In the wake of Rupture: 
Iconoclasm, Film Aesthetics and the Wound in the foundational years of Indian Parallel Cinema (1968 – 1975) 

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Abstract

Rupture is a relatively undetermined scholarly field often associated with political philosophy. While there have been many ruptures in the history of film, South Asian cinema has been largely displaced from this paradigm because of the Euro-centric nature of film historiography. This thesis demonstrates how the concept of rupture can be used as a tool for analyzing history in film. I have determined how the moment of Parallel Cinema was a break in the history of Indian cinema but was made altogether potent because of the collision with The Naxalite Movement in West Bengal in 1967. Since Parallel Cinema has a broad history, my research looks specifically at the strand of Bengali Parallel Cinema films and covers the first phase that I have labeled as the foundational years (1968 – 1975). Deploying textual analysis as a primary methodological approach, this thesis examines rupture as a multilateral occurrence through what I call the signifiers of rupture. Firstly, rupture is made salient through a pattern of wounding in the imagery of state violence and points to a cultural and collective trauma that left its traces in Parallel Cinema. Secondly, iconoclasm and the obliteration of the Mother figure, which has often been viewed as a stabilizing force in Indian cinema. Lastly, an aesthetic rupture that transpired through these films point to the attempts to forge a new film syntax that fused European influences with more indigenous traditions, but largely against a backdrop of political modernism.
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Acknowledgments

The journey to pursue and write this PhD on Parallel Cinema was unconsciously initiated as far back as 2007. However, it was during my time at the University of Manchester in 2014 when I was completing my Masters in Screen Studies was I encouraged by my teachers to submit an application to the AHRC. If it had not been for the endearing support from Dr Felicia Chan, Professor Rajinder Dudrah and Dr David Butler I would never taken the plunge into academia. Although I never made it to India to complete fieldwork and converse with scholars and filmmakers about Parallel Cinema, my fellow comrade Dr Sanghita Sen at the University of St Andrews, opened a vital dialogue on Parallel Cinema that provided great sustenance to my work. I want to say a special thanks to Rajinder Dudrah for his constant support and who left the door open after he departed in 2017 so that I could continue turning to him for advice. Rajinder’s work in the field of Indian cinema has been a real inspiration for me. Central to my research has been the guiding hand of Felicia Chan, a supervisor who has shown me the importance of developing logic to my arguments and to always think pragmatically about my writing. Moreover, this PhD would not have possible without the support of the AHRC who gave me the opportunity to step away from thirteen years of teaching and pursue at length my interests in Parallel Cinema. I also want to recognise the elucidatory and forthcoming feedback I got from Professor Anindita Ghosh and Professor Chris Perriam in supervisory meetings. In the bind of this PhD have been accompanying external events that I have been involved with including curating ‘Not Just
Bollywood’ for HOME in Manchester. None of this would have been possible without the support of the Department of Drama at the University of Manchester, Felicia Chan and the wonderful people at HOME. Finally, I want to thank my family in letting me do this PhD thing and naturally I dedicate this thesis to my wife Saira and two children Zara and Haroun.

The Author

Omar Ahmed is a UK-based film scholar who has been teaching Film and Media Studies for over fifteen years. He was formerly Head of Film (2003 – 2016) at Aquinas College, Stockport. In 2014, Omar was awarded a distinction for a Masters in Screen Studies (Drama) from the University of Manchester, focusing on the iconography of the train in Indian cinema. In 2015 he was awarded funding by the AHRC North West Doctoral Training Partnership to pursue a PhD at The University of Manchester, focusing on Indian Parallel Cinema. He is the author of RoboCop (Auteur/CUP, 2018) and Studying Indian Cinema (Auteur/CUP, 2015). In 2017, he was awarded funding by the North West Film Hub and BFI Audience Network to curate a season of Indian independent films titled ‘Not Just Bollywood’ for HOME in Manchester. The success of ‘Not Just Bollywood’ has led to him establishing this season as one of the first South Asian film festivals in Manchester and is currently working with HOME to develop ‘Not Just Bollywood’ as a film organization/network. He writes extensively on Indian cinema for his site ‘Movie Mahal’.
Chapter One – Introduction

‘Cinema is like history, history like a film: cinema is an allegory of history’ (Antoine De Baecque, 2012: 20).

What can cinema tell us about history? This seems like an antediluvian question now, first posed by Marc Ferro in 1983. Ferro argued that to grasp film in relation to history one ‘must look at the historical function of film, at its relationship with the societies that produce and consume it, at the social processes involved in the making of the works, at cinema as a source of history’ (1983: 358). I want to return to Ferro’s original claim that cinema can unmask history, functioning as an alternate record of history, although dubiously subjective, considering the complicated ideological biases at work in most films. What can the early years of Parallel Cinema tell us about the histories of The Naxalite Movement, and how can it help us understand the ideological significance of this particular moment in India’s past?

The term rupture ‘was first used in Western medical discourse to describe a physical injury’ (Meek, 2014: 484). While the term rupture is commonly associated with the human body, it is also a metaphysical phenomenon that bears an explosive signature, emerging unexpectedly, disrupting the prevailing social order. No wonder when we think of and visualize rupture typically we conjure images of destruction, dissent and discontinuity.

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2 Marc Ferro’s ‘Film as an Agent, Product and Source of History’ (1983) remains a highly influential early intervention in the field of film and history studies.

3 The term Naxalite comes from a village Naxalbari in West Bengal that saw a peasant uprising in 1967. Naxalism spread to many of the neighbouring states. In the early 1970s Naxalism created a major civil unrest problem in Calcutta, initiating a cultural revolution led by students. The government were quick to repress Naxalite agitation, crushing the revolt in Calcutta.
While a rupture in the body such as an injury can be repaired and heal over time, the body will never be the same as it once was; a scar remains. Hodgin and Thakkar argue that ‘scars can be passed from generation to generation, making them polytemporal in the sense that they refer not just to one past but many’ (2017: 19). Scarring may well be one of the long-term impacts of rupture. But a much wider manifestation is the development of a new bodily state, to which one must accordingly adjust, be it physically, psychologically or both. The analogy of the human body to describe rupture seems apt because Indian cinema has often functioned in an equivalent state of volatility, a dissonance augmented by numerous cataclysmic events such as the Partition of British India in 1947 (leading to the creation of two separate states; India and Pakistan), The Emergency (1975 – 1977) and the demolition of the Babri Masjid (1992).

In the thesis I treat films as ‘cultural artefacts’ (Harper, 2007: 5) and a form of historical documentation, thereby returning to the influential work of Siegfried Kracauer. It was in his 1947 book From Caligari to Hitler that Kracauer reasoned ‘to go beyond what appears on the screen, and investigate the film’s production process’ (Fantoni, 2015: 20) so that we can comprehend the historical value of a given text and how it speaks to us. I will posit this particular body of films speaks to us through the performativity of rupture, uncovering a ‘psychological history’ (Gilloch, 2015: 127) and ‘the collective unconscious’ (Fantoni, 2015: 20) of the nation. Moreover, the significance of treating films, as a source of history is critical in the respect since Parallel Cinema contributed to the writing of
a ‘history from below’ (first used by Lucien Febvre in 1932), part of what Rajadhyaksha labelled as a ‘larger New Cinema imagination’ (2009: 227) and that would later become tied to the Subaltern Studies work by Ranajit Guha in the late 1970s.

**Research Context and Aims**

The scholarly work on popular Hindi cinema (Bollywood) has developed substantially over the past fifteen years (Vijay Mishra (2002) on Bombay Cinema, Rajinder Dudrah (2006) on Diaspora, Rachel Dwyer (2006) on religion, Ashish Rajadhyaksha (2008) on spectatorship and the state, and Ravi Vasudevan (2011) on melodrama) but work on Indian art cinema especially Parallel Cinema is still in its infancy. This research seeks to make an intervention here, arguing for the significance of Parallel Cinema to the history of Indian cinema. Parallel Cinema is an ‘art film’ movement that emerged in the 1950s running ‘parallel’ to mainstream Indian cinema. In this opening chapter I contribute my own interpretation of the meanings and definition of Parallel Cinema, intervening to make a case for the importance of the very term ‘Parallel’ and arguing why Parallel Cinema is

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4 The Subaltern Studies Collective is a postcolonial body of work and theorists (Dipesh Chakrabarty, Partha Chatterjee, Sudipta Kaviraj, Gyanendra Pandey) who aimed to reclaim history from the perspective of a forgotten and invisible underclass, groups of people like peasants and women who had been subjugated and not heard from before under British imperialist history.

5 Parallel Cinema’s status as a film movement is contested. Sumita Chakravarty questions if simply rejecting commercialism, song and dance and mainstream sources of finance is enough to label Parallel Cinema ‘a concerted film movement’ (1993: 239). Barnouw and Krishnaswamy reiterate this position: ‘some called it a movement, but that seemed a misnomer. The new filmmakers had pushed in many directions, united mainly in their aversion to formula’ (1980: 267). Contrariwise, Jyotika Virdi sees Parallel Cinema as a movement, finding an unsurprising locality in the Indian ‘art cinema movement’ (2010: 149) and the work of Satyajit Ray. Another complicating factor is that Parallel Cinema lasted over three decades and this challenges traditional definitions and understanding of film movements that have often been fleeting and momentary.
the most substantial film movement to have surfaced from India in the last fifty years.

This thesis will also build on the tentative work I started in my book *Studying Indian Cinema* (Ahmed, 2014) in which I briefly addressed the history of Parallel Cinema (see Chapter 7: ‘Parallel Voices’) and Indian Political Cinema (see Chapter 13: ‘Revolutionaries’). Scholarly work on Indian cinema has been forthcoming in many respects, engaging with “national film policy” (Rajadhyaksha, 2009), authorial expression (Sangeet Datta, 2002), institutional facets (Madhava Prasad, 1998) and realist traditions (Bhaskar Sarkar, 2013) but Parallel Cinema is understudied and undeveloped. Anthony Guneratne (2003) writes that Parallel Cinema has remained one of the most important cinemas to be neglected by Western criticism, ‘even though the films produced by these radical filmmakers outnumber those of the Nouvelle Vague and the New German Cinema combined’ (2003: 20). At stake here is the importance of Parallel Cinema in the Euro-centric historicizing of cinema as a whole and the goal to decolonize the history of film so it accounts for those creative histories such as Parallel Cinema, which have been ignored. Likewise, one of the overarching aims of this thesis is to posit a turn in Indian film studies (English Language), arguing for a shift away from a narrow focus on popular Hindi cinema to a rigorous, engaged study of Parallel Cinema in wider contexts. This raises significant questions worth pursuing further: why the scholarly silence around Parallel Cinema in the discourse of film history and what can rupture tell us or reveal about the potential meanings of this silence?
While I am interested in reasserting the political and aesthetic achievements of Parallel Cinema alongside other major film movements such as The Nouvelle Vague, New German Cinema and Cinema Novo, I will also redress the systemic obfuscation of Indian cinema’s contribution to innovation and exchange in the history of film. This is made altogether pertinent since Parallel Cinema emerged at a critical time in global cinema where we saw the revival of internationalism, the ascendancy of the Left and a period of instability after the death of Jawaharlal Nehru who served as Prime Minister of India from 1947 to 1964. Another reason for obfuscation is the considerable scholarly gap that exists when it comes to the study of the audio-visual language of Parallel Cinema. Significant here is the role of audio-visual forms in communicating rupture. Since little work has been conducted into the encounters between film and history in shaping form in Parallel Cinema, the return to textual analysis is essential because it is an approach that Indian film studies has often failed to fully explore. Studying rupture can also bring to life the ways in which filmmakers were beginning to communicate with film audiences in a completely new film language, drawing from political modernism, and heralding a break in the syntax of Indian cinema. Indeed, the discussions of rupture in this thesis also narrate Parallel Cinema challenging through new representational and aesthetic terms the dominant imagery and representations of popular Hindi cinema, notably

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6 Cinema Novo (‘New Cinema’) was an oppositional socio-political film movement, emerging prominently in Brazil, which started in the early 1960s, lasting until the early 1970s. The most notable filmmaker associated with Cinema Novo was the Brazilian iconoclast Glauber Rocha. While Sen has admitted to being influenced by Latin American Cinema when he was making the Calcutta trilogy, limited attention has been given to the potential intersections between Parallel Cinema and Cinema Novo.
the iconography of the mother, the family, youth and gender roles.

Concurrent to iconoclasm, a conceptualization of rupture in Parallel Cinema as political also demands redefining so to reflect Naxalite sentiments. I will read the political through the manifestation of the wound and its relationship with treating repression of The Naxalite Movement as a traumatic moment in India’s history. It is here I intend to argue the emergence of Parallel Cinema was from a leftist cultural perspective with antecedents in the politics, history and cinema of Bengal. Moreover, I will propose the significance of Naxalism as a 'leftist alternative to capture political power' (Chakrabarty, 2014: 180) demands reading the films I will be dealing with as a site of ideological contestation in which particularly Bengali directors like Mrinal Sen and Satyajit Ray are shown to be in dialogue with the politics of Naxalism.

Another major aim of this thesis is to attempt to broaden the chronology of Parallel Cinema while contributing to a more inclusive and non-linear historiography of Indian Cinema. The stasis of Parallel Cinema is long and complicated, contestably lasting until the mid 1990s (see Appendix 1 for a historical timeline of key events). In order to bring some clarity to the historiography of Parallel Cinema, I want to return to Pradip Krishen’s (1991) proposal of classifying and labelling the stages of Parallel Cinema and the lesser known work by Ravi Gupta (1993) who offers somewhat of a linear chronology of Parallel Cinema but was one of the first to attempt to map the history in a broader time frame. In this thesis I start at 1968, arguing that rupture is first explicated in Apanjan (Near and Dear), a film
that challenges the broadly held assumption that 1969 is often cited as
the official starting point of Parallel Cinema. 1969 holds a unique place in
the chronology of Parallel Cinema, heralding the publication of Sen and
Kaul’s Manifesto of the New Cinema Movement and the release of three
landmark films; *Bhuvan Shome*, *Uski Roti* (Our Daily Bread) and *Sara
Akash* (The Whole Sky). Most scholarship on Parallel Cinema including
the work of Ashish Rajadhyaksha, Paul Willemen, Ira Bhaskar and Aruna
Vasudev are in agreement of 1969 as the point at which the
historiography of Parallel Cinema began. I want to revise and remap this
official history, arguing for the importance of *Apanjan*, a fairly
conventional Bengali film that was released in 1968 and which precedes
the complete and sustained involvement of the Film Finance Corporation
(FFC), a funding organisation established in 1960 by the state to help
support independent filmmakers in India. I argue this first phase of
Parallel Cinema lasts until 1975, labelling it the foundational years or
developmental phase. It is here in the years between 1968 and 1975 that
we also find an aesthetic and political struggle amongst the filmmakers,
articulating a story to do with film polemics that is also critical to the
direction Parallel Cinema would take in the mid to late 1970s and beyond.
Accordingly, I use rupture to read films aesthetic of this period, discussing
the treatment of rupture from the filmmaker points to an inherent yet
complicated ideological position in regards to the wider contextual

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7 There is a lot of work to be done in remapping the historiography of Parallel Cinema,
seeking out and excavating the earlier precursors to the moment of 1969, and also the
slippages that exist in popular Hindi cinema such as films like Yash Chopra’s *Ittefaq *
(Coincidence, 1969) that embraces genre and rejects songs, finding inevitable
correlations with the non-commercial creative experiments of Parallel Cinema. For
example see Appendix 2 for my suggested list of films for 1969.
determinant of the Naxalite movement.

Theoretical Framework: Rupture Theory and the Political

In his ground-breaking study ‘Mourning the Nation’ (2009) Bhaskar Sarkar writes about rupture but specifically in the context of Partition: ‘rupture has a searing, corporeal dimension, experienced as the amputation of the national body, pillage and rape, physical injury and death’ (2009: 7). Although Sarkar’s interests lie with the study of Partition and its impact on the psyche of nationhood, I will argue Sarkar’s claim that ‘Partition marks a moment of rupture, a historical realization of the structural lack endemic to all bourgeois formations’ (2009: 7) is one that can be expanded to postulate Naxalism also as a form of historical rupture, an alternate one, resonating in Parallel Cinema. Sarkar writes of a ‘structural lack’ in ‘the bourgeois public sphere’ (2009: 7) unable to contain what was the inevitable rupture of Partition. In doing so, his criticisms find an earlier precedent in the work of historian Gyanendra Pandey (2001) who also related Partition to the political, posting the rupture of Partition was tied to wider ‘political outcomes that accompanied decolonization’ (2001: 1). Framing the historical rupture of Naxalism in the late 1960s as a resolutely political conception, tied to an on-going process of decolonization, we can begin to realise the significance of this moment, re-determining Parallel Cinema as a significant phase in the elaboration of Indian political cinema, analogous to the ways in which the Indian People’s Theatre Association (IPTA) influenced the pursuit for realism in the 1940s.
While historical revisionism is currently limited to Indian literature, the scholarly field of Naxalism and Indian cinema remains underdeveloped and tentative at best. Sarkar is also guilty of disregarding the Naxalism and Parallel Cinema paradigm, making just one reference to Naxalism in his entire book. Indeed, Sarkar’s oversight echoes the broader scholarly picture in Indian film discourse in which the rupture of Naxalism has not been acknowledged in the way the rupture of Partition has. Some of this blame may indeed lie with the vociferous right wing mainstream media, an extension of Hindu nationalism, which has suppressed the voice of the Left to the margins of the public sphere of Indian politics, accelerating exponentially from the 1990s onwards. In her discussion of the role of the contemporary public intellectual in Indian society, prominent left wing scholar Romila Thapar talks of the ‘narrowing of the liberal space in the last couple of decades’ (2015: 44) that has led to the censure of critical debate and autonomy notably in institutions such as universities and the media. However, the scholarly reticence to the Naxalism-Parallel Cinema paradigm is problematized because ‘the CPI (M-L) [The Communist Party of India, Marxist-Leninist] dismissed the use of feature film as a political medium’ (Bhattacharya, 2011: 360). In this bind of denial, obfuscation and linear historicizing, and given Sarkar’s reasoning that rupture is a predominately corporeal and psychological experience, an alternate reading of rupture as political becomes altogether necessary.

Nina Martyris writes ‘of the growing canon of literature that has emerged from, and in response to, Indian Maoism’ (Martyris, 2014), which she dubs ‘The Naxal Novel’ citing examples such as Jhumpa Lahirī’s The Lowland (2013) and Neel Mukherjee’s The Lives of Others (2015).

Bhaskar Sarkar does look at Parallel Cinema, focusing on Garam Hawa (Hot Winds, 1973) and Tamas (Darkness, 1988) as case studies of Partition.
Conceptualising rupture in Parallel Cinema as a political concept also demands defining the ideological identity of Naxalite political sentiments. It is here I want to return to an earlier argument concerning the emergence of Parallel Cinema from a Leftist cultural perspective with antecedents in the politics, history and cinema of Bengal. It is worth emphasizing the Maoism that defined Naxalite ideology ‘was understood differently in India’ (Jeffrey & Hariss, 2014: 131), not as a ‘practice of communism’ (Jeffrey & Hariss, 2014: 131) but as ‘the mode of revolutionary practice developed by Mao in the course of the Chinese revolution, based amongst the peasantry’ (Jeffrey & Hariss, 2014: 131) and which had the ultimate aim of overthrowing the state.

In Rupture: On the Emergence of the Political Paul Eisenstein and Todd McGowan theorise rupture through the prism of political philosophy. Eisenstein and McGowan’s conception of rupture is a sophisticated reading of metaphysics but one that continually underlines the significance of what they deem a revolutionary break in history:

‘rupture occurs at moments of revolutionary historical change, but it is not just revolution: it is also the interruption of the flow of social life whose force remains in the wake of revolutionary changes. The political impact of rupture does not disappear when its obvious manifestation cease to be prominently visible’ (Eisenstein & McGowan, 2012: 3).

10 In his chapter ‘The City and the Real: Chhinnamul and The Left Cultural Movement in the 1940s’, scholar Moinak Biswas (2007) maps a leftist cultural trajectory that witnessed a creative and political interface between the IPTA and the Bengali social film of the late 1940s and early 1950s. One could argue this cultural trajectory reappears and regains momentum once again with the emergence of Indian Parallel Cinema in the late 1960s.
It is both the recognition and significance of ‘revolutionary historical change’ and ‘the political impact of rupture’ particularly in the context of The Naxalite Movement that hold undetermined contiguity to the conceptualisation of rupture as political. While Eisenstein & McGowan contend Stalinism and the Frankfurt School ‘reduced the emphasis on a revolutionary break’ (2012: 25), the political impact of rupture is complicated by the difficulty of trying to account for and make visible that which remain as traces in Parallel Cinema, a point which I will return to later when discussing trauma theory in relation to the wound.

Since ‘rupture is often fleeting’ (Eisenstein & McGowan, 2012: 35), one of the ways to recognise rupture is by looking for ‘the salience of a signifier of rupture – a proper name, a gesture, an act’ (2012: 7), an impression Eisenstein and McGowan draw out from the work of Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek. Brandon Kempner writes that ‘rupture is one of the dominant theoretical and political ideas to emerge from the 9/11 attacks’ (2009: 54). Kempner (2009: 54) cites thinkers such as Jean Baudrillard, Slavoj Žižek and Jacques Derrida, suggesting the events of 9/11 completely reconfigured Western culture and subjectivity. Few would disagree with Kempner’s labelling of the 9/11 attacks as a total and complete rupture in history. However, rarely have there been any sustained discussions about similar ruptures that have occurred outside the history of the West, such as the barbaric and uninterrupted ruptures of imperialism, much of it inflicted upon the Middle East and Latin American since the 1950s. This is why Eisenstein and McGowan,
insisting ‘on the universality of the theory of rupture’ (2012: 30), argue ‘cultural works can provide an unparalleled insight into how the politics of rupture plays itself out’ (2012: 30) reiterating the urgency of inserting film into the wider computation of historical rupture. In doing so, the signifiers of rupture, to be found in the audio-visual properties of Parallel Cinema, will tell us how they were also correspondingly communicating three other interrelated concepts, iconoclasm, film aesthetics and trauma.

**Indian Parallel Cinema**

An abstract shot of an outstretched hand waiting patiently to catch a guava as it drops tersely from the branches of a tree (Fig 1). A terrified young man fantasises about running away from the prospect of marriage as the wedding band plays on jovially (Fig 2). The absurdist sight of a glum bureaucrat who at the behest of the village belle disguises himself as a tree so he can shoot a flock of birds (Fig 3). What is the true Parallel Cinema? Three ostensibly unrelated glimpses from Mani Kaul’s *Uski Roti*, Basu Chatterjee’s *Sara Akash* and Mrinal Sen’s *Bhuvan Shome*, form a 1969 FFC*11* triptych of films, widely regarded as the genesis of Parallel Cinema. But to what extent are they disparate? Juxtapose these films to popular Indian cinema of the time and they aggregate in their unconventionality. Concurrently these three films are characterised by divergent cinematic approaches and refrains; *Uski Roti* manipulates temporal and spatial extents, *Sara Akash* channels middle class youth

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*11 The FFC was modelled on ‘the lines of National Film Finance Corporation and the British Film Production Fund of England’ (Jain, 1961: 104).*
anxieties, while *Bhuvan Shome* functions like an absurdist parable. Together, they defy attempts to intimate Parallel Cinema as a cohesive aesthetic practice. But how has Parallel Cinema been defined?

There seems to be a partial rejection of the term Parallel Cinema\(^\text{12}\) in the

\(^{12}\) Though it is impossible to trace the exact origins of the term Parallel Cinema it may have first come to prominence in regards to Bengali Parallel Cinema in the 1950s with directors like Satyajit Ray, Ritwik Ghatak & Bimal Roy.
scholarly work I have looked at to date. *The Encyclopaedia of Indian Cinema*, the preeminent point of reference for Indian film scholars, prefers the term ‘New Indian Cinema’, framing Parallel Cinema as a ‘promotional label for a sector of state sponsored film-making’ (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1999: 165). Certainly few scholars use the term Parallel Cinema whereas some film critics and directors do more often. Although I advocate the usage of the term Parallel Cinema (see Ahmed, 2015: Chapter 7), my own work shows inconsistencies as the term is used interchangeably with New Indian Cinema. Scholar Ira Bhaskar complicates matters further, arguing ‘the terms “Parallel” and “Art cinema” predate the New Wave’ (2013: 33), titling her essay on Parallel Cinema: ‘The Indian New Wave’. Additionally, while Manas Ghosh (2011) prefers the term ‘New Cinema Movement’ Ira Bhaskar avoids clarifying the origins of the term Parallel and in which context it was first used.

Inclinations for the usage of the terms ‘New Cinemas’, ‘New Wave’, ‘New Cinema Movement’, ‘New Indian Cinema’, define Parallel Cinema correspondingly with conventional film language used to describe new wave cinema. Indeed, the terms neorealism, Third Cinema or the Nouvelle Vague are laden with potentially historical, aesthetic and ideological signifiers, made concrete over time, through their assimilation into the way we ‘speak’ about film. The same applies to Parallel Cinema. Sumita Chakravarty writes, ‘one of the problems that we face at the start is that of terminology and categorization’, (1993: 237), amplifying the
terminological contestation that often emerges in regards to most film movements. Still, Chakravarty validates Parallel Cinema as a suitable term: ‘India, never quite comfortable with the notion of “alternative”, has found “parallel” more congenial as a concept’ as it also means ‘coexistence’ (1993: 238). But then Chakravarty refuses to apply the term in totality, settling on ‘New Cinemas’, pointing to a terminological incongruity. ‘Coexistence’ seems significant in helping to define Parallel Cinema and its potential meaning in relation to other types of cinemas. Rather than suggesting opposition, Chakravarty’s emphasis on coexistence points to an economic and political harmony between many types of cinema, working alongside each other.

Maithili Rao (2003), along with Sangetta Datta (2002) and Pradip Krishen (1991), is one of the few writers to consistently use the term Parallel Cinema. Nonetheless, Rao’s statement that Parallel Cinema ‘never really grew into a movement like the Nouvelle Vague’ (2003: 103) and ‘came about through a fortuitous combination of vague, restless quest for a new kind of cinema’ (2003: 103) is rather baffling. The latter certainly holds little weight given the ‘Manifesto for a New Cinema’ (1968, Mrinal Sen & Arun Kaul), a much anticipated rallying cry, enthused a generation of filmmakers while the unduly determined comparison to the French New Wave does so at the exclusion of reading Parallel Cinema in relation to Third Cinema. Rao’s account is skewed to Hindi cinema, omitting Mrinal Sen and his relationship to Indian political cinema,

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13 Rao was a regular contributor to Panorama and wrote many pieces on the centrality of women to Parallel Cinema.
‘enabling the possibility of historical and political change’ (Carrigy citing Willemen, 2010: 141), putting in doubt her gestalt of Parallel Cinema. However, we are no closer to defining what Parallel Cinema means. Journalist Arvind Mehta first used the term ‘parallel’ in the 1960s in Madhuri, a journal published by the Times of India. The Oxford English Dictionary defines the term Parallel as ‘occurring or existing at the same time’. However, many cinemas, styles and approaches to making films in India have co-existed alongside each other for a long time. And attributing the idea of Parallel Cinema to the mid 1960s problematizes the history of alternative cinema, making the assumption experimental or political cinema did not exist in Indian cinema before.

Another way of considering the term Parallel is a political interpretation, and it is here that a contradiction emerges with the term Parallel Cinema14 and the types of radical cinema produced in the initial years. If Parallel means co-existence and arguably denotes a kind of harmony, then it masks over the dissent that characterised the foundational phase, especially when Naxalism was its peak. In this context, the term Parallel Cinema is misleading, drawing away from the ideological intent of the early films when the encounter between cinema and history was at its fiercest. A gap exists in the scholarly terrain, neglecting to consider the ways in which film form was augmented by the Naxalite movement.

14 In his 1984 article ‘The Viewers Dialectic’ Cuban filmmaker Tomas Guitierrez Alea uses the term ‘Parallel’ to describe ‘a political cinema which can serve to mobilize the masses and channel them towards revolution’ (Alea in Martin, 1997: 114). Alea does not refer to specific national cinemas but one assumes he largely means Cuban revolutionary cinema that emerged in the late 1950s. However, writing in 1984, one could also argue Alea is referring to a much broader film practice that would also include Indian Parallel Cinema.
However, we must bear in mind the experiment with film form was divergent. A contestation emerged between the Brechtian political realism (Mrinal Sen), and an avant-garde, sensuous style of cinema (Mani Kaul). Indeed, it is unhelpful to group these diverse aesthetic strands under the umbrella of Parallel Cinema as it misleadingly produces a monolithic representation of a formal and political plurality.

Nonetheless, the term Parallel Cinema is still often misused as an unassuming way of categorising alternative, art and experimental work. This generalization has led to wrongly labelling the work of influential Bengali filmmaker Satyajit Ray as Parallel, going as far back as *Pather Panchali* (Song of the Little Road, 1955). Ray’s work in the late 1960s, when Parallel Cinema was coming to fruition, does share tentative links with the leftist ideological sentiments of his Bengali contemporaries like Tapan Sinha and Mrinal Sen. However, Ray’s work is not singular in the history of Indian cinema, it also seemed to profess an abiding link to bhadralok\textsuperscript{15} Bengali culture and cinema that had developed in the 1930s under colonial rule. In the 1930s, criticisms of the dire state of Bengali cinema in Bengali film journals coincided with the expansion of a national cinema that could cater to a Bengali public. New Theatres in 1930s Calcutta best exemplified the commitment to ‘cinema as a cultural project of the Bengal bhadralok’ (Gooptu, 2011: 35). Paul Willemen asserts the bhadralok, cultivated a snobbish understanding of art as high culture,

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\textsuperscript{15} Bhadralok which means ‘well-mannered’ is a term that was used to designate an elitist class of affluent well educated Bengalis who emerged during the British colonial era. Partha Mitter posits the Bhadralok had both an ‘ambiguous status in the caste hierarchy’ (2007: 13) and was ‘a marginal group in traditional Hindu society’ (2007: 13) thereby allowing them to take up a mediating position in the negotiation of modernity.
assimilating British colonial culture, notably ‘the absorption of British public school and Oxford-Cambridge notions of ‘art’ (Willemen, 1980: 31). Notions of art in Bengali bhadralok culture conceptualised through colonialism would later have an adverse bearing on the international perceptions of Bengali cinema:

‘Western film critics who praise Ray’s ‘universal’ humanity and appeal are in fact merely ‘recognising’ and validating the cultural residues of colonialism and congratulating themselves on the ‘universality’ of their own cultural exports’ (Willemen, 1980: 32).

Although Willemen goes on to contend Ray’s films were communicating something very elemental about the anxieties of a middle class Bengali society, it is surprising to find Ray’s work is habitually and broadly discussed in terms of a universality. The universality of Ray’s cinema is certainly over determined, one that often masks the legacy of colonialism in the historiography of Bengali cinema. But what makes Bengali cinema and particularly the films of New Theatres suggestive to the story of Parallel Cinema is the long lasting impact of the Bengali social, a form of cinema that reflected contemporary social and political ills. As early as the 1930s, cinema in Bengal was a form of cultural practice: ‘New Theatres role in the creation of an Indian film art…helped the studio to project itself as an elitist institution which addressed a ‘cultured’ public’ (Gooptu, 2011: 46). New Theatres communicated the cultural role of film publically, arguing it was viable to make films along the lines of a classical Hollywood paradigm, creating a style of cultured entertainment. Vijay

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16 A landmark film for New Theatres was Chandidas (1934); a Bengali social that dealt with taboo refrains including ‘caste, womanhood and a widow’s sexuality’ (Gooptu, 2011: 43).
Mishra writes: ‘Bimal Roy, Nitin Bose were not making art films…they were makers of popular films for a primarily urban, middle class audience…’ (2002: 31). Mishra rightly labels Bimal Roy and Nitin Bose as populist directors but the extent to which these films were mainstream is contestable.\(^\text{17}\)

When it comes to alternative Indian cinema including new Indian independent cinema any film that is deemed to be quirky, offbeat or indefinable is no sooner labelled as Parallel. I want to make an important distinction, which goes unrecognised, between the traditions of social realism, first developed through the IPTA\(^\text{18}\) in the 1940s, of which Ray’s *Pather Panchali* was a neorealist continuation, and the unconventional break with film form that occurred in the late 1960s under the aegis of the FFC. This break with film form, in terms of cinematography, editing and sound, was expressly and explicitly evident in the 1969 triptych of FFC films. Whereas Mani Kaul’s *Uski Roti* experimented with temporality which was manifested through highly unconventional, painterly compositions that drew on modernist avant-garde art, Mrinal Sen’s *Bhuvan Shome* deployed a plethora of anti-illusionist devices such as freeze frames, jump cuts, and direct camera address. While

\(^{17}\) And while the idea of Middle cinema seemed to originate much later in the 1970s, often associated with Shyam Benegal, the films of Bimal Roy and Bengali cinema in the 1940s and 1950s often professed a compromise between art and commerce that was reflected in the contradictory ideological space taken up these films. In many ways, Benegal’s cinema emerged out of an intermediate lineage that owes more to early Middle cinema directors like Bimal Roy and Guru Dutt who were often negotiating an authorial path through the capitulations and constraints of a studio system.

\(^{18}\) The IPTA, which was directly influenced by the Progressive Writers Association (PWA), was to become ‘the first major cultural initiative involving the independent left and the CPI…introducing a politically aware realism’ (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994: 167).
cinematographer K.K. Mahajan shot all three of the 1969 films, each one had a distinctive style, countering the derivative nature of film form in mainstream cinema. In many ways, I will argue the term Parallel Cinema expressed a duality, masking over the modernist break with film form that came to fruition in 1969 while signalling a new type of cinema in the history of Indian cinema.

The Naxalite Movement

In order to elucidate the concept of rupture and gain a certain grasp of the evolution of Parallel Cinema particularly in its early years I will first consider The Naxalite Movement, focusing on the peak period 1967 to 1972.

The Communist Party of India (CPI) first emerged in the 1920s, with significant ties to the Soviet Union. After independence, post-1947, the CPI, unable to align itself politically, lurched to both the left and right, causing concern amongst its more intransigent members. Dom Moares notes that the CPI ‘operated within the democratic framework in that, after independence, its members stood for Parliament and accepted posts of

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19 Much has been written about the Naxalite Movement, documented contentiously by historians (Singh, 1995; Seth, 1995; Sen, 1971; Banerjee, 1984), some hagiographic, projecting the ideological fidelities of historians. But it was the work of cultural historian Sumanta Banerjee India’s Simmering Revolution: The Naxalite Uprising (1984) that presented the first authoritative account of the movement.

20 A key moment in the history of the CPI was The Telangana insurrection (1946 – 1951). This was initially a ‘Communist-led Marxism-oriented’ (Mehra, 2000: 40) peasant insurgency predicated on ending ‘feudal landlordism’ (Banerjee, 1984: 19). Telengana became a rallying cry for the CPI, ‘an agrarian liberation struggle’ (Banerjee, 1984: 19) to be exact and which would have a long lasting impact. In 1964, ideological differences led to a split in the CPI.
civic responsibility’ (1970: 33) but this changed radically in the 1950s after ‘famine and riot’ (1970: 33) led to the development of an Indian communist party who believed in ‘violent revolution’ (1970: 33) and now looked to China rather than Russia for inspiration. Whereas the right was focused on labour reforms and retained Soviet sympathies, the left adopted a Maoist alliance, pointing to a Sino-Soviet split. As a result, the Communist right aligned itself with the Congress Party while the leftists in Calcutta formed a new party, the Communist Party of India (Marxist).

Charu Mazumdar, a charismatic Maoist revolutionary, who viewed the state as an instrument of capitalist bourgeois hegemony, led the CPI (M), arguing that only armed insurrection (Banerjee, 1984) could achieve revolution. Mazumdar spent three years with the tribal peasants in the small village of Naxalbari, North West Bengal, teaching Mao and preparing the peasants for insurrection. Naxalbari was not a spontaneous moment in India’s history, but came out of a history of working class resistance and struggle that went back centuries. Mehra cites Ranajit Guha’s claim that there were ‘110 known instances of violent peasant uprisings in 117 years, from 1783 to 1900’ (2000: 39). With Mazumdar’s politicization of the peasantry in Naxalbari, the ground was set for revolution.

21 But whereas a subaltern history implied peasant uprisings did take place regularly, the political elite cultivated ‘the myth of a submissive peasantry’ (Banerjee, 1984: 13) which ‘was foisted upon the people’ (Banerjee, 1984: 13) when in reality, ‘the peasant remained a tormented soul’ (Banerjee 1984: 14). In doing so, the establishment has continually tried to manufacture a dominant representation of the acquiescent peasant as one that suited their own political needs.
In May 1967, in Naxalbari, a peasant uprising overturned the rule of the local landowners. This revolt came to be known as the ‘Spring Thunder’. Naxalbari gave rise to the terms Naxalite, Naxal and Naxalism (used interchangeably) denoting armed resistance. While ‘the uprising was crushed by the police within a few months’ (Banerjee, 1984: i) it had a far-reaching political impact through parts of India. The first editorial of Liberation bluntly spelled out what Naxalbari meant politically for India: ‘the beginning of the end of the old regime of exploitation by imperialism and its parasites’ (Liberation, 1967: 33). Peasant revolt was soon replicated in other villages such as ‘Srikakulam (Andhra Pradesh) in 1968’ (Mehra, 2000: 38). At first, the term Naxalite was viewed as ‘a particular kind of militant and violent armed struggle by the peasants’ (Mehra, 2000: 37) but by the late 1960s, the term took on a broader anti-establishment deportment, coming ‘to symbolize any assault upon the assumptions and institutions that support the established order in India’ (Banerjee, 1984: i). Perhaps unsurprisingly today, Naxalism has been equated with terrorism. The events of Naxalbari sent shockwaves through the CPI, leading to a further split. In 1969, under the leadership of Charu Mazumdar and Kanu Sanyal, the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) (CPI (M-L)) was formed, emerging as a doggedly Maoist political organisation. Mazumdar and Sanyal had broken away

22 The term ‘Spring Thunder’ was coined by The People’s Daily (5 July, 1967), a newspaper affiliated with the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China.

23 Liberation was a magazine launched in 1967 and published by the revolutionary communists of India and that acted as a mouthpiece for The Communist Party (M-L).

24 The ‘problem’ of Naxalism was firmly placed on the public agenda when in 2010 Prime Minister Manmohan Singh referred to Naxalism as the single biggest internal threat to the security of India.
from the CPI because at the time, the United Front, a coalition of left wing political parties, had taken power in West Bengal, but had wavered when it came to Naxalbari, turning their back on the call for revolution: ‘West Bengal’s Chief Minister dispatched security forces to repress the uprising, which was crushed with extreme brutality’ (Bag, 2011: 75), resulting in the killing of 11 women and children including a baby (Moraes, 1970). The Naxalbari uprising was to be one of the first instances of a peasant insurgency to take place in a post-colonial India, offering ‘the revolutionary working people of India their rightful place as a contingent of the world revolutionary forces’ (Liberation, 1967, Issue: 4) and situating the Naxalite movement in a broader international framework of resistance.

News of the Naxalbari uprising spread quickly across West Bengal, gaining momentum in urban areas. Calcutta witnessed a prolonged period of Maoist agitation led by an angry youth movement. Civil unrest marred Calcutta. Banerjee describes ‘The Youth Upsurge’ ambiguously yet says the recruitment of middle class youth, mainly students, who in some cases left the city to join the struggle in the tribal areas were characterised by a core of dedicated ‘CPI (M-L) activists…who gave the

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25 The United Front was a political coalition formed in 1967 of left wing parties. Raka Ray notes ‘the first United Front government in 1967 was dominated by the CPI in coalition with the CPI (M) and a breakaway faction of the Congress’ (Ray, 1999: 51). The United Front was significant in dislodging the political hegemony of the Congress part in West Bengal.

26 Civil unrest can also be abridged to the de-industrialisation and the closure of factories. Calcutta witnessed both the flight of capital and Bengali youth in the 1970s. At the same time, millions of refugees poured into West Bengal during the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971, exasperating the sense of displacement that had started to plague the cities. In addition to the new migratory pattern were the two million manual workers from Bihar that made up an illiterate sub-proletariat underclass.
movement its revolutionary aura’ (1984: 209). A cultural revolution (1967 – 1971) took shape. Soon an emerging iconoclasm saw ‘attacks on educational institutions and on the statues and portraits of national heroes’ (Seth, 2004: 43). The significance of attacks against uncontested national heroes and leaders had broad sympathy amongst the youth while the elite of Calcutta derided the iconoclasm as desecration. And in some cases, this was a view supported by the right wing intellectuals of Calcutta. For instance, Mohit Sen, writing in 1971, condemned the romanticism of Naxalism, arguing it created conditions of temporariness, emptiness and a ‘cult of violence’ (1971: 95) among the youth. While Mazumdar became a counter-culture hero to some of the Calcutta youth, this was a fleeting moment since The Naxalite Movement was already beginning to unravel.27

Mazumdar had originally argued for seizing power through revolution, to actively resist a revisionism28 that had in the past plagued the CPI. Most Naxalite sympathisers seemed to agree with this position. But it was Mazumdar’s controversial policy of the annihilation of class enemies29 that saw him criticised from within his own ranks.30 For many the policy of

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27 This in turn led to the fractionalisation of the CPI (M-L) and would later see different Naxalite organisations emerge, reportedly five in total, creating further political contradictions (Moraes, 1970).

28 Hard line Marxists in the CPI had criticised the alliance with the Soviet Union, arguing it was a form of capitulation by the Communist Party of India and that the entire neo-colonial system in India needed dismantling, an idea advocated by China and Mao.

29 Sanjay Seth (1995) discusses the politics of the annihilation campaign in relation to ‘feudal codes of power’.

30 For instance, Brock Jawaid Sohail writes ‘the CPI (M-L) was a paramilitary organization and not a political party’ (Sohail, 1979: 109) whereas Sanjay Seth writes
targeted killings was a step too far. This obdurate course of political action by the CPI (M-L) led to emergency legislation: The Prevention of Violent Activities Act 1970, finally giving the West Bengal government power to repress The Naxalite Movement. By 1972 the student movement in Calcutta also started to dwindle. And the symbolism of Mazumdar’s death would become a major factor in the decline of The Naxalite Movement.

**Formative Encounters between The Naxalite Movement and Parallel Cinema**

Now that I have contextualised both Parallel Cinema and The Naxalite Movement, I next will turn to the 1940s, elaborating on the antecedents that preceded the intersection between Naxalism and Parallel Cinema.

It is necessary to contextualise the events of Naxalbari in a wider Marxist class struggle in which peasant revolts have intervened. The Telengana Rebellion of 1946, a peasant revolt against feudalism, and one of the ‘instead of engaging in the patient work of arousing and organizing the masses, they increasingly acted on their behalf’ (Seth, 1995: 496).

In 1972 Mazumdar was captured and later died in police detention of a heart attack. The movement fragmented once more, seeing another split in the party.

Although The Naxalite Movement was effectively dead by 1972, the ideology of Naxalism took hold of the political consciousness of a generation of Marxist radicals and activists and continues to remain popular with Maoist rebels in places like Andhra Pradesh.

Rural revolt against the feudal power structure was also seen as the weakening of Congress Party rule, the centre was showing the first signs of collapse and which led to the emergence of Maoism as a site of resistance for anti-caste movements and groups such as the formation of the Dalit Panthers in the early 1970s. See Chapter 8: ‘Atrocities
most significant pre-colonial uprisings imagined a tentative historical and cinematic paradigm significant to the overall development of a political cinema in India:

‘The Telengana insurrection of 1946-1951 had at its height brought about visions of the independence movement itself being carried forward into full scale revolution. Following this vision, the work that emerged from the IPTA was mostly part of a definite programme for mass mobilization…’ (Rajadhyaksha, 1982: 34)

The Telengana insurrection, a peasant revolt, is another moment of historical rupture in India’s complicated political relationship with communism but one that has not been memorialized cinematically to the extent of Naxalism. And while the IPTA’s relationship with the Bengal famine of 1943 has often been determined as the major socio-political catalyst for the plays, literature and films that were produced, the significance of Telengana as a point of rupture has been overlooked in the development of political cinema. While we could also argue Telengana and Naxalism are linked as a continuum of colonial and postcolonial peasant revolt, the rupture of Naxalism was more significant because of its far reaching political impact particularly in terms of mobilizing the middle class student polity. Sumanta Banerjee has written about common features that often characterise peasant revolts such as poverty, land rights and most pertinently ‘the gradual pauperization of the peasant…usually through debt’ (1984: 23). As early as the 1940s some of the characteristics of working class resistance outlined by Banerjee were

by the State’ of Anand Teltumbde’s The Persistence of Caste: The Khairlanji Murders and India’s Hidden Apartheid (2010).
already being explored in popular Hindi cinema via the symbolic figure of the peasant farmer. The most notable example is the story of farmer Shambu Mahato (Balraj Sahni) in Bimal Roy’s *Do Bigha Zamin* (Two Acres of Land, 1953).

A major source of ideological engagement with the proletariat, instigated by the involvement of the IPTA in the early 1940s onwards, frames Parallel Cinema as part of something historically contingent, emerging from a Leftist trajectory. Prefiguring the intersections between Parallel Cinema and Naxalism that were to come, early communicative encounters in the mid 1940s between Indian Cinema and the Cultural Left such as *Dharti Ke Lal* (Children of the Earth, 1946) and *Neecha Nagar* (Lowly City, 1946) would culminate in two notable films that appeared in the early 1950s, depicting the peasant experience in Marxist terms: *Chinnamul* (The Uprooted, 1950) and *Do Bigha Zamin*. Biswas argues *Chinnamul* represents the peasantry as an organised group, resisting the ‘local landlords and their oppression’ (Biswas, 2007: 50). But whereas *Chinnamul* relates the experience of the peasant as a form of organised resistance, an idealistic imagining, *Do Bigha Zamin* does the antithesis, depicting the peasant in a state of subjugation.

The story of *Do Bigha Zamin* follows an impoverished peasant farmer Shambu Mahato who is forced to work in the city of Calcutta so he can try and pay back a debt on ancestral land, which a cruel zamindar (landowner) has threatened to sell off to industrialists. *Do Bigha Zamin*
ends with the defeat of the peasant farmer who loses his land. Upon returning to the village, Shambu and his wife and son look on in dread at a factory that has now replaced their beloved land. At the end of Do Bigha Zamin, the peasant farmer is subdued by the dynamisms of capitalism and modernity, validating Banerjee’s proposition of an image of submissive peasantry that she argues was ‘foisted upon the people’ by the ruling elite. It would not be until the late 1960s and with Parallel Cinema particularly with the early films of Shyam Benegal (Ankur, Nishant, Manthan) that would radically overturn the dominant image of the submissive peasant. Moreover, dominant imagery of the subjugated peasant which popular Hindi cinema had continually resorted to in the past would finally be challenged in the peasant uprising of Naxalbari. Beginning in 1968 with Apanjan, Indian cinema sought to document the Naxalite moment. This is what I want to turn to next. Although I will initially focus on 1967 to 1972 as this spans the length of the Naxalite movement, Indian filmmakers in both national and regional cinemas continually returned to the question of Naxalism long after the movement had faded away. This continuous cinematic enquiry into the legacy of the Naxalite movement produced a notable body of films that can be separated into two roughly indistinct phases: 1968 - 1975 and 1979 – 1986. We need to begin by looking closely at the films from both phases, considering how rupture can help us to determine what makes these films a distinctive mode of cinema.

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34 This idea of two indistinct phases is adopted from the entry on Naxalite in The Encyclopaedia of Indian Cinema (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994: 163).
Primarily the cultural impact of the Naxalite movement was felt most directly in Bengali cinema. A loose collective of Bengali filmmakers including Tapan Sinha, Mrinal Sen, Satyajit Ray were compelled to react to the civil unrest that had marred Calcutta as a consequence of Naxalite agitation among the youth. It was the work of Mrinal Sen, who made four films between 1970 and 1974: *Interview* (1970), *Calcutta '71* (1971), *Padatik* (The Guerilla Fighter, 1973), *Chorus* (1974), came to represent ‘the most consistent record of the turbulent political conditions’ (Rajadhyaksha, 1997: 684) in Calcutta. Stylistically Sen’s reactive cinema ‘experimented with techniques of disrupting linear narrative and disengaging the audience with Brechtian devices’ (Krishen, 1991: 33) which were ‘markedly different from any other trend in India’s Parallel Cinema’ (Krishen, 1991: 33). The break with dominant film techniques was also matched by the ideological ferment of Sen’s films in this period.

Screenings of Sen’s films (*Interview, Calcutta '71*) ‘were used as platforms for Naxal gatherings’ (Sommya, Kothari & Madangarli, 2013) and were regularly raided by the police (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1999) documenting the unfolding of the Naxalite movement, imagining a historical moment in its environmental state.

The extent to which The Naxalite Movement politicised Bengali cinema in the late 60s and early 70s was also witnessed in the work of director Satyajit Ray. The encounters between Naxalism and Parallel Cinema meant that even Ray, a supposedly apolitical director, criticised for his ‘bourgeois complacency’ (Krishen, 1991: 33), produced work in this brief
period that was of a strikingly ideological nature, ‘if occasionally romanticized’ (Rajadhyaksha, 1997: 685). In particular Ray’s Pratidwandi (The Adversary, 1970) was one of the first films to depict the impact and experience of Naxalism through the eyes of the middle class Calcutta youth. What Naxalism seemed do so strikingly was it made dealing with political issues in cinema altogether palatable; the Naxalite Movement legitimised the necessity of Parallel Cinema as a source of ideological mediation.

In some ways, claiming that Parallel Cinema may never have come to fruition without the Naxalite movement may disregard the ways in which Nehru and later Indira Gandhi shaped Indian film policy, creating the FFC to support an indigenous type of cinema and one that could help in the postcolonial recovery of cultures and people lost to history. But perhaps we need to re-consider the ways in which Naxalism as an ideology was necessary and came at a time when a rot had set in Indian popular cinema. If anything Indian cinema needed a shot in the arm and more significantly Naxalism revived and purified cinema, to give it a new syntax and make it speak again in a prescient way. If both Naxalism and Parallel Cinema are interrelated, this controversial relationship between history and cinema has been downplayed to some extent because Naxalism today is a deeply problematic concept, now commonly equated with

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35 It is worth mentioning here the CSDS (Centre for the Study of Developing Societies) scholars in Delhi who were concerned with ‘the recovery of cultures of the politically marginalized by the state and the hegemonic ideologies of nationalism, secularism, scientific temper, nationality and cultural universalism’ (Sardar & Van Loon, 2004: 77).
terrorism by the mainstream news media. Only by reasserting the significance of this relationship to the development of alternative Indian cinema in the late 1960s can we begin to see the ideological questioning that went on in these early films such as Apanjan, Bhuvan Shome and Pratidwandi would be the foundation for Parallel Cinema’s capacity to become a form of didactic, oppositional discourse. In some regards, where ideology was sharpest and most pronounced it was often the Bengali filmmakers who took on the role of public intellectuals.

**Methodology**

This thesis pivots on the centrality of seven films that function as detailed case studies of the foundational years (1968 – 1975) of Parallel Cinema. The history of Parallel Cinema is prolonged, crossing four decades, evidencing regional flourishes which this thesis does not have the scope to account for. Rather than offering a broad historical survey (there are simply too many films to deal with) I focus on the years between 1968 and 1975 (see Appendix 3 for a complete list of films released in this period), the foundational or developmental years of Parallel Cinema. Many of the films made between 1968 and 1975, before the FFC policy was criticized and reformulated to adopt specific criteria, narrate a

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36 There is a wider historical computation at work here regarding terrorism. Reporting in 1970 for the New York Times, journalist Dom Moraes argues that ‘Terrorism has been an accepted political weapon in the state for more than a hundred years…the genesis of the Naxalite movement is in this peculiar, undisciplined, violent quality which all Bengalis seem to share’ (1970: 33).

37 Aruna Vasudev notes that by 1968, ‘the FFC was felt to have been a failure. Its initial capital was gone, no returns were coming in from the 30 odd films that had been financed since its inception…and there was a move to wind it up’ (1978: 157). The
tumultuous history of crisis and conflict in which Nehru’s ‘optimistic vision of a new progressive India’ (Sengoopta, 2011: 377) unravelled. All but one (Bhuvan Shome) of the seven films I deal with are Bengali. The focus on Bengali cinema is a choice determined by two factors – firstly, the political impact of the Naxalite Movement on the psyche of Bengali filmmakers, and secondly, the aim of recognizing the contribution of Bengali cinema to the aesthetic, political and cultural historiography of Parallel Cinema in the early years. It is in Bengali cinema where rupture is exhibited with a brutal anger, flowing into wider public debates. In addition, I have chosen the four major Bengali filmmakers of this period (Satyajit Ray, Mrinal Sen, Tapan Sinha, Ritwik Ghatak), demonstrating how all of these filmmakers were mobilized to offer their own cinematic ripostes to the Naxalite movement.

While Gianluca Fantoni writes ‘a universally accepted, coherent and comprehensive methodology for studying film as a source for historical analysis has not yet been formulated’ (2015: 18), I intend to use rupture as an interface, exploring specifically the historical and political relationship between The Naxalite Movement and the formal properties of these films. The work of UK film scholars, notably Valentina Vitali and Rosie Thomas, argue the historiography of Indian cinema is simplistically linear, superficially structured around Hindi Cinema. The narrative of Parallel Cinema asks to be contextualised in a broader historical, economic, industrial and political space. To do so is critical in many respects, as the discourse on the history of Indian cinema misleadingly

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turning point was the appointment of B. K. Karanjia in 1968 as the new chairman of the FFC who was instrumental in helping to revive the FFC and its policies.
unfolds in an evolutionary process. Neat categorisation and marketable phases that often dismiss cultural and filmic vagaries have produced what Valentina Vitali calls a ‘historically incorrect account’ (2006: 263) of Indian cinema. Whereas Thomas (see Bombay Before Bollywood, 2014), claims past histories need to be questioned for their singularity, often attributed to a historical engineering that suits a nationalist agenda, Vitali proposes we need to reconsider the ‘single, linear trajectory’ (2010: 142) of Indian film historiography, reasoning ‘a more productive approach would involve thinking of “context” as a force field in which multiple and contradictory temporalities and forces operate simultaneously’ (2010: 142). Vitali’s treatment of context, subject to ‘temporalities’, points to a heterogeneous approach, expressly pertinent to this thesis, in which I seek to read Parallel Cinema in a suitably ‘open’ historical, cultural framework. In this respect, this thesis will be my contribution towards the ongoing process of writing a new historiography of Parallel Cinema.

Much of Vitali’s work on Indian film historiography hinges on Barnouw and Krishnaswamy’s Indian Film (1980),38 of which Vitali is decidedly critical, saying it ‘mirrors nationalist accounts of the rise of the nation’ (2009: 54), replicating a hegemonic construction of Indian film history, revealing two major limitations: ‘its focus on film production, which the authors uncritically prioritise to the exclusion of the other sectors constitutive of any cinema’ and ‘its conceptualisation of the nation as an organic entity, disconnected from local and global networks’ (2009: 54).

38 Indian Film has been superseded by numerous texts and new, plural enquiries have been made into the history of Indian cinema. However, Barnouw and Krishnaswamy’s seminal book continues to act as a key reference point for film scholars and historians.
Both of these limitations that Vitali identifies in fact propose a new revisionist approach to the process of film historiography, namely considering the overlooked economic, cultural, industrial zones, and remapping Indian Cinema within a much broader geographical cinematic sphere, one that cannot be adequately accounted for in terms of ideological inference. In fact, Klinger (1997) has argued for a comparable interdisciplinary approach to Reception Studies, finding some parallels with Vitali’s work, which is worth repeating here:

‘These three subdivisions – cinematic practices, intertextual zones, and social and historical contexts – depict a geographical space which suggests the intricate situations in which cinema exists historically’ (1997: 113)

‘Intertextual zones’ clearly resonates with broadening the discipline of historiography in the way Parallel Cinema interacts and refers to films and cinemas beyond India.

New Wave cinema from Europe exerted considerable stylistic influences on the foundational years of Parallel Cinema expressly the Nouvelle Vague. Geeta Kapur says ‘Nehru’s support for Pather Panchali could possibly be placed with other efforts to engage Indian cultural practices with those of European contemporaries in a reciprocal way’ (2000: 316). The exchange of cultural practices between India and Europe is often under discussed yet reiterates the story of Parallel Cinema as an international one, asserting a non-linear historiography. Some of this will be dealt with in subsequent chapters expressly chapter four. Indeed, the
scholarly discourse on Parallel Cinema shows a lack of engagement with the semantics of film form, notably style and aesthetics, often de-centring the texts in favour of mythological and genre readings. Conversely, isolating form would be a redundant exercise. Therefore, my approach to textual analysis considers the extent of the arrangement of the micro elements of film (cinematography, sound, editing, performance, mise-en-scene) while centring the text in its wider contexts. Scholarly work on film form on Indian cinema has habitually explained filmic techniques in relation to indigenous cultural practices. In 1983 *The Journal of Arts and Ideas* set out a manifesto that:

‘emphasised the necessity of developing a dialectical perspective which situates the film in the context of a multiplicity of art traditions (literature, theatre, painting, music). These separate traditions with their own specificities interact in the totality of the film, subtly altering each other in the process’ (Kapur, 1983: 2).

While the dialectical perspective has been significant to the developmental practice of situating filmic techniques in a broader intersectional context, the principles of form in Indian cinema have largely centred on frontality and Darshan (see the work of Geeta Kapur, Ravi Vasudevan, Rachel Dwyer and Ashis Rajadhyaksha respectively). Such analytical approaches are largely applicable to popular Hindi cinema but seem incompatible and inadequate to the study of Parallel Cinema since many of the films particularly in the foundational years draw extensively from European and Latin American cinema, often adopting a mixed-media approach. Rajadhyaksha (2009) comes closest, acknowledging
the cinematic exchange of ideas that were taking place in the 1960s and 1970s between filmmakers in India and Europe and Latin America. Much of this cultural exchange and cinematic dialogue was facilitated through film societies and festivals, increasingly coming to view but not yet taken up by Parallel Cinema.

While the dialectical perspective have broadened the field for exploring alternate analytical approaches to film form, by and large it has been formulated in relation to popular Hindi cinema. However, there has been a recent attempt to rectify this methodological oversight in regards to film form in Parallel Cinema with the publication of books on the two foremost practitioners of the avant-garde stream in Parallel Cinema, Mani Kaul (Udayan Vajpeyi, 2013) and Kumar Shahani (Ashish Rajadhyaksha, 2015; Laleen Jayamanne, 2015), dealing with film style in overtly political and aesthetic terms. For the purposes of this thesis, I am less interested in the pursuit of avant-garde practice that emerged in Parallel Cinema and more focused on exploring the film language of the Naxalite strand of Parallel Cinema. Sen’s work in particular, that conversed in a form of experimental political modernism, representative of a wider international cinema that emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s, incorporating Third Cinema from Latin America and which was not strictly limited to this particular era also evinced notable intersections with Soviet agitprop cinema of the 1920s.

Much of the scholarly work particularly on Indian cinema has come about through a common set of methodological approaches, namely mythology,
religion, historiography, gender and nationalism. Rajinder Dudrah (2006) offers an alternate approach to the study of Indian cinema, through a sociological lens: ‘The history of contemporary Hindi film theory also lacks an explicit engagement with issues of sociological method’ (2006: 26), a charge that could just easily be levied at the scholarly indifference in reading Indian cinema as a political form and mode of address. Both Madhava Prasad (Ideology of the Hindi film, 1998) and Ashish Rajadhyaksha (From Bollywood to the Emergency, 2009) have been the most forthcoming, determining a study of Indian cinema through ‘ideological apparatus’ (Dudrah, 2006: 26). Whereas Rajadhyaksha (2009) asserts the Naxalite movement as a galvanising political moment, drawing attention to the ‘state violence and the human rights situation’, (Rajadhyaksha, 2009: 239) which by the mid 1970s had become even more potent, Prasad’s work is equivalently important, explicating the interventionist role of the FFC in shaping Indian political cinema. And although Dudrah reinserts the sociological method into Indian film theory, it is the work of Moinak Biswas who has reasoned most fervently for elucidating a political approach to the study of Indian cinema. In ‘The City and the Real: Chinnamul and the Left Cultural Movement in the 1940s’ (2002) Biswas argues a politically conscious cinema was formed by the Indian People’s Theatre Association (IPTA) as early as the 1940s with a marked emphasis on a realist aesthetic through a cycle of films including Udayer Pathe (1946), Dharti Ke Lal (1946), Nagarik (1952) and Chinnamul (1951). Biswas forges the all-together critical connection between the Left Cultural Movement, Bengali Cinema and Indian Political
Cinema and to which I return, arguing the foundational years comes out of a similar political trajectory. Accordingly, where I see my research in terms of the scholarly terrain I have outlined is to posit and demonstrate how rupture as a theoretical framework can contribute to merging the contextual with the analytical, reinstating the formal properties of Parallel Cinema as both political and aesthetically significant to re-thinking the ideological trajectories of Indian cinema in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

It is important to state the filmmakers in the period 1968 - 1975 and beyond draw extensively on the aesthetic and stylistic practices of European and Latin American cinema, notably political modernism. This has led me away from solely relying on Indian film theory for the related discussion of formal techniques. For instance in chapter four I draw on the work of Ann Kaplan and Ban Wang (2004) to discuss montage, Yuriko Furuhata (2013) for actuality, Joshua Malitsky (2013) for agitprop and Andras Kovacs (2007) for the intertexts to European modern cinema. Relatedly, I have also used the wider discourse on Parallel Cinema including interviews with the filmmakers, reviews of the films, newspaper and journal articles to produce a plural, multi dimensional consideration of film form.

Another aspect of the methodology is historical research that was undertaken particularly in regards to the wider contexts surrounding the Naxalite movement. Throughout the thesis, I refer to newspaper articles,
editorials and critiques from both India and abroad, the expanding and
key scholarly literature on Naxalism and documents and writings from key
voices, notably Charu Mazumdar, of the Naxalite movement. Although
this thesis did originally envision merging textual analysis with archival
materials, efforts to do so were hampered by my attempt to get a visa to
visit The National Film Archives of India (NFAI)\textsuperscript{39} and also partake in an
institutional visit to Jadavpur University in Calcutta where I was offered a
three-month placement to engage with Bengali film scholars. It is
impossible to say to what extent this thesis would have benefited from
archival research. Two of the films I have dealt with in this thesis,
\textit{Interview} and \textit{Calcutta '71}, are missing key sequences in the versions
available on DVD. I was informed these two films have been fully restored
but can only be viewed at the NFAI. It is not known whether or not if the
missing sequence from \textit{Interview}, the job interview that Ranjit attends,
has also been restored to the original film. The difficulty with being
granted a visa to visit India undoubtedly returns to the politics of access
that continues to be a major determinant when it comes to researching
Parallel Cinema, which has often been confined by the access and
availability of films. In a recent report titled ‘Supporting the Changing
Research Practices of Asian Studies Scholars’ (Cooper, Danielle, et al.,
2018), an outcome of a project that surveyed 169 scholars at 11
academic libraries including Harvard and Arizona State University, the
project investigated how research practices could be improved for Asian

\textsuperscript{39} In ‘Pirate Histories: Rethinking the Indian Film Archive’ (2013) Kuhu Tanvir talks in
length about the complexities of building a national state sanctioned archive of films and
how the emergence of a pirate archive that circulates freely on the internet challenges
an official film historiography.
scholars. The findings of the report highlight that when it comes to research in Asia, ‘receiving a research visa is the first hurdle to overcome’ (Cooper, Danielle, et al., 2018), emphasising that some scholars were unable to obtain visas to enter the chosen country ‘to the detriment of their projects’ (Cooper, Danielle, et al., 2018). The report also noted that just because a scholar was able to enter a country, many hurdles remained, such as navigating the libraries and archives that can bring their own set of bureaucratic problems.

The politics of access is determined to some extent by the locality and moreover the ethnicity of the scholar (my parents are originally from Pakistan) and in this respect politicizes the methodological process, placing limitations on my attempts to revise historiography. In this respect, I would argue the state and the legacy of Partition determine the boundaries of scholarly research for someone of Pakistani descent and respectively for any Indian scholars wanting to carry out fieldwork in Pakistan. In June 2018, India banned Pakistani scholars from attending the Association for Asian Studies conference held in New Delhi and in an article written in response to this ban, Adnan Rasool (2018) spoke of the hurdles faced by Pakistani scholars in accessing global academia. Although I view myself as a British Pakistani, the question of access and ethnicity raises a prescient question concerning the privilege afforded to white scholars from Europe and also those from India and beyond who are often free to travel and do not have to deal with the racial and ethnic barriers faced by scholars of Pakistani descent, a stigma that can be both
dispiriting and restrictive in terms of research, as I have discovered myself.

Nevertheless, the irony of course is the Modi government, the one that does not want me in the country, has singled out institutions including Jadavpur University (Calcutta) and Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) (New Delhi) for promoting anti nationalist sentiments, going as far as to label Jadavpur University as a ‘hub of anti-national elements’ (2016) and criticising the senior management of both universities for supporting student dissent which they argue should be curtailed. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a right wing Hindu nationalist government which is currently in power, led by the acrimonious Narendra Modi, has predictably extended the work of Hindutva first commenced in the 1990s, continuing the manifest destiny of historically re-engineering the nation’s past to suit a fascist, puritanical agenda. In a strange sort of way, the politics of access is a conundrum that returns to my suggestion of the on-going repression of the Left in India, which is often been demonized and pushed to the margins. I would reason why there is a dearth of scholarly interest in Parallel Cinema is also indicative of what has happened politically in India since the late 1990s with the rise of the BJP. Writing in the New Internationalist Nilanjana Bhowmick talks of the recent crackdown on activists and journalists in India by Modi who ‘despite the

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40 I am referring here to the arrest of Kanhaiya Kumar and Umar Khalid in February 2016 who were charged with sedition for a protest they had organized on the JNU campus criticizing the government’s hanging of Afzal Guru, convicted in his role of the 2001 Indian Parliament attack, and Maqbool Bhat, a Kashmiri separatist and co-founder of Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front. Students at Jadavpur University and other left leaning, outward looking universities in India showed their solidarity for Kanhaiya Kumar and chanted anti-national slogans in related protests.
onslaught’ (2018: 61) of abuse and persecution ‘have stood up as a unified group to protest’ (2018: 61). But as Bhowmick notes, dissent has become a dangerous proposition and speaking out against Hindutva has cultivated a culture of fear in which conformity and silence can quickly emerge as the norm. Indeed, Parallel Cinema was a fiercely political film movement. Thus, perhaps it is not surprising we are witnessing a scholarly shift from Bollywood studies to a growing interest in Indian independent cinema since this appears to be a collectively benign neoliberal cinema that offers little in way of dissent and unlike Parallel Cinema was not nurtured in a secularist context.

**Rediscovering Parallel Cinema & Bengali Cinema**

When I first started writing about Parallel Cinema in 2010, the Internet opened a door, steadily making available films through subterranean channels that had long been out of circulation. Some of the Parallel Cinema films that appeared on YouTube were off air recordings that had been broadcast by Doordarshan in the 1980s. There is no doubt the gradual digitization of archival materials and the proliferation of resources on the Internet has broadened opportunities to explore Parallel Cinema from outside of India. However, surveying the scholarly terrain of Parallel Cinema points to many gaps and blind spots. I would argue the scholarly field of Parallel Cinema remains underdeveloped, intermittent and dormant. It is difficult for me to fully substantiate this argument since I was not able to visit India for fieldwork and access the film archives in Pune. However, if I had visited the archives, would I have found the
answer considering archives can be incomplete and riddled with bureaucracy? Nonetheless, based on the secondary sources notably books, articles and interviews that I have been able to access, I would still contend that although the scholarly output on Parallel Cinema has seen a recent surge of materials including a long awaited edited volume on Kumar Shahani’s writings (2015) including a lengthy and detailed introduction by Ashish Rajadhyaksha, the existing literature is deficient to say the least. We have yet to see a contemporary edited volume on Parallel Cinema. The closest we have come is Philippe Lenglet and Aruna Vasudev’s *Indian Cinema Superbazaar* (1983), a rich resource of chapters from Mani Kaul, Chidananda Das Gupta and Madan Gopal Singh. Since the 1980s, there have been important scholarly contributions that I will outline next. The aim is to uncover the gaps in the existing literature on Parallel Cinema and detail how my work will aim to make an intervention with the hope of looking at Parallel Cinema from a new perspective, through the concept of rupture.

The number of authored books that specifically deal with the history, themes and aesthetics of Parallel Cinema are altogether lacking and suggests there is a lot of work to be done here. The last major book length study of Parallel Cinema was in 1986 by Aruna Vasudev titled *The New Indian Cinema*. This was at a time when Parallel Cinema was still active and shifting into television with the Doordarshan and NFDC collaborations. Vasudev’s work is still a major reference point for the field of Parallel Cinema and the scholarly engagement with Parallel Cinema that some had hoped for did not come to fruition. While Vasudev offers a
potted history of Parallel Cinema, admittedly acknowledging the regional
flourishes, her understanding of the movement still makes her work
critical in drawing attention to the significance of aesthetics, which she
briefly discusses in Chapter 5: ‘Substance and Style’ and Chapter 9:
‘Form and Function’. But what Vasudev fails to grasp is the impact of The
Naxalite Movement on the choice of politics and aesthetics by the
filmmakers from Bengali cinema. Also, absent are the internationalism
that Parallel Cinema represented and the relationship with a post colonial
and Third Cinema context.

These are contextual determinants I will try to address in my reading of
Parallel Cinema through the prism of rupture that I have used foremost as
a tool for critical analysis. Vasudev is not alone in overlooking the
significance of The Naxalite Movement on the psyche of the Bengali
strand of Parallel Cinema. In his seminal book *Ideology of the Hindi Film:
A Historical Construction* (1998), Madhava Prasad deals with Parallel
Cinema through an institutional and thematic lens notably in Chapter 5:
‘The Moment of Disaggregation’ (Sen’s *Bhuvan Shome*) and Chapter 8:
‘The Developmental Aesthetic’ (Benegal’s rural trilogy). Surprisingly,
nowhere in any of these two chapters when speaking about the narratives
of films like *Bhuvan Shome* and *Manthan* that function as allegories of the
nation state does Prasad recognize the importance of The Naxalite
Movement and how this shaped the subaltern political address of the
films that he discusses. Although Prasad’s monumental work is
undeniably influential in terms of shaping scholarly discourse on Indian
cinema, it is often that taking his lead can result in an ideological
approach we have seen on repeated occasions.

One of the more curious omissions from the scholarly landscape of Parallel Cinema is the booklet published annually by the Directorate of Film Festivals in India. Very rarely do film scholars make reference to this material. The editors for the booklets ranged from P.K. Nair to Uma de Cunha, and brought together many important contributors including Shama Zaidi, Khalid Mohamed, Iqbal Masud and Maithili Rao. The booklets were used to complement the Indian Panorama strand of the International Film Festival of India (IFFI) that showcases the best of Indian cinema, offering space to film writers and journalists to write on various aspects of Indian cinema, with much of the writings dedicated to tracking the achievements of Parallel Cinema. The articles and essays produced in the Panorama booklets are extensive, critical and fascinating. While some of the writings do naturally have a state leaning bias, I would argue the booklets evidence a broader appreciation of the vagaries of Parallel Cinema. This was mirrored in the publication of New Indian Cinema (1982), edited by Shampa Banerjee, in conjunction with a season of films at the National Film Theatre in London and Film India: The New Generation 1960 – 1980 (1981). Together these two slim yet important volumes amounted to one of the first attempts to canonize Parallel Cinema films and spotlight specific filmmakers from across the regions.

41 Ravi Gupta’s 1993 article titled ‘National Film Development Corporation’ frames the NFDC in an industrial and economic context, making some germane points for investigating the chronology of Parallel Cinema, which he segments into four distinct phases, beginning as early as 1960 with the establishment of the FFC.
As mentioned earlier in regards to methodology, the scholarly work on Parallel Cinema points to a lack of analytical engagement with the films themselves expressly in terms of the language with which they were speaking. Much of the work has often centred on semantics and the contestation of terminology and how it has been impossible to reach a consensus on how scholars should speak about Parallel Cinema. While Pradip Krishnen (1991) embraces the term Parallel Cinema, recognizing its distinctiveness, Ira Bhaskar’s (2013) chapter on ‘The Indian New Wave’ opts to bring the film movement in line with American and European perceptions of new wave cinemas. In some respects, Krishnen and Bhaskar’s work is typical of a lot of the scholarly work of Parallel Cinema since it offers a snapshot of the major trends but says very little about the syntax of film and aesthetics of the foundational years, an oversight I aim to address in this thesis by placing a greater emphasis on the need for textual analysis. Indeed, the recent work by indiancine.ma, an online platform, including ‘The New Cinemas Project’ which is made up of 112 films between 1969 and 1980 and a series of films annotated by The University of Jadavpur Media Lab, which was first established in 2008, has made a significant intervention. It is certainly worth underlining the work of Maharghya Chakraborty (2015) who has gone to great lengths to annotate the films of Mrinal Sen, taking an approach that accounts for a vagary of contexts including history, politics and aesthetics. It is also worth pointing out Megan Carrigy’s chapter on Bhuvan Shome in The Cinema of India (2011) edited volume is one of the few readings of the film that deals with both style and themes of Sen’s
film.

My work intersects directly with annotations of the Jadavpur Media Lab since Chakraborty in particular draws out the nuances when it comes to the relationship between Naxalism, Third Cinema, internationalism and Indian cinema in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Much of Chakraborty’s close analysis correlates with the work of Ashish Rajadhyaksha’s chapter titled The Indian Emergency in his monumental book *Indian Cinema in the Time of Celluloid* (2009). Rajadhyaksha’s chapter is probably one of the most sustained scholarly readings of the politics of Parallel Cinema in the early years, postulating a discourse that understands how Naxalism, India’s first post independence peasant insurgency, impacted the trajectory of Parallel Cinema, and which shaped aesthetic and political choices, notably evident in the work of Mrinal Sen and his Calcutta Trilogy. Accordingly, Rajadhyaksha along with Geeta Kapur (1989) and Anthony Guneratne (2003) have been forthcoming in trying to reason for a consideration of Parallel Cinema as an adjunct of Third Cinema. Aside from Rajadhyaksha and Kapur’s contribution in 1989, there has been very little, if any, attempts to re-engage with Third Cinema, and which I also attempt to address but only partially given the limited scope of the thesis and what I can accommodate.

Before I can introduce the films I will map the significance of Bengali cinema to the development of Parallel Cinema. I will argue that Parallel Cinema was more than just about cinema, or history, but a form of political resistance, an affront to the cultural mainstream, with clear
antecedents in the 1930s Bengali cinema and which saw the lasting impressions of the IPTA determine the cultural trajectory of Parallel Cinema. While Parallel Cinema is largely associated with the FFC and 1969, I want to reason the term overlooks another key determinant in the development of Parallel Cinema in the 1960s, the contribution of Bengali cinema. Only by reinstating the role Bengali cinema played in the birth of Parallel Cinema, can we begin to understand alternative cinema in India was being cultivated as early as the 1930s. But the emergence of Bengali studio cinema in the 1930s was not working in isolation. It is the historical paradigm of Bengali art cinema that is critical to the aesthetic, technological and thematic advancements of Indian cinema as a whole.

There were preludes to Parallel Cinema, three strands in particular, which were significant to the development of firstly Art Cinema in Bengal and later Parallel Cinema. This includes The Bengal School of Art, the IPTA and The Calcutta Group. All three working in tandem to explore the currents of modernism were culturally specific to Bengal as a pluralistic movement of the arts, laying a creative foundation for Parallel Cinema that would explicate similarly divergent approaches, namely the political, avant-garde and realist. While Parallel Cinema was certainly reacting to the social and political uncertainty of the late 1960s, the plea for a new cinema, as outlined in Sen and Kaul’s manifesto, was coming out of a rich, creative tradition in Bengal that stretched back to the 1920s, which had first seen the revival of ancient Indian traditions that led to many Bengali artists reclaiming an indigenous history denied to them under colonialism. Artists working in the interrelated disciplines of painting,
literature, theatre and cinema shared in a process of personal self-determination, an actualisation of Indianness.

The first phase of modernism, lasting 1922 to 1947 (Mitter, 2007) began with The Bengal School of Art. It was ‘Calcutta as a hybrid cosmopolis’ (Mitter, 13: 2007) that became the centre of India’s first modernist art movement in which ‘Indian artists used primitivism as an effective weapon against colonial culture’ (Mitter, 2007: 14). In the Bengal School of Art, the work of Indian artists Abanindranath Tagore, Jamini Roy, Rabindranath Tagore\(^{42}\) saw what Mitter describes as the interaction between the global and the local, ‘assimilating different Asian cultures’ (2007: 178), responding to stylistic influences from the West such as Cubism that led to a pluralistic, hybridized form: ‘Abanindranath and his followers propagated a theory of art emphasizing bhava (emotion) over rupa (form) as the logical corollary of privileging Eastern spirituality over Western materialism’ (Khullar, 2012: 167). The Bengal School of Art revived folk culture, ‘where ideas of the village, the home, woman and rituals were invoked as symbols of India’s pure uncolonised self, uncontaminated by colonial reason and progress’ (Guha-Thakurta, 1992: 199). The primitivism and hybridity of Indian modernist art would also be revived first in Ray’s *Pather Panchali* and then later more explicitly in Parallel Cinema particularly the rural trilogy of Shyam Benegal.

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\(^{42}\) Gooptu writes that ‘Tagore’s ideas were influential among the intellectual elite, who developed an internationalism which ran parallel to their nationalist consciousness’ (2011: 25).
Of concern to this project is not so much the legacy of The Bengal School of Art but the resulting ‘tensions between avant-garde formalism and socialist radicalism’ (Mitter, 2007: 305) in the 1940s that saw the emergence of progressive art groups. The Calcutta Group (1943 – 1953), a radical group of Bengali artists, working in parallel with the IPTA, ‘strongly rejected artistic nationalism in favour of social justice and equality’ (Mitter, 2007: 199). More critically to the genesis of Parallel Cinema was the ‘overwhelming concern for form and style’ (Mallik, 2004) which looked forward to similarly invested concerns from the early years of Parallel Cinema in seeing a clear break in terms of aesthetics, the call for a new filmic syntax as professed by Sen and Kaul in their ’68 manifesto. The Calcutta Group criticised the romanticism of The Bengal School of Art, advocating ‘art should aim to be international and interdependent’ (the manifesto of The Calcutta group), pointing to the 1960s Bengali cultural revolution, the second renaissance, in which Parallel Cinema would come to play a defining role in creating disruption, radicalism and dissent.

Cultural engagement by the IPTA often avoided filmic interventions since popular Indian cinema relied on melodrama as primary mode of address clashing with the IPTA’s desire to promote realist modernism. Gooptu’s

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43 In an article titled ‘Can There Be An Indian Revolution?’ (May, 1966) for the Leftist political weekly Now, writer Nirad C. Chaudhuri deems revolution unlikely in India given the transfer of power has insidiously led to what he calls a ‘brown colonialism’ (Now, 1966: 9). The political scepticism of Chaudhuri about the impossibility of revolution would be challenged with the events in Naxalbari in 1967. Chaudhuri’s article provoked a furious response from readers and other political commentators of the day, much of what was debated in Now in a series of responses, questioning Chaudhuri’s insistence that revolution was impossible in a nation in which the middle class was reluctant to support revolution and where the condition of passivity was historical.
work on the history of Bengali cinema draws out this key theme. The IPTA’s filmic interventions demonstrates the ‘displacement and degeneration of Bengali life after 1947’ (Gooptu, 2011: 102) was manifested in films that were gradually politicized in terms of form and content. Initial ideological affiliation between the cultural left and communism remained an instrumental part of the politics that galvanised social realism in Indian cinema, re-asserting itself raucously in the 1960s with the Naxalite movement. The cultural impact of the IPTA facilitated to ‘revitalise folk art, and inform it with a revolutionary consciousness’ (Dasgupta, 2002: 126). And it was theatre that politicized Bengali cinema in the late 1940s, proving the Bengali wing of the IPTA to be the most powerful and creative.

While the first official IPTA film is generally considered to be Dharti Ke Lal (1946), there is an earlier unofficial IPTA Bengali film, Bimal Roy’s Udayer Pathe (Towards the Light, 1944), a political melodrama about class, which led to the development of a darker vein of realism in the late 1940s and 1950s in both Bengali and Hindi cinema. Often understated is Bimal Roy’s contribution to the story of Parallel Cinema, eclipsed in much of the scholarly writing on alternative Indian cinema by the Bengali triptych of Satyajit Ray, Ritwik Ghatak and Mrinal Sen. Bimal Roy was making films many years before the triptych, and notably, it is Udayer Pathe (1944) (remade as Hamrahi in Hindi) and Do Bigha Zamin (1953),

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44 In 1944, Nabanna (The Harvest), a play written by Bijon Bhattacharya and co-directed by Shambu Mitra, which dramatizes the Bengal famine of 1943, had a major cultural impact in Bengal.
examples of social melodrama, that act as instrumental precursors to Parallel Cinema. Both *Udayer Pathe* and *Do Bigha Zamin* adopted a semi-neorealist aesthetic levied with a sharp leftist political critique of capitalism yet cloaked in the idioms of mainstream cinema.

The significance of the IPTA, spurring the evolution of alternative Indian cinema, ‘grew into the only instance of a cultural avant-garde in contemporary Indian history’ (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994: 102), a bold claim indeed, one that can only legitimately be sustained if the IPTA’s cultural achievements are contextualised in a broader historiography that registered beyond the 1940s, culminating in the birth of Parallel Cinema. Gooptu acknowledges ‘the 1950s Bengali film was emblematic of a generation which had been through the experience of political upheaval and rapid social transition’ (2011: 108), claiming the

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45 *Udayer Pathe* was a collaboration of many key members of the Bengali wing of the IPTA, demonstrating a technical mastery in the ‘fluid shot divisions, unobtrusive camera angles…magical lighting’ (Ghosh, 2009: 10) that was matched by the unconventional and daring thematic emphasis. Gandhy writes *Udayer Pathe*, ‘was the first depiction of the embattled relations of workers and management and had a tremendous impact upon audiences in Bengal who had never come across a cinema of protest’ (Gandhy, 1980: 52). The emergence of protest, a direct influence from the IPTA, would take on a corrosive, radical portent in late 1960s Bengali cinema. But *Udayer Pathe* was also a precursor to the stream of IPTA that emerged out of Bengal in the early 1950s. This included *Tathapi* (1950), *Chinnamul* (1950), *Nagarik* (1952), *Bhor Hoye Elo* (1953), *Dukhir Iman* (1954) and *Rickshawalla* (1955). However, Ray’s *Pather Panchali* surpassed all of this in 1955, imaginably overshadowing the contributions of the IPTA and the nurturing of political realism that was unfolding at the same time.

46 The heterogeneous nature of Parallel Cinema, stretching across many of the cinemas of India, not just Bombay Hindi cinema, could not have occurred without the IPTA. And this was foreseen in the shift of Bengali directors, writers and technicians from Bengali cinema to Hindi cinema in the late 1940s. The Bengali creative influence, determining the path of Hindi realist cinema in the 1950s, which Gooptu dubs ‘Bombay’s Bengali Life’, is exemplified most expressively in the work of Bimal Roy who worked across both Bengali and Hindi cinema. Ray’s *Do Bigha Zamin* (1953) and also the Raj Kapoor backed *Jagte Raho* (1956) were films, albeit mainstream constructs, that came out of a leftist political trajectory, directed by IPTA members. But this was not merely an isolated ideological subversion of popular Hindi cinema; it was taking place alongside the continuing evolution of political realism in Bengali cinema.
populist films of Bengali film stars Uttam Kumar-Suchitra Sen and Bhanu were as ideological in their themes as the directly political works of the era. But the degree to which the development of political cinema in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s has been subject to scholarly debate is still a relatively underdeveloped aspect of Indian film studies.

In the wider context of Bengali cinema, Parallel Cinema, as a term, category, idea or movement, was explicated from outside of Bombay, the implicit centre of the Indian film world, from Bengal, a regional cinema. West Bengal’s determination of Parallel Cinema was multifaceted. Firstly, Ritwik Ghatak took up a post as a professor at the Film and Television Institute of India in the 1960s. Ghatak, already a major influence on Bengali cinema, would train the next generation of filmmakers including Kumar Shahani and Mani Kaul, many of whom would go onto form the main core of Parallel Cinema. Next, West Bengal’s leftist political cognizance and flirtations with communism was mirrored in the ideological capacity of Parallel Cinema to question the status quo. Furthermore, Bengali director Mrinal Sen, co-authored the ‘Manifesto of the New Cinema Movement’ (1968), the theoretical treatise of Parallel Cinema, calling for a new form of Indian Cinema. Finally, the Naxalite movement politicized Bengali cinema, significantly the foundational period of Parallel Cinema. Simply put, there would not have been a Parallel Cinema without Bengali Cinema.

47 The FTII was ‘patterned on France’s famous IDHEC (Institut des Hautes Etudes Cinematographiques)’ (Vasudev, 138).
The Focus Films

This next section details the seven films that will be the focus of the thesis, which I will discuss chronologically, starting with *Apanjan* (1968). These seven films (see Fig 4) also form a loose cycle of films that could be categorised as the first phase of Naxalite cinema. It is also worth stating plainly from the outset the focus films are not analysed individually in separate chapters but run holistically through the thesis whereby I return to the films and specific sequences on several occasions in more than one chapter but for different reasons.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Film</th>
<th>Director</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Funding</th>
<th>Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Apanjan</em> (Near and Dear)</td>
<td>Tapan Sinha</td>
<td>1968</td>
<td>K. L. Kapoor Production (Private)</td>
<td>Bengali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Bhuvan Shome</em></td>
<td>Mrinal Sen</td>
<td>1969</td>
<td>Film Finance Corporation (State/Public)</td>
<td>Hindi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Interview</em></td>
<td>Mrinal Sen</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>D. S. Sultania (Private)</td>
<td>Bengali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Pratidwandi</em> (The Adversary)</td>
<td>Satyajit Ray</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Priya Films (Private)</td>
<td>Bengali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Calcutta ‘71</em></td>
<td>Mrinal Sen</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>D. S. Sultania (Private)</td>
<td>Bengali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Padatik</em> (The Guerilla Fighter)</td>
<td>Mrinal Sen</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Film Finance Corporation (State/Public)</td>
<td>Bengali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Jukti Takko Aar Gappo</em> (Reason, Debate and a story)</td>
<td>Ritwik Ghatak</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Rit Chitra (Private) &amp; Film Finance Corporation (State/Public)</td>
<td>Bengali</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig 4. The focus films
The main protagonist of *Apanjan* is Anandamoyee (Chhaya Devi), an old, forlorn widow\(^{48}\) and matriarchal figure who is lured to Calcutta by her relatives only to end up enslaved as a glorified servant. The choice to begin with *Apanjan*, a film made before the official starting point of Parallel Cinema, is to not only question the linearity of historiography but more significantly to situate the work as a precursor and transitional film for Bengali cinema. Director Tapan Sinha was the first Bengali filmmaker of his generation to recognise the break in history and his film looks forward to the urban civil unrest that would traumatisse Calcutta, beginning in the late 1960s. Gooptu notes:

‘Set in the contemporary, Aponjon [Apanjan] was one of the first films to bring up the issue of a new generation that was conditioned by cynicism rather than a value system, and who were turning to crime and political violence as the result of a systemic breakdown’ (Gooptu, 2011: 171).

Sinha could foresee the political violence that would mar Calcutta in the early 1970s, much of it instigated by an angry disillusioned youth,\(^{49}\) which would emerge as a defining thematic and representational feature of the early years of Parallel Cinema. Indeed, Moinak Biswas argues the ‘cult status’ (Biswas, 2011: 120) of *Apanjan* led to a cycle of youth oriented films including *Pratidwandi* (1970) and *Interview* (1970).

\(^{48}\) Anandamoyee’s relationship with her husband is depicted in conventional martial terms (conveyed via a series of flashbacks). She has an arranged marriage and then takes up a subservient role as the dutiful wife. Nonetheless, Anandamoyee also sees another side to her husband, as a struggling theatre actor and semi-political activist.

\(^{49}\) Violent dissent from the youth had been simmering in Bengal as early as 1966. B. Roy labels this as ‘angry vandalism’, a rising tide of iconoclastic rage that saw ‘bands of teenagers roamed, burning trains, stoning schools’ (Roy in Now, 1966, June 3: 10).
The next film is Mrinal Sen’s *Bhuvan Shome* (1969), which is ‘set in the late 1940s just after independence’ (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994: 399) and focuses on a sullen Indian railway bureaucrat and widower Mr. Shome/Shome Saab (Utpal Dutt). One day Shome decides to take a break from the drudgery of his office job and travels to a village on a bird hunting expedition. In the village, Shome meets Gauri (Suhasini Mullay), a vivacious young bride with whom he strikes up a transformative relationship. *Bhuvan Shome* occupies a unique place in Indian film history. It was the first of three films in 1969 to be granted a loan from the FFC. Vasudev argues Bengali film critic Chidananda Das Gupta ‘was a member of the FFC’s board of directors in 1969 and was one of the few who fought for change in its policies’ (1986: 37). The change in what types of films to support led to a radical shift in film policy in which unconventional, independent projects attracted state financing. Vasudev goes on to say: ‘It was at this time that against great pressure from the established film industry the FFC gave Mrinal Sen the loan for *Bhuvan Shome*’ (1986: 37). *Bhuvan Shome* is recognised as the film that officially inaugurated Parallel Cinema, although I challenge this notion with the focus on *Apanjan* and 1968, and was a formative experience for director Mrinal Sen, the consolidation of a visual style that he had been developing over a series of films, one that liberated him as a filmmaker.

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50 Utpal Dutt was a founder of the Little Theatre group in Calcutta, which put on political plays in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Dutt was a Naxalite sympathiser and says he became very actively associated with Charu Mazumdar. He later wrote a play titled ‘Tir’ (Arrow) on the Naxalbari uprising (Moares, 1970). Dutt was expelled from the CPI (M-L) for his protestations about the terror tactics that Mazumdar had encouraged the Naxals especially the urban youth to adopt.

51 Two of Sen’s most political works of the 1970s, *Interview* and *Calcutta ’71*, were financed independently by D.S. Sultania (D.S. Pictures). And both films were successful at the box office.
Following on from *Bhuvan Shome* is Satyajit Ray’s *Pratidwandi* (1970), the first part in his Calcutta trilogy which ‘records the failures of an entire class and ideology to address the demands of the cruel new age’ (Sengoopta, 2009: 19). *Pratidwandi* uses an episodic narrative in which an unemployed young Bengali male Siddhartha (played by actor Dhritiman Chatterjee who also plays the main lead in Mrinal Sen’s *Padatik*) is faced with the crisis of finding a job after the death of his father. *Pratidwandi*, like *Apanjan*, is not considered an example of Parallel Cinema because it was a film directed by an established filmmaker who is still widely seen as an exception in the history of Indian cinema.

Moreover, the canonization of Parallel Cinema, and greatly influenced by the work of Barnouw and Krishnaswamy’s *Indian Film* (1980), Gokulsing and Dissanayake’s *Indian Popular Cinema* (1998) and Rajadhyaksha & Willemen’s *Encyclopedia of Indian Cinema* (1994), has occurred largely on the basis of criteria that prioritises the role of state financing, a reasonable enough determination (see Appendix 3 which lists 46 films that were financed by the FFC between 1968 to 1974). But the once monolithic and narrow canonization of Parallel Cinema has started to shift quite dramatically with the emergence of online cinephilia and notably film bloggers such as Srikanth Srinivasan (see his blog *The Seventh Art*) in 2000 onwards. Both *Pratidwandi* and *Interview* were privately financed and had nothing to do with FFC. Therefore, part of the reason for selecting *Pratidwandi* for this thesis is to once again challenge historiography and reclaim the work as an example of Parallel Cinema. *Pratidwandi* has rarely been spoken of, as part of Parallel Cinema,
although I will claim it is indeed a key film in the first phase. Ray wanted to respond to the political violence that Calcutta was experiencing in the early 1970s in his own way. And as Christian Braad Thomsen noted, writing in 1972, a film like *Pratidwandi* 'acquired a political awareness which was perhaps less openly stated' (2007: 54) in Ray’s earlier films.\(^{52}\) Although Ray avoided polemicizing in his films, the supposedly apolitical nature of his films has been challenged over the years. Most recently by Chandak Sengoopta (2011).\(^{53}\) But *Pratidwandi* was in many ways the first openly political film he made, which in some respects can be viewed as a response to his critics. Chidananda Das Gupta notes: ‘Ray faced up to the Calcutta of the burning trains, the angry political processions, the agonies of the employed’ (Das Gupta, 1994: 101). In some respects Ray did not have a choice. He had to make *Pratidwandi*. And it is the trauma of Naxalite revolt and state violence that *Pratidwandi* returns to, reconnecting with the traumatic death of the Mother at the end of *Apanjan* (as I will discuss in chapter two). And as signifier of rupture, it is trauma, as manifested in the wound that is most totalizing in *Pratidwandi*.

Post-colonialism is an ancillary contextual and thematic link between *Pratidwandi* and *Interview* (1970), the second of four films by Sen that I undertake to study in this thesis. *Interview* has a relatively unassuming plot, a threadbare neorealist concoction. It is the story of a young man

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\(^{52}\) Marie Seton writing in 1970 says ‘Satyajit Ray remarked years ago that sometime he would introduce his contact with political minded people into a film when he felt the time had come to do so. He had no intentions of being hurried’ (Seton, 2003: 284).

\(^{53}\) See ‘The fruits of independence’ (South Asian History and Culture, 2: 3, 2011) in which Sengoopta reads Ray’s early films in terms of nationalism and colonialism.
Ranjit Mallick\textsuperscript{54} who goes on a quixotic search in the city of Calcutta to find a suit for an interview at an Indo-British company. In their summary of an un-translated article by Bengali writer Someswar Bhowmik, The Media Lab, writes that Bhowmik ‘acknowledges Mrinal Sen’s Calcutta Trilogy as the first truly political cinema in Bengal’ (2015), restating the significance of Sen’s work to the development of Indian political cinema. This is certainly a bold claim from Bhowmik and remains underdeveloped as a scholarly venture, one that I hope to pursue over the course of the thesis.

Unlike Bhuvan Shome that still has the semblance of a narrative, Interview is largely non-narrative, loosely structured in episodic form, more so than Ray’s Pratidwandi. Sen’s decision to make a job interview the subject of his first film in the Calcutta Trilogy magnifies the mundane into something far more politically potent. But it also gives the film an added layer of abstraction and subversion. Moreover, Sen’s mixed media approach first introduced in Bhuvan Shome takes on a rigour in Interview.

Interview is followed by Calcutta ’71 (1971),\textsuperscript{55} the second part in the Calcutta trilogy, a work that adopts a complicated three-part narrative in which the perennial theme of poverty is framed against stories from 1933, 1943 and 1953. By the time Calcutta ’71 was released in cinemas in 1972, the Naxalite movement had met its demise in the months of July-August 1971. Biblap Dasgupta writes that ‘from the middle of 1971…the

\textsuperscript{54} Ranjit Mallick bears the same name as the actor but the point to note is that many of the actors play themselves in Interview, the first of many examples of the blurring’s between fiction and reality that would characterise the openly self reflexive period of Sen’s work.

\textsuperscript{55} Ashish Rajadhyakska (2009: 251) notes that although Calcutta ’71 was released in 1972, Mrinal Sen had started to film from 1969.
offensive against CPI (M-L) was conducted directly in the name of the ruling party’ (1972: 263) and which led to the capturing of Charu Mazumdar. The death of Mazumdar formally announced the end of the unrest in Calcutta. But the Naxalites continued to show resistance and which saw a continuation of violent state repression. Calcutta ‘71 is central to the thesis because Sen was the only filmmaker in this period to look back at India’s history, situating the anger and violence of Naxalism in a broader timeframe of exploitation and impoverishment. Moreover, Calcutta ‘71 is also the closest Sen came to realising a postcolonial style of Third Cinema, communicating in an intertextual audio-visual dialogue in which internationalism was at stake.

The penultimate film I will look at is Padatik (1973), the last part of Sen’s Calcutta trilogy and ‘probably the first overtly political film made in India’ (Gupta, 1976: 9). The story sees a young Naxalite member hiding out in the apartment of a middle class divorced woman who spends his time reflecting on the limitations of the political venture; attempting to understand where he positions himself in relation to leftist, Naxalite politics. The political self-criticism also extends to the director Mrinal Sen who uses the narrative to try and make sense of Marxist revolutionary ideology and examine whether or not it is a misguided enterprise. Interestingly, both Pratidwandi and Padatik may differ in their approach but they both attempt to deal with the same political questions – does the subscription to an ideological cause necessarily make one revolutionary? Padatik was the only film of Sen’s Calcutta trilogy to have
been funded by the FFC but forges a notable link with Ray’s Pratidwandi since both films star Dhritiman Chatterjee.

The final film I will address is Ritwik Ghatak’s *Jukti Takko Aar Gappo*, another film to be financed by the FFC. Whereas the other films I deal with are rooted very much in a contemporary ideological engagement, *Jukti Takko Aar Gappo* (1974; released in 1977) speaks tentatively and fleetingly about Naxalism. It would be an oversight not to consider the role of Ghatak in the paradigm of Naxalism and Parallel Cinema since he is a poet of rupture, a major feature of his Partition trilogy, notably *Komal Gandhar* and *Meghe Dhaka Tara*, demonstrating the application of rupture to a wider field. It is worth stating the story of rupture is not new to Indian Cinema. The cinema of Ritwik Ghatak is a continual thread holding together the very idea of rupture. And while Satyajit Ray’s films are still largely influential today, it is Ghatak’s rebellious spirit that runs through the leftist and subaltern politics of the Bengali strand of Parallel Cinema. *Jukti Takko Aar Gappo* is significant, mainly because there is a sequence towards the end of the film where a drunken failed intellectual, played by Ghatak himself, encounters a gang of Naxalite youth hiding out in the jungle from the police and which leads to a striking conversation about political commitment. And in some respects, the killing of the intellectual brought to a close the first period of Parallel Cinema in the most vehement of ways. Before I move on to chapter two it is important to

56 Given the limitations of this thesis I am unable to cover Ghatak’s relationship with rupture and Partition in the main body of the text. However, I still feel this a crucial link in the story of Parallel Cinema expressly his films on Partition including *Komal Gandhar* (1961) in which rupture is a central concept and idea.
say that although there are many other notable films in this first period of Parallel Cinema, I have specifically chosen to focus on the films that have either an overt or tentative link to the Naxalite movement since this thesis concentrates on mapping the particular intersection between Naxalism and Parallel Cinema.

While prying open the linear historiography of Parallel Cinema and approaching Parallel Cinema from an alternative critical perspective is a central part of this thesis, I also want to return to my earlier conceptualization of rupture in regards to the seminal work of Eisenstein and McGowan who argue that rupture equates to a revolutionary break in history. In chapter two I will deal with rupture more specifically, demonstrating how *Apanjan* and the death of Anandamoyee is a critical event and the point of rupture in Parallel Cinema. Determining the point of rupture seems like an impossible task since what constitutes a rupture can be subjective and open to debate. But I will argue that Indian cinema offers a relatively new and unexplored cultural space in which to re-think how real historical and political events such as the ‘Spring Thunder’ of Naxalbari in 1967 was unconsciously subsumed into the narrative of films. We must also never lose sight of the way in which The Naxalite Movement (1967) and Parallel Cinema (1969) coincide. Although they are arguably two distinctively separate ruptures, historical and cultural, their collision in 1968-69 led to the amplification of rupture as something inherently radical. But my conceptualization of rupture is broader than just the Event, arguing how rupture manifests itself heterogeneously. This is
why in chapter three, I posit the idea of an aesthetic rupture, going beyond the concept of the event, suggesting how rupture is denoted in the language of film and in the wound. A broader idea at stake here is the ways in which rupture also functions as an instrument of mobilization, channelling the anger of Naxalism, culturally through the politicization of Parallel Cinema and resultantly the films that were made. What will become clear through this thesis is that although rupture invites the proposition of revolution, labelled as ‘an accumulation of ruptures’ (Endnotes, 2013: 239), it can also be argued that ‘rupture is a moment of partisanship, of taking sides’ (Endnotes, 2013: 240), an ideological notion which is partially explored in the ways in which filmmakers like Sen, Ray and Ghatak took up trenchant political positions in how they imagined rupture.

The thesis is comprised of three core chapters that explore the concept of rupture in divergent ways. The wound forms the basis of chapter two. The wound as a signifier is the most direct manifestation of rupture and the analysis accounts for the impact of Naxalism on the psyche of Calcutta and how this moment in India’s past can be reclaimed as a source of trauma. Chapter three deals with iconoclasm, the first of the three signifiers of rupture. I open with an examination of the film Apanjan (1968), identifying the point of origin for the break in history and the saliency of the iconoclastic gesture and what this rupture heralded in terms of ideology. Chapter four deals with a formal break in film language/syntax that Parallel Cinema initiated and which points to a
widespread engagement with experimental and avant-garde filmmaking techniques. A central focus of this chapter is to argue rupture was not merely ideological but was also evident in the attempts to re-new film aesthetics expressly in the work of Mrinal Sen and his hybridised non-narrative approach to filmmaking. The conclusion, the final chapter, posits some potential trajectories for further research in terms of historiography, rupture film/cinema and canonizing Parallel Cinema.
Chapter Two – The Wound as a Signifier of Rupture

‘The convening of the public around scenes of violence – the rushing to the scene of the accident, the milling around the point of impact – has come to make up a wound culture: the public fascination with torn and opened bodies and torn and opened persons, a collective gathering around shock, trauma, and the wound’ (Seltzer, 1997: 3).

Writing in 1997 Mark Seltzer’s work on wound culture raises a beguiling argument about the accumulation of wound imagery in the public sphere and how trauma has become a cultural spectacle. Rupture is like an incision that cannot be undone. However, I will argue throughout this thesis that while rupture cannot be captured on film, it can be performed. Before I posit how iconoclasm and aesthetic signifiers were working together to imagine rupture, I want to turn to the traumatic impact of Naxalism as a kind of latent wounding that was recorded on film. Roger Luckhurst writes: ‘Trauma derives from the Greek word meaning wound. First used in English in the seventeenth century in medicine, it referred to a bodily injury caused by an external agent’ (2008: 2). In this respect the wound is suitably tied to the essence of what occurs with rupture in both physical and psychological terms, and in the case of Indian cinema, a break or disturbance that had a social and political resonance, and which was relatedly tied up in the history of The Naxalite Movement. The wound as indexical or referential of trauma, often psychic, unconscious and hidden, finds a notable resonance in Indian film scholar Bhaskar Sarkar’s work on the trauma of Partition, a significant postcolonial turn in the scholarly discourse on trauma theory. ‘Cinematic traces are indexical of acts of cultural mourning’ (2009: 2) claims Sarkar. It is the cinematic
traces, things that can go undetected, invisible markers or wounds that once unearthed point to a residue of trauma that demand reclaiming.

In chapter three I will suggest how rupture was about transformation, that rupture could posit something new. This chapter focuses on how rupture can be a deleterious, damaging and potent phenomenon, allowing us to read trauma through an alternate postcolonial prism. A recent development and intervention in the field of cultural trauma theory is Irene Visser’s ‘Trauma theory and postcolonial literary studies’ (2011). Visser notes ‘the trauma paradigm is limiting for postcolonial analysis...because of its orientation on ahistorical, structural trauma’ (2011: 277). Referring specifically to Judith Herman’s *Trauma and Recovery* (1994), Visser argues for a shift away from Freudian psychoanalysis, rethinking how trauma theory can be revisited through a re-engagement with the importance of how narrative offers a chance for recuperation, healing and recovery. As Visser notes, many aspects of Herman’s work directly challenges Cathy Caruth’s ‘view that narrativization of traumatic memory’ (2011: 274) is both incomprehensible and inaccessible. Visser also criticizes Caruth for ‘dehistoricizing tendencies’ (2011: 274). Visser’s work draws attention to the ahistorical study of trauma and this is why I have turned to recent interventions by Allen Meek (2010) and Emma Hutchison (2016).

In many ways, Emma Hutchison’s work *Affective Communities in World Politics* (2016) is important in this respect, arguing to look more closely at
the social and political contexts of trauma. Hutchison has sought to look at the relationship between representations of trauma and the construction of political community, and in doing so underlines the importance of reasserting the historical and political dimensions of trauma into the way narratives are analysed. Both Meek and Hutchison situate trauma in a wider social and political context, attempting to move forward the discourse from traditional accounts of the psychic impact of trauma on the individual. Meek argues ‘What is lost in the gradual transformation and increasing centrality of trauma as a concept in cultural criticism is a sense of broader currents of power and violence that traumatize individuals and populations in the first place’ (2010: 19). This calls for a re-thinking of how trauma is studied especially in film. This is why I have argued for triangulating trauma with iconoclasm as signifiers. By giving more scope to identify and interpret rupture as a broader, more inclusive analytical tool, also ensures the wider contextual dimensions are not obscured, and which as Meek rightly draws attention to, can often happen with the singularity of trauma as an over determined mode of address.

I will argue that looking back at these films we can see how the image of the wound was not an isolated occurrence but point to a pattern of wounding, a dormant signature of a much wider historical and political rupture. And given the contemporary public fascination with wound culture as suggested by Mark Seltzer, the instances of wounding in Bengali Parallel Cinema resonate as both prescient and elemental of the way rupture manifests itself in many of these films. In this chapter of the
thesis I will reason the concept of rupture finds its closest correlation in the image of the wound and which is used repeatedly in these films to signify a trauma being played out. It is also worth noting the trauma of The Naxalite Movement has a complicated double bind that includes the iconoclastic violence of the movement itself and the violent repression from the state, and how both of these traumatic impositions have been contested ideologically over time. This complicates who the victim of this trauma is but I will show how rupture in these films points to an imagining of state violence in which the figure of the Naxalite is predominately represented as a political victim, a traumatic image, and which is part of a broader imagery of rupture. Culturally and officially, it was probably Mahasweta Devi’s ‘Mother of 1084’ (1973-4) that first recognised The Naxalite Movement and the ensuing civil unrest in Calcutta as a broadly traumatic moment. But I want to argue we need to take a step back and reconsider the role Indian cinema played in recognising and communicating Naxalism as a traumatic moment in India’s history. In doing so, we can begin to think about to what extent the trauma of Naxalism affected cinema, although on a lesser scale to an event like the Partition of India.

Many forms of trauma have been determined – individual, cultural, collective, psychic. But I will be exploring rupture through the metaphor of the wound. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section addresses the nature of the wound and how it speaks to us across the films. Relatedly, is there a pattern in the type of wound that reoccurs and
how is the wound speaking to us. The next section considers what the
wound comes to denote ideologically across the films. More specifically, I
will demonstrate how the individual wounds that repeat themselves
across a body of films can be read as a metonym for a wider collective
and cultural trauma related directly to The Naxalite Movement and the
state’s violent response. The final section focuses on memory, examining
what is it exactly the wound gives us access to and what kind of narrative
and history does it help us to remember expressly about The Naxalite
Movement.

The audio-visual manifestation of the wound

In *Apanjan*, one could readily dismiss Anandamoyee’s death as part of a
narrative in which the tragic demise of the Mother is played out with a
melodramatic intent. However, I want to identify this particular moment,
the death of Anandamoyee in *Apanjan*, as the origin of the break in Indian
cinema, the rupture that gave birth to Parallel Cinema, and denoting the
opening of a wound. But how exactly the wound speaks to us
demonstrates how the language correlates closely with the aesthetic
rupture of Parallel Cinema. The wound speaks to us through a number of
audio-visual devices and specific micro gestures that convey a literal
translation of rupture on screen. This includes a temporal irruption in the
narrative, the sound of a gunshot, the victim clutching what is a stomach
wound, the spontaneity of this wounding, all of which circulates around
the imagery of violence and death.
Relatedly, the opening of a wound, a fatal one, is linked to a much wider acknowledgment of a collective trauma, resonating in films like *Pratidwandi, Calcutta '71, Padatik* and *Jukti Takko Aar Gappo*. A major audio-visual concept at work in terms of how the wound is speaking to us is the role of the gunshot, both aurally and in terms of its physical onscreen impact on the body. Firstly, the gunshot itself functions as a type of cinematic rupture, a dissenting gesture that as Eisenstein & McGowan have said ‘returns to us the break that the signifier inaugurates’ (2012: 9). Moreover, the gunshot, a type of violent laceration, can be interpreted as an iconoclastic act. Secondly, the bodily reactions to being shot are equivalent, characterized in a spasmodic choreography, points to the severity of the violence. I want to discuss both of these ideas further in relation to how a kind of wounding becomes amplified through a cinematic performance of rupture.

‘The rupture is always a traumatic cut’ (2012: 36) write Eisenstein & McGowan, finding a particular resonance in the shrill, recalcitrant sound edit used when Anandamoyee is shot. The dissenting force of this particular edit is nowhere to be seen in the rest of the film, elucidating the materiality of this critical rupture. The piercing gunshot, equivalent of a terrifying scream, amplifies the rupture and which is rendered as something unholy while intimating a broader geo-political paralysis of a nation. While the singularity of the gunshot is an audio-visual translation of rupture, the subsequent mosaic of shots used to depict the severity of the wound, visualizes Anandamoyee’s fragmented body as a geo-political
topography of pain. This fragmentary explication begins with a medium close up of Anandamoyee who freezes, paralyzed by the gunshot (Fig 5), moves into a tighter close up of Anandamoyee’s ghoulish facial expression, accentuated by the micro gesture of her mouth wide open (Fig 6), and finishes with a vertiginous high angle shot looking down on Anandamoyee (Fig 7) who then collapses, falling back out of the frame, signalling a finality.

Fig 5. Paralyzed by the gunshot. Fig 6. Anandamoyee’s ghoulish face.

Fig 7. A high angle shot of Anandamoyee.
These three shots depicting Anandamoyee’s death are juxtaposed to the discordant sound of the Venu flute that stays in a singular register before Anandamoyee collapses. Correspondingly, In *Pratidwandi*, before Tunu is shot, the intercutting of shots including Tunu and the firing squad are repeated several times, emerging as an experiential audio-visual recreation of what trauma may feel like to Siddhartha who looks on (see Fig 8 - 10). The camera never reveals the faces of the firing squad, bayonets raised sinisterly, refusing to humanize the establishment and at one point reverting to the negative photographic effect in order to conjure a vivid impression of totalitarianism. Over the images of Tunu and the firing squad the droning twang of a sarod can be heard. The sarod is an instrument that gives a brooding forte presaging the traumatic punctuation of Tunu’s execution. As soon as Tunu is shot, his body spasms and he falls down. As I propose later in relation to *Bhuvan Shome* (see chapter three) sound can also act as a marker of rupture. Here the sound of the gunfire is an amplified, an outlandish explication that punctuates the narrative, extenuating the traumatic impact of Tunu’s death.

Fig 8. The firing squad prepares to shoot.  
Fig 9. Siddhartha looks on helplessly.
In Pratidwandi and many of the films, the wound speaks to us through a fragmentary audio-visual design. The staccato of edits, the piercing gunshot and unusual combination of shot sizes creates a disruptive rhythm in the narrative that replicates the wound in audio-visual terms. Kai Erikson’s definition of collective trauma is meaningful in this context that he labels as ‘a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality’ (1995: 187). Since the street children, the youth and the Mother are imagined in Apanjan as a loosely connected metaphorical family, the death of Anandamoyee severs this tenuous yet important social bond, recognizing how trauma undermines group solidarity and results in a ‘loss of confidence in established social structures and forms of community’ (Hutchison, 2016: 47). More importantly, this traumatic severance returns to the ways in which rupture has a social and political
impact that is ambivalently manifested in terms of iconoclastic renewal and destruction, as will be discussed in more detail in chapter three. Hutchison (2016: 47) suggests some scholars argue trauma suspends politics. Anandamoyee’s death does in fact bring a halt to the violent political contestation between the youth. Indeed, Hutchison’s discussion of trauma and political community chimes with the ambivalent yet potentially transformative political space that appears in the aftermath of iconoclastic acts. I would go further, posting rupture, through the enablers of trauma and iconoclasm, is a source of political mobilization that is imagined notably in the endings to these films. This arguably returns to the ways in which films have often functioned as a polarizing cultural form of ideological consensus and opposition, mobilizing support for specific political objectives.

The treatment of the body as something spasmodic, and which repeats itself throughout the films becomes a personification of the ruptured state. And perhaps the most potent traumatic image that repeats itself across these films is the ruptured body. Notably, the micro gesture of the characters holding their stomach in agony once they have been shot, suggests the cinematic imagining of the wound is an unbearably painful avulsion. Here we also get to see the physical wound. However, the use of long shots when this rupture occurs, framing the victims within their social environment, keeping them at a distance, depicts the wound as a cinematic spectacle, and which in some respects limits the emotional impact of the trauma upon the spectator. Hodgin & Thakkar (2017) warn of the dangers of spectacularising trauma, arguing films can sometimes
decontextualize the event or action being represented. I don’t feel this is prevalent in the films I have looked at but it is a question that draws attention to the ideological constraints Parallel Cinema filmmakers often found themselves in relation to new state led practices. In some respects looking at the spasmodic bodily representations individually, the wound can appear as a hyperbolic manifestation. But when pieced together, the spasmodic representations constitute a collectivity, narrating an unconscious political solidarity amongst the filmmakers that is less spectacle and more figurative. Perhaps an exception is in the opening sequence to Padatik that uses a freeze frame and close up of the Naxal when he is shot three times (Fig 11), magnifying the anguish, thereby drawing in the spectator to experience the emotional impact of the trauma. Sen takes the wound imagery further in this traumatic moment whereby the anguished image of the Naxal literally disintegrates with the appearance of a burn motif that scars the image in a self-reflexive gesture of violence (Fig 12). Another reading of this gesture is trauma leaves a literal scar on the physicality of the medium, whereby the aura of rupture is finally consolidated as an image.

The circularity of these images as a consolidating index of trauma is also articulated through the emotional anguish of the four victims, an affectation located culturally in the idea of rasa. Scholars including Paul Willemen, Patrick Hogan (2003) and Alisha Ibkar (2015) argue the use of rasa point to a culturally coded practice in which audiences react to Indian cinema ‘in terms of the nine rasa or moods each having its corresponding expression signs’ (Willemen, 1980: 43). My contention is the rasa of Bhayanaka (terror/fear) can be denoted in the anguish of the four victims notably Anandamoyee’s ghastly facial expression, indicating the emotional impact of trauma is made acutely psychic. Along with the serrating sound and impact of the gunshot and the frenzied bodily rejoinders, rasa heightens and transmits the severity of the traumatic wound in a culturally indigenous form. It is through the prism of rasa that the emotional affect of trauma becomes altogether visible.
I also want to contend the paralysis of Anandamoyee’s body as isolated in three shots and juxtaposed to the dissonant sound of the Venu flute represents the violence of Naxalism as a poignant yet traumatic moment in the history of India. Trauma is depicted as both a bodily wound, visible in the shot of Anandamoyee clutching the bullet wound, and also a psychic wound, a point of origin and locality of violence that will have long lasting effects, connecting with other later imaginings of historical and political rupture. Anandamoyee’s corporal state in the three shots when she is killed presents her paralysis as a broader geo-political metonymy, looking forward to the immobilization of Calcutta in the early 1970s by young Maoist revolutionaries. More crucially, returning to Eisenstein and McGowan’s claim that gestures draw attention to the act of rupture, the extended gesture of Anandamoyee’s tortured facial expression, consistently visible in all three shots (see Fig 65 – 67), provides a similar function, exclaiming the wound as a flamboyant signifier of rupture. Indeed, the severity of the bodily rupture in many of these films heralds an ideological potency in which the state is implicated as an indiscriminate perpetrator of violent repression. It is important to note all
of these films were very much immediate reactions to what was happening in Calcutta at the time, a loosely connected response to Naxal unrest and state repression. But my reasoning is that by looking more intensely at the performativity of rupture and notably the traumatic victims of state violence unearths the interventionist role that Parallel Cinema initially sought to play in the cultural politics of the era.

Another way in which the collectivity of the wound is amplified is through a break in temporality, an interruption in the narrative that becomes a direct metaphor for the ways in which rupture behaves. The violence that occurs on screen is like an irruption in the narrative. Beginning with Anandamoyee’s death, a temporal irruption, is an audio-visual device that repeats itself through the films, disrupting linear, chronological time with the insertion of random, disconnected images that do not necessarily convey trauma but suggest something far more historically fragmented. Temporal irruption, part of broader aesthetic indices, enunciates the relationship between iconoclasm and the aesthetic rupture, a phantasmal collision between cinema and history. Eisenstein & McGowan write: ‘we know we are in the presence of rupture’s interval when the continuous order of things is interrupted’ (2012: 35). And it is interruptions, specifically temporal irruption that is used to amplify the wound that makes rupture discernable. In the case of Anandamoyee, after she falls down dead, and in what is the most abstract interruption in the film, cutting to three tightly edited shots amounts to a visual manifestation of Anandamoyee’s life flashing before her eyes. The first shot sees the camera whip pan from left to right across a landscape populated by trees
(Fig 13), and then segues into the second shot repeating the same movement but this time outside what appears to be a house in the village (Fig 14), and ends with the third shot, which is inside a courtyard of a house (Fig 15) which gradually tilts up to the sky.

Sutured together, the three shots create an ellipsis, a rupturing of the present. But they also give us access to something sacred, taking us into the subjective space of Anandamoyee, thus allowing us to experience her
traumatic death. Functioning as traces of memories, the three shots also return to imagery of the village, a past when Anandamoyee was happiest. Kaplan has argued ‘trauma is narration without narrativity – that is, without the ordered sequence we associate with narratives’ (2001: 204) and that images ‘erupt into cinematic space, unheralded in the story as in an individual’s consciousness’ (2001: 204). I would claim the historical and political significance of Anandamoyee’s death is heralded through a temporal irruption whereby ‘the traumatic event intimately links several temporalities, making them coexist within the same perceptual or somatic field, so much that the very distinction between psychic time and chronological time seems suspended’ (Radstone, 2001: 197). The suspension between psychic and chronological time that marks trauma, as argued by Radstone, is reflected in the temporal eruption of memories as fleeting traces. Certainly, the discontinuity that rupture produces points to trauma as a signifier that ‘alters time, amputating any sense of before of after’ (Hutchison, 2016: 45). In Pratidwandi, the nightmarish execution of Tunu that Siddhartha imagines we see a suspension of spatial and temporal linearity to evoke the pursuit of the fantastical, allowing Siddhartha to deal with anxieties involving political guilt, shame and acquiescence: ‘He sees Tunu…wearing a defiant smile on his face as the soldiers take aim and fire. Siddhartha would like to die in the same way with his courage and determination intact’ writes Ganguly (2012: 326). But I would go further and argue it is particularly important to read temporal irruption as not merely a ‘breach in the mind’s experience of time, self, and the world’ (Caruth, 1996: 4) but is also tied to the
signification and consolidation of rupture. Another distinction remains though and is worth drawing attention to; the temporal irruption that characterises the death of Anandamoyee is singular and lacks the political connotations insinuated by temporality in later films like Bhuvan Shome and Pratidwandi. The temporal irruption of Anandamoyee’s death, linked to trauma, does signify a cataclysmic historical rupture, envisaging the political impact of Naxalism but the death of Anandamoyee in terms of revolutionary historical change is presented as a debilitating event. Meek notes that ‘For [Janet] Walker trauma is best shown through experimental forms of narrative construction’ (2013: 487). I want to build on the idea of temporal irruption as an audio-visual marker of the wound and briefly turn to Pratidwandi, to demonstrate how the wound speaks to us through daydreams, flashbacks and nightmares, all functioning collectively to elucidate the political impact of rupture on the psyche of the male.

In Pratidwandi, it is important to recognise Siddhartha’s apolitical stance masks a deeper psychic trauma that is reflected in the way he behaves, an aspect of the film’s fragmented audio-visual and narrative design, ‘characters and incidents…seem to drift indeterminably in a rather undefined environment reflecting the protagonist’s distaste for it’ (Das Gupta, 1994: 103). This alienated comportment repeatedly finds Siddhartha in limbo, wandering hopelessly through the streets of Calcutta, daydreaming and unable to comprehend the state of things.58

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58 Another way of reading Siddhartha’s urban alienation is through the prism of European existential literature. In taking this approach, the idiosyncrasies of Siddhartha can be traced to the influences of Jean Paul Sartre, Stendhal, Albert Camus and Dostoyevsky who helped nurture the figure of the detached, anxious middle class
Kai Erikson underlines one potential explanation of interpreting Siddhartha's discombobulated temperament. Erikson argues ‘trauma invokes a continual reliving of some wounding experience in daydreams and nightmares, flashbacks and hallucinations, and in a compulsive seeking out of similar circumstances’ (1995: 184). Of particular note here is Erikson’s emphasis on the wounding experience, which he suggests is experienced continually through, for example, daydreams and nightmares, of which Siddhartha experiences several. Relatedly, Erikson’s use of the term compulsive certainly works to extenuate the obsessiveness that characterises Siddhartha’s character in the film, increasingly lost in the abyss of a personal trauma. But it is specifically this wounding experience that is first expressed in the death of Siddhartha’s father but also correspondingly symptomatic of a wider cultural trauma that is also reflected simultaneously in the opening of Pratidwandi. In doing so, the funeral and death that lingers portentously through the film comes to function symbolically and literally as the continuation of a wound first opened in Apanjan and that can no longer be silenced.

bourgeois male. Reading Siddhartha as symptomatic of the existential male holds a certain acumen considering Ray’s interests with Western music and literature that is evident in many of his films. It is worth mentioning that Anindya Sengupta (2007) in her essay ‘Seeing through the Sound: Certain tendencies of the Soundtrack in Satyajit Ray’s Films of the 1970s’ looks at Pratidwandi in relation to Tomas Gutierrez Alea’s Memories of Underdevelopment (1968), ‘another film about one man and the city during times of political trouble’ (Sengupta, 2007: 11) with which Pratidwandi bears a striking resemblance particularly in terms of the theme of urban alienation. Interestingly, Dhritiman Chatterjee who plays Siddhartha has also talked of the uncanny intersections between the films he starred in the late 1960s (also Sen’s Padatik) between India, Cuba and other countries. Chatterjee also compares Pratidwandi to Memories of Underdevelopment.
Likewise, the use of a negative image in the opening sequence of *Pratidwandi*, masked over the action before Siddhartha is introduced at the cremation of his father, is also wholly appropriate for visualizing the way trauma renders reality indistinct and dislocated (Fig 16 & 17). Ray's use of the negative image can also be broadly sustained as part of the avant-garde repertoire, recognizing the fragmented, elliptical nature of independent non-realist cinema is often best suited to represent trauma on screen. Advancing the significance of the negative image further, T.G. Vaidyanathan argues Ray 'uses the negative to keep down the emotional temperature' (1971: 49). Denying the spectator the opportunity to fully experience the emotional pain of mourning that we can hear in the opening creates a detachment from the narrative and makes us question the political value of the image. The abrupt shift in Ray's formal treatment in *Pratidwandi* certainly sustains the argument of the broad cultural impact that Naxalism had on Bengali cinema. Unlike *Apanjan* and *Bhuvan Shome* where rupture is intermittent, suggesting and pointing to a coming break in history, *Pratidwand* opens in an explicit state of historical and political rupture, indicating how the development of rupture, undoubtedly propelled by Naxalism, now takes on an overwhelming momentum and anarchism that consolidates the 'traumatic image' (Meek, 2014: 31) in the form of the wound.
To expand further the role of temporal irruption, we can also consider how flashbacks are used to disrupt linearity, replicating trauma while extenuating the wound as something inherently residual. In *Pratidwandi*, a flashback jarringly interrupts Tunu and Siddhartha’s conversation as they are discussing political choices, returning to the syntax of trauma (Fig 18 & 19). The violation of temporality recovers a traumatic memory for Siddhartha who is ‘reading under a tree when he is called to witness the cutting of a chicken’s neck’ (Vaidyanathan, 1971: 49). Maureen Turim has talked of the ‘frequency of the flashback trope as a way of signalling and exploring the return of traumas’ (2001: 207) and how they are ‘often abrupt, fragmentary, and repetitive, marked by a modernism of technique’ (2001: 207). While the use of the flashback visualizes the traumatised psyche of Siddhartha, there is also a political meaning at stake. Robinson says the sequence was altered from the novel: ‘Instead of showing Tunu nauseated by the decapitation of a chicken by a servant, Tunu is seen to be fascinated’ (1988: 20). Marking the Naxalite as morally inadequate is a significant alteration, whereby: ‘an equation is suggested through the placement of the recall between his [Siddhartha’s] introversion and over-
sensitivity and his brother’s subsequent conversion to Naxalism’ (Vaidyanathan, 1971: 49).

Moreover, in *Pratidwandi* as soon as Siddhartha awakes from a nightmarish guillotining (Fig 20 & 21) he almost immediately slips back into a dream state again. Dream sequences recur throughout many of these films. Writing in 1971, T.G. Vaidyanathan argues for importance of the dream in *Pratidwandi*: ‘No other sequence of images is so commanding and compelling as this one and here, if anywhere, seems to lie the key to Siddhartha’s personality’ (1971: 50). Claiming the dream-nightmare as an inexplicable avant-garde occurrence in the cinema of Ray contradicts how Ray’s style has chiefly been defined as falling in line with classical realist cinema. In this case, the fragmented style in *Pratidwandi* points to the ways in which creative experiments with formalism was expansive, infecting all kinds of filmmakers. Indeed, the avant-garde has often come in for criticism as pathetically reductive, ‘a

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59 I have labelled Siddhartha’s dream a nightmare, although it is often described as a dream, primarily because of the startling imagining of Tunu’s death, a terrifying explication and marker of trauma.
sort of cannibalism, of devouring, reducing and taking over, making art an instrument of power’ (Sundaram, 1991: 39). Ironically, Ray opposed avant-garde cinema, a formal break with film grammar with Pratidwandi was not only suitable to expressing the trauma of Naxalism but suggestive of the ways in which the burden of history naturally called for a shift in style. While the fractured and dislocated style\(^\text{60}\) that characterises Pratidwandi particularly in the extended nightmare sequence can be attributed to historical forces, the wound as a signifier is overwhelmingly evident in the audio-visual treatment of rupture that unfolds. Aside, the nightmare also registers another wound perpetrated by the state, the execution of Tunu, one of many political victims of the state.

Fig 20. Siddhartha’s nightmarish experience. Fig. 21. Siddhartha being guillotined.

The death of Anandamoyee is undoubtedly the most violent explication in Apanjan. This event, a marker of rupture, also acts as an opening of a traumatic wound. In his understanding of historical trauma Allen Meek notes that ‘political power has also been mobilized around images of victims of violence’ (2010: 30). Anandamoyee is explicitly a victim of

\(^{60}\)Nayak (Hero) released in 1966, looks forward to Ray’s increasing experimentation with flashbacks and dream sequences in his films in the early 1970s.
political violence; the gunshot and subsequent bodily paralysis narrates a trauma perpetrated by the youth. However, Anandamoyee’s anguished death is not singular in the corpus of early Naxalite inspired films. Relatedly, the portrayal of the wound is also not a singular event. Meek notes that ‘[Josef] Breuer and Freud began to depart from [Jean-Martin] Charcot by emphasizing that trauma may not originate with a single event but be the effect of a cluster of events or causes’ (2010: 54). The proliferation of the wound as an image that reoccurs through these films testifies to this notion of trauma as something plural and cyclic.

It is worth returning to and looking more closely at the idea of collectivity and circularity of the wound by first isolating the specific instances of wounding that take place in the films. This begins with Apanjan when Anandamoyee is shot and killed. After this, the image of the wound proliferates. In Pratidwandi, Tunu, a Naxalite, the younger brother of Siddhartha, is shot and killed by a firing squad in a waking nightmare that Siddhartha experiences (Fig 22). Although it is a bloodless imagining, the gunshot rips through the soundtrack in a tone reminiscent of Anandamoyee’s death (Fig 23). Next, in Calcutta ’71, at the end of the film a nameless Naxalite youth on the run from the police is abruptly shot and killed (Fig 24). Once again, the violent gunshot on the soundtrack resonates. Padatik follows this where the film opens with another assassination of a young male. Lastly, in Jukti Takko Aar Gappo, the final film in the first wave of Bengali Naxalite films, Ghatak’s character, an
alcoholic professor, is shot dead in a police encounter targeting Naxalite members (Fig 25).

I have isolated the aforementioned traces of violent wounding in an attempt to identify a circularity in which ‘the experience of a trauma repeats itself, exactly and unremittingly’ (Caruth, 1996: 2). Kohne, Elm and Kabalek claim film:

‘activates and deconstructs taboos associated with traumatic wounds in a unique way – wounds that, because they are sometimes so painful and incomprehensible, cannot be comprehensively integrated into the psyche or narrations, history, mythology or ideology of the nation’ (2014: 9).
This certainly rings true with the physical and metaphorical trauma of
Naxalism, much of it resultant of state violence that are shared in the
audio-visual language of these traumatic traces. While these are
traumatic traces, rupture is conjured in the repeated image of a wound
that takes on an expansive political collectivism. The argument of
belatedness, explored ostensibly by Cathy Caruth in her influential
Freudian led work *Unclaimed experience: trauma, narrative and history*
(1996), posits the notion that the full extent of a traumatic event is only
evident much later:

'It is this inherent latency of the event that paradoxically explains
the peculiar, temporal structure, the belatedness, of historical
experience: since the traumatic event is not experienced as it
occurs, it is fully evident only in connection with another place, and
in another time...For history to be a history of trauma means that it
is referential precisely to the extent that it is not fully perceived as it
occurs' (1996: 8)

I would argue these films could be viewed in a similar way. The trauma
performed on screen was an unconscious act and not recognised as such
at the time because as Caruth notes ‘the traumatic event is not
experienced as it occurs’ (1996: 8). Some of these films offer a cultural
site for looking back and helping us to remember the atrocities that took
place, returning to haunt the spectator through a type of
phantasmagorical performativity. Latency could contestably be applied to
the ways in which we can return to films and look for such traumatic
traces. Kaplan and Wang write: ‘Our aim is to theorize how cultures too
may be traumatized, how traces of traumatic events leave their mark on
cultures’ (2004: 16). It is the trace that is significant here. Usually a trace
in the context of trauma is something we cannot see and only becomes apparent after time. But film arguably functions in a similar way. When we look back at these films today, the wound shifts from a singularity to a plural cinematic explication that amounts to a collective pattern, a kind of political wounding so to speak. Moreover, Judy Atkinson’s *Trauma Trails: Recreating Song Lines* (2002), which deals with trans-generational trauma, expressly the impact of colonialism on Aboriginal culture, claims trauma leaves a trail that can be in the form of a pattern occurring over time. Atkinson uses Charles Figley’s work ‘Trauma and its Wake (1986)’ which ‘describes the traumatic effect of extraordinary stressful experiences as being like waves created by a stone cast into a pond’ (Atkinson, 2002: 24). This fascinating analogy of trauma returns to the concept of latency but I would argue Figley also inadvertently recognises how rupture behaves in a similar way.

Atkinson’s theorisation of trauma’s cumulative impact over time may seem parochial but the idea of trauma leaving a trail is pertinent and I would argue materialises in theses films precisely in the image of the wound, which is both literal and symbolic. It is worth accentuating Kai Erikson’s chapter on ‘Notes on Trauma and Community (1995) in Caruth's *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. Kai Erikson (1995: 185) argues the social dimension of trauma can come about through the collectivity of private wounds that creates a group culture and that comes to represent solidarity. This is certainly what we find with imagery of wounds in the films. Together they represent a community, the Naxalites
specifically, that have been traumatized rather than just isolated individuals. Erikson argues that people who have suffered similar traumatic experiences find a kinship and come together, what he calls ‘a gathering of the wounded’ (1995: 187) and which subsequently allows for ‘the work of recovery to begin’ (1995: 187). Pooled together, the wounds in these films create a kind of ghostly kinship. Although it is difficult to say some kind of recovery begins, there is expressly recognition of the wound as a signifier of rupture in history that has taken place. Moreover, Erikson’s work realises how a pattern of wounding can be identified through the films I have focused on, reliving of trauma and which come to function as a metaphor for the political violence expressly enacted by the state against The Naxalite Movement, and which will form the next part of the chapter.

**The Wound as a Metaphor for State Violence**

‘Police sources give the numbers of CPI (M-L) members and supporters killed between March 1970 and August 1971 as 1783, which unofficial sources believe should be at least doubled, according to Banerjee. And this does not include the numbers killed inside jails by police firings on unarmed prisoners’ (Robinson, 1988: 16).

What would the wound say about the thousands of Naxalites that were massacred by the state? Would the repeated circularity of the wound that appears across these Bengali Parallel Cinema films suggest an admonition of the state’s culpability in the systematic annihilation of Naxalite members? It has been argued the ‘traumatic experience cannot be directly transmitted though media’ (Meek, 2010: 34), and the same
goes for the memory of trauma (Hirsch, 2004). However, Emma Hutchison’s recent work on trauma argues that visual culture is a ‘potent medium for the expression of trauma’ (2016: 126) since ‘aesthetic sources’ such as cultural artefacts including film ‘hold greater possibilities of finding a voice emotionally attuned to expressing the wounds of trauma’ (2016: 126). Meek’s elaboration of trauma attends specifically to what he calls ‘the images of bare life (the hysteric, the colonized indigene, the camp inmate and the victim of terror)’ (2010: 29) which he argues ‘reveal the political forces and structures that define individual and collective trauma’ (2010: 29). More specifically, Meek reasons visual media including film are invaluable: ‘images of the past can be discovered remnants of “oppressed histories” and forgotten and discarded social fantasies’ (2010: 30). In this section of the chapter I will reason how the wound comes to function as a dormant metaphor for the state violence that was perpetrated against the Naxalite Movement.

Later films including Pratidwandi, Calcutta ’71 and Jukti Takko Aar Gappo, also disclose ‘traumatic traces’ (Kaplan & Wang, 2012) or ‘trauma trails’ (Atkinson, 2002). These traumatic traces or trails materialize in the form of wounds and ambiguously narrate themes of political violence and repression in which ‘stories of young idealistic men being brutally tortured and shot by the police has been the most sustained component of this legacy’ (Roy, 2012: 148). I would reason this is where Parallel Cinema came to intervene politically, responding to the ‘horrors of state repression’ (Roy, 2012: 148) with immediacy, recognising the urgency to
catalogue the atrocities in altogether divergent modes. This included the unemployed male, the fragmented urban landscape of Calcutta, the death and absence of fathers, the destabilised mother and the transformation of traditional gender roles. I want to reason that all of these tropes emerge as shared cultural manifestations, expressing an extended metaphorical wound, and part of a much wider political trauma measured in the severity of state violence inflicted on Naxalite activists. However, it is the figure of the wounded individual, the trauma victim (Meek, 2010), often violently annihilated by the state that remains the most potent vestige of rupture in these films. But I want to argue there are two types of traumatic images at work in these films. Firstly, the traumatised individual, the victim, clutching their stomach in agony – this is the literal and physical wound. Then there is the metonymical wound. This is when we look at the wounds together and which arguably amounts to a collective trauma at work and that speaks to us about the violence at work.

When *Calcutta ’71* was released in cinemas in 1972, the Naxalite movement had met its demise in July-August 1971 and which was followed by yet more state repression. Biblap Dasgupta writes that ‘from the middle of 1971…the offensive against CPI (M-L) was conducted directly in the name of the ruling party’ (1972: 263) and which led to the capturing of Charu Mazumdar, the main leader of the Naxalite movement, in July 1972 who would later in a few weeks die of a heart attack. The

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61 The Naxalite disturbances in Calcutta polarized public opinion, and laid bare intrinsic ideological differences between the old and new generation, a theme that resonates in many early Parallel Cinema films.
death of Mazumdar for the state formally announced the end of the unrest in Calcutta. But the Naxalites continued to show resistance and which saw a continuation of violent state repression wrought against Naxalite members and sympathisers, many of them young students, an aspect of historical reality which is reflected in the opening of Sen’s *Calcutta ’71*.  

‘Today at dawn a body of an unidentified young man was found at the northwestern part of Kolkata Moidan. The young man is roughly twenty years old. The dead body has various marks of bullet injuries. Anyone knowing the identity of the dead young man should contact the traffic department of Kolkata police’.

As a voice over announces this grim statement, a young girl listens on tentatively, suggesting it could be someone she knew. Maybe even her brother. The description of the anonymous dead young man with bullet injuries conjures a traumatic image of violence and doubly functions as an iconoclastic annihilation of the youth, a theme that seems to be carried over from Apanjan’s depiction of youth as disillusioned and anarchic.

Meek deals with the media image in three ways; the traumatic image, structural trauma and historical trauma. But it is the latter that Meek argues needs asserting more fully into trauma theory: ‘historical trauma makes a case for the political significance of specific instances of violence, suffering or catastrophe in the past’ (2010: 32). Meek calls the traumatic image as ‘something physically or psychically traumatic’ (2010: 31) in which ‘the victim invariably belongs to a group, a political

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62 *Calcutta ’71* opens with the following quote, establishing a tone of political disillusionment: ‘Every time I return to Calcutta I feel it must be surely impossible that it can continue much longer like this. Yet it always does. An interval of a year makes the visual impact more painful, the squalor more squalid, the poverty more militant, the despair more desperate. I find Calcutta an intimidating and even infernal city, unredeemed and probably doomed’.
movement, an ethnicity or a nation’ (2010: 33). In this case, the young male, as we will discover through the rest of the films including *Pratidwandi* and *Padatik*, belong to the Naxalite Movement in Calcutta. But what exactly is the political significance of the wound that expresses violence? In some respects, instances of violence in these films that result in the continual playing out of the wound are not explicitly stated and to some degree avoid the much larger political issues at stake.

In reading *Pratidwandi* both scholars Darius Cooper (2000) and Suranjan Ganguly (2012) situate Siddhartha’s traumatic state as part of a wider social crisis of masculinity and a tale of succession. I would contend Cooper’s reading of Siddhartha in particular depoliticizes trauma, failing to recognize the potency of the wound as a conduit for rupture, overlooking the wider historical determinant of Naxalism and the significance of Tunu’s violently imagined execution. I would reason the image of the traumatised male in films like *Pratidwandi* is undeniably forged out of a political malcontent that should be reasserted into the ways in which the film has been read. As noted earlier, the metaphor of the wound as a direct expression of rupture is evident quite immediately in the opening funeral. The wound, referential of the trauma of Naxalism begins with the loss of the father and gains a more discordant political resonance in Siddhartha’s nightmarish imagining of Tunu’s death, the committed Naxal. In *Pratidwandi*, the execution of Tunu, which

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63 Darius Cooper (2000) and Suranjan Ganguly’s (2012) analysis of Siddhartha’s trauma is conjoined by a traditional understanding of the frustrated, apathetic young male. The opening image of Siddhartha is resolutely traumatic, a young man paralysed by the uncertainty of an era and faced with the fracture of his family. Though Siddhartha is
Siddhartha imagines, connects metonymically with the opening of a wound first enacted at the end of *Apanjan* when Anandamoyee is accidentally shot and killed by the youth. But unlike *Apanjan* where the wounding is a tragic manifestation of political disillusionment, Tunu is framed as a victim of state violence. Ray’s decision to imagine the death of Tunu as traumatic is significant since it makes visible state violence against the Naxalite youth that was unfolding at the time:

‘In response to the Naxalite movement, the State structure underwent a fascist transformation while at the same time maintaining a façade of rule by law. Thus we had the brutal practice of extra-judicial killings of the movement’s activists’ (K.G. Kannabiran in Pelly, 2008: 175).

Moreover, framing Tunu’s death as traumatic recognises Naxalism as a rupture that permits the wound to finally speak, localizing the state as the source of violence. Conversely, the interpretation of the wound, finally allowed to speak is complicated with Siddhartha’s perplexed witnessing of the trauma, suggesting he is unable to comprehend the voice that is released through the wound. Certainly, attempts to read the framing of the wound as a metaphor for political violence is complicated by the fact that the wound is also not allowed to speak. In *Pratidwandi*, Ray gives us

traumatised by the death of his father, it is a trauma made doubly worse when he later imagines the death of his younger brother, Tunu. Two of the most foremost writers on *Pratidwandi*, Ganguly and Cooper, talk about Siddhartha in terms of a wider masculinity in crisis. Cooper argues in terms of Hindu philosophy, describing ‘Siddhartha’s male lack as a symptom of the larger Hindu acedic form of both active and inactive tamasic suffering of frustration’ (2000: 135) that paralyses him psychologically. Cooper interprets the acedic as spiritual torpor/apathy and the tamasic as frustration. While both of these qualities, apathy and frustration have often characterised the urban youth, Ganguly reads Siddhartha’s masculinity in crisis in relation to the void left by the death of the father: ‘Siddhartha is neither materially nor ideologically qualified to replace his father’ (2012: 320), thereby situating *Pratidwandi* as a tale about familial succession.
one of the first literal sights of the wound. The first time we are introduced to Tunu he is applying anointment to a wound on his leg and later conceals the wound with a bandage (Fig 26 & 27). As Ganguly notes, the inference here is that Tunu has been involved in ‘one of the daily skirmishes in the city’ (2012: 325). In some respects, Ray’s refusal to contextualise the wound denies the wound a voice and depoliticizes my attempts to read the wound as something political. Nonetheless, the lack of historical and political context for the wound is paradoxically undone by the magnification of the wound through the editing. Moreover, the action of bandaging the wound in an attempt to conceal the violence that Tunu is involved in functions as a literal marker of the damage that was being inflicted by the state upon Naxals in Calcutta.

Fig 26. The wound in close up. Fig 27. Tunu bandages the wound.

In terms of the political impotency of Siddhartha, a similar position of powerlessness is replicated in the spectator. I want to turn briefly here to Meek’s discussion of the victim in relation to both Susan Sontag and John Berger. Referring to her work on photographs, Sontag says the response of ‘bearing witness to suffering and cruelty’ leads to ‘political frustration on
the part of the viewer at being unable to affect the cause of the shown events’ (Meek, 2010: 33). Berger makes a similar point, ‘photographs of extreme suffering confront viewers with feelings of “moral inadequacy” which effectively disperses the shock of the image…and their effect is ultimately to depoliticize public response through feelings of impotence’ (Berger in Meek, 2010: 33). In the violent instance of Tunu’s execution, Siddhartha is sutured into the fragmented montage as inadequate, paralysed by shock and whereby his emotional response becomes a mirror image of our own sense of despondency and impotence.

In his discussion of the Holocaust and film, Joshua Hirsch (2004) discusses the problems of witnessing history and implications for historical memory: ‘Witnesses survived. From this survival some questions have arisen. What are the effects of having witnessed such things? Can something of this witnessing be transmitted to the public?’ (2004: 6). Some of the Parallel Cinema films simulate or reproduce the concept of witnessing trauma, whereby the traumatic event is recognized by the presence of a character(s). This witnessing of trauma also once again augments the severity of the wound. For instance, when Anandamoyee is shot, both the street children and the youth act as witnesses to trauma. Caruth writes: ‘What returns to haunt the victim…is not only the reality of the violent event but also the reality of the way that its violence has not yet been fully known’ (1996: 6). I would argue unlike the youth, who witness the stark political reality of their violent anger; the street children are unable to comprehend the trauma of what they
witness. As Kaplan points out and with which I would partially agree is Caruth reduces trauma to ‘an affect only, not meaning’ (2004: 34). I would argue that determining trauma as a signifier of rupture politicizes the concept whereby meaning has to be sought in relation to emotional affects.

Let us return to the final sequence of Apanjan. The emotional reaction to Anandamoyee’s death from the both the street children and youth (Fig 28 & 29) is evident in the numbing physiology. Numbness and agony, symptomatic of having witnessed a traumatic event, purposely marks out the children as a victim of trauma. But the shock of the rupture is not merely emotional, disclosing a meaning about ‘the experience of modernity as traumatic’ (Wang, 2004: 16) in which the ‘secular dethroning of the sacred and the absolute’ (Wang, 2004: 16), namely the Mother, draws an interrelatedness between trauma and iconoclasm as adjoined signifiers of rupture, a correlation that reasserts itself in similarly traumatic moments in films other than Apanjan. In a dream sequence from Pratidwandi, Siddhartha can only look on helplessly as a sort of impotent witness to history, when his brother, Tunu, is shot and killed. Whereas Kaplan has argued of the different positions viewers of trauma films can take up, notably the spectator as a witness to trauma, ‘the most politically useful position’ (2001: 204) claims Kaplan, is made especially so since Siddhartha also ‘sees himself primarily as a witness’ (Cooper, 2000: 138). Yet since we as film spectators can also be regarded as ‘secondary witnesses of trauma’ (Hodgin & Thakkar, 2017: 12), the execution of
Tunu situates the act of state violence as part of the public sphere, or perhaps the wound echoes Mark Seltzer’s conceptualization of the wound: ‘where private and public cross: the transit-point between the individual and the collective’ (1997: 25).

Tunu as a victim of state violence is undeniably a traumatic image but the impotency of Siddhartha’s position and many of the other characters in the films that I have discussed, as merely a witness to history, unable to intervene and prevent the violence from taking place, depicts Naxalism as ultimately futile and creates apathy in the spectator. Although the perpetrator of violence is identified as the establishment, executing the Naxalite is a pessimistic statement on the perils of political revolution that simply reinforces the status quo. A point made dubiously considering Tunu’s execution is a bloodless act and who is shown not to defy the firing squad.\textsuperscript{64} Indeed, \textit{Pratidwandi} might be an exception in the

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{fig28.png}
\caption{The youth react to Anandamoyee’s death.}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{fig29.png}
\caption{The children look on as witnesses.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{64} Why could Ray not have imagined Tunu with a machine gun mowing down the firing squad in a spectacle of anarchy? Acts of political theatre made famous in an emerging global counter culture cinema such as Godard’s \textit{Weekend} (1967) and Lindsay Anderson’s \textit{If...} (1968). Instead Tunu, the revolutionary, stands sheepishly still,
imagining of the wound. When Tunu is shot the source of the violence is explicitly the state. However, the ambiguity of the wound prevails throughout the rest of the films. For example in the ending to Calcutta '71, the unidentified Naxal is killed. But we are not told who shoots him. Ambiguity resides in locating the source of the wound since Sen does not explicitly show the state slaying the young male; he simply turns and looks at the camera in horror before he is violently shot dead. It is worth noting the actor who plays the Naxal in Calcutta '71 (Fig 30); Tunu in Pratidwandi (Fig 31) and who also reappears at the beginning of Padatik (Fig 32) is actor Debraj Roy. And in all three occasions, the character of the young Naxal that Roy portrays is shot and killed repeatedly. In Pratidwandi, Tunu’s state led slaying is projected in the imaginings of Siddhartha. But this seems almost like a precursor for the real thing, which takes place at the end of Calcutta ‘71 when Roy’s character is finally killed in what can only be described as an encounter with the police.

Fig 30. Calcutta ‘71. Fig 31. Pratidwandi.

paralysed by state power. Or is this the callous reality of revolution that Ray wants to narrate?

65 Bernard D’Mello defines a police encounter as a ‘term used by the Indian police…to explain the death of an individual whom they have cold-bloodedly killed’ (2018: 81).
There is an eerily spectral connection between Pratidwandi, Calcutta ’71 and Padatik that suspends cinematic time and space and forges a potent image of the young Naxal as a victim of state violence. But why is it the same actor appears in all three films and what is the significance of repeating the traumatic action of the young Naxal being shot? The multiple wounding that occurs across the three films also replicates the experience of trauma, which repeats itself and ‘emerges as the unwitting re-enactment of an event that one cannot simply leave behind’ (Caruth, 1996: 2). In fact, the figure of the Naxal who is continually depicted on the run from the establishment culminates in the opening to Padatik where once again actor Debraj Roy re-appears and yet again is shot. The same actor Debraj Roy is reincarnated and resurrected as a Naxal in three films (Pratidwandi, Calcutta ’71, Padatik). But as a victim of state violence, the
Naxal is framed with a degree of ambivalence by director Mrinal Sen since it is never clear who fires the shots. We presume it is the police. *Apanjan* does the exact opposite, recognising the role of the youth in the violence and death of Anandamoyee. Moreover, director Tapan Sinha chooses to frame the rupture initiated by Anandamoyee’s death as filled with dread and impotency, curtailing the potentially interruptive nature of rupture, preferring to recoil and adopt destruction as a preferable locus. And as for Ghatak, he is even more explicit in *Jukti Takko Aar Gappo* (1974), isolating the source of violence that slays the aging alcoholic professor as originating directly from the police that surrounds the Naxals in the jungle in a premeditated killing that was symptomatic of the organised and systematic campaign waged by the state against the Maoist insurgency.

One of the ways in which the political ambiguity about the wound is circumvented is through the idea of circularity and this is expressed through the continuous presence of actor Debraj Roy. Since the same actor is shot three times roughly playing the same character, the Naxal, extenuates the severity and pain of the violence enacted by the state against the Naxalite Movement. Meek argues: ‘What is lost in the gradual transformation and increasing centrality of trauma as a concept of cultural criticism is a sense of the broader currents of power and violence that traumatize individuals and populations in the first place’ (Meek, 2010: 19). Meek goes on to argue that structural trauma ‘cannot adequately account for the political violence that is the cause of so much traumatic
experience’ (2010: 19). However, what rupture allows us to do is reassert the political into the analysis of trauma, treating the wound as ideological and thereby helping us to unlock history. And in this respect, the relation of the three sequences in which Debraj Roy is shot also speaks of a collective trauma but more significantly can be interpreted as a metonymical wound that narrates a political violence that was perpetrated by the state in this murderous epoch of repression. To reiterate, individual wounds lack a coherent voice and appear sporadic but when pooled together in a ghostly kinship, they speak to us about a political solidarity.

To some degree, there is a contradiction here between solidarity and discourse that is worth pointing out. Most of these films failed to chart a discourse about the Naxalite movement and detail the brutal repression and organised campaign waged against the Naxals. *Calcutta ’71*, the most politically explicit of the films, displaces the politics of the Naxalite movement for a long view of history in which poverty is framed as a relentlessly traumatising agent. Nevertheless Sen embraces a broader engagement with the currents of power and violence that has been argued for by Meek in his work on trauma theory. Meek has sought to rethink trauma in terms of its relationship with political discourse and contexts, contending trauma theory has often lacked engagement with wider contextual determinants, reverting to the spectacular.

*Calcutta ’71* seems like a rejoinder to this very notion of trauma as decorative and merely a spectacle, situating the perpetual wound of
poverty as a national trauma and in a wider historical context. For a film as resolutely Marxist as *Calcutta ’71*, Mrinal Sen attempts to defend the defeatist political position the film adopts, epitomised in the nihilistic ending, suggesting poverty ultimately debilitates the mobilization of a revolutionary position. And *Calcutta ’71* also seems to posit this is not possible in the face of prodigious state violence, thereby rendering the potential of rupture as ineffectual. The suggestive political space rupture creates in the final montage of *Calcutta ’71* and which ends with the killing of the young male can also be read alternatively, as a political record of the times. Mukhopadhyay notes:

‘1971 was also the year of the mass murders of selected Naxalite youths in Cossipore-Baranagar areas of North Calcutta, where hundreds of corpses, all mutilated and bullet-ridden, were ‘discovered’” (2009: 103)

The killing of the young male is an aspect of the film that registered profoundly with young men who saw the film in Calcutta when it was first released. Since filming was underway as early as 1969, Sen recalls incidents in which audience members recognised (referring here to the use of actuality footage of street demonstrations in many of these films) people they once knew and who were now dead. Ashish Rajadhyaksha (2009) notes the screenings of *Calcutta ’71* became a site for political gatherings, notably by the youth. While ‘the notion of film event’ as identified by Mariano Mestman (2011: 29) used to characterise Militant Cinema in Argentina frames Sen’s work as part of a broader cine-geography (Eshun & Gray, 2011) of Third Cinema. In this regard, Sen
instrumentalizes the wound so it takes on deeper associations to do with the nation. And this is to agitate a reaction from the audience.

Significantly Sen provokes and mobilizes the spectator to take up a combative position with the state that was responding to Naxalite unrest and the Cultural Revolution with violent repression. With the ending of Padatik, Sen would reimagine rupture once more, as a space that agitates political action from the spectator, reiterating how rupture is a heterogeneous, fluid concept that finally gives way to universality while ‘building united action…solidarity’ (Sen, 1977: 140).

It is not only Apanjan and Calcutta ‘71 that end with acts of violence, Ghatak’s final film Jukti Takko Aar Gappo (1974), also illuminates the agency of the wound. Director Kumar Shahani, once a student of Ghatak, writes ‘the communist upbringings of his [Ghatak] youth had taught him to act with a renewed vigour and hope, whenever a crisis or a breakdown occurred’ (Shahani, 1976 in Rajadhyaksha & Gangar, 1987: 121). Shahani’s words explain why Ghatak, often disconcertingly labelled the most disillusioned filmmaker of his generation, was also resolutely sanguine. Like his contemporaries, Ghatak was compelled to respond to Naxalism, and he was the final filmmaker of the four major Bengali auteurs to do so:

‘When he [Ghatak] made Jukti in 1974 he was at the end of his tether, his health and sanity disintegrating. But he was astute enough to realize the nation between, among other things, agents of political expediency and ultra-radicalism was on the brink; and if it was the last thing he did he would intervene – as an artist’ (Kapur, 1989: 180).
The central character of *Jukti Takko Aar Gappo* is Nilkantha, someone who is ‘struggling to come to terms with the social impact of the war of liberation in Bangladesh’ (1991: 28), and who is also in the bind of a greater history of displacement, exile and partition that marked the cinematic psyche of Ghatak’s work. Ghatak was himself a committed Marxist and brings with him a political mythology to Nilkantha, ‘acting in the role of a historical twin’ (Kapur, 1989: 181) relaying his exilic status and fundamentally as a victim of separation. In this respect, it is significant to read Nilkantha as a spectral agent of rupture that is tied up in an earlier discordant memory of partition, a far broader and painful rupture in India’s past. Hence, John Akomfrah labels Nilkantha as a ‘prisoner of uncertainty, forever tottering on the brink of chaos which promises both redemption and annihilation’ (1991: 28). *Jukti Takko Aar Gappo* ends with the death of Nilkantha. The stray bullet punctures his stomach, the open wound re-appearing, reiterating the destruction that rupture can imagine.

Rajadhyaksha reads the wounding of Nilkantha alternatively, recognizing not so much optimism but a kind of regeneration of political terms, the creation of a new space but at the expense of his erasure: ‘He himself is the past…and it is only through his own destruction even as the Naxalite youths are killed, that makes it possible for the others to face the future afresh’ (Rajadhyaksha, 1982: 136). This calls for recognition of the contrasting representations of Bengali youth. ‘The nihilism of the Naxalite boys is a romantic complement to the innocence of the new-found lovers’
(Kapur, 1989: 183) writes Geeta Kapur. There is a similar dichotomy at work in *Apanjan* in which we find the troubled youth juxtaposed to the innocuous street children. In this respect, rupture is not a totalizing destructive experience to the youth in *Jukti Takko Aar Gappo*:

‘Ritwik doesn’t take a pessimistic view-point. He only recognizes the inevitability of violence. And caught in that cross-fire, it is not he alone who dies unheroic, but also those young heroes whose moral courage he admires’ (Shahani, 1976 in Rajadhyaksha & Gangar, 1987: 120).

The solidarity that Shahani emphasizes amongst Ghatak and the Naxalite youth is one that importantly legitimizes the state of destruction that rupture denotes as potentially open ended, concealing veneration of Naxalism. Indeed, Shahani argues that Ghatak’s work is a ‘vital generative force for the young’ because ‘he does not hide behind a medieval or dead past or a decorative Indianness’ (Shahani, 1976 in Rajadhyaksha & Gangar, 1987: 122). Although, *Apanjan*, *Calcutta ’71* and *Jukti Takko Aar Gappo* end with the collective image of annihilation and projects trauma as a debilitating occurrence, the treatment of the wound is markedly different in *Jukti Takko Aar Gappo*. Geeta Kapur argues the ‘exaggerated death’ (1989: 192) of Nilkantha is depicted comically, which includes the pseudo reflexive shot of him pouring the alcohol over the camera lens (Fig 33 & 34). Hence, the death of Nilkantha is devoid of the solemnity that transpires in both *Apanjan* and *Calcutta ’71*, undercutting the potentially destructive explication of rupture. But what of the significance of the double register of Nilkantha’s death in terms of the trajectory of rupture? Since this also meant the erasure of
Ghatak from Indian cinema, a figurative Marxist icon, the wound first opened in *Apanjan* and used to signify rupture is now ambiguously sealed over, potentially signalling the totalizing failure of the Left in the face of state repression.

Fig 33. Nilkantha’s comical death.  
Fig 34. Nilkantha pours alcohol over the lens.

Tapan Sinha was not alone in imagining rupture as a potentially destructive force, unfulfilling the promise of change that conventional political interpretations of what rupture gives birth to. In fact, many of the filmmakers partially shared Sinha’s framing of the wound as a pessimistic occurrence of singularity – a grim, recalcitrant cry of political impotency. In the endings to *Apanjan, Calcutta ’71* and *Jukti Takko Aar Gappo*, violent death comes to mark the immediate impact of rupture as damaging. Rupture results in the destruction of human life and which lingers in the image of the wound, both individually and metonymically. In this section I have demonstrated how the imagining of the wound in these films can be interpreted as a metaphor for state violence. Having discussed how the wound speaks and what it says, I next want to also
consider what exactly the wound can give us access to in terms of history and memory.

The wound as a source of unofficial history

Trauma and iconoclasm are closely intertwined as signifiers and should in many respects be read as a symbiotic force. And whereas iconoclasm seems to clear the way for something new, trauma points to the damage inflicted. But at the same time trauma can speak to us about history and the past. ‘The ways that we imagine trauma are part of ongoing historical struggles’ writes Allen Meek (2010: 46). Relatedly, Joshua Hirsch notes ‘the discourse of trauma works towards a form of narrative that can speak from the collective space of traumatic historical experience’ (2004: 107). Moreover, if trauma is a way of speaking about history then trauma also ‘offers a language in which to speak of the wounds of the past’ (Fassin & Rechtman, 2009: 81). Since the wound is the most literal manifestation of rupture, it also significant in helping to narrate the impossible: ‘The traumatic experience cannot be communicated but, as we can see, it can be revisited by others and thus saved as narratives’ (Gutorow, Jarniewicz & Kennedy, 2010: 6). In her work Cathy Caruth writes: ‘The figure of Tancred addressed by the speaking wound constitutes, in other words, not only a parable of trauma and of its uncanny repetition, but more generally, a parable of psychoanalytic theory…’ (1996: 9). If the wound can speak and narrate the invisible and impossible, an idea proposed by Caruth, with her Freudian analogy of Tancred, what is it the wound gives us access to? Trauma is often about an event that cannot be
remembered (Radstone, 2007). Since films offer the terrain to imagine trauma, they can also help us remember. Caruth’s theorisation of the wound as something repetitive, haunting and that releases a voice is a concept that I have argued speaks to us through these films about The Naxalite Movement. In her influential work on trauma theory ‘Unclaimed Experience’ (1996) Cathy Caruth writes ‘trauma is understood as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind’ (1996: 3). More expressly Caruth says ‘it is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available’ (1996: 4). It is voice that released by the wound that is of significance to my reading of the wound in these films, giving us access to a narrative and a history that may run contrary to the official, mainstream one (Shoshana Felman; 1995, 2002).

Here I want to turn to Scars and Wounds: Film and Legacies of Trauma (2017). This edited volume by Nick Hodgin and Amit Thakkar features new scholarly writing on how the scar and wound motif can be trans-generational and connected to memory. Thakkar in particular discusses how the wound as a simulation is also connected to national memory and can remain open, unhealed over time. Amit Thakkar analyses Pablo Larrain’s Post Mortem (2010) in relation to Caruth’s work on trauma theory. Thakkar argues the film does not heal a wound but instead deals with the impact of trauma: ‘on the nation in order to acknowledge a persistent scar, the damage it has done’ (2017: 252). Larrain’s film becomes about the recovery of a traumatic memory, which is precisely
what the metonymical wound gives us access to in the Parallel Cinema films that I have dealt with. In this final section of the chapter I will argue the wound, as a site of remembrance is critical because it lets us embrace the ways in which rupture creates a new political space and in this case opens a narrative space for memory. What I mean by this is that the wound acts as a narrative and speaks to us about another kind of history, an unofficial one. Soshana Felman writes: ‘Because official history is based on the perspective of the victor, the voice with which it speaks authoritatively is deafening: it makes us unaware of the fact that there remains in history a claim, a discourse, that we do not hear’ (2002: 30). The trauma trails that I have discussed let’s us hear this exact discourse through the wound, constructing an alternate, unofficial history about The Naxalite Movement.

In their discussion of the wound in film, Nick Hodgin and Amit Thakkar make a fascinating intervention in trauma theory, discussing the wound as a simulacrum:

‘The simulacrum of the wound is what we see represented in the film, and it is this reproduction of the wound – not the wound itself, the original historic event – that is our focus in the present as we watch the film’ (Hodgin & Thakkar, 2017: 16).

Hodgin and Thakkar deny the wound an indexical status, displacing the historical from trauma. Indeed, Hodgin and Thakkar’s simulacrum of the wound seems to chime pertinently with the de-politicization of the wound in Pratidwandi, although only momentarily. Meek (2010) draws attention to the limitations of the traumatic image in our postmodern age of hyper
reality in which the image has lost its referential potency while also criticizing the impossibility of the media being able to transmit the traumatic experience. Thomas Elsaesser has also written on the cinematic limitations of representing trauma, arguing the screen image is ‘dislocated from any authentic or original experience’ (Meek, 2013: 486). In doing so I would contend Elsaesser overlooks how the traumatic image, although mediated, carries with it a propensity for unofficial history and which is made salient through the wound. This is critical in several respects to the long-term aim of reconfiguring the politics of trauma theory as Radstone (2007: 25) eloquently notes:

‘Moreover, it is the sufferings of those categorized, in the West as ‘other’, that tend not to be addressed via trauma theory - which becomes in this regard, a theory that supports politicized constructions of those with whom identifications via traumatic sufferings can be forged and those from whom such identifications are withheld. This is not, as I have already argued, a call to extend trauma’s reach - it is rather a call to attend to this aspect of the politics of trauma theory’

Radstone’s sentiments regarding the importance of trauma’s empathetic reach returns to an overarching aim of this project, which is to recognise not so much a post traumatic cinema but to claim how rupture works to claim The Naxalite movement as a traumatic one.

Unofficial can often mean something that is not substantiated or recognized by the government or authority. One could certainly question the legitimacy of unofficial history. But I would reason what makes unofficial history resonate is that sometimes it can help to unmask and contest official state narratives used to sustain power and control over the
record of The Naxalite Movement and its relationship with the media. This returns to one of the overarching concerns of this thesis: how Parallel Cinema as a cultural artefact was speaking often in opposition to the establishment and lets us approach the history of this particularly key moment through an alternate prism and counter narrative. It is worth turning next to the work of Neil Smelser (2004) who has written on cultural trauma and its relationship to memory to think further about what the wound gives us access to. Neil Smelser defines cultural trauma as ‘an invasive and overwhelming event that is believed to undermine or overwhelm one or several essential ingredients of a culture or the culture as a whole’ (Smelser in Alexander et al. 2004: 38). It might be problematic at first to label Naxalism as traumatic since it was a movement that challenged a status quo that feudalism had kept in check even after colonialism had ended. However, the state’s brutal and violent suppression of the Naxalite revolt is where I would contend a cultural trauma emerges, one that records the crimes of the state. In many ways, it is the wound, which best defines Naxalism as an event that constitutes cultural trauma because it appears metaphorically across a loose body of films.

Expanding on my discussion of the wound in terms of representational value, I want to turn to three ‘definitional accomplishments’ (Smelser in Alexander et al. 2004: 38) posited by Smelser that need to be discernible if an event is to qualify as a cultural trauma. The first, concerning remembrance, resounds in the wound’s capacity to allow us to remember
the trauma of the past. As I have noted the shooting in *Apanjan* was not an isolated occurrence, connecting audio-visually with later Parallel Cinema films. Together they act as a wider wound metaphor. Secondly, Smelser says ‘the memory must be made culturally relevant, that is, represented as obliterating, damaging, or rendering problematic something sacred – usually a value or outlook felt to be essential for the integrity of the affected society’ (Smelser in Alexander et al. 2004: 38).

This second characteristic is more than evident in the opening of the wound commencing with the destruction of the Mother archetype, destabilizing the tradition of the family and also the nation. Thirdly, Smelser writes ‘the memory must be associated with a strong negative affect’ (Smelser in Alexander et al. 2004: 38), in this case the wound indicating anguish - the collective loss of control amongst the Naxalite movement. Smelser’s rigid definition of cultural trauma pivots on memory and the act of remembering but does so at the expense of the political.

Allen Meek’s recent work on trauma particularly *Trauma and Media: Theories, Histories and Images* (2010) also draws attention to the role that media images can play in recognising the wider social and political contexts, notably questions to do power, control and violence, which are often displaced by exclusively psychoanalytical frameworks. Meek places emphasis on what he terms the ‘traumatic image’ (2010: 31), a useful concept that ‘shows us something physically or psychically traumatic’ (2010: 31), and an idea that I previously discussed in my audio-visual analysis of the wound. Visser, Hutchison and Meek’s work opens a new
space in which I would argue manifestations like the wound, both literal and psychic, can be read as something political, harbouring ideas to do with history, memory and violence that I have implemented in my analysis of rupture in the films I am dealing with. In light of Meek’s work I would argue Smelser’s definition of cultural trauma overlooks the importance of determining the political reckoning of the event and what kind of politics it helps us to remember. Therefore, treating the wound as political seeks to reiterate trauma’s overt connections with rupture. But how can we read the political in the wound(s) of trauma? Here I would like to begin by turning to Caruth’s Freudian analogy of the wound as a site of remembrance. A voice is released through the wound (Caruth, 1996) says Caruth. This seems like an imaginary, hypothetical proposition to make about wound culture but Felman goes further, arguing it is ‘from within the woundedness that the event, incomprehensible though it may, becomes accessible’ (Felman, 1995: 34). In the context of these films, I want to assert the voice that cries out from the wound is a voice of the forgotten victims of Naxalism. In this case, the wound gives access to and memorializes a political reality, a buried truth, recalling for instance ‘the victims of terror’ (Meek, 2010: 29). In doing so, Meek’s work resonates with the recent work by C.F. Alford who is interested in ‘unofficial trauma, the chronic trauma that afflicts the socially marginal’ (2016: 32). If the voice that is released through the open wound is of the marginal, the dispossessed, the silenced, then such a wound not only helps us to remember the atrocities of the past committed by the state against its own people but also presents a history from below. And in my opinion, it
is the historical, political and cultural rupture witnessed in these films that reiterate the interventionist role Parallel Cinema came to play.

Writing about Judith Herman’s ‘Trauma and Recovery’ (1994) Irene Visser (2011) argues Herman’s belief in narrative as a means of recovery is in direct opposition to Caruth’s claim that trauma is incomprehensible and impossible to make sense of. If the wound gives us access to the crimes perpetrated against the Naxalite movement by the state then I would contend these films help us recover a traumatic past. Gutorow, Jarniewicz and Kennedy (2010) go further, calling for a new model of memory: ‘the collective memory as expressed in official forms is not enough, and that we have to ‘scar back’ to the source of the injury, perhaps even identify the source in ourselves’ (2010: 7). As a way of explaining this idea of recovery further, we can turn to Alison Landsberg who talks about the idea of ‘prosthetic memory’. Landsberg argues that film narratives allow us to experience history and take ‘on a more personal, deeply felt memory of a past event through which he or she did not live’ (2004: 2). The wound functions in a similar way, harbouring a narrative of the Naxalite movement that ‘has the ability to shape that person’s subjectivity and politics’ (2004: 2). Making us think differently about the official narrative helps to recover and potentially revise history through film. There is limited scope in this thesis to broaden out and explore at length how Sen deals with the trauma of poverty in Calcutta ‘71 but I will refer to this idea briefly in this section because the relationship between trauma and history posits the wound as something
that over time can amount to a scar and complicates what exactly the wound is helping us to recover in terms of memory.

The moment of Naxalism in Calcutta in the early 1970s was a contemporary break in history, espousing a political anger that Sen situates in a broader historical and structural framework. In connecting the dots so to speak, *Calcutta ’71* traces the genesis of the wound that first materializes in *Apanjan* as far back as the 1930s, before Partition and independent, imitating a link to poverty: ‘The anger had not suddenly fallen out of anywhere. It must have a beginning and end. I wanted to try to find this genesis and in the process redefine our history’ (Sen, 1976 interview with Udyan Gupta). It is worth noting the historical rupture of The Naxalite Movement in 1967 coincided at a time in Bengal when ‘poverty among Bengalis had risen to a staggering eighty percent’ (Chatterji, 2007: 239) thereby complicating my reading of the wound as giving us access to a political memory specific to the late 1960s and early 1970s.

At the end of *Calcutta ’71*, the imaginary figure of the Naxal and his defiant cry for change is met with violent repression. We can read this defeatist traumatic image as a totalizing collective wound. And if the

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66 The imaginary figure is a traumatised personification of India’s history and a Naxal on the run from the establishment who monologues about the tyranny of poverty in the opening to the film:

‘I am twenty. For the last one thousand years I have been living this age of twenty. For the last one thousand years I have been passing through terrible times: I have walked through poverty, squalor and death. For the last one thousands years I have been breathing despair and frustration. And now, as I stand before you, I see: ours is the history of unceasing poverty running through one thousand years and more.’
wound functions as a metaphor of rupture then it also leaves a theoretical cinematic scar. Through the cumulative imagery and which can come to function as a source of historical memory that we can access and use the wound to negotiate the meanings of trauma. Hence, the wound, first opened in *Apanjan* with the death of Anandamoyee, now becomes a gateway into the history/trauma of Naxalism but in opening this wound Parallel Cinema suggests this is an old wound that can never be healed. In my opinion we should not see trauma completely as a wound but reframe it as a poly-temporal scar (Hodgin & Thakkar, 2017). The scar is also related to memory. The trans-generational trauma at work here and amplified through the concept of poverty suggests the ‘scar motif is one obvious motif by which we can attempt to connect the imagined ‘wounded body’ to processes of memory’ (Hodgin & Thakkar, 2017: 14). Relatedly, Fassin & Rechtman argue ‘we could define trauma as the sudden emergence of memory at the moment of danger’ (2009: 16). This seems relevant to the way trauma functions in many of these films since it is the wound of Naxalism and the response of state violence that constitutes the so-called ‘moment of danger’. Thereby the interconnected stories in *Calcutta '71* come to perform the role of memory – a cultural memory about a trauma to do with Naxalism that is a continuum of rupture.

More critically, these films in their treatment of trauma is an important task for reinstating the victims of state violence in the equation of political marginality and which comes about through the recovery of a traumatic
memory that should not be forgotten. Meek cites the work of Judith Herman that is worth repeating here:

‘Herman evoked a scenario in which trauma victims were intimidated into a condition of isolation and silence that enhanced the power of the perpetrator. Thus Herman understood the recovery of traumatic memory as a part of a larger power struggle in which the victim gains the support of a political movement’ (2010: 27).

Through the mediated imaginings of trauma, notably the image of the ruptured political body, this particular corpus of Parallel Cinema films certainly came to play a part of a power struggle in which Naxalism sought to intervene culturally. And in the case of Calcutta ’71, the recovery of a traumatic memory had an impact that was felt immediately with the audience. It is no wonder that Sen talks about Calcutta ’71 as a record-film and which became a talking point when the film was showing in cinemas. Young boys would come back and watch the film again, hoping to get a glimpse of their friends. And Sen recalls two incidents in which audience members’ recognised people they knew, in the footage of street demonstrations, but who were now dead, either shot dead by the state or a victim of revolutionary violence. But what this shows is how the youth were able to access a private trauma through these films (and now public), allowing them to revisit a moment as a piece of historical memory that had elided the grasp of the state apparatus. Meek writes: ‘Like a traumatic memory, the meaning of a photograph may only emerge in an

67 The recovery of traumatic memory can be discussed further in relation to Teshome Gabriel’s (1989) influential proposition that Third Cinema is centred on the reclaiming and rescuing of Popular Memory, a political act that re-contextualises Naxalism in a broader history of oppression.
entirely new and unprecedented context in which it can be witnessed for the first time.’ (2010: 37). The same applies to the cinematic immediacy of *Calcutta ’71*. Sen hadn’t realized what exactly he had captured but it is only when he showed it to an audience did the ‘literal trace of an event’\(^{68}\) (Meek citing Ulrich Bauer, 2010: 22-23) come to life.

Kaplan and Wang argue the ‘isolation of a self-contained event and its trauma ignores the larger issues of systemic proportions and forces at work over a long stretch of history…’ (Kaplan & Wang, 2004: 4). It is the lack of historical perspective when dealing with trauma that Kaplan and Wang draw attention to as a drawback when it comes to claiming trauma. However, Sen reasserts the historical into his cinema with *Calcutta ’71*, presenting specifically the trauma of poverty as an ‘historical and cultural phenomenon’ (Kaplan & Wang, 2004: 8), and which is systemic and not merely an isolated occurrence unlike in *Pratidwandi* where trauma is presented in a more conventional, psychic form. Susannah Radstone (2001) argues that Maureen Turim understands trauma as ‘the layering of several experiences upon one another, rather than as the impact of a single event’ (Radstone, 2001: 192). In this respect, the narrative of *Calcutta ’71* replicates trauma in a similar way. The three stories (1934, 1943, 1953) of poverty come to express what Kaplan and Wang term a ‘traumatic history’ (2004: 8). In an interview with Mrinal Sen, writer Samik Bandyopadhyay draws attention to the equation between trauma and

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\(^{68}\) Meek (2010: 22-23) notes the following: ‘In *Spectral Evidence* (2002) Ulrich Baer further developed the conjunction of trauma theory and Benjamin’s notion of the optical unconscious, proposing that the photographic image shares the structure of traumatic memory as the literal trace of an event’.
‘You have been the only Indian filmmaker to be seriously concerned with the projection of the Naxalite movement in the cinema at several levels and from several perspectives, at times probing the dichotomy between politics and morality, at other times idealizing the image of the revolutionary, and elsewhere seeking the roots of violence in India’s life and history’ (Bandyopadhyay, 2002: 154).

However, we must never lose sight of the wound as a metaphor for state violence. And by bringing in the concept of trauma as another intersection reshapes rupture as a political concept with a greater degree of historical continuity, an aggregate force. This challenges the altogether neat notions of rupture as an immediate and spontaneous break in history. Therefore, rupture becomes merely the logical ‘expression’ of revolutionary historical change that has been building over time.

**Chapter Summary**

Susannah Radstone addresses ‘the difficulty of debating trauma analysis’ (2007: 24) arguing ‘who is it that gets claimed by trauma theory, and who ignored’ (2007: 24) is symptomatic of the trauma of Naxalism having been denied the historical legitimacy and privilege afforded to say the trauma of Partition. On the contrary interpreting the trauma of Naxalism in Parallel Cinema is problematized because it is masked by the trauma of Partition that was still being played out in Indian cinema. As I have demonstrated by focusing on the wound as one of the first signifiers of rupture we can hope to gain a better understanding of the role Bengali Parallel Cinema played in unmasking atrocities committed by the state.
This in turn raises the question about to what extent ‘narratives and images are indexes to the still unfolding traumas of history’ (Kaplan & Wang, 2004: 12). Arguably one of the most important contributions to the field of film and trauma theory has been *Trauma and Cinema: Cross-cultural explorations* (2004) edited by E. Anna Kaplan and Ban Wang. In their work Ann Kaplan and Ban Wang propose:

‘cultural reproductions of trauma in the United States, Asia, Africa and many other parts of the world suggest that it is in the retelling and especially in visual representation, that traces of trauma can be preserved and transmitted, however unsatisfactory or even “improper” that representation may be’ (2004: 14).

Leading on from the Kaplan and Wang’s proposal in which the visual functions as a marker of trauma, Naxalism as a political trauma is manifested in two ways in the early films of Parallel Cinema. Firstly, and as I have discussed in this chapter, there is the brutal violence perpetrated against The Naxalite movement, which Bernard D’Mello describes as ‘the most monstrous repression unleashed on a political movement in post-independence India’ (D’Mello, 2018: 44) and which also finds a palpable ideological register in some of these films.\(^69\)

Secondly, students traumatize the cultural landscape of West Bengal notably Calcutta, leading iconoclastic attacks against the establishment, an area of discussion that will form a major part of the next chapter on iconoclasm and rupture.

\(^{69}\) Naxalism as a trauma, initially geographically and culturally specific to West Bengal, would become far more evident in Keralan and Bombay cinema in later films such as *Amma Ariyan* (Report to Mother, 1986), looking back at Naxalism with vacillation.
In this case, can it be argued the violence of Naxalism and the state are manifestations of a political rupture that is visualised in cinema through the metonymic opening of a specifically traumatic wound? With this in mind, there needs to be recognition the events of the Naxalite movement can broadly be interpreted as a type of cultural trauma. Here we can turn to the work of Jeffrey C. Alexander for a lucid definition of cultural trauma:

‘Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways’ (Alexander, 2004: 1).

Accordingly, Alexander’s work raises wider questions concerning the politics of trauma theory. And while much of the revisionist work on Naxalite history has come about through literature, testimonies and other cultural documents, overlooking film as an alternate historical record throws in doubt the determination of what defines and constitutes Naxalism as a traumatic moment in India’s past. With this in mind, the act of recognising rupture becomes altogether significant, a point made by Eisenstein & McGowan: ‘The effect of rupture – its capacity for reorienting social relations and inaugurating political values – depends on its recognition’ (2012: 22). And it is only by recognising rupture can a following acknowledgment of trauma arise since the two are interrelated in their interruptive and transformative nature. For this reason it is through the literal and metaphorical shattering of audio-visual forms are we able to acknowledge trauma.
Indeed, Naxalism mobilized a cultural response from Parallel Cinema, inevitably articulating respective ideological positions from filmmakers but collectively recording the break in history as broadly traumatic. But like Roy says ‘the state can hardly memorialize these events without recognizing its own complicity’ (Roy, 2012: 149). I would contend Roy’s argument concerning the state’s complicated duality, acknowledging the brutal repression of the Naxalite movement while also helping to inadvertently record this history, finds a suitable yet complicated correlation in the FFC providing loans to films that were critical of state repression including *Padatik* (1973) and *Jukti Takko Aar Gappo* (1974). Not only does this point to the incongruities between ideology and capitalism often at the centre of state led initiatives in cinema but could also be construed as a partial admittance of guilt. If the traumatic traces these films harbour act as a source of collective memory, an audio-visual repository that lets us access a past violence then it is also a rupture that a second wave of Naxal themed films in the 1980s would return to from a revisionist historical position. It remains to be seen in what ways the second wave of films dealt with the rupture of the Naxalite Movement and to what extent Parallel Cinema continued to participate in the augmentation of the wound first opened in the first wave of Naxal films.

Decisively, the collective wound testifies to a loose political solidarity amongst the filmmakers, at times expressing an incomplete empathy for the Naxalite cause, and which was met with a polarizing response from the media. For example, Sen’s realisation of state violence and the
continual reciprocation of the open wound through the image of the murdered youth was questioned when *Calcutta ’71* was released in 1972. In a letter published in *Frontier*, an independent political weekly sympathetic to Naxalism, A. Rudra accused Sen of falsifying history, disputing the portrayal of the police as the violent aggressor, arguing that in reality it was the young revolutionaries who fired first. Rudra refers to the ending of the film and the state violence that Sen frames to suit his own leftist ideological agenda. Rudra’s elucidation underlines how Sen distorts history, contending Sen also uses street demonstrations as a ‘mode of struggle’ (1992: 71) that rings hollow in a time when Calcutta had already passed through the moment of protest and was in the grips of a violent struggle. However, I would argue we need to understand that Sen’s manipulation of history that posits the police, an extension of the state, as a source of annihilation is situated in a broad, traumatic narratology in which history is determined by the tyranny of poverty. We can turn here to the analogy of a disruptive and interruptive history posited by Walter Benjamin as noted by scholar Traverso:

‘Departing from a linear conception of time, he [Walter Benjamin] recognised the kairotic rhythm of history, that is, an asynchronic, “discordant” rhythm, permanently opened to the irruption of event’ (2016: 360).

The discordant rhythm of history that Benjamin points to resonates with the ways in which rupture occurs. However, it is the emphasis on the

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70 *Frontier* was founded in 1968 by the journalist Samar Sen, in response to the social and political upheavals of the late 1960s in Bengal and India. *Frontier* came to play an integral role in the film polemics of the era, publishing lengthy replies from readers to the reviews of Mrinal Sen’s *Calcutta ’71* and *Padatik* and creating a critical discourse around politics and cinema. Dom Moares (1970) notes that *Frontier* was the only Naxalite publication that was not banned by the government.
word kairotic which comes from the Greek word ‘Kairos’, meaning the opportune time to do a particular thing, contradicts the spontaneous performance of rupture which often has unpredictable consequences that are difficult to foresee. While rupture severs the linearity of history, celebrating the plurality of history, Sen suggests the wound (and which in the case of poverty amounts to a scar) can act as bridge between the past and present, offering greater clarity to political life. Sen’s conceptualization of the break that Naxalism realized and that was felt in Parallel Cinema is also tied to a view of rupture that makes visible the flow of hegemony as articulated in the looking back at the interconnectedness of poverty in Calcutta ’71. In this respect, the gunshot that punctuates the final moments of Calcutta ’71 and the overhead shot of the dead Naxalite rebel legitimizes the wound as a Marxist augmentation, broadly interpreted as opening up a counter hegemonic space in which the crimes of the state are concretized and more importantly universalized. In the next chapter I will broaden the concept of rupture, shifting away from the manifestation of the wound to an exploration of how iconoclasm signified rupture as something metamorphic and destabilizing to dominant cultural representations.
Chapter Three

Imagining and Signifying Rupture through Iconoclastic Actions

Radha: ‘Let her go. Or I’ll kill you!’
Birju: ‘You cannot kill me. You are my mother’
Radha: ‘I’m first a woman’
Birju: ‘I am your son’
Radha: ‘She is the daughter of the entire village. Our honour. I can give up a son. But not my honour!’

At the end of Mother India (1957), a seminal Indian film about motherhood, Birju (Sunil Dutt), a bandit, tries to abduct a bride from a village but Radha (Nargis), his mother, confronts him. Eventually, Radha shoots Birju so she can preserve the honour of the village. Clasping her dying son in her arms, a distraught Radha caresses the gunshot wound that she enacted. In what is the film’s most powerful dissolve; we cut from a close up of Radha’s hand covered in blood (Fig 35) to the image of water rushing into an irrigation canal (Fig 36): ‘Like a floodgate, the palm of Radha’s hand tries vainly to stop the blood from flowing’ writes Gayatri Chatterjee (2002: 70). The dissolve between the two shots acts as a bridge between the past and present. Except the water is just as red as the blood from the previous shot. Radha, overcome with remorse, looks on at the inauguration of the irrigation system. But the blood that flowed from the body of her son, and which she perpetrated, is continual, transcending the past.

71 Mother India was a reworking of Mehboob's 1940 film Aurat (Woman), a pre-Partition work, which tells the story of Radha (Sardar Akhtar), a peasant woman, who is left to fend for her four children when her husband abandons the family and leaves the village. Mother India was also the title of a book written in 1927 by Katherine Mayo, an imperialist diatribe of colonial India.
The gunshot unleashes a rupture at the end that remains open; the flow of blood as Chatterjee notes cannot be stopped. It is everlasting.

Chatterjee (2002) argues Birju’s death, a human sacrifice, is for the benefit of the community. What this sequence from *Mother India* points to is the sacred, holy and revered representation of the Mother has often been the centre of the cinematic universe in popular Hindi cinema. The Mother is a moral fulcrum, sustaining social order, a benign apparatus of the state, making her a potent archetype in popular culture. Birju’s death is about reinforcing the status quo. Rosie Thomas, one of the first Western academics to analyse *Mother India* in its multifaceted contexts, notes the film denies and destroys Birju’s potent and radical use of violence, opting to celebrate ‘Radha’s power and her defense of chastity’ (1989: 19). Indeed, no sooner is rupture unleashed in the film, the killing of Sukhilala,⁷² is it invariably sealed over. This is because the lawlessness that Birju represents must be condemned; his rebellious spirit cannot be allowed to prevail. However, Vijay Mishra draws attention to the subversive tone struck by the gesture of Birju ‘holding a pair of

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⁷² Sukhilala (Kanhaiyalal) is the moneylender, a symbol of feudal and oppression and sexual exploitation.
blood-soaked kangans (his mother’s marriage bangles) he had recovered from Sukhilala’ and which Mishra argues ‘is an image fraught with inescapable sexual overtones’ (1989: 132). But at the same time, while Radha protects the honour of her village, the cost in blood narrates a history of the nation in which the Mother is framed incongruently: ‘all the central male figures are destroyed or implicitly “castrated” by association with her…a destroyer of men’ (Thomas, 1989: 16). This is how rupture is imagined, as a resolutely destructive occurrence, and that has an unmistakable long-term impact on the cultural psyche of the nation. In this respect, the death of the son at the hands of the Mother looks forward to the later unconventional cinematic imaginings of the Mother in Parallel Cinema. It is an iconoclastic shift that occurs most strikingly in Apanjan (1968)\textsuperscript{73} with the obliteration of the Mother, an impossible yet spontaneous imagining of rupture.

I want to propose that one of the other ways in which rupture is signified is through iconoclasm. This chapter argues a break in history was imagined in the displacement of dominant cultural representations. Primarily, this includes the destabilization of the Mother that led to the fragmentation of the family. Utpal Banerjee describes the female archetype in popular Indian cinema as ‘an embodiment of trust, faith and loving sacrifice’ (1992: 247). While idealistic representations of femininity no longer holds any outright validity, one of the most iconographic signifiers of femininity in the past, the Mother Goddess or Mata (Mother)

\textsuperscript{73} Apanjan was directed before Parallel Cinema had officially come to fruition and the film was a commercial success with audiences.
has traditionally communicated both nationhood and India’s rich mythological past: ‘The nationalist rhetoric of the of the pre-independence years produced films valorising the mother figure’ (2000: 73) writes Sangeeta Datta. In Apanjan, the disruptive representation of motherhood would set a precedent that be would felt in other Parallel Cinema films that came after it, momentarily liberating cinema from the constraints of dominant gender representations. And as Datta instructively points out, it was Parallel Cinema in the 1970s and 1980s that ‘made attempts to explore women’s subjectivity, her familial and civic role’ (2000: 79). The revolutionary political impact of rupture would come to fruition in the feminist led narratives of Shyam Benegal’s cinema in the 1970s and beyond that ‘often centred around woman, both as protagonist and larger metaphor’ (Rao, 2003: 96), reframing Parallel Cinema as a newly reconstituted gendered space.

As I will demonstrate, Apanjan (1968) is a work that identifies the origin for the break in history, Anandamoyee's death, and the significance of this iconoclastic gesture. I will then broaden out the analysis, considering the ways in which the preoccupation with the Mother coming under attack in other related films, including Pratidwandi, Interview, Calcutta ’71 and Jukti Takko Aar Gappo, is borne out of a real political iconoclasm related to Naxalism and student agitation. A following line of enquiry is the ways in which the real statue smashing acts carried out by students are re-imagined in these films, and notably how in Interview (1970) iconoclasm becomes tied to the politics of decolonization. In this chapter I will be

**Iconoclasm**

Critical to an understanding of iconoclasm as a signifier of the nomenclature of rupture is to contextualize recent developments in the field of iconoclasm and the admittedly tentative relationship with film, which is what I will do next.

‘In 1970, at the tail end of a failing rural insurgency which had for a period created small ‘liberated zones’ in a few parts of rural India, Maoist students in Calcutta began a ‘cultural revolution’, comprised principally of attacks on educational institutions and on icons’ (Seth, 2004: 43).

As Sanjay Seth notes, The Naxalite Movement in Calcutta amongst the student polity witnessed the desecration of statues, attacks against institutions and the obliteration of political leaders. Denoting rupture as iconoclastic is pertinent since the cultural revolution Seth talks of was an attempt to overturn and destroy old hegemonic power structures such as feudalism. Here we can also establish the link between iconoclasm and the ongoing processes of decolonization. Naxalite iconoclasm, as

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74 Rural revolt against the feudal power structure was also seen as the weakening of Congress Party rule, the centre was showing the first signs of collapse and which led to the emergence of Maoism as a site of resistance for anti-caste movements and groups such as the formation of the Dalit Panthers in the early 1970s. See Chapter 8: ‘Atrocities by the State’ of Anand Teltumbde’s *The Persistence of Caste: The Khairlanji Murders and India’s Hidden Apartheid* (2010).
polarizing as it was, manifests itself notably in the early films of Parallel Cinema, through a shattering of traditional social concepts and sacred cinematic imagery. Specifically, traditional, dominant representations of the mother, the youth, family, gender and politics came under attack from Parallel Cinema and are recorded in these films as a kind of oppositional political rupture. But what do these representational shifts tell us about the significance of Parallel Cinema as a transformative one?

Iconoclasm, a term\(^{75}\) that can be traced back to the Byzantine Empire, has a historical past in the destruction of religious iconicity, which over time has been superseded by many types of modern imagery, notably photography and the moving image. Stacy Boldrick notes: ‘Iconoclasm is no longer a subject that any of us can afford to ignore or avoid’ (2013: 1). But why is this the case? Well, much of it has to do with what iconoclasm can tell us about power, culture and rupture. Polly Jones notes that iconoclastic acts unmask ‘demonstrations of attitudes towards political power and cultural values’ (2007: 242) that take on multiple and conflicting meanings. Richard Clay (and Stacy Boldrick), who have done the most to broaden the field of iconoclasm, writes ‘etymologically, iconoclasm means ‘image-breaking’ (2007: 8). While Boldrick notes the ‘spectrum of image-breaking is expansive’ (2013: 2), the emphasis on the image is significant since it permits the inclusion of film, which has often gone unnoticed in the field of iconoclasm. The placement of two images together, the art and act of juxtaposition, can lead to the imagined

\(^{75}\) The Oxford English Dictionary defines the iconoclast in two ways, both relevant to a conceptualisation of iconoclasm as a signifier of rupture, as ‘a destroyer of images’ (OED) and someone ‘who attacks or criticizes cherished beliefs or institutions’ (OED).
destruction of something or someone sacred. In fact, Eisenstein’s theory of montage is all about iconoclasm; the intentions of political montage and the affect on the spectator are brought together in a revolutionary paradigm in which editing enacts the iconoclastic gesture. It is worth mentioning that Eisenstein’s iconoclastic imaginings especially those articulated in *October* (1928), his dramatization of the 1917 Russian Revolution, found a distinct mirror in historical events:

‘The Russian Revolution of 1917 emphasized the destruction of the Tsarist past through the removal and destruction of Tsarist insignia and other Romanov symbols, using complex rituals of carnivalesque humiliation and iconoclastic practices borrowed from the French revolution’ (Jones, 2007: 421).

It is important to pause here and define on screen imaginings of iconoclasm as acts of cinematic iconoclasm and which Boldrick argues can take ‘the form of spectacle, when an action publicly transgresses social and legal codes’ (2007: 2). I have drawn attention to the iconoclastic mirroring between cinema and history with the example of Eisenstein’s work since as I will discuss later, it finds a startling parallel in the cinema of Mrinal Sen, who stages decolonization in *Interview* (1970) with a similar revolutionary fervour that paints rupture as regenerative. Indeed, Stacy Boldrick notes that: ‘Richard Clay proposes that we understand iconoclastic acts in terms of remaking and semiosis as opposed to violence and destruction’ (2007: 2). Clay’s ‘sign transformation’ theory of iconoclasm reasons iconoclasm can lead to the transformation of an object rather than just obliteration (2007: 116). In this respect, iconoclasm becomes about change. Fabio Rambelli and Eric
Reinders agree: ‘rarely does iconoclasm end in the instant and total obliteration of an object’ (2007: 20). It is this oppositional reading of iconoclasm that is relevant to the ways in which I intend to look at the syntax of film in chapter four, arguing it was a form of renewal, liberation and transformation that paradoxically equipped filmmakers like Sen with the necessary tools with which to engage in acts of iconoclasm and help augment rupture.

Furthermore, Fabio Rambelli and Eric Reinders (2007) argue iconoclasm is still considered a ‘Western, Christian phenomenon’ (Rambelli & Reinders in Boldrick & Clay, 2007: 16) and that ‘there is a need for more studies of non-Western iconoclasm’ (Rambelli & Reinders in Boldrick & Clay, 2007: 16). While the 2007 edited volume ‘Iconoclasm: Contested Objects, Contested Terms’ has gone furthest in addressing this scholarly oversight (with chapters that explore examples of iconoclasm in East Asia, Mexico and West Africa), Indian culture remains relatively under appreciated. And while Rambelli and Reinders are talking specifically about the field of art history, there is also considerable scope to widen the exploration of the term to the study of film especially when we consider the potency of Parallel Cinema as a new iconoclastic cinema. More expressly, I want to maintain that some of the Bengali Parallel Cinema films that deal with the politics of the iconoclasm of the Naxalite era, imagine and re-present acts of iconoclasm so to question the ideological intent of the perpetrators: ‘Intention is a category of interpretation, not authorship’ say Rambelli & Reinders (Boldrick & Clay, 2007: 19). Another
major contribution has been the work of Bruno Latour who in 2002 produced a ground breaking interdisciplinary exhibition with a team of international curators titled ‘Iconoclash: Beyond the Image Wars in Science, Religion and Art’. It was Latour’s coining of the term ‘Iconoclash’ that proved to be a turning point in the field of iconoclasm and which in turn would influence both Richard Clay and Stacy Boldrick. Iconoclash is important to this chapter since I will demonstrate how iconoclasm can be interpreted as an act of political and cultural ambiguity in Parallel Cinema. Latour makes a clear distinction between iconoclasm and iconoclash:

‘Iconoclasm is when we know what is happening in the act of breaking and what the motivations for what appears as a clear project of destruction are; iconoclash, on the other hand, is when one does not know, one hesitates, one is troubled by an action for which there is no way to know, without further enquiry, whether it is destructive or constructive’ (Latour, 2002: 16).

What Latour emphasized with iconoclash was the contested intentions of the iconoclastic act, which similarly relates to the uncertainty of rupture and the ambiguous space it opens in the films I will be looking at. In other words, how can we read the ideological intentions of the filmmaker? Who imagines the iconoclastic gesture in the films of Parallel Cinema? And these questions needs to be considered in relation to a study of iconoclasm that covers not just the statue breaking acts of Naxal youth but examines the destructive imaginings of archetypes, namely the mother and father, the syntax of film and the rupturing of public spaces in the form of monuments and statues.
Iconoclasm has often been tied up in religious iconicity but there is little writing in terms of its relationship with film. The work of Boris Groys comes closest in this respect and I want to set up a few of his ideas that I will pursue further and use to build on in relation to my theory of rupture in this chapter. Groys says the following: ‘film appears capable only of staging and illustrating historical scenes of iconoclasm, but never of being iconoclastic itself’ (2008: 67).

A contentious statement indeed since what this thesis intends to demonstrate is that Parallel Cinema was fundamentally an iconoclastic cinema, especially in the foundational years. The films will demonstrate how the questioning of absolutes such as aesthetics and politics was not simply about destruction but led to a transformation and shift, starting in Bengali society in the late 1960s. Furthermore, when Groys aligns iconoclasm with the avant-garde, he draws an elucidatory equivalence since much of the iconoclastic attacks witnessed in these films occur through ‘discarding traditions, breaking with conventions… and eradicating outdated values’ (2008: 69) but one in which the treatment of the image is ‘sawed apart, cut up, smashed into fragments, pierced, spiked, drawn through dirt, and exposed to ridicule’ (2008: 69) which is precisely the iconoclastic assault that is brought to bear upon dominant iconicity and concepts such as the Mother – a signifier of rupture. Groys’s work is concerned primarily with the practice of iconoclasm in film but he also turns to a number of examples to illustrate the aesthetic and political idioms of the iconoclastic gesture, ‘the destruction of prevailing religious and cultural icons’ (2008: 75) such as the revolutionary crowd which he
labels as ‘an elementary material force’ (2008: 75) in Eisenstein’s
*October* (1927) and Lang’s *Metropolis* (1927).

The hope is to extend the understanding of the theoretical positions
outlined, suggesting what insight the study of iconoclasm might provide to
the way rupture is imagined and performed in Parallel Cinema. More
importantly, if rupture is about revolutionary historical change, the first
target is often dominant imagery that holds together the fabric of society.
In this regard, what is that iconoclastic gestures tell us about power
relations that were contested in the wake of Naxalism? Boldrick writes:
‘images are symbols of something else, representative of a belief system
or political regime, and that the destruction of images is a tangible form of
obliterating that system of regime’ (2013: 6). But one could argue
photography and more importantly film that captures iconoclasm in action
or is reimagined on screen preserves images as a ghostly, spectral
residue that lives on and which permits the iconoclastic gesture to be
replayed over again, allowing us to revisit that which was once present,
obliterating the symbolic intent of creating anew. Does that mean rupture
becomes paralysed, accessible as a moment in time? If so, film
challenges what normally occurs when iconoclasm takes place – the near
totalizing obliteration and annihilation of the object becomes absurdly
immortalised.
**Deconstructing Mother Bengal**

In *Apanjan*, the death of Anandamoyee begins with a violent clash. The gang leaders, Ravi and Chenu (Samit Bhanja), fall to the ground and are seen wrestling with first a knife and then a gun (Fig 37). Anandamoyee arrives to intervene; the two street children following close behind. But when the gun accidentally goes off, Anandamoyee is shot and killed instantly (Fig 38).

Eisenstein and McGowan argue ‘rupture is the occurrence of the impossible, when the very ground under our feet shifts in order to transform the point from which we see’ (2012: 94). In some respects, the death of Anandamoyee, a mother figure to many of the children in the film, is the breaking of a sacred taboo and the first of many iconoclastic gestures that signify rupture. While Anandamoyee’s death, at the hands of the youth, occurs against the backdrop of The Naxalite Movement, her death also finds an affinity with the corporeal experience of rupture (Sarkar, 2009: 7) in which the body, through the editing and
cinematographic choices, is imagined in a traumatized state and that reasons for closer analysis.

Whereas Bengali film scholar Moinak Biswas argues the ‘cult status’ (2011: 120) of *Apanjan* (1968) led to a cycle of youth oriented films including *Pratidwandi* (1970) and *Interview* (1970), I want to suggest the break in the history and cinema of India is marked with the symbolic death of Anandamoyee in the film. I want to clarify what I mean here by a break in history. In his discussions of the event, and which Slavoj Žižek defines as a radical turning point (2014), Žižek poses the question: what if we could locate the precise moment of rupture? This at first appears like a seemingly impossible task considering how Žižek suggests we are living in an age that prevents against ‘the genesis of a proper Event, the rise of something New’ (2014: 181), much of which Žižek attributes to the triumph of capitalism. But it is precisely the iconology of the Mother and its importance to Indian cinema that rightly consolidates my claim that *Apanjan* imagines the impossible. This was also in an age, the late 1960s, when political ruptures were at its peak. The death of Anadamoyee becomes an event, a symbolic crossroads for not simply the change envisioned by the Cultural Revolution in Bengal but an attempt to create a new kind of cinema in India.

It is specifically the death of Anandamoyee, which I would argue is the origin of rupture in Parallel Cinema, mainly because the film’s release intersects historically and politically with many wider events of the time.
including The Naxalite Movement, the growing disillusionment amongst
the Bengali youth, the Cultural Revolution in West Bengal, and the
political failings of the state to live up to the promises of national growth
and development. Many of the Parallel Cinema films released in this
period rest on a fault line of political uncertainty. In doing so, the
iconoclasm of this moment, the metonymic destruction of the Mother
figure, testifies to a seismic political rupture in the history of postcolonial
India that is augmented by such wider contextual accelerators.

In this section, I will discuss the destruction of the Mother in terms of the
relationship with Bengali mythology and popular culture. I will also
contextualize concepts to do with Motherhood in Indian cinema and how
the archetype of the Mother was ultimately challenged through the
imagined Event of Anandamoyee’s death and how this can be seen as a
moment of radical political rupture.

It was Bankim Chatterjee’s iconographic representation of the Mother
(invoking the Goddess Durga)\(^76\) popularized in the poem ‘Vande
Mataram’ (1882) that ‘decisively influenced all later nationalist imaginings’
(Sarkar, 2001: 254) and which became largely associated with elite Hindu
Bengali nationalism (Roy, 2012: 59). Relatedly, the Mother has often
functioned as a totem of national stability in the Hindi melodrama:

‘In the cinematic imagination of Mother India, the suffering but
strong and self-sacrificing Indian peasant woman is at the center of

\(^{76}\) Bengali nationalists appropriated and transformed the iconicity of Durga, a warrior
goddess, into something more innocent (Sarkar, 2001).
the fantasy of Nehruvian-style socialism and progress’ (Shah, 2014: 136).

*Mother India*, a seminal text, which stars Indian film actress Nargis77 as Radha – the self-sacrificing, resilient Mother of the land and ‘symbolizing the larger community/nation’ (Eswaran, 2016), is a major point of reference for the development of the mythologized Mother figure in Indian cinema. Rosie Thomas posits Radha is constructed through a negotiated ‘spectrum of archetypes of ideal femininity in Indian culture’ (1989: 16) alluding ‘to a variety of figures of Hindu mythology (1989: 17) including Sita, Lakshmi, Durga, Kali and Surabai. Vijay Mishra reiterates the character of Radha played by Nargis alludes to Sita, ‘a figure who is really a stand-in for India’ (1989: 125). However, it is worth drawing attention to Mishra’s counter reading of Radha (Krishna’s mistress), arguing she was a figure that emerged later in the epic texts of the *Puranas*. Since Sita is an epic figure from the Ramayana and is ‘closed…fixed…immutable’ (1989: 130), the openness of Radha permits her to oscillate between ‘woman, devotee and beloved’ (1989: 130). I would reason Mishra’s important differentiation between Sita and Radha and what they signify in terms of femininity points to how the female representation is able to accommodate a far reaching and plural articulation of the Mother.

Let us for a minute imagine if Birju (Sunil Dutt), the son who becomes a bandit, at the end of *Mother India* killed Radha, his mother, in act of

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77 Scholar Priya Jha writes that ‘the supplanting of Nargis by the overdetermined and ‘universal’ Mother India imprisons her within the already existing repertoire of images that prop up the nation’ (2011: 289).
violent matricide. Indeed, this would have been impossible in the 1950s since society ‘offers no space to...Birju to become their hero living on edge as the “angry young man”, unlike the mid 1970s’ (Schulze, 2002: 83). The sacred Mother archetype was tied up in the Utopian imaginings of Nehru and the Nation: ‘The deified woman, the mother, attained her greatest heights as the Motherland’ writes Samita Sen (1993: 233) and which Tanika Sarkar (2001: 251) argues was a concept that was naturalized to such an extent that it fetishized the Mother. In Mother India, Chatterji reads the shooting of the son as a political act that ‘sustains the balance of society and dominance of traditional values amidst suffering and anarchy’ (1998: 37). But as Sudhir Kakar notes, ‘another characteristic of the good mother in Hindi films is her all-pervading suffering. This suffering may be due to the iniquities of the extended family that make her the victim of its sadistic excesses...’ (1989: 92).

Apanjan undoes these very complex ideas about Motherhood, which had been sustained by popular Hindi cinema. The impossible happens in Apanjan. The mother is shot and killed, albeit accidentally, but very much at the hands of her surrogate children, the angry youth. The dislocation of sacred iconology, in this case the Mother archetype, is just one traditional female role amongst many others that Anandamoyee comes to occupy in the film including a wife, a widow, and also a saint. Ghatak’s politicization of archetypes, as discussed earlier, particularly the Mother Goddess, resonates with Sinha who goes further, annihilating the iconology of the Mother. Biswas recognizes the ideological significance of this rupture,
reasoning Sinha ‘was trying to comprehend a transformation of the social fabric’ (Biswas, 2011: 120), while equivalently the change Biswas talks of is violent and disturbing in Apanjan. Anandamoyee’s death is conveyed in terms of a cataclysmic portentousness, taking place at the end of the film. Doubly, the death of Anandamoyee also marks the end of an era in India’s history: ‘The Nehruvian interventionist state had failed to deliver the growth and development that it had promised two decades ago’ (Roy, 2012: 27). Anandamoyee’s death brings to a fortuitous and violent close this history but also announces the beginning of a new era of urban protests. In many ways, the ideological extent of the rupture that Anandamoyee’s death articulates is related to her personification as a dominant female image - the Mother.

Broadening out the argument concerning the iconoclasm of Anandamoyee’s death, the contending rupture of this particular break in history is made altogether ideologically potent if we construe that Anandamoyee’s character draws from the mythology of Bengali culture, a familiar trait of female constructions in Indian cinema. It was during the Bengal renaissance the Mother Bengal (Bangamata) concept was disseminated through popular culture, a personification of Bengal and intrinsic to the essence of social relations: ‘The texture of social communication in Bengal is permeated by the address of mother’ (Bagchi, 1990: 66). Mother Bengal, an image of strength, ‘a combination of the affective warmth of a quintessentially Bengali mother and the mother goddess Shakti’ (1990: 66), ranks as ‘the most dominant myth of
colonial Bengal’ (1990: 66). Alternatively, Mother Bengal would also come to symbolize national unity and opposition to British colonial rule particularly ‘Jana Gana Mana’, a song written by Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore that deified the Mother and that later became India’s National Anthem. Cinematically, it was Ritwik Ghatak who harnessed yet subverted the Jungian potency of the Great Mother image in Bengali cinema:

‘The images of women in Ghatak’s films...signify a past glory of a land betrayal, the present state of humiliation and predicament and a future redemption which could be only attained through a popular revolution’ (Sengupta, 2004: 10).

In this cultural and historical trajectory of Mother Bengal, the death of Anandamoyee becomes altogether potent, functioning as a broader metonymic device. From this perspective, the return to the notion of image breaking that underpins iconoclasm reasserts itself metaphorically. Moreover, the iconoclasm of her death, read as the demise of the Great Mother of Bengal, imagines rupture as a literal tearing apart of the land and history, a severance from a colonial Bengal and its associated mythologies – a rejection of dominant myths. But more importantly, it is the youth, who remain as witnesses to this displacement of Mother Bengal, suggesting iconoclasm as a signifier of rupture brings with it a potential for political restitution.

Indian cinema often draws from Hindu mythology to imagine characters but in this case I would argue the inspiration for Anandamoyee also draws from contemporary Bengali folk culture. Anandamayi Ma, ‘an
illiterate Bengali woman who was widely revered as a saint, guru, and avatara, or incarnation of God’ (Hallstrom, 1999: 5) resonates in the virtuous, long suffering Anandamoyee. Anandamoyee appears as a saint to the people she comes across including her relatives, the street children and gangs of youth. In this context of religious iconography, the death of Anandamoyee, a revered image of sainthood, encourages us to read to rupture as far more political than first thought. As I noted from the outset of the chapter, the political impact of Anandamoyee’s death is mythologized to the sound of a Venu flute, often used in the melodrama as a conventional idiom of bereavement. The Venu flute ‘is the instrument of Lord Krishna’ (Thakur, 2010: 166), a revered deity in Hindu mythology, hence Anandamoyee’s death takes on a deeper mythological stream, reminding us the conventional use of folk music indicates a religious inviolability has also been transgressed.

Unlike the more conventional interpretation of the sacred mythological deification of Anandamoyee, there is also an alternative gender reading at stake. Thus, it is worth expanding on the ways in which the iconoclastic displacement of Anandamoyee conceals a significant commentary on gender norms that have often been perpetuated through dominant mythological constructions of masculinity and femininity in Indian cinema. Shoma Chatterji (1998) argues that unlike the male icon, which has been able to transform over the decades, the image of the female has remained trapped in narrow realms of ‘mythical stereotypes’:  

78 ‘Mother of Bliss: Anandamayi Ma (1896 – 1982)’ is the title of a biography written by Lisa Lassell Halstrom which examines her teachings and influence on religious imagery in Bengal.
'It suits the Indian mass audience...since it coincides and reinforces its timeless conditioning into the dominant patriarchal ideology which deifies the woman who sacrifices everything for the sake of, or, at the command of her husband' (1998: 42).

While Chatterji is talking here specifically about the ‘gender-ownership’ enacted by the imagining of Sita in popular Hindi cinema, the representation of Anandamoyee is also very traditional in the context of Parallel Cinema. Correspondingly, Srila Roy has argued that, ‘Naxalbari politics was infused with middle-class ideologies of “pure” womanhood epitomized in a nurturing, sacrificial, and desexed motherhood' (2012: 62). Turning to Mother India again, Radha, the archetypal deified Indian woman, ‘humbly accepts her economic and social dependence' (Schulze, 2002: 86). And through flashbacks in Apanjan, we discover Anandamoyee was subservient to her husband and later comes to occupy a nurturing motherly role, caring for the street children. A departure though is Anandamoyee’s refusal to be treated like a glorified servant and ultimately her rejection of such middle class contempt leads to her becoming an outcast in a changing Indian society. Nevertheless, in this context of representational gender constraints, the iconoclastic displacement of Mother Bengal as an icon of conventional femininity not only amplifies rupture as a multilateral phenomenon but also makes salient the moment of revolutionary historical change at a critical juncture in Indian history. Moreover, Roy’s view of motherhood and Naxalbari politics overlooks the iconoclastic representations of the Mother in Parallel Cinema and how cinematic imaginings of rupture come to contest the totality of this hegemonic and continual myth.
Having discussed the ways in which the iconoclasm of both the cultural status of Mother Bengal and also the saintly connotations with Anadamayi Ma are conjoined as a broader signifier of the severity of Naxalism as rupture, the Mother as a site of familial crisis would emerge as a key thematic motif in many of these early films, often depicting the Mother in a state of mourning. Mourning often associated with trauma manifests itself in the ghostly look of Anandamoyee and her cultural status as a widow. The image of the widow, which reappears throughout Bengali Parallel Cinema, later at the start of Pratidwandi and also in Calcutta ‘71 can also be read alternately against the backdrop of Naxalism, coming to embody the traumatic suffering of those mothers who were mourning the loss of their children; idealistic middle class Bengali youth who had ran away from home without saying goodbye or even an explanation. In Apanjan, the ending mourns the death of Anandamoyee. After Anandamoyee’s dead body is stretchered into the ambulance (Fig 39), the two street children run after the ambulance. Over this ghostly image of the children chasing after the ambulance (Fig 40) the instrumental version of the film’s main tune is heard on the soundtrack, of which the lyrics are significant: ‘Wake up oh the goddess of the wealth, (and the nation), wake up oh the one who is beloved and revered by all’. While both the conventional and alternative readings I have offered of Anandamoyee’s death contest the iconoclastic meanings of this action, I would argue the significance of the lyrics, lamenting the death of Anandamoyee, inferred through the instrumental music, reiterates the potency of the Mother Goddess archetype and its
supremacy to Indian nationhood: ‘The concept of the Hindu Goddess is something deep rooted among Indians. This concept has remained strong despite the European’s imposition of a patriarchal mind-set on us’ (Abraham in Shaji, 1994: 106). Director John Abraham’s comments underline how sacred the Hindu Goddess is to Indian culture. It is this deconstruction of Motherhood what makes Apanjan a critical film in the foundational years of Parallel Cinema. The film does not shy away from framing Anandamoyee’s death as a metaphor for the failure of the Nation to protect the Mother from harm. Indeed, the Mother’s demise, destruction and displacement realises the way rupture becomes a cumulative force of history.

Srila Roy (2012) argues the party literature of Naxalite politics constructed the Mother as a sentimental, albeit contradictory representation, the victim and saviour, and repeated what the anti-colonial movement had done in the past, which was to link Motherhood to a specific political identity and cause. While Roy admits that her discussion is limited to ‘autobiographical tracts by activists’ (2012: 200),
she notes the ‘literary and poetic imagination of the movement…
mobilizes the emotive force of motherhood for political purposes’ (2012: 200). This is where my work intervenes; demonstrating how the
ciconclastic assault brought to bear upon the Mother in Parallel Cinema
maps an alternative cultural trajectory through which we can see the
politicization of the Mother. But more importantly, it is the cinematic
imagining of the origins of rupture, which I have identified as the death of
Anandamoyee that creates a new political space in which to begin this re-
reading of the Mother while reiterating the hypothetical usefulness of
rupture as a tool for film analysis.

Stacy Boldrick talks of iconoclasts as potential liberators: ‘Destabilizing
political symbols is, for many, one desired result of revolutionary
iconoclasm’ (Boldrick, 2007: 3). To understand the iconoclastic
displacement of the Mother in Apanjan with greater clarity and how it led
to the destabilization of the Mother figure in Parallel Cinema, we need to
turn to a much later Naxalite film – John Abraham’s Amma Ariyan (A
Report to Mother, 1984)\textsuperscript{79} that looks back at the Naxalite movement with
romanticism but accordingly resurrects the Mother and situates her as
central to revolution:

‘Revolution should be done with the knowledge and consent of the
mothers. If one can’t tell one’s own mother about revolutionary
ideas, how can one change the world? That is why I say; it
[revolution] should begin from mothers’ (Shaji, 1994: 129).

\textsuperscript{79} Amma Ariyan is part of the second wave of Naxalite films that were made in the 1980s
and which looked back at the movement in a critical way, reflecting on the traumatic
impact of state repression.
Resultant of the initial iconoclastic gesture in *Apanjan*, the first cycle of Naxalite films that form the foundational years of Parallel Cinema displace the Mother whereby she remains in a crisis, paralysed by the cultural and political shifts of the early 1970s. John Abraham’s suggestion of the Mother as a consensual element of revolution in society, ‘without awakening our mothers, it is impossible to achieve our goals’ (1994: 129), he writes, has its antecedents in one of the first literary responses to the trauma of Naxalism – feminist postcolonial writer Mahasweta Devi’s ‘Mother of 1084’ (1973-4). ‘Mother of 1084’ deals with the trauma of a mother, Sujata, who comes to terms with the murder of her son. In his introduction to Devi’s ‘Mother of 1084’, Samik Bandyopadhyay writes:

‘At one level, the work is all about a woman finding a voice of her own, distinctive from all the other voices she has negotiated with, including those of her family…growing in the process to the final point of eruption/explosion’ (2014: xviii).

The narrative of ‘Mother of 1084’ unfolds through the point of view of the Mother and looks at the traumatic impact of Naxalism through a female prism and which eventually leads to the activation of the Mother into a political position. When Sujata cries out at the end of the novel, Devi writes: ‘It was a cry that smelt of blood, protest, grief’ (Devi, 2014: 127). That is to say Sujata is aligned finally with the iconoclastic protestation of the Naxal youth, leading to the start of the reconstitution of the Mother in Bengali culture. If we return to Boldrick’s comments regarding the destabilization of political symbols I would go as far as to suggest rupture was adamantly necessary for renewal to begin. Thus, in the long term, the iconoclastic displacement first witnessed in *Apanjan* does change into
a form of liberation but which takes place gradually and culminates in the return of the Mother in a far more belligerent, political mode. Tanika Sarkar (2001) talks of the role of the Mother, ‘mayer jati’ (race of mothers), in helping to awaken and regenerate the nation through a cultural and political activism. Likewise, Srila Roy (2012: 59) also draws attention to the significance of motherhood as a political instrument. The most striking cinematic instance of the mobilization of the Mother occurs in the ending to Amma Ariyan. The grieving Mother is finally told the news that her son Hari, a Naxalite, committed suicide. Rather than escape into sentimentality, the mother’s grief turns into defiance. When the mother looks directly at the audience in a self-reflexive gesture, she is surrounded by a swarm of young men who share her pain. In terms of the foundational years of Parallel Cinema, it would take Ghatak’s Jukti Takko Aar Gappo, the last film in the first cycle of Naxalite inspired Parallel Cinema films, to resurrect the mother. Ghatak does so through the mythological figure of Durga who returns at the end of the film as a witness to state violence and the traumatic impact of the historical and political rupture of Naxalism that is imagined in the film.

Ideologically, if the moral center was the Mother in Indian cinema, holding everything together, the iconoclastic displacement of the Mother mirrored ‘a time of crisis and conflict, of resentment along lines of class, religion, ethnicity and region, of a centre that seemed barely to hold’ (Guha, 2007: 433). Since Apanjan was made at the peak of Naxalism, the death of Anandamoyee takes on a palpable political register. And the significance
of this iconoclastic displacement of the Mother in *Apanjan* is articulated in the corporeal imagery of Anandamoyee’s body, which is treated as an ‘image of the social, moral and political order’ (Beattie, 1998: 16). The corporeal is most flagrant in the terrifying anguish that is imagined in the physiognomy of Anandamoyee’s facial expression when she is shot and killed as explored earlier in chapter two. The corporeal amounts to a recurring theme through these films. Notably, the final film in Sen’s Calcutta Trilogy, *Padatik*, and the penultimate Naxalite film that form the first phase of Parallel Cinema, ends with the funeral of Sumit’s Mother. In *Padatik*, the iconoclastic displacement of the Mother folds back on itself, whereby rupture indicates a cyclical void that is taken up in the reconstitution of the absent father, expressly in *Padatik*, and who now emerges as a defiantly political entity.

In this section I have demonstrated rupture is signified through the iconoclastic action of Anandamoyee’s death. The death of Mother Bengal is decentred from the exalted position it has often taken up in the cultural imagination of Indian society. Moreover, I have argued the death of Anandamoyee is also the origin of the rupture that would gain further momentum in later films. Finally, Parallel Cinema emerges as a way of taking on popular mythology, forging a new cultural space in which to contest and deconstruct dominant cinematic representations such as the Mother. But in the next section I want to move forward and consider how the death of Anandamoyee was not merely an act of cultural iconoclasm.

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*Padatik* can be placed comparatively in relation to the way *Tout Va Bien* (All Is Well, 1972) functioned for Godard, as an attempt to take stock of a failed political project, and look back reflexively at the original intentions of a militant cinema.
but reflected a real political iconoclasm, that of The Naxalite Movement while opening a new space for alternate female representations.

**The displacement of the Mother and new gender imaginings**

In *Apanjan*, Anandamoyee is represented as dysfunctional, displaced and ultimately ineffectual. She fails to intervene and stop the violence at the end. Thereby, she is no longer able to ‘sustain the balance of society’ (Chatterji, 1998: 37) which was conventionally expected of the Mother in Indian cinema. Anandamoyee’s death is the iconoclastic Event that signifies and imagines rupture, coinciding with the birth of Parallel Cinema. But there is a lot more at stake here than the deconstruction of the Mother figure in Indian cinema. In this section, I will deal with the following two arguments. How can the Event of Anandamoyee’s death be read as a political metaphor for what was about to come to fruition in terms of civil unrest, invoking a real political iconoclasm? And, what new gender representations emerged after the displacement of the Mother, suggestive of rupture’s capacity to open up a new political space with a revolutionary portent that the Event can often given birth to.

By the time *Apanjan* was released in cinemas, The Naxalite Movement had already come to fruition. And come 1969, Naxalism steadily attracted more followers to its revolutionary cause. The disillusioned Bengali youth were captivated by the iconoclasm of this moment. *Apanjan* does not show the tryst between the youth, Naxalism and iconoclasm, since it would come later. However, the death of Anandamoyee, can be read as a
precursor of things to come, unconsciously looking forward to the rise of a real iconoclasm\textsuperscript{81} in Calcutta which ‘began in mid-April 1970’ (Seth, 2004: 43), and led to ‘statues of prominent figures… decapitated, blackened and otherwise vandalized’ (Seth, 2004: 43). But Anandamoyee is a potent symbol of the Mother figure. In this respect, viewed as an icon of Bengali society, her destruction imitates and plays out the act of statue smashing in metaphorical terms.

It is important to note that much of the iconoclasm in Calcutta in the early 1970s was student led. Thus, I would reason the suggestion of the iconoclastic rage that explodes into violence at the end of \textit{Apanjan}, and which leads to the accidental shooting of Anandamoyee is an example of how vandalism and iconoclasm are intertwined, making it difficult in this particular instance to separate the two. Fabio Rambelli and Eric Reinders note the study of iconoclasm often treats ‘destruction as a social problem’ (2007: 17) and has often sought to associate iconoclasm with ‘the rubric of vandalism’ (2007: 17). Rambelli and Reinders argue otherwise, that iconoclastic actions are meaningful and ‘the destruction of objects produces new meanings and practices’ (2007: 17). In this light, the iconoclastic actions of the youth, that leads to the destruction of Anandamoyee, imagines rupture as almost necessary and completely justified. Transforming the Mother from the sacred icon that she was to a

\textsuperscript{81} The iconoclasm of the Naxalite student movement also has its antecedents in the Hungry generation of Bengali poets (1961 – 1965). The Hungryalists as they were commonly known came from the slums, writing anti-establishment poetry. They were greatly influenced by the work of Oswald Spengler who argued history was organic with lots of branches representing different, competing voices. Many of the poets were arrested and put on trial for obscenity by the state but their counter culture spirit struck a chord with a younger generation.
casualty of youth violence clears the way, and does what unconsciously the youth desire, which is to use ‘iconoclasm as a creative force directed against the past’ (Brubaker, 2013: 13). If there is meaning in the iconoclastic action of Ananadamoyee’s death, the reaction from the youth and children suggest otherwise. This is because of the shift from the sacred to the profane is registered as somewhat traumatic, a reminder of the impact of rupture.

It is important to note that Rambelli and Reinders also say that in smashing an icon, there is also ‘a desire to preserve the object’ (2007: 18). The entombing of Anandamoyee’s dead body in the ambulance could be read as preservation. However, such an argument appears contrary to the iconoclastic action of destroying the Mother. Leslie Brubaker notes: ‘The most familiar reason to destroy images is to annihilate the belief system that they are thought to embody’ (2013: 13). To some extent this is true. Anandamoyee’s dead body testifies to the iconoclastic action. However, I would reason the iconoclastic action is not totalizing. After all, this is an accidental, indiscriminate enactment of iconoclasm. The Mother can be displaced, deconstructed, undermined but she can never be totally obliterated from Indian culture. This is why I would argue the very definition of rupture is important here. Rupture offers an alternate perspective on the iconoclastic action – it places emphasis on the idea of breaking with the past.
Nonetheless, a contradiction exists with the explication of cinematic iconoclasm. In actual historical moments, iconoclasm can lead to the real destruction of physical objects. Film is merely an imagining of iconoclasm. And it is an imagining that can reduce the power of iconoclasm since it occurs in a safe, distanced space from real history. This is what Boris Groys (2008: 66) means when he says that films can never truly be iconoclastic – they can only imagine iconoclasm as a performance. Nonetheless, I would argue oppositely with Groys and suggest representations of cinematic iconoclasm can also be harnessed for specific aims such as the mobilization of a collective political response from the film spectator or audience. This is important because Sen resorts to this political objective in many of his films, imagining iconoclasm as revolutionary, a substantial point I will return in the next half of this chapter.

If Anandamoyee’s death was about breaking with the past for the dissenting youth in a changing Bengali society, her death also functions as a metaphor for the real violence that was about to be unleashed in Calcutta. Indeed, the historical rupture of Naxalism that Anandamoyee’s death comes to denote is a rupture that bears an indiscriminate violence of which Anandamoyee is a casualty and victim. And all of this would become a major criticism of Naxalite student agitation in Calcutta ‘advanced not only by the bourgeois press and Congress politicians, but also many on the Left’ (Seth, 2004: 43). I would maintain the iconoclastic action of Anandamoyee’s death can be interpreted as a conservative
warning against the dangers of political unrest and that it often leads to
meaningless violence. Here I want to intercede and propose that another
way of situating the indiscriminate violence that marks the iconoclastic
action of Anandamoyee’s death is to turn to Bruno Latour’s term ‘innocent
vandals’ (2002: 29). Latour uses the term to refer to describe those who
‘had absolutely no idea that they were destroying anything’ (2002: 29),
which he labels as an example of iconoclash. Latour’s concept of
iconoclash contests the intentions of the iconoclastic action, complicating
how we should read Anandamoyee’s death. In this context, framing the
youth as ignorant vandals imagines rupture as dysfunctional and lacks a
political intent. At any rate the innocent vandalism of the youth at the end
of Apanjan is debatable. For example, the statue smashing actions of the
students in Calcutta, was interpreted by some as the realization of protest
against a corrupt, bourgeoisie system:

‘Attacking schools, burning furniture, twisting the blades of electric
fans are futile no doubt if they are meant as actions in a class war;
but they are as effective as any other action if meant as a symbolic
protest against the entire social setup’ (Rudra, 1970: 5).

While the death of Anandamoyee is unintentional, the source of the
violence, perpetrated by the youth, functions almost like a warning of the
fine line between vandalism and iconoclasm that would be contested in
the media as both meaningless and decadent. But this was not simply a
crude spectacle of anarchism. The Naxalite leadership defended the
iconoclastic statue breaking campaign as it ‘kept alive the possibility of
revolt’ (Seth, 2004: 44) which was central to their overarching aim of the
total obliteration of the system. This is why Anandamoyee’s death
invokes a real political iconoclasm that was coming to fruition at the time, imagining rupture as a counter-hegemonic rejoinder to the existing power structures that were in place and which the iconology of the Mother was part of.

In his work on iconoclasm Richard Clay suggests image breaking is not an isolated act ‘but a moment in on-going processes of sign transformation’ (2007: 116). Clay argues that we should think in terms of transformation and not simply destruction. In some respects, Clay’s emphasis on transformation seeks to rescue iconoclasm from the oft-repeated associations with nihilism, that after the iconoclastic action has taken place, a political and cultural despair sets in and closes off the potential to think of rupture in progressive terms. In this section, I want to expand on Clay’s position and reason the death of the Mother in *Apanjan* as sign transformation can be interpreted as a form of displacement rather than simply destruction or obliteration. I choose the term displacement since the destruction of the Mother in Parallel Cinema was not a totalizing occurrence, as this would have meant something far more apocalyptic.

I want to begin by returning to an earlier point I made about how the displacement of the Mother figure can also be read as a rejection of traditional cinematic imaginings of gender (Chatterji, 1998) notably the narrow female representations. This ties in with Clay’s notion that iconoclasm is not about destruction but about the way objects can
change and take on new meanings. The new gender imaginings that emerged as a result of the iconoclastic action and Event of Anandamoyee’s death also points to a new political space that rupture can carve out, allowing new ideas to take hold. My assertion is that some of the Bengali Parallel Cinema films that follow Apanjan begin to contest the impact of the iconoclastic displacement of the Mother through the introduction of new female imaginings such as Gauri in Bhuvan Shome and Sutapa in Pratidwandi. This argument is worth pursuing further since it discloses the early interventionism of Parallel Cinema in terms of countering dominant gender representations popularized by mainstream Indian cinema.

For instance, in a key montage sequence from Bhuvan Shome, actuality footage of street demonstrations, much of it communist led, trails what is an iconoclastic assault upon a colonial, romantic and dominant image of Bengal that centers on male iconicity. This particular cinematic imagining of the iconoclastic destruction of the Bengali nation as personified by the Mother gives way to cries of ‘Long live the revolution!’ looped over the imagery of men and women marching in solidarity. But it is notable the demonstration is dominated by the presence of women (Fig 41 & 42). Not only does this gender cohesion give the demonstration a

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82 Louis Malle’s 1969 documentary Calcutta uses similar footage to the street demonstrations shown in Bhuvan Shome. This is because as Somak Mukherjee (2015) notes Mrinal Sen assisted Malle when he was shooting in Calcutta. Interestingly, Malle fell foul of critic, Jag Mohan, who wrote to the editor of the Times of India in response to Dileep Padgaonkar’s article on Louis Malle’s Calcutta. Mohan criticised Malle’s blinkered view of India, situating the documentary as ‘an excellent piece of propaganda for Kanu Sanyal and his new communist party’ (Mohan, 1969: 8).
considerably egalitarian quality but imagines and amplifies rupture as a progressive break in history:

‘The rupture frees individuals from the despotic rule of nature or tradition, and it constitutes them as singular subjects. But it also introduces a principle of equality that binds subjects to one another in an experience of human solidarity’ (Eisenstein & McGowan, 2012: 11).

Eisenstein & McGowan’s emphasis on the revolutionary nature of rupture, creating equality, solidarity and freeing people from the tyranny of the past is a positivist, egalitarian imagining of iconoclasm. Such notions of egalitarianism are more than visible in this discursive instance of revolutionary iconoclasm. And this just one example of many in which we can see how the displacement of the Mother was giving way to new female imaginings.

Fig 41. A street demonstration. Fig 42. Women protesting in solidarity.

However, it is contestable to what extent Bengali Parallel Cinema films position women as active political agents, and central to the idea of revolution. Moreover, to what extent are these fleeting explications that
posit rupture as a progressive force merely a romantic cinematic inclination that often plagues radical political cinema. Mallarika Sinha Roy has written notably on the relationship between gender and Naxalism, examining the role of women in the movement: ‘Indeed, the greatest martyrs of the movement were the women adivasis that the state fired upon at Naxalbari’ (Roy, 2011: 56). Roy’s work demonstrates the urgency of reclaiming political histories in which the role of women has not been fully asserted. While all of the Bengali films that form the first wave of Naxalite cinema unfold through the perspective of the male protagonist, there is recurring evidence that Parallel Cinema did attempt to break new ground in terms of the parochial gender paradigm that conventional, mainstream Hindi cinema had ingrained.

In a 1983 essay titled ‘The Woman: Vamp or Victim’, Aruna Vasudev accounts for the changing representation of women in Indian cinema, arguing ‘society’s long denial of the woman as a person, is being challenged and condemned’ (1983: 104) predominately by the emergence of Parallel Cinema. In this context, I would contend the urban activism of the women protesting which Sen shows us earlier in Bhuvan Shome connects ideologically with Gauri’s rural unconventionality. Thereby forging a progressive view of female subjectivity that could be considered as consequential of the late 1960s and while also potentially interpreted as resultant of the earlier destabilization of the Mother that occurs in Apanjan. To illustrate the point further, regarding displacement, I want to turn to sequences from Bhuvan Shome. In Bhuvan Shome,
Gauri, whom partially defies conventional female expectations, constantly questions Shome, points to a power struggle in which Gauri outwits Shome in many respects (Chakraborty, 2015). Gauri is first introduced when a black buffalo terrorizes Shome and the driver of a bullock cart. When the buffalo chases Shome, the sequence is edited in a fractured style, punctuated with freeze frames, jump cuts and animation, espousing Shome’s loss of control and frantic state. Eventually, Gauri intervenes, bringing the buffalo under her control, laughing at the ridiculous sight of Shome who has climbed a tree to escape. Her laughter marks her as a vivacious, high-spirited woman. She then rides away on the buffalo. Later, Gauri compares Shome to a buffalo, a critique of the repressed animalistic depravity of the bourgeoisie. Not only does this sequence present a farcical visual illustration of Shome’s emasculation but reverses gender norms, situating Gauri in a position of control and power.

Gauri’s ethereal connection with the buffalo resonates, a motif of the uninhibited rural village. This initial meeting is significant in many respects primarily because it presents Shome in a state of emasculation, the first stage in the shattering of his engrained middle class colonialist temperament. Up to this point, Shome has been depicted as a man who has complete control over his life, a taciturn authoritarian, constantly dictating terms. But precipitously Shome is immobilized, undone by the rage of a buffalo. Even the archetype of the village belle that Banerjee defines as ‘conspicuous and semi-vulgarized, adept in pseudo folk songs and dances, with a retinue of chorus-girls’ (1992: 247) is nowhere to be
found in the wholly nuanced representation of Gauri. In this respect, Gauri’s archetypal representation of the sacrosanct Indian woman devoted to her husband is subverted in ways that find her more than a match, if not superior, in terms of intellect than the male characters. Acknowledging Gauri’s interventionist role at the end of *Bhuvan Shome* becomes a way of privileging femininity, implementing a partial change in social attitudes and complicating the linear trajectory of gender destabilization that extends out from the trajectory of the iconoclastic gesture first realised and imagined at the end of *Apanjan*.

The historical and political rupture of Naxalism seem to impact gender in markedly alternate ways, disrupting masculinity to such an extent that it results in polarizing extremes – in this case urban alienation and disillusionment or taking up arms and joining the revolution. Ray had already started to develop the trope of the modern, liberated woman in the character of Arati (Madhabhi Mukherjee) in *Mahanagar* (The Big City, 1963). Brinda Bose relates Arati’s emancipation in *Mahanagar* with the claim of re-gendering public spaces ‘as a series of significant semiotic engagements with notional female liberation in contexts of urbanity, modernity, and sexuality in post-independence India’ (Bose, 2008: 55). While there is a continuation of liberated femininity in *Pratidwandi*, Sutapa’s character is problematized by her overt sexuality, threatening both Siddhartha’s natural right to succeed his father and the image of the family. But if rupture lays claim to a new social order, overturning normative gender identity, then Bulbul (Ranjit’s sister), Sutapa and Keya
(Pratidwandi) and Gauri (Bhuvan Shome) form a loose female collective, products of a late 1960s modernity, but also arguably liberated by a violent rupture that is treated with a political ambiguity by both Ray and Sen.

Srila Roy writes Sutapa symbolizes ‘the young urban career woman’ who represents the dangers of modernization itself’ (2012: 64) that often ‘herald social doom’ (2012: 64). To a certain extent this is quite true but Roy’s argument that Keya balances Sutapa’s deviancy by restoring normalcy in terms of gender is based on Ganguly’s reading of Keya as a reputable Bengali middle-class woman. Although it would be a stretch to say Keya was a Naxal sympathiser, my opinion is that Keya shares with Siddhartha similar traits of the withdrawn, confused and alienated youth, thereby making such representations less about gender and far more about a political unanimity, not solely Naxalite related, that was prevalent amongst the Bengali youth at the time. Undeniably both Keya and Sutapa are modern women and arguably their emergence in Parallel Cinema is often seen to be the result of the iconoclastic destabilization of the family and significantly the absence of the father in the narrative of these films.

What I have tried to demonstrate in this section is how the death of Ananadmooyee is a political metaphor for an emerging real iconoclasm, much of it connected to Naxalism, and how the displacement of the Mother led to new gender imaginings. Both of these arguments imagine rupture as a potentially modernizing force that shows the state was going
through its own social and political transformation, all of which is reflected in Parallel Cinema. Clay’s proposition regarding iconoclasm, as transformation is an ambivalent argument because it not only plays down the revolutionary potential of the iconoclastic action and Event, but also depoliticizes rupture. Moreover, the danger with arguing for Anandamoyee’s death as a metaphor for the displacement of the Mother is that it can reduce the Mother to an object, fetishizing the Event and as a result decentring the broader geopolitical context. But as I will show in the next part of this chapter, filmmakers often found innovative ways of bringing to life the real political value of iconoclasm.

**Statue smashing and Naxalite revolutionary iconoclasm**

‘The young men knocking down statues were not members of the CPI (M-L) though they too were revolutionaries. They are hastening the process. They were smashing up things because they felt in their guts that this is the way people were thinking. Break old statues so that new statues can come up. Remove Gandhi to make way for Rani of Jhansi. The Gandhi ghat at Barrakpur would be Mangal Pandey ghat. The new generation wanted to sever the ties with the reformist past’ (Gangopadhyay, 2004: 242).

By February 1970 Naxalite agitation had reached the streets of Calcutta, infecting the political psyche of the youth. In the period between May-July 1970, 1257 instances of vandalism took place in Calcutta (Arun Mukherjee, 2007), with much of the rage directed towards public buildings (mostly educational institutions) and statues. In his novel *East West: Purbo Paschim*, Bengali writer Sunil Gangopadhyay describes the orgy of vandalism that was unleashed by the youth during the months of Naxalite
unrest. Gangopadhyay is largely unsympathetic to the act of smashing statue, arguing it was vandalism rather than revolutionary iconoclasm. Clay notes: ‘When historians call the toppling of the statue “vandalism”, they condemn the perpetrators as barbarians’ (2007: 93). This was readily the reaction from much of the right wing press in Bengal, portraying the young Naxals as mindless thugs. In the context of the Russian Revolution, Richard Stites (1989) discusses revolutionary iconoclasm in terms of expunging the past, negating cultural values and making way for the new signs of the future. Boris Groys argues along similar lines, viewing iconoclasm as a cleansing process, ‘a series of historically ascending movements constantly clearing their path of all that has become redundant, powerless, and void of inner meaning, to make way for whatever the future might bring’ (Groys, 2008: 67).

Statue breaking was one of many iconoclastic campaigns unleashed by Naxalite students and endorsed by the CPI (M-L) under Mazumdar. Firstly, this frames the filmmaker as a potential vandal but more importantly reiterates the iconoclastic nature of the artist. Secondly, ‘the destruction of nationalist icons’ (Seth, 2004: 42) in public spaces, which were subsequently transformed and reclaimed as political zones of protest84 and resistance in Calcutta in the late 1960s and early 1970s, provoked a debate about vandalism and iconoclasm that was doubly imagined in the films of the era, notably Sen’s Calcutta Trilogy. In this

84 Achin Vanaik notes ‘protest...has been a dominant characteristic of Bengali political life, whether expressed in its strong terrorist tradition, in revolutionary rejection of the status quo, or in electoral opposition’ and that ‘communism has been the vehicle of West Bengal's ideological and cultural self-affirmation’ (1986: 58).
respect, the article by Moni Guha titled ‘The Politics of Statues’ (28 Nov, 1970, Frontier) took on the accusations of mindless vandalism and it is important to situate this work in relation to Sanjay Seth’s ‘Smashing Statues, Dancing Sivas’ (2004) which also debates the iconoclasm of Naxalite unrest. Equally significant is Seth’s 2006 article ‘From Maoism to postcolonialism? The Indian “Sixties”, and beyond’ in which he develops the idea of annihilation and that was central to the dictum of Naxalism as an iconoclastic movement. In this section of the chapter I will extend my discussions of iconoclasm as a key signifier. I will demonstrate how the breaking of images first discussed in relation to the Mother broadens out. Now rupture is imagined and manifested predominately through the act of statue smashing and which could possibly be labelled as examples of revolutionary iconoclasm. Also of importance here is the way iconoclastic actions narrate a discourse the contestation of memory and space.

*Interview* opens with an audio-visual motif of battle, an imperial cannon at the Queen Victoria memorial in Calcutta (Fig 43) juxtaposed to the imaginary off-screen sound of cannon fire. The cannon fire replicates rupture in aural terms, creating an instant disturbance in the narrative. Then, the camera steadily tilts up and a statue of Lord Curzon (George Curzon was the Governor general and Viceroy of British India), one of many statues venerating British rule, comes into view (Fig 44) – an idol of British colonialism and symbol of the past.
We now see the devious satirical intent of Sen’s cinematic iconoclasm. The cannon points straight at Curzon, a reviled figure of British rule. The primary iconoclastic gesture in which Sen’s target for symbolic annihilation is the British Empire, tears into the self-imposing colonial past that has been memorialized by the old political order. Sweeping away, purging the past of the old order is a history of decolonization that Sen narrates metonymically. With this explication, Sen indirectly sympathises with the overarching ideals of The Naxalite Movement and more broadly with rising anti-imperialist sentiments of the youth. The creative destruction of the statue of Curzon also reiterates the ways in which the act of revolutionary iconoclasm can be replicated through the saliency of film editing: ‘When the cutting of shots and juxtaposition of sequences are erratic, quite possible they are serving as a slap in the Establishment’s face’ (Sen, 1977: 91), says director Mrinal Sen. However, the problem with cinematic iconoclasm is that it remains merely an imagining that can be revisited and relived, almost fetishizing iconoclasm whereby it becomes removed from historical reality. Film preserves the iconoclastic action indefinitely, as a ghostly and spectral residue that lives on and
which permits the iconoclastic action to be replayed over again. In this respect, film allows us to revisit that was once was present, undermining the symbolic intent of creating anew. Does that mean rupture becomes paralysed, accessible as a moment in time? If so, I would argue film challenges what normally occurs when iconoclasm takes place – the near totalizing annihilation of the object and Event becomes absurdly immortalised.

The next shot in the opening sequence tracks through an empty archway of the Victoria memorial. On the soundtrack we hear a cacophony of battle sounds including a machine gun and explosions. The effect is ghostly, extenuated further by a musical score by Vijay Rao that stays in one elongated note, anticipating violence. It is an eerie juxtaposition, reminiscent of Resnais and Grillet’s haunting objectification of the non-space in Last Year at Marienbad (1961), framing the city as a spectral landscape. What follows next is actuality footage showing the removal of statues from the Victoria memorial including Edward VII (Emperor of India, 1901 – 1910). Sen’s deployment of actuality seizes upon the immediacy of the iconoclastic action. The reclaiming of public sites from the tyranny of colonialist symbolism such as the Victoria memorial visualizes a struggle over power. Inanimate statues are benignly and supernaturally brought to life but they no longer stand tall in their respective places. The statues are now suspended in the air by cranes, laid down in trucks and tied down by ropes (Fig 45 and 46). This montage
is a visual enactment of decolonization, an act of political resistance, which imagines rupture as cathartic, purgative and liberating.

Scholar and historian Paul M. McGarr (2015) writes the purging of statues all took place in 1964, after Nehru's death. This was because Nehru argued the statues were part of India's past, a reminder of British rule. David Johnson suggests Nehru's reluctance to remove the colonial statues was not strictly to do with expunging the colonial memory but about geopolitical relations: 'He [Nehru] understood the need to remain on cordial relations with India's most important trade partner' (Johnson in Walsh & Varnava, 2017: 258). But after Nehru's death The Congress Party was forced to put into place a timetable for the removal of colonial statues throughout the major cities:

‘In Calcutta, a marble state of Lord Curzon, which had stood defiantly outside the main entrance to the Victoria memorial, was dismantled and taken to join some of the 22 other statues removed from West Bengal’ (McGarr, 2015: 825).

One of the ways in which we can read the removal of statues is to do with colonial memory that came under attack during The Naxalite Movement.
Leslie Brubaker posits ‘the silencing of memory’ (2013: 15) in relation to iconoclasm, arguing ‘one of the most fundamental reasons to destroy a picture is to erase whatever memories are conjured up’ (2013: 14). Erasing the past, iconoclastic political gestures that signify rupture are problematized. And since helping us to forget about a past that should in this case be remembered, history becomes worryingly engineered - obfuscated in the service of politics. Ironically, McGarr notes that while it was the United Front government that had campaigned for the removal of the statues, Siddhartha Shankar Ray, the Chief Minister of West Bengal in the 1970s, who having helped to crush the Naxal revolt, later argued ‘the return of colonial statuary would reassure nervous British investors wary of West Bengal’s reputation for political radicalism’ (McGarr, 2015: 830). This is unsurprising when one considers how even during the Russian Revolution ‘Bolshevik leaders also felt ambivalent about the destruction of monuments’ (Stites, 1989: 65).

Here we can turn to an earlier debate regarding bourgeois culture and space that arose in post-revolutionary Soviet Union. Joshua Malitsky argues that rather than tear down ‘iconic buildings’ (2013: 52), the Bolsheviks appropriated ‘tsarist or bourgeois spaces for socialist ends’ (2013: 52). The appropriation of space once associated with the old order demonstrates how iconoclasm is repeatedly about transformation and not completely about destruction. At the same time, it is important to read the ideological contestation for the landscape of Calcutta as a struggle over the historical memory of colonialism. Hence, Sen’s choice to re-enact the
removal of the statues is certainly an iconoclastic gesture that ‘draws from the Naxalbari Movement as central to this new political consciousness’ (Bhowmik, 1979) since it demonstrates ‘the negotiation of the content and form of social memory’ (Jones, 2007: 242).

Conversely, the limitation of this iconoclastic gesture is that Sen is unable to propose what exactly will take up this political vacuum. Johnson draws attention to this conundrum of what would replace the statues: ‘If removed, what would replace these colonial objects and how could they be made free of colonialism’s taint?’ (Johnson in Walsh & Varnava, 2017: 258). But as Groys suggests ‘discarding traditions, breaking with conventions, destroying old art, and eradicating outdated values’ (2008: 68) does not necessarily ‘clear the way for the emergence of new images and the introduction of new values’ (2008: 69). The difficulty with Sen’s opening evocation of decolonization is that it does not take place in a post-revolutionary Bengal. One could just easily criticize the iconoclastic erasing of colonial statues as merely decorative, offering little in any way of how these spaces could be seized upon to further the cause of Naxalism. In some respects, the counter ideology of Naxalite iconoclasm is undeniably visible but lacks an impetus to demonstrate how the construction of a new national history (Malitsky, 2013) could come about.

Director Satyajit Ray enacts a similar unconventional praxis in the opening to Pratidwandi but lacks the sweeping revolutionary iconoclasm of Sen’s decolonization. Ray resorts to emphasising the trauma of
Naxalism upon the corpus of the family, killing the father, ‘indexical of the disintegration of bourgeois culture’ (Marcuse, 1972: 66). Otherwise, Sen starts from a historical position, tearing down the iconology of the establishment, and framing rupture as part of a broader socio-political struggle. Jon Wilson writes:

‘The statues started to tumble in the 1960s. By then, images of long dead British officers had begun to symbolise something new and different. For the left, particularly, in South Asia, they came to embody a far more expansive form of power than the British had ever claimed in India. They came to represent the West’s cultural and economic domination of the ‘third world’, a kind of power summed up by the word ‘imperialism’ but which critics thought had been continued into their own present time’ (2016: 435).

Wilson’s comments draw attention to the way signs transform over time, taking on new meanings. In this case, colonial statues, representative of British rule, came to symbolise imperialism. This explains why much of the iconoclastic assault was directed towards statues. For the rebellious Naxal youth, I would reason the statues were less about wiping away the memory of colonialism and more about demonstrating an international solidarity with fellow comrades in the quest to oppose the forces of imperialism. By equating colonialism with imperialism Interview imagines rupture as a fiercely revolutionary concept that is rooted in a broader historical continuum of political struggle that has often characterised the psyche of Bengal.

Since we are discussing how an iconoclastic action is often linked to an Event, I want to briefly pause and turn to the concept of the Event and help us better understand how rupture is imagined by Sen in particular.
Daniel Bensäid describes an Event as ‘aleatory by nature’ (2004) and ‘characterized by the unpredictability of what might just as well not have occurred’ (2004). In his discussion of Alain Badiou’s reading of an Event, Hollis Phelps says the following: ‘an event proper accomplishes a total rupture with the past, an unbreachable scission between what went before and what will come after in its evental wake’ (2008: 61). In the rupture(s) that are imagined in Sen’s Calcutta Trilogy, it is often the case that the break, as signified in this instance through an iconoclastic action, connects the present event with the history and politics of the past. Colonialism and Naxalism become intertwined. As Phelps notes, for Badiou ‘it would seem that the advent of an Event does not allow for any connection with a previous state of affairs’ (Phelps, 2008: 61). Bensäid argues that Badiou sees the event as an imaginary construction and as something inherently miraculous, which is also something that Žižek picks up on his reading of Badiou’s conceptualization of rupture. Todd McGowan disagrees, arguing we can create events and the need to remain faithful to rupture in political terms: ‘One does this by becoming a militant of the event and working diligently to ensure its disruptive impact on the historical situation’ (McGowan, 2010: 9). Likewise, Bensäid contends rupture can only be understood in the proper historical context unlike Badiou who refuses to ‘venture into the dense thickets of real history, into the social and historical determination of events’ (Bensäid, 2004). Arguably this returns to Sen’s imagining of rupture as a markedly political occurrence to that of his contemporaries, and especially in Calcutta ’71, he tries to situate the rupture of Naxalism as something
elemental to the history of poverty in India’s past. As Bensäid notes: ‘Badiou presents us with a subject without history’ (Bensäid, 2004), a return to the miracle of the event, a decidedly inexplicable act.

In this respect, Sen’s work repeatedly challenges this very notion of rupture occurring in some kind of politically isolated bubble, problematizing the notion that if any event can completely break with the past or if there exists such an occurrence as a total or complete rupture. Just as the iconoclastic action can never erase the object, the past and accordingly the old order remain very much in play. Perhaps it is better than to see the way rupture is imagined in Parallel Cinema as a romantic struggle and process to achieve absolute rupture, an impossible enterprise, a notion that ties in with the idealism of Sen and Kaul’s 1968 New Cinema manifesto.

In Interview the opening visual symbolism of decolonization in action can also be situated as part of the Naxalite attempt at a spiritual, moral and ideological renewal of society. For instance, in Italy after World War II, the birth of neorealism was characterised by filmmakers deliberately shunning fascist architecture (Shiel, 2006), refusing to integrate hideous totems of power in the mise-en-scene of the film. Comparatively, the opening to Interview functions in a similar way, expunging the memories of colonialism and offering viewers a blank slate, a new society in which they can participate to reconstruct. But the iconoclastic action of the removal of colonial statues in Interview is complicated by the vandalism
perpetrated at the end by Ranjit. And since Sen opens with iconoclasm and ends with vandalism conjures an imagining of rupture that is also signified ambivalently. Where does iconoclasm finish and vandalism begin? Or is there any real difference between them?

In some respects, although I have argued the political impact of iconoclasm that is imagined in many of these films is ambivalent, we could just as readily turn to another argument posited by Charles Ford who writes we should think about ‘iconoclasm as a means of making icons, rather than a simple notion of breaking, defacing or destroying’ (2007: 77). Iconoclasm as a transformational and creative force supports my theory of rupture, which I argue, can open a new political space and which has the potential to enact a revolution. For instance, the opening montage to Interview, which visualizes iconoclasm in action, also leads to the creation of a new imagery of decolonization, all of which was critical to the development of Sen’s cinema of political modernism. It certainly seems to be the case that Sen was arguing there was a real meaning behind vandalism, that it was not mindless. Rather it had a political purpose that was obfuscated by a sensationalism to do with the very spectacle of iconoclasm. Much of this sensationalist tone was explicated and amplified by the mainstream right wing press. Nonetheless, as I will demonstrate next, the purpose and meaning of the iconoclastic action, predominately instigated by the youth in these films, was also a site of political contestation.
**Vandalism v Iconoclasm**

A young girl is carried away who has just been hit by a car (Fig 47). A mob has gathered around a car. Siddhartha looks on in dismay (Fig 48). The mob drags the man out of the car and begins beating him. When Siddhartha sees the Mercedes emblem on the rear of the car (Fig 49), his blood boils and he explodes, rushing to join the mob. At first, it seems like a clear-cut case of the rich savaging the poor. But as Siddhartha tries to join the mob, he hesitates and backs away. It is then he sees the young schoolgirl (Fig 50), the daughter of the rich man, in the back of the Mercedes, who looks on terrified as the mob continue to beat her father. Guilty, Siddhartha turns and walks away.

Fig 47. The injured girl.  
Fig 48. Anger mounts in Siddhartha.  
Fig 49. The Mercedes emblem.  
Fig 50. The petrified school girl.
The sequence I have described is from *Pratidwandi*. It is one of many moments that detail the unrest in the city. What makes this moment particularly arresting is not so much the mob law that we witness but the anger that is triggered when Siddhartha sees the Mercedes emblem. He is not alone in his rage against the elite. And the sentiment of attacking the man is specifically about attacking a sign, a mark of the bourgeoisie. It is an iconoclastic action that symbolises a simple truth about how vandalism and iconoclasm can often blur into one another, making them inseparable. Stites (1985) argues there may in fact be very little distinction between iconoclasm and vandalism. They are both driven by the impulse and outcome of destruction, be it symbolic, cultural or revolutionary. In *Pratidwandi*, *Interview* and *Padatik*, the middle class Bengali youth would like to see themselves as iconoclasts but their actions suggest otherwise, implying vandalism. In this final section of the chapter, I want to look more closely at how the relationship between definitions of vandalism and iconoclasm can tell us about the ways in which rupture was imagined in these films. This means focusing on the acts of rebellion that are enacted in *Pratidwandi* and *Interview*, which see the youth fighting back against the establishment. In this section, I will also turn to the work of Richard Stities (1985; 1989) who has written about vandalism in relation to the Russian Revolution.

It is during the final job interview in *Pratidwandi* when Siddhartha’s patience finally gives out. He rushes into the interview room, screaming at the panel of three stuffy men for treating the candidates like animals (Fig
Siddhartha shoves one of the men, splatters ink across the wall, throws a chair and then flips over the table in a final act of rage (Fig 52). Although this anger has been steadily building through the film, the release of this anger translates into vandalism. Notably, when director Satyajit Ray does speak out against the establishment, he depicts Siddhartha as a vandal, not as an iconoclast.

Ray would claim Siddhartha is ‘too much the individual to submerge himself in politics or even revolution’ (Robinson, 1988: 19) but I would argue his violent protestation is merely a decorative gesture: ‘unreflected, isolated and essentially ineffective’ (Dawson, 1973: 33). And while Siddhartha makes the ‘inhuman callousness of the bureaucracy’ (Vaidyanthan, 1971: 51) the target of his anger, it is pointless because it ‘does not accomplish anything concrete (Ganguly, 2012: 327). In fact, throwing a chair, overturning a desk alludes to the random, meaningless vandalism that was occurring in Calcutta in 1970 and 1971. Since Ray interprets iconoclasm as vandalism, rupture is imagined as a kind of nihilism. There appears to be nothing revolutionary about rupture. Ray
writes that Siddhartha’s protest is a ‘marvellous thing because it comes from inside and not as an expression of political ideology’ (Ray in Cardullo, 2007: 57). Indeed, Ray chooses to frame iconoclasm as an emotional response that bears a subjective portent, seemingly depoliticizing rupture. In a 1972 interview, Ray stated that he doesn’t ‘believe in the new theories which hold that art must be destroyed and doesn’t need to be permanent. I believe in permanent values’ (2007: 59).

These views that guard against the destruction of the old order to make way for the new crystalize Ray’s opposition to iconoclasm that comes through in Pratidwandi. And one can also read the execution of Tunu (although imagined by Siddhartha), the symbol of the new, the Naxal revolutionary, as an extension of Ray’s disdain for the iconoclastic actions of the youth of the time. It is worth stating that Sen had shrewdly implied in Bhuvan Shome that Ray was symbolic of the old order in Bengal, the middle class bourgeoisie. So perhaps it is unsurprising that Ray resorts to maintaining ‘tradition and the old culture’ (Gupta in Cardullo, 1982: 126). Ray’s position was not an isolated one though. It had popular backing in Bengal. Ray uses the acts of vandalism in Pratidwandi as a metaphor to problematize the real world iconoclasm of the time. In doing so Ray frames political resistance as an empty gesture, reiterating the populist contempt for the statue smashing antics of the youth.

Respectively, I next want to turn to Interview in which we also find a similar moment of anger to that of Pratidwandi. In Interview, Ranjit, an
unemployed Bengali youth, has failed to attend an interview because he did not have a suit. When Ranjit comes face to face with a mannequin in a shop window draped in a suit, he explodes with rage, smashing the shop window with a rock (Fig 53) and stripping the mannequin (Fig 54). Ranjit’s iconoclastic action goes further than Siddhartha’s partial protestations since it depicts the destruction of property and chimes more explicitly with the wider political reality. But unlike Ray’s choice to frame and condemn the actions of the youth as representative of vandalism, Sen does the opposite, imbuing iconoclasm with a political meaning and subsequently imagining rupture as harbinger of revolution. Although Ranjit’s actions would clearly have been marked as vandalism by popular opinion of the time, Sen suggests the outpouring of anger is a form of iconoclasm, thereby articulating his sympathies with the Naxal youth.

Sen accomplishes this in a number of ways. To begin with the action of smashing the window and stripping the mannequin is part of a montage in which Ranjit becomes sutured into a compendium of anti-imperialist imagery. This depicts Ranjit’s iconoclasm as part of a broader internationalism. Connecting and situating Ranjit’s iconoclastic actions
within an ongoing history of struggle and leftist political realization, rupture is imagined as a universal occurrence. In this respect, Sen’s imagining of rupture as an international, universal happening provides the iconoclasm of Naxalism with a historical agency. Furthermore, Ranjit’s iconoclasm is juxtaposed to inserts from the opening of the film when we first saw decolonization posited as an iconoclastic undertaking. The footage depicting the removal of colonial statues from Calcutta is intercut with Ranjit stripping the mannequin until it is naked, an absurdly grotesque image (Fig 55 & 56). Juxtaposing ideas to do with colonialism with Naxalism, past and present histories, transforms what could have been an act of vandalism into an iconoclastic action that relatedly imagines rupture as distinctively cathartic and political.

But in some respects, the anti-imperialist sentiments of Ranjit’s revolt are also masked over especially if we interpret the revolt as primarily about Naxalite iconoclasm. Unlike the colonial statues at the start of the film that are tied down in trucks, the mannequin remains standing in an upright position. While metaphorically speaking, imperialism has been stripped off its dignity, although it doesn’t have any to speak of, the obliteration of
the mannequin is not totalizing and resultantly implies an ambivalence about the political value and impact of Ranjit’s iconoclastic actions. This raises the question about to what extent Ranjit’s rebellion – the smashing of the window, the stripping of the mannequin – is an act of iconoclasm as timid and ineffectual as the one perpetrated by Siddhartha in Pratidwandi? To what extent Ranjit’s actions position him as a revolutionary iconoclast returns to and connects with the work of Richard Stites, which I will focus on next.

Richard Stites writes: ‘revolutionary iconoclasts cleared away the signs of the past in order to raise up new ones’ (1985: 2). And if the mannequin symbolises imperialism and also neo-colonialism, nothing appears in its place nor does it undergo the sign transformation that Richard Clay speaks of. The final image of Interview, the naked mannequin, that remains standing in the shop window, implies that while the veil of imperialism has been metaphorically stripped away, the reluctance to obliterate the mannequin, a totem of consumerism, signifies the continuation of the old bourgeoisie order that Naxalism cannot defeat. If nothing is really achieved by Ranjit’s iconoclastic actions then it is difficult to argue for him to be labelled as a revolutionary iconoclast. But then if this is the case, does this mean he is in truth a vandal? If we turn to Richard Stites description of vandalism then there is some credence to Ranjit’s actions to be labelled as cultural vandalism. Stites describes vandalism as ‘spontaneous, random, even accidental’ (1989: 62) and the result of anger that instinctively gives way to a ‘flash of emotion’ (1989:
62). Stites definition of vandalism does correlate quite closely with the treatment of the actions of both Siddhartha and Ranjit. What I would argue is of significance here is not so much about making the distinction between vandalism and iconoclasm but elucidating how potentially all of these early Parallel Cinema films were caught up in the bind of imagining rupture as incomplete, partial and riddled with ambiguity about what it meant politically.

In the final film of Sen’s Calcutta trilogy, Sen uses the trope of a young Naxal reflecting on the limitations of political revolution as a means of personal self reflection found, looking back on his own imaginings of cinematic iconoclasm. Turning to Padatik, I will illustrate how Sen also later questioned, from a critical distance, if the revolutionary iconoclasm carried out by the Naxals was misguided and wrong, a proposition that outraged some commentators of the time. In doing so, Sen re-labels iconoclasm as vandalism. Here is Moni Guha writing in 1970: ‘But now in West Bengal, statue breaking is the act of a “few vandals and miscreants” against progressivism!’ (1970: 10). The sequence in question from Padatik finds Sumit in the apartment writing a letter, which seems to apologise for the iconoclasm and associated violence perpetrated by the students: ‘But in this final struggle if we have made any mistake, if we have lost our ways, if we have drowned into the confusion then history will never forgive us with us revolutionary greetings’. Sumit’s words, delivered as an interior monologue, are juxtaposed to three quick inserts that function as a diminutive montage that details acts of real world
iconoclasm, fusing actuality with fictional footage. The montage begins with a shot of a student entering a classroom holding a flaming torch (Fig 57). This is followed by an image of a statue, the face blackened by ink (Fig 58). And then finishes with the fallen and smashed statue of Ashutosh Mukherjee (Fig 59), a key figure in the Bengal Renaissance and influential educator.

Fig 57. Destruction of a classroom.  
Fig 58. A statue desecrated with ink.  
Fig 59. The smashed and fallen statue of Ashutosh Mukherjee.
Since I have argued iconoclasm functions as a marker of political rupture, by 1973, increasing scepticism had emerged, criticising the original goals of the Naxalite movement and elucidating the internal contradictions of the Left in India. *Padatik* contests and potentially overturns the leftist interpretation of what the image breaking iconoclasm had potentially symbolised in 1970s: ‘The demolition of statues is undoubtedly a protest, though unconscious and primitive’ (Guha, 1970: 11). By the time we reach 1973, the real world iconoclasm of the Naxals is deemed by Sen to be a ‘mistake’, a result of ‘confusion’ and ultimately jeopardizing the revolution. Indeed, Sen was criticised for challenging what Muzumdar had opined in October 1970 concerning the corrupt, colonial educational system of Bengal, reasoning students had a sacred duty to ‘destroy school-college furniture or burn down office records’ (Mazumdar in Acharya, 2012: 128). Not everyone was in agreement with Sen’s revisionism regarding the destruction of statues, arguing such acts were inevitable and just required the right opportunity: ‘I do not support his mode of presentation of this point. Today or tomorrow we must destroy them. The only question is the choice of time’ said Manas Ray in 1973 (Basu & Dasgupta, 1992: 84). Sen’s re-imagining of iconoclasm obviously throws into doubt the validity of the youthful protestors as a new icon that replaces the neo-colonial statues that were being attacked and displaced.

What this also points to is Bruno Latour’s theory of iconoclash and to what extent the image breaking was destructive or transformative. Could it be then much of the Naxalite image breaking that went on in the real
world should be labelled as representative of iconoclash, returning to Seth’s argument that ‘the import of the statue smashing was never made fully clear’ (2004: 43) and which led to a contestation over their meanings that slipped over into Parallel Cinema’s imaginings of revolution. Indeed, Sen’s revisionist interpretation of his own explications of iconoclasm fails to grasp the totalizing assault on Indian history by the Naxalite campaign of statue breaking and what it suggested in terms of a revolutionary break in history:

‘The Naxalite campaign was like a slap in the face. Its very refusal to make distinctions signified a wholesale rejection; through their actions bhadralok youth, many of them from an elite college of Calcutta University, seemed to be pouring scorn on the idea that there were any ‘progressive’ aspects to a cultural tradition born of and sustained in privilege’ (Seth, 2004: 45).

This also indicates a slight incongruity between the rupture of Naxalism and the one imagined in the films of Parallel Cinema. Nonetheless, Sen does not abandon the new iconicity of revolt and dissent. At the end of Padatik, he mobilizes the youth into political action, an important consequence of the destabilization of political symbols (Clay, 2007) and the coming together of both cinematic and real world iconoclasm. As Adrian A. Bantjes argues: ‘Iconoclasm seldom resulted in oblivion; instead communities used the profaned image as a mnemonic device with which to forge powerful collective counter-memories and new identities’ (2007: 172). In this respect, Bantjes points to the ways in which acts of iconoclasm can also create a sense of belonging and identity for communities or political groups, a concept that is translated cinematically through repeated instances of image breaking.
Chapter Summary

In this summary I want to return to my original question that concerns how rupture is signified and imagined through iconoclastic actions and clarify my own position on rupture in relation to some theorists notably Žižek.

‘An Event is a radical turning point, which is, in its true dimension, invisible’ (2014: 179) says Žižek. This is precisely what film undoes, making visible the rupture and imagining the event of Naxalism through iconoclastic actions such as the symbolic deconstruction and displacement of the Mother. It is to be noted that both Badiou and Žižek ‘insist that rupture must have a violent quality to it’ (McGowan, 2010: 8) and which often means the ‘uprooting of existing relations’ (McGowan, 2010: 8) of which I have demonstrated vandalism bears an extreme witness to. In this context, what makes rupture useful as a tool for analysing history in film is that it identifies the point at which Indian cinema was challenged, both ideologically and aesthetically, and elucidates a political contestation about what this break really meant in relation to wider contextual dimensions such as The Naxalite Movement.

Studying the iconoclastic actions in these films points to a fragile consensus with respect of the performativity of rupture and how it occurs and takes place. Interruption and spontaneity are just two of the characteristics associated with this performativity and they reoccur throughout these films, imagining rupture as something unsettling. Žižek
sees rupture in similar terms, as interruptive, but through the perspective of the event. He uses a moment of strangulation from Agatha Christie’s *4.50 from Paddington* to illustrate the performativity of an event:

‘This is an event at its purest and most minimal: something shocking, out of joint, that appears to happen all of a sudden and interrupts the usual flow of things; something that emerges seemingly out of nowhere, without discernable causes, an appearance without solid being as its foundation’ (2014: 2).

I have chosen to emphasise Žižek’s initial definition of an event since it relatedly maps some of the features associated with rupture that could also be used to describe the death of Anandamoyee in *Apanjan*. Žižek’s description includes the violence of rupture, which can have a traumatic impact, along with spontaneity, interruption, discontinuity and the inexplicable nature of rupture. And while rupture is supposedly a complete break with the past, this can never really ever be the case, as the iconoclastic actions suggests we saw a transformation of signs but never a complete obliteration of iconology. Endnotes write: ‘It is sometimes possible to bring society to a halt, but not to produce a rupture’ (2013: 242). I would argue this might be one way of looking at the imagining of rupture in these films, as merely disruptive. Relationally, the state’s suppression of The Naxalite Movement who believed in a complete destruction of what was a neo-colonial system was a rupture that dreamed of totality but was stopped from realising the impossible long-term goal of socialist emancipation. Accordingly, the iconoclastic actions of the removal and smashing of statues can be reduced to
romantic political imaginings of rupture, indicative of yet more performativity that tries to expunge social memory:

‘The Chinese Cultural Revolution serves as a lesson here: destroying old monuments proved not to be a true negation of the past. Rather it was an impotent passage a l’acte, an ‘acting out’ which bore witness to the failure to get rid of the past’ (Žižek, 2014: 186)

All the while McGowan, Žižek and Badiou agree rupture is about a complete break with the past, this seems altogether improbable. Phelps goes further and labels Badiou’s idea of a complete break, a pure rupture, as naïve and dangerous:

‘The subject which results from such an event would, in turn, depend upon a sheer act of will, a certain heroic voluntarism that revels in the moment of decision and elevates the event to the status of a sacred object’ (2008: 62).

I would reason the past is always in play. This is why the work of iconoclasm is important here since it draws attention to the ways in which rupture is perhaps less about a complete break and more about achieving a break so that a transformation can take place and a new order attained. But I would argue this can only happen if we situate the rupture within a broader historical lineage and framework, something Sen imagines in his Calcutta trilogy, framing the iconoclastic actions of the youth and relatedly the event of Naxalism, within a history that can be explained and not remain a tangential act. As I have said from the outset, I want to treat rupture as a multi-lateral occurrence and this means also looking at the ways in a break with the past was also manifested in the renewal and
transformation of the very syntax and aesthetics of Indian cinema, which is what I will take up in the penultimate chapter.
Chapter Four

The Aesthetic Rupture and the bid to renew the Syntax of Indian Cinema

‘The Hour of the Furnaces is a manifesto. It is unabashed propaganda from the first shot to the last. It is didactic, it is agitational, it acts like a detonator. It is, in essence, a guide to militant action’ (Sen, 1977: 112).

Released in 1968, Solanas and Getino’s The Hour of the Furnaces is perhaps the most recognisable example of Third Cinema. It is not clear when Sen first saw The Hour of the Furnaces. It may have been at a film festival or was the film smuggled into India? Whatever the case, the film was to be a major influence on Sen’s approach to his Calcutta Trilogy. In fact, inserts of the film appear in an agit-prop montage in Calcutta ’71. In an essay titled ‘The Latin American Scene’, Sen argues the film ‘draws a brilliant case for the aesthetics of audio-visual montage’ (1977: 113) referring to the influences of both Dziga Vertov and Sergei Eisenstein. More importantly, Sen suggests the film is an ideal template for Parallel cinema since it analyses and deconstructs neo-colonialism, a system that continued to prevail in West Bengal in the late 1960s and early 1970s and which Sen would repeatedly attack in his Calcutta trilogy. In some respects, The Hour of the Furnaces is a rupture film that was part of a broader international attempt to renew the syntax of cinema, communicated through a Third Cinema ideal. I want to contend Sen’s Calcutta Trilogy and relatedly the foundational years of Parallel Cinema in West Bengal was also in this international bind that refused to reduce rupture to merely a political concept, demonstrating how rupture was a
multi-lateral occurrence, manifested in culture and art, and specifically renewing the very syntax of film. In doing so, I want to call this an aesthetic rupture.

My emphasis in this chapter is on the need to determine rupture as not merely ideological in the context of Parallel Cinema. This means looking closely at the ways in which rupture also meant a transformation in film syntax and the very mechanics of cinema. Indeed, my contention is that Parallel Cinema filmmakers adopted modernist techniques to try and register a break from the language of the past. Very little has been written about the ways in which rupture manifests itself in the formal properties of film. Eisenstein & McGowan (2013) come closest, focusing on ideas such as the gesture and editing, notably the saliency of the cut, but I want to go further and argue for specific audio-visual devices such as actuality, montage and agitation count as enablers of rupture, and are also closely tied to iconoclasm and trauma. Together, notably in the work of Sen, these audio-visual devices worked together, creating film syntax that intersected with the fields of avant-garde, Third Worldism, Third Cinema and political modernism. This chapter is divided into three sections. Firstly, I will open with some contextualization, situating the break in film language in terms of film aesthetics and politics. The following section, the bulk of the chapter, analyses sequences from a range of films, focusing predominately on Bhuvan Shome, Pratidwandi and Interview, while discussing the audio-visual enablers of rupture including montage and agitprop. The chapter will conclude with a section on the critical
intersections between internationalism, the avant-garde aesthetics and Third Cinema, discussing how the aesthetic rupture was contestably a transnational conceptualization.

**Film Syntax and Aesthetics**

In the next part of the analytical framework, I will outline some of the key scholarly voices in relation to film syntax and aesthetics of Parallel Cinema. In some respects, the break that occurred with film syntax overlaps with iconoclasm that I discussed in chapter two.

There is a broad range of scholarly voices important to film syntax/aesthetics and Parallel Cinema. Whereas Madhava Prasad (1998) argues that films like *Bhuvan Shome* simply folded back into the traditions of realism, Sen and Kaul’s New Cinema Manifesto (1968) called for a new form of Indian cinema; aesthetically, thematically and economically. In 1980, Indian cinema’s foremost film critic and thinker Chidananda Das Gupta (1980: 39), echoing the earlier sentiments of Satyajit Ray (with his 1971 analysis of *Bhuvan Shome*), openly criticised the unfamiliar style and ostentatious posturing of filmmakers like Mani Kaul & Kumar Shahani. Self-criticism was a feature of some filmmakers notably Kumar Shahani (1974) who started to doubt the achievements of the avant-garde vein of Parallel Cinema, pointing to the limitations of the aesthetic rupture of the early years. Another filmmaker Saeed Mirza, writing in

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85 It was often the case many filmmakers such as Saeed Mirza openly critiqued Parallel Cinema in terms of aesthetics, politics and the direction in which it was headed, and their work was published in various print media.
1979 – 80 and who would become a major player in the second phase of Parallel Cinema suggested a mixing of the forms, reasoning hybridity and fusion in particular were important for the development of film aesthetics and Parallel Cinema. Creative hybridity overlaps with the work of scholar Sumita Chakravarty (1993) in her reading of Parallel Cinema. More importantly, Chakravarty recognises a loose set of characteristics (discussed later) of Parallel Cinema, which is useful when considering what exactly the Parallel Cinema filmmakers were fighting against with the aesthetic rupture of 68 – 75. Since I would contend discussions of the aesthetic rupture show a notable intersection with political modernism (David Rodowick, 1988: 12) and Third Cinema, and which has been overlooked in the existing literature on Parallel Cinema, the work of Manas Ghosh (2011), Anthony Guneratne (2003) and Ashish Rajadhyaksha (1989, 1993) is critical in this respect. What is missing and what I will aim to reassert into this conversation on the aesthetics of the foundational years of Parallel Cinema is an engagement with specific examples of film syntax and how this particular body of Bengali films and filmmakers notably Mrinal Sen were in dialogue with political modernism that maps the films in a wider cine-geography of internationalism.

While I would argue there was an aesthetic rupture, it was a rupture that extended from a lineage of filmmakers likes Satyajit Ray and notably the iconoclastic Ritwik Ghatak who had been involved in trying to renew the syntax of Indian cinema since the mid 1950s. This is an area I address later in this chapter, contextualising briefly the trajectory from which
Parallel Cinema emerged and which I have expanded further in the appendices. More decisively, Rajadhyaksha notes that ‘Ghatak himself had been close to the Indian political left since the 1940s’ (1989: 170), a relationship with Marxism that was evident in how he often joined politics and cinema together in his work. Therefore, it is unsurprising that for the Edinburgh conference on Third Cinema in 1986, Ashish Rajadhyaksha and Geeta Kapur chose Ghatak’s *Jukti Takko Ar Gappo* as Indian cinema’s contribution to the Third Cinema debate, a work that brought to a close the first phase of Indian Parallel Cinema and the first cycle of Naxal based films. In this respect, Ghatak as a political figure and his work provides a critical link here, paving the way for the 1968 manifesto. Perhaps then we could argue the bid to renew the syntax of Indian cinema did not appear spontaneously but was a culmination of a tradition of aesthetic and thematic restitution in Bengali cinema that goes as far back as the 1940s, a major focus of Moinak Biswas’ 2002 chapter on the Leftist trajectory of Indian cinema that I referred to briefly in the introduction.

Unlike Madhava Prasad who argues realism has often been part of a national project for the state, which he says continued with Parallel Cinema, I would claim there was a break in terms of film aesthetics in the 68 – 75 period, a fractional shift away from realism. Prasad does not want to dispute ‘the claim made on behalf of *Ankur*’ (1998: 189) by Aruna Vasudev. Vasudev argues that it was Shyam Benegal who consolidated the aesthetic rupture of 68 – 75: ‘It is as if his films contained the essence
of the New Cinema’ writes Vasudev (cited by Prasad, 1998: 189). In ‘Ideology of the Hindi Film’ Prasad goes on to say that he is less concerned with ‘an alternative film history’ (1998: 189) and more interested in the ideological computation of this moment when in my opinion, if anything, it is precisely a new and revised history that needs to be written. It is worth noting with a film like Bhuvan Shome, Prasad does tentatively acknowledge the experimental aspects of Sen’s approach, drawing attention to the role of erratic editing ‘disrupting the realist conventions and leaving the spectator with a sense of a world devoid of rationality’ (1998: 192). However, Prasad contends that Bhuvan Shome ‘under the FFC aegis, realism became a national political project’ (1998: 190) and that ‘the FFC project was defined by a commitment to realism’ (1998: 160). Interestingly, Aruna Vasudev argues the realism produced by the FFC in the 1960s and 1970s was ‘neither critical nor subversive’ (1986: 140). Amrit Gangar (2010) echoes such dismissive sentiments in his work, reasoning much of the work including Sen and that of Kaul and Shahani was not avant-garde. I will argue otherwise, suggesting Bhuvan Shome was partially experimental for Sen, resolutely disruptive and hybridised in terms of its formal aspects. The aesthetic rupture of 68 – 75 demonstrates a rejection of realism and attempt to find new a cinematic language from some of the filmmakers of this period. In this respect, Prasad is probably correct in situating Ankur as a film that signals the consolidation of a commitment to realism that the FFC wanted to pursue in their agenda. Relatedly, Maithili Rao argues the creative space carved out by Parallel Cinema in the foundational years was ‘gradually taken
over by the exponents of the other cinema who did not reject the realist aesthetic but married it to a significant theme’ (2003: 93) by directors such as Shyam Benegal. But whereas Kumar Shahani has questioned the aesthetic legitimacy of Benegal’s Middle cinema, criticising it as ‘a soft cathartic realism’ (Rajadhyaksha, 2009: 243), film critic Derek Malcolm poses a populist institutional explanation, reasoning the emergence of Middle Cinema was a reaction to exhibition woes that ‘attempted to defeat the commercial cinema on its own ground’ (1986: 173). Moreover, the championing of Ankur as a peon of new realist aesthetics can also be explained in the enthusiastic embrace of Benegal’s work from a filmmaker like Satyajit Ray who was largely dismissive of the significance of an aesthetic rupture and the creative possibilities that it heralded for alternative Indian cinema.

My attempt to account for and explore the significance of the aesthetic rupture of 68 – 75 is arguably flawed because this moment cannot really be fully understood without considering the formalist film experimentations of Mani Kaul and especially Kumar Shahani who ‘addressed the formal propositions of Indian aesthetic theory’ (Rajadhyasha, 1996: 687). It was Mani Kaul’s Uski Roti, made in the same year, which was real proof that the New Cinema manifesto could sustain different types of cinema: ‘the Movement aims at supporting “Avant Garde” and experimental efforts of a new kind which would normally be denied sponsorship elsewhere in India’ (Sen & Kaul, 2014: 167). Kaul’s Uski Roti was altogether more experimental than Bhuvan
Shome, wholly dispensing with story, and favouring a cinematographic approach based on composition. Kaul and Shahani did attempt to introduce a completely new syntax to Indian cinema. But it is worth noting Kaul and Shahani’s attempts to reinvigorate film syntax was taking place at the same time as Sen and Ray’s experiments, returning to my earlier argument that Parallel Cinema is best seen as the co-existence of different creative streams running alongside each other. Yet what is distinctive about the Bengali Parallel Cinema films of the foundational years was the impact of The Naxalite Movement whereby the aesthetic rupture was augmented exponentially by the wider political situation. Even Ghatak recognised the urgency of drawing the historical and aesthetic connection in Jukti Takko Ar Gappo, and Rajadhyaksha notes that Shahani also partially addressed Naxal politics in Tarang (1984). Sadly, the New Cinema manifesto, which had proposed the development of a new distribution-exhibition infrastructure to help with the circulation of alternative films, failed to materialise, undermining the efforts of Kaul and Shahani, whose early films were delayed and in some cases never got a release.  

If there was an attempt to renew the syntax of film, we first have to identify and isolate what exactly Parallel Cinema filmmakers like Mrinal Sen were rallying against? What was the dominant film language they were aiming to overturn or challenge? The scholarly work on Parallel Cinema does not go into detail about film language and tends to

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86 For example Mani Kaul’s Uski Roti was never released theatrically.
problematically generalize about thematic arrangements. In his analysis of Shyam Benegal’s *Nishant* (Night’s End, 1974) a ‘paradigm of the parallel cinema’ (Hogan, 2008: 75), Hogan characterizes directors of Parallel Cinema in the following terms: ‘They rejected the conventions of Indian popular movies, most often adopting a realistic and self-consciously political style’ (2008: 75). Hogan’s claim that Parallel Cinema rejected conventions is a totalizing one, difficult to substantiate since he does not go into any detail about the conventions of popular Hindi cinema. And rather than deconstruct the two major characteristics he initially outlines namely realism and the ‘self-consciously political style’ (2008: 75) Hogan applies a mythological interpretation of *Nishant*, claiming ‘the narrative structure parallels the great paradigm of overthrowing unjust rule – Rāma’s overthrow of Rāvana’ (2008: 76). The reversion to the mythological, a perfectly valid reading, not only decenters Parallel Cinema as a new and distinctive form, but also depoliticizes textual analysis, ignoring ideological vagaries such as Naxalism that fundamentally re-shaped the consciousness of the Parallel Cinema movement. Yet politics was perspicuous in the work of Mrinal Sen, ‘the ideological leader’ (Gupta, 1982: 18) of Parallel Cinema whose work asks to be discussed in terms of its radical political address.

In many ways, existing literature on Parallel Cinema has continually failed to marry political analysis with the cinematic modes of communication, notably the impact of the Naxalite movement on the initial trajectory of Parallel Cinema. Sumita Chakravarty also falls into the trap of crudely
isolating a broad set of features that she argues characterizes Parallel Cinema: ‘linear narrative, realistic mise-en-scene, psychological portrayal of character, the motivated use of song and dances, explicit scenes of sexuality, and a disenchantment with the workings of the Indian political system’ (1993: 267). It is far too simplistic to suggest Parallel Cinema was aligned in perpetuating these features. Indeed, features like ‘disenchantment with the…political system’ was not specific to Parallel Cinema, it was also a major ideological aspect of 1970s popular Hindi cinema and the cycle of Angry Young Man films. Writing in 1991, Aruna Vasudev, reasons why the discourse on Parallel Cinema has failed to pinpoint what exactly were the formal achievements in terms of cinematography, mise-en-scene, editing, sound and performance:

‘Film critics with a sociological orientation tend to be swayed by the content, taking the way of least resistance by discussing the story rather than its presentation. Very rarely is the subject and its form analysed from an understanding of the manner in which cinema operates’ (1991: 29).

Vasudev demanded a return to the text, to pay more consideration of the specific film syntax and modes of communication in relation to industrial and economic practices.

In trying to help re-determine the aesthetic rupture of the 68-75 periods, one of the ways in which we can pay greater consideration of film syntax is to undertake a fuller reading of the 1968 manifesto. Mrinal Sen and Arun Kaul’s ‘Manifesto of the New Cinema Movement’ is a key document in the history of Parallel Cinema. The manifesto arrived many years after
the establishment of the FFC but formalised the vexations of a new generation of cine-literate film artists while theorising suggestions for a new kind of cinema: ‘Hardly anyone conceives of a film in terms of aesthetic experience and creative expression’ (2014: 165) exclaimed Sen and Kaul. The manifesto’s impact was almost immediate with the FFC financing Bhuvan Shome and Uski Roti. Sen and Kaul recall commonalities with other past cinemas (neorealism in particular) while conjecturing a focus on the director as auteur. Although there was no specific call for the renewal of the syntax of film, the manifesto implored ‘film-makers to bring to their work improvisation, spontaneity and youthful enthusiasm’ (2014: 166). Director Mrinal Sen says with Bhuvan Shome he had to say ‘something new, in a new style’ (2002: 120). Not everyone was convinced including director Satyajit Ray who in 1971 openly questioned the newness of Sen’s film, arguing it was ‘essentially old-fashioned and Indian beneath its trendy habit’ (1976: 99). However, the manifesto also professed contempt for mainstream cinema, which they argued, was responsible for ‘conditioning the tastes of the majority of film goers’ (2014: 166), a result of: ‘popular stars, gaudy sets, glossy colour and large number of irrelevant musical sequences and other standard meretricious ingredients’ (2014: 166). Indeed, the manifesto’s parochial attitude regarding the ways in which mass entertainment ‘conditions’ or inoculates taste overlooks the pleasures offered by popular Hindi cinema and fails to understand the filmmaker is often subject to a process of negotiation and compromise when dealing with the economics of an inherently capitalist system like cinema.
Mrinal Sen’s ‘A Manifesto for New Cinema’ (1968) does not make the case for the avant-garde. Instead, Sen reasons for experimentation and new ways of thinking that heralded a break from the past. Not everyone agreed, criticising the limitations of experimenting with form, notably Satyajit Ray: ‘The true artist is recognisable in his style and his attitude, not in his idiosyncrasies’ (1976: 83). Expressly, the development of style as a countenance of authorial intent is foregrounded in the New Cinema manifesto, resonating throughout the first phase of Parallel Cinema. In some respects, manifestos have often functioned as means of mobilizing a collective response but also offering the theoretical framework with which to instigate acts of rupture.

It is my understanding that Sen and Kaul’s manifesto performed a similar purpose, laying the groundwork for the attempts to renew the syntax of Indian cinema. Sadly, it is a manifesto that has been ignored by Indian film scholars and which candidly says a lot about the ways in which the significance of Parallel Cinema, both aesthetically and politically, has been overlooked. And while manifestos have been viewed with reluctance because of their admittedly impossible utopian ideals, I would reason what makes Sen and Kaul’s manifesto so crucial is in its singularity within the history of Indian cinema. Perhaps it was with good fortune that Naxalism and the birth of Parallel Cinema intersected at such a critical moment in India’s history. In doing so, the collision between history and cinema brought to light the interventionist potential of a new film manifesto in helping to develop the syntax of Indian cinema.
The Political Modernism of Indian Cinema

In my estimation the period between 1968 and 1975 opened a new space for political redress in Indian cinema, as was clearly manifested in the leftist agenda of Parallel Cinema. However, this was only made possible through a momentary aesthetic rupture in the syntax of Indian cinema. While I have identified the wound and iconolasm as signifiers of rupture, the audio-visual enablement of these signifiers is expressed through a break in the language of cinema, re-thinking film style, narrative and genre. For instance, writing in 1971 critic K. N. Arora remarked that 'Interview has no particular style, it is a mixture of the nouvelle vague and cinéma vérité' (1971: A9), an opinion also raised by Rajadhyaksha who writes of Sen’s experiments with ‘avant-garde techniques’ (2009: 251). Moreover, Parallel Cinema had to be adequate to the task of communicating the revolutionary politics of Naxalism, a major feature of Sen’s work and Bengali cinema in the late 60s. Further still, in their manifesto for a new cinema, Mrinal Sen & Arun Kaul had argued that ‘hardly anyone conceives of a film in terms of aesthetic experience and creative expression’ (2014: 165) - an overarching criticism of Indian cinema that drew attention to the requisite of an aesthetic rupture in their 1968 manifesto, an idea taken up by Sen in his own work.

My view is that discussions of film techniques remain allusive in much of the writings on Sen and Parallel Cinema and which has obscured the

Arguably the Leftist social and political agenda continued well into the late 1980s and became a defining ideological characteristic of Parallel Cinema, and was most pronounced in the work of Shyam Benegal.
aesthetic influence and importance of Parallel Cinema in the historiography of late 1960s and early 1970s political cinema. What global film history tells us is that only the French, Latin American cinema or even the Japanese were radical enough to be political in this inimitable period of dissent, supposedly attempting a formalist break that was matched by an iconoclastic content. I want to cite here works like Revolution! The Explosion of World Cinema in the 60s by Peter Cowie (2004), Anglo-centric studies of film history, which expunge the contributions of Parallel Cinema in the story of global cinema. But the neglect of Parallel Cinema is much deeper in film culture and points to a narrow, somewhat misguided view of who contributed what at critically decisive moments in film history such as the late 1960s. For example, in 2018, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of May 1968, a UK wide celebration titled ‘Uprising: Spirit of ’68’ was programmed by the BFI to celebrate the political significance of this decisive moment in history. Not a single film from South Asia was on the list of films that were screened across the UK. However, films like Pratidwandi and Interview, part of the cinematic internationalism of this moment, deserve to be situated alongside works like Weekend and The Battle of Algiers. But warranted on artistic merit not simply because we must redress the historiography of global film.

Just as popular Hindi cinema has been reclaimed, beginning in the late 1980s with scholarly interventions by Rosie Thomas and Ravi Vasudevan and later in the 1990s by Rachel Dwyer and Lalitha Gopalan, Parallel Cinema necessitates a similar rescue mission. And it doesn’t have to be
strictly scholarly. It can also come from revising or even smashing the existing film canon. While this is a long-term goal, I nonetheless want to insert Parallel Cinema into the paradigm of international political cinema. And this means we first have to return to film theory debates in the 1970s concerning the emergence of a self-reflexive and avant-garde materialist cinema. Much of this second cinema was greatly influenced by Brecht’s Epic Theatre and Eisenstein’s theory of montage, and epitomised in Europe by Godard’s work that Peter Wollen (1972) defined as counter cinema. As Sylvia Harvey notes: ‘It is because social reality is changing, Brecht argues, that new forms of art must be developed’ (1980: 72).

While there was a clear disagreement about the avant-garde tendencies of filmmakers like Godard, David Rodowick’s intervention in 1988 with ‘The Crisis of Political Modernism’ re-opened a major debate that is significant to my work on the aesthetic rupture of Parallel Cinema:

‘The question of the necessary engagement of film practice with theory…and with formal innovations characteristic of modernism on the other, is still a living issue. Political modernism is the expression of a desire to combine semiotic and ideological analysis with the development of an avant-garde aesthetic practice dedicated to the production of radical social effects’ (1994: 2)

Sylvia Harvey (1980), Peter Wollen (1972) and David Rodowick (1988) have traced the experimental political modernism of late sixties and early seventies cinema in Europe to the influence of Brecht’s Epic Theatre and which was first interpreted and determined in relation to film by Walter Benjamin. It is here where I want to argue that my work intersects so to map out more broadly how political modernism also needs to incorporate the work from South Asia notably Parallel Cinema in the hope of showing
how rupture allows us to see this formalist break in Indian cinema through the signifiers of iconoclasm and trauma. In his study of political modernism, Rodowick only points to the work of independent filmmakers in Europe and America, overlooking South Asia including India. Perhaps more problematic is the usage of the term avant-garde to describe Parallel Cinema, a debate taken up by Pradip Krishen (1991) and Amit Gangar (2010). Although avant-garde and internationalism are still worth pursuing further, I want to call for a closer look at the audio-visual devices or enablers, the very syntax that came to denote an aesthetic rupture.

**Disrupting the Image: Planimetric, Tableau & Reflexivity**

With *Bhuvan Shome*, Sen was one of the first filmmakers of his generation to ‘search for a new form’ (Sen, 2010: 120), an intention he had outlined in a manifesto with Arun Kaul: ‘New Cinema encourages film-makers to bring to their work improvisation, spontaneity and youthful enthusiasm’ (2014: 166). This ‘awareness of the changing grammar’ (2014: 166) of film is evident in the numerous modernist and experimental film techniques that Sen uses throughout the Calcutta Trilogy. This is largely because Sen’s mode of political address was broader and more oppositional than his contemporaries, incorporating ideas from Latin American Third Cinema, melodrama, Brechtian Theatre, Naxalite ideology and Marxism, fusing them into an intellectual experimental bricolage. Writing in 1979-80 director Saeed Mirza reflected on Parallel Cinema in terms of film form, offering a framework for determining what
exactly the movement was trying to achieve in relation to three forms inherent to Indian cinema:

‘1). The dramatic, subdivided into the analytic and the narrative
2). The lyric
3). The epic; again subdivided into the classical and neo-classical’ (1979-80: 125).

Mirza does not explore the dramatic or lyric forms in any detail, however, he does argue for the epic form as one suited to Parallel Cinema, ‘expounded in its classical form by Miklós Jancsó (1979-80: 121). In this article, Mirza seems to reflect on the foundational years of Parallel Cinema and what had been achieved in terms of film form. The connections he makes with European cinema and Jancsó’s work was evident in Ghashiram Kotwal (1976), a film that experiments with time and space and on which Mirza worked as a co-director as part of the short lived Yukt film collective.90

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88 The influence of Jancsó is most pronounced in the landscapes and the uninterrupted use of long takes, with the final shot lasting for a continuous ten minutes and which K. Hariharan says is ‘the world’s longest shot on a standard reel of 1,000 feet to be shot by four camera operators’ (2014).

89 Perhaps we could argue that Ghashiram Kotwal was the culmination of the formalist experiments of the foundational years of Parallel Cinema. Combining dance traditions of Indian culture with Brechtian devices amounts to a postcolonial dialogue on history and politics while also doubling up as an allegory of The Emergency (75 – 77).

90 The Yukt (which means strength) film cooperative was made up of 16 members including co-director K. Hariharan and actor Om Puri. Financing for Ghashiram Kotwal came through a bank manager contact of Mani Kaul. Such creative freedom instinctively meant as a collective they could take risks. Hariharan says that Kaul was very much the creative senior, someone they greatly admired, an established filmmaker, who helped to guide and shape the project. Equally participatory was the role played by Kamal Swaroop and Saeed Mirza in developing ideas central to the film.
Both Rajadhyaksha and Shahani have theorised on the epic form in Ghatak’s cinema but Mirza calls for a mixing of the forms, ‘extension and synthesis’ (Mirza, 1979-80: 125). The question of innovation is one Mark Cousins (The Story of Film, 2012) and other film scholars have adopted to trace the evolution of film history. In many ways, the legitimacy of a film movement or a new kind of cinema depends to a large degree on innovation, which has predominately come from experiments in film form. This leads to the question, to what extent was Parallel Cinema innovative with form, and was it matched by new oppositional modes of ideological engagement? This connection between form and ideology was a point of contention for Mirza:

‘One tends to forget a basic rule that a certain kind of cinema exists because a certain kind of state exists. If one wants to change the nature of the state, one needs to change the nature of the cinema.’ (Mirza, 1979-80: 125)

However, Mirza’s proposition of new cinematic forms seemed to overlook expressly what Sen had already tried to do in his Calcutta Trilogy:

‘experiments with the agitprop cinema of the twenties, the documentary, the Cinema Verite of the sixties – all these forms need to be extended and synthesized perhaps. And through this synthesis other forms will emerge’ (1979/80: 125).

Initially, I want to argue that Mirza’s comments overlook the synthesis and mixing of film forms that was evident in Sen’s films notably The Calcutta Trilogy. Indeed, Kaul and Shahani’s films have often been situated as a formalist break. But I want to reason Sen’s films in this period were also part of this aesthetic rupture. It is important to reclaim films like Bhuvan
*Shome* and *Calcutta ‘71* as examples of creative innovation, experimentation and the synthesis that Mirza talks of. In order to challenge the prevailing scholarly discourse that downplays or ignores the formalist achievements of Sen’s work, a useful starting point is to consider the role a concept like bricolage can help play in resituating Sen’s work as part of an aesthetic rupture. Bricolage, often linked to postmodern theory, traditionally suggests the collapse between low and high culture. But considering how Sen’s cinematic approach in this period has been referred to by contemporary scholars including Megan Carrigy (2010: 142) as mixed media, the concept of bricolage seems altogether suitable if we look more closely at the following definition by James Procter. Procter describes bricolage as ‘taking the raw materials we have to hand and putting them to alternative uses by adapting and combining objects through improvisation to create new meanings’ (2004: 91). The mixed media approach adopted by Sen certainly adapts, combines and improvises when it comes to film style but more importantly demonstrates a breaking of the rules, an iconoclasm that extended to the very modes of filmic communication and which Sen described as ‘shock therapy’ (Malcolm, 1988: 264).

Sen’s adoption of a mixed media approach segues into Sumita Chakravarty’s work. Chakravarty believes the best way to make sense of Parallel Cinema is to return to what she says are ‘notions of hybridity and the masquerade and their status as negotiable entities in the ideological and artistic repertoire of the new cinema practitioners’ (1993: 240).

Analysing key films including *Garm Hawa* (Hot Winds, 1973), *Kalyug*
Chakravarty (1993) finds seemingly crossovers between art cinema and popular cinema, hypothesising Parallel Cinema draws on ‘the stores of images and icons, desires and fantasies in the realm of public culture which is circulated largely by the Bombay cinema’ (Chakravarty, 1993: 246). For instance Chakravarty writes that Garm Hawa: ‘begins with one of the most enduring images of the Hindi cinema: a railway platform and a train…’ (Chakravarty, 1993: 249). If the mythological, iconographic are not exclusive to just one cinema or even genre, and they crossover, then Chakravarty’s following claim becomes another way of contesting how we define and label Parallel Cinema: ‘Once the notion of hybridity is taken for granted, we can no longer talk of an “authentic” national culture’ (Chakravarty, 1993: 247).

Throughout the foundational years of Parallel Cinema, a hybrid film syntax, representative of a new form becomes most apparent in the work of Mrinal Sen notably his Calcutta Trilogy. This renewal includes a number of ‘interrelated non-naturalistic devices’ (Carrigy, 2010: 142) including freeze frames, hand-drawn animation, still photography, archival documentary footage, rapid editing techniques (Carrigy, 2010). Sen’s cinema was not exceptional in making use of these audio-visual devices. Instead, unique was the political intent and relationship to the iconoclastic promises first outlined in the manifesto. It is not possible to account for the breadth of creative practices in this project but I want to focus on some of the key audio-visual enablers of rupture in the strand of Bengal
Parallel Cinema that brought together innovative (reflexivity) and long-standing (montage) aesthetic and stylistic approaches, much of it tied to the ‘tactics of political modernism’ (Bordwell & Thompson, 2009: 771). It is worth highlighting many of these audio-visual devices can equally be claimed as part of a Third Cinema practice in which decolonization was the overarching aim. Antonio D. Sison notes: ‘Solanas and Getino insist that art and cinema must first and foremost play an emancipatory role – as virtual revolutionary weapons in the struggle for liberation’ (2006: 16).

To begin with, the flat use of the filmic image and frame is a modernist technique that reappears throughout the Calcutta Trilogy. For instance, having the camera in a frontal position whereby the framing is tableau like creates a pictorial metaphor for the character of Shome (Fig 60); someone imprisoned in his empty world and ‘confined within four walls’ (Sen, 2001: 95). Bordwell describes ‘planimetric’ (2005: 167) as when ‘the background is resolutely perpendicular to the lens axis, and the figures stand fully frontal, in profile, or with their backs towards us’ (2005: 167). At the same time, the flatness of the image, somewhat asymmetrical in which Shome becomes reduced to an object frozen in time and as if he is being dissected by the filmmaker discourages identification with the character, thus allowing us to step back and adopt an analytical stance.
Albeit Bordwell goes on to argue the planimetric style of framing was adopted from a ‘strain of political modernism’ (2005: 167), notably Godard’s late sixties work, I would argue that tableau was not unfamiliar to popular Hindi cinema, often used as a ‘visual summary of the emotional situation’ (Vasudevan, 2010: 82). But there is a major difference that I want to elucidate so to claim there was a new film syntax that emerged. Sen deploys tableau as a Brechtian device for political effect whereas popular Hindi cinema has often used tableau for organising spatial elements within the frame for an emotional impact.

Madan Singh has talked about how ‘Indian consumerist cinema’ subverts defamiliarisation (1983: 124). And since mainstream Indian cinema is predicated on the basis of a mise-en-scene that involves the spectator ‘through the stylized performance, ritual motifs, and auditory address that arise from a host of Indian aesthetic and performance traditions’ (Vasudevan, 2010: 111), the appropriation of the planimetric compositional technique can be viewed as an iconoclastic rejection of traditional aesthetics, functioning like montage that Eisenstein used to ‘rouse the viewer and wrench him from his passive, contemplative
condition’ (Groys, 2008: 72), with the overarching aim of agitating a political response from the spectator. Here we can see how the iconoclastic refashioning of the syntax of film was done in accordance with the specific political intention of transforming the position of the spectator.

At one point in the *Bhuvan Shome* montage, as Shome nonsensically paces back and forth, a freeze frame is deployed, another anti-illusionary device, capturing Shome in an acutely planimetric shot. And as the voice over continues over this shot, rather than unfreeze the image, Sen flips the shot so that Shome is now on the right hand side of the frame in a similarly planimetric yet non-figurative composition (Fig 61). It is as if Sen wants to repeatedly catch the film spectator off guard and shift their expectations. Sen explains the effects of a disjointed combination of shots and incongruous compositions was all part of a playful experimentation:

‘With staccato movements or cuts, I designed the film in terms of attitude, in terms of situations, in terms of shot divisions and in terms of editing…there was a sheer delight of playing with the media’ (2002: 12).

Indeed, this stylistic assault on the conventions of popular Indian cinema became a recurring motif. In addition to the creative use of the planimetric shot, Sen also makes use of tableau in most of The Calcutta Trilogy. For example, at the end of *Interview*, Sen’s reversion to ‘Brechtian epic theatre’ (Chakraborty, 2015) strips away everything in terms of style. All that is left now is Ranjit against a black background, a completely flat and
admittedly theatrical image (Fig 62 and 63). But it is also an image of
political modernism that finds an ideological correlation in Badal Sircar’s
concept of Third Theatre, a cultural interstice of late 1960s and early
1970s Bengali radical counter culture. The Brechtian technique of the
black background with the actor, as if frozen in time and transported to
another reality reoccurs in both Interview and Calcutta ’71, and is pushed
even further in Padatik so that it takes on a far more surreal effect, this
time the body completely fragments so all we are left with is the floating
head of the protagonist.

For Sen the rejection of dominant filmic techniques was also considered a
political act. For instance, Sen attributes the ‘erratic and illogical’ (1977:
40) style of Bhuvan Shome as a reaction to ‘the suffocating walls of very
rigid tradition’ (Sen, 2003: 60). This reiterates Sen was also involved in
not merely a singular, ideological type of iconoclastic practice but one
also directed at overturning and eradicating dominant filmmaking
practices. Unlike the moderately classical narrative construction of
Apanjan, in Bhuvan Shome iconoclasm is manifested through the
abandonment of both logic and coherence, for a ‘deconstruction of forms’
(Sen, 2002: 120). Breaking down the traditions and rules governing
mainstream cinema illuminates how rupture was also about a rejection of
the old social order: ‘communication of the radically nonconformist, new

Sircar’s brand of anti-establishment, experimental free theatre performed in the close
proximity of audiences, protesting social and political ills and revolutionising street
theatre in India. Sircar wrote and performed plays during the Naxalite movement and we
can find a cultural intersection, espousing a political solidarity between the street theatre
of Sircar and films of Mrinal Sen in this period, both attempting to give a platform and
voice to Naxalism and the movement. J. Trowsdale notes that plays like Satabdi (1967)
‘connects most readily with oriental and ritual theatre forms which centre on the
performer’s body’ (1997: 44).
historical goals of the revolution requires an equally nonconformist language’ (Marcuse, 1972: 62). The deployment of unconventional framing and the political appropriation of tableau\footnote{Returning to Sumita Chakravarty’s theory of a shared film language, she is one of the few scholars to have recognised an archetypal pattern in the films of Parallel Cinema. By thinking about form, Chakravarty recognises the use of ‘tableaux like compositions’ (1993: 241) which she sees predominately articulated through ‘architectural and building motifs and metaphors’ (1993: 241), functioning as ‘oppressive spatial signifiers’ (1993: 241) that ‘foreground the tensions and contradictions of the Indian experience’ (1993: 241). Chakravarty also refers to specific films, which makes her work very important, one that demands closer investigation.} was part of a radical cinematic language that went through an evolution most visibly in the films of Sen in this period and which found Sen repeatedly interrogating and reinventing his own style through the prism of reflexivity. But it wasn’t so much reinvention that marked reflexivity, rather the concept of transparency, incorporating the filmmaker into the narrative as a denotation of truth – another cog in the illusion of cinema.

The defiant overturning and deconstruction of conventional film language is evident in the heterogeneous approach Sen first adopted in Bhuvan Shome and which is broadened out in films like Interview and Calcutta ’71. The dynamic interplay between aesthetics and ideology emerges as a political instrument, as noted by Paul Willemen:
'Acknowledging influences from Brecht, Vertov and Pudovkin, he [Sen] juxtaposes extreme stylization and caricature with neo-realist documentary sequences as well as direct address to camera. He wants to cross-fertilize the forms because they lend their own advantages to his ultimate message which is to expose the poverty and exploitation in India’ (1980: 54).

Interview was one of the first Indian films to embrace a materialist concept of cinema in the aftermath of 1968. When the film was released, critic K. N. Arora observed that ‘Watching Interview is like taking part in the film itself. It’s free shooting, realistic style and true to life narration invite you to get involved in the making of it’ (1971: 9). And many of the films Sen directed in the foundational years including Interview allude to and shares similarities with what Peter Wollen93 first labelled counter-cinema, a film practice that sought to deconstruct dominant mainstream cinema through the development of an oppositional film language. In the early 1970s period of political cinema Godard (The Vertov Group) drew extensively from Brecht and Eisenstein to try and ‘transform the mode of communication’ (Harvey, 1980: 62) of cinema. Experimental collectives such as Godard and Gorin’s Dziga-Vertov Group in France ‘sought to jettison the “bourgeois” auto-critique of cinema for a committed cinematic critique of society’ (Stark, 2012: 139). Critiquing society through the medium of film took on a sharper political edge that collided with the rejectionist sentiments of internationalism, leading to a deconstruction of formal devices.

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93 Wollen introduced the idea of counter cinema in his article on Godard’s Vent d’est/Wind from the East (‘Godard and Counter Cinema: Vent d’est’, Afterimage [UK] n4 Autumn 1972; reprinted in Wollen, P., Readings and Writings, NLB, London, 1982).
I want to next discuss further some examples of reflexivity, a significant anti-illusionary device that would become a popular stylistic idiom of counter cinema, exemplified in the use of ‘narration as direct authorial address’ (Kovacs, 2007: 363) that had become synonymous with European art cinema in the 1960s. Deviating from conventional practice, Sen repeatedly breaks the fourth wall in many of his films, another Brechtian device and theatrical link. Characters interrupt the narrative, speaking to the audience in an uninhibited, improvisatory manner, as if they have been freed and they can say what they like. The release that comes with direct authorial address amplifies the performativity of rupture, creating volatility within the narrative while sustaining the flow of rupture. Likewise we can find a striking demonstration of this anti-illusionary technique in the astonishing tram sequence from Interview when Ranjit unexpectedly turns and speaks directly to the camera (Fig 64), informing us he is not an actor, ‘breaking narrative logic, coherence and asserting the inherently illusory nature of what is being seen’ (Chakraborty, 2015). Although this feels like an exhausted creative device now, it had at that point rarely been used in Indian cinema with such conspicuous, transparent political intent. Dissolving the fourth wall and ‘subordinating narrative action to verbal utterances’ (Kovacs, 2007: 363-4), the sequence ‘ruptures the notion of pleasure and continuity that defines the industrial mode of representation exemplified by narrative cinema’ (Chakraborty, 2015). In doing so, Sen agitates, urging the spectator to adopt a political position in which the audience are seen to be in dialogue with the authorial and ideological discourse of cinema...
itself, 'prompting him [the spectator] to start where the film ends, completing what it has left unfinished' (Debuysère, 2014). This agitational address to camera is repeated throughout The Calcutta Trilogy, the youth framed against an unsettling black background, a dominant visual motif that invariably signifies protest.

Moreover, in the tram sequence, the acknowledgement of the camera by the actor who we discover is playing himself changes the perspective of the narrative, pushing the film into a critical, intellectual zone. The self-reflexivity in *Interview* and *Bhuvan Shome* becomes a culminating iconoclastic assault on film syntax, taking apart the very illusion of cinema and uniquely one of the first films to do so in Indian cinema. By making the spectator aware they are watching a film also returns to the Brechtian imperative in Sen’s work, another intertextual mode of address and one that recalls Verfremdungseffekt (de-familiarization):

'Brecht’s approach…aims to situate both artist and viewer within and in conscious relation to the historical present in order to illuminate a position of active, critical involvement in the knowing and making of the world' (Glahn, 2014: 8).
Sen was not the first Indian filmmaker to break the fourth wall but his intention was resolutely political. Accordingly, de-familiarization also extends to the work of Ghatak. In the ending to Jukti Takko Aar Gappo, Ghatak’s death as an aging intellectual is punctuated with him pouring alcohol over the camera lens, a comical yet iconoclastic gesture that finds Ghatak mocking his own real life destruction. Veritably, recognizing the presence of the camera, as merely a technological instrument, is a bittersweet rejoinder to the political limitations of cinema.

Indeed, the tram sequence in Interview was in itself a major break in the history Indian cinema. In the sequence, Sen deconstructs the act of making a film, ‘criticizing the illusions of consciousness and unravelling its real material conditions and contradictions’ (2014); a prominent feature of political cinema argues Stoffel Debuysere. Beginning with Bhuvan Shome and continuing into the Calcutta trilogy, K.K. Mahajan’s contribution as a cinematographer on all of these films is significant in terms of liberating the camera, developing an uninhibited approach to filming that led to a deglamourized, de-stylised street cinema. Nearly all of these films came to inhabit the street. Although Mahajan would become Sen’s regular DOP, in 1969 Mahajan shot all three of the breakout Parallel Cinema films, demonstrating his range as a cinematographer. Mahajan is just as important and influential as the any of the directors in the early years of Parallel Cinema, helping to discover new modes of cinematographic

94 In her essay ‘The Story of Arrif: Imagined Landscapes, Emergent Technologies and Bengali Cinema’ (2011) scholar Madhuja Mukherjee looks more closely at the role of technology in the advancement of film form. Mukherjee traces the history of the lightweight Arriflex camera and how the camera helped to create a certain landscape in 1950s and 1960s Bengali cinema.
storytelling. And his understanding of both the beauty of the elliptical cinema of Kaul and the agitiational politics of Sen emphasised versatility to shift across creative streams and enhance the lexicon of Parallel Cinema. Bengali film scholar Madhuja Mukherjee (2011) argues the vitality with which K. K. Mahajan photographs everyday images in *Interview* was the culmination of a technological development that saw the emergence of the Arriflex camera, first introduced by Ray’s cinematographer Subrata Mitra in the 1950s, permitting a mobility and intimacy that offered new ways of capturing the erratic temperaments of the varying urban landscapes of Calcutta. Mukherjee notes: ‘This scene [tram sequence] holds a historical value since in actuality the audience gets a glimpse of the handy Arri and the range of its exploits’ (2011: 76).

The inclusion of the technological apparatus of cinema (Fig 65), part of a demystified mise-en-scene, emerges as another part of the ideological extension of Sen’s totalizing quest to politicize film form and undergo a process of self-iconoclasm. The bricolage of tableau, reflexivity and planimetric framing that Sen used to tear down the cinematic image was part of the anti-illusionary counter cinema of the 1970s and many of these films can be aligned with such a practice. However, what remains noticeable is how avant-garde techniques align with the practice of political modernism while also expressing an ostensible duality, returning to a revisionist engagement with montage, actuality and agitation. This is what I want to focus on next.
Montage: Punctuation not Juxtaposition

Just as David Rodowick points to Peter Wollen’s theory that a crucial break in the history of representation is initiated by the revolution of Cubism, John Berger draws a similar conclusion. What Berger has written about Cubism resonates with the conceptualisation of rupture in terms of shattering form and the relationship with film language. In ‘The Moment of Cubism’ (Originally published in 1967) John Berger’s analysis of Cubism finds notable equivocation in the ways in which rupture, broadly speaking, brought about a social and aesthetic transformation, impacting the psyche of political and cultural frameworks. Berger writes:

‘These are moments of convergence, when numerous developments enter a period of similar qualitative change, before diverging into a multiplicity of new terms. Few of those who live through such a moment can grasp the full significance of the qualitative change taking place; but everybody is aware of the times changing: the future, instead of offering continuity, appears to advance towards them’ (1985: 162).

In his influential essay ‘The Moment of Cubism’ John Berger speaks of a disjunctive spatial, temporal, superfluous and decorative idea of art, outlining what he deems to be some of the ‘revolutionary innovations of Cubism’:

‘The structuring of a picture to admit coexistence of different modes of space and time, the inclusion in a work of art of extraneous objects, the dislocation of forms to reveal movement or change, the combining of hitherto separate and distinct media, the diagrammatic use of appearances’ (1985: 182).
The schisms with Cubism that Parallel Cinema expressed in the early 1970s were not new to Indian art in general. As I noted in chapter one, the relationship between Cubism and Indian Art stretches back to the 1920s in Bengal. Ratan Parimoo, writing in 1968 (delivered as a paper at the 1st Indian Triennial) about the influence of Cubism on Indian art, argued that Indian artists borrowed freely from Cubism, merging with indigenous elements to create a syncretic art. Moreover, Parimoo indicates the appeal of Cubism for painters such as Ganganendranath Tagore was primarily related to expanding the possibilities of what could be achieved with space. What Berger describes as Cubism’s revolutionary ‘dislocation of forms’ (1985: 182) also resonates with the formalist break of Parallel Cinema. Furthermore, rupture pivots on fragmentation that montage is well suited to expressing. Distinctly, Cubism’s rejection of ‘simple casualty and the single permanent all-seeing viewpoint’ (Berger, 1985: 182) emerged at a time when montage was beginning to be theorised in the 1920s by Sergei Eisenstein and Vsevolod Pudovkin. Although much of this had connected with Indian Art in the 1920s, the underexplored interstices of avant-garde Parallel Cinema and Cubism would only really fully come to life forty years later, once again in Bengal.

95 Art Historian and Modern Indian painter Ratan Parimoo (1936) was part of the Baroda group of artists which was formed in 1956 and who experimented with form and content, engaging predominately with cubism. Parimoo has also written extensively on Indian art.

96 The Triennale-India was first held in New Delhi and organised by the Lalit Kala Akademi (National Academy of Arts) as an international event centred on the cultural exchange of ideas to do with contemporary art.
It is montage I want to turn to first in an attempt to try and demonstrate the aesthetic rupture of Parallel Cinema was never a complete break with past. Indeed, it could be argued it was a merging of the past and present. My conceptualization of rupture as a tool with which to investigate history continually returns to a common theme shared amongst the signifiers – the relationship of rupture to modernity and film form. In their work on rupture Eisenstein & McGowan (2012) argue rupture is identifiable in the formal properties of film. In particular, they claim both ‘the most prominent manifestation of rupture is the cut’ (2012: 176) and which they argue is most evident in Eisenstein’s praxis of montage, an inherently political form of editing. Ban Wang follows a similar line of enquiry, arguing scholars like ‘Barthes, Deleuze, Benjamin, and Eisenstein’ (2004: 236) perceive montage ‘as a crucible of trauma, rupture, and becoming – as an experiment with conflicting options and ideological positions. It touches history at a moment when it is shaken with shocks’ (Wang, 2004: 236). Inherently, both the experimental and ideological nature of montage makes it pertinent to identifying the aesthetics of rupture. Moreover, Eisenstein & McGowan also claim the singularity of the gesture (citing the example of the close up), non-verbal communication, is a corresponding cinematic practice, just like the cut, explicating the materiality of rupture in cinematic terms. Since rupture is about interruption, irruption, discontinuity, the unconventional cinematic language of Parallel Cinema is well suited to recording political break(s) in history. It is worth mentioning the modernist syntax of rupture overlaps with the terrain of
trauma theory, an area that was explored in greater detail in chapter two.\textsuperscript{97}

The work of Ban Wang, Sergei Eisenstein, Gilberto Perez, David Eisenstein & Todd McGowan, expresses how and why montage correlates closely with the performativity of rupture. While both montage and actuality are constituents of agit-prop cinema, it is important to recognise that I have looked at agitation separately, in the next section of this chapter, because it brings with it a significant political dimension that demands contextualizing.

David Eisenstein & Todd McGowan argue film is intrinsic and elemental to the performativity of rupture. This is because they say ‘the most prominent manifestation of rupture is the cut’ (2012: 176) and that a ‘filmmaker can highlight the value of an object or a subject that would otherwise be part of a mass’ (2012: 177). Classical Hollywood cinema and the emergence of continuity editing as a political gesture conceals and diminishes ‘the rupturing power of the cut and its radicality’ (2012: 177) argue Eisenstein & McGowan. Gilberto Perez also notes: ‘Eisenstein wanted the audience to register the cut, the break in our perception that

\textsuperscript{97} For instance E. Ann Kaplan writes the uninhibited nature of independent cinema and the ‘nonrepresentability of trauma’ (2001: 204) means ‘images are repeated but without meaning…they erupt into cinematic space, unheralded in the story as in an individual’s consciousness’ (2001: 204). Similarly, Janet Walker posits trauma cinema as nonrealist, referring specifically to the 1980s and 1990s: ‘these films are characterized by non-linearity, fragmentation, nonsynchronous sound, repetition, rapid editing and strange angles’ (2001: 214). In essence, scholarly positions on the relationship between trauma and film form delineate modernist practices often associated with experimental, avant-garde and independent filmmaking, a striking characteristic of early Parallel Cinema and it’s imperative to reinvent film language. In turn theoretically determining the significance of Parallel Cinema as the point at which modernist cinema came to fruition in India lies in extrapolating the relatively under discussed frisson between form and history.
conventional editing would smooth over’ (1998: 153). This returns to a familiar debate about the role of film apparatus and the mechanics of filmmaking as an ideological tool. And in trying to extrapolate the radical nature of the rupture that the cut poses, turning to the ‘conflict montage of Sergei Eisenstein’ (2012: 177), Eisenstein & McGowan suggest sharp cutting and juxtaposition can amplify rupture and its political radicalism: ‘The cinematic cut, especially as Eisenstein employs it, reveals how rupture can play itself out on an everyday level’ (2012: 179). Further still, Ban Wang has written about the use of montage in relation to trauma in 1930s Chinese cinema that he argues saw a radical turn in filmmaking, ‘developing a film aesthetic that more effectively registered and engaged the “real” strata of history in flux’ (2008: 225). More importantly, Wang’s discussion of montage, leads him to suggest that ‘Eisenstein montage is much more than a cinematic device; it is in a privileged position to mimic the volatile experience of modernity’ (2008: 235) but also the non-linearity of history. As Wang notes of montage: ‘The effect is not just emotional impact but a visceral, physical blow’ (2008: 236). The emphasis on the violence of rupture that can be explicated through montage not only reiterates the connection to modernity. But it also consolidates in my opinion how an audio-visual device such as montage enabled Parallel Cinema filmmakers to re-deploy a past syntax as a new form of political critique and be able to communicate rupture.

Eisenstein & McGowan’s understanding of montage as cinematic punctuation returns to the fundamental nature of the cut. The cut can
sever and break but the emphasis on the term punctuation is altogether
significant because disturbance is often what rupture amounts to when it
occurs. At work here is also the correlation between punctuation and
shock, a key idea that Ban Wang identifies when discussing the
relationship between montage and modernity, and which I will return to
later. Eisenstein & McGowan argue montage draws attention to the cuts,
making us aware of the impact of rupture. And since discontinuity or
elliptical editing techniques are not new to cinema (the jump cut was often
used in early silent cinema), to punctuate a continuous flow of shots can
also be anarchic, disruptive and even radical. This certainly was the case
with discontinuity editing that emerged in the sixties in global cinema. But
why punctuation, why not juxtaposition? Juxtaposition is still the dominant
way in which montage is described – the collision or combination of two
shots to create meaning. However, I would reason punctuation feels far
more traumatic and political as a term, a direct expression of the
aesthetic rupture. Clearly, punctuation is used in grammar to signify a
pause. And in some respects to punctuate something can be destructive
and is closer to the language used to describe the impact of rupture. But
to punctuate is also about trying to intercede or intervene. Finally,
punctuation also has a closer affinity with the effects of trauma, leaving a
lasting impression.

The idea of punctuation is not new – it connects closely with Eisenstein’s
Kino-fist concept, which was a rebuke of Vertov’s Kino-eye that believed
the fiction film was ‘an obfuscation of consciousness, a form of
bewitchment’ (Perez, 1998: 152) that betrays reality. In this next section, I will discuss some of these ideas further. In the 1923 essay ‘The Montage of Attractions’ Eisenstein writes that an attraction is any element ‘that subjects the audience to emotional or psychological influence, verified by experience and mathematically calculated to produce specific emotional shocks in the spectator’ (Taylor, 1988: 34). The emphasis on shock is an important one. But as Peter Wollen (1969; 1972) notes, this was a gradual change in Eisenstein’s theory, replacing attractions with shocks.

As I have discussed, my concept of rupture is a violent occurrence that results in destruction. Interestingly, Eisenstein’s theory of montage (1925) emphasizes the ideological violence that can be conjured through film editing: ‘We must cut with our cine-fist through to skulls, cut through to find victory…we must cut through as never before! Make way for the cine-fist!’ (Taylor, 1988: 64). Arguably, this is also why the aesthetic rupture of Parallel Cinema was looking back to the past. Much of the radical political cinema of the era, returned to reclaim and appropriate Eisensteinian montage as part of a revolutionary aesthetic. Resurrecting montage in terms of a political modernism, allowed politically engaged filmmakers like Sen to engage with ‘the extremist assault on the spectator and the demands of political agitation’ (Wollen, 1969; 1972), something Eisenstein had begun to implement in the mid 1920s with films like Strike (1925), although it was still fundamentally subservient to the ‘comparison of subjects for thematic effect’ (Eisenstein 1924, Taylor, 1988: 43).
Let us turn momentarily to the following definition of montage that Eisenstein describes as a transient happening:

‘Montage should be compared to the series of explosions of an internal combustion engine, driving forwards its automobile or tractor: for, similarly, the dynamics of montage serve as impulses driving forward the total film’ (Eisenstein & Leyda, 1949/1972: 38).

In many ways, rupture performs in a similar manner, surging forwards; working to interrupt and dislocate the linearity of history and narrative and potentially this is why montage is so well suited to explicating rupture. Writing about Eisenstein’s theory of montage, Gilberto Perez notes: ‘The rupture makes an impact and the juncture makes a meaning’ (1998: 153). This is significant. Perez is one of the few scholars who use the term rupture to describe the collision and juxtaposition of montage but does so to make the all-important link between rupture and what he deems impact - the impact of rupture on the spectator.

There are many examples of what Eisenstein & McGowan term cinematic punctuation in the films I am dealing with. We can cite the moment of Anandamoyee’s death in Apanjan along with the punctuating gunshot. We can also refer to Pratidwandi – Siddhartha’s nightmarish dream of being guillotined uses a punctuating cut that returns Siddhartha back to the real world. Moreover, in the final montage of Interview, there is a defiantly radical gesture of the punctuating cut from Ranjit holding out his hand with the rock in his hand to a phantasmagorical figure of international dissent (Fig 66 & 67).
Beginning with *Bhuvan Shome*, it was Mrinal Sen and his Calcutta Trilogy, where agitation is brought to life, through the use of montage, another manifestation of the aesthetic rupture. Many of the sequences I have chosen from Sen’s work fall under the rubric of montage, fragmenting temporal and spatial linearity while juxtaposing what at first appears to be seemingly unrelated situations. Sen’s use of montage is less about the creative impact of intellectual montage and more about the way montage is used as a form of interruption, disrupting narrative flow and replicating the way rupture often occurs – spontaneously, unpredictably and violently. A micro edit can become both iconoclastic and traumatic. For the purposes of this chapter, let us turn to a montage from *Bhuvan Shome*. Centring on how exactly Sen was beginning to experiment with unconventional editing practices, I will demonstrate how punctuation was far more significant than juxtaposition in terms of realizing rupture.

The montage is structured in four sections. The first section begins with the formal introduction of Shome. We then move into the second section,
which is made up of five associative images contrasted in quick succession alongside each other, ridiculing dominant representations of Bengal, a return to the iconoclasm of earlier discussions in chapter two. The third section is made up of actuality footage of street demonstrations in Calcutta. And the montage ends with a reference to a strike by the film industry in the late 1960s. I am particularly interested in the way in which Sen introduces the actuality footage of street demonstrations. It occurs suddenly and without warning. An explosion punctuates the fourth and final image of Ravi Shankar playing the sitar creating an elemental yet profound audio-visual collision between peace and violence (Fig 68 & 69).

There is an unavoidable degree of collision at work, a metonym for the way political discord was beginning to consume Bengali society. But I would sustain that it is punctuation signified violently on the soundtrack that results in collision, arguably the two concepts working together to create meaning (this is the basis of montage that Eisenstein theorised in his early writings). As Perez notes: ‘From the conjunction of two objects arises a concept. From the conjunction of two shots arises an emotion, an
idea, a way of thinking’ (1998: 153). This sudden interruption of the narrative, largely through the intervention of agit-prop, would become a recurring audio-visual device throughout The Calcutta Trilogy. The audio-visual punctuation is a classic marker of Eisensteinian montage, bringing to life the very act of rupture as a cinematic countenance: ‘Eisenstein, in making us register the cut’s cutting, aimed to give us a jolt that intensifies our response, to hit us all the harder with his “kino-fist” (Perez, 2000: 153). What Perez talks about in relation to the jolt and its effect on the spectator is significant. Peter Wollen notes that with Strike Eisenstein dropped attractions but still retained the ‘reductive sense of shocks or provocations’ (1969; 1972: 39). Although Eisenstein continued to refine his theory of montage, the idea of shock or the jolt on the spectator is sought through the punctuating edit. The breaking through the skull that Eisenstein describes is a potent description and recognition of punctuation as a revolutionary action. As Ranciere notes: ‘Eisenstein wanted to organize the emotions that the assemblage of visual elements was meant to arouse in the spectators’ (2013: 234). This is where Eisenstein differed from Dziga Vertov98 who was interested in how montage could be used to ‘organize facts visually’ (Ranciere, 2013: 234).99 In doing so, the repeated emphasis on punctuation became more

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98 Nico Baumbach notes a critical difference in Vertov and Eisenstein’s conceptualization of montage: ‘Whereas Vertov sought to show that the filmmaker was a worker among workers and was also in a certain sense a spectator, Eisenstein sought a method that would make the spectator act or work in a way that was equivalent to that of the filmmaker’ (2016: 306).

99 In his essay ‘Seeing Things Through Things’ (2013), Jacques Ranciere is critical of Vertov’s Kino-eye, arguing his work often relied on the artificial staging of facts for the camera, although with the problematic claim of observing and recording reality in an unfiltered, unobtrusive way: ‘One could create a montage of images or words chosen to make sense in a work of fiction. But there is no montage of facts. They are only so, they
prevalent in Eisenstein’s work and finds an equivalent reclaiming in the renewed syntax of certain Parallel Cinema filmmakers like Sen.

In the montage sequence from *Bhuvan Shome*, the collision amid the spiritual reverence of Ravi Shankar’s sitar playing and the undisclosed explosion produces an intellectual meaning, narrating a political contestation between the old and new social order, the generation gap translated into an audio-visual idiom of cinematic iconoclasm. It is also at this point in the montage, illusion is suspended and pseudo-actuality takes over. And as Eisenstein and McGowan have theorised, ‘ruptures interrupt the situation, confronting us with the spectre of discontinuity’ (2012: 35). Discontinuity, a marker of the presence of trauma, functions just as it does in *Komal Gandhar* and *Apanjan*, as a break in linearity, so that rupture is made discernable. But I would contend it is the creative use of a punctuating sound that elucidates the iconoclasm of this rupture. The asynchronous bomb bursting over the image of Ravi Shankar is transitorily ‘acousmatic’, a sound without a literal source (Chion, 1994: 71) dislocating the image of Ravi Shankar, a cultural icon of amity. The violent explosion disturbs what Chion deems the ‘internal logic of the audiovisual flow of connecting images’ (1994: 45), disturbing the hoary, romantic order of Bengal. But since the locality and source of the explosion is delayed, the acousmatic value of the sound, denoting violence and revolt, is not subjective, but rendered non-figurative. I want to argue here that rupture materialises as a ‘creative force directed can only escape the undifferentiated flux of ‘life’, if they carry a meaning that individualizes them. And this individualization is lost one when tries to fragment them into elements of a language’ (Ranciere, 2013: 239).
against the past, in order to create a new future’ (Brubaker, 2013: 13), infecting the mechanics and aesthetics of cinema, and translating sound as a political praxis and contrapuntal tool, extenuating the duality of trauma, in terms of Naxalite revolt and state repression.

Moreover, montage also seeks to explicate the rupture of Naxalism as a modernist revolutionary force that could be construed as traumatic to the spectator because momentarily what Sen displays is a kind of laceration, fervently evidenced in the marked cut, from Ravi Shankar playing his sitar to the imagery and sound of political violence. The violence of the demonstrations, interpreted as a continual open wound also signify state repression, first initiated at the end of Apanjan and resonating with greater clarity in Bhuvan Shome and later films. More importantly, the break in the fictional narrative space of the film, juxtaposing classical cultural Bengal alongside contemporary revolt returns to what Eisenstein & McGowan have argued about the political impact of rupture which in some instances ‘causes a new social order to emerge from an older one’ (2012: 11). In some regards, I would argue Sen’s interruptive use of street demonstrations not only replicates the spontaneity of rupture but returns to an earlier notion of the Brechtian influence in Sen’s iconoclastic assault on film language: ‘Interruption is the rhythm of epic theatre, that is to say interruptions of the flow of life in order to provoke astonishment and to ‘defamiliarise’ the action’ (Leslie, 2005: 49).

Relatedly, it is the jolt of the Kino-fist, a result of montage, an iconoclastic
enabler, which also works to ‘shock people into new recognitions and understandings’ (Mitchell, 1988: xiii) and that suitably expresses the performativity of rupture. Eisenstein & McGowan use Walter Benjamin to underline the political value of revolution in terms of rupture: ‘Benjamin theorizes revolution not as fulfilment of a historical mission but as a break within history. This break of historical continuity gives revolution its political significance’ (2012: 26). Sen only seems to hint at this new social order that rupture heralds. We are not told what it might be, which is often the difficulty with acts of revolutionary iconoclasm; they wield ambiguity.

In the final montage of Interview the Kino-fist is used to depict the assault of history as violently quixotic, something we have not witnessed in the rest of the film. The rapidly edited montage of images return to reinstate the Kino-fist as an idiom of shock: ‘the idea that the violent montage of images stimulates aggressive and angry impulses in the audience’ (Leslie, 2005: 52). In Children of the Mire Octavio Paz argues ‘what is modern breaks with the past, denies it entirely’ (1974: 2). In the context of the final montage that unleashes the forces of history, Sen frames cinema as a bridge between the past, present and future, a historical repository of connecting dots that draws a map of anti-imperialist revolt. While Sen’s vision of modernity does not deny the past, the shock of rupture in the form of the montage presents history as a continuous, accelerating and syncretic moment in time. As Paz says:

‘the modern era marks the acceleration of historical time…more things happen at the same time – not in succession, but
simultaneously. Such acceleration produces fusion: all times and all spaces flow together in one here and now’ (1974: 6).

I would contend this flow of history, shaped through the idioms of the montage, into a singular movement reiterates the ways in which rupture is inscribed as a force of plurality and solidarity.

It would be wrong to say that juxtaposition does not occur in the use of montage. It does, and explicitly so. In the case of the montage sequence in *Bhuvan Shome*, an associative edit in the form of a match cut is used. Before the narrative segues into the montage sequence, there is an edit from Shome to a shot of Vivekananda, a still image (Fig 70 & 71). By forging a connection between the two shots, the insinuation is symbolic. Moreover, this creates a unity between the shots but which is only temporary. It is a unity that is broken with the realisation of rupture in the use of punctuation that occurs straightway. In Eisenstein’s *Notes For a General History of Cinema* (2016), Antonio Somaini broadens out the theory of montage, identifying different forms that Eisenstein experimented with. Somaini moves away from traditional film discourse that often cites the five levels or types of montages; metric, rhythmic, tonal, overtonal and intellectual, when discussing Eisenstein’s theory of montage. He includes historiographical montage, ‘in which cinema is presented as the “heir” of a long history of media and forms of representation’ (2016: 31) and anachronic montage (2016: 84, 89), a non-linear and interruptive chronology of events.
Although it would be impossible to speculate on how well versed Sen and his contemporaries were with the work of Eisenstein (Shahani and Ghatak being the exception), both of these forms of montage, historiographical and anachronic, are well suited to expressing iconoclasm and trauma. But it seems to be the spectres of anachronic montage that Sen tries to revive as did many of the Latin American filmmakers of the late 1960s. Certainly in later montage sequences, notably the extraordinary collage of global dissent that Sen maps at the end of *Interview*, a ‘belief in montage as a powerful epistemic and historiographical tool’ (Somaini, 2016: 84) is something that chimes with that of Eisenstein and Walter Benjamin. As Somaini notes: ‘The gaze of the film director and film theorist who turns to history has to be constantly oriented toward different directions at the same time: the present in which previous art forms are examined, the past from which they are extracted.

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100 Both Ghatak and Shahani have written on Eisenstein and montage. But as discussed earlier in chapter one with regards to *Komal Gandhar*, Eisenstein was perhaps a greater influence on Ghatak’s work. Anne Sheridan’s ‘Healing the Rupture: The Influence of Eisenstein on the work of Ghatak’ in *The Montage Principle: Eisenstein in New Cultural and Critical Contexts* (ed. Jean Antoine-Dunne and Paula Quigley, 2016, Brill) looks in detail at Eisenstein’s influence on Ghatak’s editing style.
and the future in which they could be reinterpreted and reactivated’ (2016: 84).

Treating montage, as a historiographical tool is something that Sen would pursue at greater lengths in Calcutta ’71, a work that presents a vision of Indian history that joins together the present and the past (Somaini, 2016: 88) through the perpetual theme of poverty. As Somaini notes: ‘Both in Eisenstein and Benjamin, montage becomes a historiographical tool thanks to its capacity for interrupting the continuous flow of time in order to produce sequences of anachronic junctures’ (2016: 89). Expressly, it is punctuation that I would argue performs this audio-visual explication and how this punctuation is made to articulate the shock and interruption of rupture is expressly through the use of sound. Could we then argue that punctuation is multi-layered, augmented by sound to consolidate the sharpness of the edit? In this case the sound edit of the bomb blast over the sitar that is used to announce interruption in the Bhuvan Shome montage sequence is an aural form of punctuation. Michel Chion writes that ‘synchronous sound brought to the cinema not the principle of punctuation but increasingly subtle means of punctuating scenes without putting a strain on the acting or the editing’ (1994: 49). I would argue Sen does not want to hide this strain on the editing; instead he embellishes it so that the asynchronous use of sound makes us feel the impact of rupture in a far more categorical and visceral manner. Sen repeatedly does this throughout the Calcutta Trilogy, attempting to realise Eisenstein’s notion of the Kino-fist: ‘By a strenuous fragmentation of the
world and rearrangement of its pieces Eisenstein makes it speak to the spectator, makes it mean’ (1998: 154) writes Gilberto Perez. I want to end this section of the chapter by returning to an earlier quote from Ban Wang in which he describes montage as being able to touch history at a moment when it is shaken with shocks (2004). If shock can be interpreted as rupture then montage in some of the Bengali Parallel Cinema films, notably Sen’s work, becomes a scalpel with which to carve out new histories.

**Agitprop and mobilizing a political response from the spectator**

‘Ciné-geography designates situated cinecultural practices in an expanded sense, and the connections – individual, institutional, aesthetic and political – that link them transnationally to other situations of urgent struggle’ (Eshun & Gray, 2011: 1).

In my discussions of the image and montage, the aesthetic rupture in early Parallel Cinema, was arguably part of a radical cine-geography that emerged in the late 1960s, one that has strong associations with David Rodowick’s conception of political modernism. In this next section I want to argue the transnational aspect of the aesthetic rupture that characterised Parallel Cinema was part of a struggle to do with the Naxalite Movement in Bengal and which inevitably saw such creative experiments connect globally with other cine-cultural practices as Eshun and Gray note. For example, scholars, notably Michael Chanan and Joshua Malitsky, have identified the aesthetic and stylistic intersections between Soviet Cinema of the 1930s and Latin American cinema of the 1960s. It is altogether problematic to argue the Bengali Parallel films that
made up the foundational years of Parallel Cinema were in the bind of the transnational ‘formulations of the militant image’ (Eshun & Gray, 2011: 1) and arguably Third Worldism in what was a radical break in history. However, there continues to be a major oversight in terms of Indian cinema’s contribution to the cine-cultural practices of this particular moment in world history. Why this scholarly gap exists can partially be attributed to a misunderstanding of Indian Cinema and the continuing failure to recognise the recurring Leftist political engagements that have taken place over time in Indian Cinema especially in Parallel Cinema in the early years. This misunderstanding extends from a wider cultural and historical ignorance that scholar Enzo Traverso maps out when discussing the hypocritical bind of Marxist ideology towards colonialism:

‘Needless to say that such a vision of the “Orient” – Asia and Africa – as a world of stagnation, immutable and paralyzed by centuries of lethargy, congenitally unable to produce innovation and a cumulative development, had a large intellectual pedigree. It was a commonplace for many Enlightenment and nineteenth century thinkers who – from Montesquieu to John Stuart Mill, passing through Adam Smith and Hegel – defended the idea of “oriental despotism” (2016: 417)

While Traverso stops short of branding Marx ‘a reluctant apostle of colonialism’ (2016: 436) since ‘Marxism became the theoretical framework of decolonization’ (2016: 436), Traverso’s work raises a significant point regarding the ways in which Indian culture has also come to be deemed non-developmental including cinema. Traverso’s argument points to a cultural impotency that was cultivated by the West. The stagnation, lethargy and lack of innovation that Traverso points to smacks of racism that was endemic in Western intellectualism. But what it also
seems to suggest is creative innovation in terms of the arts including film was inevitably brushed over, dismissed as infantile and imitational, as is still the case when popular Hindi cinema is often discussed in mainstream film discourse. This is why it becomes altogether important to recognise Sen’s Calcutta Trilogy as a critical moment in the history of Indian cinema but not just in terms of politics but also aesthetics. We return here again to the role of the scholar as one who can go about reclaiming and rescuing Parallel Cinema as significant to film history. Rupture not only brings to light a broader international cultural exchange and syncretism, which has often been overlooked, but also most significantly situates works like Interview, Calcutta ’71 and Pratidwandi as part of a deeply political work with strong Leftist antecedents and views. In this next section, I will demonstrate how agitation and actuality are also part of the aesthetic rupture, connecting with montage in helping to expand the extent of the assault on conventional film syntax. But once again, it is important to bear in mind the radicalism of The Naxalite Movement mobilized a cultural response in Bengal of which Sen’s engagement with agitprop cinema was part of.

Another audio-visual enabler of rupture, used expressly in Sen’s Calcutta Trilogy is agitation, a form of communist political montage with antecedents in 1920s agitprop cinema and which has rarely been discussed in terms of Sen’s work. To some degree most films agitate. Seeking an emotional response from the spectator is part of a residual

101 Film critic Derek Malcolm refers to and embraces the four films Sen made between 1970 and 1974 as agitprop films (1988: 264).
goal of mainstream cinema. Yet agitation is a term and concept that has often been used interchangeably with propaganda, with roots in the agit-prop cinema of the Soviet Union. Beginning in the 1910s, agitational trains and ships travelled the Soviet countryside (Peter Kenez, 2001), addressing the peasants with a Bolshevism political message, showing agitiki, ‘short films, from five to thirty minutes long, with extremely didactic content, aimed at an uneducated audience’ (Kenez, 2001: 34). Although film historian Richard Taylor argues agitka was a new type of film (1971), he also makes an important distinction between propaganda and agitation worth reiterating: ‘Propaganda…is more of a long-term activity, a preparation of the background. Agitation, on the other hand, is more immediate… specifically directed’ (1979: 28).

Immediacy and mobilization are two aspects of Taylor’s definition of agitation in the context of film history that strike a chord with Sen’s approach to agitation in The Calcutta Trilogy. James Goodwin writes that ‘agitation is the excitation of the feelings of the audience and readers and has a direct influence on their will’ (1993: 24). In some respects, Goodwin’s definition returns to a conventional view of agitation, urging propagandistic sentiments. However, Taylor agrees, arguing that both agitation and propaganda worked hand in hand to arouse a revolutionary consciousness. Bertolt Brecht would later borrow many of the agitprop sentiments of the Soviet era, creating an influential style of agitprop theatre with an anti-illusionist aesthetic. It was with Latin American cinema, Godard & Gorin’s Dziga Vertov group and Straub & Hulliet in the
1960s that agit-prop re-entered the lexicon of film aesthetics, intellectually through a Brechtian prism.

I want to intervene here, reasoning that although Sen’s idea of agitprop cinema was also about mobilizing a political reaction, it was tied to an avant-garde aesthetic and political modernism that may have appeared as a case of singularity in the context of Parallel Cinema but when framed in the internationalism of the late 60s-early 70s was altogether part of something broader. Arguably, it is the connections with Soviet Cinema of the 1930s, Eisenstein’s Kino-fist mentioned earlier, that emphasise an attempt to re-assert the avant-garde impulse that carries through but also the way many of those ideas were re-theorised and assimilated into the Third Cinema doctrine and manifesto of the late 1960s. Stepping away from the use of the term agitprop and agitation since it has a meaning specific to Soviet Cinema, although agitprop has been subsumed as an approach over the years, I want to posit agitation brings something else to light, a way of recognising how rupture materialises in Sen’s Calcutta Trilogy.

In fact, Getino and Solanas posit a vague, underdetermined conceptualisation of agitation/pamphlet cinema as part of their overall theory on Militant Cinema. Getino and Solanas write that agitation cinema ‘sums up in a few minutes an idea, or a series of appropriate slogans, useful for a specific context and for particular situations’ (2011: 46, originally published in 1973). There is no attempt to expand upon this
definition and agitation seems to lose some of its political acumen and important historical lineage. However, in his discussion of the work of Dutch avant-garde documentary filmmaker Joris Ivens Thomas Waugh defines agitprop as a ‘distinctive cultural and political tradition of documentary oriented towards social activism and grounded in the utopian or denunciatory rhetoric of emotion or persuasion’ (Waugh in Mathijs, 2004: 31). Waugh’s emphasis on social activism is significant. It allows us to posit the authorial presence of the filmmaker, in this case Mrinal Sen, synchronically in the vein of the activism of the IPTA, thereby strengthening the formal link between the late 1940s and early 1970s as a continuum of agitprop. Marxist agitation would become a primary mode of political address in Sen’s Calcutta trilogy, another audio-visual enabler of rupture, attempting to rouse the viewer into some kind of radical action and shaking them out of the trance of political inertia and complacency sometimes attributed to mainstream popular culture. But agitation did not work singularly to explicate rupture; it was working in correspondence with montage and actuality, stylistic manifestations of the experimental encounter between avant-garde and modernity. In some respects, actuality as an audio-visual enabler of rupture is restricted to the work of Mrinal Sen and his Calcutta Trilogy.

Next I want to consider to what extent Sen’s repetition and treatment of the footage of street demonstrations ‘crystallize the ambivalent proximity between cinema and journalism’ (Furuhata, 2013: 55) and imbues rupture with a contemporaneous quality. I want to begin with a consideration of
the meaning of actuality and its relationship to film. Some of the first films were actualities, non-fiction records of everyday life, lacking a narrative form. In her article ‘Documenting Fictions’ Elizabeth Cowie (1997: 54) discusses how it was the emergence of a narrative and the fashioning of reality that distinguished documentary from actuality. Actuality has often been aligned with John Grierson’s conceptualisation of documentary that ‘admitted dramatic reconstruction as a legitimate component of ‘creative’ representation’ (Beattie, 2004: 151). In the 1920s, Dziga Vertov argued for the ideological urgency of actuality as part of a Kino-Pravda manifesto. ‘The proletarian cinema must be based on truth – “fragments of actuality” – assembled for meaningful impact’ (Barnouw, 1974: 55), wrote Vertov. Both Grierson and Vertov agreed that actuality was open to creative interpretation if it was to register an impression on the spectator.

Dave Saunders, citing Bill Nichols work on documentary, argues it was with the emergence of the avant-garde, a modernist break in cultural history that experiments with actuality flourished:

‘The explosive power of avant-garde practices subverts and shatters the coherence, stability, and naturalness of the dominant world of realist representation ... The ‘creative treatment of actuality’ is authored, not recorded or registered’ (2010: 43).

I would sustain that Nichols' emphasis on the ways in which authorship transformed realism, ‘the artist was beginning with actuality…creating his own expressive synthesis’ (Barnouw, 1974: 55), situates a recognizable potency in Sen’s political treatment of actuality in his films. It is also worth turning to the work of Yuriko Furuhata who explores the dynamics between avant-garde cinema and actuality in her study of late 1960s and
early 1970s Japanese avant-garde filmmaking. Furuhata uses the term ‘artifactuality’, first used by Jacques Derrida, to describe the ‘fictional fashioning’ (Derrida & Stiegler in Cowie, 2011: 40) of actuality. The premise of artifactuality is explored in length by Furuhata, analyzing how the avant-garde cinema of Nagisa Oshima and Toshio Matsumoto ‘lead to a timely interrogation of the journalistic production of the actuality effect’ (Furuhata, 2013: 56). Moreover, actuality was just one audio-visual enabler, tied to a new political modernism, that gave rupture its potency as a political act particularly in the work of Mrinal Sen. Writing about post revolutionary Cuban Cinema, Joshua Malitsky argues ‘the immediacy and authenticity of nonfiction film could expose the falsity of fiction film in the way that Marxism brought to light the ideological deceptiveness of Western capitalism’ (2013: 24). Malitsky’s argument imbues actuality and the non-narrative form with a piercing political force. Likewise, it is important to situate Sen’s Calcutta Trilogy as an ideological extension of the CPI (M). Thus, Sen’s films in this brief period (1969 – 1974) should be read as Marxist instruments of the Naxalite enthused class struggle, entering into a political dialogue with and mobilizing a political response from the spectator.

Tom Gunning, a scholar on early cinema, has said ‘early actuality films were structured around presenting something visually, capturing and preserving a look or vantage point’ (Gunning in Kahana, 2016: 55). Indeed, there is a political sentiment attached to the footage of the Calcutta street demonstrations. The vantage point momentarily shows
revolution from a journalistic, reportage lens and functions similarly to what Gunning claims; actuality as a distanced view. In this context, actuality creates discontinuity so to extenuate the severity of rupture. Furuhata writes that ‘actuality is aligned with the element of surprise’ (2013: 60). Since rupture is something that occurs unexpectedly, one can understand why Sen repeatedly uses actuality as a device to imagine rupture cinematically.

Fig 72. A student protesting.  
Fig 73. Footage of street demonstrations.

It becomes about the now, accentuating ‘one’s temporal and existential relation to present-day reality’ (2013: 58) writes Furuhata. In terms of The Calcutta Trilogy, Sen’s repeated insertion of street-demonstrations (Fig 72 & 73) in the form of montage also takes on a journalistic quality that function similarly to Oshima and Matsumoto’s work, realizing the plurality of actuality as ‘timeliness, topicality and relevance’ (2013: 63). In fact, Furuhata identifies actuality in the context of the Japanese avant-garde in the late sixties along three lines:

‘(1) The contingency of unscripted actions and events in documentary practice; (2) journalistic topicality or newsworthiness;
and (3) the critical relevance of a work in relation to present-day social and political situations’ (2013: 65).

It is notable Sen’s work in this period could arguably be posited alongside Oshima, Matsumoto and Godard as part of an international return to actuality as a means of revitalizing parochial conceptions of film syntax. All the while Furuhata’s emphasis on topicality, unscripted actions and relation to the politics of the era as identifiable characteristics of actuality point to the porous nature of Parallel Cinema’s creative experiments with film language and Sen’s deconstruction of the conventional image. In the late 1960s Sen increasingly saw himself as a pamphleteer, using his films to disseminate a resolutely Marxist ideology, reiterating the journalistic tendency of his work in this period. In many respects, Furuhata establishes actuality as critical to the syntax of the Japanese avant-garde. If we were to take a similar approach to Sen’s work in this period the emphasis placed on avant-garde cinema, complicates attempts to categorize the foundational years of Parallel Cinema as an unfolding chapter in the evolution of realism. And while works like Interview are not strictly documentaries, actuality as a recurring political mode of address, would continually reappear throughout Sen’s Calcutta Trilogy, relatedly connecting with politics of agitation to elucidate the historical and political realities of Naxalism.

102 Mike Wayne argues that ‘Solanas and Getino’s choice of the documentary film as the main cinematic strategy did make some sense given the particular historical conditions of the moment’ (2001: 125). Sen and his contemporaries resisted this compulsion when they should have fully embraced the documentary film in the context of unrest since the urgency and openness of the form would have been more beneficial to the Naxalite cause.
Above all, actuality as theorized by Furuhata is a journalistic, contemporary and modernist cinematographic stratagem that represents rupture as a ‘traumatic image’ (Meek, 2010: 31) of revolution. Also of concern here is the creative encounters between cinema and journalism that Furuhata isolates as a distinguishing characteristic of Japanese avant-garde cinema and which find a similar correlation in Sen’s approach to cinema in the late sixties, beginning with Bhuvan Shome, as Sen noted himself:

‘I also don’t draw any sharp line between feature film and documentary techniques. This is an artificial distinction going back to the days when films were thought of as stage plays on celluloid. We’ve moved a long way towards liberating cinema since then’ (Times of India, 1970: A5).

Political protest in the form of street demonstrations is a recurring iconoclastic concept in Sen’s Calcutta Trilogy. By returning to the explication of protest, both individually and collectively, across all four films, it is often used to shatter the narrative flow so to remind us of the turbulence of the real world. But each time, protest means something different until in Padatik, the final film in the trilogy, protest leads to an imagining of mobilization in which the past and present generations are galvanised in an instance of solidarity, and which is symbolised in the closing tryst between father and son. If this is what actuality enables, a mobilization of political will, then it comes to serve a somewhat quixotic purpose and contestably draws attention to the ambivalence of rupture.
Ashish Rajadhyaksha refers to Sen’s use of the street demonstrations as ‘textual excess’ (2009: 252), footage used by Sen that spills over into the real world, ‘drawing attention to the political emphasis on the marginal or the inessential’ (2009: 253). In all four films Sen returns to the same footage of street demonstrations. But each time it is used in a different context. And by the time we reach the final film in the trilogy, *Padatik*, the footage takes on a broader meaning, transformed into the iconography of rupture. The break that materialises with the sudden insertion of street demonstrations in many of Sen’s films is contestably iconoclastic and traumatic. This is what Rajadhyaksha describes as ‘interruptive recordings of political action’ (2009: 252), a correlation with how I argued earlier that punctuation is what gives the use of montage a distinctive feature. I would reason that it was the interruption of the narrative in all of these films not just Sen’s Calcutta Trilogy, in the form of flashbacks and inserts, that was evidently where the performativity of rupture intersected most clearly with the aesthetic rupture. Yet the true political significance of this break can be ascribed to the potency of the aesthetics of rupture such as actuality in helping to assert the contemporaneous and proximate quality of rupture so that we recognise its inescapable real world impact. This is why Sen’s work came closest to communicating, partially in journalistic terms, the revolutionary unrest of Naxalism in Calcutta, using a cinematic bricolage as a reminder of what was at stake politically.

Having discussed how agitprop is a component of the aesthetic rupture, I next turn to a sequence from *Interview* in an attempt to offer an extended
close analysis, demonstrating how exactly agitprop is used by Sen to articulate rupture. This will also mean addressing earlier ideas to do with actuality, montage and reflexivity. In the ending to Interview, Ranjit fails to attend a job interview and is reduced to contemplating his fate. The sequence starts with Ranjit, a solitary figure against a black background, as though he has become imprisoned. Ranjit’s anti-establishment rage is met with silence. He looks around, enquiring repeatedly where the audience has gone. ‘Can you hear me?’ he asks. His voice rises into a cry of subjection. Ranjit finally sees a new truth – the machinations of neo-colonialism. And then there is a personal uprising. Extending out his empty hand, a rock is elliptically conjured into his hand, a magical illumination of political resistance (Fig 74 & 75).

![Fig 74. Ranjit's anger rises to a climax.](image1) ![Fig 75. A rock materialises into his hand.](image2)

It is as if Ranjit wills the rock to appear, summoning political forces of the past that have been repressed in his consciousness. Ranjit is also reacting to the traumas of the past and present, which converge into what can only be described as a moment of anger. Ranjit, holding the rock, is followed by the image of an anonymous male protestor, screaming ‘Inquilaab!’ which translates as revolt in English (Fig 76). This is
juxtaposed to an insert of a colossal explosion (Fig 77), an audio-visual personification of the magnitude of rupture.

Fig 76. The scream of ‘Inquilaabi!’

Fig 77. A colossal explosion.

It is here that sentiments of revolt and anger unleash an agitational force that harbours an unquestionably Marxist temperament. As Sen says: ‘We just could not escape the pressure. We felt our task was to point a finger at the enemy of the people. We constantly asserted our state of rebellion’ (1986: 236). Rebellion in the montage is ‘explicitly citational in the way the images of strikes, revolts and violent uprisings across the world are juxtaposed and edited’ (Chakraborty, 2015) leading to what Sen says is a ‘moment of judgement’ (1977: 152) and the call for revolution. The incessant sound of a drumbeat that carries over the montage, an aural marker of war, rouses a measure of anarchism that suddenly overwhelms the film. Moreover, the juxtaposition of political images becomes sharper as the montage accelerates, cutting from protestors on the march in the streets of Calcutta (Fig 78) to images of Vietnamese soldiers holding aloft a spear (Fig 79), (iconography of violent revolt), to a Black Panther leader (Fig 80), Ho Chi Minh, the Viet Cong Army (Fig 81), and returning back to Calcutta and finally to Ranjit holding the rock, poised to throw it.
The agitation at work here also comes out of a historical awareness of political imagery in the late 60s, much of it related to actuality, that Furuhatá labels as ‘global synchronicity’ (2013: 74) and which was ‘accelerated by the collective desire to partake in the contemporary revolutionary struggles that swept through Asia, Latin America, Africa and the Middle East in the 1960s’ (2013: 74), and which ‘for the first time in history, a global popular culture appeared’ (Traverso, 2016: 32). In this wider international synchronisation of Third Worldism, the final montage in Interview brings together agitation, montage and actuality so to imagine the aesthetic rupture as transnational.
The aesthetic rupture as a transnational occurrence has some interesting correlations with the ways in which we could argue for Parallel Cinema’s relationship and positioning as part of the transnational function of Third Cinema (1997). Chanan argues that ‘no internationalist form of struggle can be carried out successfully without a mutual exchange of experiences between peoples’ (1997: 379). The experiments with film aesthetics in the early years of Parallel Cinema seemed to understand this equation between film practice and political solidarity, unconsciously invoking Third Cinema. In a 1986 article on Third Cinema in Screen, Teshome Gabriel mentions Mrinal Sen in the same breath of Third Cinema filmmakers such as Ousmane Sembène, Thomas Gutiérrez Alea and Fernando Solanas. More precisely, the aesthetic rupture that I have isolated in the work of Bengali filmmakers in the 68-75 period falls in line with Gabriel’s proposal that in the context of a re-assessment of the relationship between Third Cinema and Third World contexts, suggesting that ‘semiotics should be an instrument of political action’ (1986: 143), just as agitprop comes to play a role in The Calcutta Trilogy in communicating the revolutionary ideology of Parallel Cinema. This is why as Martin Walsh notes for new means of cinematic expression to emerge ‘the signifying system itself must be attacked, in order to overthrow the basis upon which the dominant ideological message rests’ (1981: 39).

Since the use of montage in many of these films returns to the signifiers of iconoclasm and even trauma, the choice and juxtaposition of images as explicated through the intellectual editing, expressly demonstrates the
political power of agitprop cinema in action. The final montage in 
*Interview* recalls Soviet Cinema but also connects aesthetically and 
ideologically with post revolutionary Cuban cinema, notably with the work 
of Santiago Alvarez ‘who carried forth the radical nonfiction film tradition’ 
(Malitsky, 2013: 26) first started by Vertov in the 1920s. Chanan has 
argued that Alvarez was the boldest innovator in Cuba who reinvented 
the documentary genre ‘in an irrepressible frenzy of filmic bricolage’ 
(2005: 236). In his discussion of Alvarez’s work, referring specifically to 
the nonfiction film *79 Primaverous* (*79 Springtime, 1969*), Joshua Malitsky 
says the following about Alvarez’s use of montage:

‘It [the montage sequence] visualizes transnational alignments with 
the Vietnamese, commitment to the nonaligned movement, and 
even alliance with American anti-war demonstrators. Alvarez 
paints a virtual image of a multiracial, anti-imperialist collective 
uniting in its efforts’ (2013: 120).

In his book ‘Revolution in the Air’, Max Elbaum argues that young 
people’s search for revolution (69 – 73) led to an alignment with Third 
World Marxism that ‘promised a break with Eurocentric models of social 
change’ (2002: 29) since the cultural revolution ‘called for ordinary people 
to rise up, participate in political life, and criticise officials who wielded 
power’ (2002: 77). The Bengali Cultural Revolution was also part of this 
anti-imperialist collective that Parallel Cinema and specifically Sen’s films 
mediated. This sense of shared aesthetics among filmmakers from the 
Third World returns to an earlier point regarding what Eshun and Gray 
have labelled as a ciné-geography that is both transnational and 
intertextual.
In the context of Soviet and Cuban Cinema, Malitsky writes that ‘Rather than aiming to transform perception or fundamental modes of thought, nonfiction cinema sought to transform how viewers read history’ (2013: 30). I would go further and reason that Sen’s films including Interview let you ‘see’ history and not just read it as Malitsky posits. It is a history amplified through the intermittent prism of new hybridised aesthetics, returning to my earlier determination of the significance of enablers like actuality as a source of immediacy, authenticity and praxis. It is here in the montage sequence in Interview where rupture is most discernible, imagined as a compendium of socio-political agitation. However, the major problem with Sen’s revolutionary explication in the form of the montage of dissent is that it appears too late in the film and lacks the political involvement with which Soviet agitprop cinema empowered the spectator. Moreover, Malitsky argues that Soviet agitprop cinema ‘gave people the opportunity to participate vicariously in the revolutionary activities and allowed them to see such participation at a distance’ (2013: 50). Unlike the Soviet Union and Cuba were there was a post-revolutionary moment, the Naxalite movement was a failed revolution so there was an absence of such a context. Nonetheless, Naxalism created a radical political ideology that mobilized tribal peasants and galvanised socialist ideals. Comparatively, Sen’s exchange with agitprop is fleeting to say the least and never fully connects ideologically with the politics of Naxalism, reluctantly reminiscent of Ray and Pratidwandi. But would this have been a step too far, bordering on the propagandistic?
Having smashed the window, Ranjit goes about frantically stripping the clothes from the mannequin. This act of destruction is juxtaposed to inserts from the opening of the film when we first saw decolonization posited as an iconoclastic undertaking, and as discussed earlier in chapter three. The intercutting of inserts of the removal of colonial statues to the shots of a mannequin being stripped down until it is naked reasserts the political impact of rupture as linked to the legacy of colonialism. In one shot, Ranjit’s admiration of the suited mannequin leads to him mimicking the lifeless movements of the mannequin. In this respect, Ranjit’s mimicry epitomises a false consciousness while the plastic and lifeless mannequin symbolises neo-colonial rule. Furthermore, right up until the end of the film Ranjit is enamoured by the suited mannequin, a suggestion of the extent of the influence neo-colonialism had upon the Bengali middle class. And it is the invisible audience in the form of the off screen voice that continually interjects, reminding Ranjit of a ruinous socio-political complacency. But in some respects, the anti-imperialist sentiments of Ranjit’s revolt are also masked over especially if we interpret the revolt as primarily about Naxalite protestation. Unlike the colonial statues at the start of the film which are tied down in trucks (Fig 82), the mannequin remains standing in an upright position (Fig 83), and although it is now naked, exposing the banality of neo-colonialism, the obliteration of the mannequin is not totalizing and resultanty implies an ambivalence about the political value of Ranjit’s revolt.
But I would reason what differentiates the revolt in *Interview* from *Pratidwandi* is the agitprop value of rupture, seeking a reaction from the spectator to take action, an idiom of dissent that seems to unite the closing image of all the films in Sen’s Calcutta trilogy. However, agitation is also contradicted by the final image of *Interview*, the naked mannequin. Since the mannequin remains standing in the shop window, implies that while the veil of neo-colonialism has been metaphorically stripped away, the reluctance to obliterate the mannequin, a totem of consumerism, signifies the continuation of a new reality that socialism cannot defeat.

We could incorporate the work of Kaul and Shahani into the paradigm of the aesthetic rupture but the encounters with agitprop as an audio-visual cinematic device was fleeting. Agitation on the other hand was more prevalent and was largely a result of the saliency of montage and actuality in helping to explicate the rupture of Naxalism. All three of these cinematic enablers are suited to communicating the performativity of rupture since they place a collective emphasis on interruption, shock, disruption that often characterize the volatility of what happens place
when rupture takes place. In the final section of the chapter, I will attempt to broaden out earlier tentative discussions concerning how we can map the aesthetics of rupture and the bid to renew the syntax of Indian cinema as part of a transnational avant-garde directive that alludes to Third Cinema.

**A wider cine-geography: internationalism, avant-garde and Third Cinema**

In the preface to ‘Questions of Third Cinema’ (1989), which brought together many of the key voices from the Edinburgh conference on Third Cinema, Jim Pines asks ‘whether it is possible (or even necessary) to erect an aesthetic paradigm which defines a broad range of oppositional cultural practices’ (Pines & Willemen, 1989: ix). This is a critical question in relation to the aesthetic rupture that I have set out over the course of this chapter. In this final section, I want to draw out some of the strands from what I have discussed in terms of the aesthetic rupture. I will try to position these various strands in a wider cine-geography context. This calls for a closer engagement with the global context of rupture. Notably, how the break in film language that took place in the early years of Parallel Cinema was part of a dialogue in which internationalism, avant-garde tendencies and Third Cinema were major contributors. While, Parallel Cinema can also be situated as Third Worldism, it can just as equivalently be claimed as part of a postcolonial imperative. Over the course of five films beginning with *Bhuvan Shome* in 1969 and ending with *Chorus* in 1974, Sen frames an agitated compendium of
internationalist solidarity. Malitsky writes that ‘Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, internationalism was projected in a range of nation-building discourses as integral to the construction of a Cuban national identity’ (Malitsky, 2013: 199). Perhaps more than his contemporaries like Ray, Mrinal Sen attempted to use cinema to make a similar assertion of the links between internationalism and Indian national identity in his work.

Indeed, Parallel Cinema filmmakers were a fragmented horde, never showing a united front in terms of politics or aesthetics, which in many ways, undermined the development of a political cinema but also situated Sen’s internationalism as an isolated, even opportunistic gesture. The difficulty with arguing for internationalism, as a defining political ideology for Parallel Cinema is the history of internationalism is a dubious one particularly in the light of decolonization. The first International, ‘founded at a public meeting of English and French workers in St Martin’s Hall in London on 28 September 1864’ (Ali, 2017: 85) would remain ‘essentially a Euro-American outfit’ (Ali, 2017: 89). Lenin and Trotsky, as a response to ‘the Second International for prioritising ‘white skins’ and not caring about the victims of the imperialist countries’ (Ali, 2017: 170) proposed The Third International – The Communist International (1919). The Communist International dreamt of framing working class insurrection in a broader global notion of revolution. It is here we can see an ideological intersection between Internationalism of the past, the Maoist inspired politics of the Naxalite movement and also the cinema of Mrinal Sen in trying to augment Parallel Cinema as an interventionist and agitational
force. Writing in 1967 to celebrate the Naxalbari movement, Charu Mazumdar talked of the internationalism of the initial uprising:

‘We feel the significance of that immortal call, “Workers of the World, Unite”, we have a feeling of oneness and our conviction becomes more strong and firm that we have our dear relations in all lands’ (Liberation, 1971/1972: 23).

But Naxalism put in doubt any proposals that internationalism could succeed in India and notably West Bengal considering how the middle class intelligentsia treated Maoism with scorn. Naxalism was seen as yet more foreign ideology trying to meddle with the peculiarities of India’s complicated socio-political orthodoxies. Nonetheless, Parallel Cinema’s intersections especially in the case of the early years and foundational films with Cuban Cinema have often been underdetermined. In his annotated notes for Calcutta ’71 that accompany the film on the Indiancine.ma website Maharghya Chakraborty (2015) writes that Calcutta ’71 is perhaps the closest that Sen comes to a citation of the many aspects of ‘Third Cinema’ as espoused by Argentine filmmakers Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino’ (Chakraborty, 2015). While the question of Third Cinema has appeared tentatively through this thesis, Chakraborty’s observation raises the question of the relationship between Sen’s renewal of the syntax of Indian Cinema in films like Calcutta ’71 and to what degree it corresponds to Third Cinema and what this can tell us about the broader meaning of rupture. In the introduction to the edited volume Rethinking Third Cinema, Anthony Guerante, referring to the neglected achievements of Parallel Cinema, notes that ‘India produced something akin to the radicalized collective cinema that Solanas and
Getino demanded with such optimistic commitment in their manifesto (2007: 21). Guerante goes onto to identify Anand Patwardhan, Shyam Benegal, M. S. Sathyu and Adoor Gopalakrishnan as filmmakers in India who were part of this Third Cinema.

There is much to learn from this dialogue on Third Cinema as it points to a theory of rupture, which was interconnected, extending beyond the borders of Bengal. The work of Third Cinema scholar Teshome Gabriel comes closest but he doesn’t deal with Indian cinema in detail, making only passing references to both Ray and Sen, although both significant. I will return to Gabriel’s reference to Ray in a moment. As far as Sen is concerned, Gabriel mentions him in the same breath as Third Cinema stalwarts including Ousmane Sembène, Thomas Gutiérrez Alea and Fernando Birri (1986: 145). This is one of the few occasions that a scholar has positioned Sen in such transnational terms, thereby reiterating how some filmmakers in Parallel Cinema could be posited as part of the Third Cinema collective. But Gabriel complicates this claim, arguing Ray’s *Pather Panchali* was one of ‘the initiators of a concern with cultural identity in the Third Cinema’ (1982: 16) with his observations of rural village life in Bengal. Although Gabriel’s labelling of *Pather Panchali* asserts Indian cinema with a greater claim on the antecedents of Third Cinema, in my opinion Gabriel glosses over the romanticism of poverty in these films but more importantly overlooks the slippages in popular Hindi cinema (First Cinema) such as films like *Do Bigha Zamin* while confounding Ray’s cinema as an auteur led one that would more than
likely be seen as Second Cinema. The slippery boundaries between First, Second and Third Cinema draws attention to the categorical entombing of filmmakers and filmmaking that can happen with a rigid and prescriptive framework like Third Cinema. Perhaps Parallel Cinema occupies the ‘grey areas’ between Second and Third Cinema which Chanan (1997) talks about when discussing Gabriel’s work: ‘Gabriel is keenly aware that the whole approach tends towards schematism, and he therefore emphasises that there are intermediate positions…between each phase’ (1997: 382). Indeed, Solanas may have stated that ‘Third Cinema is an open category, unfinished, incomplete’ (1979) but as Mike Wayne notes, ‘even First Cinema can be porous’ (2001: 138), citing the examples of Hollywood revisionist Westerns in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Of course, Third Cinema is useful for helping to situate Parallel Cinema in a new cine-geography of the militant image as proposed by Eshun and Gray (2011) and trying to understand how revolutionary, radical and counter-cinema was reframed outside of Europe and the West.

In her 1985 article in Screen titled ‘Marginal Cinemas and Mainstream Critical Theory’ Julianne Burton argues film practices from the underdeveloped and developed worlds ‘cannot be understood in isolation’ (1985: 10) and that they are inextricably tied to one another. This includes Third Cinema. Burton’s article appeared when Third Cinema debates in the 1980s were entering into a period of critical introspection, reaching a kind of climax in the Edinburgh conference in 1986. It is not possible to cover the gamut of questions that have been posed about Third Cinema.
But rupture might be useful in helping us to gain a better understanding of the interstices between Parallel Cinema and Third Cinema. I would argue there a few reasons why there has been scholarly reluctance to look more closely at the relationship between Parallel Cinema and Third Cinema. Third Cinema as a theory is vague, outmoded and has been over determined, although we could just as easily argue Third Cinema as a discipline has been somewhat neglected over the past decade, superseded by the growth of transnational studies. Moreover, to label Parallel Cinema as part of Third Cinema brings with it the inherent dangers of robbing Parallel Cinema of its cultural worth and distinctiveness.

But as well as considering the wider cine-geography of Parallel Cinema, we can also look back at earlier examples of creative exchange so to map a trajectory of rupture through Indian art. A shared practice of oppositional syntax suggests Parallel Cinema in its early years of experimentation was the continuation of a cosmopolitan artistic exploration that had characterised Indian Art in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Homi Bhabha’s 2013 conversation with Susan Bean is revealing in the context of Parallel Cinema’s cosmopolitan artistic experiments. Referring to the Indian Art Movement in the 1950s\textsuperscript{103} Bhabha reasons: ‘India’s urban centres at the time had a richness of cultural exchange, a cosmopolitan culture’ (Bhabha in Bean, 2013: 24).

\textsuperscript{103} In terms of The Indian Art Movement in the 1950s Bhabha is talking specifically about the Modernist artists that emerged after independence notably the Bombay Progressive Artists’ Group (formed in 1947) that adopted a syncretic approach, fusing European and indigenous themes and styles.
In spite of Bhabha talking about Indian Art in the 1950s, his emphasis on cultural exchange is significant since it steps away from the troubling idea that Indian culture has often simply imitated Western models. In his readings of Third Cinema, Paul Willemen argues that ‘the question of the national cannot be divorced from the question of Third Cinema’ (1989: 20). How Willemen tries to illustrate this point holds some instructive dialogue for trying to map the rupture of Parallel Cinema in a broader international discourse. Willemen uses the example of ‘the cultural practice advocated at Santiniketan in India in the 20s and 30s’ (1989: 21) and suggests this practice ‘saw culture as layered into regional specificities while insisting on a critical internationalism’ (1989: 21), a quality that epitomises the early years of Parallel Cinema and notably the initial strand of Bengali Parallel Cinema. Firstly, this restates the importance of Bengali culture to the development of Parallel Cinema and secondly, aligns itself with Gabriel’s argument regarding Ray’s Pather Panchali and the cinematic imagining of a new, authentic and indigenous cultural identity. What this also returns to is my idea that Parallel Cinema was about co-existence, many creative streams working side by side and the difficulty of labelling Parallel Cinema as strictly oppositional to mainstream popular cinema considering how porous Parallel Cinema would become in the second phase. It is worth quoting in full how Willemen fully relates the example of Santiniketan to Third Cinema:

‘The dialogic relation with the popular, the stress on the vernacular, the double reference to both the regional and the international, the hybridisation practices, the recourse to the most inexpensive means of artistic production, the project of creating a
new national culture, all these features recur in the writings of the Third Cinema polemicists’ (1989: 22)

I want to suggest that exchange is critical here because situating the renewal of film language within a global cinematic context construes rupture as perhaps a transnational manifestation. We can turn once again to Third Cinema here. In his 1997 article ‘The Changing Geography of Third Cinema’ Michael Chanan raises the possibility of Third Cinema as having played a transnational role. Chanan notes: ‘connections were made with parallel movements not only elsewhere in Latin America but other continents too’ (1997: 379) and which led Third-World filmmakers to ‘consider the role of film in the struggle against imperialism and neo-colonialism’ (1997: 379). By invoking the transnational aspect of rupture, I want to turn to Eisenstein & McGowan’s position on the universality of rupture: ‘the benefit of the universals is they allow us to make a deeper sense of the world by seeing the connections between the phenomena’ (2012: 63). Eisenstein & McGowan use the analogy of the Haitian Revolution, ‘the great event in modernity’ (2012: 79), arguing the people of Haiti revolted not in the particularity of culture but ‘for the sake of the universal’ (2012: 79). I want to draw a similar comparison with The Naxalite Movement, a Maoist inspired peasant revolt that occurred at a time of global revolution and which I would accordingly designate the rupture that we see imagined in Parallel Cinema has universality to it, pointing to the broader transnational connections.
Universality also draws attention to the dialogue with European cinema that has routinely characterised the development of Indian art cinema as a source of renewal and transformation, expressly film aesthetics. Susan Bean writes:

‘This practice of interpretation, of translation, of artists drawing from diverse sources and transferring what they find through their own vision, seems to be especially important to appreciating the tenor and texture of India’s art scene during these decades’ (2013: 27).

I would maintain the practices of cultural exchange and translation could apply equivalently to Parallel Cinema, contesting Satyajit Ray’s insubstantial criticisms of Parallel Cinema’s supposed replications of European new wave cinema. In his 1971 essay titled ‘An Indian New Wave’ Ray disputed Bhuvan Shome’s claim to ingenuity, controversially dubbing the film’s naïve concept as ‘Big Bad Bureaucrat reformed by Rustic Belle’ (Ray, 1976: 99), a facile simplification of the film’s innovative thematic and aesthetic syntax. Megan Carrigy writes the surprise success of Bhuvan Shome provoked a ‘vigorous public debate between contemporaries Mrinal Sen and Satyajit Ray about the nature of low budget independent filmmaking and the idea of New Indian Cinema in the local press during the 1970s’ (Carrigy in Gopalan, 2010: 140). Ray argued that Bhuvan Shome ‘worked because it used some of the most popular conventions of cinema which helped soften the edges of the occasional spiky syntax. These conventions are: a delectable heroine, an ear filling background score, and a simple, wholesome, wish-fulfilling screen story’ (Ray, 1976: 99). Indeed, Ray completely overlooked how
Sen’s film was a transitional work, synthesising many cultural forms and styles.

Bean reasons her conversation with Bhabha ‘brings out a particular, distinctive quality of much of India’s modernist art: the artists’ predilection for hybrid, dialogical, transformational practices’ (2013: 35). On that account Bean’s argument makes salient the break from dominant cinema, invoking internationalism and a new political modernism that Indian cinema had never seen before. Making salient this break remains deeply problematic because it is a break that has been vigorously denied by both critics and paradoxically Parallel Cinema filmmakers. For instance, Aruna Vasudev makes a broad sweeping generalization, labelling form in Parallel Cinema as ‘usually neo-realistic’ (1986: 1), a link to the work of Satyajit Ray that in truth Parallel Cinema attempted to sever, notably by Sen. Correspondingly, Shyam Benegal (1989: 167) has often suggested Indian cinema has never have had a tradition of political cinema and cites the example of documentary filmmaking which has also failed to develop a political imperative because of Government sponsorship. In this respect, my opinion is the iconoclastic attempt to renew the syntax of film is evident in Sen’s work. Hence, the foundational years came closest in the attempt to forge a new political cinema, although it was inevitably sealed over in a contest between the state and filmmakers.

Writing in 1983 Mira Binford posited Parallel Cinema was ‘an oppositional cinema’ (1983: 44). But ‘in Solanas’ and Gettino’s terms, ‘a Second
Cinema’ (1983: 44), stopping short of labelling it as part of Third Cinema. Although Binford emphasises the confrontational nature of Parallel Cinema, it was still in her view a didactic, cultural instrument used by the state, proselytizing ‘the nation’s progressive, modern outlook’ and ‘democratic liberalism’ (1983: 44). One of the most recent scholarly interventions in terms of universalizing the historiography of Parallel Cinema and calling to locate the movement internationally has come from Manas Ghosh: ‘It is clear that their agenda should be read in relation to other contemporary movements of world cinema of the 1960s and 70s’ (2011: 55). Like Binford, Ghosh had his reservations about the categorisation of Parallel Cinema as ‘third cinema’, arguing ‘it often distanced itself in practice from a cinema of liberation/decolonization’ (2011: 55-56). Nonetheless, Ghosh still argues that ‘a major part of New Cinema must be aligned with third cinema’ (2011: 56) because filmmakers ‘addressed local landscapes, local narratives of struggle and local history’ (2011: 56). This was expressly true of the Bengali Parallel Cinema films that dealt with the politics and impact of The Naxalite Movement.  

Manas Ghosh has also been one of the first to contest Rajadhyaksha’s position on the relationship between Parallel Cinema and Third Cinema. It

104 The engagement with local histories, narratives and landscapes that Ghosh points is altogether more distinct in Shyam Benegal’s rural trilogy and his work in the early 1980s. And in some respects, the historiography of Parallel Cinema runs analogously with the rise of Subaltern Studies in the 1980s. Sangeeta Datta has noted that Shyam Benegal’s early films ‘operate within this paradigm of Subaltern histories’ (2002: 26). This in turn raises many questions including: what was the impact of Parallel Cinema in articulating a new class politics and to what extent was Parallel Cinema one of the first ideologically concerted efforts at a postcolonial film movement in India?
is worth recalling Rajadhyaksha’s position in which he claims Third Cinema of the 1960s and 1970s, ‘despite their similarities in style and ideological commonness…are finally national cinemas because they…depend on state funding & were conditioned by censorship’ (Rajadhyaksha, 2009: 58). Ghosh summarises his contentions as a framework for exploring Parallel Cinema including two major criticisms: ‘the problem of the attempt to fit alternative cinema into the national cinema paradigm…aspires to become a part of the world-wide response to universal capitalism’ (2011: 58) and ‘the assumption that every kind of realism has kinship with the classic realist structure…misguides Indian film studies’ (2011: 58). Ghosh’s suggestion is that alternative cinema, in this case Parallel Cinema, must be addressed by taking into ‘account transborder, international and global perspectives simultaneously with local cultural specificities and national motivation’ (2011: 59) while also urging the study of ‘textual features, historicities and symptoms in comparison with other similar instances of world cinema’ (2011: 59). Ghosh’s proposition to study Parallel Cinema as a transnational phenomenon explicates a contentious scholarly locus since contemporary Indian film theory has repeatedly kept approaches to Parallel Cinema as an exclusively indigenous concern, an aspect of Indian film theory that this thesis has tried to challenge.

While it might be a leap to reason Sen was working in a political stream that mirrored filmmakers like Godard in France, the internationalism of the New Left is certainly an ideological bond that united many filmmakers of
the late 1960s and early 1970s. For example, one only has to turn to the
work of both Mani Kaul and Kumar Shahani to determine the influence of
Robert Bresson. But as Amrit Gangar notes: ‘Most of the discussions
around Mrinal Sen’s films touch upon their socio-political emphases or
messages and not so much about their formal cinematographic
engagements’ (2010: 8). Ironically, Gangar falls into the same trap of
never quite bringing to life the formalism of Sen’s work, an oversight that
has plagued much of the scholarly work on Parallel Cinema. Even
prominent Bengali film writer Chidananda Das Gupta who was very
supportive of the rise of Parallel Cinema, reiterates such a stance,
arguing experimentation was merely decorative in Sen’s work and at
odds with ‘the conformism of his political credo’ (Das Gupta in Vasudev,
1995: 113). Relatedly, Gangar reasons that Sen, a ‘middle roader’ (2010:
8), was only briefly part of an avant-garde, implying Sen helped
propagate a ‘new movement of communication rhetoric’ (2010: 8) that
attacked the true avant-garde filmmakers, namely Mani Kaul and Kumar
Shahani.105 Interestingly, avant-garde claims are evidenced by Sen
himself who notes ‘Interview is a blending of fictional narrative, newsreel
coverage and near-cinema-verite type documentation’ (1977: 151). In
fact, Mukhopadhyay argues Interview was ‘Sen’s first avant-garde movie’
(2009: 86). Moreover, Sen’s mixed media hybridised approach first
introduced in Bhuvan Shome steadily evolves through his Calcutta Trilogy
and it first takes on a political rigour in Interview. Abandoning
conventional storytelling for a threadbare plot about a young man, who

105 See Gangar’s 2010 paper Svabhava Flowing into Streams: In Continuum –
Interrogating Avant-garde. And the Wave, A working paper presented at “The Avant-
garde in the Indian New Wave”, the Annual Conference of Yale Film Studies Program.
needs to find a suit for a job interview, narrative could arguably be interpreted as one of the first sites of iconoclastic (Chakraborty, 2015) attack. Refusing in some respects to speak in the language of the bourgeoisie, Sen takes up an oppositional position, cinematically and politically. Rodowick notes that:

‘By finally bringing together political commitment and argumentation with a reflexive, semiological critique of the forms and materials of cinematic expression in their ideological functioning, Godard is credited with accomplishing a crucial shift in the history of modernist film. In Wollen’s view, Godard’s films of the post-68 period define a synthetic third avant-garde’ (1988: 47).

My view is that Mrinal Sen was working in a very similar vein to filmmakers like Godard, unconsciously, bringing together reflexivity and intertextuality, ‘offering a third direction in the history of the cinematic avant-gardes; i.e., what Wollen had already termed counter-cinema’ (Rodowick, 1988: 55). Perhaps of real note here is Rodowick’s reference to an earlier moment of rupture in history: ‘Godard had returned to the point of the original epistemological break instigated by the cubist revolution in painting’ (1988: 55). In doing so, it becomes significant to reinsert the work of Mrinal Sen and the accomplishments of Parallel Cinema into the broader discourse of late 1960-film historiography.

Likewise, rupture evidences how filmmakers were working in coexistence with one another, including those from South Asia and India. In some respects this breaks open the myth of European cinema as having

106 Teshome Gabriel acknowledges the bonds between Third World filmmakers and notes four objectives for Third Cinema: ‘a. decolonize minds b. contribute to the development of a radical consciousness, c. lead to a revolutionary transformation of society, d. develop new film language with which to accomplish these tasks’ (1982: 3).
defined the parameters of political cinema and modernism and underscores the creative sophistication of avant-garde experiments in India. Just as Godard was galvanised ideologically by the tectonic shifts of the late 1960s in France, coalescing in May 68, Sen drew on the Naxal rage in Calcutta in the early 1970s.

Furthermore, my proposition to include Satyajit Ray’s *Pratidwandi* within this paradigm of the experimental, avant-garde strengthens the argument of the aesthetic rupture of Parallel Cinema. Expressly because Ray was a classical filmmaker who initially criticised Sen’s earlier film *Akash Kusum* (1965) as gimmicky and later adopted some of the modernist techniques. Albeit, with deep reluctance, repeatedly criticising Parallel Cinema: ‘They talk of experiment without clearly specifying what lines the experiment is to take and how far it is to go’ (Ray, 1976: 93). Still, it is critical to view *Pratidwandi* as a breach in the cinema of Ray and the trajectory of Indian art cinema. What this meant is that, momentarily, Ray partially aligned himself with the avant-garde, even adopting certain stylistic gestures that he had criticised in the past. With *Pratidwandi* Ray debatably started to question the aesthetic treatment of the film image he had developed over the course of his career. Vaidyanathan notes: ‘Also, for the first time, Ray’s own attitude to his medium is sober and unself-

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107 Saeed Mirza talked of the trap of technology that can ‘swamp the medium…with its sheer technique’ (1979/80: 125) and lead to nowhere.

108 To what extent Mrinal Sen and to a greater extent Satyajit Ray was part of the avant-garde is a subject of dispute by critics and academics since the films of Kumar Shahani and Mani Kaul are often associated with the vein of avant-garde experimentation that developed in the early years of Parallel Cinema. I would argue *Pratidwandi* is one of Ray’s most experimental films in the context of a body of work that remains very much part of the mainstream, manifesting some avant-garde tendencies.
conscious’ (Vaidyanathan, 1971: 49). For example, the anticipatory deployment of the negative image in *Pratidwandi* can be read as yet another kind of iconoclasm, but this time in Ray’s visual approach, which had up to this point taken a relatively linear trajectory. Ray returns to the negative image several times, inverting the realism of the photographic image that had come to define his work, conjuring a phantom effect and undoing everything he had sustained aesthetically up to that point in his work. Gangar’s position reflected that of Kumar Shahani who openly criticised the left wing intellectuals including the political engaged stream of Parallel Cinema as vulgar and hypocritical (Shahani in Vasudev & Lenglet, 1983: 274), arguing for a separation of practice and ideology. Upon returning from France in 1968/9, Shahani exclaimed political cinema in India had become pornographic and populist: ‘I wanted to make a film which would have all the politics implicit’ (1983: 278). Indeed, the professed communication rhetoric that Gangar identifies is the socio-political cinema of Sen and later Benegal. Accordingly, Gangar ridicules Sen for aborting the supposedly true avant-garde route, abandoning political didactics, in favour of a petit bourgeois ‘trend of compromise, the middle trend’ (Shahani, 1983: 281) that would be consolidated with the cinema of Shyam Benegal. Even Gangar disliked the terms experimental and avant-garde, which he argues, are Euro-American and exclusivist (2006). In a 2006 interview, director Mani Kaul agrees with Gangar’s comments but interestingly says the following:

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109 This film was *Maya Darpan*, released in 1973, and funded by the FFC.

110 Gangar prefers the Sanskrit word ‘Prayoga’ (meaning practice, experiment, representation) as an alternative to experimental film.
‘I prefer the word parallel to experimental, for experimental presupposes an opposition to that which is established, whereas parallel signifies a production of films equal to the mainstream and not marginalized into any cinematic ghetto’ (Butler & Mirza, 2006: 81).

This is a significant statement by Kaul since it returns to one of the overarching aims of this thesis, which is to try and reclaim Parallel Cinema as a broader way of categorising the diffuse film practices of this early period. By arguing for a co-existence between Parallel and the mainstream Kaul demonstrates how the term itself came to express different things for different filmmakers. In this respect, Parallel Cinema becomes rigorously porous and inclusive, and additionally problematic when it comes to a consideration of Third Cinema.

Indeed, Gangar’s position helps to overinflate the avant-garde perspective and rescue the work of Kaul and Shahani but in doing so it is at the expense of Sen’s interventionist work. Moreover, I would reason Gangar’s failure to detail Sen’s intertextual, reflexive and internationalist cinematographic mode of address, effectively deriding Sen’s use of ‘Argentinean filmmaker Fernando Solanas’ The Hour of the Furnaces and Joris Ivens’ documentary on the Vietnam War’ (Gangar, 2010: 13) as faux experimental cinema, obfuscates the contribution of Sen’s work particularly Interview to the development of Indian Political Cinema in terms of both aesthetics, style and politics. Furthermore, Gangar does not acknowledge how films like Interview were products of the collision

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111 This interview conducted by Amrit Gangar ‘In Conversation with Mani Kaul’ is included in the volume on experimental cinema titled Cinema of Prayoga: Indian Experimental Film & Video 1913 – 2006.
between history and cinema, and how both the iconoclasm and trauma of Naxalism also determined the aesthetic and ideological choices made by Sen.

It was not just Ray who was cautious to situate Sen’s work notably *Interview* as part of the aesthetic rupture. For instance, writing in 1976 (The Times of India) in an article titled ‘Cinema of the Third World’, Bharat Dogra argues that although Sen has come closest to dealing with ‘political themes politically’ (1976: 13), he is ‘hampered by technical gymnastics and surface politicisation which prevents him from looking far enough and deep enough at social reality’ (1976: 13). What is interesting here is that Dogra dismisses the formalism of Sen’s work, labelling style as ‘technical gymnastics’, thereby failing to grasp the tryst between technology, style and ideology and how together they served a communicative purpose. Dogra goes on to write the failure to develop a revolutionary political cinema in India was down to the ‘middle class bias of the country’s artistic cinema’ (1976: 13); claiming Sen’s films except for *Padatik* fail to go ‘beyond revolutionary smugness’ (1976: 13). Both Amrit Gangar and Pradip Krishnen have also debunked claims that Sen’s work was avant-garde. Be that as it may, Gangar and Krishnen overlook the exigency of the rupture created by Sen’s work particularly *Interview* to the evolution of Indian cinema. As much as his work would go on to polarize audiences and critics, it was iconoclasm with a discordant political impact, that re-energised and imbued Parallel Cinema with an unmistakable creative momentum and zeal to critique society.
Concluding thoughts

What I have tried to demonstrate with this chapter is that there was a concerted push to renew film syntax and which was partially inspired by the 1968 manifesto and augmented by the radical politics of The Naxalite Movement. But since my work is limited to only Bengali films in this period it is difficult to say to what extent the aesthetic rupture was a broader phenomenon that transcended regional borders. The purist avant-garde and experimental encounters of Kaul and Shahani in particular seem to suggest this was the case. Although we have probably broken through the critical impasse that derided the work of the avant-garde in the past with the growing reputation of both Kaul and Shanani, it is worth reminding ourselves of the ways in which attempts to renew aesthetics and the syntax of film has often meant critical condemnation. Writing in 1980 Chidananda Das Gupta's criticism of experimental cinema, citing four films, Uski Roti (1970), Ashad Ka Ek Din (1972), Duvidha (1973) and Maya Darpan (1972), which ‘failed to obtain release in any theatre circuit’ (1980: 39), is put down to ‘a degree of participation that only the committed audiences can provide’ (1980: 39) while criticisms extend to an ‘exposure to world cinema’ (1980: 39) that Das Gupta suggests is ‘Indian in content but alien in style’ (1980: 39). In fact, Das Gupta provocatively brands the experimental cinema of Kaul and Shahani as ‘pretentious personalization’ (1980: 39) echoing Maithili Rao’s criticisms about their careers as a ‘sad comment on public taste and private self-indulgence’ (Rao, 2011: 106). Criticisms from scholars, the industry and the state of two of Indian cinema’s boldest auteurs points to the hostile
reception they faced from an emerging discourse on Parallel Cinema, much of which was historicising from the Left yet sought to downplay the contributions of certain directors because of the incompatibility of style and content. Talking expressly about the radicalism of avant-garde and experimental aesthetics, Rajadhyaksha writes: ‘The radical potential revealed by Shahani’s work to some extent explains the vehemence with which the state disowned its own independent cinema programme so soon after it was initiated’ (1996: 687). However, censures regarding experiments with form were not restricted solely to critics and scholars, filmmakers were also in this bind, looking back and taking stock. Writing in 1974 in an article titled ‘Myths for Sale’ Shahani notes: ‘The avant-garde experiments, borrowing syntax from the other arts, have merely been attempts at achieving a kind of respectability for the cinema’ (2015: 102). Shahani seems to be referring here to foundational years including the work of Mrinal Sen and to what extent the aesthetic rupture was less about developing new forms and more about authorial self-importance.

However, what does seem expressly pertinent are the ways in which Parallel Cinema led to filmmakers drawing on influences and mapping a new aesthetic that helped to politicize cinema. Gabriel writes: ‘The praxis of Third Cinema…point toward a confrontational cinema and an aesthetics of liberation’ (1982: 6). In some respects, filmmakers like Mrinal Sen only seemed to realise what was really at stake in political terms after the manifesto had been written. The Calcutta Trilogy organically aligned itself with an internationalism that framed the moment
of Naxalism as part of a global anti-imperialist struggle of which Parallel Cinema unconsciously found itself in conversation with Third Cinema. But it has to be noted, the instrumentalization of Parallel Cinema as a revolutionary tool for political liberation was most explicit in the cinema of West Bengal, and the hybridized film aesthetics of reflexivity, montage, actuality and agitprop were momentarily involved in trying to write a new history and mobilize a political response from the spectator.

In 1975 Udayan Gupta penned an article titled ‘The new Indian cinema: A cinema in a nonrevolutionary society’, written as the first phase of Parallel Cinema was coming to an end and a chance to take stock of what had been accomplished, or not. Gupta claimed that a revolutionary cinema could only exist where a revolution had taken place, ‘in a post-revolutionary’ (1975) society such as Cuba. I would argue otherwise though and suggest that while the Naxalite revolt was suppressed, Naxalism aligned itself with another revolution, a cultural revolution, which had been fermenting in Bengal at the start of the 1960s. Of course, Gupta was writing in 1975 and it is only now when we look back at Parallel Cinema can we begin to recognise the radicalism of this project and how it was an attempt to intervene in the parochial history of Indian cinema. Whereas the Naxalite Movement was initially violently suppressed by the Indian state, Naxalism took hold as an ideology and it is still active in some places in India today, particularly with tribal groups. Gupta like many critics and scholars who have written on Parallel Cinema continually overlook the actual language in which many of these
filmmakers were speaking, other than the over determined neo-realist tradition. Rupture tells us this, pointing to a new hybridised aesthetic that was fusing a past and present revolutionary syntax into an iconoclastic mode of address. Gupta goes as far as to say that although films *Padatik* and *Calcutta ’71* were dealing with new topics, the societal analysis was superficial, mirroring that of popular cinema. But Gupta overlooks the abiding theme many of these films were criticising – neo-colonialism and imperialism. Moreover, Gupta also makes this claim without turning to what film syntax can tell us about the internationalism, avant-garde and Third Cinema interstices that were being mapped by filmmakers. Once again, I would reason it is rupture that brings to life these aesthetic and political slippages.

While Sen’s dissenting quest to liberate cinema was an evolutionary process that ultimately ended in political resignation with *Chorus* in 1974, along the way, he was able to speak through his films in an iconoclastic, recalcitrant mode of address that he first proposed in his own manifesto in 1968: ‘New Cinema engages itself in a ruthless search for “truth” as an individual artist sees it. New Cinema believes in looking fresh at everything including old values’ (Sen & Kaul in 166). In some respects, the professed search for truth has often naively plagued cinema manifestos past and present. But it is important to bear in mind that 1968-9 was the point at which the very language of Indian cinema started to shift; the assault on film language was articulated in the smashing of images in the form of dominant myths such as the Mother, the social
memory of colonialism and the parochial image of Bengal. Here we can clearly see Parallel Cinema emerging as an iconoclastic form of cinema at the point at which rupture became discernable in both history and cinema, colliding in a spectacular tryst and in which saw a blurring of the lines between the fictitious images of cinema and real world politics.
Chapter Five: Indian Cinema as a Cinema of Rupture

Concluding Comments and Thoughts for Future Work

An overarching theme of this thesis has been to try and reclaim Parallel Cinema from a new perspective, to challenge the parochial and linear historiography of Indian Cinema. In doing so, approaching the study of Parallel Cinema through Bengali cinema in the foundational years has demonstrated how the very idea of rupture, a substantial break in history, is manifested through a body of films in which iconoclasm, film syntax and the wound function acted as signifiers (there may potentially be other signifiers that need to be identified and elucidated, depending on the context and nature of the rupture). In this concluding chapter, I will offer some final thoughts and potential ideas for future work.

Rupture and the suppression of Parallel Cinema

In my original definition of rupture, I made the analogy between cinema and the human body, arguing they both function in a state of volatility. Many of the films that made up the foundational years and originated from Bengali cinema visualized and magnified the wound as distinctly traumatic and iconoclastic in nature. But if a wound often leaves a mark, a residue that cannot be erased, we also need to consider when and if this rupture was sealed over. In my opinion, rupture possesses a strange duality. Rupture is an organic flow that no one can prevent from taking place once it has been initiated, devouring all that stands before it. Concurrently, rupture is also about interruption, a pause in history,
whereby time and space becomes suspended and a potentially new space opens up into which new ideas can be projected and mapped.

But as I have shown with the analysis of film sequences and identification of the audio-visual enablers of rupture, rupture functions in this contradictory state, devouring the very foundations of cinema, re-writing the past but also annihilating the present, whereby we could see a disintegration of tradition/orthodoxy so to offer a chance for restitution of language. Indeed, we could further and argue that rupture also functions as a form of political resistance, making visible the flow of hegemony and power relations in this case standardized by popular Indian cinema. Ideological apparatus such as the media is habitually instrumentalized by the state to contain, obfuscate and seal over political rupture. Indeed, considering the extent of the unrest produced by Naxalite revolt in Calcutta, one would assume rupture ‘as a revolutionary concept…criticized for its destructive momentum, singularity and even posturing’ (Eckersall & Grehan, 2014: 2), was also a site of iconoclasm and resistance that could in fact ‘transform the status quo’ (Hutchison, 2016: 106). This was not the case. While ‘acts of rupture…challenge the hegemony of dominant ideological processes’ (Branch & Hughes, 2014: 110), characteristically shattering orthodoxies, films like Pratidwandi remained ambiguously in the bind of the vilification of Naxalism that characterised much of the mainstream media of the time.
Indeed, the imagining of rupture in the foundational years was a counter hegemonic rejoinder that threatened the status quo: ‘Despite various attempts at social critique, calling attention to economic and political disparities, as well as social injustices, the popular cinema in India is by and large committed to the maintenance of the status quo’ (Dissanayake, 2003: 206). Many of the films I have focused on expressed a fragile solidarity for the romantic ideals of a Cultural Revolution and which was ‘unified by an oppositional stance towards the commercial cinema’ (Prasad, 1998: 124). While the true avant-garde filmmakers (Kaul and Shahani) argue that it was political aspects that curtailed the potential of Parallel Cinema, negating a radical shift in Indian cinema, I have tried to demonstrate the foundational years were fundamentally aligned in their experimental and iconoclastic accomplishments no matter where filmmakers positioned themselves ideologically.

In some respects, it was after 1976 when the FFC criteria was revised and that saw the emergence of Shyam Benegal’s middle cinema was an ideological and aesthetic split broadly visible. In an interview with Ashish Rajadhyaksha, Mani Kaul professed contempt for the very existence of middle cinema: ‘The mainstream is not the enemy of cinematography any longer, it’s the middle cinema. These people should go and join some revolutionary forums or social reform groups, why do they want to make films?’ (Rajadhyaksha, 1989: 14). Kaul was expressly talking about Benegal but one could go wider and incorporate Sen too in this paradigm of political cinema that was forged by Parallel Cinema in the 1970s and
beyond. Yet rupture tells us Parallel Cinema showed greater solidarity in
the foundational years compared to the acrimony of the mid to late 1980s
when Parallel Cinema was beginning to find a new audience with
television. Moreover, the extent of the rupture in the foundational years of
Parallel Cinema can only ever be fully considered with a more
comprehensive appreciation of the regional vagaries. This also means a
further re-consideration of Kaul and Shahani’s work in particular since it
has largely been studied from an aesthetic, formalist perspective at the
expense of the socio-political content which often gets neglected.

While my thesis has dealt with rupture predominately through textual and
discourse analysis, another approach would be to consider the wider
cultural, industrial and economic response to Parallel Cinema. In doing
so, engagement with archival materials and looking closely at the
response from Indian film industry at the time might help to consolidate a
broader understanding of the contestation of rupture in the foundational
years and over a longer period of time. For example, the work of scholar
Madhava Prasad elucidates the concealment of rupture in relation to
wider cultural and economic contexts which I was unable to pursue in the
thesis but which is worth highlighting here. Prasad contends the political
dimension of Parallel Cinema antagonised the mainstream film industry to
such a degree that it became a bitter contest between alternative Indian
cinema and popular Indian cinema played out in the discourse of film
journals and magazines. Prasad argues that rupture was sealed over not
by the state but the mainstream film industry. In doing so, Prasad refers
to *Screen*, a major Indian film publication of the day, which criticised a speech given by Nandini Satpathy, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, in 1972, endorsing ‘the cultural policy of the Indira Gandhi government’ (Prasad, 1998: 125). In seeing this endorsement as state sanctioned approval of the direction in which Parallel Cinema was heading, *Screen* reacted, labelling Parallel Cinema as eccentric, arguing the ideological commitment shown by filmmakers posed a danger to Indian society. As a further riposte to the political torchbearers of Parallel Cinema, the *Screen* article ends by recommending Satyajit Ray as someone who should head a new academy of motion pictures arts that could replace the purportedly defective FFC. Prasad writes: ‘The mainstream industry had good reason to invoke the authority of Ray to serve as an aesthetic focal point that would reduce the importance of the political dimension’ (Prasad, 1998: 125). And as I have argued earlier, one of the oppositional readings of the term Parallel Cinema and what it came to mean to filmmakers was to treat it as a form of political resistance. Of course, for the flag-bearers of a parochial mainstream cinema, the idea of Parallel Cinema as a conduit for Leftist political expression was simply unacceptable.

Prasad also notes the introduction of ‘a political element into the aesthetic field’ (Prasad, 1998: 126) underlined the ‘dispute between Ray and some in the FFC was over political and institutional questions’ (Prasad, 1998: 126). In many ways, the foundational years (1968 – 1975) were the most political. And I would argue in the aftermath of the failure of the Parallel
Cinema movement to galvanise and sustain itself as a political form, a discordant Leftist political rupture was sealed over. But it is an argument that demands further investigation. Much of this acquiescence can be ascribed to the pressure from the mainstream film industry, eventually the FFC and also by Ray who turned his back on ‘serving as a supportive elder figure for the new enthusiasts’ (Prasad, 1998: 126). And to map the response from the mainstream commercial cinema is worth pursuing since it might also offer greater insight into the ways in which the shifts between Parallel Cinema and the mainstream became increasingly blurred over time, leading to the emergence of a Middle Cinema in the mid to late 1970s. Additionally, it is important to consider the impact Parallel Cinema had upon the aesthetics and themes of popular Indian cinema.

Problems with the Historiography of Indian Parallel Cinema

Limited as it is, the scholarly work on Naxalite Cinema (Rajadhyaksha, 2009; Basu, 2012)\textsuperscript{112} leads us to believe the films produced in this first phase largely extend from either Hindi or Bengali cinematic auspices. To a certain extent, this is true, especially in the case of Bengali cinema, which was impacted most directly by Naxalism. However, the first phase of Naxalite inspired films is routinely predicated on a canonization of work by esteemed auteurs like Mrinal Sen and Shyam Benegal. Parallel Cinema as a whole has largely been canonized along the lines of Hindi cinema.

\textsuperscript{112} Pradip Basu’s edited volume ‘Red on Silver: Naxalites in Cinema’ (2012) brings together one of the first collection of essays on the changing representation of Naxalism in Indian cinema and explores Naxalite cinema from beyond the centre.
language as a criterion for inclusion and while the contributions of regional cinema (predominately South Indian including Tamil Nadu) have been acknowledged, many regional films remain marginalised and under analysed. My thesis has tried to challenge this particular bias and while some of this bias has come about through an over reliance on the films listed in *The Encyclopaedia of Indian Cinema*, there is still potential to revise the historiography of Parallel Cinema even further.

In the context of Naxalite Cinema, the politicization of Parallel Cinema did not originate solely from Hindi and Bengali Cinema. It was much more widespread, notably Kerala, where the first democratically elected communist government was voted into power in 1957 and which actively ‘encouraged political films’ (Bordwell, 1994: 771). In many ways, West Bengal and Malayalam are linked politically through the presence of leftist Communist parties that have held power and popularity amongst the electorate since the late 1950s. Relatedly, if there has been a hegemonic denial of Kannada and Malayalam’s contribution to the development of Naxalite Cinema, a denial that has come from scholarly work and the Hindi film industry, then to redress this imbalance becomes imperative to re-frame the historiography of Parallel Cinema from a heterogeneous perspective.

There are three Malayalam films which demand reinserting into the first phase of Naxalite cinema. The first two, *Mooladhavan* (P. Bhaskaran, 1969) and *Ningalenne Communistaki* (You Made a Communist, Thoppi
Bhasi, 1970), are state sponsored communist propaganda films. The third film, *Kabani Nadi Chuvannappol* (When The River Kabani Turned Red, P.A. Backer, 1975), an Emergency film, comes right at the end of the first phase and was the first attempt in Malayalam cinema to feature a Naxalite as the main protagonist. Throughout the 1970s, Malayalam Cinema, along with Bengali Cinema, remained the most politically conscious of the regional cinemas, a trend that has often gone unexplored in the historiography of Parallel Cinema. What makes these three films, particularly the first two, significant for inclusion in the canon of Parallel Cinema, is that unlike many of the unconventional art-house Hindi-Bengali Naxalite films of this first phase, both *Mooladhavan* and *Ningalenne Communistaki*, were part of Malayalam popular cinema. These two films feature many Pan-Indian conventions, particularly songs. The inclusion of populist propaganda certainly complicates the contribution of Malayalam cinema in the story of Parallel Cinema.

Similarly, the second phase of Naxalite cinema also demands to be situated in a broader context, considering yet again the understated contributions of regional cinemas particularly the political melodramas of Malayalam cinema. I have previously identified some of the more obvious canonized works of this second phase of Naxalite cinema, predominately Hindi films backed by the FFC and NFDC. But some of the regional films particularly Malayalam Cinema warrant further comparative analysis in this second phase. This includes *Mukha Mukham* (Face to Face, Dir. Adoor Gopalakrishnan, 1984, Malayalam), *Amma Ariyan* (Report to
Mother, Dir. John Abraham, 1986, Malayalam) and Piravi (Birth, Dir. Shaji N. Karun, 1988, Malayalam). While Amma Ariyan uses the suicide of a young Naxalite as a basis for exploring Kerala’s political past, Piravi is marked by the political symbolism of the disappearance of a Naxalite. Perhaps the film that is least connected to Naxalism is Mukha Mukham, a work exploring the history of communism in Kerala. Communism and Naxalism are in many ways inseparable so it would be logical to determine the ways in which differing regional and Hindi films treat Marxism as an ideology and how, if and why political sympathies changed over the years.

**Rupture Film/Cinema**

A final area that remains underdeveloped and demands further research is the claim that rupture is not merely a branch of political philosophy but constitutes a cinema in its own right, that rupture films exist transnationally. Although my treatment of rupture has largely been as a tool for analysing history in film, looking for the key signifiers, there is a broader conception of cinema at stake. Here I want to suggest two things. Firstly, that ‘rupture film’ exists, and secondly, Indian cinema is fundamentally a cinema ruled by interruptions, disaggregation and schizophrenia that comes out of the traumatic impact of Partition on the cultural psyche of India.

In his 2006 book Godard au travail: Les Aunces 60, Alain Bergala refers to Weekend (1967) as a ‘rupture film’ (as cited in the Criterion booklet for
the Blu-ray release of Weekend). Similarly, Daniel Fairfax, writing in Senses of Cinema, also argues that *Weekend* is a ‘film of rupture’ (2017) and ‘one of the most spectacular ripostes to the cinema in the history of the medium’ (2017). Bergala does not really explain why he uses the term ‘rupture film’ or how he arrives at this term. But it is easy to see why. Critics and scholars when discussing Godard’s work of the late 1960s often use rupture to describe the dissension of his ideological and stylistic approach. Godard was not only severing himself from his own work but was also rejecting the very cinematic language he had helped to reinvigorate at the outset of the 1960s. In this respect, *Weekend* was a rupture in the oeuvre of Godard, a rupture in the language of cinema, a rupture in the bourgeois sensibilities of France, a rupture that opened up a new space for Godard to begin again. Although I have argued for a theorization of rupture as a tool with which to investigate the collisions between cinema, history and politics, there is potential to broaden out and claim *Calcutta ’71* as a ‘rupture film’ that follows in the trajectory of *Weekend*. In a broader sense, to what degree are films like *Weekend* and *Calcutta ’71* part of a cinema of rupture, and how could we go about positing the rupture film as a type of cinema – what would be the underpinning features, how widespread was it, and how marked was the intersections between history, film and politics as a wider contextual imperative.

Returning to my aforementioned conceptualisation of rupture as political, iconoclastic and traumatic, and by continuing to draw on the work of
Moinak Biswas and Ashish Rajadhyaksha while engaging with postcolonial scholars Vinay Lal and Ashis Nandy, I also want to speculatively suggest Indian cinema is essentially a cinema of rupture, resultant of the ways in which breaks in history such as Partition has shaped the film grammar, ideology, narratives and thematic of both the alternate and popular cinemas of India. Biswas situates the iconoclastic ruptures of late 60s and early 70s Bengal as part of a broader phenomenon, located in the imagination of all cinemas:

‘The cinema that bore the traces of rupture was in effect much wider than the films which we can call Brechtian, the disaggregated form found in the politically committed minority cinema of the time. We should think about the more intriguing phenomenon of the effect of disintegration across the spectrum of filmmaking’ (Biswas, 2007: 74)

In doing so, Biswas says to look beyond the Brechtian work of Mrinal Sen and alternative Indian cinema. Rather than reduce rupture to just Bengali or Parallel Cinema, Biswas argues disintegration needs to be examined in a broader cinematic context. The use of the term disaggregated is important here. Typically a consequence of rupture is the division or separation of the whole into parts, a decisive effect of Partition on the psyche of the nation. This inevitably posits ‘the disaggregated form’ was potentially current across many types of cinema and regions. One could reason the disaggregation Biswas talk of has its antecedents and historical lineage in the event of Partition. Indeed, returning this conversation to the spectre of Partition indicates geographical and communal disturbances were felt culturally, gradually disrupting formal practices, and developing a schizophrenic style of cinema, best
exemplified in the interruptive Masala form of popular Hindi cinema. What this hints at is rupture has the possibility of being conceptualized more fully as something inherently part of Indian cinema, furthering its potential use as a tool for analysis.

In a conversation between South Asian cultural commentators Ashis Nandy and Vinay Lal, Lal argues the memories of Partition have been displaced. Further, Lal contends India’s refusal to memorialize Partition in the form of monuments, relying instead on what Lal calls ‘folk memories’ (2000), situates the Hindi film as an expressly audio-visual public exhibition of Partition:

‘A very large number of Hindi films show families that are split or broken; the separation of brothers is a dominant motif, and you have read it as the divided self within the person. But that can also be read as a psychobiography of the tormented nation-state; there are the bifurcations that take place at the time of the partition, and perhaps individual narratives inscribe a larger narrative’ (2000).

The bifurcations of partition dislocated the Hindi film in terms of thematic integrity, whereby the ideas of separation, which Adrian Martin (2014) talks of in relation to Ghatak’s work, is not simply explicated through form and content but also projected through narrative imaginings such as the purgative lost and found storyline often found in popular Hindi cinema. In this wider cinematic context, ‘the psychobiography of the tormented nation-state’ (2000) that Lal talks of is a condition not exclusive to one form of cinema but a homogenous concept, amplified by the metonym of rupture, which is treated intellectually by Parallel Cinema. In the past, rupture transmitted and acted as a conduit for the memories and trauma
of Partition. This was to change though. With the urgency of the Naxalite
movement in the late 1960s, the idea of rupture was notably amplified.
Relatedly, the emergence of Parallel Cinema, a state sponsored film
movement, took up a new postcolonial space, aligned politically to the
left. And given the participation of the state, in terms of the Film Finance
Corporation (FFC), the transformation of the monolithic idea of rupture,
previously sustained by the historical associations with partition,
witnessed a political transformation.

In other words, when did films in Parallel Cinema come to terms with this
initial rupture? Or was the rupture of Naxalism disguised and masked
over by other notable explications of historical and political rupture? This
potentially includes The Emergency (1975), The Sikh Massacre (1984)
cinema is a cinema of mourning, predominately in response to Partition,
which have been dealt with invariably by both the mainstream and
alternative cinema. In this respect, do later Parallel Cinema films that look
back at the events of Naxalism do so from a standpoint of revisionism,
romanticism or mourning? And if it was about coming to terms with the
trauma and failures of The Naxalite Movement, to what extent did these
later films imagine the healing of a wound first opened way back in 1968
with the death of Anandamoyee in Apanjan?

In many ways, the wound(s) of Partition have never healed, and probably
never will, creating a continual dislocation and displacement across South
Asia. The seismic rupture of Partition and the ensuing wounds remain open, lingering in the often-brazen imagery of popular Indian cinema, seeping through the pores of history. Perhaps rupture remains perpetual, that it can never be reconciled just as Naxalism still haunts the psyche of Indian politics, a reminder that resistance is a struggle for political revolution. Healing the wounds would only expunge the cultural memory of the oppressed and this is why films as an alternate source of history can help keep alive an audio-visual testimony, an unofficial history, which we can revisit to find new ways of looking at rupture and reclaim the interventionist role Parallel Cinema came to play. Talking about the beginning of new histories as a reply to the misconceptions regarding the end of history denunciation often associated with postmodernism, Kuan-Hsing Chen writes:

‘What is finished is the ‘official’, universal, unified, racist, sexist, imperialist History; from this point on, that History is finished. Thus, ‘the end of History’ means the beginning of histories: the history of women’s struggle, the history of youth culture, the history of prisons, the history of madness, the history of the working class, the history of minorities and the history of the Third World’ (1996: 310)

I would reason Chen’s words could be used to situate and frame Parallel Cinema as a moment where rupture sought to imagine a history from below. But rupture is not permanent and while it can mean interruption, disrupting linearity, rupture functions in a state of volatility whereby the threat of sealing over and containing rupture is a political act that is perhaps best realised in the endings to many of the films I have discussed. In fact the very notion of rupture as something bursting forth,
severing ties with the past is also about contestation. The challenge and opposition that rupture faces cannot simply mean total change and in some respects rupture is like hegemony – a process of negotiation, struggle and contest over the political meanings that rupture heralds. Ultimately, rupture as a tool for critical analysis is an alternate way of reading Parallel Cinema, pointing to the critical breaks in history. An abiding thread seems to be the ways in which trauma, iconoclasm and aesthetics working together, brings to life the political as a defining and implicit signifier of rupture. This points to how signifiers function collectively, elucidating rupture as something far more immediate and real, and often the beginning of something new and even radical as was the case with Parallel Cinema.
## Historical Timeline

Some of the details in this timeline have been adapted from *The Encyclopaedia of Indian Cinema* (1998) by Rajadhyaksha & Willemen.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>The Film Advisory Board is established.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>The formation of Indian People’s Theatre Association (IPTA).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Peasant insurrection in Telangana (Hyderabad) against feudalism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>The Partition of India.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>Films Division established and S. K. Patil Film Enquiry Committee appointed to report on film industry and culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td><em>Chinnamul</em> released and directed by Nemai Ghosh.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Patil Report published but ignored for over a decade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>The First International Film Festival of India held in Bombay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>The Indian neorealist film <em>Do Bigha Zamin</em> is released in cinemas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td><em>Pather Panchali</em> released, heralding the advent of Indian art cinema and advancement of Bengali cinema.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Government implements 1951 (Patil Report) film committee recommendations including the establishment of Film Finance Corporation (FFC) to give low interest loans to selected projects and Film Institute started at Pune.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, dies. National Film Archive of India is founded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Ritwik Ghatak joins the FTII in Pune.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Major peasant revolt in Naxalbari leads to The Naxalite Movement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Manifesto for New Indian Cinema movement is issued by Mrinal Sen &amp; Arun Kaul, advocating a state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>The triptych of <em>Bhuvan Shome</em>, <em>Uski Roti</em> (unreleased) and <em>Sara Akash</em> signals the birth of Parallel Cinema.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>The directive to the FFC to sponsor independent filmmaking is written into its official objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>The first art-house cinema is opened by the FFC.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td><em>Ankur</em>, a realist film directed by Shyam Benegal, is an unexpected commercial success and heralds the eventual rise of Middle Cinema.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>State of Emergency declared by Indira Gandhi and which lasts for 21 months, leading to a paralysing constitutional crisis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>FFC’s art policy is criticised for backing films that are commercially unsuccessful. FFC sets out new aesthetic criteria for future film funding including ‘human interest in theme’, ‘Indianness’ and ‘characters with whom the audience can identify’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>FFC merges with Indian Motion Picture Export Corporation to become the NFDC.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td><em>Gandhi</em>, a film partially financed by the NFDC is a major critical and commercial success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Panorama of Indian cinema at the Centre Pompidou, Paris.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>NFDC diversifies into film production and also collaborates with Doordarshan to make feature films for a new television audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Smita Patil, one of the leading artists of Parallel Cinema, dies, aged 31.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>The rise of Hindutva with ‘Chariot of Fire’ procession led by Advani that propagates anti-Muslim sentiments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Demolition of Babri Masjid by BJP in Ayodhya leads to widespread riots and signals the demise of secularism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td><em>Naseem</em> is released marking the end of Parallel Cinema.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2

**Indian films released in 1969**

1969 is recognised as the official starting point of Parallel Cinema. Other than the sacred triptych of *Bhuvan Shome, Uski Roti* and *Sara Akash*, there are other films which need to be studied more closely and would help in rewriting the Parallel Cinema film canon. This means looking for the slippages between mainstream and Parallel Cinema. Here is a cursory list of films released in 1969 that I would argue broadens out the significance of this particular moment in Indian film history.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Film</th>
<th>Director</th>
<th>Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Guru</td>
<td>James Ivory</td>
<td>Hindi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khamoshi (The Silence)</td>
<td>Asit Sen</td>
<td>Hindi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ittefaq</td>
<td>Yash Chopra</td>
<td>Hindi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mooladhanam (Capital)</td>
<td>P. Bhaskaran</td>
<td>Malayalam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olavum Theeravum (Waves and Shores)</td>
<td>P. N. Menon</td>
<td>Malayalam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Days and Nights in the Forest</td>
<td>Satyajit Ray</td>
<td>Bengali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sattekalapu Sattaiah</td>
<td>K. Balachander</td>
<td>Telugu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calcutta</td>
<td>Louis Malle</td>
<td>Bengali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phantom India</td>
<td>Louis Malle</td>
<td>Bengali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satyakam</td>
<td>Hrishikesh Mukherjee</td>
<td>Hindi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mattukkara Velau</td>
<td>P. Neelakantan</td>
<td>Tamil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanku</td>
<td>Kantilal Rathod</td>
<td>Gujarati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ichhapuran (Wish Fulfilment)</td>
<td>Mrinal Sen</td>
<td>Bengali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adimakal</td>
<td>K. S. Sethumadhavan</td>
<td>Malayalam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adimai Penn</td>
<td>K. Shankar</td>
<td>Tamil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3

Canonizing Parallel Cinema (1968 – 1995)

This cursory canon of Parallel Cinema films is based on the one published online by Indiacine.ma as part of their on-going project on The New Cinemas project which focuses on the time period of 1969 and 1980. My canon situates Parallel Cinema within a wider timeline and is a chronology that is divided into five phases, which mirrors economic and political shifts in India over four decades. Arguably, this extended chronology complicates attempts to define Parallel Cinema as a film movement. In this respect, perhaps it would be more apt to label Parallel Cinema as a specific approach or philosophy to making films, one that is evident in an ideological imperative. My canon also brings together films that have been labelled as part of Middle Cinema and even some divergent examples of popular Hindi cinema under the auspice of Parallel Cinema with the aim of dislodging the traditional film canon and rethink how we define Parallel Cinema.

First Phase: The Foundational Years or Developmental Phase (1968 – 1974)

- Apanjan (Dir. Tapan Sinha, 1968, Bengali)
- Aranyer Din Ratri / Days and Nights in the Forest (Dir. Satyajit Ray, 1969, Bengali)
- Bhuvan Shome (Dir. Mrinal Sen, 1969, Hindi)
- Ittefaq (Dir. Yash Chopra, 1969, Hindi)
- Olavum Theeravum / Waves and Shores (Dir. P. N. Menon, 1969, Malayalam)
- Sara Akash / The Whole Sky (Dir. Basu Chatterjee, 1969, Hindi)
- Satyakam (Dir. Hrishikesh Mukherjee, 1969, Hindi)
- Uski Roti / A Day’s Bread (Dir. Mani Kaul, 1969, Hindi)
- Anand (Dir. Hrishikesh Mukherjee, 1970, Hindi)
- Dastak (Dir. Rajinder Singh Bedi, 1970, Hindi)
- Interview (Dir. Mrinal Sen, 1970, Bengali)
- Gejje Pooje / The Mock Marriage (Dir. S. R. Puttana Kangal, 1970, Kannada)
- Pratidwandi / The Adversary (Dir. Satyajit Ray, 1970, Bengali)
- Sagina Mahato (Dir. Tapan Sinha, 1970, Bengali)
- Samskara / Funeral Rites (Dir. Pattabhi Rama Reddy, 1970, Kannada)
- Anubhav (Dir. Basu Bhattacharya, 1971, Hindi)
- Ashad Ka Ek Din / A Monsoon Day (Dir. Mani Kaul, 1971, Hindi)
• *Ek Adhuri Kahani* / An Unfinished Story (Dir. Mrinal Sen, 1971, Hindi)
• *Guddi* / Darling Child (Dir. Hrishikesh Mukherjee, 1971, Hindi)
• *Mere Apne* (Dir. Gulzar, 1971, Hindi)
• *Seemabaddha* / Company Limited (Dir. Satyajit Ray, 1971, Bengali)
• *Shantata! Court Chalu Aahe* / Silence! The Court is in Session (Dir. Satyadev Dubey, 1971, Marathi)
• *Sharapanjara* (Dir. S.R. Puttana Kanagal, 1971, Kannada)
• *Vamsha Vriksha* (Dir. B.V. Karanth & Girish Karnad, 1971, Kannada)
• *Vidyarthikale Ithile Ithile* / This Ways Students (Dir. John Abraham, 1971, Malayalam)
• *Bangarada Manushya* (Dir. Siddalingaiah, 1972, Kannada)
• *Calcutta 71* (Dir. Mrinal Sen, 1972, Bengali)
• *Maya Darpan* / Mirror of Illusion (Dir. Kumar Shahani, 1972, Hindi)
• *Nine months to Freedom: The story of Bangladesh* (Dir. S. Sukhdev, 1972, English)
• *Swayamvaram* / One’s Own Choice (Dir. Adoor Gopalakrishnan, 1972, Malayalam)
• *Ankur* / The Seedling (Dir. Shyam Benegal, 1973, Hindi)
• *Ashani Sanket* (Dir. Satyajit Ray, 1973, Bengali)
• *Duvidha* / In Two Minds (Dir. Mani Kaul, 1973, Hindi)
• *Garam Hawa* / Hot Winds (Dir. M.S. Sathyu, 1973, Urdu)
• *Kaadu* (Dir. Girish Karnad, 1973, Kannada)
• *Nirmalayam* / The Offering (Dir. M.T. Vasudevan Nair, 1973, Malayalam)
• *Padatik* / The Guerrilla Fighter (Dir. Mrinal Sen, 1973, Bengali)
• *Titash Ekti Nadir Naam* / A River Named Titash (Dir. Ritwik Ghatak, 1973, Bengali)
• *27 Down* / Sattawis Down (Dir. Avtar Krishna Kaul, 1973, Hindi)
• *Abhimaan* (Dir. Hrishikesh Mukherjee, 1973, Hindi)
• *Chorus* (Dir. Mrinal Sen, 1974, Bengali)
• *Jukti Takko Aar Gappo* / Reason, Debate and a Story (Dir. Ritwik Ghatak, 1974, Bengali)
• *Rajanigandha* / Tube Rose (Dir. Basu Chatterjee, 1974, Hindi)
• *Sonar Kella* / The Golden Fortress (Dir. Satyajit Ray, 1974, Bengali)
• *Avishkaar* (Dir. Basu Bhattacharya, 1974, Hindi)
• *Uttarayanam* / Throne of Capricorn (Dir. G. Aravindan, 1974, Malayalam)
Second Phase: The Emergency (75 – 77)

- **Aandhi** (Dir. Gulzar, 1975, Hindi)
- **Kabani Nadi Chuvannapool / When the Kabani River Turned Red** (Dir. P.A. Backer, 1975, Malayalam)
- **Chhotisi Baat / Little Affair** (Dir. Basu Chatterjee, 1975, Hindi)
- **Chomana Dudi / Choma's Drum** (Dir. B.V. Karanth, 1975, Kannada)
- **Ganga Chiloner Pankhi** (Dir. Padum Barua, 1975, Assamese)
- **Hamsa Geethe / The Swan Song** (Dir. G.V. Iyer, 1975, Kannada)
- **Jana Arnya / The Middleman** (Dir. Satyajit Ray, 1975, Bengali)
- **Nishant / Night's End** (Dir. Shyam Benegal, 1975, Hindi)
- **Avasesh** (Dir. Girish Kasaravalli, 1975, Kannada)
- **Samna / Confrontation** (Dir. Jabbar Patel, 1975, Marathi)
- **Waves of Revolution** (Dir. Anand Patwardhan, 1975, English)
- **Bhumika / The Role** (Dir. Shyam Benegal, 1976, Hindi)
- **Ghashiram Kotwal** (Dir. K. Hariharan, Mani Kaul, Kamap Swaroop, Saeed Mirza, 1976, Marathi)
- **Hungry Autumn** (Dir. Gautam Ghose, 1976, English)
- **Manthan / The Churning** (Dir. Shyam Benegal, 1976, Hindi)
- **Mrigaya / The Royal Hunt** (Dir. Mrinal Sen, 1976, Hindi)
- **Pallavi** (Dir. P. Lankesh, 1976, Kannada)
- **Chitrakathi** (Dir. Mani Kaul, 1976, Hindi)
- **Bonga** (Dir. Kundan Shah, 1976, Hindi)
- **Agraharathil Kazhuthai / Donkey in a Brahmin Village** (Dir. John Abraham, 1977, Tamil)
- **Ghattashraddha / The Ritual** (Dir. Girish Kasaravalli, 1977, Kannada)
- **Kanchana Seeta / Golden Seeta** (Dir. G. Aravindan, 1977, Malayalam)
- **Manimuzhakkam / Tolling of the Bell** (Dir. P.A. Backer, 1977, Malayalam)
- **Kodiyettam / The Ascent** (Dir. Adoor Gopalakrishnan, 1977, Malayalam)
- **Kondura / The Boom** (Dir. Shyam Benegal, 1977, Hindi/Telegu)
- **Oka Oorie Katha / The Outsiders** (Dir. Mrinal Sen, 1977, Telugu)
- **Shatranj Ke Khiladi / The Chess Players** (Dir. Satyajit Ray, 1977, Urdu)
- **Swami** (Dir. Basu Chatterjee, 1977, Hindi)
- **Alaap** (Dir. Hrishkesh Mukherjee, 1977, Hindi)
- **Jait Re Jait** (Dir. Jabbar Patel, 1977, Marathi)
- **Chaani** (Dir. V. Shantaram, 1977, Marathi)
• *Khatta Meetha* (Dir. Basu Chatterjee, 1977, Hindi)

**Third Phase: The Transitional Years (1978 – 1979)**

• *Arvind Desai Ki Ajeeb Dastaan* / The Strange Fate of Arvind Desai (Dir. Saeed Akhtar Mirza, 1978, Hindi)
• *Dooratwa* / Distance (Dir. Buddadhev Dasgupta, 1978, Bengali)
• *Gaman* / Going (Dir. Muzaffar Ali, 1978, Hindi)
• *Grahana* / The Eclipse (Dir. T.S. Nagabharana, 1978, Kannada)
• *Junoon* / The Obsession (Dir. Shyam Benegal, 1978, Hindi)
• *Ondanondu Kaladalli* (Dir. Girish Karnad, 1978, Kannada)
• *Parashuram* / The Man with the Axe (Dir. Mrinal Sen, 1978, Bengali)
• *Pranam Khareedu* (Dir. Vasu, 1978, Telugu)
• *Prisoners of Conscience* (Dir. Anand Patwardhan, 1978, English/Hindi)
• *Sarvasakshi* / The Omniscient (Dir. Ramdas Phutane, 1978, Marathi)
• *Thampu* / The Circus Tent (Dir. G. Aravindan, 1978, Malayalam)
• *Avalude Ravukal* (Dir. V. Sasi, 1978, Malayalam)
• *Yaro Oral* / Someone Unknown (Dir. V.K. Pavithran, 1978, Malayalam)
• *Cheriyachente Kroora Krithyangal* (Dir. John Abraham, 1979, Malayalam)
• *Ek Din Pratidin* / And Quiet Rolls the Day (Dir. Mrinal Sen, 1979, Bengali)
• *Estheppan* / Stephen (Dir. G. Aravindan, 1979, Malayalam)
• *Kummatty* / The Bogeyman (Dir. G. Aravindan, 1979, Malayalam)
• *Maabhoomi* / Our Land (Dir. Gautam Ghose, 1979, Telugu)
• *The Naxalities* (Dir. K.A. Abbas, 1979, Hindi)
• *Neem Annapurna* / Bitter Morsel (Dir. Buddhadev Dasgupta, 1979, Bengali)
• *Sinhasan* / The Throne (Dir. Jabbar Patel, 1979, Marathi)
• *Sparsh* / The Touch (Dir. Sai Paranjpye, 1979, Hindi)

**Fourth Phase: The High Point (1980 – 1989)**

• *Aakrosh* / Cry of the Wounded (Dir. Govind Nihalani, 1980, Hindi)
• *Akaler Sandhaney* / In Search of Famine (Dir. Mrinal Sen, 1980, Bengali)
• *Albert Pinto Ko Gussa Kyon Aata Hai* / What Makes Albert Pinto Angry (dir. Saeed Akhtar Mirza, 1980, Hindi)
• *Bara* / The Famine (Dir. M.S. Sathya, 1980, Kannada/Hindi)
• Bhavni Bhavai / A Folk Tale (Dir. Ketan Mehta, 1980, Gujarati/Hindi)
• Chakra / Vicious Circle (Dir. Rabindra Dharmaraj, 1980, Hindi)
• Chann Pardesi (Dir. Chitrarath Singh, 1980, Punjabi)
• Hum Paanch (Dir. Bapu, 1980, Hindi)
• Kalyug / The Machine Age (Dir. Shyam Benegal, 1980, Hindi)
• Kolangal / Caricatures (Dir. K.G. George, 1980, Malayalam)
• Satah Se Uthata Admi / Arising from the Surface (Dir. Mani Kaul, 1980, Hindi)
• Adharshilla / The Foundation Stone (Dir. Ashok Ahuja, 1981, Hindi)
• Chaalchitra / The Kaleidoscope (Dir. Mrinal Sen, 1981, Bengali)
• Chashme Budoor / Shield Against the Evil Eye (Dir. Sai Paranjpye, 1981, Hindi)
• Dakhal / The Occupation (Dir. Gautam Ghose, 1981, Bengali)
• Elippathyam / The Rat Trap (Dir. Adoor Gopalakrishnan, 1981, Malayalam)
• Pokkuveyil / Twilight (Dir. G. Aravindan, 1981, Malayalam)
• Sadgati / Deliverance (Dir. Satyajit Ray, 1981, Hindi)
• Thanneer Thanneer / Water Water (Dir. K. Balachander, 1981, Tamil)
• 36 Chowringhee Lane (Dir. Aparna Sen, 1981, English)
• Umbartha / Dawn (Dir. Jabbar Patel, 1981, Marathi/Hindi)
• Umrao Jaan (Dir. Muzaffar Ali, 1981, Urdu)
• Aarohan / The Ascent (Dir. Shyam Benegal, 1982, Hindi)
• Aparoopa (Dir. Jahn Barua, 1982, Assemese/Hindi)
• Chokh / The Eyes (Dir. Utpalendu Chakraborty, 1982, Bengali)
• Dhrupad (Dir. Mani Kaul, 1982, Hindi)
• Grihadjudda / Crossroads (Dir. Buddhadev Dasgupta, 1982, Bengali)
• Kharij / The Case is Closed (Dir. Mrinal Sen, 1982, Bengali)
• Katha / The Tale (Dir. Sai Paranjpye, 1982, Hindi)
• Adi Shankaracharya / The Philosopher (Dir. G.V. Iyer, 1983, Sanskrit)
• Ardh Satya / The Half-truth (Dir. Govind Nihalani, 1983, Hindi)
• Godam / Warehouse (Dir. Dilip Chitre, 1983, Hindi)
• Holi / Festival of Fire (Dir. Ketan Mehta, 1983, Hindi)
• Jaane Bhi Do Yaaron / Who Pays the Piper (Dir. Kundan Shah, 1983, Hindi)
• Khandhar / The Runs (Dir. Mrinal Sen, 1983, Bengali)
• Mandi / The Marketplace (Dir. Shyam Benegal, 1983, Hindi)
• Maya Mriga / The Mirage (Dir. Nird N. Mahapatra, 1983, Oriya)
• Smritichitre / Memory Episodes (Dir. Vijaya Mehta, 1983, Marathi)
• Andhi Gali / Blind Alley (Dir. Buddhadev Dasgupta, 1984, Hindi)
• Damul / Bonded Until Death (Dir. Prakash Jha, 1984, Hindi)
• Ghare Baire / Home and the World (Dir. Satyajit Ray, 1984, Bengali)
• Mati Manas / Mind of Clay (Dir. Mani Kaul, 1984, Hindi)
• Mohan Joshi Haazir Ho! / A Summons for Mohan Joshi (Dir. Saeed Akhtar Mirza, 1984, Hindi)
• Mukha Mukham / Face to Face (Dir. Adoor Gopalakrishnan, 1984, Malayalam)
• Party (Dir. Govind Nihalani, 1984, Hindi)
• Paar / The Crossing (Dir. Gautam Ghose, 1984, Hindi)
• Tarang / Wages and Profit (Dir. Kumar Shahani, 1984, Hindi)
• Utsav / The Festival (Dir. Girish Karnad, 1984, Hindi)
• Chidambaram (Dir. G. Aravindan, 1985, Malayalam)
• Debshishu / The Child God (Dir. Upalendu Chakraborty, 1985, Hindi)
• Hamara Shaher / Bombay Our City (Dir. Anand Patwardhan, 1985, Hindi/Tamil/English/Marathi)
• Mirch Masala / Spices (Dir. Ketan Mehta, 1985, Hindi)
• New Delhi Times (Dir. Ramesh Sharma, 1985, Hindi)
• Parama (Dir. Aparna Sen, 1985, Bengali/Hindi)
• Amma Ariyan / Report to Mother (Dir. John Abraham, 1986, Malayalam)
• Genesis (Dir. Mrinal Sen, 1986, Hindi)
• Massey Sahib (Dir. Pradip Krishen, 1986, Hindi)
• Oridatha / Somewhere (Dir. G. Aravindan, 1986, Malayalam)
• Panchagni (Dir. T. Hariharan, 1986, Malayalam)
• Papor / Return (Dir. Buddhadev Dasgupta, 1986, Bengali)
• Susman / The Essence (Dir. Shyam Benegal, 1986, Hindi)
• Tabarana Kathe (Dir. Tabara’s Tale, 1986, Kannada)
• Anantaram / Monologue (Dir. Adoor Gopalakrishnan, 1987, Malayalam)
• Antarjali Jatra / The Voyage Beyond (Dir. Gautam Ghose, 1987, Bengali/Hindi)
• Pestonjee (Dir. Vijaya Mehta, 1987, Hindi)
• Tamas / Darkness (Dir. Govind Nihalani, 1987, Hindi)
• Ek Din Achanak / Suddenly One Day (Dir. Mrinal Sen, 1988, Hindi)
• Khayal Gatha / Khayal Saga (Dir. Kumar Shahani, 1988, Hindi)
• Marattam / Masquerade (Dir. G. Aravindan, 1988, Malayalam)
• Om Dar-B-Dar (Dir. Kamal Swaroop, 1988, Hindi)
• *Bagh Bahadur* (Dir. Buddhadev Dasgupta, 1989, Hindi)
• *Banani / The Forest* (Dir. Jahnu Barua, 1989, Assamese)
• *Ganashatru / An Enemy of the People* (Dir. Satyajit Ray, 1989, Bengali)
• *Kaal Abhirati / Time Addiction* (Dir. Amitabh Chakraborty, 1989, Bengali)
• *Ek Ghar* (Dir. Girish Kasaravalli, 1989, Hindi/Kannada)
• *Marhi Da Deeva / The Lamp of the Top* (Dir. Surinder Singh, 1989, Punjabi/Hindi)
• *Mathilukal / The Walls* (Dir. Adoor Gopalakrishnan, 1989, Malayalam)
• *Nazar / The Gaze* (Dir. Mani Kaul, 1989, Hindi)
• *Percy* (Dir. Pervez Mehrwanji, 1989, Gujarati)
• *Salim Langde Pe Mat Ro / Don’t Cry for Salim the Lane* (Dir. Saeed Akhtar Mirza, 1989, Hindi)
• *Sati* (Dir. Aparna Sen, 1989, Bengali)
• *Siddheshwari* (Dir. Mani Kaul, 1989, Hindi)
• *Una Mitterandi Yaad Pyari / In Memory of Friends* (Dir. Anand Patwardhan, 1989, Punjabi/Hindi/English)

**Fifth and final phase: The demise of Parallel Cinema (1990 – 1995)**

• *Disha / The Uprooted Ones* (Dir. Sai Paranjpye, 1990, Hindi)
• *Drishti / Vision* (Dir. Govind Nihalani, 1990, Hindi)
• *Kasba* (Dir. Kumar Shahani, 1990, Hindi)
• *Vasthuhara / The Dispossessed* (Dir. G. Aravindan, 1990, Malayalam)
• *Agantuk / The Stranger* (Dir. Satyajit Ray, 1991, Bengali)
• *Dharavi / Quicksand* (Dir. Sudhir Mishra, 1991, Hindi)
• *Idiot* (Dir. Mani Kaul, 1991, Hindi)
• *Something Like A War* (Dir. Deepa Dhanraj, 1991, English)
• *Apathbandhavudu / The Saviour* (Dir. K. Vishwanath, 1992, Telugu)
• *Cheluvi / The Flowering Tree* (Dir. Girish Karnad, 1992, Hindi)
• *Maya Memsaab / The Enchanting Illusion* (Dir. Ketan Mehta, 1992, Hindi)
• *Padma Nadir Majhi / Boatman of the River Padma* (Dir. Gautam Ghose, 1992, Bengali)
• *Ram Ke Naam / In the Name of God* (Dir. Anand Patwardhan, 1992, Hindi)
• *Rudaali / The Mourner* (Dir. Kalpana Lajmi, 1992, Hindi)
• *Suraj Ka Satwan Ghoda / The Seventh Horse of the Sun* (Dir. Shyam Benegal, 1992, Hindi)
• Antareen (Dir. Mrinal Sen, 1993, Bengali)
• Indradhanura Chhai / The Shadows of the Rainbows (Dir. Sushant Misra, 1993, Oriya)
• Sardar (Dir. Ketan Mehta, 1993, Hindi)
• Sunya Theke Suru / A Return to Zero (Dir. Ashoke Vishwanathan, 1993, Bengali)
• Vidheyan / The Servile (Dir. Adoor Gopalakrishnan, 1993, Malayalam/Kannada)
• Amodini (Dir. Chidananda Das Gupta, 1994, Bengali)
• Aranyak (Dir. Bhavdeep Jaipurwale, 1994, Hindi)
• Bandit Queen (Dir. Shekar Kapur, 1994, Hindi)
• Drohkaal (Dir. Govind Nihalani, 1994, Hindi)
• English, August (Dir. Dev Benegal, 1994, English)
• Hkhgoroloi Bohu Door / It’s a long way to the Sea (Dir. Jahnu Barua, 1994, Assamese)
• Mammo (Dir. Shyam Benegal, 1994, Hindi)
• Nirbachana (Dir. Biplab Roy Choudhury, 1994, Oriya)
• Prasab / The Deliverance (Dir. Utpalendu Chakraborty, 1994, Bengali)
• Sopan (Dir. Ajay Bannerjee, 1994, Bengali)
• Tarpan (Dir. K. Bikram Singh, 1994, Hindi)
• Tunnu Ki Tina (Dir. Paresh Kamdar, 1994, Hindi)
• Wheelchair (Dir. Tapan Sinha, 1994, Bengali)
• Bangarwadi (Dir. Amol Palekar, 1995, Marathi)
• Doghi (Dir. Sumitra Bhave, 1995, Marathi)
• Kahini (Dir. Malay Bhattacharya, 1995, Bengali)
• Kathapurushan (Dir. Adoor Gopalakrishnan, 1995, Malayalam)
• Limited Manuski (Dir. Nachiket/Jayoo Patwardhan, 1995, Marathi)
• Naseem (Dir. Saeed Akhtar Mirza, 1995, Hindi)
Appendix 4

State Funded Films (FFC), 46 Films (September 1968 to June 1974)

This list is taken from Amrit Gangar’s (2010), Svabhava Flowing into Streams: In Continuum – Interrogating Avant-garde. And the Wave, a working paper presented at “The Avant-garde in the Indian New Wave”, the Annual Conference of Yale Film Studies Program. The list is originally from Indian Film Society News, a journal of the Federation of Film Societies in India, and compiled by Mriganka Shekhar Ray (undated).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Film</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Director</th>
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<td>Bhuvan Shome</td>
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<td>R</td>
<td>Mrinal Sen</td>
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<td>Gujarati</td>
<td>R</td>
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<td>R</td>
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<td>R</td>
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<td>12.</td>
<td>Bilet pherat</td>
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<td>R</td>
<td>Chidananda Dasgupta</td>
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<td>Trisandhya</td>
<td>Malayalam</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Raj Marbros</td>
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<td>Swayamvaram</td>
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<td>Girish Ranjan</td>
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<td>37.</td>
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<td>Hindi</td>
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<td>Kantilal Rathod</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.</td>
<td>Duvidha</td>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Mani Kaul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39.</td>
<td>Taser desh</td>
<td>Bengali</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>Shyamal Guha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40.</td>
<td>Dikkatra Parvati</td>
<td>Tamil</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>SS Rao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41.</td>
<td>Uston paranh</td>
<td>Punjabi</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Basu Bhattacharya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42.</td>
<td>Tyag patra</td>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Ramesh Gupta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43.</td>
<td>Barva bibarna</td>
<td>Bengali</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Biplab Roy Choudhury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44.</td>
<td>Barbondhu</td>
<td>Bengali</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Bijoy Chatterjee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45.</td>
<td>Mansal na diva</td>
<td>Gujarati</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Govind Saraiya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46.</td>
<td>The wild wind</td>
<td>Kannada</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>TP Rama Reddy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R – Released  
C – Completed and expected to be released shortly  
U – Under protection and expected to be released shortly  
N – Loan yet to be disbursed
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Select Filmography

The key films included in the main text are outlined in more detail below.

_Udayer Pathey_ (Towards the Light, 1944)

_Dharti Ke Lal_ (Children of the Earth, 1946)
Dir. K. A. Abbas, Hindi, Indian People’s Theatre Association (IPTA).

_Neecha Nagar_ (Lowly City, 1946)
Dir. Chetan Anand, Hindi, India Pictures.

_Chinnamul_ (The Uprooted, 1951)
Dir. Nemai Ghosh, Bengali, Desha Pics.

_Nagarik_ (The Citizen, 1952)
Dir. Ritwik Ghatak, Bengali, Film Guild.

_Do Bigha Zamin_ (Two Acres of Land, 1953)

_Pather Panchali_ (Song of the Little Road, 1955)
Dir. Satyajit Ray, Bengali, West Bengal Government.

_Mother India_ (1957)
Dir. Mehboob Khan, Hindi, Mehboob Productions.

_Komal Gandhar_ (A Soft Note on a Sharp Scale, 1961)
Dir. Ritwik Ghatak, Bengali, Chitrakalpa.

_Mahanagar_ (The Big City, 1963)

_Apanjan_ (Near and Dear, 1968)
Dir. Tapan Sinha, Bengali, K. L. Kapoor Productions.

_Bhuvan Shome_ (1969)
Dir. Mrinal Sen, Hindi, Mrinal Sen Productions.

_Sara Akash_ (The Whole Sky, 1969)
Dir. Basu Chatterjee, Hindi, Cine Eye Films.

_Uski Roti_ (Our Daily Bread, 1969)
Dir. Mani Kaul, Hindi, Film Finance Corporation.

_Mooladhanam_ (Capital, 1969)
Dir. P. Bhaskaran, Malayalam, Azim Company.
Ningalenne Communistaki (You Made Me a Communist, 1970)
Dir. Thoppil Bhasi, Malayalam, Excel Productions.

Interview (1970)
Dir. Mrinal Sen, Bengali, Mrinal Sen Productions.

Pratidwandi (The Adversary, 1970)
Dir. Satyajit Ray, Bengali, Priya Films.

Ashad Ka Ek Din (A Monsoon Day, 1971)
Dir. Mani Kaul, Hindi, Film Finance Corporation (FFC).

Maya Darpan (Mirror of Illusion, 1972)
Dir. Kumar Shahani, Hindi, Film Finance Corporation (FFC).

Calcutta '71 (1972)
Dir. Mrinal Sen, Bengali, D. S. Pictures.

Padatik (The Guerilla Fighter, 1973)
Dir. Mrinal Sen, Bengali, Mrinal Sen Productions.

Ankur (The Seedling, 1973)
Dir. Shyam Benegal, Hindi, Blaze Film Enterprises.

Garam Hawa (Scorching Winds, 1973)
Dir. M. S. Sathyu, Urdu/Hindi, Film Finance Corporation.

Duvidha (In Two Minds, 1973)
Dir. Mani Kaul, Hindi, Film Finance Corporation (FFC).

Chorus (1974)
Dir. Mrinal Sen, Bengali, Mrinal Sen Productions.

Jutki Takko Aar Gappo (Reason, Debate and a Story, 1974)
Dir. Ritwik Ghatak, Bengali, Rit Chatra.

Nishant (Night's End, 1975)
Dir. Shyam Benegal, Hindi, Blaze Film Enterprises.

Manthan (The Churning, 1976)
Dir. Shyam Benegal, Hindi, Sahyadri Films.

Amma Ariyan (Report to Mother, 1986)
Dir. John Abraham, Malayalam, Odessa Movies.

Kalyug (The Machine Age, 1980)
Dir. Shyam Benegal, Hindi, Film-Valas.

Aakrosh (Cry of the Wounded, 1980)
Dir. Govind Nihalani, Hindi, Krsna Movies.
Tarang (1984)
Dir. Kumar Shahani, Hindi, National Film Development Corporation of India (NFDC).

Mukha Mukham (Face to Face, 1984)
Dir. Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Malayalam, General Pics.

Piravi (Birth, 1988)
Dir. Shaji N. Karun, Malayalam, Filmfolk.