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Devapriya Sanyal

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Apocalyptic desires and possessing the world through the gaze: Satyajit Ray's *Charulata*

DEVAPRIYA SANYAL
Jawaharlal Nehru University

Whilst cinema certainly propagates social change as a signpost of dominant ideologies and prevalent values in society, it may also be a means to establish resisting positions, and here I examine the dynamics of 'looking' versus 'to be looked-at-ness', as it were. I attempt this through a reading of Satyajit Ray's *Charulata* and problematise Laura Mulvey's notion of the 'male gaze'. Ray's film, in fact, seem to pre-empt this with the 'female gaze'. This, I argue, differs because it is discerning and critical, and it is through this that the woman at last comes into her own.

Popular cinema may be considered a site of plural signification in its role as a vibrant and dynamic medium for effectuating social change, a catalyst of public and private manifestations of human conduct, a signpost of cultural values and a receptacle of dominant ideologies. As Molly Haskell states, 'movies are one of the clearest and most accessible of looking glasses into the past, being both cultural artefacts and mirrors' (1987: xviii). At the same time, film has also been used as a reflector of confirmatory and resistant positions. Ray's use of the cinematic medium is often seen to be such, especially in the way he chooses to represent his female characters. A case in point is his film *Charulata* (1964).

Bankimchandra Chatterjee's essay 'Women old and new' was published in 1879, which appears to be the year in which Ray

places the events that will change Charu's life forever. Incidentally, this is also the essay that the character Amal reads to Manda and Charu, which will help him (and the film's audience) distinguish between the two female figures in Amal's frame of mind, as well as the ones within the cinematic frame.

In his essay, Chatterjee argues for a 'new woman' who would be modern in a traditional way. She would embody the resolution of the conflict between tradition and modernity by finding her place in a re-invented patriarchy¹. She would thus learn to be the 'new' traditional woman. As Simone de Beauvoir puts it, 'representation of the world...is the

¹Both in Tagore's novella *Nashtanir*, on which Ray based his film, as well as in Ray's cinematic text, there are an indulgent husband and an obliging brother-in-law who will encourage Charu to read, write and even publish, making her body of work an object of gaze.

work of men (which portray it) from their own point of view' (1984: 175) and one can almost say with Beauvoir, that of women as well. Under Ray's aegis, however, Charulata is no longer willing to be confined within the strictures of fiction nor of dominant patriarchal mores for women, which has led her image to be forever frozen into a dichotomous one: a virgin/whore. In Suranjan Ganguly's (2000: 64) words,

Charu must negotiate with modernity within a traditional setup. This inhibits her from causing a rupture, by simply rejecting the system or dismantling it. Ray is thus careful not to turn her into a modern day feminist, but defines her more as an unconscious one who cannot quite comprehend what is driving her forward but who dares social convention through her desires and relationships. Thus, while there is no conscious formulation on her part of concepts such as 'freedom', 'identity', 'rebellion', 'infidelity', or 'a woman's space', there is a working out of all these issues in her life.

Charulata then is about a journey of self-discovery, in which the woman forges an identity and discovers herself even if she is hedged in by a man's world. This runs contrary to the film industry's insistence of the depiction of women as sex objects or victims which according to Rosen (1973: 9) speaks of patriarchal anxieties regarding a loss of male socio-economic power. Thus, we see Ray's subversive stance working out through his particular portrayal of Charu. 'Emancipation is possible,' Betty Friedan states, 'if cultural images are reshaped and women educated to reach maturity, identity, completeness of self without conflict with sexual fulfilment' (1968: 318). Ganguly further reiterates, 'From within the *andarmahal* [inner quarters where the women lived; also called *zenana*] she can

sense the changes taking place in the world outside - changes that subtly affect her. Ray seeks to link her story of a woman's awakening to the larger historical transformations that are remoulding social and political issues' (2000: 61). In her efforts to define herself as a woman, or more importantly as a *nabina* [new woman], we see reflected the aspirations of all Indian women making the difficult transition from the nineteenth to the twentieth century.

The film opens with a shot of a pair of hands busily embroidering a handkerchief while the title credits roll by. By presenting the exposition scene as such, Ray at once makes us understand that the focus of the film is Charulata. It is significant that while Tagore's story was titled *Nastanir* [The Broken Nest], Ray chooses to name his film *Charulata* - completely shifting the focus of his study to the woman, his heroine, and how he sees her.

The exposition sequence is rather a long one. It is composed of 29 shots and lasts seven and a half minutes, mostly wordless (only once broken by Charu calling out to the old servant Brojo to take tea to the master), in which Ray presents not only Charulata's boredom but also evokes a particular day in her life. After throwing to the ground the embroidered handkerchief that has been occupying her attention for so long, Charu selects a book to read and randomly starts turning the pages. Yet, unable to control her restlessness, she moves to the drawing room to select another book. In this one act, we become aware of Charu's literacy.

The camera follows along as she walks slowly towards the window reading Bankim's *Kapalkundala*. Nevertheless, street sounds distract her as she gives up reading and instead fetches her lorgnette to peer through the slats of the window blind. Through the lorgnette,

she first observes a street performer with two monkeys, followed by a palanquin with the chanting bearers, then the passage of a heavysset man with oily hair in a *dhoti* carrying a furred umbrella on his shoulder and a pot of sweets dangling from his other hand. Ray observes, 'it was important to stress this playful aspect of Charu because this is where she is farthest from her husband and closest to the youthful, exuberant Amal' (Robinson 2004:166).

Once the heavysset man leaves her area of vision, she resumes her listless walking around the house. As she wanders around the drawing room, we see Charu dwarfed by the heavy ornate Victorian furniture surrounding her. We seem to understand that she lives in relative luxury and comfort, but Ray's frames belie the rosy picture the audience has built in its mind. Instead, we realise that Charu lives in a genteel opulent prison of her husband's and society's devising. This is the way women, especially educated women, were forced to live their lives in nineteenth century Bengal as well as elsewhere in India. The atmosphere that emerges from this sequence is rich in paradox: loneliness and emptiness amidst an apparent life of comfort and elegance. There is also a hint that perhaps all of Charu's afternoons are spent like this, and that her life is a long routine full of endless repetitions without any respite. As Ray's camera tracks her movements, we also learn that Charu is someone who likes to be on the move. It also highlights that she is immensely curious about the world and that she fails to be contained within her giant contraption of a bed, even as it fails to contain her sexually and maternally (we later come to learn that she is childless, possibly because of her distance from her husband physically as well as emotionally).

As Charu distractedly sits to play the piano, she suddenly becomes aware of her

husband. Bhupati's approach is captured by Ray in a long shot along the extensive upper floor balcony, initially walking towards the camera immersed in his thoughts, only to then disappear into a room from which he re-emerges reading a heavy tome. He is not aware of his wife, who is standing just a couple of feet away from him. As he walks away, Charu observes him with her lorgnette, thus highlighting her isolation but also a distance from not only her husband but the world at large.

Bhupati (whom we come to know through the extremely dry editorial which he will read later in the night) is dedicated, single minded and sincere; a man who believes in integrity, in hard work and honesty but who dislikes Bengali writers, so much admired by his wife. While Bhupati's mind is excited by political philosophers of Europe and especially England, his wife with her strong literary bent of mind is drawn towards the literary luminaries of Bengal and the Bengali language, in which she finds expression. As John Hood notes shrewdly in his book *Beyond the World of Apu*, 'Charulata's malaise is much more complex than mere boredom. She is not only intelligent but unusual among women of her time in that she is educated. Ironically it is education that sets her off from Bhupati' (Hood 2007: 257). While Bhupati has his newspaper *Sentinel* and his close circle of intellectual friends to keep him company, Charulata is alone with no outlet for her creativity, which simmers until Amal arrives on the scene. Indeed, in Amal she will find an outlet both for her creative activity as well as for the powerful emotions which she has had to control almost all her life with her husband.

While Bhupati is not an ideal husband, he is certainly a good one, especially by nineteenth century standards: he has no vices except for his obsession with his newspaper,

he keeps his wife in material comfort and luxury, and apart from his working hours, he is accessible to his wife. Until now, Ray's representation of Charu responds to what Mulvey defines as 'the image of woman in patriarchal representation which refers more readily to its connotation within the male unconscious' (1975: 8). Ray shows us one such interaction between husband and wife. Bhupati is at dinner, while Charu sits by, fanning her husband and serving him. She is told that Umapada, Charu's elder brother, is seeking employment with Bhupati as he has proved a failure at practicing law in his native village. Charu at once asks him, 'Will *dada* [elder brother] be able to work?' but Bhupati quickly comes to his brother-in-law's defence by stating that unless one is given a particular responsibility, he cannot prove his mettle. At the end of the film, when Bhupati will have encountered his brother-in-law's treachery and will feel that he cannot trust any other human being again, we as the audience are made aware of two things. Firstly, Bhupati, who apparently thinks of himself as a man of the world and of action, is essentially naïve and it is a woman who, even though fettered within the precincts of her golden cage, lets out an instinctive cry of warning. And secondly, while the idealistic Bhupati is defensive about his brother-in-law, he forgets that all of his ideals of responsibility and action apply to his wife as well, and we therefore cannot lay the entire blame at Charu's feet if she transgresses later.

Charu is a dutiful and obedient wife who acquiesces with everything that her husband has to say. Even when Bhupati announces that one day he will explain to her all the nitty-gritties of politics, she does not question his decision and she only nods her head in agreement. It is interesting to note how in the nineteenth century it was believed that politics

was a man's business, while the woman's domain was at home raising children and fulfilling familial obligations. In spite of this, Bhupati's suggestion on Charu learning about politics is perhaps Ray's ploy to emphasise Bhupati's kindly and generous nature, as well as the fact that he is also a victim of the dominant patriarchal discourse of the nineteenth century, in which he is willing to grant his wife all sorts of comforts but fails to comprehend her inner life.²

Even though Charu does not speak against the master, we know that she is a woman who very zealously guards her privacy and ironically it is her boredom that inspires her thinking, feeling and later creative forms of expression. Perhaps, boredom makes her dream and imagine a life different from the one that she leads, largely encouraged by the copious amounts of books she reads. It is also her solitude which provides her with the freedom to live her life outside a male dominated one, in which she can be at one with herself and discover her own private space. She prefers a modern writer like Bankim, who with his progressive and reform-minded thinking envisaged literary heroines who were strong, book-reading women who aspired to break free from their patriarchal shackles but often with tragic results. The emancipation of women along with widow remarriage, political reform, western liberalism and love outside marriage are among the many ideas which she encounters in her reading. It is Ray's suggestion, that perhaps it is Charu's reading that gives her the courage to imagine a different existence. She identifies with Bankim's women to the extent that she wishes to become one of them, to live

² Another example of this is when he grandly announces that he will ask Umapada, Charu's brother, to bring along his wife so that Charu will have company.

out their forbidden dreams and rebellions—as in her act of falling in love with her brother-in-law.

Ray's shift from the public to a private space violates the expectations of much of not only Indian mainstream cinema audiences but also to a large extent Bengali commercial cinema audiences. These are used to particular stereotypical representations of woman on celluloid in which a woman's self is determined in terms of how she caters to men both within the framework of the cinematic text and male fantasies amongst the male members of the audience. McCabe notes, 'Meaning, far from being imposed from the outside onto the film, was produced in and through the internal operations of the text itself...dominant filmmaking practices transmitted the ideological codes of patriarchy to construct an image of woman as somehow fixed' (2004: 17). Ray's *Charulata* is perhaps the first sustained study in Indian cinema that delves into a woman's consciousness which seeks to define itself in terms other than those prescribed by her society.

Charu's growth to a certain extent is highlighted by the contrasting figure of Manda, Charu's coarse and uneducated sister-in-law. The subsequent shot reveals Charu engaged in a mindless card game of *gadha petapeti* with Manda. There is a hint that now Charu's afternoons pass engaged in such monotonous activity, even though she is no longer shown during her restless journey through the house. However, Manda's arrival offers no respite to Charu because as John Hood has stated, her malaise lies in her simmering creativity finding no outlet. Just as it seems that *Charulata* will forever be doomed to finding pleasure and entertainment amidst these mindless games with Manda, a *kaalbaishakhi* [norwester] starts almost on cue and with it, the young and attractive Amal

(Bhupati's cousin) blusters his way into the house with lines from Bankim's latest novel on his lips.

It is Amal who in the meantime (until she finds her calling) provides Charu with just the outlet she needs. Right up to this moment we cannot detect the different kind of feelings that *Charulata* will come to harbour for him later in the course of the film. He readily adapts to the role of the much-pampered younger brother-in-law in whom Charu indulges by mending his torn kurtas and by making him *pan*. Yet, Charu has already identified in him a partner with whom she may embark on a literary endeavour. Indeed, we can notice how the first words with which he greets his *bouthan* [sister-in-law] are, 'Have you read (Bankim's) *Anandamath*?', as we had already noticed earlier in the exposition shots that Charu too prefers reading his novels. It is thus very clear that they are kindred spirits as far as taste in literature is concerned. As with Charu, he also loves to sing, and for this reason one of the scenes is constructed around his singing of '*ami chini go chini*'.³ This recalls an earlier scene where Charu converts Bankim's name into a musical motif while looking for books to read.

Amal comes across as witty and playful—a young university graduate who is out to have a good time until he finds himself something substantial to do, or marries a rich girl arranged by his relatives. Until then, he finds it easy to accept Bhupati's request to look after his wife's reading and to encourage her to write. As he is informed by Bhupati, Charu writes beautifully and this is particularly evinced by the letters which she had written to Bhupati while he was away in Monghyr.

³ This song was written and addressed to the Argentine poet Victoria Ocampo who was an admirer and close friend of Tagore.

As Amal acts in line with what he had told Bhupati (he had come to Bhupati's house to relax after his exams and engage in literary activities like writing), he starts a discussion with Charu. Here, we come to know that Amal's taste reflects his callow nature, especially when asking Charu who her favourite author is. In replying to this question, Charu thinks for a moment before pronouncing the name of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, a luminary of Bengali literature. Amal, whose tastes seemed to have moved beyond himself, announces that he prefers the writing of Manmatha Dutta to Bankim, whom Amal perhaps finds more thought-provoking than Bankim. This can also perhaps be read as Amal's bid to distinguish himself from other readers of Bankim. When Charu informs him that she does not like Manmatha Dutta's writing, Amal acts shocked and tells her that it is due to her lack of taste in literature. Even after listening to such unkind words from her beloved *thakurpo* [younger brother-in-law], Charu does not change her mind showing that she is thick-skinned; a strong and independent minded individual who is capable of thinking critically about whom and what she reads.

Manda is a silent spectator in this kind of discussions for she knows no joy of words or the complexities of language. The act of writing therefore remains a profound mystery to her. Left out of the word games between Amal and Charu, she asserts herself through her earthy sensuality. Amal is drawn towards Manda by the sheer condition of her 'wordlessness' as Suranjan Ganguly (2000: 76) defines it, for she proves to be an ineffectual intellectual threat to Amal and instead comes to stand for a sexual diversion.

The scenes in the garden are light and have an 'airy quality', as Ben Nyce (1988: 95) writes. Here, Charu is able to play out her feelings and desires as opposed to the house,

which seem to confine and trap her very being into nothingness. It is here that Charu first feels the stirrings of desire for Amal while he writes. She wants to extend her suzerainty over this activity they share by first making a notebook for him and then trying to elicit the promise that anything he will write in it will be a secret he will not be able to share with the outside world. Through this, Charu seems to be expecting some kind of commitment from Amal's end too. As Charu trains the lorgnette on Amal we become aware of a different kind of discourse at work: the act of gaze is not only reversed but directed at the male himself. Indeed, it is surprising that it is the woman who takes the initiative and not the man. By desiring her own brother-in-law, she indulges in the most forbidden of taboos—incest—and initiates a relationship that could plunge a respectable Bengali bourgeois family into scandal. Besides, this one act also shows that she is no longer willing to be the compliant wife of Bhupati who desires nothing but her husband's happiness and welfare. It is interesting to note that Ray, as early as 1964 when he made *Charulata*, highlights the issue of voyeurism and more evidently a voyeurism which is absent from Indian cinema at large. While a man's gaze in a patriarchal society represents the sexual objectification of a woman and appeasement of his libidinal urges, Charu's gaze takes a different turn. As Mulvey argues, 'unchallenged, mainstream film coded the erotic into the language of the dominant patriarchal order' (1975: 8). Ray's text thus laid open signs of 'ideological and formal contestation in relation to dominant film representations of women' (McCabe 2004: 18).

In a patriarchal world, women are always at risk of the predatory male gaze. A subversive reading could be that perhaps men feared a greater risk to their hearth and home

in that the woman could also be tempted to reciprocate the gaze. Claire Johnston notes,

in spite of the enormous emphasis placed on women as spectacle in the cinema, woman as woman is largely absent...there is a far greater differentiation of men's roles than of women's in the history of the cinema (which) relates to sexist ideology itself, and the basic opposition which places man inside history, and woman as ahistoric and eternal (2000: 23).

Thus seclusion from the world—in the *andarmahal*, is the best solution as deemed by the *bhadralok* society [cultured and refined section of the Bengali society]. Shielded from the gaze, she could neither be desired nor desire. Therefore, when she gazes at Bhupati and then Amal, the men submit to her gaze without ever suspecting that they are being spied upon, since she poses no threat to them as a housewife. Just as men know the ethical dimensions of the gaze, she too must know what constitutes the proper gaze. They can trust her to gaze but behave with discretion and within the limits that they have set her. Charu's gaze sets in motion two things: firstly, a serious violation of propriety in looking at the world boldly, openly and inquiringly, something deemed prohibitive by her society; and secondly, by impinging on a male prerogative, that of possessing the world through the gaze as Ganguly (2000: 67) would argue.

Thus, in a way, in Ray's cinema Charu's gaze seems to somehow subvert the norms of patriarchal society—it is roving, pleasure-seeking and fastening on objects that have no place in her daily life leading to distraction and idle curiosity and finally to illicit desire. It is also a voyeuristic gaze directed at men, which poses a challenge to their world. Charu, who derives a deep sensual pleasure in simply gazing at the world, discovers quite by chance

that the curious outward glance can also result in being the revealing inward glance. When she realises that her simple innocent gazing at Amal is sexual, she is shocked. Myriads of emotions flit across her face as she understands what that gaze reveals to her: herself. In this way, this act of seeing becomes inextricably linked with that of a woman's self-discovery as she finds herself—not only in the act of literary creativity but also that of a woman being able to desire opening her somewhat loveless and claustrophobic life. As Ben Nyce points out, 'Charulata is nothing if not a drama of awareness' (1988: 95). The erotics of gazing is subsumed within the inward gaze at her own self and becomes part of Charu's growth towards self-knowledge. It is thus transformed into an introspective gaze. And as a result, it is successful in showing how in a woman the erotic gaze can also initiate a process of rational self-enquiry and self-reflection leading to her growth. Again, as in other women centric films by Ray we see that it is the man who aids, albeit unknowingly, the woman in discovering herself.

While Ray puts this in frames, he is breaking new grounds in Indian as well as World Cinema, by instilling such a thought within the male members of the audience who are more accustomed to indulging in sexual fantasies via the celluloid. Charulata is held up to our view so that we may gauge her thoughts and feelings through her expressive body language. Already in the 1870s, Ray seems to tell the world at large that this kind of seeing was beginning to take shape and more and more women would engage in it in an attempt to end male hegemony. Charulata points out a new way of looking at and conceiving the world. To quote Johnston, 'it is only the discourse of the woman and her desire for transgression which provides the principle of

coherence and generates knowledge' (Johnston 2000: 145) and it is in women that Ray locates the possibility of truth in the film text.

Amal's act of writing in a way acts like a catalyst for it instils in Charulata the desire to be created anew and indulge in a life that could only be possible in fiction, something which she is unusually fond of and a way out of her dreary life. When Charu watches Amal write, she aspires to be written into his life, hence the decorated notebook which she gifts him along with the quill and the ink bottle. And Amal scribbles away, remaining the object of Charu's fascinated gaze. His words pour into the notebook – a pouring that Ganguly (2000: 78) describes as 'seductive and sexual'. When Amal asks Charu to write about her childhood, she can only perceive it as his interest in her fascinated as she is by him. Naturally she is then piqued when she finds out that Amal had been acting on Bhupati's order to make Charu's talent in writing come out. For Amal, Charu's writing is 'an acceptable female diversion' (Ganguly 2000: 78) to be encouraged and definitely not to be taken seriously. However, it is this very act along with Amal's announcement about sending his writing to be published and the subsequent act of Amal rubbing salt into Charu's wounds, as well as his demand to her to treat him not as a family member but as a published author, which sets things rolling and makes Charu start writing. Thus, a literary rivalry of sorts begins in which the woman will prove to be superior.

As Charu begins writing, we see that words do not burgeon forth like they do for Amal. Instead, Charu takes time thinking, something that is very powerfully displayed through Ray's camera as it gazes introspectively at her. It is thus through 'transgression and desire in a search for an

independent existence beyond and outside the discourse of the male' that Charulata will come to determine her own identity (Johnston 2000: 142). Initially, she scribbles 'The call of the Cuckoo' to then scratch it out and write, 'The Cuckoo's Lament'. Before long, she has crumpled up this page too and rejected all attempts at such romanticized subjects, unlike her mentor Amal. Instead, she becomes one with herself delving into images from her childhood that flit across her mind's eye, as they do in front of our eyes with the help of Ray's camera. Sifting through such images of the past as the river, the colourful sails of country boats on the river, village fairs, the merry go round, fireworks, *bahurupis* [quick-change artists across India who physically metamorphose into many characters] and an old woman spinning at the wheel, she starts writing this all down on paper. She has finally found her subject and her own language, moving away from the shadow of her tutor as well as the male condescending stance. She writes 'My Village' on the page—a choice that further distances herself from Amal and begins to hint at realism. Charu has now begun to come into her own.

Even though Amal had suggested the topic to her, it is not until she will publish her article in the prestigious literary journal *The Philanthrope* that she will be considered to have come into her own by the men who are too oblivious to the upheavals in a woman's inner world. She has managed to carve out a place for herself in the heavily male coded territory of literary activity. She has beaten both the *logos*-obsessed men in her life (Amal and Bhupati) at their own game. It is only then that they begin to see her truly for what she is.

On a simplistic reading, it might seem that Charu bent on retaliation publishes her work only to spite Amal. To draw his attention, she taps Amal with the rolled-up journal rather

hard at the back of his head to show her article in *The Philanthrope*, a journal which does not publish new writers as Amal had earlier revealed both to Manda and the audience. The fact that Charu has managed to get her essay published in it proves that she is a far better writer than Amal, who can only stare at Charu in disbelief. Later, she decides to get rid of the *pan* that Manda had made Amal and instead, she starts making him one with her own hands. She also gifts him a pair of slippers made by her. She begins bringing him to her again. And yet, when Amal praises her writing and encourages her to continue writing, it is then that she breaks down and claims that she will not write ever again. It is clear that she indulges in the act of writing only to prove to Amal that she is better than the sensual Manda, whom Amal had earlier declared as a *prachina* [traditional woman]. Charu can hold a conversation on literature or other topics and is a *nabina* in her own right. In discovering her skill, which she can use to define and strengthen herself, she is ready to sacrifice it if it is Amal's desire that she abandons writing. In other words, she only wants his love. She does not want to hide behind words or in word games any longer and is bold enough to display it.

However, before anything can happen between her and Amal, as with her literary heroines, Amal escapes at night scared of betraying his brother's trust a second time—the first time being Bhupati betrayed by Umapada, his brother-in-law. It is a brutal and nasty termination of their relationship when seen from her point of view. Yet, she does not break down in the face of this and instead goes to the seaside with her husband who needs to recuperate from the shock. Here, it is Charu who suggests that they begin afresh by starting another newspaper in place of *The Sentinel*, ruined because of Umapada. She even

suggests that it be a bilingual one—while Bhupati would look after the political section in English she would take charge of the literary section in Bengali. Bhupati is at once struck by the idea but tells Charu it is brilliant that she has thought of this and that they must return to Calcutta immediately to begin the work.

But, even as Charu thinks she has recovered, Amal's unread letter in her hand diminishes her ability to keep her emotions in check. She breaks down while unknowingly being spied on by Bhupati, who comes to know of his wife's love for Amal. Devastated, he leaves the house and only comes back when Charu, who is sufficiently recovered, thrusts her hand forward to welcome him into her part of the house when he hesitates. It is again the woman who is trying to engineer a new growth when the so-called proven structures have failed. Charu's forbidden love may have floundered but she has managed to bring it out of the pages of a book and transcribe it right into life.

Of all the three characters, it is Charu who emerges the strongest. In many respects, her life battles have armed her with strength, resilience, and knowledge. She stands as another example in Ray's world of the inner strength of women. The character of Charu will find further fine-tuning in the character Bimala in *Ghare Baire*, directed by Ray in 1984. One can almost say with Haskell that women in Ray's films 'reflected, perpetuated and in some respects offered innovations of the roles of women in society' (1987: 12). Ray's text then echoes what Gledhill believes, 'in this way traditions are broken and remade (and) critical activity itself participates in social negotiation of meaning, definition and identity' (1988: 74).

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About the author

Devapriya Sanyal has worked on Satyajit Ray's films for her PhD. She is the author of *From Text to Screen: Issues and Images in Schindler's List* (Germany: Lap Lambert Academic Publishing, 2009) and *Through the Eyes of a Cinematographer: The Biography of Soumendu Roy*, Harper Collins, 2017. Her interests include watching world cinema, Bollywood and Bengali cinema. She loves reading and has a lively interest in photography, travelling, sketching and writing.