated by Freud; Walter Benjamin's theory of the role of mythicizing memory in the

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[58] Ibid., p. 34.

revolutionary moment; Jung's belief in the liberating power of the "archetypal unconscious.[59]

It is extremely important to acknowledge that Frithjof Schuon and René Guénon were important for the West's Modernist encounter and engagement with the Bengal-Balkan Sufi Silsila, or living lineages, but there were other major events and individuals that were vastly more influential and at times occasioned not only the modernist transfusion and trafficking of perennial, traditionalist knowledge from the Islamic East, but also conversion/defection from soul-crushing materialism and pilgrimage to the sites of spiritual connectedness: one can mention the establishment of Sufi musician Hazrat Inayet Khan's *Silsila*[60] in Paris in 1920,the Senussi uprising in the aftermath of Italo-Turkish war in 1911, and the subsequent spread of Idrisi Sufism, especially in the Western Europe, Usmani Turkey, and the colonized territories of North Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia. Since it is slightly outside the scope of my dissertation, instead of getting into more details about Hazrat Inayet Khan or Senussi, I will return to Guénon, in order to clarify and further illustrate the links between some of his key notions vis-à-vis modernism's revolt against modernities.

Guénon, a Vedantic scholar extraordinaire, who received direct transmission from Annie Bessant, the new leader of Theosophical Society, after the demise of

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[59] Ibid., p. 34.

[60] Silsila (Arabic: سِلْسِلَة) is an Arabic word meaning chain, link, connection often used in various senses of lineage. In particular, it may be translated as "(religious) order" or "spiritual genealogy" where one Sufi Master transfers his khilfat to his spiritual descendant. Silsila." See: *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second edition. Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W. P. Heinrichs. Brill, 2010. Brill Online. Augustana. 8 April 2010.

Madame Blavatsky, was an extremely cultivated man of sharp sensibilities and wide influence. Vedantic tradition had become the default lens for Guénon to examine other spiritual approaches, but he took a conscious and informed decision that "Islam with its sophisticated esoteric aspect, provided the only appropriate setting for a Westerner in search of a valid spiritual practice at that time."[61] Guénon hybridized Vedanta and Islam to successfully weaponize this practice of Oriental spirituality to pit against Western modernism. But Guénon's use of the terms Orient and Occident did not imply a belief that, the traditional teachings originated in the East. In fact, he believed that they reached the East in Prehistoric times from the Northern source, but he claimed that "it is in the East that the most direct transmission has been preserved" and the most authentic traditionalist and perennial knowledge can be traced.[62] It is important to understand that although Guénon and Evola inaugurated the traditionalist turn in the fascist-modernist complex, they believed their brand of traditionalism was the purest strand of a much older and more authentic perennial knowledge. In fact, Guénon had often referred to himself or been referred to as a perennialist.[63] It is from "Perennialism" that Guénon developed his two most important ideas: first, the notion of "counter

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[61] Rooth, Graham, *Prophet for a Dark Age: A Companion to the Works of Rene Guénon*, Brighton, Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 2008, p. xxi.

[62] Ibid., p. 200.

[63] The term *philosophia perennis* was coined in 1540 by a Catholic scholar to describe the central insights of Marsilio Ficino, an important figure in Guénon and Evola's brand of Traditionalism, precisely because "whereas a modern Westerner might justify religion by giving it a philosophical coloring, Ficino did the reverse, giving to Platonic philosophy a religious coloring. Then, in the nineteenth century, Perennialism was revived in a slightly modified form, with the newly discovered Vedas being taken as its surviving textual expression. It was in this form that Guénon encountered Perennialism and is central to the Traditionalist Philosophy."
See: Sedgwick, Mark, *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century*, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 23-24.

initiation," which is initiation into anything other than true tradition, like modernism, etc., and secondly, the notion of "inversion." For Guénon, the Anti-Christ is the inversion of Christ; modernism is the decline and inversion of true progress; the youth's fashion is ugly and an inversion of traditional beauty.[64] These ideological tools were developed, in reaction to modernism, to systematically attack materialism and the toxic impact of rationalism. He further argues that modern Western civilization emerged in history as a "veritable anomaly among all those that we know."[65] He proclaims that Modern civilization is the first and only human development with merely material direction as its goal. Guénon calls this a "monstruous development the start of which coincides with what is commonly called the Renaissance, has been accompanied by a corresponding intellectual regression which has reached a point where today's Occidental no longer know what the pure intellectuality might be—hence their disdain, not only for Oriental civilizations, but also for the European Middle Ages."[66]

This vexing precis very briefly maps the Eastern and the "occult" ferment of modernism's core foundational ethos and ideology. It is necessary to recall that (art) historians in general have, up to the last few decades, prejudicially erased or ignored this body of facts. Also, as I will illustrate, this prejudice performs the politics of erasure to maintain Modernism's "true narration." The politics of

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[64] Sedgwick, Mark, *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century*, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 25.

[65] Guénon, René, *Orient et Occident*, Paris: Guy Tredaniel, 1993, p. 19.

[66] Ibid.

erasure, if nothing else, is based not only on the intuition that this material is too outré to be taken seriously, but also is propelled by the consideration that the inclusion of Eurasian elements, which particularly demonstrate the Sufi Muslim and Hindu Vedantic foundation of the modernism-fascism complex, will imperil its purity and legitimacy as an ideology of European *Aufbruch* and spiritual revival. Besides, who, "indeed, can take seriously an ideology that drew upon the occultism of Madame Blavatsky, rejected science in favor of *seeing with one's soul*, and came dangerously close to sun worship?"[67] Other than the more influential Guénon and Evola, the early formulators of this romantic and mystical world view were all European intellectuals like Paul de Lagarde (1827-1891), Guido von List (1848-1919), Alfred Schuler (1865-1923), and above all, Julius Langbehn (1851-1907). They were given all European profiles, and were popularized by publishers like Eugen Diederichs of Jena, whose influence was manifest in the diverse branches of the traditionalist movement. It was Langbehn who pithily summarized their common aim: "to transform Germans into artists."[68] By artists, traditionalists meant not a certain profession, but a certain traditionalist/perennial worldview in direct opposition to the ideals of Enlightenment rationalism and the developmental and progressive model of modernity, the tenets to which the "man machines," as traditionalists called them, adhered.[69] The traditionalists believed that when the Germans became unified the

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[67] Mosse, George L., *The Fascist Revolution: Toward a General Theory of Fascism*, New York: Howard Fertig, 1999, pp. 118-19.

[68] Ibid., p.18.

[69] Ibid., p. 18.

process of their national revolution would transfigure the materialism and science of contemporary Germany into "an artistic outlook upon the world, an outlook that would result in an all-encompassing national renewal. Such a viewpoint was connected to their belief in cosmic life force, which opposed all that was artificial and man-made."[70]

0.4 The Ideological Formula of Modernism, Fascist Desiring-Machines

I have, in the previous sections, delineated the links of modernism and fascism. I have attempted to interrogate the Sufi-Muslim and Hindu-Vedantic traditionalist foundation of the modernist-fascist complex and how it intended "to transform Germans into artists"[71] due to the traditionalist telos of spiritual revolution against the rationalist progressive modernity to instill among Germans an artistic outlook upon the world and to redress and redesign a declining European civilization. Since it is outside the scope of my dissertation, I have not expounded on the "irrationalistic philosophy"[72] of the modernist fascist complex. It is not my intention at all to discount the role of Henri Bergson, the airy mysticism of Emanuel Swedenborg, the UFO and Atlantis myths, Austrian engineer Hanns Hörbiger's Welteislehre, or ice cosmological theory, in the shaping of modernism-fascism. But I would like to underline once again that the core genome of the modernist-fascist complex has been, as I have shown in the

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[70] Ibid., p. 19.

[71] Ibid., p. 18.

[72] Strauss, Lulu von, and Torney-Diederichs, Jena, eds. *Eugen Diederichs Leben und Werke,* 1936, p. 180.

previous sections, the heady mix of perverted Sufi-Islam, willfully corrupt Hindu Vedanta, the Goddess culture and tantric Buddhism of the Völkisch Theosophy purveyed by Madame Blavatsky, Annie Besant, and C. W. Leadbetter, and eventually many other key components of Eurasian modernist-fascist movements.

I have attempted to exhibit and establish, throughout my dissertation, the instances of modernist-fascist complex as a Eurasian production with different case studies, but the links between the Theosophical Society and the mutual development of modernism and fascism can also be conclusively demonstrated through the archive of an important German monthly called *Prana*. *Prana*—a Sanskrit word meaning lifeforce or cosmic power—the definitive German journal of applied spiritualism of the time, was published by the theosophical publishing house in Leipzig. *Prana's* editor was Johannes Balzli, the influential secretary of the Guido von List Society. Both the society and the journal were founded to spread the teaching of the "Master"—what Madame Blavatsky referred to as *Mahatma*—and to finance Balzli's publications[73] of Franz Hartmann's works; incidentally Hartmann was "one of the most important theosophical writers of his time."[74] Also, Hartmann single-handedly popularized yoga in Germany and Austria, was a collaborator of scientist and mystic Carl Kellner, and regularly contributed to *Prana*.

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[73] Mosse, George L., *The Fascist Revolution: Toward a General Theory of Fascism*, New York: Howard Fertig, 1999, p. 124.

[74] Baier, Karl. (2018). *Yoga within Viennese Occultism: Carl Kellner and Co*. In Karl Baier, Philipp André Maas, Karin Preisendanz. *Yoga in Transformation: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*. Vienna University Press. pp. 395-96.

I am underlining this point, as spiritualism, yoga, and Indic mysticism fashioned the formative and foundational ideology that transformed Germanic *science* into *art*. And, this is the key to understanding the aforementioned modernist-fascist formula of the *aestheticization of politics*: when early modernist, proto-fascist men like Langbehn called on Germans to be artists, they wanted them to recognize that, the true German soul was an expression of the cosmic spirit of the world based on nature. Possession of such a spirit meant recalling that which was truly *traditionalist*, a perennial and pure Germanic past, as opposed to modern and evil rationalism.[75]

This was also exactly the moment in the history of modernism in which the notion of "prehistory" emerged. As a method and historical category, "prehistory" was invented, mostly, to mobilize the politics of erasure, so that a linear and fantastical past of pure German (and by and large European) ancestral memories could be installed and animated.

Here, it is important to understand that it is only a traditionalist, someone with an unbroken link with "prehistory" and "tradition" who "could have a true soul, who could be an organic and not a materialistic human being."[76] And in his book, *The Fascist Revolution*, George Mosee continues, "for Guido von List, as for his successors, it was only the Aryans"—with their unbroken continuity and connection with the original traditions of the prehistorical ancients— "who could grasp the 'mysteries' of life which govern the world."[77]

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[75] Mosse, George L., *The Fascist Revolution: Toward a General Theory of Fascism*, New York: Howard Fertig, 1999, p. 126.

[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid.

The perennialist and traditionalist René Guénon located these mysteries—

which he refers to as the primordial tradition, *philosophiea perennis*, of Ficino and

Leibniz—in Hinduism and Sufi Islam of the Bengal-Balkan complex.[78] Guénon

declared that "the great current flowing directly from the primordial tradition to

give rise to the doctrines of India and Persia"[79] in our time. Guénon, of course,

developed these ideas vis-à-vis the Hindu Vedas. He wrote extensively about the

authority and power of the Vedas being such "that heterodoxy does not flourish,

even in the absence of any official supervising body equivalent to a religious

authority."[80] Elsewhere, especially in the West, he thought, the situation is very

different. Guénon believed that in Europe the traditional sources do not exercise

authority and influence comparable to that of traditions in India and Persia.

Guénon felt that in the West there was no external authority connected to the

source that was able to exercise unambiguous control. Consequently, according to

Guénon, dangerous and contradictory opinions developed and spread, and modern

Western philosophy clearly demonstrated the division and pollution of the

Western mind.[81] Borrowing from the Vedas, Guénon imagined traditionalist

society as a reflection of the organic, cosmic order. In his reference to "order" in

society, Guénon had in mind something akin to the Hindu concept of a society

functioning in accordance with the *Sanatana Dharma*, which can roughly be

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[78] Rooth, *Prophet for a Dark Age*, p. xxi.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Guénon, René*, Symbols of Sacred Science,* Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1966.

[81] Rooth, *Prophet for a Dark Age*, p. 5.

translated as "perennial" or "primordial laws." For Guénon, these are the universal

spiritual laws that govern both human and non-human existences within the

durations of human history. Guénon claimed that the *Sanatana Dharma* is the

"norm" proper to this particular cycle of human evolution and history which had

been formulated from its origin by *Manu*, the cosmic intelligence that reflects the

Divine Will and expresses universal order through it.[82] This particular cycle of

human history, as per Hindu Vedanta, is called Kali Yuga or the "Age of

Quarrel." Another dark prophet of the modernist-fascist complex, Julius Evola,

also formulated Kali Yuga in a way that had been particularly favored by fascists.

But, on a slightly tangential register, let me state that prominent English

traditionalist, Nobel laureate poet W. B. Yeats, as well as his prominent friends,

early modernist intellectuals and writers Aldous Huxley, T. S. Eliot, Kathrine

Raine, and André Gide, were not only traditionalists, but very active in European

occult societies and studied Hinduism and Sanskrit at some point or other. It was

while in a traditionalist trance that Yeats wrote his immortal lines: "things fall

apart, the center cannot hold/ Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world."[83] By

"center," Yeats is referring to the *temenos*, the divine and spiritual Vedic order,

"the essential aspect of human life which seemed to have vanished from the

West."[84]

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[82] Ibid., p. 5.

[83] Sedgwick, Mark, *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century*, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 23-24.

[84] Ibid.

As an extreme example, one can think of Karl Wiligut, who has been referred to as Himmler's Rasputin for his politico-spiritual bent, and who was an important member of the Nazis' Central Bureau for SS Race and Settlement and head of the Department of Pre- and Early History. Wiligut had been instrumental in converting a seventeenth-century castle at Wewelsburg as an occult ritual headquarter for German fascists and their influential sympathizers.[85] Even before his appointment to this exalted position, Wiligut had been carrying out intense research into Hinduism and the Eurasian occult and, on 2 February 1938, he invited Evola to the Wewelsburg castle to lecture to a select audience of elites on the subject of "The Restoration of the West on the Basis of the Original Aryan Spirit."

Wiligut's intention was to impress on the saviors of the new German and European civilization that the vitality of a civilization was determined the degree to which it followed the precepts of the perennial tradition of the perennial tradition.[86] Having neglected its moral laws for over two millennia, the West had reached the nadir of its cycle of cultural decay, which is known in the Hindu cosmology as Kali Yuga. As a result, the West now stood on the threshold of a new Krita Yuga, or "Age of Purity," but only on the condition that the Nazis and other fascist leaders recognized the metaphysical dimension of their mission, which was to carry out a total material and *spiritual* revolution against the

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[85] Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*, pp. 16-20

[86] Ibid., p. 18.

putrefying world of modernity epitomized in materialism, individualism, egalitarianism, the loss of hierarchy, and the erosion of higher values.[87]

So far, I have discussed the overlapping ideological genomes of Eurasian modernism-fascism and outlined how the foundational core of

Fascism is a complex cultural mongrel. I have also reviewed how Sufi-Islam and Hindu Vedanta were integral to the accomplishment of the ideological enterprise of the aestheticization of racist German politics and a united European identity. But, at this point, I would like to shift gears and underline one of my original insights: that the Eurasian modernism-fascism complex has never been, or perhaps cannot be built solely on the foundation of the aforementioned ideology. modernism-fascism is, ultimately a projection and execution of a romantic, revivalist *desire*. It is my claim that, as a revolutionary or revivalist project, the modernist-fascist complex can't be addressed merely as the (re)constitution or (re)turn of particular systems of power relations or incipient ideologies. The labyrinthine engine of the modernism-fascism complex is not propelled by an ideology but rather by what Deleuze and Guattari referred to as a *desiring-machine*,[88] which on one hand, concentrates the desire of a divided polity and, on the other, mobilizes every element of the desire of a people "for its own repression and eventual destruction."[89] Philosopher, social theorist, and translator, Brian Massumi, describes fascism, apropos Deleuze and Guattari, as "a manic attack by

[87] Ibid.

[88] Deleuze, Gilles, and Felix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated by Robert J. Hurley. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016. p.6.

[89] Evans, Brad, and Reid, Julian. *Deleuze & Fascism: Security, War, Aesthetics*. London: Routledge, 2014, p 2

the body politic against itself, in the interests of its own salvation…it is desire turned against itself."[90] But Deleuze and Guattari write more revealingly and bluntly on the trajectory of this desire:

> (Wilhelm) Reich is at his profoundest as a thinker when he refuses to accept ignorance or illusion on the part of the masses as an explanation of fascism, and the demands an explanation that will take their desire into account, an explanation formulated in terms of desire: no, the masses were not innocent dupes; at a certain point, under a certain set of conditions, they *wanted* fascism, and it is this perversion of desire of the masses that needs to be accounted for.[91]

Let me emphasize the fact that the Fascist desire for unbroken, true, and organic tradition, connected to an original source and unified European history and identity, is not a psychoanalytic desire which can be signified as "lacking." This is not a desire that manufactures its object. Here, I would like to insert Deleuze and Guattari's formulation that there is only desire and it is social, and this desire is productive and generative. On the basis of Deleuze and Guattari's formula, I would venture that the propulsive problem of the modernist-fascist complex is not its illusory and imaginative ideology but the perversion of its desire:

> It is not a question of ideology. There is an unconscious libidinal investment of the social field that coexists, but does not necessarily

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[90] Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 29.
[91] Ibid.

coincide, with preconscious investments, or with what

preconscious investments 'ought to be.' That is why, when

subjects, individuals or groups act manifestly counter to their class

interests…it is not enough to say: they were fooled, the masses

have been fooled.[92]

We have to understand that the Modernist-fascist scist scist need for the

invention and reconnection of an authentic, traditionalist origin is inextricably

attached to the modernist-fascist project's reinterpretation of the European

subjecthood which has long desired to reawaken from the corruption of

rationalism and materialism. In order to maintain the unity and sustainability of

the true narration of European subjecthood, the modernist-fascist complex has to

erase the "ontological dichotomy of liberal history-making and fascist history-

making"[93]to project a unified European heritage and origin "translated into

ideological terms… (towards the) reorientation of historical consciousness in the

aftermath of the (first) Great War. This is a shift in history making from "history

belonging to the past" to "history belonging to the present which was theorized by

Giovanni Gentile, Fascism's prime philosopher and Croce's philosophical

nemesis.'[94] Gentile's main idea was to create a unified oeuvre of a shared

European past/history in accordance with the modernist-fascist messianic myth

and mystical tradition.

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[92] Ibid., p. 104.

[93] Lazzaro, Claudia and Crum, Roger J., eds. *Donatello among the Black shirts: History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy*, Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2005, p. 33.

[94] Ibid., p. 33.

To achieve the aim of sustaining the true narration of a unified European subjecthood and aestheticizing fascist history-making, I claim that fascism-modernism's three biggest inventions were the formula of "pre-history" and the ideas of "the primitive" and "antiquity," not as ideological formations but as the desiring-machines of the modernism-fascism complex.

For the purpose and purview of my dissertation, I will limit my discussion to "pre-history" in order to argue that this category— coined in 1860[95], during the upheaval of Western traditionalist emergence—is actually a modernist project. It would not be too irrelevant to mention that, "pre-history" exemplifies Alain Badiou and Jacques Rancière's discussion of the symbolic-semiotic violence of what Walter Benjamin refers to as the *explosion of the temporal continuum* in the sense that not only "pre-historic" art, but more broadly the idea of "pre-history" per se, was developed to radically alter our notions of anthropomorphic representations. Badiou and Rancière talk about the realization of an unpeopled earth followed by a slow process of hominization allowed to thoughts, symmetrically, of the possible extinction of humanity. The transition from nomadic hunter-gatherer societies (the Paleolithic) to more sedentary farming societies (the Neolithic) raised thoughts regarding humanity's claim of control over our environment, leading to the industrial era. Fueled by archaeological discoveries, but far from being simply their reflections, this communally held idea

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[95] Debray, Cecile, LaBrusse, Remi, and Stravrinaki, Maria, "Introduction," in *Prehistory—A Modern Enigma*, The Exhibition (pamphlet), Paris: Centre Pompidou, pp. 2-3

of "pre-history" surpassed its strict scientific definition, refocusing on the emergence of humanity up until the invention of writing.[96]

But, perhaps, more importantly, the political fictions about pre-history "[have] shaped mental horizons of modernity, where it has operated as a powerful *machine of disrupting time*."[97] Prehistory, as a powerful formula, coherently combines the

> Geological upheavals, the stirrings of life, species extinctions, the first hominids, the vanished cultures of the Paleolithic, and the Neolithic 'revolution', among other events. Within it, also, forces are exerted that draw their fertility from their very contradictions: The need for deconstruction and the need for refoundation; desire to venture beyond the contours of history and that of total immersion within history; calls for revolution and apocalyptic panic."[98]

It is my contention that, Guénon and Evola's trip-wired the circuiting of not only the *Vedas* but also of Puranic-Semitic syncretism, and most importantly a tantric epistemic system and "structure of feelings"[99] —derived from the Bengal-Balkan complex—with the traditionalist-*Völkisch* movements, and then aligning these with the "prehistoric" notions of the birth of human consciousness, Aryan man's journey from animality to humanity, nature to culture etc., fueled the

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[96] Ibid.

[97] Ibid., p. 3.

[98] Ibid.

[99] Spivak, Gayatri Chakraborty, "Moving Devi," *Cultural Critique*, No. 41 (Winter 2001): pp.120-63.

powerful desire-machine of the fascist-modernist complex by activating a popular "inverted memory."[100] It was none other than Walter Benjamin who, in his essay "The Artist as Producer," first traced the already performed modernist notion of parallax historiography of "inverted memory" which had summoned the repetition of the historical "origin"—the origin of European subjecthood. Not surprisingly, German philosopher Martin Heidegger, an important modernist-fascist thinker, often repeated the idea that the beginning of the history of men—that is, the origin of Europeanness in early Antiquity—had never been behind us, but always reaching ahead of us.[101] Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek quotes Heidegger, who in his 1937-38 lectures dismissed "conservatisms as a philosophy of history, since only a true revolutionary can see into the depths of history."[102] By the term "revolution" Heidegger, of course, meant a creative reproduction of the first beginning so that the second beginning is "completely other but still the same (as the first beginning)."[103] Here, Žižek mounts the Heideggerian (re)iteration of Benjamin's theory of revolution to link it with Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard's account of repetition as "inverted memory." Here, the repetition of historical origins is not imitation, but the bringing forth of something hidden and unrealized in the origin, a reparation of the failure of the beginning, at least in the sense of "failing better."[104]

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[100] Vadèn, Tere, *Heidegger, Žižek and Revolution*, Boston: Sense Publishers, 2014, p. 101.

[101] Ibid.

[102] Ibid.

[103] Ibid.

[104] Ibid.

In this section, I have unpacked the modernist-fascist ideology. I have demonstrated how mere ideology is never enough to launch a powerful revivalist project and why the true narration and the engines of the modernism-fascism complex was propelled by not only illusory ideological formations but also by perverted desiring-machines. I have exhibited how European subjecthood and original stories and the entire modernism-fascism complex are established on Eastern and more specifically Bengal-Balkan *virtual* genomes. Also, I have attempted to show how the makeshift political fictions of fascist politics managed to aestheticize itself into modernism.[105]

0.5 End of the Beginning: Case Studies, Next Chapters

For the untarnished historical vérité, German idealist philosopher Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Von Schelling asserts, "there must be aspects of the past that simply cannot be remembered. Seen from this point of view, the self now constructs its identity back towards an unknown historical ground, retracing 'the long path of developments from the present back into the deepest night of the

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[105] Virtual is a Deleuzian term. "He argues that we cannot understand virtuality merely in terms of possibility because, unlike the possible, the virtual is itself *fully real*. It is not merely a rephrasing of possibility, but a novel conception of a *part of reality* upon which we can ground a whole theory of both experience and the genesis of objects. That is to say, the virtual cannot be opposed to the real or else we fall into tautology. It must therefore be understood in opposition to the actual: the world of real extended objects. As Deleuze states: "The virtual is opposed not to the real but to the actual. *The virtual is fully real in so far as it is virtual.* Exactly what Proust said of states of resonance must be said of the virtual: 'Real without being actual, ideal without being abstract'" In summary, we can understand the virtual as a realm of differential relations which become 'actualized' in their transition into the actual realm. The virtual therefore comes to serve as a foundational notion in both the work of Bergson and Deleuze."
See Bluemink, Matt. "On Virtuality: Deleuze, Bergson, Simondon." Epoché Magazine, February 27, 2021. https://epochemagazine.org/36/on-virtuality-deleuze-bergson-simondon/.

past.'"[106] From this unknown Schellingian historical ground, I seek to perform the impossible task of recalling the blind spots of the pasts that were key foundational ingredients of the fascism-modernism complex. I maintain that these blind spots were important historical events that were suppressed, or to quote Shelling, "cannot be remembered" on the discursive level by a strategic politics of erasure. These events and foundational phenomena of formulating the interwar modernism-fascism complex were obliterated in order to maintain the smooth Eurouniversalist surface of art fields so that these erasures could only be remembered within the history of modernism as muted praxes and blind spots.

I have evidenced that, like the notion of "Europe" and "European subjectivity," modernism and fascism are also Eurasian productions. The emergence of modernism and fascism in fact intertwined with pre-modern revivalist and traditionalist movements which are always-already rooted in Western esotericism and Eastern religions/mysticism. I have implicated my thesis with clear historical evidence that not only the Vedanta movements, Tantric Hinduism, and South Asian goddess culture but also Sufi Islam from the Bengal-Balkan complex are foundational to modernism and the aesthetic dimension of fascist myth-making, as well as to fascism's self-conception as an aestheticized politics of regeneration and not a political or economic movement.[107] Let me reiterate here that, in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Walter Benjamin also systematically develops his thesis that, if anything, fascism is an aestheticized

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[106] Žižek, Slavoj, and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Von Schelling. *The Abyss of Freedom: Ages of the World*, translated by Judith Norman, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2005, p. 114.
[107] Benjamin, Walter, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zorn, New York: Schocken, 1969, pp. 217-52.

politics.[108] This accords with what Roger Griffin calls the "palingenetic" tenor of fascism as the "thrust towards a new type of society […]that it builds rhetorically on the cultural achievements attributed to former, more 'glorious' or healthy eras in national history."[109] The main purpose and functions of the modernism-fascism complex have been to invoke a regenerative ethos, which is the prerequisite for national rebirth, and not to suggest socio-political models to be duplicated. Also,

> it was the strength of fascism in general that it realized, as other political movements and parties did not, that with the nineteenth century Europe had entered a visual age, the age of political symbols, such as national flag or the national anthem—which, as instruments of mass politics in the end proved more effective than any didactive speeches. Under fascism, for example, the speech of the leader itself took the form of symbolic action. The Populism of fascism helped the movement to arrive at this insight; the need integrating the masses into a so-called spiritual revolution which represented itself through a largely traditional aesthetic.[110]

Hence, it is by interrogating the visual icons (from art and cinema) of modernist-fascist spiritual revolution that I attempted to expose the "virtual"[111] cartography of fascism in the discursive and the social.

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[108] Ibid.

[109] Mosse, George L., *The Fascist Revolution: Toward a General Theory of Fascism*, New York: Howard Fertig, 1999, p. 47.
Ibid., pp. 47-48.

[111] Deleuze used the term virtual to refer to an aspect of reality that is ideal but nonetheless real. An example of this is the meaning, or sense, of a proposition that is not a material aspect of that proposition (whether written or spoken) but is nonetheless an attribute of that proposition.

I propose to disseminate a nativized media archaeology as a creative and travelling discipline to interrogate and break open the historical-theoretical doxa to account for the "unthought" and disavowed truth vis-à-vis Dutch master Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn and Indian filmmaker Satyajit Ray in order to demonstrate that modernism and fascism are undergirded by the same foundational infrastructure. Moreover, this foundational infrastructure of Eurasian modernism is a heady hybrid of Vedanta philosophy trafficked from the Bengal-Balkan complex—in the forms of Spiritualism, perennial philosophy, traditionalism, etc., including Sufi-Islam, and *vVölkisch* movements. But for the purpose of my dissertation, the principal thrusts of my interrogation are to clearly delineate and critically account for a set of key events and moments that mark what Deleuze called a shift from "false narration" to "true narration" in the Euro-universalist cultural memory.[112]   Also, I will appraise the more radical investments of native sensuous knowledge from within the modernist-fascist complex that always-already resist the fascist trend within modernity.

Here, I will reiterate that one of the original insights I have evidentially advanced is that interwar "European modernism" is clearly a Eurasian production. In the following pages, the Anglo-European "true narration" of art and film histories and their individual protagonists (who are represented as coherent and synchronized) will be destabilized. I have discussed its origin, nature, and function. I have exposed the formulations of the notion of "prehistory" as one of the desiring-

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See: Daniel Smith and John Protevi, "Gilles Deleuze" "Gilles Deleuze." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.* Retrieved 24 August 2021.
[110] Evans, Brad, and Reid, Julian. *Deleuze & Fascism: Security, War, Aesthetics*. London: Routledge, 2014, p. 10.

machines of the modernism-fascism complex; this desiring-machine fuels the traditionalist aesthetic and ideology of fascism so that the fascism-modernism complex can be truly effective and popular. In my intervention, I agree with Deleuze and Guattari that, as an intellectual project, the appraisal and analysis of why people, against their own class interests, might desire fascism is absolutely futile and even counterproductive. Thus, as per Deleuze's formula, one of the chief intentions of my dissertation is to expose the muted matrix of fascism in modernism, "to reach the investments of unconscious desire of the social field, insofar as they are differentiated from the preconscious investments of interest, and insofar as they are not merely capable of counteracting them, but also of coexisting with them."[113] However, inherent in my approach to make art and cinema—and the history of modernism and related art history—susceptible to a polyphonic and polluted "false narration" is an intention to de-center the status of a certain reality in order to impact the comprehension and visibility of South Asian art and films and its new registers of experience so as to bring to light its blind spots, *unthoughts*, and disavowed presuppositions. This particular film studies trajectory might offer a praxis of change by revising Anglo-European phallogocentric grand narratives and thus by opening up the modernism's art historical doxic closure to be read and understood as pluralistic micro-narratives. This notion is further explored in my two case studies—the seventeenth-century Dutch master Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn, and Academy Award-winning Indian filmmaker Satyajit Ray—in the following two chapters.

In the first chapter, I will attempt to cull the seventeenth-century Dutch

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[113] Ibid., p. 350.

master Rembrandt, the most vaunted and mythologized figure from the pantheon of modernism-fascism complex, as a representative of generations of European artists enthralled by the cultural opulence and soft diplomacy of the South Asian Mughal empire. I will stage Rembrandt's *singularity* and *burgeoning* in a historical moment of Europe's enthusiastic mongrelization with South Asian influences and affects. I will demonstrate and analyze how European capitalism's strategic widening of horizons of political expectation is only assertively underlined by Rembrandt's engagement with an ecology of (in)visible relationships—unbroken from pre-industrialized Eurasia—still active inside modernism as a force of resistance against reactionary modernism. My discussion of Rembrandt counters, among others, historian and romantic philosopher Julius Langbehn's *Rembrandt as Educator*—a key fascist-modernist text—which had been designed to arouse the perverted desire to be the "new man," the organic artist man, by abandoning rationalism. Through many revisions, the text of *Rembrandt as Educator* called on the German people to be linked together into one brotherhood by a common creativity. "Classes would not be abolished," as Langbehn put it, "equality is death. A corporate society is life."[114] I will analyze Rembrandt to explain how Rembrandt's engagement with the Mughal India is symptomatic to unbroken, pre-industrialized Eurasian relationships, which are still active inside modernism as a force of resistance against reactionary modernism.

The second chapter, situating Satyajit Ray firmly in the traditions of European Modernism, will demonstrate how Ray's sensuous cinema turns landscapes into a haptic unveiling, a tactile action that insists upon an action-in-

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[114] Mosse, *The Fascist Revolution*, p. 127.

process with an indeterminate end to make cognizance of a *de-Westernized* and *native* cinema practice that Karl Marx would refer to as "practical, human sensuous activity."[115] I maintain that, Ray's films—which are activated archives of sensuous knowledge—have to operate from within modernism in order to reach the Western audience that it addressed. But, paradoxically, to resist the modernism-fascism complex and at the same time to engage with what Heidegger refers to as being-in-the-world of art/cinema history, Ray invented a position of a meta-historical outreach and resisted cinema as an aesthetic project. My argument with regard to Ray is an attempt to "[set] out the encounter and possibly the clash" of the sensuous minor and micro-narratives of the subaltern and voiceless against traditionalist standards of beauty and the meaning of the civic religion of fascism.[116] By investigating and interrogating Ray's use of landscapes, I have attempted "to provoke a break in our perception, to disclose some secret connection of things hidden behind the everyday reality."[117]

The last chapter, the Epilogue, provides an account of how I have revised the Anglo-European phallogocentric grand narratives vis-à-vis Rembrandt and Ray. [118] Here, my focus is on opening up the modernist art-historical and

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[115] Marx, Karl, "Theses on Feuerbach." Accessed August 18, 2018. https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/theses.htm.

[116] Rancière, Jacques, *Film Fables*, Oxford: Berg, 2006, p. 30.

[117] Ibid.

[118] Dely, Carole. "Jacques Derrida: The Perchance of a Coming of the Otherwoman, The Deconstruction of 'Phallogocentrism' from Duel to Duo." Sens Public. Accesses August 20, 2018.

http://www.sens-public.org/IMG/pdf/SensPublic_CaroleDely_JDerrida-The_perchance_of_a_coming_of_the_otherwoman.pdf

cinematic doxic closures and staging Modernism in a way that it can be understood as pluralistic micro-narratives plotted as confrontations rather than as smooth transitions. I posit that such confrontations with power are signaled by a functional change in the sign-system of South Asian art fields that have not been accounted for in Eurouniversalist canons and annals. One of my main goals in this dissertation is to develop a language to traffic the change in the sign-system to the surface of our violent present, an account of which is assayed in my Epilogue.

<u>Chapter1</u>

1.1 Rembrandt and The Mughals: The Historical Ferment of Eurasian Modernism

"India is not an important country, but perhaps *the* most important country for the future of the world,"[1] begins cultural theorist Angelika Fitz—co-curator of *Kapital & Karma*, the first exhibition of Indian art in Central Europe, in 2002, at the notoriously conservative Kunsthalle Wien. Fitz continues, "all the convergent influences of the world run through this society: Hindu, Moslem, Christian, secular: Liberal, Marxist, democratic socialist, Gandhian. There is not a thought in the West or East which is not active in some Indian mind."[2] As we progress through her text, we further untangle this sentiment and reveal another decipherable instance of the genealogy of a pre-modern moment that Fitz underlines by quoting an important statement. The statement was made by British historian E. P. Thompson, in the *Memories of E.P. Thompson* during his first visit to India. The statement was quoted, once again, in notable Indian historian Ramachandra Guha's now famous book *An Anthropologist Among the Marxists and Other Essays*. Thompson writes, "the historical invention of India has been a screen for projection for a long time, not only for those steeped in various esoteric traditions but also, preferentially, for social utopias. Many European intellectuals

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[1]Fitz, Angelika, *Kapital & Karma, Aktuelle Positionen indischer Kunst: Recent Positions in Indian Art*, Hatje Cantz Verlag; Auflage, März 2003, p. 15

[2] Ibid. p. 115.

and politicians followed the development of the model multinational state with great interest."[3]

Here, in Thompson's quote the operative words are, "the historical invention," "esoteric traditions," and "social utopias." It is important to underline and reread these phrases to fully comprehend their significance, because in this chapter, I will interrogate the construction of seventeenth-century Dutch master painter Rembrandt's as the most vaunted and mythologized figure in the pantheon of the modernism-fascism complex. Consideration of Rembrandt—representative of a generation of great European artists who were deeply engaged with the South Asian Mughal empire and East Asian culture and craft—will enable me to excavate the muted and erased matrix of the Fascist-Modernists social utopia of European modernism, which is distinctly a Eurasian production. This analysis of Rembrandt will stage the Eastern, specifically South Asian and Indian occult and esoteric thought and most of the Eastern influenced traditionalist core of the aesthetic and ideology of Fascism-Modernism complex. My theoretical intervention will trace the historical invention of the *true narrative* of Europe and Europeanness. I will exhibit how, in order to maintain its coherence and purity, this true narrative deploys a politics of erasure.

It is important to understand that Rembrandt's *singularity* and his creative flourishing is conditioned to and dependent on the historical moment of Europe's enthusiastic reception of South Asian influences, inspirations, and artistic materials, e.g., Japanese paper, indigo ink, etc. I will demonstrate and analyze

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[3] Ibid.

how European capitalism's strategic widening of the horizons of political expectation is assertively underlined by Rembrandt's engagement with an ecology of (in)visible relationships—unbroken from pre-industrialized Eurasia—that are still active inside modernism as a force of resistance against reactionary modernism.

My argument here will respond to, among others, the key fascist-modernist art historian and philosopher Julius Langbehn's very influential arguments, presented in his seminal biography *Rembrandt as Educator*, specifically that Rembrandt is essentially and unequivocally a European artist. Langbehn's politically fictive arguments were designed to manufacture the awakening of the European "new man." Following and to some extent contributing to the fascist formula, Langbehn argues this new European man is also the organic artist, who abandons the rationalism emanating from the traditions of the Enlightenment and instead aestheticizes politics

In the larger context of my critical project, I am attempting to make the historical telos of modernism susceptible to a polyphonic world-making and gradually affording the ability to master a usable past which fragments South Asian narrative, and identity. This fragmentation is mostly due to the fact that the limit and meaning of the South Asian experience submits to a colonial memory of itself and is punctured with many erasures, blank spaces, and blind spots.

In the difficult epistemological operation of opening up Western art's doxic closure—whether to directly address art history, critical theory, etc,—there is a risk of conflating the subject and object, which produces no new knowledge. This is because most methodological interrogations can be reduced to interpretations of the

limits of articulation at a specific time vis-à-vis historical blind spots and erasures, attempting to maintain Euro-dominant grand narratives. As I continue to entangle fissured narratives with affective models, i.e., Walter Benjamin's model of the anecdote and Slavoj Žižek's theorization of bricolage, the fragmentation of my position within the disciplinary cartography is, in certain a way, reflective of the following statement by Jean-Francois Lyotard:

> It remains to be said that the author of this report is a philosopher, not an expert. The latter knows what he knows and what he does not know: the former does not. One concludes, the other questions, — two very different language games. I combine them here with the result that neither quite succeeds.[4]

1.2 Rembrandt and Modernism's Mughal Masala

In the catalog of a recent exhibition at the Getty Museum, *Rembrandt and the Inspiration of India*, Yael Rice inverts the Euro-Anglo paradigm toward a more logical and evidential framework. Proceeding from there and agreeing with most of the scholars of the period, Rice coherently records a multicultural, globalized, polyphonic pre-modern moment; this moment ushered in early European modernity. Rice posits that Rembrandt's interest in and intimate study of Indian Mughal rulers' physiognomy, clothing, and jewelry, as well as his playful representations of Mughal compositional motifs and procedures (on
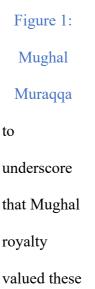
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[4] Lyotard, Jean-François, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Translated by Geoff Bennnigton, University of Minnesota Press, 2010.

imported Japanese paper, no less) and his paintings and drawings of Mughal

emperors, princes, and courtiers not only "convey a considered, cohesive response

to Indian art,"[5] evincing his active engagement with "the global culture of

seventeenth-century Amsterdam."[6]

In the same vein, Rice postulates that a significant number of Mughal

imperial paintings traveled to Amsterdam during this period. These paintings

likely entered into Rembrandt's temporary possession at one time or another.

Many scholars, including Rice, have noted Rembrandt's personal collection,

which includes a massive number of valuable Indian artifacts (1656 inventory

entries) which, if nothing else, hints at Rembrandt's immense interest in Mughal

culture. But there are larger implications of Rembrandt's use of Mughal source

materials than cultural appropriation, transmission, translation, or transmutation.

Rice shows that Rembrandt worked from Mughal albums and argues "it is critical

Figure 1:

Mughal

Muraqqa

to

underscore

that Mughal

royalty

valued these

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[5] Schrader, Stephanie, et. al, eds. *Rembrandt and the Inspiration of India*. The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2018.

[6] Ibid.

albums highly, and they used them to communicate their political aspirations and worldly ambitions."[7] These Mughal albums, commonly referred to as *muraqqa* or patch-work, "adhered to an aesthetic and material logic that encouraged its own segmentation and dispersion; its cosmopolitan emphasis further ensured its widespread currency around the globe. Inherent to the very ontology of the album, in other words, is a tendency for its contents to fragment, congeal, and propagate."[8]

Figure 2: Mughal Painter Mohsin's work (1630-35)

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[7] Ibid., p. 61.

[8] Ibid.

Figure **3**: Rembrandt's version (1656-61)

In the seventeenth century, as European presence increased in the Northern India and the Deccan plateau, so did the production and the circulation of these re-constitutive codices intended to relay Mughal cosmopolitanism, imperial ambition, and cross-cultural enterprise. Following suit with the Mughal, other rulers of India—the Nabobs of Awadh and Bengal in particular— as well as artists from Golconda, the capital of the Qutb Shahi Sultanate, shuffled and sped up their production lines—often incorporating Mughal models—meeting the demands of the British, Dutch and French enabling the Mughal transmission, in Europe, in a very specific way.[9]

Widespread dispersal of Mughal albums is neither the first nor the biggest instance of Indian soft diplomacy in Europe—design, engineering, and jewelry are more susceptible to the material analysis of Indian influence in Europe.
Also, Rembrandt is neither the only nor the first major European master to aspire

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[9] Ibid.

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to participate in the Oriental fantasy of the unimaginable opulence, plurality, and openness of the great Mughal durbar. Almost every major artist of that era was contaminated by Oriental *vulgar* art—as these objects have been categorized in the context of Anglo-European art history—and other strains of craftwork, ethnic, artisanal, and graphic objects and artifacts.

An earlier Eurasian contact that occurred on Indian soil was highlighted in another groundbreaking exhibition called *The Jesuits and the Grand Mogul: Renaissance Art at the Imperial Court of India, 1580-1630*, which took place at the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution. Alexander Gauvin Bailey, the editor of the exhibition's catalog argues that important and wealthy European travelers such as the Englishman Sir Thomas Roe (1581-1644) and the Italian adventurer Pertro Della Valle (1586-1652) entered the palaces and tombs of the Mughal emperors between 1580 and 1630. These travelers were astounded to discover the walls of the palaces covered in Italian Renaissance-style murals depicting Christ, the Madonna, and Christian saints. As Bailey emphasizes, the "Mughal emperors openly appropriated the Jesuits' devotional imagery as a form of royal propaganda. They related it to India and Islamic tradition to drive home their message of divinely sanctioned kingship."[10] On a slightly different register, while this competitive exchange had been taking place between Portuguese missionaries and the Mughal nobility, the missionaries were settling down in Goa. And it is important to remember that "most of the painters, builders, and sculptors

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[10] Bailey, Gauvin Alexander, ed., *The Jesuits and the Grand Mogul: Renaissance Art at the Imperial Court of India, 1580-1630.* Freer Gallery of Art, Arthur. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 1998, p. 9.

hired by the Jesuits and others in Goa were Indians. Surviving documents, however, reveal that many of them retained their Hindu faith even as they produced Christian devotional art."[11]

Many of the court painters of the great emperor Akbar specialized in European-style picturization. Specially Kesu Das "served as Akbar's specialist in the Occidentalist mode…A signed copy of an engraving of Michelangelo's Noah from the Sistine Chapel—taken from *St. Jerome,* an adaptation in reverse by the Italian printmaker Mario Cartaro—is typical of Kesu's work."[12] Kesu Das excelled in copying Michelangelesque Italian engravings but,

> typical of much of Kesu's later work, the tree, horizon, and birds
> were incorporated into standard Mughal repertory from Flemish
> prints. The prominence of the book in this work is characteristic of
> many Mughal, as well as other Asian, versions of Christian
> pictures. Kesu places the book in the man's hand even though it
> lies on the ground in the original. Books appear to serve as an
> attribute of sainthood. In Islamic tradition, Jews, Christians, and
> Muslims are all categorized as people of the book (ahl al-kitab).[13]

Also, Kesu would, especially in his earlier work, skillfully and almost imperceptibly alter and subtly renovate the European landscape by hybridizing it with Persian-style hills and rock formations with "Flemish atmospheric

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[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid. P 19

perspective and birds. He changed the scene from and interior to an exterior by turning the arched window of the original into a pavilion that becomes a study in linear perspective…Kesu added a billowing curtain in an archway—a favorite Mughal framing device derived from Venetian paintings."[14]

But, what almost no Western scholar seems to grasp is the Mughal fascination with European style figurative art. Not only is it unequivocally prohibited in Islam, but Muslims in the Middle East and North Africa hadn't had any tradition of figurative arts—though the Mughals did exhibit an interest in Christian religious subjects. Some scholars assert that "Jesus and Mary both play an important role in the Koran and Islamic religious literature."[15] However, these scholars, including most Islamic scholars and art historians, fail to understand that, during the time of the great Mughal Akbar, the Indian sub-continent was undergoing its own renaissance of sorts. The harsher, orthodox Middle Eastern or North African Islam of the desert had very different social codes and narrative taxonomies than syncretic, tolerant, and mostly secular South Asia. In the milder and riverine subcontinent, Islam was sung by troubadours and preached by Sufis and not mullahs. Here, Muslims embraced values such as exploration, ambiguity, aestheticization, polyvalence, and relativism, and they had practiced figural art, music, and even wine drinking since the ninth century. Such syncretic Islamic traits are found everywhere in the textual and material record of what great Islamic scholar Shahab Ahmed calls the "Balkan-to-Bengal complex, the great belt of Muslim societies that stretched from southeastern Europe and Central Asia

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[14] Ibid. P 19-20

[15] Ibid P 35

into North India between the 15th and late 19th centuries."[16] Also, according to Shahab the vast region of Balkan-to-Bengal complex epitomized "the most geographically, demographically, and temporally extensive instance of a highly-articulated shared paradigm of life and thought in the history of Muslims."[17]

Not only had the Balkan-to-Bengal complex been a major demographic, spatial, temporal, and *historical paradigm* of Islam, but also that "region's notable characteristics [include] rationalist philosophy, both in its purest form and as an epistemological framework for scholastic theology; the omnipresence of Sufi thought and practice; and the tradition of figural representation in painting."[18] For example, the treatise of Ibne Sina(Avicenna in European parlance), the eleventh-century Persian polymath, and the great strands and traditions of hermeneutics and interpretational corpus he fomented advanced the idea of a Being and a superior Truth that emanated from the Being that was methodologically accessible to the great intellects and "a lesser version of that Truth that communicates itself *via* Prophets, such as Muhammad."[19] The prophet was, to Avicenna, a kind of *über-philosopher*, and his "prescribed laws promulgated in the Koran were meant to address the multitude in terms intelligible to them, seeking to bring home to them what transcends their intelligence by means of simile and symbol." [20]

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[16] Muhanna, Elias. "How Has Islamic Orthodoxy Changed Over Time?" *The Nation*, 23 December, 2015
https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/contradiction-and-diversity/

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

Avicenna's interpretation of commonly comprehensible, consumable Koranic laws, for *Insaaf* or social justice, in the multicultural, multiethnic, universalist and globalized Indian Sub-Continent, was one of the foundations of a reformist Islam, *Din-i-Ilahi*, founded by Emperor Akbar in 1583. *Din-i-Ilahi* officially coalesced Hindu and Muslim practices, among others, with "a philosophy based on Sufism and Mongol ancestor worship…Din-i-Ilahi transcended ethnic and religious boundaries to unite subjects in the service of their monarch, Catholic devotional art, which did not belong to any of the subcontinental sects, provided a medium of expression that was seen as culturally neutral."[21]

Concurrently, and apropos the zeitgeist of the great Mughal Akbar's era, the realism of Western art was seen at the emperor's court not only as an antidote to the perverse transgression of Hindu iconography, but also as a perfect signifier to be freighted with Mughal universalism, which afforded:

> a climate of creativity, experimentation, and tolerance …made Mughal culture one of the most sophisticated on earth. The name *Mughal*, initially spelled *mogul* by Europeans, became synonymous with grandeur which European elites wanted to emulate; consequently, European cultural to luxury goods producers, among other things, had to contend with the new trends and taste of the marketplace and, supplicate to the demands of their patrons and valued clienteles.[22]

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[21] Bailey, Gauvin Alexander, ed., *The Jesuits and the Grand Mogul*, p.37.

[22] Ibid., p. 11.

Here, I foreground Rembrandt's oeuvre and worldview in this slightly esoteric and broad horizon to underscore the transnational origin(s) and predominantly Eurasian production of Western Modernism in what is to be considered the quintessential form of European art.

Paradoxically, regarding the contemporary debate vis-à-vis post-modernist epistemodiversity and its arguments concerning modernity's "comparative" or "alternate or multiple valences," Modernity and its artistic love child Modernism are distinctly and exclusively Western epiphenomena. I assert this very important point despite modernity's Eurasian roots and numerous transnational and transcontinental overlapping, collusion, and collision. Western modernism's exclusionary, triumphalist, Euro-universalist, narratives operate, circulate, and maintain themselves by systemically limiting, suppressing, and erasing other so-called "modernities" and non-European origins of knowledge and ingredients. By marginalizing any narrative within the Eurouniversalist, modernist grand narrative that might expose its plural, polyphonic, and polluted roots. This essential tension and the internal contradictions of modernity and modernism are thus contained, and art historical Eurouniversalism is reconciled in the constant writing, rewriting, redefinition, and theorizing of the (art) history of Western modernism, which is, I would emphasize, the only modernism.

In the following sections of this chapter, I will exhibit the protocols and politics of erasure which sustain the theorization and Eurouniversality of modernism. Then I will demonstrate how, in reaction to the modernist-fascist complex in South Asia, polluted modernist art and art historical practices emerged towards the complex articulation of *becoming*. In the following sections, South

Asian minor art practices, as resistance and performance of sensual knowledge, and its epistemodiversity will be unpacked. I would like to add that this unpacking will require me to (de)*historicize* and delimit a theory of affect that overtly mobilizes at least the following tripartite interrogation: firstly, who is a *subject of history*? Secondly, how do knowledge, power, and language relate to non-white—in this case, *South Asian, Indian*, and *Bengali*—subjectivity? And, thirdly, what are some of the resistances to modernity from within modernity? What is the connection between modernity/modernism and colonialism? What is the creative strategy of South Asian art that operates outside Eurouniversalist history and resists Eurouniversalist art-as-an-aesthetic-project in order to assert what Heidegger refers to as being-in-the-world?

1.3 Epistemodiversity & Western Art's Doxic Closure

For Heidegger, being means *dwelling alongside*. In the realm of Heidegger's ontology, Being-in grasps and links itself with the train of notions that signifies that, *I*, in order to *be*, must be an *I* that resides alongside the world. The world here portents both awareness of and deep connection with things that *I* reside alongside with, which is of course the Eurouniversalist understanding and history of the world. Keeping this in mind, to address the Heideggerian interrogation of how South Asian art might operate in the Eurouniversalist art field and the global market place, I would like to quote Ming Tiampo, who, in the catalog of *Reimagining Asia*, an important exhibition at the White Cube gallery in London, empathically attempts to re-historicize the modernist-fascist complex.

She points out that the task will require scholars "to acknowledge both the transnationality of Modernism in Europe and North America, as well as the rich history of cultural translation and transmission—not derivative or importation— that characterizes Modernism in Asia and other non-western regions.[23]

To underline *the transnationality of modernism*— and of course the continually occurring translation and transmission—Deleuze coded this phenomenon in his treatise *Pourparlers* as part of the larger market force and states, "in capitalism, only one thing is universal—the market."[24] Deleuze also asserts that the logic and practices of the market undergirds the socius, which is made up of the societal institutions and activities that contain and maintain the parameters of the collision/collusion between the sales force of abstract labor and the circuit of Capital's value-creation/self-valorization.[25] Art, whatever the medium, as the symbolic surplus of capital is at once subjected to and the object of the globalized marketplace. Art is impacted by the flux of markets' paradigmatic logics, but also, unlike any other social activity or institution, modern art's sole function is to be exposed to transactions—mostly mercantile but, others as well. The art objects which cannot be marketed will inevitably diminish in presence and eventually (or promptly) disappear. In order to be marketable and to establish proper provenance, contemporary art needs to be genealogized, signified, understood, and archived.

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[23] Tiampo, Ming, *Reimagining Asia: A thousand Years of Separation*, Shaheen Merali, ed., London: Saqi, 2008. P 98-110

[24] Deleuze, Gilles *Pourparlers*, Paris: Minuit, 1990, P 233

[25] Ibid p.233

As far back as in the early 1990s, French curator and art historian Nicolas Bourriaud argued in his influential and groundbreaking work, *Relational Aesthetics*, that "an overwhelming majority of critics and reluctant to grips with contemporary practices," as neither the originality or relevance of these practices can be legible, nor can they be decoded on the basis of the problematic, the discursive field, or the art historical model. This model is always already a theoretical and ideological formation of the "previous generations."[26] According to Bourriaud:

> Twentieth century avant-garde from Dadaism to the Situationist International, fell within the tradition of this modern project (changing culture, attitudes and mentalities, and Individual and social living conditions), but it is as well to bear in mind that this project was already there before them, differing from their plan in many ways. For modernity cannot be reduced to a rationalist teleology…It is not modernity that is dead, but its idealistic and theological version…today's fight for modernity is being waged in the same terms as yesterday's (by) learning to inhabit the world in a better way, instead of trying to construct it based on a preconceived idea of historical evolution…The artist dwells in the circumstances that the globalized world offer him, so as to turn the setting of his life (his link with the physical and conceptual world) into a lasting world. He catches the world on the move.[27]

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[26] Bourriaud, Nicolas, *Relational Aesthetic*, Les Presses du Reel, Paris: 2002, pp. 7-24.
[27] Ibid., p. 20.

The productive resolve to catch the contemporary globalized world—on the move—that not only the artists but also the art bazaars inhabit, necessitates engendering Modernism's globalized history. Producing a universalist art historical grand narrative has become one of the greatest challenges faced by scholars of modern and contemporary art. In the last decade, the proliferation of signal topoi viz. *alterity*, *geopolitical* and *ethnical* in museum shows, biennials, and triennials and in academic attempts to overlay art history with post-colonial discourse have feebly endeavored to displace the questions of origin into questions of process. These attempts have added to sacred European arts annals a brilliant marginal doodle here, an interlineal gloss there. These marginal doodles are texted in Occidental protocols and procedures. These protocols and procedures not only confirm the peripheral actors who pursued centrist avant-garde logics but also maintain the grammatology of the modernistic canonization—implicating non-Western regions without debilitating or destabilizing the symbolic hierarchies and processes of exclusion that undergird Western Modernism.

In her essay "Like a Riot: The Politics of Forgetfulness, Relearning the South, and the Island of Dr. Moreau," Françoise Vergès, a French post-colonial theorist and expert on Frantz Fanon writes:

> The mechanism of forgetfulness has ramifications far beyond the importance it has played in psychoanalysis. Sigmund Freud notes that forgetfulness is not "left to psychic arbitrariness, but that it follows lawful and rational paths." Forgetting, he writes, moreover, has "proved to be founded on a motive of displeasure."
> Considering the infamous "return of the repressed," Freud provides

evidence of the capacity of the repressed to express itself. If we

apply this theory to the fabrication of forgetfulness in imperialism

and capitalism, colonial and capitalist crimes certainly represent a

source of unpleasant memories that explain the fabrication of

forgetfulness by empire the world over. But forgetfulness is not

just a psychological mechanism; it is the result of economic and

political choices. In its logic, there is no need to do away with

inequalities and precariousness. They are, in fact, structural to

neoliberal logic. What is important in this system is to negotiate

and renegotiate the threshold of "bearable" precariousness, to avoid

revolts and insurrections by shifting the blame onto individuals (if

their lives are precarious, it's because they are lazy), by systematic

displacement and dispossession. Frantz Fanon's analysis of the

condition of *The Wretched of the Earth* can be understood as the

"forgetfulness of damnation," the process whereby a state of

amnesia has led to murder, destruction, and the epistemic will to

power—with a European good conscience. For Fanon, any

opposition to Western modernity and its racism must address this

amnesia and the invisibility of the damned.[28]

From this important, long quotation I would underline Vergès' last

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[28] Vergès, Françoise, "Like a Riot: The Politics of Forgetfulness, Relearning the South, and the Island of Dr. Moreau." *Documenta 14*.
https://www.documenta14.de/en/south/25_like_a_riot_the_politics_of_forgetfulness_relearning_the_south_and_the_island_of_dr_moreau

phrase— "*any opposition to Western modernity and its racism must address this amnesia and the invisibility of the damned*"—and point to my preceding attempt to filter an Indian Subcontinental moment (before early modernity's inauguration) through this lens. This attempt might enable us to clearly understand that the narrative of teleological modernity originated in the West. Suppressing and erasing other narratives can only sustain this narrative. Also, it is essential to construct marginalized and marginalizing spin-offs of this narrative in order to sustain it. Most essentially, this Eurouniversalist narrative recasts its historical relationships and links with Africa, Latin America, India, etc. to essentialize the differences between colonizers and colonized. The Eurouniversalist historical narrative dismisses the need to open modernism's doxic enclosure in order to maintain a low-intensity apartheid in the art field.

According to art historian James Elkins, far from engendering an understanding of the global totality, such an approach systematically *Westernizes* global art history to assert Euro-universality.[29] This new art historical and critical turn and the consequent anxiety it produces is brilliantly captured by María Iñigo Clavo:

> It is a hallmark of postcolonial theory to question selective, self-flattering accounts of European modernity. Postcolonial theorists from both Europe and the rest of the world have illustrated how ideals of emancipation, equality, freedom, and scientific and industrial development were only possible through their opposites:

[29] Elkins, James, "Can We Invent a World Art Studies?" in *World Art Studies: Exploring Concoepts and Approaches*, ed. Kitty Zijlmans and Wilfried Van Damme (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2008)

colonial exploitation, inequality, slavery, torture, and suffering in the Global South.**1** That's why, during the 1990s, theorists felt it was necessary to insist that coloniality was the other face of modernity, the "dark side of the renaissance," as Walter Mignolo famously put it.[30]

While European theorists such as Jürgen Habermas have claimed that modernity began in Northern Europe with the Enlightenment in the late seventeenth century, Latin American theorists such as Enrique Dussel see this as a sign of contempt for Spain and Portugal's historic contributions to modern thought, and as yet another indicator of Europe's colonial mentality with regard to Latin American intellectual production. Latin American postcolonial theorists have thus situated the birth of Western modernity in 1492 with the "discovery of America," which marks the beginning of the history of international capitalism, globalization, and its intellectual production.

However, given that the ultimate goal is to question modernity, does it not seem contradictory to dispute which side holds the patent to it? If Euro-American and Latin American postcolonial thinkers agree that modernity was the origin of all colonial evils, why should we insist on being acknowledged as part of it?[31]

With that in mind, the Deleuzian trope of "faciality" becomes useful for clearly understanding one of the key signs of white patriarchy and for advancing

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[30]Clavo, María Iñigo. "Modernity vs. Epistemodiversity." *e-flux Journal Issue #73* May 2016. https://www.e-flux.com/journal/73/60475/modernity-vs-epistemodiversity/

[31] Clavo, María Iñigo. "Modernity vs. Epistemodiversity."

my argument.[32] Faciality is the formal rigidity and formulaic presumptions of the culture-machines of the Empire. The ideological allegiance of faciality and Empire's culture machines has been locked to a facialized reenactment inscribed on the colonial grid. This formulation of the Other as a coherent identity-formation is based on a hierarchy of incongruity from the white man's face. The Other consequently redeems the idea of the identity of the colonized (non-)subject in objects: art, literature, iconography, and cinema.

To quote Deleuze, "This machine is called the faciality machine because it is the social production of face, because it performs the facialization of the entire body and all its surroundings and objects, and the landscapification of all worlds and milieus."[33]

In the next section, we will trace the un-facialized faces from outside the landscape of the modernist-fascist complex and explore how it is coded in the Eurouniversalist modernist-fascist complex.

1.4 Epistemodiversity vis-à-vis History & Human Zoo

I would like to open this section with two quotes which will illuminate my argument with different lights and slants. The first quotation is from Ranajit Guha:

> It is our intention here precisely to confront the philosophically certified "higher morality" of World-history with its politics by asking some difficult questions about the morality of colonizers claiming to be the authorized historians of lands and peoples they

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[32] Deleuze and Guattari, "Year Zero: Faciality,"

[33] Ibid., p. 181.

have themselves put under colonial yoke…In our move towards a

thinking of historically as what cannot be thought, we shall set out

from that side of World-history "inside which everything is to be

found," taking the concept of "people without history" for our

point of departure.[34]

Zhu Qi, complimenting scholarly positions from an activist and curator's

practical perspective argues:

Asian Contemporary history began with the deconstruction of

colonial

spaces. At that period, the contemporary history was the prototype.

But, after the deconstruction, there are many differences of the

choice and politics, economy and self-remodeling on culture in

different Asian areas including modernization, origination,

neocolonialialism, state-capitalism...[35]

With this in mind, it becomes possible to ask the following: if faciality is a

supreme counter-dialectical machine that maintains the inextricable coupling of

the colonizer's apparatus of domination with his face, then, what redeems *minor

art practices*?[36] These practices take place within and outside of the metropolis in

the macro context of the globalized art market in double inverse movements

toward two heterogeneous directions. One of the directions is towards the future

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[34] Guha, Ranajit *History at the Limit of World-History*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 4, 8.

[35] Qi, Zhu, *Millennium Reincarnation: The Possibility of Asian Contemporary Visual Art* WWW.Chinaart-networks.com/features/wen_zhu.shtml

[36] Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Felix, Trans. Dana Polan, Kafka: Toward A Minority Literature. Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 1986, p. 16.

that never arrives, and the other one inaugurates a past that never was. Belonging

to this essential aspect of historicality, South Asian art/cinema—and South Asian

art/cinema history—belongs to extra-modern temporality. South Asian art/cinema

histories' time and telos have not been synchronous with that of Anglo-European

modernities. It is important to underline that, Anglo-European modernities are not

monolithic. Anglo-European modernity mitigate and manage multiple strands and

strata of temporalities, maintaining different dromological tempos. These tempos

are structured in rigid hierarchy that define and rule rigidly and ruthlessly. Anglo-

European art history's discovery of Indian art is directly linked to colonialism, in

the sixteenth century with the *human zoos* "held in European courts of African,

South American or Asian peoples, and could continue with the colonial

presentations within the World Exhibitions in the nineteenth and twentieth

centuries, the creation of the Musée de l'Homme in Paris in the 1937 and,

MOMA's 'ethnographic' projects throughout the first half of the twentieth

century. But it was not until the mid-to-late 1980s that cultural practice that had

not originated in the West was addressed directly and explicitly by several large-

scale initiatives within the Western art system. The size of and ambition of these

projects, as well as their repercussions in terms of ideas, productions and scale,

generated a series of polemics and dramatic shifts in artistic, curatorial and

collecting practices that changed, for good, the context of contemporary art"[37] by

delegitimizing if not bankrupting modernist Euro-universalizing projects and

aesthetics. Two of these shows stand out as default standards of this knowledge

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[37] Steeds, Steeds et al., *Making Art Global (Part 2): 'Magiciens de la Terre' 1989*, Afterfall Book, UK, 2013, p. 10.

production genre that continue to exert influence: firstly, "Primitives" in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern (which took place at MOMA from 27 September 1984 to 15 January 1985;[38] and, secondly, the absolutely marvelous and groundbreaking Magiciens de la Terre at the Centre George Pompidou in Paris from 18 May to 14 August 1989.

But before venturing further into this terrain, let me pause a moment to underscore the connection between the West's colonial project, the invention of the human zoo, exhibitions, and modernity very briefly. Human Zoo, designed by none other than Jean Nouvel, the star architect, and a pet project of French president Jacques Chirac, excavates the long historical process of the fabrication of alterity, race, and the parallax history of colonialism and modern-contemporary optics.

The curators, Pascal Blanchard, Gilles Boëtsch and Nanette Jacomijn Snoep write:

> The West invented the "savage". It did so through spectacles, with performers, stage sets, impresarios, drama and incredible narrative. The story has been forgotten, and yet it stands at the intersection of colonial history. the history of science and the history the world of entertainment and of the grandiose world's fairs that shaped international relations for over a century (1851-1958). It was the age of Human exhibitions, the time of "scientific racism", a time when men came to see "monsters" or "exotics", not for what they

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[38] Ibid., p. 10.

did, but rather for what they were supposed to be. Being that was different. Inferior beings. Others…[39]

This desire to juxtapose the races not though photographs but in real life in fact dates to the early nineteenth century, as Eric Baratay has pointed out.[40] Across Europe, a similar stage was reached in the early nineteenth century with the exhibitions in London and Paris of Sarah Baartman, the "Hottentot Venus," whose body became an object of science and show business. Subsequently, London would become the European capital of "exotic exhibitions," hosting exhibits of Indians in 1817, Laplanders in 1822, Eskimos in 1824, and Fuegians in 1828-1829. This phenomenon was more complex in the United States, where a shift in exhibiting "exoticism" might be pinpointed—with many reservations—to the San Francisco World's Fair of 1915, ending a cycle begun in 1853-1854 in New York. After the First World War, the exhibition of "minorities" and "exotic" peoples took on a new dimension which once again declined with the high demand of "modernity" by American world's fairs. The prototypical examples of American world's fairs include Philadelphia in 1876, New Orleans in 1884-1885, and Chicago in 1893. The invisible wall separating them "them" from "us" survived primarily in the realms of circuses and freak shows, as well as in the world of movies. When it came to Japan, colonial and ethnographic pavilions became commonplace at big exhibitions between 1914 and the Second Word War. In Europe, the major powers also justified their choice of colonies through

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[39] Blanchard, Pascal, *Human Zoos: The Invention of the Savage*, Actes Sud, August 31, 2012, p. 16.

[40] Ibid.

exhibitions constituting what could be described as "colonial theater": Great

Britain had India and France had Algeria. It was also a period when all exhibitions

of "difference" were rationalized and "commercialized" to include not only exotic

humans but also people with mental and physical disabilities and anybody with

any kind of anomaly.[41]

Perhaps not surprisingly, in Japan as in France, England, Belgium and

Italy, the link between colonial potential and peoples to be "subjected" (or

"already colonized") was clear. In the case of France and England, people on

exhibit reflected current events based on the specific phase of conquest and

colonial development between 1880 and 1910. In the United States, the

connection between exotic or freak shows and eugenics was a constant theme of a

campaign by the Eugenics Record Office. Their impact was unmistakable, and

American culture perfectly assimilated traditionalist notions of eugenicist, anti-

miscegenation philosophy, as did Switzerland and Scandinavian and Germanic

countries.[42] However, let me quickly enumerate the ways public annals and

cultural and art histories—the Eurouniversalist discourse—enact the politics of

erasure and constantly rewrite and revise so as to mute its underpinning in

modernist-fascist praxis. I would like to emphasized that the dominant academic

grids, regardless of places as different as Hong Kong, Honolulu, Dhaka, Delhi or

Darfur, the reception of the *history* of modernism invariably alludes to the

dominant ways of knowing and thinking about the history of colonial practices

and avoiding its complex Eurasian composite and network of multiple

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[41] Ibid. pp. 20-42.

[42] Ibid. p. 42.

contradictions, traces, and inscriptions. This is an affirmation of the idealized,

settled, schematic, and totalized *transcendental signified*. This Eurocentric

transcendental signified is not formulated and formalized by what Pierre Bourdieu

calls *habitus*. Habitus refers to "the way society becomes deposited in persons in

the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and structured propensities to

think, feel and act in determinant ways."[43] Also, the transcendental signified is not

integrated with interplay between free will and structures of inclusions and

exclusions but rather through the signs and symbolic surplus of "imperialist white

supremacist capitalist patriarchy."[44] I have discussed one of these symbolic

surplus in this section.

Now, I would like to slightly push this issue to its logical limit to conclude

this section by asserting that, although they are rebranded and recoded, one can

clearly ascertain the parallel between the protocols, values, and parameters of the

phenomena of "human zoos," "exotic exhibits," and *Volkerschau*, and

contemporary ethnic/sex tourism, reality shows, and art biennials and fairs which

have collectively drawn more than twenty-five million visitors in recent years.[45]

Art institutions, which organize the biennials and fairs, are heavily, if not

entirely, dependent on government and corporate grants and funding, and they are

stunted by prescriptive procedural ethos and knowledge as they infringe the

frictional push and pull between contemporary art objects' autonomy of how to be

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[43] Wacquant, L., "Habitus." *International Encyclopedia of Economic Sociology.* J. Becket and Z. Milan. London, Routledge, 2005. p. 316.

[44] hooks, bell, *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love*, New York: Atria Books, 2004, p. 17.

[45] Ibid., p. 46.

in the world. In order to maintain fiscal benefits, these art institutions and

contemporary art scholars are pressured to re-code, commodify, and adapt the

dying modernist-fascist universalist project to the latest cultural zeitgeist,

sometimes as postmodernist relativism, identity politics, etc. These art institutions

package and distribute relativist and identity politics inflected by modernist-fascist

ideological formations as Indian, Chinese, or some urgent versions of ethnically

absolutist or primitivist art/craft to meet Eurocentric expectations. These art

institutions force the artist to cosplay as ethnographer, social historian, or worst of

all, activist, inducing them to participate in different processes of othering and

performing cultural difference from a global hot water "friction zone."[46]

In the next section, I will discuss the primary processes of othering and

how modernist-fascist prescriptions, frission, and its accumulated residues of

forces have impacted the lived life-world and social spaces in South Asia.

1.5 South Asia vis-à-vis Eurouniversality

The independence of formerly colonized territories, postcolonial

movements, and the accelerated process of decolonization in Asian nations in the

aftermath of World War II still maintained the progressivist notion of historical

development. These nations persisted in older art historical topoi, cultural

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[46] Architect Rem Koolhaas devised the term friction zones as places where the infrastructure slows down, creating the opportunity for an area of exchange--a market—to take shape. "We call them friction zones. They're all-around intersections… and the crazy thing now is that it's getting much richer because of that and linking back to that modernity right away. It goes back and forth. When there's more money it disappears again, and it gets planned, and there's more public space and gentrification."
See: Koolhaas, Rem "Africa Comes First," in *Transurbanism*, Arjen Mulder (ed.), Rotterdam: V2_Publishing/NAI Publishers, 2002, p. 179.

representation, colonial, modernist regime to afford art—South Asian material practices, both at the aesthetic and physical level, and the non-Western objects it produced—as a discourse-machine. Art as a discourse-machine instrumentalizes South Asian art's subaltern source culture to be subordinated to the epistemological essence of the dominant European ones. But, despite the obvious incongruences, contradictions, and the bad translation, the trafficking of the discourse-machine have rendered the protean "art" objects and artifacts— radically alien to the European world-view—intelligible, and thus accessible to an Anglo-European audience. But usually the understanding of South Asian art and the study of objects produced in local sites beyond the European reach have usually been confined to those art objects that were created before the moment of European and local contact. Romantic fascination with the "other," historically, has tended to restrict European interest in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[47]

Bengali art historian Partha Mitter brings up an interesting point regarding the inviolable apartheid against non-European art—produced after European contact and carrying cultural imprint from the colonial exchange—as vulgar, derivative, inferior, or as a craft object:

> Stylistic influence, as we are all aware, has been the consequence of art historical discourse since the Renaissance. Nineteenth-century art history, in the age of Western domination, extended it

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[47] Fabian, Johannes, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1983.
For a more recent discussion, see Errington, Shelly, *The Death of Authentic Primitive Art and Other Tales of Progress*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

to world art, ranking it according to the notion of progress, with Western art at its apex. Influence acquired an added resonance in colonial art history…. Influence has been the key epistemic tool in studying the reception of Western art in the non-Western world: if the product is too close to its original source, it reflects slavish mentality; if on the other hand, the imitation is imperfect, it represents a failure. In terms of power relations, borrowing by artists from the peripheries becomes a badge of inferiority. In contrast, the borrowings of European artists are described approvingly either as 'affinities' or dismissed as inconsequential, as evident in the primitivism exhibition held as the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1985.[48]

As one reason for this disparity, Mitter writes:

One of the problems besetting the discourse of modernism has been its Vasarian art historical foundations, which pursue a linear trajectory according to the dictates of a relentless teleology that does not allow for dissidence difference and competition. John Clark has called Western modernism a 'closed' system of discourse, which cannot accommodate new discourses that modernisms outside the West give rise to.[49]

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[48] Mitter, Partha, *The Triumph of Modernism: India's Artists and the Avant-garde, 1922-47*, Reaktion Books 2007, p. 8.

[49] Ibid.

But the advent of the poststructuralist Metacritic—along with semioticians like Roland Barthes and structuralist Claude Lévi-Strauss—have successfully overseen the fertile miscegenation of criticism and hardcore philosophy and to raise the critical theoretical clarion call to mark the mutational jump to deconstruct an extremely potent and generative critical enterprise of the European Enlightenment's project. This process delegitimized Euro-centrism, the twining of power/knowledge; and the logocentrism, essentialism, nominalism, rationalism, science and all other apparatuses and the regime of truth. This have ruptured the foundation of the Western metaphysical tradition. Deconstruction destabilized the Western philosophy's hold of the ownership of meaning, unity of presence and absence which opens up a absolutely new horizon of possibility setting off what Gayatri Spivak dubs, "revolutionary change of mind,"[50] changing practice of art, criticism and history-making, among other thing, irrecoverably. It would be helpful to remember that in 1977, Jean Baudrillard published *L'effet Beaubourd: implotion et dissuasion*, in which he discussed the *Beaubourg* effect or *Beaubourg* machine that had not only directed the mass action of the student movement of the 1968 but also effectuated the proliferation of critiques from groups like the Situationist International.[51]

For Hal Foster, whose work is also informed by the work of the Situationist International, postmodernism and poststructuralism engage with

[50] Spivak, Gayatri. *The Spivak Reader Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak*. Edited by Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean, Taylor and Francis, 2013. P. 204

[51] West, Kim. "'A Live Center of Information': The Paris Connection, or, Of What Was Beaubourg the End," *May Quarterly Journal*. http://www.mayrevue.com/en/a-live-center-of-information-the-paris-connection-or-of-what-was-beaubourg-the-end/

debates that resist conditions of socialization through the consumption of mass cultural images and the tyranny of "the phallocentric signifier"; his special contributions are oriented toward institutional critique, with particular attention given to site, address ,and audience, and feminist challenges to the regimes of power concentrated on bodies and identities.[52]

The radicalized and rapidly changing theoretical environment in South Asia enabled the post-colonial critic/artist to redress or reject what Benjamin proclaimed as the metaphysical "truth." South Asian theorists, along with their Western cohorts, have been vociferous critics of the crucial insufficiency of the critical epistemology of Kantian aesthetics, which is a continuation and deification of the Enlightenment project. The post-colonial critic/artist, at this juncture of history, has a rich and varied toolbox with which to analyze and understand the problematic of Euro-teleology. The second and third generation of post-colonial critics are cognizant of the political prerogatives that are most urgent in decolonized spaces. It is almost inevitable that these spaces are often implicitly coded within imperialist institutions like nationhood, constitutionality, citizenship, democracy, socialism, or culturalism. In the historical frame of exploration, colonization, and decolonization, what is effectively being reclaimed, here is a series of regulative political concepts. The ideological underpinnings of these clusters of concepts are the authoritative and generative narrative of production machines which were constructed elsewhere, namely in the nation-states of Western Europe. "They are thus being reclaimed, indeed claimed, as concept-

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[52] Frascina, Francis, ed., *Modern Art Culture: A Reader*, Routledge, 2009. P. 109.

metaphors for which no historically adequate referent may be advance from postcolonial space."[53]

Also, one of the impacts of Jean-Francois Lyotard and Michel Foucault's attack —as well as the poststructuralist destabilizing of Western metaphysics— was the development of a coherent and consistent delegitimization of progressive teleological narratives. These teleological *grand narratives* structured European ideas of history. Lyotard and Foucault's theory perform a decoupling of artistic production from the necessity to articulate chronology's spiritual development or time, the aesthetic from the privileged relation to temporal, in the process erasing the colonial and imperialist marker between "art" and non-art objects.[54]

This has been clearly conveyed, on a different register and in the less racially and colonially charged North American context, by Clement Greenberg in the context of abstract expressionism. Incidentally, Greenberg's theorization of media specificity was primarily concerned with whether the media in which art materialized were more or less aware of their "essential" natures.[55] After Clement, Arthur Danto, as per Hegel, developed his timely and influential argument that modern art has come to an end only in order to become philosophy.[56] Along with

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[53] Ibid.

[54] Lyotard, Jean-François, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984; 1st ed. Paris, 1979.

[55] Danto, Arthur. "Introduction: Modern, Postmodern, and Contemporary," in *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997. p. 3-19.

[56] Greenberg, Clement, *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989; 1st ed. 1961.
See also "Art History or Sacred History?" in *Art and Discontent: Theory at the Millennium*, New York: McPherson, 1991. p. 133-67.
Art history's linear trajectory has been most forcefully challenged by Belting, Hans in *The End of the History of Art*, trans. Christopher Wood, Chicago; University of Chicago Press, 1987, and

its anti-essentialist politics, strategies of identitarianism, and critiques of Eurocentric and logocentric Enlightenment project, the humanities tradition built the intellectual framework for the arrival of non-Euro-American art forms and objects in the world's art markets, biennials, art fairs, and Kunst Halles. This new wave ultimately lodged inside the contemporaneity the tensions of Orientalism—in Edward Said's sense of the term—as well as Asia-futurity, the concept of subaltern—in Dipesh Chakrabarty and Ranajit Guha's sense—as subject-effect.

Chakrabarty's discursive and progressivist i.e., Hegelian displacement of narrativist taxonomy through textual insurgence or subaltern activity and his South Asian focused post-colonial historiography as strategy etc. have afforded one of the most art-market-ready critiques of the temporal as assemblage of the necessary sequence of events. These South Asian subaltern performances determine the present and the future by pointing out the difficulties of formulating an Indian historiography translated through the Janus face of Marx and Hegel. Marxian-Hegelian models, as Chakrabarty very mildly puts it, relegate India to the margins of world history because neither the world spirit nor capitalism traveled to the Indian-subcontinent/South Asia. Chakrabarty points to a different set of philosophies of history that attempt to absolve or adjudicate the follies of the ideological investments of European traditions like Marxism-Hegelianism. Chakrabarty's project of provincializing "Europe" transcends the postmodernist cultural relativist stance to critique the rationalist-imperialist-scientific regime of the Enlightenment and posits European modernity as *culture-specific* and

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Das Ende der Kunstgeschichte. Eine Revision nach zehn Jahren. Munich: Beck, 1995.

therefore only relevant to European cultures. For the point is not that

Enlightenment rationalism is always unreasonable in itself. Enlightenment

rationalism is rather a matter of universalizing European Enlightenment "reason."

This hegemonic reason has never been self-evident to much older and affectually

(a translation of *Bhaba*) sophisticated South Asian cultures and

civilizations.[57] Chakrabarty's theorizing, proclaims Patrick Williams, leads to

three epistemic interrogations:

> it becomes evident that these criterion of modernity offers no way
> to understand the time of non-European peoples. These criteria
> cannot afford investigations regarding as to what is the time of
> contemporaneity, the time in which the *global* transformation of
> the art world is currently taking place. Within this paradigm
> "history" has to be dismissed as a product of the European
> imagination, a story that legitimates the violence that enable
> western nations to dominate the globe between the fifteenth and the
> twentieth centuries. And, if time cannot be divorced from place, as
> the critique of a universal time would demand, what might happen
> to its shards? What shape does historical narratives take once the
> teleology of its former structure is broken? Can time be envisioned
> in terms of simultaneous temporalities?[58]

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[57] Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for the 'Indian' Pasts?" *Representations* 37 (1992), 1-26, 20-21

[58] Patrick Williams, "Simultaneous Uncontemporaneities: Theorizing Modernism and Empire," in *Modernism and Empire*, ed. Howard Booth and Nigel Rigby. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000. pp. 13-38.

Moving on to the realm of post-history, which is, effectively sans

historical substance and meaning, contemporary art is still marked by tim''s

passage. Here, the notion of time is of course irregular and multi-textured, moving

slower or faster in different places. In the post-history milieu, parallel to the

continuing economic liberalization and the internationalization of capital,

culture, technology, and consumption, the South Asian post-colonial art world

received accelerationism as a return to reformism, a fresh coat of paint on the state

of things. Benjamin Noys, who coined the term, traces it back to a certain "ultra-

leftist" turn in French political and social thought in the 1970s. Noys cites

Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* (1972), Lyotard's *Libidinal*

Economy (1974), and Baudrillard's *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (1976). These

works can all be read as desperate responses to the failures of political radicalism

in the 1960s (and especially, in France, to the failure of the May 1968 uprising).

In their different ways, these texts all argue that, since there is no *outside* of the

capitalist system, capitalism can only be overcome from within by what Noys

calls "an exotic variant of *la politique du pire*: if capitalism generates its own

forces of dissolution, then the necessity is to radicalize capitalism itself: the worse

the better." By pushing capitalism's own internal tensions (or what Marx called its

"contradictions") to extremes, accelerationism hopes to reach a point where

capitalism explodes and falls apart.[59]

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[59] Steven Shaviro. "Accelerationist Aesthetics: Necessary Inefficiency in Times of Real
Subsumption" On the Social Media Ideology - Journal #75 September 2016, *e-Flux*
 https://www.e-flux.com/journal/46/60070/accelerationist-aesthetics-necessary-inefficiency-in-
times-of-real-subsumption/

For the South Asian post-colonial artist/critic, though, it is a strangely ironic stance to channel accelerationism. While it is a fashionable foreign import that offers technological and design solutions for essentially political and economic problems, in fact there can only be revolutionary hope. In South Asia, accelerationism was a political strategy before it became an aesthetic one. It is a universalist ideological movement wrapped in feminist/postcolonial rhetoric, but at same time it is an important toolbox for upmarket social currency and for enabling entry into the global biennial circuit.

Though initially not invited to the *arty party* (as Hal Foster notoriously dubbed relational aesthetics), Nicolas Bourriaud's notion of altermodern found more cultural and intellectual purchase. Here, Bourriaud proposes a notion of a time with heterochronicity and no past: "a vision of human history as constituted by multiple temporalities."[60] Rather than envisioning a proliferation of histories, one for each of time's different manifestations, Bourriaud assumes that contemporaneity is "ahistorical." Heterochronicity translates to achronicity. The chaotic nature of time, the existence of many forms and the absence of a means of relating to one another, is equated with time's absence. The consequence of privileging contemporaneity in this way, of equating it with the end of time, is that it becomes a universal time (a non-time) from which there is no escape, regardless of culture or location. In these circumstances, the phrase "multiple temporalities" loses its meaning. One moment of contemporaneity cannot be distinguished from any other, for they are all synchronous—they all belong either to the same

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[60] Nicolas Bourriaud, "Altermodern," *Altermodern (exhibition catalog)* ed. Nicolas Bourriaud, London: Tate Publishing, 2009

uniform conception of time or to no time at all.[61] Terry Smith agrees with Augé and Bourriaud, doubting whether the contemporary can or should be considered a period:

> No longer does it feel like "our time," because "our" cannot be stretched to encompass its contrariness. Nor, indeed, is it "a time," because if the modern was inclined above all to define itself as a period, and sort the past into periods, in contemporaneity periodization is impossible. The only potentially permanent thing about this state of affairs is that it may last for an unspecifiable amount of time: the present may become, perversely, "eternal." Bourriaud wish to avoid what he perceives as the "essentializing" dangers inherent in the project of periodization by arguing that contemporary art is just too diverse to describe or categorize. Contemporaneity is identified by the impossibility of its definition—a historical moment that is marked by irreconcilable antinomies.[62]

In *Documenta 11*, traditionally a showcase of Europeanness and European art, Okwui Enwezor erected a platform in New Delhi, India. In response, Nicolas Bourriaud's review of *Documenta 11*'s carefully composed survey of Indian and other South Asian artists disclosed a curious observation. He said that the overwhelming majority of critics are reluctant to come to grips with these contemporary practices, as neither the originality and relevance of these practices

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[61] Ibid.

[62] Smith, Terry. *What is Contemporary Art?* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.

can be legible, nor can they be deciphered on the basis of the Eurouniversalist

discursive field or the art historical model. In the process, he underlined once

again how *art history* is always already a European theoretical and ideological

formation of the "previous generations."[63] This old erasure appeared in a new

light and context in South Asia and Hong Kong through the activities of Asia Art

Archive. According to Nicolas Bourriaud:

> The twentieth-century avant-garde from Dadaism to the
>
> Situationist International fell within the tradition of this modern
>
> project (changing culture, attitudes and mentalities, and Individual
>
> and social living conditions), but it is as well to bear in mind that
>
> this project was already there before them, differing from their plan
>
> in many ways. For modernity cannot be reduced to a rationalist
>
> teleology…It is not modernity that is dead, but its idealistic and
>
> theological version…" and more importantly, "today's fight for
>
> modernity is being waged in the same terms as yesterday's" by
>
> "learning to inhabit the world in a better way, instead of trying to
>
> construct it based on a preconceived idea of historical
>
> evolution…The artist dwells in the circumstances the globalized
>
> world offer him, so as to turn the setting of his life (his linked with
>
> the physical and conceptual world) into a lasting world. He catches
>
> the world on the move…"[64]

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[63] Bourriaud, Nicolas, *Relational Aesthetic*, Les Presses du Reel, 2002, pp. 7-24.

[64] Ibid. Prior to the exhibition of *reset Modernity* and the publication of its ground breaking catalog, Latour and Armin Linke—a professor of photography at ZKM Karlsruhe, and an important artist *Alpi*—visited South Asia to launch their program on the Anthropocene even before

In response to and developing with modernist-fascist prescriptions and its multifarious reactions and residues of forces, South Asian art and cinema has grown into localized forms and formats. In the first phase of the anti-colonial movements, and among the first generations of modernists, South Asian art was inflected with what Homi Bhabha calls *a psychosis of patriotic fervor* toward a diffused attempt to locate the Self.[65] In the next two sections, I will discuss not only this particular psychosis but also the native and tropicalized antidote to modernism from within modernism.

1.6 South Asian Epistemodiversity and Sensual Knowledge vis-à-vis Citizenship of History

In the beginning, it might be helpful to note that the making of South Asia and the sliding of the post-colonial artist/critic from India to the Indian sub-continent to South Asian identity markers and the web of definitions and demarcations can be traced, in order to mark a moment in contemporaneity. This contemporaneity is one of the tragic consequences of the random drawing of lines by the British on the map of South-Asia, the culmination of a 190-year occupation, popularly referred to as the "partition." In 1947, the partition (the splitting of British India into two sovereign nations) displaced an estimated fifteen

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the concept found its home in the campuses of the USA; both Armin and Latour, along with a host of Nobel laureates and art world luminaries, had been commissioned by the Haus der Kulturen der Welt (The House Of World Culture) in Berlin to develop an exhibition with programming on the Anthropocene as well. But notions like the Anthropocene, post-humanism, cyborgs, etc. are severely contested terrains and languish on the fringes of the art scenes in South Asia at this point.

[65] Ebadur Rahman. *Depart Magazine List Your Ad*. Accessed March 05, 2022. http://www.departmag.com/index.php/en/detail/75/Negotiating-Modernism-in-Bengal

million people and killed another million in riots and violence and is an event which is referred to in the popular literature and media as a *holocaust*. It is important to note that it was ethnic Bengali and Punjabi people who were most affected by this holocaust, which for decades found no voice in Bengali artistic production. Following the trauma of the partition, in 1971 the state of East Bengal seceded from Pakistan—one of the countries born in 1947—and formed the nation of Bangladesh after a nine-month war during which three million Bengalis were killed and hundred and twenty thousand Bengali women were systemically violated.

Despite this bloody history, all through South Asia, but especially in Bangladesh, it has been a significant struggle to imagine anything outside the paradigmatic/discursive construction of what Benjamin refers to as empty homogenous time.[66] Artists, intellectuals, and common people endeavored to manufacture a modality and a morality from the political agency founded on Bengali-Muslims' fragmentary and episodic experience of true historical citizenship. This citizenship is embedded in the hermeneutics of suspicion, which deconstructs the protocols of disciplinary power in order to reveal the presence of the obscure, opaque subjects who have been overlooked by History.[67]

We must keep in mind that this is also consistent with Bengali Muslims'

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[66] Benjamin, W. "Theses on the Philosophy of History." Retrieved October 19, 2021, from https://www.sfu.ca/~andrewf/CONCEPT2.html.

[67] An extract from Hegel's Second Draft of the Lectures on the *Philosophy of World History* states: "It is obvious to anyone with even a rudimentary knowledge of the treasures of Indian literature that this country, so rich in spiritual achievement of a truly profound quality, has no history…India not only has ancient religious books and splendid works of poetry, but also ancient books of law; nevertheless, it still does not have a history."

extremely complicated ongoing struggles for the citizenship of *History*. This struggle became prominent at the turn of the twentieth century. This was a crucial time in the empire, when in the remote corner of undivided Bengal there was a great enunciation of practical, artistic, and ideological imperatives of conscientious political consistency that attempted to set out an anti-colonial/imperialist project, overriding internal colonialism, decolonizing the culture of the South and South-East Asian "native" artists. This great struggle is concurrent with Bengali Muslims' inability, to this date, to produce a coherent historical (grand) narrative. The origin of this inability seems to be located in an inward-looking, traumatic complexity which also destabilizes the cozy ideals of the Bengal School of Arts. The Bengal School of Arts came out of the crucible of the Indian nationalist movement, but, at the same time, this school's regime of images was fomented by, among others, Francisco Fenellosa's most prominent student, Kakujo Okakura. Okakura had travelled to Bengal at least twice by 1905. Around the same time, he wrote his theoretical history of Asian art, *Ideals of the East*, in which on the eve of the Sino-Russian War, he postulated a hitherto unknown brand of Pan-Asianism. This was also at the same time that the first Bauhaus show was organized in Calcutta, the Bengali capital and former capital of Raj.[68] The exchanges between Bengali artists and members of Nihon Bijutsu

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[68] The Bauhaus exhibition in 1922 was by no means the source of Indian modernism in the arts. Poet Rabindranath Tagore visited the Weimer Bauhaus in 1921, and invited them for the 14th annual exhibition of the Indian Society of Oriental Art. The exhibition showed 250 works including two watercolors by Kandinsky, nine watercolors by Klee, and more. Among the local artists, Gaganendranath Tagore and prominent "primitivist" female painter Sunayani Devi, as well as others, represented the natives. But even before the show had started, debates regarding the nature of Indian modernism and modernist art, had given rise to two prominent Bengali journals, *Rupam* and *Prabashi*. Bengali historian and public intellectual Benoy Sarkar wrote a manifesto and sent it to *Prabashi* from Berlin, proclaiming that the modernist "aesthetics of autonomy" was parallel to the nationalist search for autonomy, and that the Orientalist work of the Bengali school

Kyokai society had translated into Abanandrinath Tagore's (one of the founders of the Bengal school) trademark wash technique. More importantly it inaugurated a new way of invoking Bengali figures and reality, which promptly became a template for Indian artists of later generations, such as Nandalal Basu, K. G. Subramanyan (the proponent of the legendary Progressive school), S. H. Raza, M. F. Husain, Francis Newton Souza, among others.

These interfaces and relations were clearly formulated as a resistance. Rabindranath Tagore—the first Nobel laureate of Asia and founder of a utopian wilderness university, which was the principal hub for a lot of these exchanges— he incessantly traveled to the West, as well as to the Soviet Union and South America to initiate decolonizing and empowering contacts with and contaminations of the West.[69] Tagore helped to establish a pipeline for the

and its undergirding *Indian* spirituality was a form of myth-making which had become irrelevant in the revolutionary reality of the country. On the other hand, Tagore found great affinity with Kandinsky and Klee's work, not only because he thought these artists engendered forms of art making that were opposed to the Western materialism and academic art brought on by colonialism, but, also due to the fact that Kandinsky, Mondrian, van Doesburg and, especially Malevich had been intensely impacted by the *Bhagavad Gita* and the Vedanta philosophy initiated in the West by Swami Vivekananda in 1893 at the Chicago World's Fair, and the works of J. Krishnamurti. See: Clammer, John, *Vision and Society: Towards a Sociology and Anthropology From Art*, New York: Routledge, 2014, pp. 149-51.

[69] Great Spanish Nobel laureate poet Juan Ramón Jiménez and his artist wife Zenobia Camprubi first translated Tagore into Spanish. The Argentinian writer Victoria Ocampo, publisher of immensely influential magazine *Sur*, and older sister of Silvina, Jorge Luis Borges' lifelong friend and lover, not only translated Tagore from Andre Gide's French translation, but also hosted him at her house. It is interesting to note that Gabriela Mistral, Pablo Neruda (Chile), Dulce María Loynaz (Cuba), José Vasconcelos (Mexico), Cecilia Meireles (Brazil) and a series of educationists and reformers from different Latin American countries showed deep interest in Tagore's thinking and writings. It was at Ocampo's home that Tagore first started to paint in 1924 at the age of 63; his first exhibition opened to great acclaim in Paris, in 1930, and in NYC in 1931. Also, in September 1930, an exhibition of Tagore's work opened in Moscow's State Museum of New Western Art, which featured more than 200 watercolors. By 1926, the Soviet government had already decided to publish the collected works of Tagore. His poems and reviews of his work appeared in many Soviet magazines. In his article "The Indian Tolstoy," Anatoly Lunacharsky, the Soviet people's commissar (minister) of education, stated, "Tagore's works are so full of colour, subtle spiritual experiences and truly noble ideas that they now constitute a treasure of human culture."
See: Prasad, Bimal. "Full text of "Indo-soviet Relations 1947-1972." Accessed March 26, 2022.

constant exchange of scholarship which brought in some of the premier proto-fascists, fierce anti-imperialists of the time, like Stella Kramrisch, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania and a curator at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Others included Leonard Knight Elmhurst, W.W. Pearson, Italian futurists, and Czech and German Indologists, who were all strange accomplices in galvanizing a strange amalgam of a makeshift Indian modernism in Bengal. This modernism was not insular and despite its localized fervor an flavor reached out towards a globalized horizon.

1.7 **South Asian Epistemodiversity vis-à-vis Sensual Knowledge**

Tagore, the first non-European Nobel laureate and a major Traditionalist figure for European poets, theorists, and artists, cautioned during the Second World War, to "try and highlight only the history, which is piloted by man-as-the creator towards the Magnum that lies beyond the history and is at the very center of the human soul."[70] A good friend of Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, a fiercely anti colonial and retro-futuristic figure,[71] recognized the violence of hegemonic history

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https://archive.org/stream/in.ernet.dli.2015.129918/2015.129918.Indo-soviet-Relations-1947-1972_djvu.txt

[70] Taken from a conversation between Tagore and a younger poet, at Shantiniketon, Tagore's University, in 1941; the text had been translated, from original Bengali by subaltern historian Ranajit Guha and, was published in his book, *History at the Limit of World-History*; New Delhi: Oxford University Presse, 2002, p. 99.

[71] Gandhi established the *traditionalist* Swaraj movement with its stern rejection of not only any industrially produced products but a total dismissal of the West and the Western ideas about futurity, progress and development. Gandhi's Swaraj movement is symbolized by a handloom as an emblem that defy the icons and idioms of industrial modernism. In order to break free of the fetters of the determinist Western history—and the vector of continuity—Gandhi invented and activated a future-oriented *traditionalist* memory where Orient and Occident could collude outside the violence of Modernism.

and modernism. Gandhi perceived Western art as a necropolitical apparatus, unfolding within the violent logic of Modernism. Explicitly rejecting modernism and modern art, Gandhi invoked a practice-based revival of critical autochthonous knowledge of the seed, soil, aroma, season, and bio/geo spaces unimaginable in production relations brought on after industrial relations. Gandhi reanimated and reframed an organic science of the peasant, craftspeople, untouchable, invisible, village midwife, snake oil sellers, shamans, priests, and unnamable professionals who could still shuttle between capitalist-statist reality and the internalized allegiance with the practical grassroots and other social forms. Gandhi, among others, brought into view a homespun ideology of the revivalism of local crafts. He saw craft as a practical space to spin and weave different threads of autochthonous knowledge with allochthonous. For Gandhi craft was as a heteropraxic system that could suture the wound of colonialism. Gandhi's abhorrence of modern arts in favor of crafts—a distinction which he had always considered colonial—is given a strong theoretical base by Ananda Coomaraswamy, one of the greatest south Asian art historians of the century. In 1923, Coomaraswamy wrote in the introduction of a primer to Indian art, "art arises in India in response to a demand, and the virtue or defect of a work (are those) of the race in that age...there are no distinctions of fine and applied or decorative art and no insurmountable barrier dividing the arts of the folk from the canonical arts."[72]

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[72] Coomaraswamy, Ananda K., *Introduction to Indian Art*. Madras: Theosophical Publishing House.1923. p. 2.

As far back as 1913, Coomaraswamy, who was a leader of the *traditionalist* movement in the US, contrasted the emancipatory nature of the sub-continental arts with the necropolitical apparatuses emerged from the Enlightenment humanist tradition:

> The Hindus have never believed in art for art's sake; their art, like that of mediaeval Europe, was an art for love's sake. They made no distinctions of sacred and profane...A great art expresses a clear and impassioned vision of life: each inessential statement detracts from its power. In Indian philosophy: whether or not the work reveals the Self (atman) within the form (rupa)...the presence of this spirit is Beauty. To cultivate some-sightedness, to recognize one reality behind the pleasant and unpleasant Names and Forms, the familiar and unfamiliar formulas, it is needful to go behind the merely representative element to the purely emotional content of art, its dealings with love and death, for these are exactly the same to all, in all nations and times, all over the earth. It is this content, the movement of the spirit that is the universal subject-matter of art.[73]

Gandhi's counter-historical and ardently *traditionalist* Swaraj movement, symbolized by a handloom, rejected the icons and idioms of industrial modernism which assumed history as sets of linear and culture-specific, developmental narratives constructed with random parameters and autonomous components

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[73] Coomaraswamy, Ananda K., Singam, Durai and Fitzgerald, Joseph A. *The Wisdom of Ananda Coomaraswamy: Reflections on Indian Art, Life, and Religion*, Edition 2011, p. 42.

which debunk emancipatory potentials of the future. In order to break free of the fetters of determinist Western history—and the vector of continuity—Gandhi invented and activated a future-oriented traditionalist memory in which Orient and Occident could collude outside the violence of Modernism.

Ethno-technology/crafts, mobilizing embodied, sensuous, allochthonous knowledges and networks of relationships, actualize an *anecdotal* virtuality and articulate a polyphonic and anti-historical opening up of new possibilities for world making. Through crafts, Gandhi established the importance of the physical, and reclaimed the ongoing dialogue between head and heart, the intellect and labor, labor and play. In the sub-continental worldview, crafts describe a circular metamorphosis between sensuous thinking and doing. Creating a crafts-object is not a linear endeavor; it is rather, in Leibniz's terms, a *compossible* that has been sifted through the *great screen*. Crafts-objects are abstractions, or one might construe their *machina* and *techne* as extractions, from a chaotic multiplicity of possibilities and sensuousness.

While the core of my arguments stages the insights of a revisionist history with regard to the contractedness and inter-discursivity of an erased South Asian history, it also recognizes that this history's organization is implicit in its negotiation with the violence of Western modernism, broadly construed. I want to allay the seeming paradox of trafficking the history of necropolitical Western art vis-à-vis the status and understanding of time based/plastic arts/images, and the founding assumption that artistic articulation necessitates the construction of subjectivity, on different gauges, meanwhile art history–and arts–dictates the

establishment of a shared site of subjectivity in order for this history's affects and retrocity to be instituted, institutionalized, and imbibed.

I am asserting here that the history of necropolitical Western art inaugurates disengagement, decay, and internecine paramnesia. Taking a schizo-paranoid approach to the culture-producer's radical *potentia* for being-in-the world, for history-making.

Through the dynamics of socius-social movements and displacements, as embodied signal flow in the globalized and networked world, the decentering of the foci of sovereignty acts as a powerful political currency in mitigating cultural resistance through subjection/subjectivation. The collapse of the construct of the autonomous liberal subject in Occidental capitalist economies correlates with the starting- point of a mode of production founded in a continual process of subjectivation: the notion of "human capital" per Michel Foucault. In the post-Fordist context, the artistic interlocution with history, regarding the regime of scopic economy/ecology, also replicates one of production's primary orientations: the production of subjectivities. Since all production is the reproduction of various subjectivity-formations, I am invoking what has been categorized as continuing production in the post-Fordist era. This occurs through what Franco "Bifo" Berardi defines as the precarious and recombinant fragmentations or fractalizations of a worker's life.

Perhaps it would be helpful to have the example of Gandhi and this framework fresh in mind, with the context and traces of the first meeting between Joseph Beuys and Lama Sogyal. This meeting was conspicuously organized by a Dutch artist, Louwrien Wijers, who subsequently published the meeting and the

subsequent debate in a hard-to-find book: *His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama of Tibet talks to Louwrien Wijers*.[74] In the meeting, both Beuys and Lama Sogyal seem to be aware, from opposing yet complementary points of view, of an ongoing anodyne to modern art's phallogocentric epistemological operations. It is almost impossible to sufficiently demonstrate Beuys's attempt to distance himself from Western art the fact which specially resonated with the post-colonial artist and critics of South Asia *(*and I've addressed this theme in details in the creative component of my dissertation: *Lost in Love).* Here it should be evident that, in the last phase of his career, Beuys had been clearly endeavoring to implant a particular meta-position, an anti-conceptual and experiential undergrowth on the body and the body politic of the Westernized world's art history-knowledge complex. In the meeting, he almost embarrassingly refers to this meta-position as "a kind of spiritual issue as a certain basic background. . . that is an ancient tradition, which runs through very old Christian impulses. . . and through Rosicrucian intentions, and is being carried by people like Rudolph Steiner, for instance, in his so-called anthroposophy."[75]

  This is particularly important to note as this particular notion channels through Louwrien Wijers—Beuys's long-time cohort and co-conspirator —in a series of performances which culminated in a biennial planned with French Fluxus artist Robert Filliou—*Zugehend auf eine Biennale des Friedens*. Based on suggestions from Beuys and Filliou, Louwrien organized a series of seminars as

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[74] Wijers, Louwrien, *His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama of Tibet Talks to Louwrien Wijers*. Kantoor voor Cultuur Extracten, Arnhem + Van Reekum Museum, Apeldoorn, 1982.

[75] Ibid. p. 133.

mental sculptures titled "Art Meets Science and Spirituality in a Changing Economy," at the Stedelik Museum in Amsterdam. These seminars brought together six Nobel laureate scientists, economists, thinkers, and artists with guests such as the Dalai Lama, Indian Catholic priest Raiman Panikkar, Frithjof Capra, Russian economist Stanislav Menshikov, Robert Rauschenberg, John Cage, David Bohm, Mother Tessa Bielecki, Lawrence Weiner, Marina Abramovic, and others, and they have left indelible marks on South Asia's psyche.

The South Asian contemporary art "system" emerged as an effect of the shift in artistic practices that took place during the 1950s-1970s but for very different reasons than a Western art historian might think. The historical trajectory and the social dynamics that led to the collusion of the South Asian art world with Fluxus, Marcel Duchamp—strangely channeled through Romanian historian of religion and professor at the University of Chicago Mircea Eliade and Romanian philosopher and essayist E. M. Cioran—and Joseph Beuys. But at the same time, the long and arduous travelling show of Merce Cunningham, Robert Rauschenberg, and John Cage-- in India, in the 1964-65—has been relegated to relative oblivion and unimportance; other than few photographs and half-whispered stories told by few audience members there are almost no trace in the art field or the collective memory of the cities they travelled.[76] Around the same time, Vikram Sarabhai, a co-sponsor of most of their trip, founder of the Indian space program, and father-in-law of artist Lynda Benglis, hired Le Corbusier to design and build his Ahmedabad house. Strangely, Vikram's archive doesn't contain even a single photo of Cunningham, Rauschenberg, and Cage's visit, and

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[76] This is addressed in the creative component of my dissertation, *Lost in Love*.

other than a few Indian dancers and theater artists, nobody seems to remember this event.[77]

In contrast, a number of noted Indian artists and critics—Vivan Sundaram, Geeta Kapur, S. H. Raza, F. N. Souza, et al.—were either studying or had settled in Western Europe or the US while ground-breaking exhibitions like *Systems* (White chapel Art Gallery, London, 1972), *Primary Structures* (Jewish Museum, New York, 1966), *Cybernetic Serendipity* (ICA, London, 1968), *When Attitudes Become Form* (Kunsthalle, Bern, 1969), and *The Machine as Seen at the End of the Mechanical Age* (MOMO, NY, 1968) took place. But, these monumental exhibitions had almost no impact on South Asian art practices either at home or in the diaspora.

Beuys, who at that stage in his career, in 1982, was painfully cognizant that Western art and its history had unabashedly developed and consumed every knowledge inscribed in the regime of the scopic economy and its political meta-semiotics. He had, therefore, declared, per Hegel, the death of art as the closure of the chasm between being and knowing that engendered art. The erasure of this void, the constant identity of being with knowledge, foreclosed all future possibility for Western art. Beuys realized that the West—with absolute desire at its origin and absolute knowledge as its obliteration—embodied better than anything else a dialectical telos toward the manufacturing of meaning, but only in relationship with the immanence of death, depression, and disengagement as negative space and/or absence. Also, it will be helpful to know that, in the struggle against Western art as a death-depression-disengagement-dealing necropolitical

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[77] This event has been addressed in the creative component of my dissertation: *Lost in Love*.

apparatus, Beuys, Wijers, and Filliou had been plotting to initiate a very new kind of biennial as a platform to discuss the futurity and potentiality that resonated deeply in the hearts of the South Asian artist.

Now, it shouldn't come as a surprise that Beuys's 1965 performance *Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* and the 1974 performance, *I Like America and America likes Me*, seem to find affinity in the South Asian art scene. We find their resonances among the works of not only a master painter Atul Dodiya—a near contemporary of Beuys—but also to thoroughly contemporary and incredibly smart Vivan Sundaram, from the 1970's generation, to a very young sculptor— recently included in the 11th Shanghai Biennale, curated by Documenta 11's famed Raqs Media Collective—Rafiqul Shuvo, born in 1983. They come back to reference Beuys's oeuvre in particular, and Zen and South Asian Buddhism- inflected Fluxus in general, again and again. But, in the following pages, through analyzing a discussion between Homi Bhaba and Susan Bean, I will demonstrate that these willful and very selective appropriations are neither simply borrowing nor only utilizing a lexicon of tools plundered from the so-called contemporary/postmodernist corpus to understand and absorb their efficacy in the native context. Rather this is a strategy to resist modernism's historical and discursive aggression by infusing the signified with sensual knowledge while maintaining the modernist signifier in a form which opens up conversation by bypassing the doxa of Eurouniversalist art history.

Let me end this chapter by quoting a rather lengthy exchange between a typical European expert Susan S. Bean (SSB), curator of Asian art at the Peabody Essex Museum, and a native agent, Homi K. Bhabha (HKB). This exchange must

not only be taken as a mark of the beginning of a self-aware theorization of a resistant contemporaneity—breaking from Modernism's post-colonial past and reformulating moments of contact between the so called "East" and "West"—but here Bhabha also observes an important formula of sensuous knowledge practice freighted in contemporary South Asia:

> HKB: …Urban centers at the time had a richness of cultural exchange, a cosmopolitan culture. You never had to choose Western art over Indian art, or African art over Chinese. Although, the art world was not at all sure of itself in an international sense but, there was a certain confidence about being able to cite from whatever you wanted, talk about anything you choose, from here, take from there, make it your own. This tremendous translational vitality wouldn't not have been the case if you were brought up to revere certain canons, schools, or great masters… There is no apparent sense of the anxiety of influence, because there is a prevailing mood of translation and conversation. There was a desire to establish a zone of translation in which the language of contemporary art could be used to signify historical forms and contemporary figures that had a local and regional resonance. That, I think, is one of the innovative values that Indian contemporary artists and writers have given us. They work with, and within, the vocabulary of dominant, international forms and practices, by using their languages but resisting their normative authority or their formal canonicity. They attempt to hybridize

cultural forms and figures; to see how much you cross-fertilize them; how far you can translate them…

The Eurocentric habit of mind is frequently structured around a dialectic that cites non-European objects or ideas in order to subsume them into a new, syncretic totality—a totality that envelops forms of cultural alterity or "otherness" into representation of "exemplarity" articulated to general norms of principles.

These normative generalizations often decontextualize cultural differences and refigure them as mere embellishments to alien histories and dominating contexts.

Briefly, the ahistorical description of African art as 'Primitivism" allows it to be appropriated by Eurocentric discourse in the cause of universalism and progressivism that are all too often self-referential in establishing the authority of the Western intellectual, aesthetic, or epistemological traditions.

In the realm of Indian art—modernist and contemporary—one sees a much more dialogical approach to the representation of cultural differences and the influence of diverse aesthetic traditions. Some artists have explicitly reflected on the genealogies of cultural exchange and their enabling effects…This sign of hospitality is there in the affective and stylistic gesture of the work…

SSB: In *The Bombay Buccaneer* (Figure 4), (Atul) Dodiya also probed his relationship to other artists and to a broad cultural terrain, but his take is teasing and ironic.

HKB: This is painting after cinema, after Bollywood. Coming out of the traditional form of self-portraiture, you get the popular icon of the Bollywood star. Reflected in the spectacles of the film star you have David Hockney at left and Bhupen Khakhar at right. By 1994, when this self-portrait was made, the Indian art world had acquired a celebrity gloss boosted by a bullish art market. The mythological musical romances associated with the Bollywood style were losing ground to spare, racy Neo-Realist films (with a touch of Film Noir) that deal with Bombay's mafioso and the glamour of gangland…This is about cinema, glamour, consumerism—the painting is branded with the familiar Ralph Lauren logo of a polo player, making a bold, ironic statement about a "brave new India" and the confidence of its rising middle classes. But it is also about the precarious nature of urban India and its frequent forays into the wild side of corruption, criminality, and exploitation. There's something quite canny about taking a little bit of Braque, or a little bit of Picasso, or a little bit of Hockney, and putting it in a different context—the Bollywood context—and saying: "I'm hearing what you're saying, and now I am giving you something else to think about."

SSB: Our conversation brings out a particular, distinctive quality of munch of India's modernist art: the artist's predilection for hybrid, dialogical, transformational practices.

HKB: When you are confronted by the modernity of India, which is so knowing about the cosmopolitanism of its own choosing, then it's a different conversation from one fraught with the anxiety of influence, or overwhelmed by the sense of coming belatedly to the drawing board. These artists understood something very profound, which is that if you want a dialogue, you have to take somebody else's words, or, in this case, other approaches to painting, and use them to some degree, in the conversation, as if they were your own. [78]

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[78] Bean, Susan S., and Bhabha, Homi K., eds., *Midnight to the Boom: Painting in India after Independence: From the Peabody Essex Museums Horwitz Collection.* London: Thames & Hudson, 2013. pp. 23-39.

Figure 2, *The Bombay Buccaneer* by Atul Dodhy

In the next chapter, I focus on Satyajit Ray's filmmaking, particularly his construction of filmic landscape, as a sensual, localized, and naturalized resistance against the Fascist-Modernist complex. Not unlike South Asian modernist painters Atul Dodiya et.al., Ray launches his films from within the modernist lexicon. Here, we have to remember that, modernist-fascist complex annexed the public standard of European beauty. It is fascism which in the eighteenth century not only *rediscovered* antiquity but also recreated and interpreted it to fit fascist desire. Modernist-fascist aesthetics is deeply interrelated with the aestheticization of politics which, as Rancière declared, "provoke a break in our perception, to

disclose some secret connection of things hidden behind the everyday reality."[79] I
underline and interrogate how Ray formulates his "encounter and possibly the
clash"[80] against modernist-fascist aesthetics, the ideals of beauty and everyday
reality, by designing and masterfully deploying the sensuous, minor, and
tropicalized micro-narratives of the native, minor, and voiceless.

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[79] Ibid.

[80] Rancière, Jacques, *Film Fables*, Oxford: Berg, 2006, p. 30.

Chapter 2

2.1 The Politics of Erasure: Hegel, Memory, and Theorizing Media/Cinema

In the previous chapters, I have demonstrated that, while a Eurasian production, *Modernism* is an event and epiphenomenon that is constantly being written, rewritten, historicized, constructed, and contrived as distinctly and exclusively "Occidental" or "Western." Hence, the systemic limitation of Western modernism's narrative is that it can only operate by suppressing and erasing other so called "modernities," including Traditionalist, Vedic, and occult ingredients in the ferment of Western modernism. Almost inevitably, according to this logic, the emergence of "modernism" and the "modern subject" hinges on the splitting of the whole into binaries. The suppression of modernism's *Oriental* objectal counterparts disappear from the present but effectively remain present in the unconscious and "unthought" of modernism. The presence—under erasure—of modernism's *Oriental* objectal counterparts is actively unacknowledged and coded to invisibility: the Occidental subject is correlative to an "impossible" object whose existence has "moved underground," as Freud put it in his *Interpretation of Dreams*.[1] In other words, the smooth exterior of the explicit modernist reality in the so-called Occident is sustained by erasing and systemic suppression of its non-occidental participants in that reality. Here, I will emphasize once again that *modernism* is always-already implicitly understood as *Western modernism*. And modernism has to engage in a continuous act of

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[1] Žižek, Slavoj. "Move the Underground!" Slavoj Zizek—A Pervert's Guide to Family. Accesses June O5, 2018.
https://www.lacan.com/zizunder.htm

suppression and erasure of the non-Occidental body, labor, and the resources that have gone into erecting and maintaining the façade of Western modernism.

In his vast corpus, German Idealist philosopher G. W. F. Hegel, perhaps the most important critic of Enlightenment rationalism, established his nuanced and complex appraisal of modernity.[2] In the first draft of his lectures on World-History, a term he coined, Hegel interchanged this term freely with "universal world history" throughout the "Introduction." Hegel, henceforth, outlines World-History's parameters:

> Nations whose consciousness is obscure, or the obscure history of such nations, are…not the object of the philosophical history of the world, whose end is to attain knowledge of the Idea in history—the spirits of those nations which (have) become conscious of their inherent principle, and have become aware of what they are and what their action signify, are its object.[3]

Hegel identifies that World-history "is nothing more than the plan of

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[2] "In his Lectures on Fine Art, delivered in Berlin in the 1820's, Hegel argues that art worlds involve a unique form of aesthetic intelligibility, and that what they rendered intelligible was the state of collective human self- knowledge across historical time. This approach to art works has been extremely influential in a number of different contexts. The question posed in this lecture is whether Hegel's approach might be of any value in understanding the most radical revolution in the later history of art, modernism."
See: "After the Beautiful: Hegel and the Philosophy of Pictorial Modernism." CornellCast. Accessed October 3, 2021. https://www.cornell.edu/video/hegel-and-the-philosophy-of-pictoral-modernism.

[3] Hegel, *Lectures on World History*, p. 55, quoted in Guha, Ranajit, *History at the Limit of World-history*. New York: Columbia University Press,2003. p.35.

providence."[4] And the Orient is condemned to remain where it was at the very beginning—that is, condemned to stay frozen in Prehistory.[5] Hegel emphatically points out that, there are no great literatures or philosophies in China and India. He probes this question again and again, and in his opinion,

> These two nations are lacking—indeed completely lacking—in the essential self-consciousness of the concept of freedom. The Chinese look on their moral rules as if they were laws of nature positive external commandments, coercive rights and duties or rules of mutual courtesy. Freedom, through which the substantial determinations of reason can alone be translated into ethical attitudes is absent…And in the Indian doctrine of renunciation of sensuality, desire and earthly interests, positive ethical freedom is not the goal and end but rather the extinction of consciousness and the suspension of spiritual and physical life.[6]

In a speech at the Columbia University, Ranajit Guha addresses this issue of legitimizing the erasure of the "Orientals" from world-history. He asserts that Hegel's identification of himself with what he claims as the collective "we" is to pronounce his condemnation of anything "Oriental." The proclamation of "we" ultimately apotheosized in changing Hegel's own protocol of adequacy to concede

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[4] Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*. Translated by Robert F. Brown and Peter Crafts Hodgson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019, p. 67.
[5] Guha, *History at the Limit of World-history,* p.37

[6] Hegel*, Lectures on World History*, p. 145, quoted by Guha in Guha, Ranajit, *History at the Limit of World-history.* New York: Columbia University Press,2003. p.37-38.

the three European realms to World-history. For Hegel, Guha conveys, the apertures of world history are firmly shut, for instance,

> against India which does not qualify because its society is an
> unfree patriarchal structure, but the slave societies of Ancient
> Greece and Rome do and so does medieval and early modern
> Europe with its tolerance of slavery and its considerable
> dependence on servile labor. China and India are 'out' because in
> these polluted only One, that is, the despot, is free, while Greece
> and Rome are "in" with the stipulation about fully developed
> freedom modified to accommodate the fact that Some, though by
> no means All, are free there…[7]

Now, according to Hegel, China, the Bengal-Balkan complex, the Middle East, and North Africa encompass 32 countries and a vast number of people without histories. These people's ongoing struggle against erasure and their relationship with contemporary memory and the archive have become part of the infrastructure of globalization. Which is to say: the archive as mnemonic machines[8] are purchasing urgent currency as an underground or *markets of* minor and polyphonic history of modernism. It is imperative for us to understand that both modernism and modernity can—as veritable sources, settings, touchstones,

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[7] Ibid. p. 40.

[8] A machine to access actionable memory especially in cultures which are traditionally oral. Here, I was thinking of how and which ways memories are actionable, in the sense Edward Said deployed the notion: "appeals to the past are among the commonest of strategies in interpretations of the present. What animates such appeals is not only disagreement about what happened in the past and what the past was, but uncertainty about whether the past really is past, over and concluded, or whether it continues, albeit in different forms, perhaps." See Said, Edward, *Culture and Imperialism*, New York: Knopf, 1994, p. 3.

and compendia of meanings and values—has to be conceived of as an assemblage of grand narratives to be seamlessly plaited into what a great philosopher like Hegel called world history. The mnemonic machines of minor history struggle against world-history. This is not only a struggle of minor and minority memory against erasure but also against definition, interpretation, codification, and territorialization as per the dominant civilizational values. This definition, interpretation, codification, and territorialization effectively smooths out colonial disparities, historical disproportion, and dissent by violence. This violence performs erasure, subjugation, and suppression of the knowledge, language, labor, body, agency, and subjectivity of subaltern subjects. Western modernism and its narrative ultimately attempt to suture the jagged fault lines of colonial wounds. These wounds proclaim the vector and teleology of a process which is not only oriented toward reimagining a messy futuristic present but also is a venue of political contestations manifested as limiting definitions and truncated histories that construct the meaning and shape of the present.

In the next section, I explore a case study of a native cinematic modernism intrinsic to not only the non-European context, but also symptomatic of the very specific low-resolution South Asian realism and the poverty-row infrastructural situations. And these would be reflected in the instances in the following sections, to some extent, to index or decode new meaning/affect, subordinated to new registers of experiences, the unanchored reality of which produce effects of a native naturalist-modernism rooted in dissenting sensuous knowledge—a lot of which are undecipherable through Western cinematic discourses. At the same

time, uniquely, this untranslatable and undecipherable knowledge correlates to the palimpsestic modes of production and the flows of global capital in South Asia.

2.2 Naïve Motion Picture Karma: Sensuous Knowledge and Resistance

On 2 December 1962, Jean Renoir wrote to Christine Burnier, an accomplished translator of the oeuvre of the first Asian Nobel laureate, Rabindranath Tagore, that,

> We are flabbergasted by the work you're accomplishing. India, Africa, and to top it all the delightful translations of Tagore's writings. We have seen the two films that Satyajit Ray made from the works of this author. The longest one is based on a story you included in your book: the one about the wild girl. It is always dangerous to adapt masterpieces. Ray is a great director, but despite his talent, I was not able to find on the screen the breadth of Tagore's tale.[9]

Now, on the other side of the spectrum, Satyajit Ray's imperiousness towards and contempt of not only Western critics and audiences, but also of Western filmmakers who come to India to make films, is well documented. Ray held Renoir in high estimation, but he liked neither Renoir's script nor the finished film of *The River*—though Ray made some corrections of the script at Renoir's request. And let us not forget, thirteen years before Renoir wrote this

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[9]Thompson, David and LoBianco, Lorraine (Ed.) Renoir, Jean, *Jean Renoir: Letters*. London: Faber and Faber, 1994.

letter, six years before Ray finished his first film,(*Pather Panchali*) three years

after he had co-founded the first cine-society of India, and one year after he had

met and formed friendship with Renoir, in 1950, he wrote the following to his

soon-to-be art director, Bansi Chandragupta:[10]

> The entire conventional approach (as exemplified by even the best
>
> American and British films) is wrong. Because the conventional
>
> approach tells you that, the best way to tell a story is to leave out
>
> all except those elements which are directly related to your story,
>
> while the master's work clearly indicates that if your theme is
>
> strong and simple, then you can include a hundred little apparently
>
> irrelevant details which, instead of obscuring the theme, only help
>
> to intensify it by contrast, and in addition create the illusion of
>
> actuality better.[11]

Almost 32 years, later, once again, Ray pours out his frustration and

vitriol, making a more specific case about the Western critics:

> The Western critic who hopes to do full justice to Devi must be
>
> prepared to do a great deal of homework before he confronts the
>
> film. He must read up on the cult of the Mother Goddess; on the
>
> 19th century Bengal Renaissance and how it affected the values of
>
> orthodox Hindu society; on the position of the Hindu bride in an

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[10] Bansi would later go on to work with not only Jean Renoir but also a couple of Hollywood productions of James Ivory and Ismail Merchant and numerous Bollywood productions. Bansi was scheduled to work with Roberto Rossellini as well, in his highly publicized Indian film *India, Matri Bhum*i; but Bansi's plan to work with Rossellini never materialized. Rossellini abandoned his wife, Ingrid Bergman, to elope with the wife of Harisadhan Dasgupta, a documentary filmmaker, and a close friend and, working partner of both Satyajit Ray and Bansi.
[11] Robinson, Andrew. *Sudden Genius*? Oxford, NYC: Oxford University Press, 2010, p. 236.

upper-class family. All the turns and twists of the plot grow out of one or more of these factors. The Western critic who hasn't done his homework will pin his faith on the rational so to save him from the swirls and eddies of an alien value system; but even here the son's ultimate helplessness will convince him only if he is aware of the stranglehold of Hindu orthodoxy in 19th century Bengal.[12]

While it is a given that Western audiences and critics will miss the native referential framework of Bengali art and film in the earlier days of international exposure, Ray, once again, underscores the historical phenomena of Western incomprehensibility of Indian film in the 50th Anniversary issue of *Sight & Sound*: "it is more important for the west now to see our films than to understand them. In any case, true understanding will take time. Slighted for so long, India will not yield up her secrets to the west so easily, for cows are still holy here, and God is still a phallus."[13]

Ray considered Renoir his "principal mentor."[14] Renoir was extraordinarily sensitive to the conditions in India. Time and again Renoir exhibited his knowledge vis-à-vis Ray's ontic economy of his artistic projects. But

[12] Robinson, Andrew. *Satyajit Ray: The Inner Eye: The Biography of a Master Filmmaker*. Berkeley and California: University of California Press, 1989, p. 121.
[13] Ray, Satyajit. "Satyajit Ray on Cinema." Google Books. Accessed June 05, 2018. https://books.google.com/books?id=Iw46JXat1jQC&pg=PA91&lpg=PA91&dq=&source=bl&ots=2t5gA9xuRE&sig=A9DK1Ek36u6oCkRP64xTIsJLbdw&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjItYT0rrzbAhUE-lQKHYTFDfYQ6AEIKTAA#v=onepage&q&f=false
Satyajit Ray told this to then French president Francois Mitterrand while receiving the Legion of Honor in Calcutta in 1987.

[14] Deb, Sandipan. "Remembering Satyajit Ray, India's most renowned filmmaker." *Live Mint*, 27 Sep 2015. https://www.livemint.com/Sundayapp/1dWG5Rlu5XMfeo3mAlUjYP/Remembering-Satyajit-Ray-Indias-most-renowned-filmmaker.html

as can be seen in Renoir's letter to Christine Burnier, Renoir was still denied

access on a different count. In Ray's case, Renoir misread Ray's decolonizing

cultural politics of disseminating Bengali sensuous knowledge in the guise of

Ray's Nehruvian naturalist/nationalist translation of Asia's first Nobel laureate

and tremendously influential poet and lyricist Rabindranath Tagore's *Upanishad*

and pre-industrialized and precolonial Indian traditionalist cultural ferment.

By 1963, Satyajit Ray had performed transcoding and translation—

between two medias—of three Tagore stories and one of his novellas, not to

mention a documentary on Tagore. Among these films, *Charulata*[15]—which Jean-

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[15] *Charulata* (1964), often rated the director's finest film—and the one that, when pressed, he would name as his own personal favorite: "It's the one with the fewest flaws"—is adapted from Tagore's 1901 novella *Nastanirh* (*The Broken Nest*). It's widely believed that the story was inspired by Tagore's relationship with his sister-in-law, Kadambari Devi, who committed suicide in 1884 for reasons that have never been fully explained. Kadambari, like Charulata, was beautiful, intelligent, and a gifted writer, and toward the end of his life, Tagore admitted that the hundreds of haunting portraits of women that he painted in his later years were inspired by memories of her.
See: Kemp, Philip. "Charulata: 'Calm Without, Fire Within.'" Writing on the screen: Satyajit Ray's adaptation of Tagore. Accessed October 3, 2021.
https://web.archive.org/web/20060523005503/http://www.ipv.pt/forumedia/5/9.htm.
    Charulata belongs to that venerable category of films that unabashedly display their complexities, and are readily regarded as "exemplary" because of the delightful struggle involved in talking or writing about them. For several Ray enthusiasts – including my mother – it *is* the director's masterpiece, a film that has been likened to Mozart's music (but with little objective justification), and is cinematically "close to perfection" . Set in a late 19th century Bengali middle-class household, it revolves around Charu, a lonely and childless housewife, and her efforts to alleviate the ennui in which she lives. She is married to Bhupati, an affluent *bhadralok* , too consumed in disseminating Western liberalism through his English-language newspaper to pay any attention to his wife. The inertia is their marriage seems convenient until it is interrupted by the arrival of Bhupati's cousin, Amal, who is full of youthful virtues – exuberance, poetic idealism, naivete. In his presence, Charu begins to reject her habitual proximity towards
the *Prachina* (Conservative Woman) – a figure satirised by writers of the time as one who lolls around in bed, reads pulp fiction and only thinks of herself, and is typified by Charu's sister-in-law, Manda. By contrast, as a *Nabina* (Modern Woman), Charu freely exercises an unassuming intellect and harbours a latent sexual attraction towards Amal. However, Charu spends most of the narrative oscillating between the *Prachina* and the *Nabina*; she is never quite one or the other. The film reaches its climax: Amal is unwilling to betray his cousin's trust that has already suffered at the hands of Charu's swindling brother, Umapada. He abruptly leaves, and after Charu hysterically submits to her disappointment in the presence of Bhupati, there is nothing left but for the forsaken woman and her humiliated husband to forge a contrived reconciliation.
    What begins as a seemingly straightforward character study quickly develops into a scathing critique of the social hypocrisies of the Bengali Renaissance. Charu becomes representative of a generation of women, encouraged to experience a sense of liberty and independence, but only within the *andarmahal* (inner sanctum of the house). Ray's structural and

Luc Godard claims to be his most favorite Ray film—wasn't released until 1964 and was lauded for its absolute faithfulness to the general project of Tagore's traditionalism. Here, I think one can safely assume that, Renoir had seen *Charulata* before it was officially released—given his friendship with Ray and the fact that, Ray often screened unreleased, or even unfinished, films for friends— one is surprised by Renoir's estimation of Ray's cinematic opus not capturing Tagore's breath of vision.

2.3 Satyajit Ray: Heterodoxic Hospitality to a Sense of Prevailing Translation

Now, in order to interrogate Renoir's politics of misreading, let us reflect on the uncomfortable curve of the postcolonial processes of transnational cinematic transactions through the ideological operation of Ray's native Nehruvian naturalist and humanist-traditionalist stance.

Satyajit Ray, scion of one of the oldest and most revered families of culture producers in pre-partitioned Bengal, repeatedly insisted that he had learnt his art mostly from two occidental sources: Western cinema and Western classical music. In his Bengali autobiography, Ray mentions that in his extended— "joint"— family everybody was musical and four of his aunts had their LP out

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aesthetic approach to the delicate complexities of his thematics and narrative deserves careful scrutiny, and has certainly not gone unnoticed, but for the sake of brevity it is perhaps appropriate to only highlight the key aspects of his strategy. In the opening segment of the film (roughly 7 and a half minutes), Ray takes full advantage of the cinematic apparatus at his disposal, in search of a "language entirely free from literary and theatrical influences" . Dialogue is almost done away with; sound cues and music are carefully selected and introduced with pin-point precision, and the action and camera movement are orchestrated to mediate between Charu's reflective pauses and moments of acceleration. The end result is a wonderfully intricate, almost composed tableau that already discloses Ray's thematic concerns as well as his formal approach. See Chaudhuri, Neel. "Charulata: The Intimacies of a Broken Nest." *Senses of Cinema*, June 4, 2014. https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2004/cteq/charulata/.

from HMV. In those early gramophone days, Ray's family possessed some of the earliest Mozart and baroque music records.[16] Ray played piano, "with professional ease,"[17] and participated in the family choir but craved something more "dramatic than the Vedic chants"[18] and the Bengali Tagore songs he found in Western classical music. He writes, "at the age when Bengali youth almost inevitably writes poetry, I was listening to European classical Music."[19] At the age of thirteen, looking for Beethoven's 5th Symphony in used music and bookstores in Calcutta, he auspiciously happened upon Mozart's *Eine Kleine Nacht Musik*, and the composer became a lifelong inspiration for Ray.[20] In his autobiography, Nirad C. Choudhury, the preeminent Indian scholar and polyglot, details how Ray looked him up and made his acquaintance while still in college, primarily to borrow musical notation and exchange records.[21] Also, "Adi Gazdar, the Calcutta-based classical pianist once confirmed, that Ray was 'one of the best connoisseurs of Western classical music in the country.'"[22] While studying at Shantiniketon, a

[16] Ray, Satyajit. *Amar Chelebela*, Ananda Publishers, Kolkata, 9th Edition, 1992, pp. 26-32.

[17] Sen Abhijit. "Western Influences on Satyajit Ray"—An Essay by Abhijit Sen (Parabaas: Satyajit Ray Section). Chakraborti.Chhanda. "Buro Angla and Nils: A tale of transmigration of stories"— An Essay by Chhanda Chakraborti (Parabaas: Translation). *Parabas,* Accessed March 12th, 2022. https://www.parabaas.com/satyajit/articles/pAbhijit.html https://www.parabaas.com/translation/database/translations/essays/pChhanda.html

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Choudhury, Nirad C. *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, NYRB Classics; 1st US Edition, October 10, 2001.

[22] Sen Abhijit. "Western Influences on Satyajit Ray"—An Essay by Abhijit Sen (Parabaas: Satyajit Ray Section). Chakraborti.Chhanda. "Buro Angla and Nils: A tale of transmigration of stories"— An Essay by Chhanda Chakraborti (Parabaas: Translation). *Parabas,* Accessed March 12th,

fine arts university founded by Tagore, "there were four individuals […] who exerted a direct influence over Satyajit Ray: Alex Aronson, a lively minded young German-Jewish refugee and a pupil of Leavis'[23] at Cambridge, who taught English; Pritwish Neogy, another Bengali art student; the art teacher Nandalal Bose; and Binode Bihari Mukherjee, both already established painters. It was Western music that drew Aronson and Ray together."[24] Drawing a direct parallel, later in life, Ray wrote in detail about how his film might be structured musically. In more than few essays, Ray emphasizes that the prominent weakness of Indian cinema "was a formal one."[25] And, of course, Ray had his own strong notions vis-à-vis how Indian filmmakers are oblivious towards the inherent affinities between musical and filmic structures. Ray was convinced that the chief reason for this obvious intellectual faux pas is the fact that most of these Indian filmmakers had grown up in the tradition of Indian classical music, which is devoid of any dramatic narrative. On many occasions, and especially in his collection of cinematic writings, *Our Films Their Films*, Ray conveys his comparative musical and film theory. He postulates that since the Renaissance, Western classical music developed new forms e.g., the sonata form, as part of a humanizing and democratizing process: if one thinks in terms of a story or narrative, one could say

2022. https://www.parabaas.com/satyajit/articles/pAbhijit.html
https://www.parabaas.com/translation/database/translations/essays/pChhanda.html

[23] Frank Raymond "F. R." Leavis (14 July 1895 – 14 April 1978) was a British literary critic of the early-to-mid-twentieth century. He taught for much of his career at Downing College, Cambridge, England.

[24] Robinson, Andrew. *Satyajit Ray: The Inner Eye: The Biography of a Master Filmmaker*. Berkeley and California: University of California Press, 1989. p. 49.

[25] Ray, Satyajit. *Our Films Their Films*. New Delhi: Orient lack Swan, 2010. p.50.

the sonata form has a masculine first subject and feminine second subject; the music progresses by these subjects interweaving and progress through a series of dramatic key-changes. And "perhaps one could, with some stretch of imagination, think of a film subject that might be built up like the development of a raga, but I cannot think of this as a form with wide application. At any rate, the vast majority of stories that provide the material for our films can only be told in a style that has already found universal application—in style, which originated in Hollywood."[26]

One would think that Hollywood features largely into Ray's cinematic education. Citing his influences, other than Renoir and De Sicca, the names Satyajit Ray recites time and again, like incantations, are a Hollywood all-star ensemble: "Ford, Capra, Huston, Wyler and Wilder."[27] In an essay, in 1962, Ray writes, "the feature film, as we know it, came about in the middle of the second decade. It was a product of Hollywood. In fact, we can narrow it down a lot more and say with perfect truth that it was the creation of one man, and one man alone. That man was D. W. Griffith."[28] Ray's eminent biographer, Andrew Robinson, writes in *Satyajit Ray: The Inner Eye*, "Chaplin, Keaton and Harold Lloyd made a tremendous and lasting impression on him. So did *The Thief of Baghdad* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. He was particularly move by Lubitsch's films: *Love Parade, The Smiling Lieutenant, One Hour with You, Trouble in Paradise*."[29] And, Robinson continues, albeit British films had superb technical

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[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Robinson, Andrew. *Satyajit Ray: The Inner Eye: The Biography of a Master Filmmaker*. Berkeley and California: University of California Press, 1989. pp. 36-37.

superiority compared with Indian films then, Ray still was not fond of British films. He would severely criticize these films for the same flaws and deficiencies as Indian films:

> Stagey settings, theatrical dialogs, affected situations and acting…As the 30's wore on, Satyajit Ray saw films more and more frequently…He began keeping a notebook with his own star-rating, and learned to distinguish the finish of the different Hollywood studios. MGM, 20th Century Fox, Warner Brothers etc.— by learning to decipher the distinctive editing styles, intercuts, mixes etc. often resulting in schema and patterns which Ray would jot down— with footnotes —in his notebook.[30]

Ray himself has very candidly written and spoken about the tremendous influence of Italian new realism in his earlier films, especially on his first film *Pather Panchali.* In 1950, when his employer, the advertisement firm Keymer's had sent Ray to London, he watched roughly a hundred films, including Renoir's *La Règle du Jeu*, but for him the revelation was unquestionably *The Bicycle Thief*. "It 'gored' me. I came out of the theatre my mind firmly made up. I would become a filmmaker," he said in his famous 1982 lecture.[31] His 1950 review of De Sicca's *The Bicycle Thief* for the *Film Society Bulletin* could have been a description of *Pather Panchali*:

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[30] Ibid., p. 37.

[31] Ibid., p. 71.

Zavattini's (De Sicca's scriptwriter) greatest assets are an acute

understanding of human beings and ability to devise the "chain"

type of story that fits perfectly into the ninety min span of the

commercial cinema. Simplicity of plot allows for intensive

treatment, while a whole series of interesting and believable

situations and characters sustain interest…For a popular medium,

the best kind of inspiration should derive from life and have its

roots in it. No amount of technical polish can make up for

artificiality of them and dishonesty of treatment. The Indian

filmmaker must turn to life, to reality. De Sicca, and no DeMille,

should be his ideal.[32]

It is important to remember that *The Bicycle Thief* also reminded Ray of

Henri Cartier-Bresson, whose work he carefully studied and emulated as an

amateur still photographer after he had discovered Cartier-Bresson's work in the

French magazine *Verbe* in the 1930s. Ray would recall that his first exposure to

Cartier-Bresson was the photographer's magnificent coverage of the quotidian

portraits of Mexican everydayness, "a woman in black carrying babies."[33] But for

Ray, Cartier-Bresson's photographs "had the same compelling, mysterious and

memorable quality, as distinctive and as instantly recognizable as the work of any

great painter."[34] Ray felt that these photos were "a new way of looking at things—

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[32] Ibid., p. 71-72.

[33] Ibid., p. 72.

[34] Ibid.

the eye seeking the subject matter, and at the same time, its most expressive

disposition in geometrical terms within the conventional rectangle of the

photographic space."[35] And for Ray, Cartier-Bresson's photographs from his

Indian visit, in their poetic style and humanity, were a distinctive synthesis of

emotion and intellect. Ray praised Cartier-Bresson's "deep regard for people that

is revealed in this Indian photograph, as well as in his photographs of any people

anywhere in the world, invests them with a palpable humanism."[36]

It is Cartier-Bresson who opened a new horizon of invoking Indian reality

for Ray. Cartier-Bresson catalyzed Ray to start to formulating his own way to film

the Indian village and the typical Indian landscapes—which Ray explicitly said,

he not only didn't like but thought was not very "photogenic"[37]—resulting in

Ray's signature affects and moods of the Apu trilogy. Also, Cartier-Bresson's

Indian oeuvre had been a masterclass for Ray to call back to his own instinctive

self and to come to his own. It is, first through Cartier-Bresson's photographs ,

and then the long conversations with Jean Renoir—while he was recceing the

location for *The River*, in Kolkata—that Ray mustered the confidence to formulate

his strictly modernist language—which would be lauded first by the Museum of

Modern Arts in New York, and then soon by the whole world—and his humanist

approach to his Bengali subjects: to frame and light a hitherto never experienced

native modernist-humanism, from within the European Fascist-Modernist

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[35] Ibid.

[36] Cartier-Bresson, Henri, Ray, Satyajit and Véquaud, Yves. *Henri Cartier-Bresson in India; with 105 Plates in Duotone.* London: Thames & Hudson. 2006. pp 5-6.

[37] Gupta, Chidananda, Das. *The Cinema of Satyajit Ray.* Vikas,1980. P 20.

complex, but firmly rooted in Bengali tradition and reality. This is interesting because Ray's sensual humanist-modernism was very much part of the tradition and temperament formulated by the painters of *Bengal school* of *Shantiniketon*— with direct connection with the Futurists, Italian and Japanese Fascists, and the Bauhaus, where and Ray studied art history and commercial arts. Cartier-Bresson's photographic humanism and De Sicca's new realist aesthetics strengthened Ray's resolve not only to take advantage of unknown and unprofessional actors, simpler themes, and low-cost production but, most importantly, to cinematically construct Bengal's natural landscape and locations as an ideological formation, and in an supremely *idealized* way.

By that time, Ray was already a massive admirer of Renoir. He had spent a lot of time with Renoir and Renoir's director of photography and world-renowned impressionist painter Pierre- Auguste Renoir's grandson Claude Renoir, who had taken a special training in London to shoot world's first Technicolor film, *The River* (1951). By Ray's own admission, even before he met Renoir, his influence on Ray was deeper and more palpable. *La Règle du Jeu*, which Ray thought was one of the most innovative films ever made in the history of cinema, was a "…subtle, almost imperceptible kind of innovation that can be felt in the very texture and sinews of a film, A film like *La Règle du Jeu*—I defy anyone to give it a label. This is the kind of innovation that appeals to me."[38]

In one of the fabled and most written about events in the Ray canon, the lonely wife Madhabi Mukherjee's swing sequences in *Charulata* (1964) is

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[38] Ibid., p. 331.

directly lifted out—conceptually, the camera positioning etc.—from a scene of

Renoir's *A Day in The Country* (1936). The brilliant montage depicting the arrival

of the rains in *Pather Panchali* was taken from the same Renoir film,[39] and the list

goes on. Ray himself acknowledged his debt to Renoir, Godard, and Truffaut:

> As for innovation, all artists owe a debt to innovators and profit by
> such innovation. [Jean-Luc] Godard gave me the courage to
> dispense largely with fades and dissolves, [François] Truffaut to
> use the freeze. But all innovation is not external. There is a subtle,
> almost imperceptible kind of innovation that can be felt in the very
> texture and sinews of a film. A film that doesn't wear its
> innovations on its sleeve. A film like La Règle du jour. Humanist?
> Classical? Avant-Garde? Contemporary? I defy anyone to give it a
> label. This is the kind of innovation that appeals to me…[40]

Ray wrote and said in many interviews that the end of the opening

sequence of *Charulata*—which in Ray's words "attempts to use a language

entirely free from literary and theatrical influences," which uses a one-line

dialogue in seven minutes—when Charulata lets the lorgnette flop down and the

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[39] Sen Abhijit. "Western Influences on Satyajit Ray"—An Essay by Abhijit Sen (Parabaas: Satyajit Ray Section). Chakraborti.Chhanda. "Buro Angla and Nils: A tale of transmigration of stories"—An Essay by Chhanda Chakraborti (Parabaas: Translation). *Parabas,* Accessed March 12th, 2022. https://www.parabaas.com/satyajit/articles/pAbhijit.html https://www.parabaas.com/translation/database/translations/essays/pChhanda.html

[40] Ray, Satyajit. "Under Western Sky." Essay. In *Satyajit Ray on Cinema*, edited by Sandip Ray, 68–91. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013.

camera follows with a sharp pull-back, is an affectation influenced very much by Truffaut.[41]

Here, my main purpose is not to foreground Ray's influences and his umbilical cord plugged into the Fascist-Modernist complex, but to reveal that Ray is continuing in the tradition of the first generation of modernist Indian painters—as discussed in the previous chapter. The first generation of modernist Indian painters before Ray had also reformulated the moments of contact between so called "East" and "West." But one of the masterstrokes of Ray's native sensualist-humanist modernism is that his all and sundry heterodoxic syncretic influences and assemblages are freighted with very different signifieds than their European versions. Here, Ray performs what Homi Bhabha calls "sense of prevailing translation"[42] without the slightest sense of the anxiety of influences. Ray infuses his oeuvres with native and regional affects, meanings and resonances which, in the case of Ray, and during the first decade of Indian independence, even constitute a nationalist aesthetic, if not an agenda. In this regard, it will be important to reiterate that Ray's first film had been made in the heady post-colonial years of 1950-1955 and was released in 1955, the same year the Afro-Asian Bandung Conference took place. Th Bandung Conference not only had transnational aspirations toward regional development—and eventually

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[41] Robinson, Andrew. *Satyajit Ray: The Inner Eye: The Biography of a Master Filmmaker*. Berkeley and California: University of California Press, 1989. p. 165.

[42] Bean, Susan S., and Bhabha, Homi K., eds. *Midnight to the Boom: Painting in India after Independence: From the Peabody Essex Museums Herwitz Collection*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2013. Pp23-35.

established Non-Alignment Movement—but it was there that the early postcolonial ideologies had been experimented with and forged.

Frantz Fanon, thinking about colonization and its effects, spoke eloquently for this cause when he suggested that, to be a nationalist, one had first to be an internationalist.[43] In this vein, the emphasis on the Indian nation and on internationalist Indian nationalism, made possible an open field of intercultural experimentation. This nationalism effectively resisted cultural or territorial closure, which was only more rampant in Bengal. Bengal was Ray's place of birth and lifelong workplace, and one of the few Indian states under socialist rule that actively maintained and administered cultural exchange with the Soviet Union, other countries of the Eastern bloc, and newly independent African and Asian nations of the non-alignment movement. Somehow, the post-colonial condition in India, despite many disadvantages politically and otherwise, implanted a socio-cultural reality that had been always already contingent, and demanding acts of interpretations.

In an interview with Susan S. Bean, Homi Bhabha suggests that, in South Asia in particular, but in the decolonizing, post-independent, developing world in general, the social conditions of political marginalization are part of a hegemonic structure dominating newly independent and post-colonial subjects. These conditions dictate that the reality the post-colonial subjects perceive and

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[43] I would like to add that, Frantz Fanon was introduce to the South Asian intellectuals, mostly, by Eqbal Ahmad, Fanon's secretary. Eqbal was an Indo-Pakistani activist, journalist, and theorist who almost single handedly invented postcolonial studies. He worked alongside the Algerian FLN in their fight against the French occupation. He was implicated in Harrisburg conspiracy trial for kidnapping Henry Kissinger. Eqbal was a prominent spokesperson for the peace accords between Israel and Palestine. Edward Said dedicated his magnum opus *Culture and Imperialism* to Eqbal.

experience around them, the reality of exploitation inflicted on the people, is the only nature and order of things. But the post-colonial subjects instinctively understand that this reality of inequality and marginalization is perverted and is not the natural order of things. They understand that this is an interpretation of reality that normalizes inequality and injustice. For Bhabha, this insight leads to "an approach to culture as interpretation, rather than culture as designation of identities."[44] Bhabha goes on to say that, in South Asian culture and artistic practices, there is a piercing inquisitiveness that outflanks and avoids description, while performing prescription to inaugurate acts of interpretation.

> There is, I think, a rather naive view fostered by identity politics that suggests that to achieve recognition for your identity is to be free. I would rather suggest that to be free is to have the right to interpret and have your interpretation of history, normalcy, or social reality both recognized and institutionalized. It is not the bestowal of identity—or multiple identities for that matter—that empowers you; you need authority to be the agent of transformation and cultural creativity.[45]

And, more importantly, on a slightly different but relevant tangent, Bhabha continues to explain that, more often than not, the habitual Eurocentric intellect of the native agent is organized around "a dialectic that cites non-European objects or ideas in order to subsume them into a new, syncretic totality—a totality that

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[44] Bean, Susan S., and Bhabha, Homi K., eds. *Midnight to the Boom: Painting in India after Independence: From the Peabody Essex Museums Herwitz Collection.* London: Thames & Hudson, 2013. Pp23-35.
[45] Ibid.

envelops forms of cultural alterity or 'otherness' into representation of 'exemplarity' articulated to general norms of principles."[46] As Bhabha opines, these normative simplifications and flattening of views often convey cultural disjunctions in the absence of proper and adequate context and configure them as extensions and illustrations of Euro-universal histories and Anglo-European grand narratives. For example, the Euro-universal designation and definition of African art as "primitivism" is formulated to appropriate it by "Eurocentric discourse in the cause of universalism and progressivism that are all too often self-referential in establishing the authority of the Western intellectual, aesthetic, or epistemological traditions."[47] Now, more to the point on South Asian practices, Bhabha adds a very critical insight:

> In the realm of Indian art—modernist and contemporary—one sees a much more dialogical approach to the representation of cultural differences and the influence of diverse aesthetic traditions. Some artists have explicitly reflected on the genealogies of cultural exchange and their enabling effects…*This sign of hospitality is there in the affective and stylistic gesture of the work*. (Emphasis mine)"[48]

Alluding to this radical hospitality, not only I am continuing the last chapter's discussion (Section 2.6) of breaking from Modernism's post-colonial

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[46] Ibid., p. 28.

[47] Ibid P 24

[48] Ibid P 24

past by rewriting, reimagining, and reformulating moments of contact between the so called "East" and "West" as an important formula of sensuous knowledge practice, but this also signals the host culture's cosmopolitan confidence. In nesting and sheltering different influences, the host is not betraying any apparent sense of the anxiety of influence. The host actively nurtures a mood of translation, transaction, and conversation. The host signals an open aspiration to establish a zone of translation in which the language of cinema and art could be used to signify styles, forms, and iconographies that might have regional and international resonances "into a new, syncretic totality—a totality that envelops forms of cultural alterity or 'otherness' into representation of 'exemplarity' articulated to general norms of principles."[49]

Now, my contention would be that, while strategically including Western technique and style, Ray's typically native and regional naturalist-modernism conveys a heterodoxic hospitality. This hospitality in it transformational process impacts Western art's phallocentric, necropolitical signifieds. Also, this hospitality attempts to orient Modernist art towards a harmonious inter-being or as the first prime minister of India. Jawaharlal

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[49] Ibid 25

Nehru,[50] puts it: "unity in diversity."[51] And, in more ways than one, at least the early Ray was a perfect chronicler of Nehruvian India's development narrative and its state sponsored humanist realism which aligned with Ray's sensual and instinctive resistance of the Fascist-Modernist complex from within modernism. In this regard, let us not forget, *Pather Panchali* was the first film in post-independence India to receive funding from the state government. Since the government had no department to channel the money through and the film was called *Pather Panchali* —The Song of the Small Road—absolutely without any touch of irony, the state minister sponsored Ray through the Roads and Highways department.

Now, about *Pather Panchali*, critic and theorist Moinak Biswas writes that the film was inaugurated from a specific context, which married "busy experimentation with the realist narrative that produced, various results, not just one."[52] In Biswas' opinion, *Pather Panchali* can be seen as a site of contestation and culmination of the final phase—falling roughly between 1953 and 1955—of

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[50]Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of India, was a graduate of the elite Eton School and Trinity College, Cambridge, who wrote tremendously influential books like *Discovery of India* and *Glimpses of World History.* He implicitly informed a nationalistic narrative of pluralism, tolerance and syncretism—outlined in his book *The Discovery of India,* published in 1944— as India's civilizational ethos. Nehru's developmental models, beyond the left-dominated narrow identity politics and the staunch Hindutva politics and Hindu rights, attempted to launch an Indian national identity in the terms of Western Modernism and establish values like individual liberty, equality of opportunity, secularism—ideas of European Enlightenment transplanted in the Indian cultural and political context. Nehru regarded India's composite culture as its biggest strength. Yet, as a secular nationalist, Nehru fully recognized that separateness and fissiparous tendencies, whether of Hindus, Muslims, or others are dangerous and can lead to balkanization of India. Thus, Nehru threw all his weight behind this idea of India so as to cultivate an 'imagined' national identity based on shared values reflected in the Indian constitution.

[51] Fitz, Angelika, *Kapital & Karma, Aktuelle Positionen indischer Kunst: Recent Positions in Indian Art*, Hatje Cantz Verlag; Auflage, März 2003, P 16

[52] Biswas, Moinak, *Apu and After: Revisiting Rays Cinema.* Seagull Books, 2006, p. 44.

the negotiation of Indian realism on screen. "Realism of 1955 does not allow the full elaboration of this descriptive-narrative elaboration, which left narrative itself often dependent on pure dramatic articulations. The otherwise highly advanced realism of *Taxi Driver* (Chetan Anand, 1953) or *Aar Paar* (Guru Dutt, 1953) could be cited as examples."[53] This is an exceptional insight, and Biswas' thesis becomes clear as he emphasizes how the prescriptive description in Ray's modernist but unprecedented sensual (portraying "sensuous human activity practice"[54]) and humanist *realism* is undergirded with a certain kind of obsessive detailing. Borrowing from Roland Barthes, Biswas calls Ray's detailing the "reality effect," explaining,

> The detail, as Roland Barthes pointed out, can work in excess of the narrative purpose. In modern modes of historical or fictional discourse it is not integrated to the narrative and thus creates the effect of a residue, of the substratum of the world in the representation. Barthes calls this the 'reality effect,' the direct encounter between the signifier and the referent, the situation where 'aesthetic constraints are steeped in referential constraints."[55]

Here, to delineate Ray's unprecedented sensual and humanist realism, Biswas interpolates Birth's reality effect with Hungarian Marxist philosopher

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[53] Ibid.

[54] Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach." Accessed June 20, 2021. https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/theses.htm.

[55] Ibid.

György Lukács' notion of the category of descriptions. According to Lukács, in essence and form there are two dominant structural modes.[56] Description in naturalism, according to Biswas, is not cohesive to character, plot, and action. In naturalism, description allows anti-narrative affects. Renoir's oeuvre in the 1930s, for example, contours the possibilities of naturalist cinematic innovations. But here Biswas is interested in the conditional autonomy from narrative afforded by naturalism, which foments not only the condition of creativity but also a "mode of lending materiality and significance of that which the conventional totalized narration has come to ignore in a cultural context. Description, seen in this light, can enhance, realism and can also bring it to a crisis. The two divergent trajectories of Italian Neorealism and the French Nouvelle-Vague can be historically connected through these dialectical possibilities of Naturalism."[57]

At this point, perhaps we can begin to see how Ray's previously observed heterodoxic hospitality towards Hollywood, Renoir, De Sicca, Godard, and Truffaut inaugurates the ideological operation to stage dialectically his resistance to the interwar European Fascist- Modernist complex while inventing a genius brand of sensuous and innovative naturalist-modernism.

To draw from Biswas once again, the "ramble" in *Pather Panchali,* the distinct aesthetic and technique of evoking the Bengali reality—which also sets

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[56] Lukacs' essay collection, *Problems of Realism*, includes a provocative piece entitled "Narrate or Describe?"(1936) which theorize that good (realistic) writing is governed by narration, while bad (naturalistic) writing is marked by description.

[57] Biswas, Moinak, *Apu and After: Revisiting Rays Cinema.* Seagull Books, 2006, p. 44

the film apart from Hollywood realism—is in this sense an effect of the film's

encounter with the specific pro-filmic details, debris, and residues of reality.[58]

Of course, we have already discussed the source materials—Italian

neorealist cinema, Cartier-Bresson, Renoir etc.—of Ray's primary epistêmê and

technê. His stylistic application of this learned epistêmê and technê to format the

continuous flow of native objects, bodies, textures, and shades makes it possible

for his description, and ultimately his ideological operation, to produce a

sensuous, naturalist-modernist reality which works against the compulsions of

narration.

> The textual organization takes its cue from this flow. Realism is a
>
> matter of discovery here; before it's elements —location, light,
>
> performance, speech—become parts of definite artifice…To
>
> discover a nature and a habitat, discover faces and voices excluded
>
> by the ritualized conventions of filmmaking: cinema is expected to
>
> fulfill this mission in any national—or nationalist—context."[59]

Another important critic, Sourin Bhattacharya, exquisitely recounts his

experience of the arrival of the naturalist-sensualist and, distinctively native

modernism of *Pather Panchali* in the middle of Nehru's considerable planning

initiative. Interestingly, Sourin distinguishes the "narrative of development" and

the "development of narrative" during the first decade of India's independence

which was when *Pather Panchali* and the other two film of the *Apu Trilogy* were

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[58] Ibid

[59] Ibid

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made. He argues that, because Apu's is story a development narrative, *Pather Panchali'*s protagonist shares a similar environment with the narrative of development, although that does not make them the same story.[60] Sourin's point is wonderfully exemplified when, in a key strategic moment of the film, Ray unveils his non-narrative sensual-naturalist humanism when he inserts this native ideological formation—formulated in the high modernist language—as *realism* through one of Apu's pivotal monologs:

> Where is to be found the real history of man? Most of the great historians of the world have forgotten the poor householder under the spell of the heady events of war and political revolutions, amidst the glitter of the golden finery or emperors, empresses and ministers….Everyone learns to memorize the stories of political lives of the kings--from the childhood on—but the daily lives that are lived for thousands of years, by the side of the wheat and corn fields, under the shades of grapes, olives or myrtles in India, Greece or Rome—the stories of their joys and sorrows their hopes and despair the beating of their hearts he wants to know.[61]

As Ray's renown spread in the Occident, it was his *sensual-naturalist native humanism*—due to its brilliance, beauty, and hospitable Western Fascist-Modernist veneer—had been essentialized as Indianness among scholars, critics, and most of the film going world. Ray's eminence and warm reception in

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[60] Ibid P 22

[61] Ibid P53

prestigious festivals in the Anglo-European world, and especially his luck with awards, drew stiff opposition and malice from his ideological opponents in Bollywood. This is epitomized by Nargis Dutt's response to Ray, discussed in detail later in this chapter. Ray also met the need for cultural achievement and self-reflection of the post-colonial, educated middle class of India. At the same time, this educated middle class experienced tremendous unease and had trouble with Ray's usage of his brand of *sensual-naturalist native humanism* as a horizon. Ray's brand of Indian realism was disdained and dismissed as a totalizing event. Many critics and Indian filmgoers severely critiqued Ray's film language and opined that he was an apologist for the "upper class" position in post-colonial movements, and, moreover, that in his films the language of class antagonism towards the revolutionary class is coded as enlightened bourgeois culture.

Art critic Geeta Kapur, giving Fredric Jameson's term "national allegory" a negative connotation writes, "Ray tells a story and lets it work as national allegory…And makes it work as a tale of self-redemption and moral sovereignty."[62] To this, Biswas responds, "In Kapur's argument, coupled with the critique of nationalism, there is an allegation that, the national allegory is made into an effect of bourgeois self-representation and a project undertaken by the artist in sympathy with the national state."[63]

In a 1970 interview with Folke Isaksson during a highly charged time of full-on leftist Naxalite armed revolution against the Indian state which would soon

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[62] Ibid P51

[63] Ibid., p. 52.

prompt the prime minister of India, Indira Gandhi, to declare emergency, Ray confirms his affiliation with sensual-naturalist native humanism. This humanism was described by many as "bourgeois" and "elitist" because of, if not for anything else, its alignment with Nehru's development narrative and its state sponsored humanist realism:

> "I was closer to Nehru, I think. I admired Nehru, I understood him better, because I am also in a way kind of product of East and West. A certain liberalism, a certain awareness of Western values and a fusion of Eastern and Western values was in Nehru, which I didn't find in Gandhi. …I always understood what Nehru was doing--as I understood what Tagore was doing—because you can't leave Tagore out of this, it's a triangle."[64]

Finally, I would like to end this section with two quotes from the venerable American film critic Pauline Kael—one is an observation made twenty-eight years later—to present a contrasting view of the reception of Ray's ideological construction of formal Indianness—his sensual-naturalist native humanism —which were conveyed to important fractions of the American and Indian audiences:

> *The Music Room* has such grandeur in its best scenes that we much revise customary dramatic standards. By our usual standards it isn't a good movie; its often crude and it's poorly constructed; but it's great experience. It's a study of '*noblesse obliges*' carried to

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[64] Ray, Satyajit and Cardullo, Bert. *Satyajit Ray: Interviews*. University Press of Mississippi, 2007. p.50.

extremity, to a kind of aesthetic madness…. I was exasperated by

the defects of *The Music Room* when I saw it; now, a month later, I

realize that I will never forget it.[65]

And the second quote from 1992:

In the early sixties, a group of Indian producers propositioned me:

they wanted me to go to India and teach them how to put the

'Hollywood' in their films. I tell American directors to look at

Satyajit Ray's work to learn how to take the Hollywood out of their

films. Satyajit Ray, you archive a true balance of the complex and

the simple.[66]

Ray, at that juncture in Indian cinematic history, uniquely and originally

formulated native and regional affects, meanings and resonances and infused his

oeuvres with this bhava. This, in the case of Ray, and during the first decade of

Indian independence, even constitutes a nationalist aesthetic, if not an agenda. In

this regard, it will be important to reiterate that Ray's first film had been made in

the heady post-colonial years of 1950-1955 and was released in 1955, the same

year the Afro-Asian Bandung Conference took place. As Ray's renown spread in

the occident, it was his sensual-naturalist native humanism—due to its brilliance,

beauty, and hospitable Western Fascist-Modernist veneer—had been essentialized

as Indianness, among scholars, critics, and most of the filmgoing world. At the

same time, the educated Indian middle class felt tremendous unease with Ray's

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[65] Roberge, Gaston, *Satyajit Ray: Essays (1970-2005)* Manohar Publishers & Distributors, 2007.

[66] Ghosh, Nemai, *Satyajit Ray at 70: Writer, Designer, Actor, Director, Cameraman, Editor, Composer.* Point of View and Orient Longman, 1993. P. 101.

brand of sensual-naturalist native humanism as a horizon. Many Indian critics and filmgoers rejected Ray's film language as an apology for the "upper class" position in the post-colonial movements, also because it often seemed Ray transmuted the class antagonism towards the revolutionary class as enlightened bourgeois culture.

In the following sections of this chapter, I will explore Ray's cinematic landscape as an intensely ethical and aesthetic assemblage of Ray's class politics and his agenda of sensualist knowledge practice. I will contrast Ray's landscape building with other contemporary Bengali filmmakers, Ritwik Ghatak and Mrinal Sen's, practices. Also, I will attempt to conflate Ray's Sensual-Naturalist landscape with Japanese landscape theory—*fūkeiron*—often linked with photographer Nakahira Takuma and radical leftist filmmakers Adachi Masao, Nagayama Norio, and Matsuda Masao, who endorsed a "heterogeneous landscape of the Japanese post-industrial capitalist society as a space in which political agency faces with a ubiquitous state power."[67]

2.4 Landscape: An Interrogation of the Technê of Ray's Sensual-Naturalism

Just as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is

completely free from the struggle over geography. The struggle is complex

and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also

about ideas, about forms, and about images and imaginings.

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[67] Stojkovic, Jelena. "Nakahira Takuma and the Landscape Theory." Essay. In *From Postwar to Postmodern: Art in Japan, 1945-1989: Primary Documents*, edited by Doryun Chong, Michio Hayashi, Kenji Kajiya, and Fumihiko Sumitomo, 233–38. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2012.

—Edward Said, *Culture and Empire*[68]

Pre-existing space underpins not only durable spatial arrangements, but
also representational spaces and their attendant imagery and mythic
narratives.

— Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*[69]

"Nature" is not to be understood as that which is just present-at-hand, nor
as the *power of Nature*…As the 'environment' is discovered, the 'nature'
thus discovered is encountered too... But when this happens, the "nature"
which "stirs and strives", which assails us and enthralls us as landscape,
remains hidden.

—Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*[70]

The preceding epigraphs by Edward Said, Henri Lefebvre, and Martin
Heidegger signal my guiding insight that Satyajit Ray's filmic constructions of the
Bengal landscape cannot be reduced to mimetic representation of natural scenery,
or to any metaphor of a structural realist account of oikos.[71] Designed as a body of
unruly collateral technê, Ray's carefully curated and ideologically formatted

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[69] Lefebvre, Henri, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, London Wiley-Blackwell, 1992. p. 84.

[70] Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, trans. Trans. Macquarrie & Robinson. Harper & Row.1962, p. 70.

[71] The ancient Greek word oikos is directly linked with three intertwined concepts: the family, the family's property, and the house. In the Byzantine times, especially in the milieu of the the Roman Catholic Church, Oikos was often annexed with Nomos or rule or law. Etymologically, Oikos is the root phrase of Ecology and Economy.

landscape, enacts the Sensual-Naturalism that we have discussed in the previous

sections of this chapter and resists to be exiled to the marginal realms of

philosophical or film discourses. The critical regionalism and humanist

modernism of Bengal landscape architectures, crafts, and designs perhaps relate

directly to this proposition but, I am limiting my discussion only to Satyajit Ray

owing to the focus and parameter of my dissertation.[72]

Before interrogating the construction of Ray's Sensual-Naturalist

landscape, let me quickly summarize that in the earlier sections of this chapter, we

have discussed Ray's heterodoxic hospitality towards some Hollywood directors,

Renoir's work from the 1932, De Sicca, Godard and Truffaut. This particular

ideological operation exemplifies not only Ray's resistance to the interwar

European Fascist-Modernist complex but also inaugurates a unique brand of

sensuous and naturalist-modernism. We have learned that, as Ray's renown

spread in the Occident, it was his sensual-naturalist native humanism—due to its

brilliance, beauty, and hospitable Western Fascist-Modernist veneer—had been

essentialized as Indianness, among the scholars, critics and most of the film going

world.

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[72] On 2 July 2021, *The New York Times* published an article: "25 Most Significant Works of Postwar Architecture*."* In that list dominated by Western, male, superstar architects like Luis Barragán, Alvar Aalto, Carlo Scarpa, Le Corbusier, and others from Japan and China, and with buildings like the Sydney Opera House, Centre Pompidou, a little unexpectedly, there was at number 22, Bengali Marina Tabassum and her design project Bait ur Rauf Mosque, in Dhaka. Marina's critical regionalist oeuvre wonderfully re- and deconstructs the Sensual-Naturalism of Muzharul Islam-Bashirul Haq both of whom were trained by and worked with stalwart modernist-fascist like Le Corbusier and Alvar Aalto, among others.
See: https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/02/t-magazine/significant-postwar-architecture.html
The New York Times. Accessed July 4, 2021.

In the following sections, I am underlining that, Satyajit Ray in *Pather Panchali*—a film that not only partially funded by The Museum of Modern Art, in the NYC, but also it premiered at MOMA—Satyajit Ray—who disavows any kind of revolutionary or avant-garde militancy—manufactures cinematic tableaus of lived places and landscapes of the post-independent, rural Bengal. My contention is that, Satyajit Ray, who has variously been called the "*Bergman of Bengal*"[73] and "*Renoir of rice-field*"[74] etc. is an active un-maker of neorealist signification. Ray, essentially, initiates not a semiosis, but forceful processes of manifesting the *reality* of the post-colonial, extremely poverty stricken, rural Bengal. Here, my strategic invocation of *reality* is reminiscent of how Gilles Deleuze understood and disseminated the bon mot as a theoretical shorthand. Also, let me recall Alain Badiou, colluding with Deleuze, in saying,

> where there is a rupture between image and movement, Deleuze
> establishes a new synthesis, based on Bergson. This is essential
> since it makes cinema a *reality* and no longer a representation,
> because the image and movement are one and the same thing, the
> image is not the representation of movement. It is 'movement-
> image,' so cinema is no longer a representation; it will be able to
> be a creation. In this sense, cinema is indeed produced with

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[73] Ganguly, Keya, *Cinema, Emergence, and the Films of Satyajit Ray, Cinema, Emergence, and the Films of Satyajit Ray,* UC Press, 2010, p. 91.

[74] Ibid.

images, but the image is not a representation. The image is what cinema thinks with, since thought is always a creation.[75]

In a recent appraisal of Ray's selected oeuvres, Keya Ganguli skirts most of the Western considerations about Ray and connects Ray with the post-representational framework Badiou is denoting. Ganguli reconfirms that Ray's intentionality and his sensuous modernism—albeit establishing a Sensual-Naturalist agenda—is directed neither to launch a project of worlding an Indian authenticity, nor to get lost in the funhouse of Western Fascist-Modernist complex. Instead, it is oriented towards 'what Eisenstein had called "an ideational cinema—a conceptualization of the world rather than a representational reaction to it."[76] And Ray's project is to "*think with the cinema"[77]*

contra "thinking *about* it".[78] The fact that Ray, as indeed Professor Ganguli rightly points out, "do not so much *reflect* historical, aesthetic, or cultural problems as present critical, dialectical conceptualizations of the continuities between art and experience"[79] only enables Ray's practice to overlap with Walter "Benjamin's allegorical and utopian but not so much with his Messianic: 'idealized horizon of meanings'"[80]

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[75] Badiou, Alain. *Cinema*, texts selected and introduced by Antoine de Baecque, trans. Susan Spitzer (Cambridge: Polity, 2010) p. 223.

[76] Ganguly, Keya, *Cinema, Emergence, and the Films of Satyajit Ray, Cinema, Emergence, and the Films of Satyajit Ray,* UC Press, 2010, p. 26.

[77] Ibid., p. 27.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid., p. 18.

[80] Ibid., p. 73.

Now to interrogate the technê and technology of Satyajit Ray's filmic constructions of the Bengal landscape and how it embodies his sensual humanist-modernist agenda, I will split my discussion into the two different subsections: in the first subsection (3.4.1), I will attempt to understand landscape's Eurasian genealogy, and stage landscape's hierarchical definitions. This sub section will theorize how cinematic landscape, a procedural state of immanence transforms into a site to disseminate analytics of cinema's intersubjective *becoming*.

2. 5. 1. Ray's Sensual-Naturalist Landscape

The genealogy of the signifier Landscape, in its current sense, and as a noun, might be traced to the sixteenth-century Dutch locution *Landschape*. Landscape is etymologically a portmanteau of *land*: nature and *schap* signifying either a pictorial representation of a natural setting or the artisanal practice of creating *landscape.* Also, *landschape* was often used to invoke the act of framing a portion of wild terrain to enable to experience it, a part at a time, from a particular perspective or position. Hence, landscape, in its originary genome, enfolds a duality between the notion of wilderness and that of its framing/taming to formulate an idealized view. This duality traffics traces of pre-industrial to modernist tension of collision of the natural and artificial, urban and rural, real and simulation, private and public, national and transnational, traditional and progressive, developed and indigenous. While the colonization and standardization of landscapes, in the symbolic and material realms, by transnational capital and the state, are articulated in culture, by and large, in the transcendental short-circuiting to forcefully overlay a generic Arcadian notion

of classical "harmony" as a normative value on landscape, but landscape, without any exception, is inscribed in the turbulent history and quotidian practices of a certain people. As Michel de Certeau proclaims, like any other dispositif landscape too, always needs a place on which to be constructed, texted and contexed.[81] Art historian and critic, and Professor in Cultural Theory at Radboud University Nijmegen, Timotheus Vermeulen, in his re-reading of Henri Lefebvre, to assert Lefebvre's ever-growing importance in the spatial logic of our current Anthropocene writes,

> these places, these points on the grid, De Certeau suggests, are like a language's grammar or the letters of the alphabet. Hence, one of De Certeau's most cited lines: 'Space is a practiced place.' Space, here, is always spatialization: the putting to action or—to use that post-structuralist term—the performance of a pre-existing script. In De Certeau's hierarchical definition, place is thus the stable, static, ideologically informed given, whereas space is about potentially anarchic movement.[82]

On the other hand, skeptical French philosopher and sociologist Henry Lefebvre, from the interstice of modernist and post-modernist divide, extending and developing from Marx's logic of commodity fetishism clinically demonstrates, how space is a "concrete-abstraction."[83] It involves mental

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[81] Graham Ward (Ed.), *The Certeau Reader,* London: Blackwell, 2000.

[82] Vermeulen, Timotheus, "Place is the Place", *Frieze*, April 24, 2015.

[83] Lefebvre, Henri, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, Wiley-Blackwell, 1992.

constructions and abstractions. Space, too, necessitates a material physicality, and this only gain concreteness through and in human practice. According to Lefebvre, space, like capital, is fundamentally a social process. Marx's notion of "fetish" is an integral part to Lefebvre's entire project. In many ways, he wants to do with space what Marx accomplished regarding commodities and exchange. In Lefebvre's seminal work, *The Production of Space*, with its insistence on the juxtaposition of physical, mental, and social space, the interpretation of space, as the product of social relations, instantiate a larval site constantly in flux.[84]

Now, most importantly, Martin Heidegger's formulations of place—topos—runs through his oeuvres due to his Fascist-modernist orientation towards linking Teutonic/Germanic people to the quintessential German landscape. He directly addresses his own rootedness not only in "Why do I Stay in the Provinces?" —written in 1934— and the speech "The Festival Address" made in Todtnauberg—in 1966—where he eulogizes his country house in Todtnauberg but also in dissemination of topological signifiers and images and in the located and "placed" disposition of his philosophy and of its thematic. Mark Riley, a professor at Roehampton University, in his essay *Landscape, Terrain, and Heimat,* says, "in *Why do I Stay in the Provinces?* Heidegger makes a claim for thinking and writing at Todtnauberg. He argues that his philosophical work does not take place as some kind of aloof, eccentric study but belongs right in the midst of peasants' work."[85]

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[84] Ibid.

[85] Mark Riley, "Landscape, Terrain, and Heimat*"*
https://www.academia.edu/2159741/Landscape_Terrain_and_Heimat_Martin_Heidegger_at_Todtnauberg

In this Heidegger defines the two-fold operation of "homecoming"[86] as a "letting it be"[87]—the preserving of the originary source and opening to the new. "Likewise *in Building Dwelling Thinking* Heidegger suggests a self-sufficiency of the power to let heaven earth, divinities and mortals enter in simple oneness into things, ordered in the house "for Heidegger having spent much of the text discussing 'dwelling' in relation to a bridge, this section of the text commences with a description of a Black Forest farmhouse."[88] In Heidegger's *Building Dwelling Thinking,* dwelling binds and bonds man and space; and a built environment affords a placeness that enables dwelling to happen. But, space, on the other hand, emerges out of a place: for Heidegger space, more often than not, is constructed, before it can be consumed.

Professor Yi-Fu Tuan in his *Space and Place* quotes de Certeau, to writes, "place is time made visible".[89] But, continues to affix tangibility to place due to its continuity with past and the experiences with and in the landscape. Places in landscape give meaning and identity to people, who have real emotional attachment rooted to the landscape through their memories and heritage. In contrast, space is dialectical and is about process, motion, and action and it is always in the process of becoming.[90] Like de Certeau says, space "defines itself

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[86] Ibid.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Ibid.

[89] Tuan, Yi-Fu, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, University of Minnesota Press, 1977.

[90] Ibid., p. 116.

by action….and is a practiced place".[91] But then, he attempts a mutational jump by fusing space and place to constitute the landscape—that is an ideological formation to encapsulate the lacuna between the action and fluidity of space and the rootedness and memory of place—in order to process and convey the lived experience of a people.[92]

However, in 1995, Marc Augé, in his book, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* marks the post-modern special condition by identifying the landscape of non-places grounded in Supermodernity. Non-place landscape—with its unstable inscriptions, reside outside real time and space, according to Augé—is symptomatic to the contemporary lives, and urban sprawls: highway networks, first food joints, garbage dumps, squats, airports, supermarkets etc. They are defined partly by the worlds and texts they offer us.[93] In a critical response to *No-place*, Manuel Castells reconceptualizes a new special genus: "spaces of flow.[94] Castells' space articulates itself conjoined with the abstraction of 'time' and underscores, "space is a dynamic entity related to time, and rejects the concept that it will disappear as to create a global city."[95] According to Castells, in the contemporary conditions, "space is defined as the material

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[91] Ibid., p. 117.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Augé, Marc, trans. John Howe, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity,* Verso, 2009.

[94] Manuel Castells. "An Introduction to the Information Age." Essay. In *The Information Society Reader*, edited by Frank WebsterR, Raimo Blom, Erkki Karvonen, and Harri Melin. London: Routledge, 2004.

[95] Ibid., p. 147.

organization of time-sharing social practices that work through flows."[96] On a

different occasion, Castells further elaborates, "the space of flow, links up distant

locales around shared functions and meanings on the basis of electronic circuits

and transportation corridors, while isolating and subduing the logic of experience

embodied in the space of places."[97] And, apropos to the physical support for the

way we live in time, space plus time, in the 'real world time' morphs into 'spaces

of places.[98]

While time, temporality, and historicity marked the modernist ethos, space

and spatiality has predicated a new turn in the postmodern. Now, juxtaposing the

Fascist-Modernist lens on its post-modernist continental extension, a landscape of

affects, a Deleuzian cinematic smooth landscape-space can be regarded as a

phantasmatic medium through which enfolding, and texturing of sensation

proceeds. The spectators of this smooth landscape-space trace a trajectory among

the perceptions. Each of these perceptions is itself a haecceity. And, the

perceptions are interconnected with affects, to constitute the block of sensation

that is constructed, and articulated as cinema's space. And in the process of

tracing the spectators body consolidated with the cinematic space—which is a

non-human landscape, inscribed across, and through the anatomy—a site of

transformation is launched. Further down this chapter, we will see that, in the case

of Satyajit Ray's landscape and its agenda of sensualist knowledge practice, more

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[96] Ibid., p. 147.

[97] Castells, Manuel, "Informationalism and the network society", In *The Hacker Ethic and the Spirit of the Information Age,* (Ed.) P. Himanen, (New York: Random House, 2001), pp. 155–78.

[98] Ibid., p. 156.

often than not, cites the inauguration from human entity to a becoming-with-the-world that is intersubjective, and post-human.

2. 5. 2. Masao Adachi and Ritwik Ghatak: Data of Disturbance

Instead of replacing the camera with the rifle, why not have one in each

hand?[99]

—Masao Adachi

I believe in class-conscious, committed cinema. There is no such thing as a

classless art in the world. Of course, it is for my audience to decide

whether I am a political filmmaker or not…It hardly matters if a

filmmaker labels his works as political, since in the end films always

manifest a class agenda.[100]

—Ritwik Ghatak

In the preceding subsection we have surveyed the genealogy of landscape, in the Western thought, vis-à-vis place-making and space which is about potentially anarchic movements. Specially in relation to Lefebvre, we have reviewed how space involves mental constructions. More importantly, perhaps, how space gain concreteness, only, through and in human practice. This particular special trait is picked up by Heidegger to underline, his point that how dwelling in a particular space makes it one's own landscape. Landscape is not inert; or

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[99] Haden Guest, Film = Activism. The Revolutionary Underground Cinema of Masao Adachi, Harvard *Film Archive*, March 1-4, 2013.

[100] Rajadhyaksha, Ashish. *Indian Cinema in the Time Of Celluloid: from Bollywood To the Emergency.* Indiana Univ. Press, 2009. p. 12.

uninvolved with the polis or politics, and is, fundamentally, a social process. Not only I have made it evident that, landscape is the juxtaposition of physical, mental, and social space, but also, I have theorized how Deleuzian cinematic smooth landscape-space can be regarded as a phantasmatic medium. The main focus of this subsection is, how certain filmmakers dissect and deconstruct the smooth cinematic landscape-space as an ideological site. I will use Japanese filmmaker Masao Adachi and Indian filmmaker Ritwik Ghatak as my, primary, case study.

Though mostly due to French filmmakers *Philippe Grandrieux's work and incessant promotion,* Masao Adachi has generated some interests among the Western art film audience in the last few years, but it is still very difficult to obtain information, in English, on him or Iimura Takahiko, Ishiko Junzo, Ishizaki Koichiro, Jonouchi Motoharu, Manabe Hiroshi, Matsuda Masao a.k.a. Hirosawa Mina, Oe Masanon, Tone Yasunao and most proponents of Japanese expanded cinema and intermedia of the revolutionary late 1960's.

Professor Go Hirasawa, affiliated with both Meiji Gakuin University and the Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies, Harvard University, in Harvard Film Archive's newsletter, on March 2-4, 2013, introduces, filmmaker Masao Adachi as a true Revolutionary artist. Masao Adachi believes that, cinema is an instrument and even a weapon in the struggle against the capitalist-imperialist juggernaut transforming Japan and so much of the post-WWII world.[101] His *New York Times* introduction reads: "the Japanese director, screenwriter and activist

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[101] Haden Guest, Film = Activism. The Revolutionary Underground Cinema of Masao Adachi, *Harvard Film Archive*, March 1-4, 2013.

Masao Adachi is active both in Japan's avant-garde film scene of the 1960s and in the student-led protests…Mr. Adachi developed a "theory of landscape," which hypothesized that systems of power could best be revealed through filming not people but places. [102] An important Japanese photographer, Nakahira Takuma, also known for his involvement with the revolutionary movement magazine *Provoke*, was involved in the process of a continuous dialogue with Adachi et al. in the development of *fūkeiron* or the landscape theory. We know that, Nakahira Takuma engaged both Adachi and Matsuda Masao at separate round table discussions on the theory of *fūkeiron* in 1970. Wakamatsu Kōji's film *Ecstasy of the Angels,* for which Adachi wrote the screenplay, had Takuma as the director of still photography.[103] By this time Adachi had fully developed his polemic of *fūkeiron*. And the Japanese leftist filmmakers'

> increasing interest in the semiotic functions of quotidian
> landscapes in cinema marks a crucial transition from a centralized
> subjectivist mode of thinking about resistance – which is anchored
> in the revolutionary acts of the human agents – to a de-centralized
> analytic mode of investigating the immanent relations of power
> that are found within a historically specific social formation. To

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[102] Denis Lim, *A Japanese Director's Path to Revolution - The New York Times, The New York Times*, Feb 28, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/29/arts/29iht-adachi29.htm

[103] Stojkovic, Jelena. "Nakahira Takuma and the Landscape Theory." Essay. In *From Postwar To Postmodern: Art in Japan, 1945-1989: Primary Documents*, edited by Doryun Chong, Michio Hayashi, Kenji Kajiya, and Fumihiko Sumitomo, New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2012, p. 233–38.

borrow the expression of Gilles Deleuze, the landscape understood

in this sense is a 'diagram' of the microphysics of power. [104]

Adachi, joined the revolutionary outfit, Japanese Red Army, in 1974. But

he had already developed his theory on landscape through his film *AKA Serial*

Killer, in 1969. *AKA Serial Killer* recounts the killing spree of a 19-year-old man,

Nagayama Norio, through the ontic monotony of static long-shots of banal

anonymous landscapes bereft of any human figures. Adachi's *AKA Serial Killer*

and Oshima Nagisa's 1970 film *The Secret Story of the Post-Tokyo War: The*

Story of a Man Who Left His Will on Film were directly antithetical to the Jean-

Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin's prescriptive guide of the documentary film,

famously defined as 'the creative treatment—or dramatization—of actuality'.

A.K.A. Serial Killer and *The Secret Story* not only rejected the militant ideal of

Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino's *Third Cinema* but also staged an implicit

critique of the documentary filmmaking exemplified in the work of Ogawa

Shinsuke and Tsuchimoto Noriaki or influential commune like *Newsreel*, the New

Left documentary collective founded in New York, in 1967.[105] While the militant

documentaries, of the time, emphasized arresting dramatic actions, protests and

violence but the placid surface of *A.K.A. Serial Killer* only disjunctively reflects

the urban and rural landscapes of Hokkaido to the southwestern cities of mainland

Japan. Also, *A.K.A. Serial Killer's* eventless, quotidian landscapes are constructed

neither as the pastoral nor arcadian. In his various discourses, Adachi stated that,

[104] Ibid., p.136.
[105]Furuhata, Yuriko. *Cinema of Actuality: Japanese Avant-Garde Filmmaking in the Season of Image Politics*. Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2013.

it was his strategy to convey the key sequences of his film in picture postcard like

cliched images. In doing so, Adachi intended to reveal and interrogate the

structural uniformity, and banality of the images at the heart of these landscape

films. "Adachi emphasized his awareness of such uniformity of landscapes—a

structure of domination—at the profilmic level as well as the compositional level

of effects produced by the camera."[106] Like I have discussed in the preceding

subsection, landscape needs to be understood as an ideology…the central concern

of fūkeiron is neither the aesthetic production of picturesque landscape nor the

metaphysical divide between subject and object, but rather the immanent relations

of power that produce homogenized landscapes. In their view, the very uniformity

of the landscape of rural and urban cities throughout Japan corresponds to the

serial mass production and standardization of commodities, which, in turn,

reproduce unskilled manual laborers like Nagayama Norio. Thus, 'the enemy of

Nagayama' of which Adachi speaks is not simply the homogenized landscape

itself, but rather the invisible relations of power that produce such homogenized

landscapes.

　　　Adachi made his truly agit-prop pro-Palestinian *Red Army/PFLP:*

Declaration of World War, in 1971. Both *A.K.A. Serial Killer's* and *Red*

Army/PFLP: Declaration of World War document—and caricatures— attempts of

material practices that order and enable the production of place. *Red Army/PFLP:*

Declaration of World War successfully practices Adachi's theory to stage

landscape as hegemonic tool of the ruling class and the nomadic margin as

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[106] Ibid.

something which, David Harvey—much later and in a different context—argues "a metaphor for a site or container of power which usually constrains but sometimes liberates processes of *becoming*."[107]

In stark contrast to Adachi, while virtually unknown in the Anglophone world, two Indian filmmakers Mrinal Sen and Ritwik Ghatak weaponized their landscape. Both members of the Indian Communist Party since the time it had been banned in India, as well as the revolutionary Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA), Sen and Ghatak created cinema in the post-war, post-colonial conditions, in Asia, which impacted "the radical transformation of politics into the realm of bare life."[108] Sen and Ghatak, both stalwarts of Indian parallel cinema, were born in respectively 1923 and 1925. They are a little over a decade older than Adachi, and with considerable renown—both won many national awards. Sen won special jury prizes at the Festival de Cannes, Berlinale and Karlovy Vary and Silver at Moscow International Film Festival. Ghatak was the principal of the only government run film school of India, with a highly influential body of works developed between 1956-1965—roughly in the period from the beginning of Italian New Realism till the beginning of Nouvelle Vague—that activated a revolutionary object-oriented ontology. For example, Ghatak's second film, *Un-machine*, made in 1956, dramatizes class struggle through a man-machine relationship and inaugurates his application of melodrama—which primarily is, unlike Satyajit Ray's practice, rooted in Bengali affects—as a resistance to the

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[107] Harvey, David, The *Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, London: Wiley-Blackwell, October 1991. p. 213.

[108] Agamben, Giorgio, *The Omnibus: Homo Sacer, Stanford University Press,* 2017, p.100.

Fascist-Modernist complex. But, a refugee in the newly independent India from

East Pakistan—later Bangladesh—it is Ghatak's dirge to the divided and broken

Bengal—resulting in two million death and 14 million displaced people— the

partition trilogy specially *Cloud Capped Star* more fully exemplifies his anti-

colonial and revolutionary landscape theory and a binary structure insistent on

conflict, and rupture of "capitalist Eros."[109] Ghatak's world-made-cinema

thinking, in *Cloud Capped Star,* communicates what Deleuze constitute as a

disjunctive synthesis. The disjunctive synthesis, in *Cloud Capped Star,* stages the

possibility of creative repetitions or counter-actualizations of the present,

especially in a violent period that commenced in 1968, and ended roughly in

1978.[110]

　　At this point let me recall Ravi Vasudevan, who for the first time in Indian

film studies, theorized what he called "melodrama mode"[111] which is designed to

access hitherto fore invisible folds of the Indian realism prevalent in Ghatak's

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[109] Guattari, Felix, Soft Subversions, trans. and ed. Sylvere Lotringer, New York: Semiotext(e),1996, p. 152.

[110] Perhaps, it would be important to recall that, 1968 also saw Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin form a militant film collective, the Dziga-Vertov group, as a critical response to the insurrection of May 1968. But in Japan, documentary filmmaking exemplified in the work of Ogawa Shinsuke and Tsuchimoto Noriaki came to the fore in response to an increasing demand to document and support intensifying student protests and other forms of political activism. Like Newsreel, the New Left documentary collective founded in New York in 1967, Ogawa and Tsuchimoto turned their camera onto students and workers behind the barricades. The most emblematic examples of such direct participation in political activism are perhaps Ogawa's Gennin hoˆkoku: Handeda toˆsoˆ no kiroku/Report from Haneda (1967) and Tsuchimoto's Paruchizan zenshi/Prehistory of the Partisan Party (1969).
See: Nornes, A. M. "The Postwar Documentary Trace: Groping in the Dark." *positions: east asia cultures critique* 10, no. 1 (2002): 39–78. https://doi.org/10.1215/10679847-10-1-39.

[111] Vasudevan, Ravi, "The Melodramatic Public." *The Melodramatic Public*, 2011, pp. 20-64., doi: 10.1007/978-0-230-11812-6_2.

films specially in the aforementioned *Cloud-Capped Star (1960),* which is one of the few films Ghatak directed that was commercially successful.

In his essay "Film and I" in *Rows and Rows of Fences*, Ghatak makes a coherent case of an Indian national cinema frame-worked in melodramatic infrastructures, which *Meghe Dhaka Tara (Cloud Capped Star)* innovatively attempts: "I think a truly national cinema will emerge from the much abused from of melodrama when truly serious and considerate artist will bring the pressure of their entire intellect upon it."[112] Ghatak's melodramatic national cinema locates Indian modernism's originary myth, not in the Prime Minister Nehru's development model nor in Ray's Sensual-Naturalist agenda but in the trauma of "partition" —the splitting of British India into two sovereign nations, displacing an estimated 14 million people. Partition killed one million Indians in riots and violence, which is referred to, in popular literature and media, as a "holocaust"— and, the consequent division of the *Greater Bengal*. Unlike Ray, Ghatak counter-signaled the first Prime Minister Nehru's romanticized patriotic nation-building narrative and utilized what film theorist Ashish Rajadhyaksha referred to as the marginal data of disturbance: "we crashed on our faces, clinging to a crumbling Bengal, divested of all glory…I have not been able to break loose from this theme in all films that I have made recently. What I have found most urgent is to present to the public eye the crumbling appearance of a divided Bengal to awaken the Bengalis to an awareness of their true state."[113]

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[112] Gopalan, Lalitha, and Akhtar, Javed. Editors. The Cinema of India. Wallflower Press, 2010. P.129.

[113] Vasudevan, Ravi, "The Melodramatic Public." *The Melodramatic Public*, 2011, pp. 20-64., doi: 10.1007/978-0-230-11812-6_2

Ghatak utilizes the marginal data of disturbance to imagine—outside the paradigmatic/discursive construction of the empty homogenous time—a modal and a moral from the political agency founded on the newly marginalized Bengali's fragmentary and episodic experience of a true citizenship of history, embedded in hermeneutic suspicion(s) which deconstruct the protocols of disciplinary power. This reveals the presence of the obscure, opaque, outlaw subjects who had been bypassed by and outlawed from what Dipesh Chakrabarty referred to as "minority histories."[114]

In BFI's dossier on Indian Cinema, Kumar Shahani—one of the most important filmmakers of his generation—writes:

> The heroes and heroines of Ritwik's films, while their energies are sapped by a society which can sustain no growth, have inner resources that seem to assert themselves…He was extremely disenchanted with those of his colleagues who wanted to maintain a false unity and were not, implicitly, pained enough by the splintering of every form of social and cultural values and movements. It is these factors that make Ritwik's films a vitally generative force for the young. he does not hide behind a medieval or a dead past or a decorative Indianness…Very few of his contemporaries have avoided these pitfalls whether they work in

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[114] Rajadhyaksha, Ashish. *Indian Cinema in the Time Of Celluloid: from Bollywood To the Emergency.* Indiana Univ. Press, 2009. p. 43.

the cinema and the other arts, or in the theoretical ad cultural

sphere.[115]

Not unlike Rays *naturalist native modernist* technique, Ghatak too, in

the *Cloud-Capped Star,* builds on minutia of marginal data, details of quotidian

events and actions of a refugee family that resists Satyajit Ray's –and Prime

Minister Nehru's—Indian realism and the narrative of self-growth and success in

the independent India. Suffering, unfulfilled desire, suppression and revelation of

crucial information of the narrative, in a peculiarly un-suspenseful way—essential

for melodrama—undergird the flimsy storyline of the *Cloud Capped Star.*

Traditional melodrama regularly displaces social concerns into the family

domain. Ghatak, too, works in *Meghe Dhaka Tara* (*Cloud Capped Star) to* capture

the consequence of the historical tragedy of partition through familial disorder.

Ghatak explicitly tells us, in "Film and I" that, he aimed with *Meghe Dhaka Tara*

(*Cloud Capped Star)* to convey an allegorical connection between Nita and the

Hindu Goddess Uma, the archetype of all daughters and brides of Bengali

households in Hindu mythology as it is practiced in the lower delta of Bengal. The

traditional Bengali refrain from a *Vijaya* song marking the time the goddess

Uma's return to her in-laws' home is reworked by the film's composer Jyotirindra

Moitra. The *Vijaya* song is used like a leitmotif including the times when Nita, the

female protagonist suffering from tuberculosis, is cast out of the house in the rainy

night by her father; and at the very close of the film once she had died. The song

was used ironically to highlight Nita's banishment from her family and the

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[115] Gopalan, Lalitha, and Akhtar, Javed. Editors. The Cinema of India. Wallflower Press, 2010. P.129.

fracturing of her family unit. In "My Films" Ghatak tells us that, his staging of the *Vijaya* song underscores his desire for the union of the fractured part of two Bengals, now, part of two different countries. Ghatak adds that, the song also symptomizes the reality of *partition*: his desire has remained unfulfilled and Bengal has been and is divided. Ghatak has described the film as being composed almost entirely of long takes and as having far fewer close-up shots than any of his other films. They rhythm of the camera's movement in *Meghe Dhaka Tara,* often considered uneven and unconventional, is intentional merely to manifest deep tensions weighing upon his characters. The film consistently refuses the convention of shifting the focus of the camera to the characters that are speaking. Ghatak explains, "these departures from the norm were no stuntmanship, they were born of a desire to make an observation, from a deep sense of pain."[116]

In the BFI dossier, on Indian cinema, Bhaskar Chadavarkarn gives an excellent account of Ghatak's experimental stance on *Cloud Capped Star*'s soundtrack: "while mixing, he heard the whine of projector leaking in from the projection room. Obviously, the glass pane on the projection room window was missing. A live track was also being fed into the mixer from the studio. Ritwik heard the whine a while and then advised the recordist to leave it that way."[117] At a retrospective of Indian cinema at the 1984 Pesaro Film Festival, in Italy, Ghatak was commemorated at every seminar. At one of the seminars, filmmaker John Akomfrah described Ghatak as the "key framework for discussing Indian

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[116] Ibid., p. 130.

[117] Ibid., p. 132.

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cinema."[118] He said, "Satyajit Ray was seen to provide some of the answers, but it was Ghatak people turned to for the questions."[119]

In his last film, *Arguments, Counter Arguments and Stories*, which lend the theme to the recent 11th Shanghai Biennale—curated by Raqs Media Collective—Ghatak acted as the protagonist and portrayed the ultimate critique of Ray's naturalism. The film pointedly exposes the failure of the two-nation theory—a colonial formula, which divided greater Bengal into two different countries based on religion—by basing the film on the events from the Naxalite uprising of 1970's, which happened simultaneously with the liberation war of Bangladesh, in 1971. Once again, Ghatak's focus was the same Bengali population, disenfranchised by and being slaughtered in Naxalite uprising and the Bangladesh war, both epiphenomenal legacies of partition.

2.6 Renoir of Rice Field and His Thinking Images of Cinema

In the preceding subsections I have the defined smooth landscape space and how landscape as a multifarious assemblage is involved with the polis or politics. I have shown the development of *fūkeiron* or the landscape theory in Japan and its counterpart in Bengal while using Masao Adachi and Indian filmmaker Ritwik Ghatak as my, primary, case studies. While contrasting and colluding Adachi and Ghatak, I have exhibited how Ghatak's oeuvre forwards a critique of Satyajit Ray's *Indianness* and the official Nehruvian narrative, while both Ghatak and Ray are proponent of a similar critical regionalism and Ray's

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[118] Ibid., p. 135.

[119] Ibid.

sensualist naturalism have many overlaps with Ghatak's practice. In this pivotal section, I will attempt to establish that, it was Satyajit Ray who is first in the Indian subcontinent to establishes the sensuous production of the urban and rural landscapes in order to map the distinctive naturalist-modernist native motion picture *real*, inside his cinematic landscapes.

Let me make it clear that, unlike almost apolitical Satyajit Ray, both Mrinal Sen and Ghatak were card carrying members of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) since the time it had been banned in the country. Ghatak, in the biggening of his career, was a full-time worker of the communist party, and he actively engaged with the nucleus of radicals, inside the *Party*, which splintered to organize a violent, armed revolution against the Indian state on June 28, 1967. As if on que, Radio Peking declared this extremely violent uprising of the Indian proletariat, the *Spring Thunder over India*:

> A peal of spring thunder has crashed over the land of India. Revolutionary peasants in Darjeeling area have risen in rebellion. Under the leadership of a revolutionary group of the Indian Communist Party, a red area of rural revolutionary armed struggle has been established in India.... The Chinese people joyfully applaud this revolutionary storm of the Indian peasants in the Darjeeling area as do all the Marxist-Leninists and revolutionary people of the world.[120]

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[120] Mukherjee, Arun, *Maoist Spring Thunder: The Naxalite Movement 1967-1972*, Kolkata: K.P. Bagchi & Co, 2007. p. vii

Subsequent to the Naxalite uprising, the trilogy directed by Mrinal Sen—

Interview, Padatik, Calcutta '71—and Ghatak's outstanding last feature

film *Argument, Counter Argument and Stories*—where he casted himself, as the

protagonist, and a number of real-life urban guerrilla fighters as themselves—had

been suppressed at the time, and often, sabotaged since then. And when these

films—except *Interview* which had a six-week run in the communist party ruled

West Bengal province, and slightly longer in the working-class mining areas of

Bihar— were released, the industry critics, at that time, had attempted to define

and dismiss *Calcutta 71* and *Argument, Counter-Argument and Stories* as not *real*

cinemas but the transversal and transgressive undergrowth of the contemporary

art.

Ghatak's *The River Named Titash*, made in the war-ravaged Bangladesh,

also, most successfully subverts the neo-realist depiction of Bengali landscape—a

affliction attached to their most successful colleague Satyajit Ray, following the

success of his first film *Pather Pachali* at Cannes. In *Titash* Ghatak exploits

montage, music and melodrama in a way which is unsurpassed in Bengali

film vis-à-vis the status of moving images. Ghatak's depiction of rural Bengal was

beyond the scopic economy of bio- and necro politics and the assumption that the

photographic/cinematic articulation through orientalist historiography necessarily

entails the construction of colonial subjectivity on various scales. But it is in

Pather Pachali—a film that not only partially funded by The Museum of Modern

Art, in the NYC, but also it premiered at MOMA as well—Satyajit Ray—who

disavows any kind of revolutionary or avant-garde militancy and has variously

been called the "*Bergman of Bengal*"[121], "*Renoir of rice-field*"[122] etc.— in his

cinematic tableaus of lived places and landscapes, invoking the post-independent,

extremely poor rural Bengal, seems to be an active un-maker of neorealist

signification.[123] In *Pather Pachali*, Ray, for the first time in the post-colonial

India, formulates a language and initiates not only a semiosis, but also a forceful

process of manifesting the *real*. By alluding to the *real*, here, I am recalling

Deleuze's definition of the word in relation to cinema, of course. Alain Badiou,

colludes with Deleuze, in saying,

> where there is a rupture between image and movement, Deleuze
>
> establishes a new synthesis, based on Bergson. This is essential
>
> since it makes cinema a reality and no longer a representation,
>
> because the image and movement are one and the same thing, the
>
> image is not the representation of movement. It is 'movement-
>
> image,' so cinema is no longer a representation; it will be able to
>
> be a creation. In this sense, cinema is indeed produced with
>
> images, but the image is not a representation. The image is what
>
> cinema thinks with, since thought is always a creation.[124]

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[121] Ganguly, Keya, *Cinema, Emergence, and the Films of Satyajit Ray, Cinema, Emergence, and the Films of Satyajit Ray,* UC Press, 2010, p. 91.

[122] Ibid.

[123] Satyajit Ray met Jean and Dido Renoir in Calcutta, in 1947. Ray, then an adman and one of the founders of Calcutta Film Society, recalls the event: "Renoir was not only a approachable, but so embarrassingly polite and modest that I felt if I wasn't too careful I would probably find myself discoursing on the Future of the Cinema on his benefit.
See: Seton, Marie. *Portrait of a Director: Satyajit Ray*. Delhi: Penguin India, 2003.
[124] Badiou, Alain. *Cinema*, texts selected and introduced by Antoine de Baecque, trans. Susan Spitzer, Cambridge: Polity, 2010.p. 223.

In a recent appraisal of Satyajit Ray's selected oeuvres, Professor Keya Ganguly, skirts most of the western considerations about Ray, and connects Ray with the post-representational framework Badiou is denoting. Professor Ganguli reconfirms that, Ray's intentionality and his sensuous modernism—albeit establishing a *Nehruvian nationalist agenda*—is directed neither to launch a project of worlding an Indian authenticity, nor to get lost in the funhouse of post-modernism. Rather Ray is oriented towards 'what Eisenstein had called "an ideational cinema—a conceptualization of the world rather than a representational reaction to it",[125] in order to "*think with the cinema*"[126]

contra "thinking *about* it."[127]

The fact that Ray, as indeed Professor Ganguly rightly points out, "do not so much *reflect* historical, aesthetic, or cultural problems as present critical, dialectical conceptualizations of the continuities between art and experience"[128] only enables Ray's practice to overlap with Walter "Benjamin's allegorical and utopian but not so much with his Messianic: 'idealized horizon of meanings.'"[129]

Professor Ganguly's utilization of Reinhart Koselleck's interesting notion—"any given present is at the same time a 'former future'"[130]—to frame Ray's recreating of the past to reimagine the present that-has-failed-to-be, and

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[125] Ganguly, Keya, *Cinema, Emergence, and the Films of Satyajit Ray, Cinema, Emergence, and the Films of Satyajit Ray,* UC Press, 2010, p26

[126] Ibid., p. 27.

[127] Ibid.

[128] Ibid. p. 18.

[129] Ibid., p. 73.

[130] Ibid., p. 7.

that-might-yet-to-become identifies and acknowledges a recurrent and almost signature gesture Ray has adopted throughout his career. This gesture is quotidianly utopian but at the same time aligns with Rays localizing procedures to delimit the aesthetic and medial coordinates of avant-gardism while eschewing Europeanist frames and what Rey Chow, in a slightly different context, referred to as a "coercive mimeticism"[131] blindly aped by most Third World cinema in search of validations from the Eurouniversalist institutions.[132]

Also, we need to keep on mind that, Ray epitomized traits of evading market-ready descriptive and interpretive schema; he utilizing indexicality and truth-content of Indian landscape as sites of dialectical inquiry; in his film *Devi (The Goddess)*—Ray demonstrated what Eisenstein referred as the "activist mode of thinking,"[133] and in *Jalsaghar (The Music Room)* he stages Indian classical music as soundtrack to foment hostility towards easy comprehension. As a result, beyond the art house audience and cultivated cinephiles, in the greater India, the reactions towards Ray's oeuvres have been a mix of confusion and antagonism. Even in the regional film industry of West Bengal, Ray's birthplace, and as well as in Bollywood, the capital of Indian commercial cinema Ray has been received with mistrust and misgivings. All through Ray's life, Mumbai film industry or Bollywood stayed closed to and actively antagonistic towards him. In order to manifest this antagonistic tension, like Salman Rushdie, and countless others

[132] Bowman, Paul. "Rey Chow and Postcolonial Social Semiotics." Social Semiotics. Accessed August 9, 2021.
https://www.academia.edu/343746/Rey_Chow_and_Postcolonial_Social_Semiotics

[133] Ganguly, Keya, *Cinema, Emergence, and the Films of Satyajit Ray, Cinema, Emergence, and the Films of Satyajit Ray,* UC Press, 2010, p73

before her, Professor Ganguly quotes, from Andrew Robinson's excellent biography of Ray, the interview with Nargis Dutt. Dutt was one of the biggest stars Bollywood had ever produced. Dutt was also a member of Indian parliament; wife of another influential parliament member, minister and Bollywood star; but, most importantly Nargis was the protagonist of the 1957 Bollywood blockbuster, *Mother India*. *Mother India*[134] has, in part, constructed and embodied the non-Bengali, non-intellectual and populist dominant nationalistic narrative of Nehruvian post-colonial independent India, a clear opponent of what was happening, cinematically, in the other part of the country, in Bengal. In the following short excerpt, the theory of *fūkeiron* or landscape is activated in the sense that, Nargis Dutt's Indian landscape of modernity and progress – "Dams, bridges, airports…" –is revealed as the landscape of domination. It is directly in conflict with Ray's naturalist-sensual landscape and *Indianness*. Also, here, the signifier *Modern* emerges as an important site of conflict and contention. Here's the pertinent excerpt of the interview:

> **Interviewer:** What does Ray portray in the Apu trilogy and why do you object to it?
>
> **Nargis:** He portrays a region of West Bengal that is so poor that it does not represent India's poverty in its true form. Tell me something. Which part of India are you from?
>
> **Interviewer:** UP (Uttar Pradesh)

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[134] *Mother India* was directed by Raj Kapoor, India's first international celebrity, during the cold war, owner of a powerful Bollywood film studio and the creator of the star system in India.

Nargis: Now, tell me, would you leave your eighty-year-old grandmother to die in a cremation ground, unattended?

Interviewer: No.

Nargis: Well, people in West Bengal do. And that is what he portrays in these films. It is not a correct image of India.

Interviewer: Do people in West Bengal do such a thing?

Nargis: I don't know. But when I go abroad, foreigners ask me embarrassing questions like "do you have schools in India?" "Do you have cars in India?" I feel so ashamed, my eyes are lowered before them. If a foreigner asks me, "what kind of house do you live in?" I feel like answering, "we live in treetops." Why do you think films like *Pather Panchali* become so popular abroad?

Interviewer: You tell me.

Nargis: Because, people there want to see India in an abject condition. That is the image they have of our country and a film that confirms that image seems to them authentic.

Interviewer: But why should a renowned director like Ray do such a thing?

Nargis: To win awards. His films are not commercially successful. They only win awards.

Interviewer: What do you expect Ray to do?

Nargis: What I want is that if Mr. Ray projects Indian poverty abroad, he should also show *modern India.*

> **Interviewer:** But if the theme and plot of *Pather Panchali* are completely within the realm of a poor village, how can he deliberately fit "modern India" within it?
>
> **Nargis:** But Mr. Ray can make separate films on "modern India".
>
> **Interviewer:** What is "modern India"
>
> **Nargis:** Dams, bridges, airports…" [135]

Satyajit Ray, in the *Song of the little Road—Pather Pachali—*clearl*y,* maps the aforementioned *real* as oppositional communication *contra* the statist power or the "ideology of transparent representation."[136] I hasten to add that, it is this *ideology of transparent representation* which filters Mrs. Nargis Dutt's worldview and pass "itself off as natural, (and) makes dominant interests seem universal."[137] And, through the lens of this worldview Ray's landscape can be condemned of coding the Bengal landscape of privation and poverty, in the clichéd and convenient accoutrements of *Italian New Realism*. In the meanwhile, mapping the landscape of the *real* is central to Satyajit Ray's cinema; but Ray's *real* does not locate any subject, which articulates, or devises, the narrative as strictly ideological operations. Also, Ray's cartographical tracing of native *real* is distinctively anti new-realist, and on different registers than Adichi and Ghatak. In this particular way, Satyajit Ray's sensual knowledge practice is distinctive and

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[135] Ibid P 7

[136] Ibid.

[137] Ibid.

symptomize the recurring trait of the production of the urban and rural cinematic

landscapes of the *real*. Through naturalist and sensual details, Ray's landscape,

indirectly, short-circuit the notion of subjectivity through a very skilled process of

productive, and bio-media intervention.

Ray's *real*, his plying of *Indian* details, his figureless, poverty-stricken

rural landscape, his non-emotive unprofessional actors, natural lighting and

setting, bio-media intervention infuriated not only Mrs. Nargis Dutt but

even François Truffaut enough to walk out of the Festival de Cannes' screening of

the film. Truffaut later "severely criticizing the film."[138] Proving Ray's point—

mentioned in the first section of the chapter—those Western critics don't

understand Indian films, Truffaut mistook Ray's protagonist's family of a high-

caste Brahmin priest as lowly peasants. On the other hand, the same film

prompted Akira Kurosawa to exclaim,

> I can never forget the excitement in my mind after seeing it (*Pather*
>
> *Panchali*). It is the kind of cinema that flows with the serenity and
>
> nobility of a big river. People are born, live out their lives, and then
>
> accept their deaths. Without the least effort and without any sudden
>
> jerks, Ray paints his picture, but its effect on the audience is to stir
>
> up deep passions. How does he achieve this? There is nothing

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[138] Ranjan Das Gupta, "Ray at Cannes", *The Hindu*, April 30, 2011,
https://www.thehindu.com/features/cinema/Ray-at-Cannes/article14906744.ece

irrelevant or haphazard in his cinematographic technique. In that

lies the secret of its excellence.[139]

Kurosawa's appreciation of Ray and the same work have endured, as even

34 years later, on Ray's 70th Birthday, he has sent a handwritten note with the

inscription: "When I first saw *Pather Panchali* in 1956 at Cannes, it struck me

like thunder. When I first met Satyajit Ray in 1958 at Brussels, he looked like

Krishna the mighty God. Since then, he has been my great master; through him

and thought his works I learned how to live and how to love." [140]

In the process of mapping the *real*, Ray's sensual and living landscape

yields *subject position*, and aligns with evolutionary assemblages of different

objectal and non-objectal organisms along the plane of immanence, prefiguring

today's post-humanist zeitgeist.[141] (To expand on this point, it could have been

possible to discuss Ray's massive body of science fictional writings, for children,

and his unrealized 1967 screenplay, *Alien*, for a Hollywood production, promoted

by Arthur C. Clarke, which forms the basis of Otolith Group's Otolith III. But I

would enter this particular share of Ray's massive and multifarious oeuvres, since

it's not relevant or within the scope of my dissertation.

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[139] Ryan Lattanzio, "Akira Kurosawa Said Watching a Satyajit Ray Film Is Like "Seeing the Sun or Moon"", *IndieWire*, May20, 2015.
https://www.indiewire.com/2015/05/akira-kurosawa-said-watching-a-satyajit-ray-film-is-like-seeing-the-sun-or-moon-187504/

[140] Nandi, Alok B. (B) *Satyajit Ray at 70,* (Brussels: Eiffel Editions, 1990), p. 104.

[141] Here again, I am deploying *map* and *real* in the Deleuzian sense: "The rhizome is altogether different, a map and not a tracing. Make a map, not a tracing. The orchid does not reproduce the tracing of the wasp: it forms a map with the wasp, in a rhizome. What distinguished the map from the tracing is that it is entirely oriented toward and experimentation in the contact with the real."
Deleuze, Gilles, Félix Guattari, and Brian Massumi. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.

In more ways than one, Ray's landscape of the *real* cannot be contained in the image and hints at a fissure between the image and the visual, in the sense that, Ray's landscape of rural poverty (*Apu Trilogy)*, the fall of the older feudal economy of landed gentry (The *Music Room*) or the great Bengali famine (The *Distant Thunder)* cannily escape from the dominant scopic economy, and semiotic formulations. Serge Daney, one of most important francophone television theorists, and film critic theorizing about the televised Gulf war points to similar phenomenon that, how some events failed to be imaged. He, then, proceeds, to make a distinction between the image and the visual."[142] Daney writes about fissuring of the undifferentiated epistemological operations of the visual. He describes visual as a kind of optical decoding operation of power, in which what is already in the system, keeps looping back to the end receiver. Visual not only reveals a core, but also is indexical to an *other* that cannot be contained in the image. Daney's formulation is another helpful tool to interrogate Ray's technê to visualize the sensuous naturalist-modernist Bengal landscape and its Nehruvian nationalist narratives core. At the same time, some aspects of Ray's mapping of the *real*—his staging of the unstable intersubjective and interspecies relations in the landscaping process—escapes the jagged fracture of image and visual but, perhaps, can be understood, through the lens of Luce Irigarayan masquerade. The creative critique of this particular trait seems to be integrated in Ray's film practices—as a public interior of a space of virtual conjunction— much before

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[142] Daney, Serge, "From Movies to Moving," trans, Brian Holmes, in *Documenta documents 2*, (ed.) Documenta GmbH (Ostfidern-Ruit,1996-97), p 78.

surfacing in the works of another great Indian—and German—filmmaker: Harun Farocki.[143]

Satyajit Ray's landscape, more significantly, is a conduit of vitality and vigor; Ray landscapes a world sensation which are unaccounted for and nonresponsive to the Western theoretical registers. Now by invoking Deleuze, I would like to convey that, these landscaped sensations operate outside the parameter of subjective-objective positionality. I would further argue that, different sense-complexes i.e., memory, imagination, reason and cognition are not, in any kind of ineluctable necessity, linked to perceptions of a specific object: memory, imagination, reason and cognition are *differential* elements. They, essentially, don't require representational aggregates to facilitate meanings. I would urge to underline this point, and read it again, since this might be the key to penetrate the wall of incomprehension regarding not only Ray's sensual-naturalist landscape—and Ghatak's melodrama-charged mythological Bengal— but also South Asian filmic experience, which defy representation and mimetic practices. Ray's landscape contra Nargis Dutt's modernist landscape revealed structured of domination and power. Ray's mapped *real* landscapes are screen objects. Ray constructed landscapes as material encounters, and sensation, and often not as meanings. As I have said in the beginning of the first subsection (2. 5. 1.), Ray's landscapes are aesthetic assemblage which transmits affect, and engages through intensity and *becoming*, through a space of immanence.[144]

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[143] Deleuze, Gilles. *Cinema 1. The Movement Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (USA: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 112-13.

[144] In *What Is Philosophy?* Deleuze invokes, "artists are presenters of affects, inventors and creators of affects. They not only create them in their work, they give them to us, and make us become with them… Art undoes the triple organization of perceptions, affections and opinions in order to substitute a monument composed of percepts, affects and blocs of sensation that takes the place of language." Deleuze succinctly formulates sensation as having both a subjective, and an

Ray's cinema, establishing various portmanteau sites—and continuing through its porous perimeters— initiate a new landscape-oriented ontology, which, in all probability, is a launching pad of intersubjective *becoming*. Ray's greatness is that, while his landscaping is modernist in its trappings and vocabulary, utilizing the modernist signifiers from within the Fascist-Modernist complex, he erects an operation of resistance against the Western Modernism. This operation is confidently rooted in multifarious affects and sensations—hitherto fore unacknowledged in the Western registers –and continuous return of the resilient and resistant "practical, human sensuous activity,"[145]

By articulating the relationship between spatial, and the procedural state of immanence, Satyajit Ray's landscaping interrogates the ways in which native motion picture karma, as haecceity, is understood to imagine alternatives to Indian commercial cinema and Anglo-European cinema de jure.

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objective element, but, "it has no sides at all, it is both things, indissoluble, it is being-in-the-world as phenomenologists say: at the same time, I *become* in sensation and something *arrives* through sensation, and though the other, one in the other. And finally, it is the same body that gives and receives sensation; this is at the same time subject and object."
Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *What Is Philosophy?* New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, p. 173.

[145] Marx, Karl. "Theses On Feuerbach." Accessed August 20, 2018.
https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/theses.htm

Epilogue: An Alternative Legacy of Modernism

Europe is no longer the center of gravity of the world. As I wrote in the

introduction to *Critique of Black Reason*, this is "the fundamental

experience of our era."

—Achille Mbembe[1]

The Third World must start over a new history of man which takes account

of not only the occasional prodigious theses maintained by Europe but also

its crimes.

—Frantz Fanon[2]

Oh, let my camera record the desperation of the small countries. Oh, how I

hate you, the big nations, you always think that you are the only ones, and

others should only be part of you and speak your language. Oh come,

come the dictatorship of the small countries.

—Jonas Mekas[3]

In the preceding chapters of *Native Motion Picture Karma*, I have claimed

that modernism is a retrofuturistic movement of autopoiesis or self-making. This

proposition, and theoretical premise, is the terminus a quo of my dissertation.

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[1] Mbembe, Achille, "Notes on Late Eurocentrism." Translated by Carolyn Shread. In the Moment, July 2, 2021. https://critinq.wordpress.com/2021/07/01/notes-on-late-eurocentrism/

[2] Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth: Frantz Fanon*. New York: Grove Press, 2004, p238

[3] *Jonas Mekas: Lost Lost Lost*. Paris, France, South Melbourne, Vic, Australia: Re:Voir, Contemporary Arts Media (distributor), 1976.

And, inside the chapters, of my dissertation, what might seem rhizomic entanglements of European and Native subjects –e.g., Rembrandt and Ray –is a carefully laid out design which endeavored to designate a dynamic process by which an integrated and diversified field like art history or Film or Media studies reorders itself as a core component of the Fascist-Modernist complex while each and every field is simultaneously whole and part of Modernism.

I would like to underscore this point, since it was not my intention to assert only that, the Western interwar modernism is a process of autopoietic operations. Through careful design of evidences and theorizations, I wanted to interrogate Modernism's Eurasian *Völkisch* milieu and its marriage with the asymmetrical logic of the exclusive transcendence or *Aufgang*—uprising, uplifting, returning to the source. In other words, immanent to the Fascist-Modernist complex, is an irreducible network of interrelationships from which it originates, and paradoxically, from which modernism consistently seeks to grow out from. Understanding this will not only unlock my interpretive schema but will allow the reader to grasp the inner coherence of the various bodies of scholarship—history, philosophy, art history, media archelogy, fascism studies and a host of other fields—I have deployed. But, perhaps, more importantly, my expansion of the genealogy and origin of Modernism—elucidated, mostly, in the introduction and first chapter— is a provisional portal to the manifold panoramic awareness that, modernism's autopoietic hegemony, inevitably, inaugurates an allopoietic operation of other-making. Modernism's myopic vision had blind spots; it blurs and erases the other. My interdisciplinary, intersectional and mostly itinerant evidential framework and theorization drive to illuminate few blind spots and

delineate an alternative genealogy and legacy of Modernism to make it susceptible to polyphony and minor histories of the others.

Modernism, a terrorist confluence of the autopoietic and allopoietic operations –as sources, settings, touchstones, compendium of sensations, meanings and values—sustains its hegemony and its Eurouniversalist narrative by extreme violence. In my dissertation, I have primarily focused on the violence and the politics of erasure which, among other things, characterizes Modernism as a European production and links it with the 19th century inventions of Europeanness and Antiquity. In order to maintain the Fascist-Modernist narrative of Modernism, its Asian and African lineage and protagonists are constantly being rewritten and suppressed, and all the differences and kinks in the modernist narratives are being smoothed out. The Fascist-Modernist complex, effectuate erasure, and suppression to suture the live fractures in the knowledge fields, and the political ontology of contemporary art and cinema.[4]

I have demonstrated, how the Fascist-Modernist complex proclaims for itself, the teleology of its process that is oriented towards sanitizing and eugenicizing the messy futuristic presents and the history of now. Modernism is, thus, ultimately a terrain of political contestation as highly circulative, limiting and legitimizing definitions and histories. My contention has been that, there is

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[4]According to Gayatri Spivak, art is not a specific field within culture, but just another ideological practice. Thus, artistic practice is as good as any other activity if one wants to analyze society and to take action. My appraisal of art and cinema, hence, treat culture as sedimented and layered, a fold of time and materiality where the erased past might be suddenly discovered anew. In other words, seeing through my theoretical lens, both Rembrandt and Satyajit Ray become 'heuristic devices or foci for thinking through the history of art and cinema in new ways.
 See: Art Orbit Spivak. Accessed June 05, 2018.
https://www.artnode.se/artorbit/issue1/f_spivak/f_spivak.html

only Western modernism, and the emergence of "Occidental modernity" and "modern subject" hinge on the splitting of the whole into binaries and the suppression of their Oriental objectal counterpart. This Oriental objectal counterpart, then, disappears, but remains present—effective but under erasure—from un-conscious, and un-thought while actively unacknowledged, and coded to invisibility in the Fascist-Modernist complex. Hence, the Occidental subject is correlative to an "impossible" object whose existence has, what Freud had referred to as "acheronta movebo" or *moved underground*, in his *Interpretation of Dreams.*[5]

In other words, I have argued in my first chapter— countering the key fascist-modernist Art historian Julius Langbehn's claiming of Rembrandt as a quintessential and archetypal European artist— and the Introduction that the smooth exterior of the explicit reality in the Fascist-Modernist art and European Modernism is sustained by erasing and systemic suppression of its non-occidental participants in that reality, and the labor and the resourcing of erecting and running that reality. For the purpose of my dissertation, I have emphasized the South Asian component—as part of the larger Bengal-Balkan complex—of the Oriental objectal counterpart.[6]

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[5] In the opening page of *The Interpretation of Dreams* Sigmund Freud quotes ancient Roman poet Virgil: Flectere si nequeo Superos, Acheronta Movebo. See: Freud, Sigmund, *The Interpretation of Dreams,* in *Standard Edition of the complete works of S.F.*, vols. 5, London, p. 483
But, here, I have quoted him from the work of Slavoj Zizek.
See: Zizek, Slavoj, "Move the Underground! What's Wrong with Fundamentalism? - Part II," *Lacan.com*. Accessed March 05, 2022
https://www.lacan.com/zizpassion.htm

[6] To maintain my focus on the South Asian art and cinema, I have bypassed the three most important point of contacts between the Occident and the Arab Orient: the period of the Arab conquest of Spain 711-1492; the fall of Constantinople, the capital of Christian Byzantine Empire to the Ottomans in 1453; the period of Arab rule in Sicily. To this Siegfried Zielinski says, "the

I have gone into detail vis-à-vis the Indo-European construction of fascism and its intrinsic correlation and methodological empathy to Modernism in the introduction of my dissertation[7;] and first chapter of this dissertation.[8] The trajectory of my schema, in the introduction, is to establish "fascism as the offspring of modernism."[9] I have shown how modernism and fascism are entangled, and often identical, revivalist movements supposed to replicate values and conditions of "former, more glorious healthy eras," not tarnished by the alienating pulses of progress resulting from the Enlightenment.[10] It is paramount to remember that, fascism, as a vigorous revivalist, cultural and political movement, was tolerated and accepted, in the early 20th century, insofar as it was the negation of universality—a notion that has been merely replaced by 'globalism' in later years—and to the extent that Fascist-Modernist complex programmatically performed the end of rational philosophy developed from the

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Arab scholars created the first Renaissance and to this end used all the media with which the ancient authors had provided them. For example, it was via Samarkand that the Chinese method of paper-making reached the Islamic world. Vast amount of translation work permitted Persians, Latin, and particularly Greek sources to enter the contemporary reality of *Bagdad's House of Wisdom*. The texts rendered in Arabic, which often only survived because of these translations, in many cases formed the basis of discipline that were essential for the European modern age."
In process that was highly complex the Arabs exerted a decisive influence on the Western world in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance in virtually all fields of knowledge—astronomy, biology, chemistry, cartography, mathematics, medicine, metaphysics, music, optics, and philosophy—and made a fundamental contribution to the development and diversification of the sciences which continues today.
See: Zielinski, Siegfried and Weibel, Peter, Allah's Automata: Artifacts of the Arabic-Islamic Renaissance, Hatje Cantz February 23, 2016. p. 14.

[7] See 1.2 *Eurasian Roots of Modernism: Eastern Religions*, René Guénon and Julius Evola, Introduction, p. 10.

[8] Please, see 2.1 Rembrandt and Modernism's Mughal Masala, Chapter 1, p. 3.

[9] Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*, p 6.

[10] Antliff, Mark, *Avant-Garde Fascism*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007, pp. 7, 27-28.

Enlightenment. Thus, since the very beginning, fascism is, essentially and fundamentally, a modernist project which in many occasions, not surprisingly, overlapped with and fueled a lot of the post-colonial movements in the Bengal-Balkan complex. But, of course, themes of pristine Aryan bloodlines and Indo-European races are not Modernist inventions, but excavated from pre-modernist pseudo-scientific and mythological literatures.

As I have demonstrated, the *traditionalist* turns of revivalist Fascist-Modernist complex and its strong incentive to return to the Aryan roots, are entrenched in Indo-Bengal Vedic, Spiritualist and other occult practices. But, the extent to which Orient—particularly South Asia and Bengal—was at the center of the Fascist-Modernist revolution and romance has to be understood in the larger temporal and cultural context of 19th century Europe and its ideological crisis of the time. I have mentioned before that, it was German philosopher, ideologist and the foremost theorist of German Romanticism, and former First Secretary of the Austrian Legation to the Diet of Frankfort, Friedrich Schlegel who had applied the term Aryan to the anonymous "Indic-Nordic master race."[11] Schlegel's critique of Enlightenment rationalism, pragmatism, utilitarianism and mostly materialism was founded on his scholarship of ancient Indian or Hindu texts—Upanishads and Vedas—and aligned with, and to some extent fueled, the tremendous Indophilia raging in the continental Europe, at that time. Incidentally, this Indophilia only emerged to, primarily, replace the Egyptomania which—Martin Bernal writes in the introduction of *Black Athena*—the 'Aryanists' alleged, have misled many

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[11] Poliakov, Leon, *The Aryan Myth: A History of Racist and Nationalist Ideas in Europe,* London: Sussex University Press and Heinemann, 1974, p 190-192

intelligent, balanced and informed European intellectuals "with the belief that Egyptian and Phoenicians had played a central role in the formation of in the formation of their culture."[12] Since it was a violation of the race science, the German and British scholars developed a 'scientific' methodology to discredit and reject the hypothesis that, Egyptian might have colonized and civilized Greece.[13] On the other hand, Raymond Schwab, in his monumental *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe's Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680-1880* evidences how Friedrich Schlegel "was literally the inventor of the Oriental Renaissance," fomenting, "a general cultural movement out of one particular field of Knowledge."[14] In *Über die Sprache*, for the first time Schlegel formulates how Indian Hindu epic *Ramayana*, the oeuvre of the Iranian poet Firdausi, Homer and Romanceros serves as the foundational mythos of Germania: "Homer as a reference, *Ramayana* as the family tree, and Latin poetry as the foreground."[15] Of course, this is even before Friedrich Max Müller visited and conducted his research in India and founded German Indology. German, French and most of the continental scholars were, at that point, mostly dependent on British orientalists who had complex interconnections with Bengal and South Asia.[16] By the

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[12] Bernal, Martin. *Black Athena: The AFROASIATIC Roots of Classical Civilization*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987. p. 7.

[13] Ibid p. 8.

[14] Schwab, Raymond, *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe's Rediscovery of India and the East: 1680-1880*, translated by Gene Patterson-Black, Victor Reinking, and Edward Wadie Said New-York: Columbia University Press, 1984, pp. 212–13.

[15] Ibid. p. 113.

[16] Alex Aronson writes, Germany responded "spiritually" to India since Germany had no colonial interests in this part of the world. This is, perhaps, one of the main reasons. German Indology and its direct connection to develop the Fascist-Modernist complex was ignored by Edward Said, in

beginning of 1790s, the Indophilia had reached a fever pitch in the continental

Europe and England. In 1791, Goethe, who admittedly felt strong revulsion to the

many headed, and deformed Hindu deities and found Indian art hideous was, in

one of his most celebrated quatrains, referencing William Jones new translation of

Sanskrit poet Kalidasa's *Secontala*, proclaims:

> *If you want to encompass Heaven and Earth in one single*
>
> *name,*
>
> *Then I name you, Secontala, and everything is said.*[17]

It is telling that, despite the downturn of the Indophile trend and specially

the rise of a new generations of scholars led by Karl Otfried Müller[18], Kalidasa's

Secontala received, in the century following its publication date of 1789, no fewer

than forty-six translations in twelve European languages.[19]

I have foregrounded the actual formation of the ideological—and

spiritual—core of Modernism not only in the suppressed Indo-European history of

the interwar modernism, but also –what I suspect will be regarded with dismay

and a dubious or even controversial—in the ferment of the occult, the Hindu

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Orientalism. Aronson, Alex. *Europe Looks at India: A Study in Cultural Relations*. Calcutta: Riddhi-India, 1979, p. 49.

[17]Franklin, Michael J., ed. *The European Discovery of India; Key Indological Sources of Romanticism*. London: Ganesa, 2001. p. viii.

[18] Karl Otfried Müller "urged scholars to study Greek mythology in relation to human culture as a whole, buy was adamantly opposed to recognizing any specific borrowing from the East." Bernal, Martin. *Black Athena: The AFROASIATIC Roots of Classical Civilization*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987. p. 4.

[19] Franklin, Michael J., ed. *The European Discovery of India; Key Indological Sources of Romanticism*. London: Ganesa, 2001. p. viiii.

Mother cult. I have clarified that, the Traditionalist, Vedic, Tantric Advaita Goddess culture juxtaposed on Sufi, Völkisch movements, European esoterism etc. fuels the ideological body, and more importantly, the desire machine of the closed art historical doxa of Western Modernism. I have alluded that, the Vedic Goddesses and the cult of mother worshipping is intrinsic to the modernist-fascist complex. My attempt here is, on one hand, to historicize the muted matrix of the Eurasian goddess cultures as elemental forces.

On the other hand, I tried to simultaneously disrupt historicism by describing how these narrations, which could be false—or true—might co-exist in various registers. This becomes increasingly apparent as one locates sophisticated apparati to interrogate the staging of what Jacques Rancière refers to as "elements"[20] of modernism's socio-political systems. These elements are without the benefit of a voice/place within the Fascist-Modernist complex. These are elements that are uncounted, and unaccounted for—elements for which other elements has to act/speak. To summarize, in the introduction and the first chapter of the dissertation, I have attempted to contextualize and animate—speak for—the mythopoetic operations of modernism's muted elements, modernism's foundational and elemental ideology i.e. I elaborated and theorized what Gilles Deleuze referred to as the "*false narration(s)"* of the Eurasian origin and shared history of the Fascist-Modernist complex.[21]

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[20] "Rancière, Politics, Aesthetics, and OOO." Larval Subjects., August 3, 2011. https://larvalsubjects.wordpress.com/2011/08/03/ranciere-politics-aesthetics-and-ooo/

[21] Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Felix, "Year Zero: Faciality," in: idem, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi, Athlone Press London, 1987, pp. 167-91.

In the second chapter, having chosen Satyajit Ray and Artist's cinema the as my focus, I return to the mythopoetic operations of modernism but from a diametrically opposite direction. In my analysis, Ray signals a peculiar symptom of the Fascist-Modernist complex. Satyajit Ray, performs a resistance to the Fascist tendencies of Modernism. But, a staunch modernist himself, Ray operates from within Modernism's paradigm and logic. His localized, and tropicalized modernism is susceptible to polluted narrations, not confronting or counteracting Fascist-Modernist allopoietic operation but gently creating an alternative to it. More importantly, Ray inaugurates a language of sensations and tender swish vis-à-vis Western modernism's politics of erasure and exclusion of the others.[22] Engaging with Satyajit Ray and his landscape, I have attempted to bring into

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[22] The most important aim of art, as per Deleuze, is to be a conduit of sensations, to create an unadulterated being of sensation. In *What Is Philosophy?* Deleuze invokes, "Artists are presenters of affects, inventors and creators of affects. They not only create them in their work, they give them to us, and make us become with them… Art undoes the triple organization of perceptions, affections and opinions in order to substitute a monument composed of percepts, affects and blocs of sensation that takes the place of language." Deleuze succinctly formulates sensation as having both a subjective, and an objective element, but, "it has no sides at all, it is both things, indissoluble, it is being-in-the-world as phenomenologists say: at the same time, I *become* in sensation and something *arrives* through sensation, and though the other, one in the other. And finally, it is the same body that gives and receives sensation; this is at the same time subject and object." Not only, according to Deleuze, sensation operates outside the parameter of subjective-objective positionality but, he argues, different sense-complexes i.e. memory, imagination, reason and cognition are not, in any kind of ineluctable necessity, linked to perceptions of a specific object: memory, imagination, reason and cognition are *differential* elements. They, essentially, don't require representational aggregates to facilitate meanings. For Deleuze, in terms of cinematic experience, contra representation, screen objects are material encounters, as sensation, and not entirely meanings; screen objects are aesthetic assemblage, which moves, and modulates with the spectator through processes of molecularity. Cinematic encounter engages through affect, intensity and *becoming*, through a space of immanence.

By articulating the relationship between spatial, and the procedural state of immanence, one seeks to interrogate the ways in which cinematic experience, as haecceity, is understood to imagine alternatives to molar plane of organization in a film.

In this respect, Ray's cinema, in its intersectional approach, establishes various portmanteau sites—continuous through its porous perimeters—-of these special conceptualities, and forms to initiate a new object-oriented ontology, and the cinematic remaking of "a new place of the non-place," which, in all probability, is a launching pad to disseminate analytics of post-filmic cinema's intersubjective *becoming*. See: Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Félix. *What Is Philosophy?*. Translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell III, Gardner Books, 1994.

focus new registers of "practical, human sensuous activities,"[23] in the intimate,

biotic sphere, that resist and repel the grand narratives of the modernist-fascist

complex.[24] Ray's micro-political landscape apotheosizes as energies of impossible

intimacies in both elemental and sensuous realms undergirding the Eurasian

cultural mainstreams. Here, it is important to acknowledge and underline the

importance of intimacy and sensuousness in Ray's oeuvre. Ray's landscape—as I

have demonstrated in the second chapter—animates in plotting intimacies, and

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[23] Marx, Karl. "Theses On Feuerbach." Accessed August 20, 2018.
https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/theses.htm.

[24] It is my contention that, the unbroken tradition of South Asian living mother goddesses—contiguous with the Nina or Ishtar in Babylonia, among the Western Semites, the great Hittite Goddess of Boghaz-Keui or to some extent the figure(s) from the great Mother cult—is undergirded by the representations of the Minoan and early Hellenic théogonie of the Mediterranean. The tradition of South Asian living mother goddesses is bifurcated in the Aryan and Dravidian pantheons: in the Aryan Veda based practices and beliefs, not unlike in Babylonia, ritual goddesses are subservient—except in the cases of great goddesses Kali, Durga, Saraswati, Devi—to the Gods. The older Dravidian pantheon exalt goddesses and the feminine principles in nature.

 I would like to, quickly, illustrate this point with the example of the practice of the worship of the Saptamatrika—the Seven Heavenly Mothers. The practice of *Saptamatrika* not only reveal but emphasize the unbroken continuity and liquescence—the juxtaposition of the location of power and the sites of resistance without borders— of these Bronze Age figures (and figurines). These figures were depicted on the seals, and the terra-cotta plaques from disparate locations: most prominently in Zhob valley in North Baluchistan, Pandu Rajar Dhibi in Bengal, Chandraketugarh, and the five-thousand-year-old Indus Valley cities Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro's archeological sites. Professor Stuart Piggott's research indicates, in the Indian subcontinent, especially during the lower Paleolithic period the worship of the Mother Goddesses were an exceedingly common practice; some of "these figurines seem to be a grim embodiment of the mother goddess who is also the guardian of the dead—an underworld deity concerned alike with the corpse and the seed corn buried beneath the earth".24 Not unlike many other archeologists, Professor Piggott speculates that, the ideological and material formation of the serial iconography of the awe inspiring still worshipped goddesses e.g. Chamunda, Chandika or Kali are continuations of the fierce figurines from Zoob valley.

 The theriomorphic vases and figurines as unearthed from the Harappan sites form a class by itself recalling the Egyptian theriomorphism in which religion the gods were conceded as living or manifesting themselves on earth in theophardes, their living images on earth, as ram, dog headed ape, dog, wolf, jackal, hawk, vulture, ibis, swallow, dove and heron, certain kinds of snakes, frog, beetle, grasshopper, mantis, and several kinds of fish. All the above were regarded as divine powers from the earliest to the latest times...The terra-cotta vases in the shapes of birds and animals as also the numerous figurines from the Harappan and other Proto-historic and Early Historic sites having beak like noses and pinched faces on the one hand and such figurines collected during surface explorations from the early historic sites in the Gangetic West Bengal thus reveal this transitional culture and prove a distant link with the West.
See: D. K. Chakravarty, The Antiquity and the Evolution of the Sapta Matrika Worship in Bengal, Proceedings *of the Indian History Congress*, Vol. 30,1968, pp. 129-138.

sensuous micro activities, avoiding conflicts and constantly performing soft negotiations with the *Traditionalist* archeofuturism. Unlike his more revolutionary cohorts like Mrinal Sen or Ritwik Ghatak, Ray is not scripting a global revolution. Of course, Ray's activation of the radical impossible intimacy and/or any particular affect associated with the mother cult ontologizes his landscape as feminine, as a thinking feminine body and endows it with sovereignty and agency: Ray's landscape, a sensuous ideological formation, not only thinks, all by itself, but it produces: situation, movement, truth and lives; feminine body of the landscape generates feminine time, extracted—and excluded—from not only the fold of nationalistic political spheres, but from the "true narration"[25] of linear history.

To illustrate this point, I will refer to one of the versions of the Bengali oral epic of the minor snake goddess Manasha: the tale of Manasha opens with a creation myth and a synopsis of Indian mythology, only to create a false lineage to connect the local, minor goddess Manasha with the great Aryan god Shiva and to show Manasha as Shiva's miraculous child. Manasa easily wins the allegiance and respect of Shiva's devotees except the prosperous merchant Chand, who holds fast in his devotion to Shiva, despite seeing his wealth squandered and his 12 sons massacred. To fulfill Manasa's design, Behula, wife of one of Chand's slain sons, undertakes a harrowing odyssey to the court of the great Gods, and by pleasing Shiva, Behula restores her husband's life but only with Manasa's counsel and help; and Behula, ultimately persuades her father-in-law Chand to bow to the snake goddess and worship her as well.

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[25] Deleuze, Gilles. *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013, pp. 213-17.

Here, Behula's sovereign thinking body—representing the landscape of rural Bengal—activates and is activated by Manasha—in order to act at the level of multiplicity and forces, as per Deleuze, represents the threshold of the breaking of metaphysical subjectivity.1 Behula's figure, of course, undergirds extreme double bindedness or what Deleuze calls disjunctive synthesis1 as she has to sustain the dual and contradictory constellations of identities—a sovereign thinking body and being subservient to the desire of the dead body of her husband—concurrently, and in the process erasing subjectivity by being indeterminate and in-the-making constantly. In Deleuze's formulation, in order to reach the goddess-like status but still maintain humanity, there must be a double affirmation, and the first affirmation of becoming in the first selection of eternal return is conditioned to a relationship with a human. Maintaining her marriage with Chand's dead son and being in the journey to bring him back to life, Behula is willing which one would only will eternally; on the other hand, Behula has activated Manasha, and she, by affirming Manasha, upholds *becoming* unconditionally. In the process, Behula links herself with the Manasha's dark, underworld supremacy, and multiplicity over human, and over the self, and thus Behula puts her human self under erasure. It is this binary structure insistent on Behula's conflict, and rupture that affords her—as human who has formed an impossible intimacy with Manasha—to stage the possibility of creative repetitions or counter-actualizations of the linear historical time and events to give rise to a feminine, mythopoetic time.

Seen through my archaeological lens, both Rembrandt and Satyajit Ray—as complex Dispositifs, and cultural epistemes—are *epistemological rupture* but

for different purpose and reasons. Rembrandt and Ray are 'more like a zero degree that allows one to reflect upon one's present understanding of both history and theory.'[26] In other words, for the purpose of my dissertation, I have deployed art history and cinema studies as 'heuristic devices'[27] or a focus for thinking through the fractures and blind spots of both the disciplines in new ways. My constant endeavor has been—through case studies, references and theorizations— to underline that, one of the biggest "problems besetting the discourse of modernism has been its (Giorgio) Vasari's art historical foundations, which pursue a linear trajectory according to the dictates of a relentless teleology that does not allow for dissidence, difference and competition."[28]

In our post-Foucauldian time, theorization of the difference, and the invisible and erased is, in essence, stichomancy: it is a kind of divination but discursively, and logically. Here, the logic of theorization is susceptible to certain ideology, which, more often than not, is paradigmatic and/or deterministic—to history. But, theorizing the erased and the invisible—to not only make it visible but acceptable—is an archaeological fieldwork in the *other*—which is often not-in-the-world and simply not-there—contra history which, deterministic or not, is an affirmation of the idealized, settled, schematic, and totalized transcendental signified. In the process of writing my dissertation I have traced a telos of

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[26] Elsaesser, Thomas. *Film History as Media Archaeology: Tracking Digital Cinema,* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008), p.232.

[27] Ibid p. 232.

[28] Mitter, Partha. *The Triumph of Modernism: India's Artists and the Avant-Garde, 1922-1947* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007), p.8.

analysis, which pursues to appraise the history of discourse, and the set of "things said"[29] in intersectional and interdisciplinary interrelations and transformations. Hence, the process of my writing occurred at a very specific level, which is neither the level of the events of history, nor the level of a teleological 'progress' of ideas, nor the level of an accumulation of formal knowledge, nor the level of the popular or unspoken 'spirit of the times.'"[30] Thus, as it must be evident in my writing, my analysis and discourse-making commence, primarily, by erecting a theoretical framework to break down the illusion of smooth historical transition, continuity, historical a priories, presuppositions, and exposing, in the process(es), the ideological operation of discourse-building by leveling, erasing, and suppressing disruptions, thresholds, differences, and complex taxonomies.

Conceived as a pluripotent site—contradicting the linearity and the prevailing Euro-universalist and Eurocentric narratives of art history, cinema and media studies—my protean, heterogenous discourse of modernism aimed to stage not only the jagged fault line of the Fascism-Modernism complex—and in the process attempting to reveal its machinery that always already engender and maintain a smooth "true narrative"[31]—but also aspires to demonstrate a South Asian horizon of lived sensuous knowledge emanating thick anodyne resistance, from within modernism, against the fascist trajectories.

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[29] Foucault, Michel. *Archaeology of Knowledge*. London: Routledge, 2009.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Evans, Brad, and Reid, Julian. *Deleuze & Fascism: Security, War, Aesthetics*. London: Routledge, 2014, p. 10.

Picking out what might seem the most pertinent strain of thought in my writing, I would like to end my dissertation with a reference to an unlikely encounter. On 11th December, 2015, a *New York Times* Op-Ed, by Aatish Taseer,[32] begins "an Islamic philosopher in Karachi, an ideologue who provides violent ideas to some of Pakistan's fiercest extremist groups, once told me that there are two kinds of history: dead and living."[33] Then, Aatish goes on to underline, in the philosopher's speech, the crux of *traditionalism*[34] which, ironically, make a Sunni Islamist militant group like *Islamic State* (IS) or vaguely milder *Muslim Brotherhood* and Shiite militant groups allies with White Supremist groups in the USA and radical identarian rightist groups globally. The Mulla explained to Aatish, it is the dead history which is taught by academicians or occupies a shelf in a museum."[35] On the other hand, "living history is part of your consciousness, something in your blood that inspires you."'[36] In the same article, Aatish, also, describe the core notion of William McCants' new book, *The*

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[32] Aatish Taseer is the only son of a renowned businessman and the 26th Governor of Punjab, Salman Taseer, who was brutally killed by the Taliban, on 4th January, 2011. One of Taseer's bodyguards gunned him down in Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan, after the governor had criticized Pakistan's blasphemy law that mandated a death penalty for anyone who insults Islam and campaigned for changing the law. The law attracted worldwide attention in the November, 2010, when it had been used to sentence a Christian woman (Aasia Bibi) to death for insulting Islam, a charge she denied. Over a hundred thousand people had marched in the Pakistani city of Karachi in support of the blasphemy law just a few days before Salman was murdered. Not surprisingly, Salman was a member of the liberal and secular Pakistan Peoples Party. The chairman of the party, Benazir Bhutto, the first female head of a Muslim majority country, had been assassinated as well in a suicide bombing on 27 December 2007.

[33] Aatish Taseer, "The Return of History", *New York Times*, December 11, 2015, accessed February 26, 2022, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/11/opinion/the- return-of-history.html?_r=0

[34] I have used italics to emphasize my point on *traditionalism*.

[35] Aatish Taseer, "The Return of History", *New York Times*, December 11, 2015, accessed February 26, 2022, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/11/opinion/the- return-of-history.html?_r=0

[36] Ibid.

Isis Apocalypse where McCants looks at the IS' concepts and formulations of the revival of a *traditionalist* past and how this is central to not only IS' programs and actions but also to their spiritual core and worldview. "The picture that emerges is one of a tension between the dead past and the ways in which it is being remade to fit the needs of the living present."[37] Here, one will discern that, the messages and the revivalist programs of the traditionalist revivalist groups in the Weimar Republic—discussed in the second chapter of the dissertation—and the Islamic State's *living present* and the *living history* of now is almost identical. Let us, also, be mindful that "a similar return of history is occurring with varying degrees of intensity all across the old world."[38] Now, it is extremely important to acknowledge that, "return of history" that Taseer alludes to—in Islamic State's struggle to reimagine the Caliphate of the great Abbasid caliph, Harun al-Rashid, and graft it onto the present—is a flip side of a decolonizing impulse, which is a romantic—and often utopian—reaction to the reception of the globalist, progressivist, neo-liberal variant of Modernism and its dominant ways of knowing and thinking about the history. It would be interesting to recall, from the introductory chapter of the dissertation, how the rise of the Fascist-Modernist complex in the interwar period followed the same pattern. I have explained, as well, how Nazi and the German Conservative Revolutionary movement launched a populist formula, that combined technology-fetish and traditionalism, to counter Enlightenment values and institutions of liberal democracy. Not unlike the

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[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid.

German Conservative Revolutionary movements during the interwar time, the

Islamic philosopher in Karachi, and the other contemporary discontents of the

nation-states build on Enlightenment values, are rejecting "imperialist white

supremacist capitalist patriarchal"[39] values and knowledge.

In the past four decades, an array of wide-ranging interdisciplinary body of

works have developed, aspiring to dismantle Western "imperialist white

supremacist capitalist patriarchal"[40] values and knowledge system from its

autonomous enclosure. Edward Said, among many others, argued

"contrapuntally."[41] He analytically conveyed European art history's problematic

super structural relations to the economic, social, and political spheres.[42] Said

methodically demonstrates how colonized and colonizer's cultural apparatuses

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[39] bell hooks, *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love* (New York: Atria Books, 2004), p. 17.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1993), pp.17-19.Though Said developed the theoretical concept of counterpoint during writing *Musical Elaborations*, but it is in *Culture and Imperialism,* counterpoint features as a primary lens to appraise cultural archive: "not univocally but *contrapuntally*, with a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts." Mieke Bal refers to *contrapuntal* reading a traveling concept in interdisciplinary debates. Bal elucidates, interdisciplinarity in the humanities "must seek its heuristic and methodological basis in *concepts* rather than *methods*." She explains, it is because, concepts are "dynamic in themselves" and can form "sites of debate, awareness of difference, and tentative exchange" in interdisciplinary engagements. Said forwards a similar argument in the essay "Traveling Theory Reconsidered," albeit his focus has, always, been on the mailability and rigorous adaptability of theories, in general, instead of concepts, in particular.
See: Bal, Mieke, *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities*, University of Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing Division; Illustrated edition, 2002, pp. 5, 22.
Said, Edward, "Traveling Theory Reconsidered," in *Critical Reconstructions: The Relationship of Fiction and Life*, ed. Robert M. Polhemus and Roger B. Henkle, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994, pp. 251–88.

[42] Said, Edward. *Orientalism*, New York and London: Penguin Books, 1991, pp.18-21.

and "massively knotted complex histories"[43] "co-exist and battle each other"[44] through cultural forms "as well as rival geographies, narrative and histories."[45] Said, powerfully, intervened to posit and show the metropole and colony as a single, if conflicted, analytical field.[46]

While technically accepting this premise, I have, at the same time, proposed the diametrically opposite thesis of a singular, grand narrative of Modernism. I have endeavored to animate how through suppression, erasure, and violence the grand narrative of Modernism maintains its Euro-universality and phallogocentric representational semiology. I have also exhibited a localized native cinema practice, from within the heart of Modernism, that resists the fascist tendencies of Modernism. This practice opens up a horizon to understand Modernism as sedimented and layered, multifarious folds of time and materiality. Also, this sensual knowledge practice, essentially, is an operational canon which may afford a platform for ongoing circulation of the "living history" that the Islamic ideologue in Karachi, referred to as in "your consciousness, something in your blood that inspires you."'[47] In the case of Satyajit Ray, this operational canon has, also, inaugurated new meanings and affects, and has indexed or encoded the new meaning/affect. Most importantly, this indexed or encoded new

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[43] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1993), pp. 17-19.

[44] Ibid., p. 18.

[45] Ibid., p. 18.

[46] Ibid., p. 36.

[47] Aatish Taseer, "The Return of History", *New York Times*, December 11, 2015, accessed February 26, 2022, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/11/opinion/the- return-of-history.html?_r=0

meaning/affect is subordinated to new registers of "living history" of the marginalized and the people who are excluded, by Hegel et al., from the world history.48 This operational canon is able to perform the unpacking—though poetic, and sensuous, practical daily activities of the biotic sphere—of the suppressed parts of Modernist narratives, its fractured histories, and ethical futures, in the medialities of the South Asian cinema. It is important to emphasize that, this operational canon is a vital alternative to "imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchal"[49] knowledge. And, this alternative is especially susceptible to articulate the *living history*—as opposed to the progressivist teleological history— dealing with "lower," or minor subjects, who are marginalized, and disavowed by the hegemonic ideology. As we have seen in the case of Ray, this operational procedure might inaugurate theoretical circuit breaking –tripping wire

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[48] Here, it is a good time to recall, in the *First Draft of the Lectures on World-history* Hegel writes,
> Nations whose consciousness is obscure, or the obscure history of such nations, are…not the object of the philosophical history of the world…He further clarifies, The Chinese look on their moral rules as if they were laws of nature positive external commandments, coercive rights and duties or rules of mutual courtesy. Freedom, through which the substantial determinations of reason can alone be translated into ethical attitudes is absent…And in the Indian doctrine of renunciation of sensuality, desire and all earthly interests, positive ethical freedom is not the goal and end but rather the extinction of consciousness and the suspension of spiritual and physical life.

Founder of the Subaltern Study group, Professor Ranajit Guha, in a speech at the Columbia University addresses this issue:
> Hegel identifies himself spontaneously with the region when bespeaks in the name of a collective "we" to express his disapproval of something Oriental…Some of that self-identification might have induced him to bend his own rules of adequacy in order to admit the three European realms to World-history. Its gates are firmly shut, for instance, against India which does not qualify because its society is an unfree patriarchal structure, but the slave societies of Ancient Greece and Rome do and so does medieval and early modern Europe with its tolerance of slavery and its considerable dependance on servile labor. China and India are "out" because in these polluted only One, that is, the despot, is free, while Greece and Rome are "in" with the stipulation about fully developed freedom modified to accommodate the fact that Some, though by no means All, are free there… See: Guha, Ranajit. *History at the Limit of World-History*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003, pp. 9-10, 40-41.

[49] bell hooks *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love* (New York: Atria Books, 2004), p. 17.

between philosophical speculation and political economy to short-circuit economics, philosophy, literature, myth, religion—to extract rich insights, patterns and context which essentially flatten, if not diminish, the Occident-Orient binary.

I concede that, the prescriptive hypothesis advanced in my dissertation will remain radically incomplete and unnaturalized, both in content and form. But it is nevertheless something that minor subjects[50] will be able to negotiate and live: surfing on the networking ability of the (in)surmountable binaries like Occident and Orient, the disruptive leaps of different traditions and epistemes, and the distributive competence that is native to cinema.

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[50] The deployment of a signifier like "minor" should be acknowledged, here, in Deleuze's sense: not lacking in importance and/or quality, but marginalized, disavowed by the hegemonic ideology; dealing with a "lower," or minor subject.

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