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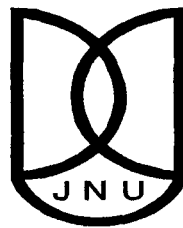
NAXALBARI, EVENT AND THE PERFORMANCE OF A REVOLUTION

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for award of the degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

by

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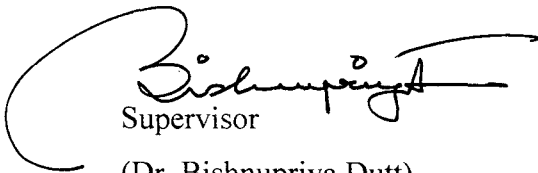
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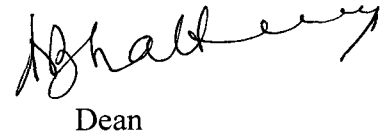
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Certificate


This dissertation titled "From Subjective Representation to Representation of the Subject: Naxalbari, Event and the Performance of Revolution" submitted by Pujya Ghosh, Theatre and Performance Studies, School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy, is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full, for any other degree, diploma of any university or institution.

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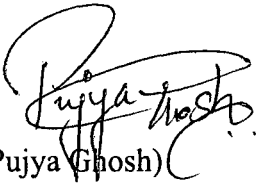
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This thesis titled “From Subjective Representation to Representation of the Subject: Naxalbari, Event and the Performance of a Revolution” submitted by me for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy, is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full, for any other degree, diploma to any university or institution.



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*...to all those who had fought and are
still fighting for their lives, livelihood
and dignity.*

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Acknowledgement

I would like to thank...

Dr. Bishnupriya Dutt, my supervisor, for all her support and guidance throughout my research. If it hadn't been for her expert help, comments, patience and motivation this work would not have been possible.

Dr. Soumyabrata Chowdhury, for instilling the confidence in me that I could deal with philosophical ideas like that of the 'event' and for helping me out in formulating my research queries and my work at every possible level, for being a teacher and a friend.

Samik Bandhopadhyay, for the endless number of times, when we discussed Bengali theatre of the 1960s and '70s, the information which I thoroughly used in my work, for setting up interviews with eminent theatre personalities, academics and participants of the Naxalbari Movement.

Dr. H.S Shivaprakash and Dr. Urmimala Sarkar, for being excellent teachers, for motivating me to pursue my research interest, and for helping me with my work whenever I needed them.

Dr. Silvija Jestrovic, for helping me formulate my research work, for letting me use her unpublished manuscript, and for all the other ways in which she has contributed to my work.

Mr. Vidyarthi, Mr. Diwan Ram, Harsh, Satish, Vinayak, and everyone else in the School of Arts and Aesthetics who have extensively helped me with all my official work for the last two years.

The Central Library, JNU, New Delhi; Library, Centre of Studies in Social Sciences, Kolkata; The Little Magazine Library, Kolkata; The National Library, Kolkata; Heepesh Ranjan Memorial Archive, Centre of Studies in Social Sciences, Kolkata; Natya Shodh Sangsthan, Kolkata.

Sumanta Banerjee, for giving his invaluable time to me for conducting his interview, and for sharing his thoughts over my work and for contributing in the formulations of some of the key arguments of my work.

Also all my other respondents for sparing their time for me to interview them, for sharing their experiences and thoughts, for letting me into their lives and having the confidence in me that I would do justice to their stories. This work would not have been possible without their help.

Amrita, for being “the presence in absence”, for being my friend, for loving me this unconditionally and for being there by my side no matter what.

Anindita, for all the company she kept at night, for lifting my spirits, for helping me with my work, for participating in my insane planning, for being partners in crime, for being there and always making me laugh.

Alekhya, for just being him and for being there exactly the way he has been for all these years. A lifetime of thanking would fall short of all that he has done for me and every step that I took towards academics.

Anubhav, for showing me how to dream, for sharing his passion with me and for being there to hold me every time I felt shaky and nervous.

Soumick, for introducing me to the works of Alain Badiou and other philosophical ideas.

Mekhola, for being my friend, confidante and the world's best roommate and for making me feel so wonderfully at home in that small, but pretty room we share.

Ban, Ishan, Zaheer, Raj, Rajdeep, Anirban, Parijat, Gourab, Pratush, Moonis, and all my other friends who have made this dissertation writing less boring and stressful and for making life in JNU worthwhile.

Banojyostna, Ritupan, Priya Ranjan, Rona, Gogol, Priya, Amrita, and all the other comrades with whom I have worked, for igniting and fostering my revolutionary fervor.

Souvik (pinks), for being the complete crazy friend that he is, for being the ultimate stress buster and for bringing a smile on my face in more than one ways!

Sambaran, for creating the rupture in my being, for being there and supporting me in every step of my work, for loving me and never letting me go and for telling me at all times that I would be able to do this.

My parents and sister, for being my support, and for making me who I am. Though at times they wish I had turned out differently, I am sure they are very proud of me now.

Pushan, my nephew, for calling me pujiiii every time I'd feel upset, and for being my play buddy, pure diversion, and entertainment.

List of Abbreviations

A.I.C.C.C.R: All India Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries

CPI (M-L): Communist Party of India (Marxist- Leninist)

CPI (M): Communist Party of India (Marxist)

Introduction

“All resistance is a rupture with what is. And every rupture begins, for those engaged in it, through a rupture with oneself.”

— Alain Badiou (Metapolitics)

In my research I would attempt to look at the “event” of the Naxalbari Movement (1967-72) and the “event” of theatre, within the paradigm of “performance” and through it address the questions of representation and the subject. The philosophical concept of ‘event’ has a genealogy of its own. We would not go into the details of it here and for this work we would restrict ourselves to the way Alain Badiou defines ‘event’. Here in this work the logic of theatre is not determined by the being of drama but rather follows an idea of performance which finds its most significant articulation in its disappearance. The use of theatre here is as a paradigm for philosophy understood as act or action. In this paradigm there is nothing illusory or false about theatre but rather it becomes a model for philosophy as something that happens in the manner of an act or action. If one believes that philosophy has to do with actions of agents then one finds herself in the realm of drama. For Badiou philosophical theatricality is the essence of philosophy, it is an act.¹

Badiou’s is a philosophy of both decision and that of wager, philosophy based on the militant and performative conception of “subjectification” which constitutes a very important part of this work. According to Badiou a void cannot be constructed on its own but is rather the foundation of all possible construction. It is the initial point because there is no way to encounter this void in a situation because

¹ Puchner, Martin, (2009) *The Theatre of Alain Badiou*, Theatre Research International, Vol. 34, No. 3, pp 256-266.

everything is counted as one. The void is rather the base for any possible count and hence from here emerges presentation. An event takes place 'on the edge of the void' in close proximity with nothing². An event provides a point of departure for subjective integrity. In context to French Revolution as event, Badiou argues that revolution is infinitely multiple sequences of facts and a promise for the future and within this argument; I would like to posit the Naxalbari Movement. Along with the idea of event, the other primary concept is that of the subject. Therefore the main questions in this research are as follows:

- How the event of Naxalbari is related to the event of theatre at that time?
- How performance percolates into the domain of politics and culture?
- What are the possibilities and impossibilities of representing an event?
- Is history writing possible when one is the subject of an event?
- If event materially transforms subjecthood then what remains of a subject and is it ever possible to represent such a subject.

The issues that I would raise in the first two chapters are that of performance and writing, concerning the ideas of representation which would culminate to the final chapter which deals with the subject of the movement. A discussion on event without the evental subject is not a complete one and as mentioned in the title the question of subjectivity and the consequent representation is also of immense importance to me. Badiou argues that various revolutionary groups are those who try to compete in establishing a viable institutional fidelity to the event. Event is the substanceless, perfectly transient fragment of pure chance which allows for the assertion of a truth to come.³ An event marks "the point where a thought subtracts itself from the state, inscribing this subtraction in being"⁴, it exists to the

² Badiou, Alain, (2005), *Being and Event*, Continuum, London.

³ Hallward, Peter, *Generic Sovereignty: the Philosophy of Alain Badiou*, Angelaki: Journal of Theoretical Humanities, 3:3, 1998, Cartax Publishing Ltd.

⁴ Ibid

degree that it is proclaimed to exist because it leaves no trace and it only belongs to itself, that it is 'self founding'. Hence the event has no objectivity. The state is very literally the principle of an ordered objectivity: the violent imposition of order is itself an intrinsic feature of objectivity. Therefore Badiou's ontology is such which moves beyond the state with its representation and toward a situation of pure presentation.⁵ His is an ontology which precisely emphasizes on that which cannot be included in the ontology and which exceeds the very nature of objectivity. Therefore Badiou argues that the only way to understand the existence of thought is to grasp how the thought might begin the rupture in the law of being. An event provides the point of departure for a nonobjective coherence, a specifically subjective integrity. What Badiou calls the subject is that which in its declared fidelity to an event maintains the articulation of a wholly "generic" truth, the truth of its situation beyond the supervision of the state. The truth emerges as an outcome of the processes of living labor.⁶ The truth is maintained by the subjective fidelity to the event from where it comes into being. These are the concerns within the idea of event which I would inquire through the one of the most important historical events of post colonial India which marks the watershed point of Indian politics post independence- the Naxalbari Movement. It is also important to research on the Naxalbari Movement from this point of departure because there has been no such work that has been done till date. Since the term Naxal and Naxalbari Movement is constantly evoked in our political discourse today, it is important to know why it has sustained for this long, and the answer to which probably cannot be only found in the ideological or historical progression of the movement then to now but also and maybe rather in the eventual quality that the Naxalbari Movement emanates and in the consequent effects of the event. We shall elaborate on the necessity of this research on the movement in the next section.

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid

Historical Background

The Naxalbari movement was inspired by a revolt in the northern part of West Bengal, India and in March- April, 1967; tribal workers who were mainly landless laborers forcibly took land on tea plantations in the Naxalbari area under the leadership of the local members of the Communist Party of India Marxist [C.P.I (M)]. Naxalbari is a police station of 206.7 sq kms in areas of the Siliguri subdivision of Darjeeling district which lies in the northern part of West Bengal known as North Bengal. Naxalbari is situated in the slender neck which is India's only vital land corridor that connects Bhutan, Sikkim and the country's north east zone. It has two international borders, on the west is Nepal at a distance of 4 miles and on the east is Bangladesh at a distance of 16miles. China occupied Tibet is only 60 miles away on the northern side. The peasants of this region mainly comprise tribal communities—Santhals, Oraons and Rajbanshis and were heavily exploited by the jotedars under the 'adhiar' system.⁷ This movement, as various commentators pointed out, was not a sudden outburst but the result of long-standing political agitations in the region. Communists of Bengal had organized cadres in the region from the 1930s onwards, and could now draw on the experience of various mass struggles, most prominently the Tebhaga movement⁸. While by Naxalbari uprising we refer to the particular peasant movement which took place in May 1967 in the Naxalbari area, the term 'Naxalbari/Naxalite Movement' is used in a more general sense to mean not only the Naxalbari uprising but also and rather

⁷ The historical background of Naxalbari Movement is collected from the following works: Banerjee, Sumanta, (1980), *In the Wake of Naxalbari: A History of the Naxalite Movement in India*, Subarnarekha, Calcutta; Damas, Marius, (1991), *Approaching Naxalbari*, Radical Impression, Calcutta; Sen, Samar, Debebrata Panda and Ashish Lahiri ed., (1978), *Naxalbari and After: A Frontier Anthology. A Moving Human Document of a Turbulent Decade*, Kathashilpa, Calcutta; Basu, Pradip, (2000), *Towards Naxalbari, 1953-1967: an Account of Inner Party Ideological Struggle*, Progressive Publishers, Calcutta; Dasgupta, Biplab, *The Naxalite Movement: An Epilogue*, Social Scientist, Vol. 6, No. 12 (Jul., 1978), pp. 3-24; *The Guerrillas of Calcutta*, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 5, No. 49 (Dec. 5, 1970), pp. 1953-1954, *Urban Guerrillas in Calcutta*, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 6, No. 28 (Jul. 10, 1971), pp. 1379-1382.

⁸ Ibid

more emphatically the later developments. After the 'Naxalbari uprising', the Maoists all over India made attempts to launch similar militant mass movements particularly of armed peasants which were coordinated by the A.I.C.C.C.R. In 1969, the C.P.I. (M.L) was formed which however pursued the line of the extreme left such as—individual annihilation of jotedars, smashing of statues of bourgeois democratic and nationalist leaders, setting fire to educational institutions, killing of police personnel and snatching of guns, violent activities by armed squads of peasants as well as of urban youth and students, total boycott of elections, of mass movements and mass organization, etc. It was around 42 years ago, in May 1967, that a minor clash between a police force and a group of armed peasants took place in a not so known corner of West Bengal. But it unleashed a force of events which escalated over the years into a political movement that derived its name from that area, and brought about far-reaching changes in India's socio- cultural scene.⁹ In India today, through the political speeches and publications, the Naxalbari movement has become a symbol of violent politics, disorder, party rivalry, and provokes the debate for the need of a strong state, and is evoked by ruling as well as opposition parties to either defend or denounce the 'law and order situation' in the state. For the Naxalites the 1970s was a 'decade of liberation'; for the Indian state it was a 'decade of repression'.¹⁰

The Naxalbari Movement has been studied mainly from three different but interrelated aspects: first, the socio-economic structures and processes providing its background, what in traditional historiography would have been called a study of its 'causes'; second, the power structures and political relationships which comprised its immediate political context; and third, the ideological-theoretical component of the movement. The three aspects put together would provide an understanding of how the

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Banerjee, Sumanta, (1980), *In the Wake of Naxalbari: A History of the Naxalite Movement in India*, Subarnarekha, Calcutta.

Naxalbari Uprising, an otherwise small and local peasant movement, assumed such an extraordinary significance. A survey of the existing literature on the Naxalbari Movement indicates that it has been mainly concerned with the above aspects. The literature includes a variety of works ranging from journalistic accounts, academic analyses, surveys by government officials, study of tribal participation, collection of reports, documents and debates, participant narratives, study of electoral politics, regional studies, critique by political rivals, etc. Certainly, several of these works have also elaborated upon ideological theoretical questions and have attempted an intellectual history of the development of Maoism. Partha Chatterjee while describing the political culture of Calcutta in the late sixties to mid seventies argues that from street graffiti to most highbrow literary periodical, the rhetoric of political radicalism was present everywhere—in literature, theatre, cinema, even those highly commodified forms of cultural production such as the pulp novel or the commercial Jatra.¹¹ He further adds that “while the rest of the country watched with surprise and the overt political turmoil in Calcutta and West Bengal between 1965 and 1975... The words poured out in teashops, coffee-houses, students’ common rooms, office canteens, political study-circles, journal offices and theatre rehearsal rooms”.¹² After more than four decades, the conjectures which marked the path from Naxalbari to the formation of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist), and to its subsequent collapse, are now a matter of political history. Partha Chatterjee recalled the specific forms of demonstrative violence—the frenzied slogan-shouting, the exaggerated iconoclasm, the anger, impatience, intolerance, the mindless drive to hit out at the most immediate targets. Thus the sheer absence of a strategy of organization which led to rapid collapse and liquidation of the movement—was born out of the state of ferment into middle class consciousness. By the mid-1960s, what has been left off are its imprints on the life of the city which is the memory of

¹¹ Chatterjee Partha, (1990), *The Political Culture of Calcutta*, in Sukanta Choudhuri ed., *Calcutta: the Living City, the Present and Future.*, Vol. 2, Oxford University Press.

¹² *Ibid*, pp 31

deserted streets, bomb blasts and running footsteps in the night; of combing operations and ‘encounters’, of torture and sheath in police stations and jails, and of the extinguishing of a few hundred young lives symbolizing the predictable death of a never-to-be-fulfilled dream.¹³ But it would have been interesting to inquire into the many routes through which a new tone of social criticism, coupled with a radical activism, became the most prominent rhetoric device in the language of the Calcutta middle class from the mid-1960s.

Event and Theatre

In his “Polemics”, Badiou attempts to show that the Cultural Revolution was the last significant political sequence that is still internal to the party state and fails as such. But he argues that May 1968 and its aftermath, the Polish movement and Chiapas are very different not only from their predecessor but also from each other. In the same way the Naxalbari Movement was also different but it was not the black flag as the shadow of the red flag because in agreement with Badiou, if it wasn’t for the stirring of the sixties and the seventies nothing yet would be thinkable outside the party state.¹⁴ According to Badiou, “an event is unpredictable, incalculable and beyond what it is and interrupts repetition which is given by knowledge. The event affirms the newness which begins the process of truth. Events shape our times.”¹⁵ He goes on to argue that the undecidability of an event and the suspension of its name are features of politics that are particularly active. For instance, for a Frenchman the events of May ’68 continue to comprise an “unattested anonymous promise”.¹⁶ The 1792 revolution or the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 remain partly undecided as to what they prescribe for philosophy. In the same way the Naxalbari movement is an event—created through numerous other events—a truth in the becoming

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Badiou, Alain, (2006), *Polemics*, trans. by Steve Corcoran, Verso, London and New York.

¹⁵ Badiou Alain, (August 2002), *On the Truth- Process*, An Open Lecture at the European Graduate School, Switzerland.

¹⁶ Ibid

and continues to comprise an anonymous promise to all who have a revolutionary fervor. Event is always an exceptional occurrence. And this event according to Badiou can happen through four things: love, politics, mathematics and art. Event is something that interrupts a moment the way it was and something new and strange enters a situation and radically alters it. Therefore an exceptional poem also bears traces of event as he showed in the work of Mallarme¹⁷. Politics as a route to event is of most importance to us and also for Badiou it is the most intuitive because for him a true history of true events is nothing more than the history of revolts and revolutions. 'Event' can also mean 'revolutionary event' but never a reaction which are not really events but rather attempts to dilute the revolutionary potential of true events.¹⁸ The Naxalbari Movement amounts to an event to the extent that it inaugurated a transformation in the realm of the political situation and in the realm of art in Bengal which was irreversible.

It might be argued that this event could not attain the triumph it proposed and the reasons for that would be discussed later in the chapters. For instance the general slogan of that time spoke of revolutionary struggle against old customs. Now this old custom meant different things for different movements. For the Chinese it meant civilizational and in old Marxist jargon it means superstructural.¹⁹ But as Badiou argues many groups gave this slogan a destructive and violent and even persecutory interpretation. He argues that "armed only with the slogan of 'the fight of the new against the old', many Red Guards gave in to a well known (negative) tendency in revolutions: iconoclasm, the persecution of people for futile motives, a sort of assumed barbarism..."²⁰ which eventually led the ordinary people to feel revulsion towards the extremist wing of the Red Guard. This is the same tendency that showed signs

¹⁷ Puchner, Martin, (2009) *The Theatre of Alain Badiou*, Theatre Research International, Vol. 34, No. 3, pp 256-266.

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Badiou, Alain, (2006), *Polemics*, trans. by Steve Corcoran, Verso, London and New York.

²⁰ Ibid. pp 307

during the Naxalbari Movement especially amongst the youth and the Red Guards that were created within the city of Calcutta. But what is important from the eventual logic is that the Naxalbari Movement subtracted itself from the situational arrangement of the time to emerge as a disjunction which couldn't be completely realized through the cognitive components available. For instance Lefebvre argues that there is a rupture which is produced in the superstructure of society when distortions and hidden contradictions appear through the events of the revolution.²¹ Events according to him are historical and they upset calculations, overturn strategies. Events upset the structures that made them possible. Badiou's quest has been to expose and make sense of the potential for profound, transformative innovation in any situation. Every such innovation can only begin with some sort of exceptional break with the status quo, an 'event'. Therefore revolution as event is nothing more than a rupture in the same plane of social order and structure within which it operates. Lefebvre goes on to argue that events are rooted in their situation, nothing is pure- events reactivate the movement of both thought and practice, a lot of disparate things are thrown up and under the impact of events people and ideas are revealed for what they are.²² Therefore events are real and find their fulfillment in the very moment they happen just like performance as understood as a transient moment.

In his analysis of the Chinese Revolution and especially the Cultural Revolution, Badiou brings in the idea of the cult of the personality in the context of Mao Zedong as the person having the greatest historical and popular legitimacy. He argues that the 'cult' functioned as a flag not for the party conservatives but for worker and student rebels. He talks about the formula of 'the absolute authority of Mao Zedong thought'²³ which we also see emerging in the Naxalbari movement. The ubiquitous leader

²¹ See Lefebvre, Henri, (2009), *The Explosion: Marxism and the French Upheaval*, trans. by Alfred Ehrenfeld, Aakar Books, New Delhi.

²² Ibid

²³ Badiou, Alain, (2006), *Polemics*, trans. by Steve Corcoran, Verso, London and New York. Pp 318

of the movement, Charu Majumdar had almost assumed this kind of a cult figure, taking on the voice of Majumdar's revolutionary mentor, Mao Tsetung. This is visible even today by the amount of writing that still is published about him and the way he still remains an icon for revolutionary fervor. During the movement though Charu Majumdar himself was giving the slogan to Mao Zedong thought and China's Chairman being our Chairman for which he was later severely criticized by his Chinese comrades, his own doctrines were attaining the status of a new thought. There have been various letters by ordinary citizens written to various editors of journals where they have mentioned Charu Majumdar Thought²⁴. Mao according to Badiou was someone who encouraged the rebels who spread the slogan 'it is right to revolt' and at the same time is being canonized as a party's chairman. He is both the incarnation of the guarantee of the existing party and as well as being himself that proletarian party which is still to come.²⁵ There was also a paradox in the way Charu Majumdar progressed because along with giving the call for freedom to workers and students he was also being consumed into the making of the new party CPI (M.L) which was to be the vanguard party of the proletariat. Therefore as Badiou describes Mao as being "somewhat like a revenge of singularity upon representation"²⁶ could be a possible way to look at Charu Majumdar as the creator of the 'evental' thought.

In the beginning I had mentioned that I would look at the event of theatre through this work. What is this event of theatre if we are to define it within the Badiouian discourse? 'All theatre is theatre of ideas'²⁷. By this statement Badiou is trying to argue not in favor of theatre fulfilling the function of distancing the idea under the garb of representation but rather in favor of the theatre as a Platonist

²⁴ This term is referred to in many of the letters to editors and journals as published in Sen, Samar, Debebrata Panda and Ashish Lahiri ed., (1978), *Naxalbari and After: A Frontier Anthology. A Moving Human Document of a Turbulent Decade*, Vol. 1 and Vol. 2, Kathashilpa, Calcutta.

²⁵ Badiou, Alain, (2006), *Polemics*, trans. by Steve Corcoran, Verso, London and New York.

²⁶ *Ibid.* Pp 320

²⁷ Puchner, Martin, (2009) *The Theatre of Alain Badiou*, Theatre Research International, Vol. 34, No. 3, pp 256-266.

conception of idea even though idea here understood as event and therefore as something that should be grasped dramatically. Hence thought is evental and so is theatre.²⁸ It is this very conception of theatre that pushes Badiou to recognize theatre as the most political art form. Badiou rejects the idea of theatre as mimesis and asserts the centrality of the theatre for thought. For him the twentieth century was a century of high art and within that theatre and the *mise-en-scene* as high art emerged.²⁹ Badiou is particularly interested in the figure of the director who according to him emerged as a ‘thinker of representation’³⁰ and who carries out a very “complex investigation into the relationships between text, acting, space, and public”³¹. In the context of Naxalbari Movement the plays that I read are also going to be looked at not just representations but also as one reflecting the director’s subjectivity. For instance looking at Badal Sarkar’s work as a director over the years , one can see a transition in him before and after the movement whereby his own subjectivity and sensibility had gone for an overall change which led him to form the Third Theatre Movement were production like *Micchil* displayed a sense of change which earlier did not exist . Each of these directors are in themselves commentaries on the movement and its impact on theatre. Badiou wants to formulate an understanding of theatre that emphasizes its relation to philosophy or more precisely to thought and hence he puts emphasis on putting the modern director in the centre of theatre. The director himself is like a text on theatre and the processes of theatre making. And since the theatre assemblages happen only in the present, but repeatedly night after night, out there on the stage, and it is because this assemblage is so unique, that it is capable of producing ideas, that Badiou argues that theatre can be called an event. ‘This event—when it really is theatre, the

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ See, Puchner, Martin, (2009) *The Theatre of Alain Badiou*, Theatre Research International, Vol. 34, No. 3, pp 256-266.

art of theatre—is an event of thought. This means that the assemblage of components directly produce ideas.³²

Chapter Design

Moving ahead from the discussion on the concept of event and the event of theatre, we would now take a glance at, how based on the above discussions, I have thematically structured my chapters which would be dealing with my research questions already mentioned in a previous section. After this chapter design we would initiate a discussion on the method and methodology that have been employed in this work. The chapters are as follows:

Chapter One:

This chapter has been titled as *Performing the Movement*. In this chapter I shall discuss about the idea of spectacle and performance theory as proposed by Silvija Jestrovic, Peggy Phelan, Elin Diamond, Erica Fisher-Lichte, Richard Schechner et al. In this chapter I have tried to critically examine the concepts in the light of the movement in question. Terms like performativity, theatricality would also be discussed and a probable connection can be made between the Naxalbari Movement and the idea of performance and the relation between politics and performance will be critically looked at. Through the use of Badiou's idea of 'event' I would argue the unfolding of the event of theatre in the 1970s and the political event of the Naxalbari movement as performance exhibiting various codes of performativity and theatricality and the various problems it raises in the realm of representation.

³² As quoted by Puchner, Martin, (2009) *The Theatre of Alain Badiou*, Theatre Research International, Vol. 34, No. 3, pp 256-266.

Chapter Two:

The second chapter has been titled *Writing the Movement* and as the title suggests this chapter would deal with writing of the theatrical texts and historical accounts of the Naxalbari movement as modes of representation. The ideas of mimesis and representation would be employed to analyze these texts while discussing whether and how the distinction between objectivity and subjectivity, fact and fiction get blurred in the face of representing an event. Along with this questions of 'witness' as proposed by Agamben and the "taking place of the archive" through these texts would also be dealt with. The writing of the Naxalbari history would be scrutinized by the complex relation between textual analysis, witness, and representation which would open up the question of the 'subject'.

Chapter Three:

The question of the 'subject' would be the central theme in the third chapter titled *Subject of the Movement*. This chapter would be the culmination of the various questions that would be either resolved or would open up in the previous two chapters. As I have already mentioned the question of who constitutes a true subject in an evental situation is intricately related to ideas of representation, writing, history, archive, memory and effectively in every domain of performance. Therefore my pursuit in this chapter would be to explore the idea of the 'subject' and then try and locate it within the context of Naxalbari where we would try to posit the subject of the movement as the evental or the political subject and its subsequent relation to history and truth. This we would do through the help of the thoughts of Badiou, Ranciere, Benjamin et al.

Method and Methodology

A constant debate in history writing has been regarding the use of narratives and consequently distinguishing it from story-telling. So what distinguishes the two? History departs from fiction in relation to evidence. Historical narrative must rest upon evidences i.e. events must have occurred in a time and space specificity. It is within an argument like this that I would want to posit my present inquiry. My attempt in this research would be at writing a history of a certain period through the memories, stories, and incidents of these people as narrated to me. Since memory is considered as unstable and testimony as too subjective, and in most cases what they say depends on how I interpret it, it has often been pointed out to me that doing a research based on these would always be contested in terms of authenticity. Hence I need to point out the inherent fallacy of this kind of argument by pointing out the instability in history writing itself irrespective of what source I employ. Also the use of theatrical texts for analysis further complicates the distinction between fiction and history. But what I would attempt in my research - how in the face of an 'event' the question of representation become more nuanced and hence story telling and history merge in a way that it raises new questions regarding objective and subjective representation.

In my research these 'evidences' have been procured firstly through the method of face to face, semi structured interviews³³ of some people who were part of the Naxalbari movement or were engaged

³³ Semi structured interview can be defined as interviews mainly consisting of open-ended questions based on topics one want to cover in the interview. While the interview focuses around key topics there is also the opportunity to discuss in more detail some areas of interest. One has the opportunity to explore answers more widely or other areas of discussion introduced by the interviewee. One may also have a set of prompts to help the interviewee if they struggle to answer any of the questions. See Young, Pauline V., (2000) *Scientific Social Surveys and Research*, Prentice Hall of India, New Delhi, Bailey, (1994), *Methods of Social Research*, Free Press, New York, Blalock Jr., Hubert M. and Ann Bonar Blalock, (2001) *Introduction to Social Research*, Sage Publication House, U.S.A.

in various cultural activities during the movement and secondly through the archives. I had intended to look at Home-Political, Home-Public, PWD files and Fortnightly Reports in the National Archives of India and also Police Reports, materials on law and order and municipality documents in the West Bengal State Archives but very little was found from here because one does not have the access to any file beyond 1956-57. Therefore I had to take into account other sources like the newspaper reports of some of the main dailies of that time like the 'Ananda Bazar' and 'The Statesman', 'Jugantar' as well some of the journals and magazine of that period like 'Kolkata', 'Deshabrati', 'Ebong Jalarka', 'Anushtup' etc. along with these there are also some books which have been marked out in the bibliography which will be used as a primary source. This is because though they have been published as books they are mainly collections of editorials, citizens' letters to newspapers, various reports or police gazetteers which serves as pieces of first hand experience. Also the justification to the use of these kinds of writing as primary data will be explained and elaborated further in the second chapter. Apart from these two sets of data, there is the third set which is an inseparable part of either of the above mentioned sources. These are the four play texts and their performance which were written and staged around the same period as the Naxalbari Movement. The four plays are Utpal Dutt written & directed "Teer" (Arrow), Mohit Chattopadhyay written and Bibhash Chakravorty directed "Rajrakta" (The Royal Blood), Badal Sarkar written & directed "Micchil" (Procession), and Asit Bose written & directed "Kolkata r Hamlet" (Kolkata's Hamlet) which provide the backbone of my investigation. Along with these texts I would also mention considering Sumanta Banerjee's 'In the Wake of Naxalbari' as a primary text (I will use the same work as my secondary literature) because in one of the section of this work we would be discussing history writing and subjectivity and whether and how history departs from fiction in terms of representing a certain event especially if the writers are engaging with their own, immediate present and responding to call of the event of their times.

Now that I have mentioned my data collection method it would be incomplete without a discussion regarding the method of data analysis. Since the nature of my research is qualitative it is important we review what qualitative research is. Qualitative researches aim to gather an in-depth understanding of human behavior and the reasons that govern such behavior. The qualitative method investigates the why and how of decision making, not just what, where, when. Hence, smaller but focused samples are more often needed, rather than large samples. Qualitative researchers may use different approaches in collecting data, such as the grounded theory practice, narratology, storytelling, classical ethnography, or shadowing. Qualitative research often categorizes data into patterns as the primary basis for organizing and reporting results. Qualitative researchers typically rely on the following methods for gathering information: Participant Observation, Non-participant Observation, Field Notes, Reflexive Journals, Structured Interview, Semi-structured Interview, Unstructured Interview, and Analysis of documents and materials. The data collected here would be through the in-depth Interview Method, which involves presentation, oral-verbal stimuli and responses in oral-verbal responses and would be analyzed through the method of content analysis. The content analysis is based on the content of the responses of the population studied. The analysis is very case specific, based on the intricacies of the individual responses, it is not making things 'standard' but for giving 'specific qualitative output'.

At this point it is important to mention that, I had made a conscious decision to interview only those people who were related to the texts which is important in our present enquiry. One of the reasons for doing this was to know process of making of these plays and what kind of thinking went into it and also since there are no documentation of any of these plays, the interviews of people involved in the theatre making process would give us an idea of the performance. I have interviewed both the directors of Rajrakta and Kolkata r Hamlet. In his interview Bibhash Chakravarty, the director of Rajrakta, spoke

at length about his political motivations behind doing the play. Given that the play was written by someone else he reflected upon how the writer and he would negotiate on certain things. *Rajrakta* was not the first play of Mohit Chattopadhyay's that Bibhash Chakravarty was directing. Hence there are a lot of published work which are basically the latter's reflection on the former or vice e versa and the work they had done together. Asit Bose had been doing theatre from a very young age and having learnt under great masters like Utpal Dutt³⁴, he was very active in the theatre scene in West Bengal during the early seventies and post emergency in 1975. He is the playwright and the director of the play "Kolkata r Hamlet" which was staged in various parts of West Bengal during the mid 70s and was later censored. Through Asit Bose's interview I also came to know a lot about the making of Utpal Dutt's "Teer" (Arrow) of which he was a part. One of my respondents was Bishakha Roy, who was part of Badal Sarkar's group and also part of the Third Theatre movement during the early 70s³⁵. She was also an active member of the CPI (ML) during the movement and worked within the city of Calcutta. She had to change her name to Meera when there was an arrest warrant issued on her name. Ms Bishakha Roy's interview is important firstly, because she was involved in the production of Badal Sarkar's play "Michil" (Prosession), and secondly, since she was also an active participant of the movement, the sphere of politics and the sphere of performance interspersed her life much more than it did to others. One of my interviewees was Sumanta Banerjee, the author of the book "In the Wake of Naxalbari" which was reprinted in London as "India's Simmering Revolution". In an extensive interview, he shared his experience of writing the book which is one of the most prominent and thorough work on the

³⁴ Asit Bose started his career in theatre from 1965 working with Utpal Dutt. In his interview he talked about how Utpal Dutt had been a great teacher and how much he owes to him in terms of learning to do theatre.

³⁵ Third Theatre was formed imbibing ideas from the traditional and folk theatre. However, at the same time it had an identity of its own. It arose from that educated minority of feudal society who neither belonged to the peasants or the landlords. In Third Theatre there is no concrete characterization. The actors are free to choose their roles and exchange them on the stage. Even the audience can take part in the same. Further, there is the freedom of movement and there is no restriction of space. Body language is made maximum use of than facial expressions.

Naxalbari movement and what makes it more interesting is Sumanta Banerjee's involvement with the movement and subsequent imprisonment. Sumanta Banerjee has positioned himself in a very precarious manner since he dared to write the history of the movement, he had clearly moved away from fiction and relied on evidence which could be objectively analyzed and at the same time he was a part of the movement---therefore he is the subject of the 'event' at the same time trying to represent it which brings us to the old question of how can a subject give an account of its own ruin?³⁶ This methodological issue that crops up through the analysis of Sumanta Banerjee's book has led me to pose a research question. Going back to the crisis of the methods that I would like to employ in my work I would in the following part discuss in brief the issues raised by scholars regarding the issue of narrative history and the archive which are in no way complete or conclusive. What I have tried to do is discuss some schools of thought and the probable solutions that these scholars give to the issue of narrative or archive.

The narrative debate in history writing assumes importance in the present inquiry because of primarily two reasons. Firstly, one of the sources that would be employed is that of interviews. The debates placed by the empiricists revolving around oral history are not new and oral history has now come to be an established form of knowledge production. Bringing the narrative debate back is to further consolidate the arguments in support of testimony and oral history which essentially relies on the interpretation of the historian. Secondly, one of the most important aspect of the narrative debate especially that proposed by Hayden White is in the use of tropes through which history is written. The subject matter of my present work is on Naxalbari Movement which was an extremely political movement with a very strong ideology behind it. There was a very sharp divide between the state and the revolutionaries hence representation of the movement is always done in at least two ways if not in

³⁶ See Agamben, Giorgio, (1999), *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, Zone Book, New York.

more. Therefore the methods of emplotment, explanation and ideological implications become very important and determine the fidelity of the subject to the event and how the event is represented or the history of it is written. This would become clearer as we move along the narrative debate. The narrative debate from the beginning has been torn between extreme narrativists and those who equate narrative with fiction. Of the many great theorists who have written extensively on narrative history like Mink and Collingwood et al, I would specially like to mention two main debaters in narrative history writing. Hayden White gives us a sort of understanding as to why history has to narrate, by moving from inside out. Hayden White argues that “historian has to interpret...”³⁷ Interpretation is indispensable. This is because historian in any given moment has so much data in record that he has to include some and exclude some through interpretation, to mirror the reality like any fiction writer. This sort of narrative technique involves interpretation at two levels—first at the level of constructing story out of the chronicle of the events; and secondly at the level of identification process with kind of a story, to be told.. White argues that there is correspondence between interpretation and ideological commitment also. There are four ideological positions in terms of historical interpretation—anarchist, conservative, radical, liberal. In addition to this Hayden White also suggests that interpretation enters historiography at least in three ways—aesthetically, epistemologically and ethically. Aesthetical interpretation leads to choice of narrative strategy; epistemological to explanatory paradigm; and ethical to ideological position. And this very process of interpretation integrates all three factors—mode of emplotment, mode of explanation, mode of ideological implication—in an organic relationship. White goes on to argue that comprehension is a direct result of different topological strategies. Four tropes—metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony—within language itself orient our looking at and in to the things in such a way

³⁷ White, Hayden, (1978), *Tropics of Discourse*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.

that they generate types of explanation.³⁸ This aspect we would be examining in greater details in the second chapter where we would be discussing about the ways in which the Naxalbari movement has been written and the various debates that can emerge from the kind of writing that exists today on the movement. As I mentioned earlier that we would be closely looking at Sumanta Banerjee's book and we would see how though he gave a lot of data and government facts in his book, it still seems as if he was narrating the events as he saw them unfolding. This would not happen if he hadn't used his 'ideological' position that of the 'radical' which enters the historiography through the 'ethical' interpretation.

Narrative activity in writing history (as in fiction also), according to Paul Ricoeur, consists of a dialectical process making it pass through successive stages of mimesis. It starts off with pre-figuration inherent in action; then constitutive configuration through emplotment and lastly re-figuration due to the interaction between the world of text and the world of the reader.³⁹ This happens through the process of mediation between time and narrative. This process generally consists of three levels of mimesis which he has referred to as mimesis 1, mimesis 2 and mimesis 3. Ricoeur emphasizes on the interplay between time and narrative in history writing. However Ricoeur in the end is not that satisfied with the conclusion he proposes that the pure phenomenology of time is not possible without the introduction of narrative time. The theory of refigured time can only be achieved through integration of narrative time and phenomenological time. Ricoeur accepts Hayden White's argument and reaffirms that history indeed imitates the type of emplotment handed down by our literary tradition. But he goes beyond this configurational stage and extends his argument to historical imagination. He explains that this act of imagination, which portrays a historical event as tragic or comedy, endows a certain work with

³⁸ White, Hayden, (1978) *Tropics of Discourse*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.

³⁹ Ricoeur, Paul, (1990), *Time and Narrative* (Vol.1), trans. by Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London.

perenniality, whose scientific value has ebbed away with further documentation of facts. Readers of a historical work willingly accord a certain level of legitimacy to the historians in “interpreting” (to use White’s term) data, which is not guaranteed but plausible.

My second source would be as I have mentioned before, the storehouse of knowledge ---the archive. Why this source is secondary was earlier more of a compulsion than a choice. It is such because most of the files in these archives cannot be accessed since they are confidential because they can cause potential threat to the country’s stability. Going back, Ricoeur argues: *“History initially reveals its creative capacity as regards the refiguration of time through its invention and use of certain reflective instruments such as the calendar; the idea of the succession of generations --- and, connected to this, the idea of threefold realm of contemporaries, predecessors, and successors; finally, and above all, in its recourse to archives, documents, and traces.”*⁴⁰ Of the three mentioned above the third point of mediation is more important to us. These are the archives, documents and traces --- perhaps the most important clue in understanding re-figured time through culmination of phenomenological time and ordinary time. This is because in discussing character of traces as connector we will come close to the beginning, i.e. aporias in shape of discordance inherent in phenomenological time thrown up by Augustine’s threefold conception of temporality and its possible solution through Aristotle’s idea of muthos. Archives consist of documents regarding any institutional activity. Documents in turn provide a warrant for argument, narrative and history at large. Documents nurture the claim of history as a true narrative of the past based on facts. This source of authority however emerges out of the significance that we attach to trace. The very existence of documents is premised on the presupposition that past has left a trace, which can be collected and conserved. Memory if we enquire closely shares the same

⁴⁰ Ricoeur, Paul, (1990), *Time and Narrative* (Vol.3), trans. by Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, pp104.



property in mental space of ours, what trace does in reality. Memory as an entity belongs to the present but its source lies in the past. Through memory we conceive past. Trace is not only a mark in history; trace also extends itself to thing. So trace exists as sign—combining a relation of significance and a relation of causality. As Foucault would argue that documents have always been treated as the language of a voice since which has been silenced; it is fragile, but possibly it is decipherable trace. Similar to Ricoeur, Foucault argues that history works from within the documents in order to develop it—define within the documentary material itself unities, totalities, series, and relations. Therefore history is that which transform documents into monuments.⁴¹ Archive in the strict sense is the storehouse that catalogues the traces of what has been said to consign them to future memory—the archive the set of rules that define the events in discourse, the archive is situated between langue as the system of construction of possible sentences—that is of possibilities of speaking—the corpus that unites the set of what has been actually uttered or written. We can see here that the archive is itself multi layered and inherently unstable--- a possibility and therefore what would be interesting is not merely interpreting the archive but actually witness the “taking place of the archive”⁴².

To conclude, it is from this understanding of the ‘taking place of the archive’, from the event of the archive that I would like to argue for the concept of the event and its bearing on any historical and political phenomenon like the Naxalbari Movement. Of course when we talk about the eventual qualification of the movement, we need to go beyond the historical and sociopolitical perspective, since an event as we shall strive to argue provides an analysis of a historical phenomenon not from the point of view of ideology but from the point of view of presence. Thus the Marxist ideology working behind

⁴¹ See Introduction, pp 7-8, Foucault, Michel, (2006), *Archeology of Knowledge*, trans. by A. M. Sheridan Smith, Routledge, London and New York.

⁴² Foucault, Michel, (2006), *Archeology of Knowledge*, trans. by A. M. Sheridan Smith, Routledge, London and New York, pp 130-131.

the movement in question is undoubtedly significant to understand the situation in which the event of Naxalbari unfolded. But that situation from the point of view of the event does nothing to explain the momentous illumination of its presence. So instead of locating the movement of Naxalbari within a schema of knowledge which presupposes the ideological underpinnings of its meaning, (which is Marxist in nature), we shall take the disjunctive emergence of its presence in its radical fragility and its performative quality.

Performing the Movement

From the period 1967-72, different parts of rural and urban Bengal especially Calcutta had turned into a stage of political struggle where performance and daily life, politics and spectacle, state power and its opposition, clashed regularly and utterly. In *Liberation*, December 1967, Charu Majumdar spoke in details about the role of the students in the cities. First of all he wanted the students to integrate themselves with the peasants and propagate revolutionary politics. But for those, who according to him, were unable to go to the village at the present should engage in propagating work among the workers in the cities. By 1968, apart from waging struggle in support of the peasants and workers, the students decided to launch struggles against the PD Act, automation, retrenchment, lock out and police repression and for food and trade union rights. Their self appointed ultimate place in the grand schema of a new society was that of the Red Guard organization (*Deshabrati*, May 2, 1968). In *Deshabrati*, August 21, 1969, there was an article titled *Party's call to the Youth and Students*, Charu Majumdar invoked the glorious tradition of the militant youth of the country. He called for an action that entailed not a peaceful and bloodless path but that of gheraos, clashes with the police and the employer, barricades, liquidation of enemies and agents-according to the situation. By 1970, the students started hit and run attacks on educational institutions, burning pictures of Gandhi, and hoisting the red flag atop schools and factories and *Deshabrati* continued to support this kind of action.¹ Charu Majumdar came out with an argument, that these attacks were more a spontaneous movement than something chalked out and led by the party.

¹ *Deshabrati Shankalan*, Vol 3 (July- September, 1999), Vol 4 (Jan- June, 2000), Vol 6 (July- Dec 2002), Vol 7 (Jan- June 2003), Vol 8 (Jan- June 2004), Vol 9 (Jan- June 2006), Ebong Jalark.

The students, he said, are making “a festival of breaking statues”² and in factories the workers are making a festival of hoisting the red flag, enjoying the sense of fear among employers, and helplessness among the police and military. The city of Calcutta became a site where dramaturgies of political protest were exercised. As Silvija Jestrovic argues in her forthcoming book that these activities could be compared to the global protests because quoting Baz Kershaw, they have “developed a new range of performative strategies. Through these strategies, protest has gained new kinds of synecdochic relevance to its socio-political contexts, and this suggests that it has drawn on new sources for radicalism in performance.”³(Kershaw, Baz, *The Radical in Performance* 109 -10) Slowly but formidably the city of Calcutta was becoming a city-as-action⁴.

Moving ahead with the idea of the Naxalbari Movement as an event what I intend to do in this chapter is to talk about the idea of performance as the always disappearing thing that eludes the economy of visibility and reproduction just like the event, as Ericka Fisher Lichte adequately puts it that during the turn in academic writings specially that of performance and representation post the 1960s “the ephemerality of the event, its uniqueness, and singularity became a focal point.”⁵ In this chapter I would examine the concept of performance not just as an extension of theatre but as a concept which has travelled beyond the boundaries of theatre in order to encapsulate everyday life, ritual or political movement. Addressing the question of performance and its relation to the Naxalbari Movement would require me to break it down into two parts: the spectacle it unfolded and the questions it raises in the

² See Sen, Samar, Debebrata Panda and Ashish Lahiri ed., (1978), *Naxalbari and After: A Frontier Anthology. A Moving Human Document of a Turbulent Decade*, Vol. 1 and Vol. 2, Kathashilpa, Calcutta.

³ As quoted by Jestrovic, Silvija, *From Cities of War to Cities of Exile: Space, Embodiment, and Utopia in Urban Performance*, Unpublished, to be published in Oct 2011 by Palgrave.

⁴ Ibid

⁵ See Introduction, Fischer-Lichte, Erika, (2008), *The Transformative Power of Performance*; Trans. by Saskya Iris Jain; Routledge, New York and London.

realm of representation. In order to demonstrate the performing of the Naxalbari Movement I would primarily depend on the four play texts and through secondary literature, newspaper reports, interviews (the ones I have conducted) and published interviews of the people during the movement (published in journals and book). The four plays, *Teer*, *Micchil*, *Kolkata r Hamlet*, and *Rajrakta*, were performed during that period and none of them have any recordings or documentation except for a recording of *Micchil* but that was performed and documented later in 1988. In fact for a very long time the text for *Teer* was not even printed. This has been accorded by many to the shift in Utpal Dutt's political allegiance. Even today it is contested whether the printed text is the original or the complete one or not. Though these plays have been performed in the late 1960s an early 1970s it would be unfair to compare them to theatre practices and conventions of places outside of India where there have been different theatre histories, like the English or the German theatre. The form in which theatre was produced here in India as well as in Bengal was influenced by the contemporary theatrical experiments, like that of Schechner's environmental theatre whose effects were apparent on the Bengali stage. The use of certain concepts and tools of analysis as proposed by Tracy Davies, Peggy Phelan, Hans Thies Lehmann et al might seem a bit arbitrary because they either talk about performances which are more recent or even if they date back to early '70s, the experiments with theatre conventions that those performances marked were in ways that were starting to take shape only around or during the period of the Naxalbari Movement. But nonetheless this comparison and critique will be used in this chapter because the eventual nature of the movement was such that it triggered off certain reactions in the existing society and theatre conventions which could no longer be grasped within the established parameters of understanding society and theatre of that time but can be justifiable understood and analyzed through the aforementioned models of investigation.

Though I have already argued that performance always evades representation, in this particular context given the concrete limitations this becomes more important. As Peggy Phelan would argue, to attempt to write about the undocumentable event of performance is to invoke the rules of the written document and thereby alter the event itself. The challenge raised by the ontological claims of performance for writing is to re-mark again the performative possibilities of writing itself.⁶ In this work analyzing the performative and representational quality of these plays would primarily be through the reading of the texts, the review articles, published interviews and through the narratives of some of those who were part of the performance, which would then help us to 'reconstruct' the performance which in itself is a representation. Even the political spectacle that was performed in the world outside of theatre can only be grasped through the historical writings on Naxalbari or in texts which discuss ideological shifts within the movement, through the various reports, debates in journals and publication of *Deshabrati* or *Liberation* articles later in journal like *Ebong Jalark* and mostly from the interviews of people that I conducted who were involved in the movement and its various programme. Writing about these political spectacles is to re-mark the possibilities that it entailed and hence we would be engaging in the act of representation ourselves. The fact that none of these plays are documented in fact points out better the ephemerality of performance itself and hence illustrates the eventual nature of performance in a better manner. Performance refuses a system of exchange and circulation, contrary to the idea that the work of art is created as a "thing" whose "thingness" never vanishes. Performance honors the idea that a limited number of people in a specific time/space frame have the opportunity to experience of value which leaves no visible trace afterward. It goes against the argument that 'art' exists as an artifact, which remains consistent with itself regardless of the recipient's presence or even despite the changes that

⁶ Phelan, Peggy, (1993), *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, New York: Routledge, Chapman & Hall.

might occur over time.⁷ Recipients can return repeatedly to the same work of art over the course of their life, discovering ever new peculiarities and possibilities for reflection and thereby generating new meanings within the work of art. Therefore, a recipient can be engaged in a life-long dialogue with a work of art unlike the discourse on performance which argues that writing necessarily cancels the “tracelessness” inaugurated within the performative promise.⁸ Performance’s independence from mass reproduction, technologically, economically, and linguistically, is its greatest strength.

Coming back to the concept of city-as-action, as Silviya Jestrovic argues that the idea of the city-as-action is more than a theatrical metaphor and it describes the city as a stage where performances of political power and political resistance are enacted. She further argues how that city-as-action implies not only the political struggles but also “its dramaturgy and its mise-en-scène”⁹. As a result of the students’ movement in different parts of the city of Calcutta, Calcutta obtained new identity markers to certain spaces. Spaces like Curzon Park, College Street came to be marked as spaces of resistance and political demonstrations. The narrow lanes of the northern part of the city, which is also the oldest part with its complicated pattern of numerous narrow roads and lanes had assumed the new form of the biggest urban jungle that the Naxalites could ever find in India where they could hide, assemble and ambush the enemy. Therefore such political struggles include the process of making and unmaking the city through action—that is, through a continuous restructuring and re-fashioning of the identity of the city. Jestrovic points out that theatricality and performativity are the key elements within the idea of city-as-action which we would discuss in details in the next section.

⁷ Fischer-Lichte, Erika, (2008), *The Transformative Power of Performance*; Trans. by Saskya Iris Jain; Routledge, New York and London.

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Jestrovic, Silviya, *From Cities of War to Cities of Exile: Space, Embodiment, and Utopia in Urban Performance*, Unpublished, to be published in Oct 2011 by Palgrave.

The Spectacle

"The spectacle is not a collection of images; rather, it is a form of social relationship between people that is mediated by image"¹⁰

Growing up in West Bengal in the 1980s and 1990s one realizes the impact of the Naxalbari Movement in the lives of the people especially the generation who were by now settled into their lives, job and family leaving their revolutionary spirit behind. One grows up with the memory of Naxalbari as that which was marked by extreme police repression, annihilation of youth in the name of combing operations to tackle the Naxalite problem. This period is remembered for its politicized streets, covering of walls with black tar, of shouting revolutionary slogans, the Naxalite sprinting from the police and with the help of simple middle class families to sustain themselves, of rampant mindless killing on the part of the students (and allegedly local goons and gangster) in the name of annihilation of class enemies, of killing and brutal torture of young boys considered to be Naxal with sounds of bullets and their agonized cries coming from the prison cells or from the streets at any point of the day. Even within the dominant literature on Naxalbari there would be at least one chapter dedicated only to city action and the role of the youth if not the entire book being about the students' movement during the '60s and '70s. Here mostly the discourse set about the role of students in the movement has been of the support base for the actual action which was to be taking place in the villages, spearheaded by peasants and landless laborers. Even today the contribution of the students working within the city of Calcutta towards the

¹⁰ Guy Debord *Society of Spectacle*, Detroit: Black and Red, 1983, pp12 as quoted by Jestrovic, Silvija, *From Cities of War to Cities of Exile: Space, Embodiment, and Utopia in Urban Performance*, Unpublished, to be published in Oct 2011 by Palgrave.

Naxalbari Movement is scrutinized on the basis of the them operating from outside in which was essentially a workers-peasants programme and has become a major portion of its history and scope. For instance, the students' movement emerging from Presidency College has been described in an article published in "Kaalpurush", 1967 as the political battle that was being fought for months after months in the name of equality and democracy against the present education system, imperialism and capitalism. This battle accordingly was a priceless one and an open call was made to all others like the factory workers, middle class people, and students from other colleges to come share their burden and help carry the red flag high. The article emphasized the need to crush the police and the military together as being their national responsibility. This article was written in response to the burning of the Baker Library of Presidency College by the students' federation. Many of the students involved in the act were arrested which triggered off massive student's protest across the city and the state. Like how Slavenka Drakulić in *How we Survived Communism and even Laughed*, as quoted by Jestrovic writes that "In the newspaper and on TV revolutions looked spectacular: cut barbed wire, seas of lighted candles, masses chanting in the streets, convulsive embraces and tears of happiness, people chiselling pieces from the Berlin Wall. A famous Hollywood director once said that movies are the same as life with the boring parts cut out..."¹¹ it was precisely what was happening to the students' movement within the larger Naxalbari Movement. Suddenly the 'boring' parts of the revolution had simply vanished from the public eye and discourse. What they were seeing and hearing were only the most dramatic and symbolic images. Even though this was all right, but it was definitely not all.

When taking interviews of ex party members or Naxalites, I realized the reality of the movement was outside the urban spaces especially of Calcutta as much as it was within the city limits. The basic

¹¹ ibid

argument that emerged out of these interviews was enwrapped within the spectacle of death and violence that was created through the glorious program of 'annihilation of class enemies' people forgot what the movement really was for. The people, who I interviewed, were young at that time and according to them they were pulled into the movement to establish solidarity between their crisis and that of the landless laborers and workers. They all argued how much work they had done in the villages spreading the Marxist- Leninist- Mao Tsetung Thought and organizing themselves on their onward march towards emancipation. Probable their motive was to make others know what really meant when thousands of young boys and girls left the comfort of their homes, the tranquility of the familiar to take up the burdensome responsibility of leading the proletariat on the way to the revolution. Rather what encapsulated the minds of people where bombardment of images of violence. What is interesting to observe here is how a mise-en-scene memory captures both memories of repression and acts of violence within one encapsulated theatrical spectacle. I shall enumerate a few such incidents which shall elucidate this point of creating a mise-en-scene memory further. One such episode was when an off-duty policeman travelling with his wife in a rickshaw was dragged out of the vehicle and stabbed to death in a crowded street, in front of his wife and scores of people; but no one came forward either to protect the victim during the attack or to identify the assassins afterwards. In one case a school teacher, the wife of a well known trade union leader, was stabbed inside her school; but in this case the other women teachers and the young girls tried their best, though un- successfully, to save her from being attacked and were severely manhandled by the attackers. Another typical instance was the incident in the College Street area of Calcutta on 25th September 1970 when the police shot dead four young men within a few hours. Another incident was when a known CPI (M-L) leader 22yrs old Debnath was shot point blank in the 'pandal' when he was attending Kali Puja. On November 17 a huge posse of police 'ruthlessly' searched CIT building at Beliaghata. The police arrested around 100 young men, took four of them to a

lonely quadrangle, made them stand in a single file and then riddled them to death with bullets. It was clear that West Bengal had been turned into a battle field in the real sense of the term, where no civil norms operated. The sole motive was to kill the enemy. Legal procedures like arrest and trails had become outmoded. In many cases after beating senseless some political suspects, the police would take them outside the lock up, pump bullets into their bodies and throw the bodies out in the streets. It was a sort of primitive method of demonstrating exemplary punishments, like keeping the dead hanging from tree tops for days or sticking up decapitated heads for display to terrorize the masses.¹² Hence the period of 1967-72 was described as a period of senseless orgy of murders, misplaced fury, and sadistic tortures, acted out with the vicious norms of the underworld and dictated by the decadent and cunning values of the petty bourgeois leaders. Debord distinguishes between two kinds of spectacular power—*the concentrated*, which epitomizes totalitarian regimes; and *the diffuse*, which has represented the Americanisation of the world¹³ and according to Jestrovic, the political movement in the late 1960s leading into the 1980s in the city of Belgrade was a spectacular power that shaped up to be a glossy version of Debord's concentrated spectacle. Though there have been many similar aspects to the students' movement in Belgrade and the one in Calcutta, I would like to argue that in Calcutta, the city witnessed the unfolding of a different kind of concentrated spectacle which was directed toward the highly bureaucratic state as against a particular a political leader and therefore the city became site of different kinds of spectacle which were sustained by excessive state violence and brutal police force and huge offensives launched by the urban guerillas.

¹² Incidents drawn from Banerjee, Sumanta, (1980), *In the Wake of Naxalbari: A History of the Naxalite Movement in India*, Subarnarekha, Calcutta.

¹³ Jestrovic, Silvija, *From Cities of War to Cities of Exile: Space, Embodiment, and Utopia in Urban Performance*, Unpublished, to be published in Oct 2011 by Palgrave.

Associated with the idea of the spectacle is also that of counter spectacle. In the year 1970, on the 1st of May, on the first anniversary of C.P.I. (M.L) they organized a rally from Victoria Memorial in Calcutta. There were around 15,000 students who gathered on that day. This meeting and procession was organized secretly. This news of the procession was sent across to students through the word of mouth without the help of a single poster or hand bill. The outcome of this was overwhelming because it had taken the police and the administration completely off guard and before they could respond the rally had achieved what it intended to. In another incident on 3rd March, 1970 the Red Guards in Calcutta using guerilla tactics attacked a cinema hall and stopped the screening of a Hindi feature film called "Prem Pujari" which was considered as anti China. Three other movie theatres in north and south Calcutta were attacked by the same Red Guards. They would suddenly ambush the place and then set fire to the screen.¹⁴ According to Jestrovic, theatricality determines the dramaturgy of the protests and also links a city's counter-spectacle to other scenarios of political urban resistance. In other words, theatricality forms "intertextual and/or interperformative links" to other radical performances. She draws from historical episode in order to show how the same thing worked in the city of Belgrade. The trajectory of this kind of staging of political protests in history dating from as far back as the French Revolution right up to the events of May, 1968 in France, and finally that of Belgrade's placed "counter-spectacles in line with the street demonstrations"¹⁵ which marks the end of certain regimes of power and the same was unfolding on the streets of Calcutta during the Naxalbari movement. One of my interviewees was Jaya Mitra, who had played an active role during the movement and has written extensively on the Naxalbari Movement mainly in Bengali. She was a member of the CPI (ML) and has also been imprisoned for a certain period. My interaction with her gave me insight into how the movement took shape step by step through everyday political activities. She spoke at length about the

¹⁴ *Shottor Dashak*, Anushtup, Special Edition, Vol 2, 1981.

¹⁵ Jestrovic, Silvija, *From Cities of War to Cities of Exile: Space, Embodiment, and Utopia in Urban Performance*, Unpublished, to be published in Oct 2011 by Palgrave.

working out of small, 'spontaneous' little protests and how they would disperse into the thin air. By spontaneous she meant protests that they would prepare in minute details in much advance. They would plan where each of them would stand and from which lane to escape and the protest would last for the exact time that it would take someone to inform the police and for the police to arrive. The art of fighting as proposed within the revolutionary discourse was to be mastered under the conditions of 'encirclement and suppression'¹⁶ operations launched by the enemy. The Naxalites frequently attacked the notorious landlords under the aforementioned conditions of operations released by reactionary police. As Diana Taylor points out "Theatricality makes the scenario alive and compelling. In other words, scenarios exist as culturally specific imaginaries—activated with more or less theatricality. [...] Theatricality strives for efficiency, not authenticity. It connotes a conscious, controlled and, thus, always political dimension that performance need not imply. It differs from spectacle in that theatricality highlights the mechanics of spectacle."¹⁷ Therefore one can argue that the theatricality of protests is located within the strategic, conceptual part of the counter-spectacle. It forms the language of the protests and other political activities and carries certain codes of co-ordination which are essentially performance codes in order to confront the state power and its repressive machineries and also attract the attention of as many people in their own local context as well as to the world as a appeal to together change the power equilibrium.

The events of the political program against the ruling class of Bengal emerged as 'spectacles' as Debord claims that the "spectacle appears at once as society itself, as a part of society and as a means of unification"¹⁸, unifying the tribal, peasants, youth, the intelligentsia and even the middle class. For the

¹⁶ Maoist Spring Thunder: The Naxalite Movement, 1967-72.

¹⁷ Jestrovic, Silvija, *From Cities of War to Cities of Exile: Space, Embodiment, and Utopia in Urban Performance*, Unpublished, to be published in Oct 2011 by Palgrave. Pp18

¹⁸ *ibid*, pp5

political protests spectacle was a necessary strategy of both maintaining the momentum of the resistance and also for capturing as much attention as possible. In same way performativity emerges as another element of counter-spectacle that can never be fully “premeditated, ‘rehearsed’, and repeated”. It lets go its own intertextual or, rather, interperformative links, through the historical, social and political contingencies of its own times and not as much through the working out or ‘dramaturgy’ of radical, political performances. The connections are both “intertextual and intra-cultural” the counter-spectacles are situated within the setting of the city of the 1960s and 1970s which would be very different if performed in the city today. Hence performativity is the context-specific dimension of the protests, allowing unique and unrepeatable aspects counter-spectacles to emerge. To conclude, as Josette Feral argues that “any spectacle is an interplay of both performativity and theatricality.”¹⁹ She further argues that theatricality has to be studied historically. Just as theatre changes, so theatricality changes. Both are re-invented and re-experienced. Thus for Feral, theatricality is defined as resulting from the spectator’s act of recognition. The doubleness of framing, to be more precise, transforms perception by forcing new views on the split codes of “everyday space/representational space; reality/fiction; symbolic/indicative.”²⁰

Theatre, Theatricality, Performance and Performativity:

During the early part of the 1970s, the city of Calcutta witnessed the most brutal attack on theatre and theatre artists. This never deterred any of the theatre groups to from their path of political theatre. In fact these incidents became a reason for different theatre groups to come together in resistance against the state. Theatre actor Satyen Mitra was killed in the hands of political groups but still Theatre Workshop carried on with even more vigor and went on to stage “Rajrakta” and also “Chak Bhangra

¹⁹ Davis, Tracy C. and Thomas Postlewaite (ed), (2003), *Theatricality*, Cambridge University Press, U.K. pp 27

²⁰ *ibid* pp28

Madhu”.²¹ Utpal Dutt’s new group People’s Little Theatre had to face attacks of different nature just the way his previous group Little Theatre Group had to face. In spite of numerous threats the group staged their play “Dushopner Nogori” in 1974 in many places with a lot of tact even after two years of the movement’s being declared as over. Another play of his “Tin er Tolowar”, 1971 when it was being staged at Rabindra Sadan, Calcutta, was also disrupted and stopped and the reason cited for it was that the play contained obscenity²². The crescendo of such brutal attacks reached when Prabir Dutta was killed in a firing at Curzon Park, Calcutta. This incident shook the entire world of theatre and in protest, in the very same Curzon Park many eminent theatre groups came together to perform. Badal Sarkar directed “Micchil” for this significant space. In a way, parts of real life were transformed into extraordinary and dramatic experiences, which could be grasped only through metaphors and vocabularies not so much of politics, but rather of performance and theatricality. “Theatricality” as defined by Tracy C. Davis and Thomas Postlewait, argue that theatricality can be abstracted from the theatre itself and then applied to any and all aspects of human life. It is a mode of representation or a style of behavior which is characterized by the dramatic actions, and manners, and hence can be applied and it is also an interpretive model for describing the identity, social rituals and ceremonies, religious festivities, and public spectacles, and therefore a conceptual tool. They also argue that theatricality has even attained the status of both an aesthetic and a philosophical system.²³ Performance describes a genuine act of creation: the very process of performing involves all participants and thus generates the performance in its specific materiality. Materiality is not given as an artifact but occurs as the result of the performative generation of corporeality, spatiality, and tonality constituting the performance as

²¹ Roy, Amar (ed,) *Naxalbarir Probhabe Shilpi- Shahitya-Challachitra*, Naya Itihash, 24th May, 1992.

²² Ibid

²³ Davis, Tracy C. and Thomas Postlewaite (ed), (2003), *Theatricality*, Cambridge University Press, U.K. pp1

event.²⁴ The theatre when imitating life or an ideology is like a ‘metaphor’ and since metaphor always fall short of its model, so does representation. Therefore theatricality apart from being used as a concept to understand the gap between reality and representation, it is also used to describe the “heightened” states when everyday reality is exceeded by its representation²⁵ as was the case with the Naxalbari movement.

As Schechner argued “Performativity- or commonly, ‘performance’ is everywhere in life, from ordinary gestures to macrodramas” it was also present in the Naxalbari Movements. For instance, in August 15, 1968, under the leadership of the Party, peasants in Mushahari organized armed guerrilla procession with several thousand peasants, which put forth the slogan: ‘Land to the tillers,’ ‘Naxalbari Path, our path,’ and shouted ‘Long Live Mao Tsetung!’ This particular episode becomes more relevant since it was carried out on the country’s Independence Day. On October 1, 1969, a demonstration of about 1000 armed peasants attacked the house of a notorious jotedar, Kanai Kuiti. The revolutionary peasants seized his gun and cartridges, confiscated his stock of hoarded rice, clothes and mortgaged articles and burnt all his documents relating to land²⁶. Incidents of violence such as “four young men were alleged to have been killed by the police immediately after they had been arrested from their houses” and “eight dead bodies were discovered in Barasat, a town very close to Calcutta, all of them tightly bound by ropes and shot from close range” had become an everyday matter during that period. Though these incidents were a regular affair it evoked extra daily possibilities which could only be captured within performance codes and representation. For instance in response to the second incident

²⁴ Fischer-Lichte, Erika, (2008), *The Transformative Power of Performance*; Trans. by Saskya Iris Jain; Routledge, New York and London.

²⁵ Davis, Tracy C. and Thomas Postlewaite (ed), (2003), *Theatricality*, Cambridge University Press, U.K. pp14

²⁶ Maoist Spring Thunder: The Naxalite Movement, 1967-72.

there was a play performed called “Aath Jora Khola Choke” by Amar Ray. However, these performances were not framed by the parameters of art alone; it also exhibited elements of ritual as well as spectacle. This raises the question whether and to what extent the genres “ritual” and/or in our case “spectacle” are transformed into an artistic performance. It remains to be explored to what extent these genres collide with each other and with the overarching framework given by the arts, and how they determine the success or failure of a performance.²⁷ Herrmann’s definition of “performance” circumvents the concept of a work of art. The performance is regarded as art not because it enjoys the status of an artwork but because it takes place as an event.²⁸ Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations; once it does so, it becomes something other than performance.²⁹ No real-world performance can fulfill Phelan’s strict ontological definition, for all are inevitably circulated as reproductions: even to speak of a performance one has seen is to reproduce it and circulate it within the economy of representations. But this impossibility is, the point in Phelan’s ontologically pure notion of performance as absolute disappearance is a horizon, a sort of a symptom toward which real-world practices (including performance criticism) may strive, knowing they will not reach it. As a conceptual horizon, it asks that we put aside our usual emphasis on visibility, representation, reproduction, history, identity, and consider the fragility of the gaze, the force of the invisible, the non representable, the non reproductive, the ever-vanishing present moment

²⁷ Bateson 1972: 177–93; Goffman 1974, as quoted in Fischer-Lichte, Erika, (2008), *The Transformative Power of Performance*; Trans. by Saskya Iris Jain; Routledge, New York and London.

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Phelan, Peggy, (1993), *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, New York: Routledge, Chapman & Hall, pp 146.

The idea of theatricality has also been enlarged and applied to politics, where political behavior and its defining rhetoric are considered as theatrical. Also the ideas of national identity and imagined history are constructed as modes of performed identity. The realm of the public is that of the performative³⁰. The political rhetoric of praxis during the Naxalbari Movement was encapsulated within one very important idea of encircling the city with villages. “Gram diye shohor ghera” or Long Live the People’s Movement were not just slogans that were called out in every part of the state. These were taken as doctrines from Lin Pao as well as announcing concrete happening. What the students wanted was an alive, real plan of action and not a theoretical or imaginative one. For them bringing a change in the society was not what they read in books but a real possibility which they sought as their responsibility to perform. The idea of performance or performativity has emerged as a possible organizing concept for a wider range of cultural, social, and political activities. The idea of performativity, instead of being folded within the idea of theatricality as Feral proposes, is often put forward as a unifying concept. An example of the performative being folded in theatricality can be found in writings on the French Revolution. In his commentary on Artaud, Derrida argues about theatrical text as that, “whose nature is itself necessarily representative, [a text which] maintains with what is called the ‘real’ an imitative and reproductive relationship.”³¹ Marie-Helene Huet argues in favor of the performative value of the theatrical text which for her is the death sentence of King Louis XVI which was ‘performed’ within the space of theatre and that of the assassination of Jean Paul Marat by Charlotte Corday which was also be carried out in the very same theatre. As Huet questions the fundamental difference between theatrical text and other writings lies not in the representation it defines but the possibility to which it lends itself of being the object of a representation? The theatrical text is

³⁰ Davis, Tracy C. and Thomas Postlewaite (ed), (2003), *Theatricality*, Cambridge University Press, U.K. pp 29.

³¹ As quoted by Huet, Marie-Helene, (1982), *Rehearsing the Revolution: The Staging of Marat’s Death 1793-1797*, Trans. by Robert Hurley, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, California. Pp 20

not representation inscribed in language but future representation on the stage hence a performance. It is the representability of the theatrical text that makes in a certain sense, unreadable and allows it only to be performed and endlessly repeat and rehearse itself as representation. As W.B. Worthen argues, that it is not the text that prescribes the meanings of the performance: it is the construction of the text within the specific apparatus of the ceremony that creates performative force. The meaning of the performance depends on the citation not of the text but of the regimes of heterosexual socialization, on the interplay among a specific text, individual performers, the “materiality and historical density of performance”³². Between the ‘event’ that is called the Naxalbari Movement and the ‘event’ called the representation, in the theatre, of the same, “writing is at once remembrance and anticipation; more than a fragile link, it is a delay, it is lapse, possibility, the putting off, till the morrow...”³³, of the revolutionary fervor that it evokes. As Huet argues, between the exercise of theatrical writing and the eventuality of the staging is a wait that is charged with meaning and no less dramatic (that is, theatrical) than the twenty four hours that were to separate the written sentence of the king’s death and his public execution. This juxtaposition that is being made between the written text and the staging of it reflects on something that was very peculiar to the Naxalbari Movement. In every political movement there is always a given plan of action but in this case it was quite literal. In the ten special editions of the journal *Ebong Jalark* which reprinted articles and reports from the later banned CPI (ML) mouthpiece *Deshabrati* there are many such articles which almost predict what is going to happen in the next few days of action. Not only did reports like “Slit the throats of jotedars!” glorified and celebrated such acts it also gives a tactical blueprint of what next is to be done and where. It almost is a pre-given, written text that was needed to be executed with

³² Diamond, Elin, (1996) *Performance and Cultural Politics*, Introduction, Routledge, pp 5, as quoted by W.B. Worthen in his article *Drama, Performativity, and Performance* in PMLA, Vol. 113, No. 5 (Oct., 1998), pp. 1093-1107.

³³ Huet, Marie-Helene, (1982), *Rehearsing the Revolution: The Staging of Marat’s Death 1793-1797*, Trans. by Robert Hurley, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, California. Pp21

utmost precision, deviating from which would hurt the final outcome of such a performance.³⁴ This line of political action was represented within the world of theatre. Many of the plays were written reflecting the performance of the already written text for example Amar Ray's play "Badla". Hence this aspect of the theatrical text that it has to be spoken does not have its reference in actual experience but in an experience yet to come, a text set down on a page to which it will perhaps be given to become life, speech, presence, but only within the strictly delimited enclosure of theatrical illusion. "In all its activities the Revolution demands a reader, a listener, ultimately a spectator"³⁵.

In the performance of the movement in the villages and cities as well as in the theatrical performances the actors would put themselves in extremely risky situation. In all circumstances whether gathering intelligence about the position of the enemy and the police or while moving in the areas or taking shelter for rest and for food supplies or when conducting raids or when retreating and advancing the guerilla force they were constantly risking themselves and none of this would have been possible without the active support and involvement of the people for whom these actions were being carried out in the first place. Thomas Carlyle in his analysis of the French Revolution in regards to certain occurrences in the public sphere argues that these spaces were where the ideas of nation and theatre, or state as theatre were very important. Carlyle draws a set of judgments by extrapolating from the theatre goers' or actor's experience of disassociation from the spectacle. One of these are how by denying sympathy, theatricality appears. Carlyle argues that in order to take ones place in democratic politics, interaction in the public sphere is necessary which requires a citizen to develop a critical stance which

³⁴ *Deshabrati Shankalan*, Vol 3 (July- September, 1999), Vol 4 (Jan- June, 2000), Vol 6 (July- Dec 2002), Vol 7 (Jan- June 2003), Vol 8 (Jan- June 2004), Vol 9 (Jan- June 2006), Ebong Jalark.

³⁵ Huet, Marie-Helene, (1982), *Rehearsing the Revolution: The Staging of Marat's Death 1793-1797*, Trans. by Robert Hurley, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, California. Pp25

sometimes comes from something in which sympathy is denied to others. He describes how the dialectics between natural and theatrical is disavowed when one becomes unconcerned about the gap between his feeling and what is being represented about them. He argues that not to have correspondence between feeling and action was to take moral responsibility.³⁶ But I would like to disagree with him on this by arguing that something quite different was happening in Bengal at that time. During performance of plays the real life intervened into the theatrical space forcing the spectators to assume their own roles as actors. The staging of both Teer and Kolkata r Hamlet was disrupted by police and the local CPI (M) cadres which put the audience in a situation where their reaction would determine if some of the actors were to live or die³⁷. Asit Bose in his interview also mentioned the staging of many of this other plays which were disrupted by local congress goons and if the audience would not have intervened then some of them would have had to loose their life. Asit Bose in regard to this kind of reaction commented “the moment those goons came inside charging us, more than feeling scared we thought to ourselves that even if we had failed to represent the brutality of the state, the actions of these lumpens would bring it out even more....the outcome of this kind of theatre no longer remained within the stage space but travelled outside to implicate everyone present within that space.” Bishakha Roy, who was part of Badal Sarkar’s group and also part of the Third Theatre movement during the early 70s³⁸ was also an active member of the CPI (ML) during the movement and worked within the city of Calcutta. She had to change her name to Meera when there was an arrest warrant issued on her name. There was a dual performance that she had to engage in—one was in real life and

³⁶ Davis, Tracy C. and Thomas Postlewaite (ed), (2003), *Theatricality*, Cambridge University Press, U.K. pp37

³⁷ Primary source

³⁸ Third Theatre was formed imbibing ideas from the traditional and folk theatre. However, at the same time it had an identity of its own. It arose from that educated minority of feudal society who neither belonged to the peasants or the landlords. In Third Theatre there is no concrete characterization. The actors are free to choose their roles and exchange them on the stage. Even the audience can take part in the same. Further, there is the freedom of movement and there is no restriction of space. Body language is made maximum use of than facial expressions

the other on stage. In fact the performance of both identities were very interconnected and every time she would be up on stage playing a character she was also the actor Meera which was a performance in itself and she would risk her true identity and her life with every such act of hers. Therefore in these performances, aesthetics cannot be grasped without ethics. By setting up extreme conditions and exposing themselves to risk force the audience to take responsibility and provoke them to intervene into the situation. The ethical turns into a constitutive dimension of the aesthetic. That is why these performances pose such a challenge and theatricality here carries certain social and political implications.³⁹ They demand a fundamental rethinking and radical reconceptualization of the relationship between the aesthetic and the ethical. The performances postulate that the aesthetic melts into the social, the political, and the ethical. The aesthetic incorporates its respective “opposites” – the social, political, and ethical. The aesthetic fuses with the non-aesthetic, blurring the boundaries between the two.⁴⁰ The autonomy of art itself becomes the object of self-reflection in performance as the opposition between art and reality, and between the aesthetic and the non-aesthetic collapses.

As I have argued in this section for locating the city of Calcutta as a site of spectacle exhibiting both theatricality and performativity, in the next section I would take up the example of wall paintings/writings and posters as one of the many acts of the part of the revolutionary which was spectacular in nature and effectively being theatrical and performative as well.

³⁹ Davis, Tracy C. and Thomas Postlewaite (ed), (2003), *Theatricality*, Cambridge University Press, U.K.

⁴⁰ Fischer-Lichte, Erika, (2008), *The Transformative Power of Performance*; Trans. by Saskya Iris Jain; Routledge, New York and London.

Wall paintings and posters: the performing of a spectacle (?)

The Naxalbari firing happened on 22nd May, 1967. 24th May this news was published in Calcutta newspapers. On the morning of 25th May, the busiest, populated parts of the city of Calcutta like Howrah station, Sealdah station, Dharamtolla, Dalhousie, Calcutta University and different college was plastered with posters and wall writings in support of the Naxalbari uprising. The previous night the students were up making and pasting the posters throughout the city. In this section I argue that the act of wall painting or postering and the production of that art go beyond just 'art' but as a performance whose life is only in the present. In the context of the Naxalbari Movement the idea was to use the image as medium to form a social relationship in the immediate condition rather than a thing accessible for generations to come. Wall painting like graffiti and posters, in its various forms and manifold designs, is one of the most ubiquitous sources of visual culture in the contemporary urban metropolis. Since its inception illegally placed images have remained a focal issue for both artists and public authorities alike and have produced intense and impassioned emotions on both sides of the spectrum. It is, on the one hand, considered to be pure, unmediated expression and the most natural manifestation of 'public' art; but, on the other, it is considered to be defacement, destruction, and an anathema to a 'civil' society. Street artists⁴¹ will go to extreme, often life-threatening extents to produce their 'art'; council authorities will likewise spend vast amounts of funds and time in order to remove and completely eradicate the 'vandalism'. Therefore, my argument is that street or public art cannot be seen just as visual imagery but as a process which entails a "performance" about which I shall elaborate further. Instances of wall writings and posters during the Naxalbari Movement, like 'China's Chairman Is Our Chairman' bloomed on the walls of the city and the walls of college streets were plastered with posters

⁴¹ Barrick, Mac E. *The Growth of Graffiti*, Folklore Forum, Vol. 7, p. 273, 1974.3, 1974.

saying: 'Murderer Ajoy Mukherjee (the Chief minister) must resign' and 'Gram Diye Shohor Ghera' (Encircling the city with villages)⁴² are present in almost any literature on the movement.

Why is it necessary for us to look at this kind of 'graphic art' to borrow Lyotard's term? Graphic art informs about the idea it promotes, it answers questions. That has its testimonial function. It is always an object of circumstances, and consequently ephemeral. The graphic artist is a street artist according to Lyotard. The street is the figure of public life and a place for encounters, encounters which are unexpected. "Graphic art is exclusively dependent on cultural, commercial, political, utilitarian events; all placed on the same gauge, and subject to the same rule of what is without rules, of the event"⁴³. The graphic artists bank on the unsure, unforeseeable and perhaps impossible communication. The object is circumstantial and inseparable from the event it promotes, thus from the location, the moment, and the public where the thing happens. Lyotard talks about how that when there is the air of the time which questions the public's definable conditions of life, of work, or constants, ideas and language, it does not change so fast. The Naxalbari movement which was taking shape in the rural areas but the effects was being visible in Calcutta. Calcutta's walls were screaming in black tar, calling upon the people to make the 70s' the "decade of liberation", announcing that "throats of jotedars" were being slit by angry peasants, and promising that the People's Liberation Army would march across West Bengal in 1971. The walls of college street area were "decorated" with posters carrying the slogans: "the path of Naxalbari is the path of peasants' revolution!" The CPI (M-L) "clandestinely but very efficiently and extensively" distributed pamphlets in the rural areas as well as urban areas. Files and records,

⁴² Banerjee, Sumanta, (1980), *In the Wake of Naxalbari: A History of the Naxalite Movement in India*, Subarnarekha, Calcutta, PP 112, 113, 114, and Dutta, Krishna and Anita Desai, (2003), *Calcutta A Cultural and Literary History*, Signal Books.

⁴³ Lyotard, Jean-François, (1997), *Postmodern Fables*, transl. by Georges Van Den Abbeele, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis. Pp 43-44

question papers and answer scripts chairs and tables went up in flames, stenciled portraits of Mao Tse-tung gazed down approvingly from school and college walls which shrieked out in loud letters: "Political power grows out of the barrel of gun!"⁴⁴ However, these acts are also that of reclaiming the streets and subverting the dynamics of private and public and the power hierarchy. Many anonymous men had unintentionally created a piece of live art that vividly commented not only on the immediate event, but created images, which contained both a reaction into the political situation of the city and a stare into a complicated and uncertain but nonetheless a coveted future

When anybody encounters any object in the world, it invites the question, how did this thing get to be here and furthermore consists of finding out their origin-stories mentally, reconstructing their histories as a sequence of actions performed by another agent.⁴⁵ Advancing this conception, we can argue that as the embodied artist undertaking the act of wall painting is also intrinsically an artist engaged in a 'criminal act', one can not view the image without perceiving this inherent illegality; when we examine and experience the images we consequently internalize this conscious act of transgression created through its performance. Accordingly, I would propose that the overt visual misdemeanor in the act of wall painting/writing can induce a sense of "corporeal illicitness"⁴⁶ to wall painting's very appearance which needs to be controlled by the state because it elicits a set of affects in the form of an experience endowed with admiration and reverence for the effort and audacity of the transgression

⁴⁴ See Banerjee, Sumanta, (1980), *In the Wake of Naxalbari: A History of the Naxalite Movement in India*, Subarnarekha, Calcutta; Damas, Marius, (1991), *Approaching Naxalbari*, Radical Impression, Calcutta; Dasgupta, Biplab, *The Naxalite Movement: An Epilogue*, Social Scientist, Vol. 6, No. 12 (Jul., 1978), pp. 3-24; *The Guerrillas of Calcutta*, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 5, No. 49 (Dec. 5, 1970), pp. 1953-1954, *Urban Guerrillas in Calcutta*, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 6, No. 28 (Jul. 10, 1971), pp. 1379-1382.

⁴⁵ Schacter, Rafael. *An Ethnography of Iconoclasm: An Investigation into the Production, Consumption and Destruction of Street-art in London*, Journal of Material Culture Vol. 13(1): 35-61.

⁴⁶ Ibid

whilst viewing the images. The image's significance only becomes 'accessible' when we take into account the medium, the means by which images are 'transmitted', and as no visible image can reach us unmediated, the mediator not only proposes, through his/her work a particular arrangement of the perception but also 'creates the viewer's attention'.⁴⁷ Thus the two elements, image and medium, are fused, and we cannot make clear the definition between the graffiti and its production, the act of production and its legality, which finally culminates in opening up a space where knowledge, action, affects and ethics converge.

Evidences of wall posters of writing are there in abundance within the literature of the Naxalbari movement. The political weapon of wall posters and writings was used even before Naxalbari especially during the movement related to food which went on to become the precursor to the Naxalbari movement. Lines such as "Jokhon e janata chaye chakri o khaddo, shimante beje oothe judh er baddo" (Whenever the people demand food and employment, there is also the call from the borders for the declaration of war) covered the walls of Calcutta at that time.⁴⁸ Even when the students were protesting against the increase of tram fares they had painted their protest all over the city walls over the span of one month. In response to this tremendous effort of the part of the students the tram employees themselves came forward to join in the protests. The students, regular passengers and trams workers together resisted the inflation which resulted in the administration having to use tear gas and lathi charge to disperse the protesters during processions and demonstrations. The inherent difficulty at producing this kind of posters and writings was something that all the respondents spoke about. One of my respondents (name withheld on request) narrated how they would only go out at night fall, covering themselves with dark cloth and they would usually go out in groups. While some of them would guard

⁴⁷ King, Thomas H. *Roadside Rock Art*, Journal of American Folklore, Vol. 93, p. 60.

⁴⁸ Acharya, Anil (ed), (2008), *Shat- Shottor er Chatro Andolon* (The Student Movement of 60s and 70s), Anushtup, Kolkata.

the ends of the road, the others would finish their work. They would usually have stencils of letters made already and they would run it over with black tar. If they were attacked in the middle they would somehow finish the writing almost smearing the tar over the wall and then sprint from there. The police when searching random houses of young people would keep a look out for such stenciled images or letter and any material required to make tar. Spotting of these at the house of a young girl or boy was according to the police a sure sign of being a Naxalite. Films such as *Calcutta '71* by Mrinal Sen and very recently “Herbert” by Suman Mukhopadhyaya have scenes depicting the youth in this act of transgression and then being chased or killed by the police. The play “Lolatkikhon” written by Amar Ray was primarily based on the dramatic events that surrounded the acts of ‘walling’ and ‘postering’ by the Naxalites⁴⁹. In this way, the performativity of the medium gives the work not only an ethical and judicial feature but extracts an affective aspect which makes spectatorship an interactive process; the specific tension and euphoria the artist feels whilst producing the imagery is communicated to both peers and other spectators, who then share and participate in the experience. It can be suggested that the act thus becomes a distinct accomplishment and the images are hence seen to be not just communicating meaning but actively doing something in the world as mediators of activity. The means, by which wall paintings’ powerful efficacy is fashioned, is created through the intensity of its very production, due not only to its illegality, but equally to the inherent physical difficulty of producing such works, without authorization, without permission, in prominent urban locations. The act of wall painting also focuses on the regularised use of certain methods of operation, symbols and codes which suggest a highly developed physical and symbolic language which remains inseparable from these works of art. Victor Turner attributed the new focus on performance during the 1970s to a shift in anthropology from “structure to process and from competence to performance”.⁵⁰ One cannot overlook this extreme and

⁴⁹ Roy, Amar (ed.) *Naxalbari Probhabe Shilpi- Shahitya-Challachitra*, Naya Itihash, 24th May, 1992.

⁵⁰ Turner, Victor, (1986), *The Anthropology of Performance*, PAJ Books.

powerful facet of the wall painting performance; not only must the artists reach perilously inaccessible sites, but once there they must spend hours perfecting their work, whilst constantly ready to sprint from the authorities. Therefore it can be said that this not only stresses the connection between art and bodily action, but furthermore accentuates how the image is not just received visually but understood in a more extensive way. One could suggest that much of wall paintings/political posters' power in fact emerge from this very act and the particular performative nature of its production.

Not only had the act of wall paintings or posters entailed a kind of performance but the words that were written also exhibited codes of performativity. J. L. Austin, who did not use the word "performativity," but proposes that constative utterances, be understood as a state of affairs and are true or false, and another class of utterances which are not true or false and which actually perform the action to which they refer (e.g., "I promise to pay you tomorrow" accomplishes the act of promising). These he calls performatives. In this sense performativity can be said to investigate the pragmatics of language. Speech here had a transformative effect on its audience. Slogans that were called out and were written by the students of Presidency College like "Ghotona ghotao, fayeda othao, shohor e Che, gram e Mao" (make events, take advantage of it, in the city be Che and in villages be Mao)⁵¹ were just not written to evoke enthusiasm but it rather it was an act of doing what was being said. The urban guerilla warfare and the village plan of action were separate during the Naxalbari movement and were very strictly adhered to and the slogan was a way to encapsulate the idea. This formed the consecrated identity of the movement especially with the role of the youth primarily of those from Presidency College. The stylized repetition of performative acts embodies certain cultural and historical possibilities. Performative acts, in turn, generate the culturally and historically marked identities. In a theatrical performance, a text can be

⁵¹ Acharya, Anil (ed), (2008), *Shat- Shottor er Chatro Andolon* (The Student Movement of 60s and 70s), Anushtup, Kolkata.

staged in various ways, and the actors may interpret and realize their roles within its textual framework. Similarly, the revolutionaries act within a space, restricted by certain demands. It enacts its individual interpretations within the limits of the given “stage directions.” The conditions for embodiment thus coincide with the conditions of performance.⁵²

Performative reflexivity is a condition in which a socio cultural group or some of its members acting representatively, turn, bend or reflect upon themselves, upon the relations, actions, symbols, meaning, codes, roles, statuses, ethical and legal rules and other socio cultural components which make up their public “selves”. Communitas can generally be defined in opposition to structure: Communitas appears where structure does. In Turner’s work, communitas in rituals refers to liminality, marginality, inferiority, and equality. The liminoid diverges from the liminal in several ways. Liminoid phenomena, takes place in the complex industrial world; they are the products of individual or particular group efforts and are generated continuously. The liminoid originates outside the boundaries of the economic, political, and structural process, and its manifestations often challenge the wider social structure by offering social critique on, or even suggestions for, a revolutionary re-ordering of the official social order.⁵³ To a great extent the same could be said about wall painting/posters and the artists/people who engage in the act of production. Firstly, these groups especially the youth who were in their liminal (in this case liminoid) stage, form the communitas which then use performative reflexivity to challenge or over turn the structures as was the case during the Naxalbari Movement especially if one goes into understanding the role the youth played in the movement. Secondly, because of the ritualized nature of their act of producing the visuals, for example, of recurring stenciled or posterized imagery, often on a

⁵² Fischer-Lichte, Erika, (2008), *The Transformative Power of Performance*; Trans. by Saskya Iris Jain; Routledge, New York and London.

⁵³ Turner, Victor, (1986), *The Anthropology of Performance*, PAJ Books.

vast spatial and temporal scale, or equally the artist's routine of repetitively signing their party's name, the same three to six words across an entire city, would seem to give itself this certain consecrated capability. Ritual events also contain various specific and routinized gestural responses; the distinct bodily movements of physically altering the walls, through painting, stenciling or stickering, and equally the evident physical movement of climbing over fences, entering onto private property etc. The performativity of wall painting does not end here, the preparation beforehand to the actual act; is mediated by highly specific and habitual methods and practices, combined with numerous materials and potent, expressive signs, as well as the various decorations and clothing fashioned for the specific performance – all elements, contribute to the ritualized character of the experience making wall painting a performative act.

Therefore to conclude, the motive behind the artists' production of his art and the usefulness of it in capturing the pulse of the movement is of intriguing interest. Lyotard grasps this idea when he comments: "Their addresses, all of us, are inhabited by the monotonous passion of "performances", only thinking about what is possible, about what is "feasible," as one says. They hurry along. They let go of the past if it can't be exploited."⁵⁴ Their work is an object that must induce something other than the pleasure drawn from its beauty. Theirs is a fidelity that is not "mimetic but inventive"⁵⁵.

Representation: Some problems

Bengali theatre in the decade of the seventies has been the subject matter of debate for a long time. Journals like People's Theatre, Abhinoy, Nattoprosongo, Epic Theatre, Theatre Bulletin etc

⁵⁴ Lyotard, Jean-François, (1997), *Postmodern Fables*, transl. by Georges Van Den Abbeele, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis. Pp 45

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, pp 46

for a long time have discussed the positives and negatives of that theatre. With the hurling of criticisms from the more established schools of theatre, these theatre directors of groups could only defend themselves arguing that in a situation that was the 1970s where one's existence is threatened, it becomes difficult to follow an umbrella ideology or theatre conventions. The moot question proposed by them was if everyday life was exceeding the economy of visibility, of performance then what, how and how much one represents that reality. Lehmann drawing from Waldenfels remarks that nothing is represented or transmitted in situations of upheaval because there is nothing that could be represented or transmitted—the experience of what is seen and the subject who is seeing is at stake.⁵⁶ Hence the question of representation becomes that of the spectators and how they respond to the event of performance as it unfolds or how would the actors want their audience to react. In the present inquiry of the Naxalbari Movement which was a situation of upheaval and as argued in the previous section, a spectacle, the question of representation becomes inevitable. In this section I would mainly be talking about the representational quality of the four plays, in so far as they represent the movement, and the various codes of theatricality, performativity and the post dramatic that they exhibit, extending the concepts within the realm of the spectacle in the real world, as well as various challenges that they pose to established ideas of representation in the western academia.

Lehmann argues that in post dramatic theatre it is assumed that for a human being even the most conflictuous situation will not appear dramatic. The representational form of drama is not equipped to grasp the experienced reality. The certainty of the beginning, middle and end of a dramatic plot is over because in the experience of society which offers no security, adventure, assurance, or seductions,

⁵⁶ Lehmann, Hans- Thies, (2006), *Postdramatic Theatre*, trans. by Karen Jurs- Munby, Routledge-Taylor & Francis Group, London and New York.

there is only the absence of possibilities.⁵⁷ That is possibly why movements like the May Revolution, the movement in Belgrade and even the Naxalbari Movement cannot be dramatized like the French Revolution because the very experience of these societies had nothing dramatic about it. At that time consciousness lost the sense of totality because totality was no longer present in reality. Total reality appeared as a mass of differences, imbalances, distortions. Fragmentary activities concentrated on a particular difference so as to be able to understand it but they could not act upon it. These fragmentary activities completed the process by which totality was emptied and vacated.⁵⁸ One of the key plays that were performed in 1971 inspired from the event of Naxalbari was Mohit Chattopadhyay written and Bibhash Chakrabarty directed “Rajrakta” (the Royal Blood). It was considered as one of the best plays of that year along with Utpal Dutt’s “Tin er Tolowar” by a lot of theatre critics and journals. One aspect that was much debated upon was the form of the play which was going beyond the Brechtian form of theatre making. Samik Bandhopadhyay in the journal “Enact” while reviewing Rajrakta said the director Bibhash Chakrabarty treated the confrontations between the authority and the youth episodically in a fragmented manner, and allowed each episode an independent character and never repeating a pattern. Theatre Workshop according to him was able to achieve in their production of Rajrakta a clarity that created symbols and unfolded their meaningfulness without any literary claims and as a consequence it “stood out as a play of protest”⁵⁹. Lefebvre while arguing about the social situation of France in the summer of 1968 pointed out that disruption and restoration of social order came to be viewed as the disruption and restoration of everyday existence. The revolution hence becomes the embodiment of the absence of possibilities, the active subversion of conditions that maintain it by divorcing it from “extra

⁵⁷ Ibid

⁵⁸ See Lefebvre, Henri, (2009), *The Explosion: Marxism and the French Upheaval*, trans. by Alfred Ehrenfeld, Aakar Books, New Delhi.

⁵⁹ Review articles on Teer, Micchil, Rajrakta, Kolkata r Hamlet, Source: Files on Utpal Dutt, Mohit Chattopadhyay, Bibhash Chakravorty, Kolkata r Hamlet and Badal Sarkar, Natya Shodh Sangsthan, Kolkata.

ordinary” possibilities. The youth of Calcutta, especially students of Presidency College during that period engaged in many other forms of resistance against the government. The students’ agitation was marked by strikes and clashes between the students and the police, the latter coming in response to the appeal of the college authorities. Attacks were directed against statues of the Indian bourgeois political leaders and the 19th century social reformers. The targets chosen by the young rebels were pictures and busts of Gandhi, Rammohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Vivekananda and other bourgeois political leaders and social reformers, in public squares and institutions of Calcutta and other towns.⁶⁰ Charu Majumdar in agreement with these actions argues, “the students and youth have become restless for the sake of the agrarian revolution and they strike blows at the statues of those who had always tried to pacify the armed struggle of the peasant masses. So this struggle is a part of the agrarian revolution.”⁶¹ Therefore contestation arose not against authority so much as against the entire society maintained by authority. Workers did not stop working because their employers acted like a father but because they reject paternalism because it embodied and symbolized a social order, their real target being the established social order.

Pralay Sur, in his review of *Rajrakta* in the journal “*Abhinoy*” describes the play as being a landmark because the play had proved that it was possible to depict the exploited and the exploiter not by pushing the limits of realism but an invention as to how we understand the dialectics through only

⁶⁰ See Banerjee, Sumanta, (1980), *In the Wake of Naxalbari: A History of the Naxalite Movement in India*, Subarnarekha, Calcutta; Damas, Marius, (1991), *Approaching Naxalbari*, Radical Impression, Calcutta; Dasgupta, Biplab, *The Naxalite Movement: An Epilogue*, *Social Scientist*, Vol. 6, No. 12 (Jul., 1978), pp. 3-24; *The Guerrillas of Calcutta*, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 5, No. 49 (Dec. 5, 1970), pp. 1953-1954, *Urban Guerrillas in Calcutta*, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 6, No. 28 (Jul. 10, 1971), pp. 1379-1382.

⁶¹ Charu Majumdar *Shongkha*, Vol 1, Ebong Jalark, Jan-Sept, 2009.

four people and without speech making.⁶² Lehmann locates the political in perception itself, in art as a “poetic interruption” of the law and therefore politics. The politics does not lie in the content of the theatre but “the implicit content of its mode of representation”. So we can argue that it is this “the implicit content of its mode of representation” that brings theatre close to historical events—political events. According to Lehmann politics is not is putting up oppressed people on stage but in the communication between actors and spectators, subject and object which gets blurred and forms the implicit content of the mode of representation. Intersection of aesthetically organized and everyday real life takes place in real gathering. The act of performing and the act of reception take place together as a real doing creating a ‘joint text’⁶³, a text that communicates even when there is no dialogue on stage or between actors and audience. This total text is the adequate description of theatre. This witnessing of the total text can be best understood by an incident narrated to me by theatre actor and director Asit Bose. It was during the staging of one of his play in which they were representing an incident in a dramatized way. During the play, the character of the police man alleges a boy who he had just killed of being a Naxalite⁶⁴ and before his co actor could respond the audience cried out “that’s a lie”! There was the intersection of the aesthetically organized and the everyday real life—hence the ‘joint text’.

Drama has been considered as the embodiment of history by many Marxist theoreticians and historians have used the metaphor of drama for any tragedy or comedy in the real historical process- the

⁶² Review articles on Teer, Micchil, Rajrakta, Kolkata r Hamlet, Source: Files on Utpal Dutt, Mohit Chattopadhyay, Bibhash Chakravorty, Kolkata r Hamlet and Badal Sarkar, Natya Shodh Sangsthan, Kolkata.

⁶³ Lehmann, Hans- Thies, (2006), *Postdramatic Theatre*, trans. by Karen Jurs- Munby, Routledge-Taylor & Francis Group, London and New York.

⁶⁴ The incident referred here is of a student of Shibpur BE College, Calcutta who was going back after buying some food. He had a plastic bag in his hand and the police suspected that it was a bomb and shot him right there alleging that he was a Naxalite carrying explosive. This incident created furor among the middle class Bengalis and they reacted in very sharp ways.

dialectical nature.⁶⁵ Therefore drama and history have had a long past together. Utpal Dutt as a playwright and director was known for his portrayal of real life incidents either implicitly or explicitly with his own artistic genius and his allegiance to Marxist ideology. But with his production of *Teer* in 1969 this was the first time he wrote and directed a play which was about an immediate political event and hence one notices a difference in the way he approaches his present crisis. Partha Raha in his review of *Teer* writes that Utpal Dutt following Brecht used a narrator in the play whose work was to talk about various events but somewhere Dutt had failed to carry out the Brechtian model till the end. Raha particularly criticized Dutt's use of documentary style in the play through the character of the narrator. He argued that Utpal Dutt goes into the drab details of minute thing right from the way of life of the tribal communities whom he portrayed in the play to the major political events. But in opposition to Raha's opinion it would probably be important to locate the necessity of adopting a form like documentary in case of writing *Teer*. According to Brecht, theatre would have features of its own that would subvert role playing and mimesis so that actors could signal the falsity and duality of their own acting, selectively helping spectators to reject empathy and identification. To be politically efficacious, Brecht needed spectators to reject the commensurability of stage and world...and use the dystopic example of the dramatized story to better their social condition⁶⁶. *Teer* was staged in 1969, two years after the firing at Naxalbari had happened. It was the formative years of the movement when it started getting more and more support from various sections of people and *Teer* was one of first plays to be staged professing the Naxalbari ideology with so much vehemence. *Teer* for its spectators was one of first representations of the movement and like the Naxalbari movement was a rupture on the political plane, a new path to emancipation, *Teer* did the same for theatre conventions. The IPTA till that day had

⁶⁵ Lehmann, Hans- Thies, (2006), *Postdramatic Theatre*, trans. by Karen Jurs- Munby, Routledge-Taylor & Francis Group, London and New York.

⁶⁶ Davis, Tracy C. and Thomas Postlewaite (ed), (2003), *Theatricality*, Cambridge University Press, U.K.

staged many plays which talked about the oppressed people, the have-nots but Teer was new because it was reacting to a situation which was immediate and evading representability. It was evading representability because the event of Naxalbari was still unfolding and hence it was indiscernible and assessing the effectiveness of the event was impossible thereby raising new problematics to the representation of the same. What 'Nabanna', done by the IPTA in 1943 meant for Bengali theatre and to the issues of representation surrounding the Bengal famine, Teer did it for again in the late 1960s with the Naxalbari Movement creating the rupture. Hence one could argue that the known model of representation revealed themselves inadequate to grasp the reality of that time. As "Anushtup" in their review of *Rajrakta* argued that if the spread of revolutionary consciousness is the aim of a theatre group then realism should be for them an indispensable weapon. Of course this would not be documentary realism but the realism of a compound nature. The reviewer suggested the style of "Red Lantern"⁶⁷ be followed which was a mixture of opera and drama. Interestingly, when *Red Lantern* was translated in Bengali and performed in Calcutta, its traditional form was never followed. Rather it was performed in the form of street theatre and went on to become one of most performed plays of that period. Both Brecht and Schiller considered theatre itself a space devoid of any pressures to act⁶⁸. The spectators were not to intervene in the performance but in the social and political conditions prevalent outside the theatre. The performance was meant to provide them with images that stirred them to reflect on the political and social conditions; this would cause them to take actions in the social and political realities surrounding them. The situation which resulted from the event called the Naxalbari Movement was such in which the space of theatre came to be one in which the audience had to take responsibility. One may argue that the use of documentary style was to give certain information and evidences to the spectator

⁶⁷ Review articles on Teer, Micchil, *Rajrakta*, Kolkata r Hamlet, Source: Files on Utpal Dutt, Mohit Chattopadhyay, Bibhash Chakravorty, Kolkata r Hamlet and Badal Sarkar, Natya Shodh Sangsthan, Kolkata.

⁶⁸ Fischer-Lichte, Erika, (2008), *The Transformative Power of Performance*; Trans. by Saskya Iris Jain; Routledge, New York and London.

for them to react to it and take their share of the responsibility. Here one would not need to create dystopic images on stage because there was no going home and thinking about it but rather taking up one role then and there. Again and again, spectators are maneuvered into situations in which they must make decisions and act. The spectators share with the artist a responsibility for the situation they find themselves in. The bodily co-presence of actors and spectators enables and constitutes performance. For a performance to occur, actors and spectators must assemble to interact in a specific place for a certain period of time. Hence these plays become “play by all for all,”⁶⁹ which is fundamentally the redefining of the relationship between actors and spectators. Through their physical presence, perception, and response, the spectators become co-actors that generate the performance by participating in the “play”.⁷⁰ Therefore one can argue that in Schiller’s and Brecht’s idea of theatre the aesthetic was also conceived in opposition to the ethical but here we see the merging together of the ethical with the aesthetic.

The idea of dialectics as proposed by Peter Szondi cannot apply in post dramatic theatre because it does not follow its basic rule⁷¹. The basic argument that emerges is that in post dramatic theatre the mode of representation is of specific value. The dichotomy between the form and the content ceases to exist. This is because the subject and the object are difficult to differentiate. “Satyayug” described Rajrakta as being a play such where slices of reality relating to the present society was arranged in a comprehensible and aesthetic manner that the spectator along with others in the audience himself became a character in the play. The actors and audience together create the total text and actor on stage is not playing a character objectively but gets in his own subjectivity which forces the audience to disrupt the performance that in turn get their own subjectivities on stage. In regard to the very same play

⁶⁹ ibid

⁷⁰ ibid

⁷¹ Lehmann, Hans- Thies, (2006), *Postdramatic Theatre*, trans. by Karen Jurs- Munby, Routledge-Taylor & Francis Group, London and New York.

Dipendu Chakrabarty writes in the journal "Anushtup" that Rajrakta presented a new and a complex mode of representation previously unknown to the Bengali stage. Chakrabarty argues that till the beginning of the seventies the two main forms of theatre that was prevalent in Bengal was the Absurdist and the Brechtian form, with the latter being a more popular and accepted form given the long history of Communism in Bengal. The dialectics between reality and representation was the main concern of most of the playwrights at that time. Then the 1960s witnessed the growing influence of Absurdist movement in Bengali theatre with Badal Sarkar's "Ebong Indrajeet" catching the maximum lime light. But there seemed to be something peculiar to the nature of politics in the 1970s that prompted theatre directors to go beyond both these forms because both the forms proved insufficient to capture it in its entirety.⁷² So while some would argue that Bibhas Chakrabarty in Rajrakta was serving the "Brechtian content in an Ionesco container", some others would argue that it was more of the expressionist theatre genre, what remains is that Rajrakta posed a challenge to the way one would represent 'reality' and paved a new mode of representation which was unique to theatre conventions and yet to named. Following Rajrakta's suit there were other plays such as Theatre Commune's "Kingking", Chetna's "Marich Sangbad", Nandikar's "Astigone" and "Football" etc where the dialectics of reality and representation had to be re thought and they were all very successful in unsettling their audience, pulling them out of their comfort areas. Therefore the politics of post dramatic (?)⁷³ lies in the mixing up of the form and content and the act of reception therefore it can almost be refereed to as post dialectics and therefore even the way we understand catharsis also needs to be re-thought.

⁷² *Shottor Dashak*, Anushtup, Special Edition, Vol 2, 1981.

⁷³ The use of the term 'post dramatic' here can be debatable because it carries certain western connotations and raises the question if we were really in the post dramatic phase or were we just employing a new form of the dramatic. But if we restrict ourselves to the essence of the post dramatic to the mixing up of form and content as argued above, one can accommodate the plays of the Naxalbari period into the framework of the post dramatic.

Lefebvre's idea of dialectics is also interesting in this context. He locates the dialectics in contestation, spontaneity and violence which had come in to fill the gap created in the political space of France. These three are pitted against the state machinery and members on the society loose their own subjectivities. In his interview to me Sumanta Banerjee responded to the question of "subject" as someone/something which had long ceased to be an individual. The subjecthood he argued travelled in a cyclical manner, moving from one collective to the other- this cycle would then consist of the peasants, workers, youth, intellectuals, film makers and theatre people--- existing not in their specificity but as a whole against the state power. Lefebvre argues that when institutions and men merge and when authority does away with legitimacy because it has itself become the criterion of legitimacy how could "subjects" express themselves or how can they invoke their status as "subjects" so as to cease being "objects" of political strategy and again become effective "subjects"? Contestation replaces the social and political mediations by which demands were raised to an all inclusive political level. The "subject" is no longer a mere individual citizen- it moved from totality to totality. This contestation arises spontaneously which is considered as a subjective element (Lenin).⁷⁴ But in this case it became a full grown objective factor and intervenes politically. In Bengal the students would be so relaxed amidst violence, setting off with a transcendent audacity and frequently carrying a red flag. They would transform relatively insignificant materials into symbols of evil, juvenile barbarism, adolescent savagery. There was widespread production of photographic collages and montages, magazine articles, quotations and slogans. There was spontaneous mural art on the walls, celebration, humor, blended with demands and aspiration, channeling them against a repressive environment. In the May Revolution in France this spontaneity expressed itself on the streets and then moved to institutions. The streets became

⁷⁴ Lefebvre, Henri, (2009), *The Explosion: Marxism and the French Upheaval*, trans. by Alfred Ehrenfeld, Aakar Books, New Delhi. Pp 69

politicized and social space assumed new meaning. Lefebvre while describing the '68 movement comments that “they have surprising ways of expressing their demands—they demand while contesting and contest while demanding”.⁷⁵ According to Lefebvre, transgression became the situation of France in May '68 and whoever did not follow it fell into the realm of the folklore. Therefore the movement oscillated between urban celebration and violence between playfulness and urban guerrilla warfare.

Since the meaning of dialectics is no longer vis-à-vis its dialogue, conflict, solution etc. catharsis is carried out in a different way. It is no longer a social bond through theatre to bind the audience and the stage. The cathartic moment comes when the actor's subjectivity is induced into the spectator and becomes his expression.⁷⁶ What happens in the case of revolution? According to Lefebvre the cathartic moment in any political upheaval is when in the masses all tendencies manifest themselves, especially all those which oppose the established society and in the case of the Naxalbari Movement it happened when in the space of the university there was freedom of speech, deep politicization, creation of new type of leadership and it became a place of ‘social condenser’⁷⁷ and the faculty who was responsible for the transmission of certain kind of knowledge but could neither fulfill promises nor needs turned the focus to a whole range of prevalent questions and problems and the students lost their subjectivities vis-à-vis the institutions which gave rise to contestation, spontaneity and violence and a will to radically transform society. The students of Presidency college were the first ones to stage the first ever play in response to the killings at the Naxalbari area. Within a few days of the firing, a student of Bengali (Hons.) wrote and directed the street play called “Bharat er Vietnam” by barricading College Street.

⁷⁵ *Ibid* pp 99

⁷⁶ Lehmann, Hans- Thies, (2006), *Postdramatic Theatre*, trans. by Karen Jurs- Munby, Routledge-Taylor & Francis Group, London and New York.

⁷⁷ Lefebvre, Henri, (2009), *The Explosion: Marxism and the French Upheaval*, trans. by Alfred Ehrenfeld, Aakar Books, New Delhi.

This play was never published and during one of their performances when they were attacked by the police the script fell off the director's hand and was confiscated by the police. At the end of the play there was a description of a procession. On the day of the performance this procession was led by the then legendary student leader Ashim Chatterjee aka Kaka who entered the scene shouting pro Naxalbari slogans. This very Ashim Chatterjee when writing about Presidency College and what the students of that institution did for the movement argues that the 1960s and '70s were the most glorious period in the history of the college. Before that period Presidency College was known as the 'elite producing machine' where career was of utmost importance and academic results were all that mattered. When thousands of students were marching on the streets of Calcutta demanding the rights of food, the students of Presidency College would pride themselves on distancing them from these things. The college was considered to be an island severed from its country-people-traditions. The '60s was capable of uprooting the students from their cocoon and dumped them in the middle of the political arena. This college went on to become the place for inspiration, safety, and dependability for the youth of the whole of Bengal. Suddenly the students were no longer interested in the lure of careers, in the safety of their familial spaces, in luxury; they were all on the path of freedom, to emancipate the country of the poor and the hungry. For that they would go from G. Williams' factory areas to peasants regions like Kalikapur to the interiors of Medinipore, Sighbhum or Birbhum. On the other side, to defend their fellow comrades of Presidency College, thousands came forward the Calcutta Tram workers, Cultural Activists and students from different parts of the state.⁷⁸ To borrow Lefebvre's argument one can opine that the movement as carried out by the youth of Bengal at that time was almost "pure"- a continuous act, continuously new or renewed. It was almost devoid of "subject" and "object"- i.e. it transcended the

⁷⁸ Acharya, Anil (ed), (2008), *Shat- Shottor er Chatro Andolon* (The Student Movement of 60s and 70s), Anushtup, Kolkata.

mental categories of object and subject and revealed them as inadequate.⁷⁹ We shall get back to this point again in our third chapter where we would directly be dealing with the idea of the subject and its subsequent representation.

The reason why we tried to bring together the performative and theatrical aspects of the Naxalbari Movement and the various performances surrounding it is because as Jestrovic points out in her work that Marvin Carlson in his book the *Haunted Stage* suggests that, through its capacity for doubling and “ghosting,” performance establishes relations not only to other texts and performances, but also to actual past and present sites that it recreates or renegotiates⁸⁰ and therefore the links and relationships between theatrical or the spaces that have been theatricalised and ‘real’ spaces can be understood in both diachronic and synchronic manner. Therefore in order to understand the Naxalbari movement and its implications today and how its history has been created, a study into these sites of theatricality is essential. As Jestrovic argues, performance can refer or even spring out of actual contemporary sites whose history is still in the making. To conclude this chapter, we can argue that the event of Naxalbari unfolded the event of theatre whose history was to be marked by stories of prohibited performances and artists, arrests of theatre practitioners for staging political implications too audaciously and, of an audience all set to identify and approve and appreciate this kind of ‘subversion’. Calcutta of the 1960s and 70s as argued, being the “city-as-action” shaped itself through radical political performances and other performative gestures into sites of spectacle and counter-spectacle and though more than forty years later a very little of that time persists the legacy of these events might hold keys of how to deal publicly with a variety of issues the country is facing. Borrowing from Jestrovic, I would

⁷⁹ Lefebvre, Henri, (2009), *The Explosion: Marxism and the French Upheaval*, trans. by Alfred Ehrenfeld, Aakar Books, New Delhi. pp 113

⁸⁰ Jestrovic, Silvija, *From Cities of War to Cities of Exile: Space, Embodiment, and Utopia in Urban Performance*, Unpublished, to be published in Oct 2011 by Palgrave.

like to argue that these performances embody an attitude and culture of confronting difficult political and ethical topics dialogically and publicly. Therefore in the last analysis one could argue that an investigation into positioning the tactical ways of using, and at times appropriating the streets and other public spaces, strategies of theatricality and performativity of place might provide us with some aesthetic forms to deal with the issues of past and present rather than address it through the language of official politics.

Writing the Movement

*"Aristotle's theory of tragedy gives us a key that seems to me to be valid for all narratives: in composing a fable, a plot, a muthos, the poet offers a mimesis, a creative imitation of human action. In the same way, a logic of possible narratives, to which a formal analysis of narrative codes may aspire, finds its completion only in the mimetic function by which the narrative remakes the human world of action. It is therefore, no longer a question of denying the subjective character of the understanding in which explanation reaches its completion. For it is always someone who receives, makes her own, appropriates the meaning for herself. But there is no sudden short circuit between the entirely objective analysis of narrative structures and the appropriation of meaning by subjects... if the subject is called upon to understand himself in light of the text, this is to the extent that the text is not closed in upon itself but open onto the world, which it redescribes and remakes."*¹

In this chapter we would be discussing the ways in which the Naxalbari movement has been written and hence has come to comprise a huge part of what we today know as the movement. Here we would be looking at writing as a form of representation and by writing here I mean literary and historical writings. There have been a large number of literatures that has been written on the Naxalbari movement including short stories, novels, plays etc. but it would be impossible to incorporate all that have been written revolving around the movement hence I would be concentrating on my four play texts: Micchil, Teer, Kolkata r Hamlet and Rajrakta. Another reason for limiting myself to the theatrical texts is because the literary quality of theatrical texts have more potential to capture the vigor of reality. Also the

¹ Ricoeur, Paul, (1991) *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics, II*, trans. by Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson, Northwest University Press, Evanston, Illinois. Pp 131

transition from written to spoken words is best understood within the space of theatre. Lastly, it would be interesting to note whether and how theatrical writing captured the exceeding reality of the situation of that period. Along with that I would also be referring to Sumanta Banerjee's book "In the Wake of Naxalbari" as an example of a historical text also because as I had mentioned before, he was a part of the movement and a witness and hence further nuances the relationship between the author and his world. In regards to texts as forms of representation, Auerbach, in 'Mimesis' deduces from the literary text (its syntax, diction, structure, point of view, tone, etc.), or, in other words, from the author's narrative strategies for representing human experience, the author's attitudes toward it. Interpretation of texts according to Ricoeur retains the feature of appropriation that was recognized by Schleiermacher, Dilthey, and Bultmann. By appropriation he understands the interpretation of a text culminating in the self interpretation of a subject who "thenceforth understands himself better, understands himself differently or simply begins to understand himself"². Self understanding passes through the understanding of the cultural signs in which the self documents and forms itself. Auerbach explicitly or implicitly locates the attitudes of the author in the culture and situation that produced them. But understanding the text is not an end in itself for it mediates the reflection of a subject who in the short circuit of immediate reflection does not find the meaning of his life. When the culture in which the author is used to, stands up on its head in the face of an event like the Naxalbari movement, when the subject is representing himself in his writing, when the event that is to be historicized is indiscernible and still happening then what happens to representation is what I intend to investigate.

In the previous chapter we had mainly focused on the performative elements of the Naxalbari movement where speech and action took the foreground. Even while discussing any form of writing, the

² Ricoeur, Paul, (1991) *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics, II*, trans. by Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson, Northwest University Press, Evanston, Illinois. Pp 119.

effort was to locate the performative in them. In this chapter we would move our focus to writing and how texts and discourses are created and what potentials it holds towards contributing to making the history of the movement. Writing as Ricoeur argues is a subsequent institution to speech because writing seems to fix in a linear script all that has already been articulated orally. He defines text as a discourse that is fixed by writing and it is a discourse that could have also been spoken but it is written precisely because it is not said. By this Ricoeur is according a very high status to the power of writing as something some concrete and reliable than spoken words. Once a discourse is written there is nothing left to capture because it loses the ephemerality of spoken words. Here the idea of language is very important. Ricoeur in order to establish discourse as a language-event enumerates the characteristics which point towards that fact. Firstly he argues that discourse is always realized temporally and in the present rather than be virtual and outside of time like language is. Secondly, he argues that language lacks a subject whereas discourse refers back to the speaker by means of a complex set of indicators such as personal pronouns. Thirdly, he points out that discourse always speaks of something—a world which it describes expresses and represents unlike language which lacks a world. Finally he notes the fact that whereas language provides the codes of communication it is only in discourse that messages are exchanged.³ The first trait of discourse as event is realized differently in living speech and writing. In living speech the event appears and disappears giving no scope for inscription and therefore this instance of discourse is like a fleeting event. Therefore he argues that what we try to inscribe is what disappears which means that only discourse needs to be fixed because it disappears. Hence the need to document the Naxalbari Movement through writing in order to concretize the discourse on the movement either through the language of literary texts or historical ones. Borrowing from Plato, he argues that writing was given to men to “come to the rescue” of the “weakness of discourse”, in which weakness is that of the event. Still the question remains as to what does writing fix? Therefore writing fixes, to quote

³ ibid

Ricoeur, “not the event of speaking, but the “said” of speaking, where we understand by the “said” of speaking that intentional exteriorization constitutive of the aim of the discourse thanks to which “sagen”, the saying, wants to become “Aus-sage”, the enunciation, the enunciated.”⁴ Or in other words, what is important for Ricoeur is the intention of being heard which lies behind the speaking of it; by which the act of saying becomes an articulation of that which has been uttered or pronounced. Therefore writing occurs in a place where speech could have emerged and a text is the inscription of the discourse because it tells us what the discourse means in written letter. He goes on to argue how writing while preserving discourse also puts it in to the archive for individual and collective memory. “The emancipation of the text from the oral situation entails a veritable upheaval in the relations between the language and the various subjectivities concerned (that of the author and of the reader)”.⁵ Therefore writing has a direct relation to the constitution of history and how in this case the Naxalbari Movement is remembered today because of certain discourses that were inscribed in the form of texts and contribute to the collective memory of each and every one who wants to remember the movement.

One of the forms of writing that I would be looking at is theatre texts which are also literary pieces. Not only just plays there have been numerous stories and novel which have been written with the Naxalbari movement as a departure point or has the movement in the background. These novels and short stories are not theatre texts but can be considered to be theatrical by the sheer virtue of capturing something which was exceeding representation and hence could only be grasped through the language of theatre. Apart from this there were also a number of poems that were penned at that time. All these written texts though are literary with no claims to represent the ‘real’ still possess a potential to contribute to history. The kinds of texts that I have mentioned require them to be read and in cases

⁴ Ibid, pp146

⁵ Ibid, pp 108.

performed or else the writing itself becomes meaningless. Derrida argues that literary texts are acts of writing that call upon acts of reading.⁶ By this he means that it is important to remain aware of the multiple meaning of the term act – both as serious performance and stage performance, as a proper doing and an improper one, as an action, a law governing and record documenting action. A representation of literature as itself governed by opposition and assumption, a representation which ones cannot simply be called inaccurate since it responds to a marked tendency in a large part of western literary writing. The space of literature according to Derrida is not only of an instituted fiction but also a fictive institution which allows one to say everything. Therefore if we take the example of the four plays that we have been discussing this far, the plays by the virtue of being within the category of literature has the privilege of saying everything through the mechanisms of the fictive institution. If one looks at the plays like *Kolkata r Hamlet*, *Micchil* or even *Rajrakta* then one can see the various liberties that have been taken by the authors of these plays. Even while dealing with something extremely real like the political unrest that they were facing due to the Naxalbari movement they still used dream imageries, disjointed narrative, actors switching characters blurring the distinction between various characters representative of different categories of people in order to represent or redescribe their reality. The kind of exchanges between the police and the theatre group in *Kolkata r Hamlet* where the protagonist is constantly caricaturing the police, where the police has been ridiculed by shown as killing a rat with his pistol out of scare, might not have been a situation that one could encounter or imagine to have in the real setting. The exaggeration was very apparent in the scene but it never took away the seriousness of a reality where the police had the power to search, interrogate, arrest, shoot anyone they thought were Naxalite and hence a force to reckon with but their obsession with controlling the Naxalites who were also a formidable power was such that it often bordered on ridiculousness. During the 1970s, the

⁶ Derrida, Jacques, (1992), *Acts of Literature*; ed. by Derek Attridge; Routledge; New York.

programme for party members was of building the arsenal by looting as much ammunition that they could. After a series of successes in Mayurjan, West Dinajpur, Darjeeling etc this programme reached the city of Calcutta where the youth responsibly took up the job. The police authorities took special precautions by directing the police men to tie their rifles to their belts with iron chains. The ridiculous sight of the policemen, CRP personnel walking around with rifles chained to their bodies was common on the streets of Calcutta and suburbs during 1970-71.⁷ It was during the same period during November, 1970 that President V.V Giri passed the West Bengal Prevention of Violent Activities Bill which was a draconian bill giving complete power to the police to search, arrest, conduct 'combing operations' or kill anyone, something that they had been doing ruthlessly for the last few months but with the bill they got their legal, state sanctioned legitimacy.⁸ It was a reality more bizarre than fantasy itself, a reality that one could have never imagined or anticipated had finally hit the city of Calcutta and it could no longer find solace just in discussions over cups of tea while munching on dry toast, reading the newspaper, talking about the rural unrest and then finally veering round to talking about sports or a local scandal. Going back to Ricoeur, these plays could say things which otherwise could not have been said and since now they were also written they hence become part of the collective memory thereby entering the historiography of the Naxalbari movement or the way it came to be perceived. By everything Derrida means to gather, by translating all figures into one another, to totalize by formalizing, but at the same time to say everything is also to breakout of prohibition.⁹ Therefore literature allows one to think the essence of the experience of this "everything to say", and it is an institution which supersedes the institution itself. Literature is a historical institution with its conventional rules but it is also this institution of fiction which gives in principle the power to say everything to break free of rules, to

⁷ Banerjee, Sumanta, (1980), *In the Wake of Naxalbari: A History of the Naxalite Movement in India*, Subarnarekha, Calcutta.

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Derrida, Jacques, (1992), *Acts of Literature*; ed. by Derek Attridge; Routledge; New York.

displace them and thereby institute, invent, or even suspect the traditional difference between nature and institution, conventional law, and history on either side.¹⁰ Since literature provides this kind of space to bend the rules of literature itself, the play texts in consideration did the same since they were not accounting for something completely fictive but rather something very real like the Naxalbari movement. Therefore whether be it through theatrical gestures or through the flights of fantasy, these plays were constantly transgressing boundaries of literature and representation. The very texts read today reveal different meanings and even at the time when they were written they demanded a more nuanced reading at multiple levels because the reality they were claiming to represent was ever elusive and the reality of it was never really a point of real like the event. Hence as Derrida argues a literary text always renders itself to a “transcendent” reading through the many folds within the text which is because without it the difference between literary and non-literary texts would cease to exist.¹¹ But is it always so easy to discern this difference between the two is something we would inquire into in a later section.

Speech, Text and Action

The four plays that we have been discussing this far, once they were written had to be read and performed, in other words uttered. Therefore once a text is written it has to be read as well and in that it fulfills the discourse of the text in a dimension similar to that of speech. But then it is different from speech because as Benveniste argues that what is retained here from the notion of speech is not the fact that it is uttered but that it is an event, an instance of discourse.¹² Therefore the lines of the plays for instance the line “Khoka hariye geche...” (Khoka, a name for a little boy, has gone missing) from the

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Ricoeur, Paul, (1991) *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics, II*, trans. by Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson, Northwest University Press, Evanston, Illinois.

play *Micchil* just does not reflect that aspect of speech which is a set of words uttered giving a sort of an information but rather the performative element of speech wherein speech has the quality to change the present state of affair. Hence the line from the play when bound within the boundaries of the text and its plot creates a rupture in the thought which shapes up the discourse of the youth who is facing the crisis of his time and feels lost and enraged and still looking for a path to redemption. It is because of the same reason that documents and pamphlets which were circulated during that period mainly those written by Charu Majumdar like his *Eight Documents*, *Long Live the Heroic Peasants of Naxalbari*, *To the Youth and Students*, *Party's Call to the Youth and the Students*, *To the Working Class* etc¹³ were not just documents to be reflected upon the way it is for us now. The sentences of a text signify here and now. The sentences of those texts referred to the now of then and when read aloud called for immediate action and then "annihilation of class enemies" is just not a sentence but an action which was going to set in motion the entire discourse surrounding the plan of action of the Naxalites. The "actualized" text finds a surrounding and an audience it resumes the referential movement—intercepted and suspended—toward a world and toward subjects.¹⁴ Discourse calls for an ever more complicated process of exteriorization with regard to itself, a process that begins with the gap between saying and the said, and it contributes through the inscription in letters, and is completed in the complex codifications of works of discourse, the narrative being one among others. It not only makes it possible but necessary the mediation of understanding by explanation.¹⁵ Due to this complex nature of discourse, there are a lot of factors which influence this path of mediation of understanding. Looking at the narrative structure of the plays or the historical texts is going to be important because that is a crucial component of how discourse is generated but only concentrating on that we would miss out on the relation between the creator of the

¹³ Charu Majumdar Shongkha, Vol 1, *Ebong Jalark*, Jan-Sept, 2009.

¹⁴ Ricoeur, Paul, (1991) *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics, II*, trans. by Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson, Northwest University Press, Evanston, Illinois.

¹⁵ *Ibid*

text, its audience, at what time it is being written and when it is being read, the situation of its readers which are important not only for understanding the discourse but also narrativity. After all these texts are narrating a story—a story of their time and crisis and narration has a very functional aspect to it as well: “Narration—in the operative sense of the word—is therefore the action that opens the narrative onto the world, where it is undone and consumed, this opening acting as the counterpart to what semiology knows only as the closed system of the narrative.”¹⁶ This opening up of the narrative onto the world then needs to be read where more things than just the narrative strategies emerge for instance, the formation of the narrator, the crisis of his mind and even the audience and their mood will together contribute to the reading of the text. Ricoeur shows that through structural analysis one would be restricting herself to look for the indication of narrative in only the signs of narrativity. Structuralism will not go back to the psychology of the narrator or the listener and to the sociology of the audience but it would rather confine it self to “describing the code through which the narrator and the reader are signified throughout the narrative itself.”¹⁷ In a narrative what is to be understood is not who is speaking behind the text but rather what is being talked about, the ‘thing of the text’, that is, the kind of world the work unfold just like it were, before the text.

Moving from text to action, we have recognized that texts can indicate not just words but also actions. But on the other hand, can human action which occurs over time or marks a point in time be considered as something readable like a text? The question becomes more poignant given that action cannot be inscribed onto time like words can be. Elaborating on this issue Ricoeur writes that ‘social’ time is not something which escapes but on the contrary has durable persisting effects. An action therefore leaves a “trace” when it contributes in the emergence of those persistent effects which become

¹⁶ *ibid*

¹⁷ *ibid*

the “the documents of human action”¹⁸. Ricoeur argues that human action is in many respects a ‘quasi text’. It is comparable to the fixation characteristic of writing to the degree that human action is externalized. This idea of human action is important because then the lives and actions of the authors of the four plays can act as texts themselves which can then be read alongside their own writings. Arguing about the relation between discourse and action Ricoeur writes that in separating from its agent, the action gains autonomy just like the way a text acquires a semantic autonomy. The action leaves a trace, a mark which in the course of time gets inscribed to create an archive, a document. He goes on to argue that human action has a weight that is not reduced to its importance in the initial situation but it allows it to be reinscribed in new contexts just like a text whose meaning is detached from its ‘initial condition of production’. Finally he points out that both text and action are an open work which is addressed to an indefinite series of possible ‘readers’. Discourse unlike language is always addressed to someone and it creates the audience for itself. Anyone who knows how to read has an access to the written discourse – “the co-presence of subjects in dialogue ceases to be the model for every understanding”.¹⁹ As Ricoeur puts it “discourse is revealed as discourse in the universality of its addresses. In escaping the momentary character of the event the bounds lived by the author & the narrowness of ostensive reference discourse escapes the limits of being face to face an unknown , invisible reader has become the unprivileged addressee of the discourse”.²⁰ In the same way human action is also open to anybody who can read just as the way a text is, this is because human actions also wait for different & new interpretations which decide their meaning. Therefore all significant events in the same way are open to this kind of “practical interpretation” through presence praxis. Therefore the ones to judge this work will not be its contemporaries but as Ricoeur would say its subsequent history. This juxtaposing of the written texts

¹⁸ Ibid, pp153

¹⁹ Ibid, pp150

²⁰ Ibid, 145-146

and the texts of the lives of the authors is something we would get back to later in this chapter as well as in the next one.

The argument given by Elizabeth Anscombe as put forward by Ricoeur is that it is not in the same language game that one speaks of events occurring in nature or of actions performed by people. To speak of events one need to enter a language game which includes ideas of cause, law, fact, explanation and so on. It is in another language game and in another conceptual network in which one can speak of human action and these two language games should be kept separate. This is because to speak in terms of action one has to talk of projects, intentions, motives, reasons for acting, agents etc.²¹ Ricoeur continues further by debating that only action which can be registered for further notice or acts as an entry points for someone's record are the only ways to judge human action and in the absence of such formal records this function is carried out by informal techniques of reputation. Extending his logic, he argues that history can itself be the record of human action to quote Ricoeur "History is this quasi thing on which human action leaves a trace, puts its mark."²² Hence there is the possibility of the 'archives'. Therefore the lives of each of those who had taken part in the movement are in themselves histories of the movement. Each of them has the potential of the archive and therefore of history which shapes the memory even before it is written. Before the intentional writing down in the archives there is always a continual process of recording of human action which is history itself as a 'sum of marks', something which goes beyond the control of individual actors therefore history assumes an autonomous entity in which human actions becomes social action when written down in the archives of history. It is due to this process of social time that human actions become "institutions". In the year 1970, there was a wave of attaching and breaking of statues of Indian bourgeois nationalist leaders, social reformers and

²¹ Ibid, pp132

²² Ibid, pp154

buildings which reflected the decadent colonial mindset. These attacks were carried out by young students from schools and colleges and these were mainly spontaneous acts of violence, something which was not enlisted in their party programme. This was made more definite by Saroj Dutta who said while encouraging such acts of the part of the youth as being their way of reacting to the farcical society they belong to, the one they want to change and even if they do not know the revolutionary implication of such acts they are nonetheless right because they are in sync with the political line and mood of the people.²³ The actions on the part of the students through the writing of the revolutionary leaders and later historians sparked off a debate on iconoclasm, violence, and revolutionary potential overlooking the act for itself and the effect of it on history. The writing down of these acts took away their potential to create an archive rather it got wound in discourse and became institutionalized. In a way their meaning was no longer in sync with the intentions of the actors.

Writing History

In this section I would like to inquire in to the idea of writing history and what comprises of what is known as history. This is particularly important because when we talk about writing of the movement then one cannot overlook the writing of history because it is through history that we have an access to the events of the past like the Naxalbari movement. If history—historiography—is a kind of narrative, a “true” narrative in comparison with mythical or fictional narratives, and history is concerned with the actions of those of the past and as Veyne argues the historian writes a “true story,” one that does greater justice to the past than the artificial scheme employed by scientists in their attempt to discern general

²³ Banerjee, Sumanta, (1980), *In the Wake of Naxalbari: A History of the Naxalite Movement in India*, Subarnarekha, Calcutta;

patterns²⁴ then historical writing becomes more important not only since it claims at representing a more real account of an event but also because in the case of Naxalbari movement this becomes a problem. This is because the ones who were writing the history were not going back to a recorded set of data from which now one is expected to weave a story. On the contrary they were writing the history of their present, the movement as they saw it and through their own experience of being a part of the movement. This idea is very against the one proposed by Veyne, because according to him the historian selects a certain connection of events from among all their potential connections and then the historiographer simply has to retell this connection—which Veyne calls a plot (intrigue)—without troubling about employing a distinctive method. In the same way the writings which constitute the Naxalbari historiography fail to fulfill the demands that Ricoeur places on history. Ricoeur argues that on one hand history asserts to capture events that possess an inside and an outside—an outside because it happens in the world and an inside because it expresses a thought and on the other hand, history consists in reactivating, that is rethinking, a past thought in the present thought of the historian. But in the case of the Naxalbari movement there was no past thought in the present thought of the historians because the present thought was the thought of the historian. If this in the case then does that change the way we then perceive history or read the texts written by someone like Sumanta Banerjee and Suniti Kumar Ghosh differently—something that might or might not be history after all. The other reason why writing of history is so very important is also because today even my attempt is to write about a past event, to historicize the movement in a certain way and hence the facts and data available to me in order to reproduce the past requires an investigation because that would decide the fate of my writing and also my truth claims. Certeau argued that in the contemporary academic writing of history there is a reversal of the traditional forms of historiography. Traditional historical research began with the individual

²⁴ As quoted by Wim Weymans in *Michel de Certeau and the Limits of Historical Representation, History and Theory*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (May, 2004), pp. 161-178

elements of the past, and worked outwards from these to build a synthesis whereas contemporary academic historians are more likely to begin with an existing theory, and then to demonstrate that it is not able to comprehend certain aspects of the past even as they employ this theory to unearth the meaning of this past.²⁵ If, as Certeau argues that the meaning of the past is not directly evident, but is instead constructed, then the role of historians and their surroundings in this constructive process is much more important and problematic than what Veyne had thought it to be.²⁶(16) It obviously becomes even more complicated in case of history writing during the Naxalbari movement because the way the historians constructed the events surrounding them serve as a representational model in the absence of any other data because as Sumanta Banerjee points out that while writing his book he mainly referred to the voluminous and regular publication of CPI(M-L) which were out of bounds of general public, documents that were secretly published or yet to publish and then also the events and incidents that were observed by him, on the basis of interviews of those part of the movement and also their oppressors. He also mentioned that by 1970, party's journals like *Deshabrati*, *Liberation*, *Lokayudh* were banned and having as access to those were impossible²⁷. This was what Sumanta Banerjee wrote in 1979 and even more than 30yrs later, the situation vis-à-vis these documents remain the same. Hence it is the work of people like Banerjee that shape up the historical discourse by being there and capturing it in words to serve as data for later academics to further construct the history of the movement. The writing of history of an event like the Naxalbari Movement needs to be scrutinized in a different way because this situation raises new questions about the constructed-ness of history and the role of the historian and it needs to go beyond even Veyne's idea of history which rejected the sciences because for him everyday narrative, rather than scientific constructs, to be the more suitable vehicle for the reproduction of the past.

²⁵ *ibid*

²⁶ *ibid*

²⁷ Banerjee, Sumanta, (1980), *In the Wake of Naxalbari: A History of the Naxalite Movement in India*, Subarnarekha, Calcutta.

According to him in their stories, historians capture the genuine connections among facts, against unreal scientific constructs and laws but the main question here is if there could be any 'genuine' connection that a historian of that period could draw from the present event.²⁸

As Hayden White would argue translation of discourses into a written text produces a distinctive object, the historiographical text which in turn becomes a subject of philosophical or critical reflection. He further argues that the principal problem of any theory of historical writing, is not the possibility or impossibility of scientific approach to the study of past but rather the constant presence of narrative in historiography and therefore in order to put forward a theory of historical discourse one must necessarily address the question of function of narrativity in the production of the historical text. White identifies the problem with historians is the way they unproblematically treat their own language and the medium of representation of past event and their thoughts about it. Sumanta Banerjee in his book while commenting on the youth of Calcutta and their role in the Naxalbari movement writes "...it was their bloodshed and heroism in the numerous battles fought in Calcutta and suburbs area in 1970-71, that gave the movement its revolutionary aura... the halo of martyrdom which surrounded them made their names household words... they were absorbed by one exclusive interest, the one thought, the one single passion—the revolution, which they seriously believed could be unleashed by paralyzing the administration and terrorizing the rulers through a series of annihilations. They were not common criminals which the police tried to make them out, but dreamers with a violent mission, characters whom Dostoyevsky would have been proud to have created."²⁹ Here it is clear that the author does have his allegiance well marked out and this narrative reflects the way he perceived the youth movement and the

²⁸ As quoted by Wim Weymans in *Michel de Certeau and the Limits of Historical Representation*, History and Theory, Vol. 43, No. 2 (May, 2004), pp. 161-178

²⁹ Banerjee, Sumanta, (1980), *In the Wake of Naxalbari: A History of the Naxalite Movement in India*, Subarnarekha, Calcutta.

credibility that they require. The way the author here writes about the revolutionary youth is a way no one else who hasn't witnessed that event could write about it. Borrowing from Ankersmit, White argues that a history is less like a picture intended to resemble the original which is "tied to the past by certain translation rules", rather it is "a complex linguistic structure specifically built for the purpose of showing a part of the past."³⁰ The way we remember the youth participation in the Naxalbari movement draws heavily from the accounts of authors and historians like Sumanta Banerjee and the way they represent these events and characters in their writings. Hence the language and the representational modes that the authors employ in this context are very important because it formulates the historical discourse surrounding the event of Naxalbari. Hence historical discourse is not an image which helps us see otherwise vague object nor is it a representation of the explanatory kind which is finally to provide an answer to the looming question of "what really happened" in the past.

The problem Hayden White argues occurs further because philosophers for assessing the truth value and discourses' relationship to reality understands historical discourse as something in which one can delineate the factual and conceptual part of the discourse from its literary forms. Going back to Banerjee's analysis of the youth upsurge in Calcutta, he writes further "as for the younger generation, the CPI (M-L) urban guerillas appeared to have set a precedent of violent defiance of any established order... a generation of desperados, growing up without any faith in the values of the status quo swayed between the lure of a fascist counter-revolutionary and the dream of a Communist revolution."³¹ The way he terms the two opposing ideologies in the political arena of the 1970s is witness enough to the narrative trope that the author is using. This is not very different in terms of how theatre director/actor

³⁰ White, Hayden, (2000), *Figural Realism: Studies in the Mimesis Effect*, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London. Pp 6

³¹ Banerjee, Sumanta, (1980), *In the Wake of Naxalbari: A History of the Naxalite Movement in India*, Subarnarekha, Calcutta;

Asit Bose characterizes the characters of his play *Kolkata r Hamlet* which I shall explain shortly. Ricoeur argues that historical understanding on which explanation is created involves a specific ability to follow a story. A primitive language game unfolds which is the reciprocal relation between recounting and following a story. Following a story is like understanding a series of actions, thoughts, and feeling presenting at a certain orientation and offering surprises. Therefore the conclusion of a story can never be predicted and hence one needs to follow the development. In short a story cannot be disconnected but it is not deducible but its outcome has to be always acceptable. Whereas Sumanta Banerjee is talking of the revolutionary youth in general without assigning a conclusive fate of these youth, Asit Bose gives a name and face to that youth in the shape of a character in his play and reaches a conclusion at the end of the play, something in which people can have belief in, that would inspire hope. Banerjee's reverence towards these youths who had become martyrs is no different in the way Abhi, the main character of the play pays his tribute to the same revolutionary youth. The faithlessness of the youth of that generation and the dilemma of having to chose a side which Banerjee elucidates is epitomized in the character of Abhi, (who in the beginning of the play is shown to be dead and as a ghost narrating the story of his death to two drunkards) which reaches a culmination when he is in a dialogue with the ghost of Hamlet who claims who be present wherever there is language. The author of the play portrays the dilemma of the present day youth especially the present day intelligentsia through the parallel of Hamlet as a historical character damned to return to relive the trauma. The author tries to show as if it is only the ghost who has language and with history it makes its return shaping it through their trauma for the ones who took their decision had already received redemption, the silenced martyrs who would never tell their story but exist in the representation of history. Therefore though "literary discourse may differ from historical discourse by virtue of its primary referents, conceived as imaginary rather than real event, but the two kinds of discourse are more similar than different since both operate language in such a way that any clear distinction between their discursive form and their interpretative content remains

impossible.”³² Historical discourse should therefore not be considered as a specific way of the “working of our minds” in order to grasp reality or to describe it but, rather, it is a special kind of language use which, like “metaphoric speech, symbolic language, and allegorical representation”,³³ always means more than it factually says because it says something other than what it seems to mean, and it also discloses something about the world only at the expense of obscuring something else. Therefore White puts forward that the argument of a historical discourse is ultimately a “second order fiction, a fiction of a fiction or a fiction of fiction making”³⁴ which allows the same relationship to the plot that plot shares with the event.

Fact and Fiction

If history is second order fiction then what happens to facts and to the representation of those facts? This is the question we would try to address in this section delving into how the relation between fact and fiction develops in representing a “modernist event”³⁵ like the Naxalbari movement and how the outcome of such a representation can be as historical as it can be imaginary. Hayden White argues that there is nothing like raw facts but only events which are under different descriptions and it is these descriptions which transform events into facts. He uses the term “factological” to show that figurative descriptions of real events are no less factual than literalist description. Therefore events & facts should never be confused whereby events happen and facts are constituted by linguistic descriptions. According to him while events may occur in time but the chronological codes used to set them in a specific order

³² White, Hayden, (2000), *Figural Realism: Studies in the Mimesis Effect*, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, pp 6

³³ *Ibid*, pp 7

³⁴ *Ibid*, pp9

³⁵ For more elaboration on this see White, Hayden, (2000), “Modernist Event” *Figural Realism: Studies in the Mimesis Effect*, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London. Pp 66-86

are cultures specific and in order to transform a chronicle of events into a story a historian requires to choose among the many kinds of plot structures provided by the cultural traditions, therefore no event is intrinsically tragic or heroic but rather are tropes within which real events are plotted. Thus stories are told & written and not found and there is no such thing as real story.³⁶ Following this argument one can opine that the way the Naxalbari movement has been written are linguistic tropes which then are used to categorize them into historical or literal texts and there shall always been a gap with the event. Therefore event cannot be captured or plotted, it is present in its absence and any attempt to bind it down through writing which will always be a language game, operating through various tropes will only retain representational value. Since the event is not intrinsically of a certain kind like tragic or heroic, and in this case also if it was a success or a failure, but they are rather tropes that the story teller uses, then the line from where the facts end and the narrator's construction begins becomes blur, and along with it the same happens to the distinction between fact and fiction. Therefore White adds further that a topological theory does not collapse the difference between fact and fiction but rather it redefines the relation between them in a given discourse and the dissolution of the event undermines the founding presupposition of western realism which is the opposition between fact & fiction. He further proposes a more extreme version of representing reality by arguing that modernism resolves this traditional problem of realism by dissolving the premise on which realism is constructed, i.e., in the opposition of fact & fiction which we get to witness in the way the movement gets represented in the theater texts, the discussion on which shall follow shortly.

In the novel titled "Pa er Tolar Mati" by Sunil Gangopadhyay, the protagonist Darik is a Naxalite who had just returned from jail. This was written during the later part of the 1970s when the movement was already over and the political power in West Bengal had changed and the cases against numerous

³⁶ *ibid*, 29

'Naxalites' were withdrawn.³⁷ Along the same time there was a lot of friction in the CPI(M-L) and members inside and outside jail were breaking into factions. Prominent Naxal leaders like Sanu Sanyal and Ashim Chatterjee were openly criticizing the line of action employed by Charu Majumdar. This left the ones being released out of jails in a very disenchanted and disillusion state which further weakened the party and it suffered a set back which it has still not been to recover. Therefore when the mood of the air was such a number of stories and novels were written based on this theme. The aforementioned novel uses this very trope but the disenchantment of the young Naxalite is not induced by the rifts of the party but the changed way in which he finds his neighborhood. He finds himself in a place which had changed in every conceivable way and this change that is shown in the novel is a model of progress but Darik knows how wrong this idea of progress is. In his vision of his locality we can see the collapse of his ideal home, the loss of the utopia but upon close observation one realizes that the neighborhood is just a metaphor for the society that had changed, the one they wished and fought to change but today holds nothing but disappointment. Fiction as Ricoeur argues has a double valence with respect to reference, "it is directed elsewhere, even nowhere; but because it designates the non place in relation to all reality, it can indirectly sight this reality..."³⁸ This is what he calls reference effect which is the power of fiction to redescribe reality. For the readers on this novel the neighborhood is of course fictitious and so are the drastic changes but it acts as a point of reference for the real situation which the novel redescribes through its own language. Borrowing from Aristotle's *Poetics*' conclusion regarding how poetry is more philosophical than history which is tied to contingency of ordinary course of action, Ricoeur argues poetry goes right to the essence of action because it ties together *muthos* and *mimesis* which in other words are fiction and redescription. In the first scene of the play *Kolkata r Hamlet*, there is a dialogue

³⁷ Ghosh, Nirmal, (1994), *Naxalbari Andolon o Bangla Sahitya*, Karuna Publishers, Kolkata.

³⁸ Ricoeur, Paul, (1991) *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics, II*, trans. by Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson, Northwest University Press, Evanston, Illinois. Pp 175

between Abhi, the theatre actor/director and the young Naxalite revolutionary whom they had given shelter. There the young boy is telling Abhi that it is duty of people like him to sow the seeds of new dreams and hope in the heart of a fallen society because they are the Artists: Army of Arts. This brings in the reference of the poem "Order No.2. To the Army of Arts" which the boy declares to be one of his favorite. One of troupe's actors mocks him in asking that how does a revolutionary talk about poems. Then Abhi answers with conviction that when the fire inside does not find the language to express itself then poetry becomes its weapon. Even as the play moves along constant reference of verses come along which talks of asserting oneself and this play which is narrated by Abhi's ghost on the whole comes across as an individual trying to cope with his dilemma and creating an identity in history for himself which happens in the imaginary setup of a courtroom where Abhi decides his own fate. Therefore Ricoeur defends fiction in which he opines that fiction has within it the scope of possibilities because it is in the realm of imagination that one can try out the power to act.³⁹ It is only through imagination that one can say 'I can' and ascribes power unto himself as an agent of his own action and depicting it to oneself.

"Interference had the effect of endowing the imaginary events with the concreteness of the reality while at the same time endowing the historical events with the magical aura peculiar to the romance".⁴⁰ This intervention that White talks about can be seen in numerous examples of stories and plays that were written on the Naxalbari movement of which two I shall discuss here. The novel "A Naxal Story" by Diptendra Raychaudhuri is a book which starts from the 1960s when the first seeds of Naxalism was sown to the beginning of this century when it had already changed and transformed into a new powerful movement bearing the splinters of its predecessor. The novel begins with the author's

³⁹ Ibid, pp 177-178

⁴⁰ As quoted by White, Hayden, (2000), *Figural Realism: Studies in the Mimesis Effect*, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, pp 67

disclaimer that many incidents, killings by the police or the landlords' army or by the Maoists are real incidents with the names and references changed and has varying degrees of resemblance with the reality. One of the reviewer for the aforementioned book writes, "Real incidents and thinly disguised personalities dot the narrative and at times lend the novel a feel of non-fiction...he has gathered enough valuable insight into the ground realities, enough to venture into telling their story"⁴¹ which point to the fact that it is a historical novel which means the distinction between fact and fiction gets even more confused. But then the reader always know that the text does have any claim to 'official' history then how does this reconciliation between what is real and what is imagined happen? Hayden White provides a solution to this by arguing that the relationship between the historical novel and its target reader is mediated by a distinctive contract which is that there is a presumed capacity on the part of the reader to distinguish between real & imaginary events, between fact & fiction and therefore between life & literature. It is without this capacity he argues that "the affect in which the familiar was rendered exotic while the exotic was rendered familiar could not have been produced".⁴² Discussing about the representation of modernist events, Hayden White puts forward the example of Oliver Stone's *JFK* (1991) stating that the film had varying reviews. He also points out his own stand which is that the film seemed to blur the distinction between fact & fiction by treating a historical event as if there were no limits on what could be legitimately said about it and therefore brings under the question the very principle of objectivity on the basis of which one usually discriminates between truth and myth ideology and lie on either side. Though the cinematic medium is very different from the medium of writing and theatre but if we concentrate on the question of what legitimately can be said of an event then this very question that White puts forward can be posed in the case of the various writings on Naxalbari

⁴¹ Review by Ranjita Biswas, *The Hindu*.

⁴² White, Hayden, (2000), *Figural Realism: Studies in the Mimesis Effect*, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, pp 67

movement especially the plays where the event has been treated in a way where reality and imagination have interspersed each other at multiple levels. The four plays that I have been working with till now have all been representation of the movement but each of them have very different take on the movement, highlighting varied aspects of it, never giving a complete story and serving them in different models of theatrical representation. Teer of all the four plays comes closest to what can be called being true to the actual event and its aftermath. This I have already discussed in my previous chapter, and in Teer there are references to actual events but it is obvious that there were fictive elements and while watching the play the audience was weaving all events as equally imaginary in so far as they are represented image. For instance there were scenes in the play depicting the shooting by police at innocent peasants, killing women and children were shown in the play which is almost a reconstruction of the actual happening at Naxalbari. There was a scene in the play where the written/director showed the killing of ten innocent young women which infuriated the villagers and also probably the audience. These were not just figments of the writer's imagination but actual happenings. This play had scenes where lessons from Mao's Red Book were being disseminated amongst illiterate peasants; tactics of guerilla warfare were being taught for their fight for their land. Along with the depiction of such events, the caricature of the landlord Satyaban Singh and some of his actions such as falling on his son while sitting down, or his breathing trouble whenever he comes across any problem all point to the fictive nature of such a landlord. Even the end of the play where the villagers defeat the police force and Satyaban Singh is hit by an arrow is definitely fictive and the audience is well aware for that because though it gives a very positive message, everyone watching the play in 1969 knew that success could not possibly come so soon and easy. Therefore Hayden White opines that the distinction between facts & meanings is usually taken to be the basis of historical relativism because he argues in conventional historical enquiries the established fact of a specific event is taken to be the meaning of that event but it is rather that facts are a function of the meaning assigned to events hence everything that each of these

plays opine might not be to assign meaning to the event by reflecting upon the fact but rather through their engagement of fiction with the movement ascribe new meanings to the event.⁴³ It is the anomalous nature of these modernist events and the anomaly with Naxalbari movement was its continued happening and indiscernibility which helps them resist the usually accepted categories and conventions for assigning meanings to events.

In conclusion to quote Hayden White, “An eventful instant of time would have been one that would have collected & condensed, dispersed events that are experienced more as intervals rather than occurrences and are endowed with pattern & cohesion even if for a moment but there are no such event in the modernist era for all the events that take place before during between and after the acts are shown to have been as insubstantial as what takes place between individual frames of movies and as fictitious as those historical events depicted in the pageant. The meaning of events remain indistinguishable from there occurrence but the occurrences are unstable, fluid, phantasmagoric”⁴⁴. By saying this he is not trying to argue that such events are not representable but rather they need techniques of representation which are different from the developed art of realism. Therefore he says that the problem is indeed not one of method but rather of representation and it requires a full exploitation of modernist as well as pre-modernist artistic techniques for its resolution.

Representation: Historical or Literary?

As we concluded in our previous section that events of our time of which Naxalbari movement is one of them is not inherently unrepresentable but they require new ways in which the question of representation can be dealt with. The relationship between historical interpretation and literary

⁴³ Ibid, pp 75

⁴⁴ Ibid, pp77

representation applies not only to their mutual interest in generic plot structure but also to the narrative mode of discourse that they mutually share.⁴⁵ Till now we have discussed historical and literary writing as representation and the way language and narrative are structured which makes distinction between the two difficult and in this section we would be directly looking at the question of representation in respect to writing on certain events like the Holocaust and the May '68 movement in France and we would try and draw a parallel with the Naxalbari movement in order to get a headway into understanding historical and literary representation. Dobie argues that debates over the representation & commemoration of the Shoah usually have contrasting "history", which is understood as the reconstruction & representation of past events with approaches which fall under the domain of "post-structuralist" or "post-modern" approach which raises questions about representation and challenge the belief that a rigid divide between historical fact from fiction.⁴⁶ She further argues that for many theorists the problematization of knowledge and representation privileges language over the real of history. This is because understanding and knowledge of the past are perceived as the basis of present day ethical action therefore in Banerjee's writing the language was the language of the time of the movement which he acknowledges in the preface to his book. In the preface Sumanta Banerjee writes that he is fully aware of the risk he is running while writing of events so contemporary and yet so confusing, of being contradicted by later revelations. He argues that new materials might crop up which may alter some of the judgments that he formed in his book. But to quote him "the story is too fascinating and important to await clarification of every detail and substantiation of every account—a task that in the fitness of things should be left to historians of the future."⁴⁷ Since he was not writing from the ethical position of the present but motivated by his present, ever evading understanding of the situation therefore the existing history of the

⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁶ Kofman, Sarah, (1987), *Translator's Introduction, Smothered Words*, trans. by Madeline Dobie, North Western University Press, Illinois.

⁴⁷ See Preface, Banerjee, Sumanta, (1980), *In the Wake of Naxalbari: A History of the Naxalite Movement in India*, Subarnarekha, Calcutta

Naxalbari movement can be said to be a concept of history that scholars of post structuralism have developed which is “positional and performative” rather than “cognitive and representational” because for them “history” occurs as a “text event” and not as a representation of extra-linguistic phenomenon.⁴⁸

“Smothered words” marks out moments of dislocation between history as representation and as text-event. The translator argues that through her work Koffman shows this movement which reflects the inevitable instability of both representative and critical modes of history as representation. This is because critical mode will always use description and representation where representational history is an important first question and on the contrary representation can be investigated through an epistemological and rhetorical analysis.⁴⁹ Kofman diagnoses the failure of historical narrative to problematize the relation between language and experience and in particular between the temporal structure of narrative and experience. The challenge posed by Kofman here can possibly be best answered by bringing in Hayden White and the idea of literary modernism that he opines in his debate over the representation of events like Holocaust, Shoah about which Kofman is also talking about. Literary modernism as Hayden White would argue was a product of an effort to represent a historical reality for which the older classical realist modes of representation were inadequate because they were based on different experiences of history or experiences of a different history. Though the nature of the event of Holocaust and the Naxalbari Movement is very different but in a way both these were products of the modernist era. It was probably the crisis of what happened during the events surrounding the Holocaust and its aftermath that led to an event like the Naxalbari movement in an obscure corner of West Bengal. Maybe the events have very different starting points but then a relation between them is not totally impossible. During the interviews that I conducted of people who were part of the movement,

⁴⁸ Kofman, Sarah, (1987), *Translator's Introduction, Smothered Words*, trans. by Madeline Dobie, North Western University Press, Illinois.

⁴⁹ *ibid*

constantly brought back the point of the calling of their time. One of my interviewee, Jaya Mitra argued that the generation which was growing up in the shadow of the Second World War, still trying to grapple with the horrors of it and the resultant effect it had across the globe was the generation who was facing the crisis. According to her, the crisis that at least the educated young minds of Bengal were facing was to grapple with their history and hence there was the ardent want and need to bring about a change so that historical mistakes could be rectified. The 1960s and 70s were a period of unrest in many corners of the world and most of them has certain common links running through them. Various authors and commentators of the Naxalbari movement have accounted for its similarity and the time frame with movements in America and France. The chanting of world news and the crisis that people, ordinary working class people were facing and what they were doing towards resolving their situation was a very important scene in the play *Micchil*. The actors hurdled together and announced the news to its audience, and with the incorporation of such world news, Badal Sarkar managed to tie together the movement that was taking shape in his country with those happening elsewhere in the world. By doing this he was letting the people know that they were not the only ones struggling, people across the world were suffering for the same exploitative system and were fighting to change it. This world wide unrest and the trajectory the movements took in these countries were also cited as a reason by Jaya Mitra for the youth to start questioning the established system of order. The Naxalbari movement and the scale that it assumed about which we have had discussions was something that this country had never seen, the experience of the people of that place and also in other parts of the country was something very new, something that was till then absent from people's imagination and vocabulary. Therefore to follow White's argument that if the Holocaust, the Final Solutions, Shoah, Churban, a German genocide of the Jews is not anymore unrepresentable than any other event in human history, and it is only that its representation whether in history or in fiction requires the kind of style that was developed in order to

represent the kind of experiences which social modernism made possible⁵⁰ then even Naxalbari was required to be looked through new frames of representation to capture the new experience of that time.

For traditional historical discourse there is always a presumption of a difference between the interpretation of a fact and the story told about it, this difference is pointed out through the use of vocabulary such as a real story or a true story. But as White would argue, unless a historical story is presented as a literary representation of real events one cannot criticize it as being either true or untrue to the facts of the matter. If this be the case then in our present inquiry only the play texts can ever come under the scanners of reality to deem it as real or unreal, but then what could possibly be the markers to decide the truth in these literary depictions. Hayden White picks up the example of Art Spiegelman's "Maus: A survivor's tale" which presents the events of the Holocaust in the medium of the comic book and in a mode of bitter satire. In the book the Germans are portrayed as cats and the Jews as mice and Poles as pigs in order to show that factual contents and specific forms of narratives are applied to the kind of rule that stipulates a serious theme for them to be represented. In the play *Rajrakta*, the main characters are shown in an extremely caricatured way. The entire play has a very absurdist feeling to it with scenes jumping from one to another and constant changing of roles. The crisis of the entire state of Bengal, the oppression of the peasantry, the high handedness of the landlords and the ruling class are all reduced into the story of a particular King who is shown to be very oppressive and hence the need on the part of the young servant boy to kill him. The play has four characters of which two keep shifting into various roles serving a pimp like function to the king. The only female character is shown to be dwindling between her allegiances to the king and constantly suffering at the hands of his men for being a woman. The narrative has no structure and the characters lack seriousness often cracking lewd jokes.

⁵⁰ White, Hayden, (2000), *Figural Realism: Studies in the Mimesis Effect*, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London.

The play though has a very serious theme but also has a deep dark satirical quality to it because the apparent funny scenes of the girl mugging up a rhyme on bullet or one of the characters reciting a poem on lollipop are not really funny but rather reflect the kind of corrupt minds and consciousnesses that we have, which we are forced to have since we are induced by the ruling class ideology. The same could be said about plays like *Teer*, *Kolkata* r *Hamlet* and *Micchil* where figures of terror like the landlord, or the police, or administrators are shown in a distorted way, bordering on being ridiculous thereby, taking away demonic quality and replacing it with sheer hatred and disgust. For instance, in *Teer*, though Satyaban Singh, the landlord had been portrayed as an evil man who took away land from Ratneshwari, the woman who had brought him up, or someone who meddles with accounts to take money back from the poor peasants at a much higher interest rate, he was also portrayed as someone who is asthmatic, the one who freaks out and takes the lord's name at every small problem, tries to run away wearing a sari with all his things, trips on his son and falls down, takes cheap pleasure seeing the photograph of women's 'ghagras' etc. But nonetheless these representations were successful in pointing to the fact that these figures of power are effectively cowards and powerless and hence very crushable. Also in both the aforementioned plays the protagonists are either dead and thereby ghosts or drunk, unable to get a grip over oneself. This calls for an inquiry because it would defeat the purpose of these authors if they represented the youth as ghosts or drunk, hence there has to be another reason behind it which in all probability was a form of being employed to reflect the state of mind of the youth. It could also be a representation of the living dead kind of a state in which the youth of the country was in and therefore a necessity to wake up from that slumber or dead-ness and move towards, as Badal Sarkar in *Micchil* says, "onno barir poth, sotti barir poth" (on a new path, the path which is true). These plays like *Maus* is not a conventional history but it is a representation of past real events or at least of events that are represented as having actually occurred and as White points out that *Maus* manages to raise all the crucial issues

regarding the limits of representation in general so does these plays by the very virtue of the event it claimed to represent.

As Sartre had argued, the treatment of the event is the representation of a thought about it rather than a presentation of the event itself.⁵¹ So what was thought about the Naxalbari movement and in what ways is it still being thought? This representation of a thought about the movement is the function that writing does irrespective it be historical or literal. Kristine Ross in her analysis of how May 1968 has been represented and remembered in the French society points out the kinds of stereotyped representation of an abject militant lifestyle which was also a rhetoric similar to that which existed for the Naxalbari Movement as it emerges quite vividly as a dominant memory in the later account of its activists, this memory is usually of the pleasure found simply by overcoming social boundaries in a deeply compartmentalized society, these were experiences of running into people that otherwise the social, cultural, and professional boundaries prevented from coming in contact with each other. Ross quotes Foucault during his days of involvement with 'Liberation' where he writes "we want the actors of an event to be those whom we consult; we want them to be the ones to speak".⁵² By this he was referring to a form that would elicit the voice of the people and would create something like a chronicle of worker's memory. The namesake of this magazine in West Bengal was considered to be the mouthpiece of the CPI (M-L) during the Naxalbari movement and is still considered to be one till date. The magazine Liberation in France was started in 1973 as a by product of the May '68 protests, but Liberation here was started with the formation of the party and was operational during most of the period of the movement only to be banned for a few years in the middle. The magazine Liberation and

⁵¹ As quoted by White, Hayden, (2000), *Figural Realism: Studies in the Mimesis Effect*, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London.

⁵² Ross, Kristine, (2004), *May '68 and Its Afterlives*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

its Bengali counterpart, *Deshabrati* was started in order to reach out to the masses and make them aware of the happenings of the movement and also to announce crucial decisions or plan of action taken by the party. In a way it was voicing the experiences of those who were struggling in areas of conflict and played a major role in how the middle class people came to perceive the movement. There were various kinds of articles that were published in these magazines, some of which were “Mushahari and Its Lessons”, October 1969, which summed up the experiences of armed peasant struggle in that area, the December, 1969 issue of *Liberation* summed up the experience of armed struggle in Debra area by the Debra Thana Organizing Committee of the CPI (M-L), Charu Majumdar’s articles in *Liberation* on hailing the path of Naxalbari struggle as the only way to bring revolution and upholding the Mao tsetung Thought, *Deshabrati*’s article on the students’ protest over the arrest of leaders like Jangal Santhal and Kanu Sanyal in its 1st year of its 35th issue on 7th March, 1968, report on the annihilation of twenty more jotedars in West Bengal in the 3rd year’s 2nd issue on 5th September, 1970 of *Deshabrati*.⁵³ As I mentioned before that both these journals were banned by the state government and in later years *Deshabrati* was very published again. Although *Liberation* was back into circulation and still in but by now the CPI (M-L) had been broken into many factions with its original leaders either dead or in opposing camps and in recent times it has also become a parliamentary party which when the party began it was vehemently opposed to. As Ross points out that though the journal *Liberation*, France was not as successful as expected and also faltered on its ideology, for its early readers *Liberation* provided continuity and a connection to recent events. It became a tangible sign that something had actually happened in May 1968.⁵⁴ In the same way the journals like *Liberation* and *Deshabrati* especially the former, served not only as a very formidable source of writing on the movement and it still continues to

⁵³ See *Deshabrati Shankalan*, Vol 3 (July- September, 1999), Vol 4 (Jan- June, 2000), Vol 6 (July- Dec 2002), Vol 7 (Jan- June 2003), Vol 8 (Jan- June 2004), Vol 9 (Jan- June 2006), *Ebong Jalark and Maoist Spring Thunder: The Naxalite Movement, 1967-72*.

⁵⁴ Ross, Kristine, (2004), *May '68 and Its Afterlives*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

serve so, it also maintains a continuity and though its ideology has gone through major shifts, it still contains the repertoire of writing on the movement which creates a very 'tangible' memory and hence contributes towards representation of the movement.

When investigating about the writing of the Naxalbari movement, the objective is to see in what ways it was represented to have been remembered in a certain way. Various writings both of scholarly kind and literal contributed to the making of this popular memory. Ross argues that for many militants coming out of the experience of May 1968 and its aftermath the problem of relation between the intellectual and the people, the question of popular memory and the voice of the people was best engaged at a theoretical and practical level within the field of history & historiography. Post emergency in West Bengal, when the movement was already over, the Naxalites who were being released out of prison or coming out of hiding, set forth the task of writing about their history. This engagement with the event of Naxalbari and the questions that it raised in its wake was dealt at many levels of theory, practice, history and literature. It was at this time when Sumanta Banerjee published his "In the Wake of Naxalbari", ex-leaders of the party like Suniti Kumar Ghosh also came out with various articles in different journals and very recently published a book "Naxalbari: Before and After", one of my interviewee, Jaya Mitra also published a book "Judhaporbo" and edited a collection of articles on Naxalbari movement titled "Sei Dokhok" (That Decade) but unfortunately both her books are now out of print, Saibal Mitra, who was active during the movement and was also imprisoned a few times published many novels and stories inspired from the movement but right after the movement, in 1978 he published a story "Toroni Pahare Bosonto" in the magazine "Amrito", which over the next decade was further enriched to come out as a novel in 1990 titled "Agrobahini". The texts discussed above are of various kinds at many levels of engagement with the movement each having its own unique contribution to the historicization of the movement. Like Ross argues that by returning to the past and through the

new examination of worker's speech practices and experiences, these writings were bringing back the unattested promise of the revolution and that it could be prolonged and accessed, therefore a new historical practice could continue the desire of these kinds of movements to give "voice to the voiceless, to contest the domain of the expert".⁵⁵ At this juncture Ross turns her attention towards something crucial. She points out when structuralism and post structuralism or sociologist and philosophers were summoned to embody the intellectual production of May, there was, on the other hand a different kind of work which was carried on within and on the outskirts of the discipline of "official history" which was derived directly from the experiences of 68. Talking about the various representation of May 68, Ross discusses three journals which came up after May simply by the virtue of being collective efforts "rooted in the practice, alien to the academy, of joint research, authorship, and decision making"⁵⁶ which make them more intimately tied to the political events of '68 than the works of individual scholars. Similarly there were several magazines which were published from after a few years of the Naxalbari Movement by either ex party members of Naxalites or by those who observed the movement very closely. Varying issues of agrarian movement to cinema, theatre and literature were discussed in these magazines such as Jalark, Ebong Jalark, Anushtup, and Kolkata etc. One of my interviewee, Krishna Bandhopadhyay is part of the magazine Ebong Jalark and she was extremely active during the Naxalbari Movement and even now she is extremely politically active and associated with many protest groups resisting against land grab and state repression. Hence this magazine has been able to because of its association with such politically rooted people, maintain a link between the past and the present. To borrow Ross's word, each of these journals had distinct ways in which they attempted to break the tradition of "academic elitism, individual research and political institutional history to create a different

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, pp 116

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, pp117

history generated out of a left politics".⁵⁷ Ross shows through the discussion of the three journals the formulation of the idea of "other memory" where the journal "Forum – Historie", raised the question, that it was not how to write history but rather which past for which future and they argued unless this question was addressed at the outset history could aspire to be nothing more than a commodity produced by specialist and then made available to different consumers of different levels of passivity and incompetence. Their mantra was to "think the past politically in order to think the present historically". The journal "Revolts Logiques" located its interest in the archives and in the words & speech of particular men and women whose words could be heard or listened only to the extent that one takes the notion of the subject literally. Such issues were also raised by the journals under scrutiny about the relation between the Naxalbari movement and the present and future. This might be related to the nature of underground politics where one could not be seen but rather be only heard. Even today in our everyday discourse on the political situation of our country we usually draw the dichotomy of the pro establishment journals as being 'seen' and the subversive is considered to be 'read' or 'heard'. The journal Kolkata came out with its first issue in 1975 where right in the beginning the editor notes the reason for this issue. This was the period of Emergency in West Bengal and hence the editor insists on the importance of an issue like this so that we could remember the history of this time correctly and not through the tainted glass of state generated ideas of the movement and that period. The journal calls for an acknowledgment of a certain event so that it could be thought politically so that a history could be drawn for the present day. Journals like Ebong Jalark took out these series of special editions on the writings of the big CPI (ML) leaders. There are special issues on Charu Majumdar, Sushital Roychoudhuri where their writings and speeches have been reprinted for the future generation to have an access to them. Also this journal took out more than ten volumes of special issues on Deshabrati where again copies of Deshabrati are reprinted. Without the help of these collections of writings

⁵⁷ Ibid, 117

available through the magazine it would be impossible to know anything about the movement, and effectively there would be a lapse in generating a popular memory about the Naxalbari Movement. Ross opines that none of the journals that she discussed in there subject matter reflect there own moment directly, but they were concerned with history and questions of the past. The ephemeral but real existence of such projects according to Ross show them to be very situational, implicated in the present and tied to the immediate needs and demands and constrains of the situation without accessing any institutional protection but the journal that I have discussed would beg to differ from what Ross is arguing. Notwithstanding the fact that these journals were motivated by the immediate need of the present to assess the past, these were also spaces where the reality of their present moment was also reflected.

Subjective Representation

*"The pleasure of narrative which is derived from between the pain of loss of the object in the past and the pleasure of its return in language does not come from the power of narration to institute an origin but rather to "repeat" an event from the past while giving it a certain "force" which is derived from its enunciation, in the story told, that is, in its representation."*⁵⁸

The four plays that we have been discussing this far, were written and directed at the same time. Since these are theatrical texts, the primary function of these texts was its being performed. In a spoken discourse, the relation it shares with the speaking subject is that of immediacy. The subjective intention of the subject and the meaning of the discourse overlap each other in such a way that understanding one means understanding the other too and the full articulation of the words uttered could only come through

⁵⁸ Marin, Louis, (2001), *On Representation*, trans. by Catherine Porter, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, pp 166

the realization of performance.⁵⁹ Hence the writing of these texts has more significance for what it came to mean for a later generation. Performance, because of its intrinsic nature privileges only those who are present to witness it, for the ones who come later it is what remains of the performance in its written form that we have to make do with. But with the written discourse the intention of the author and the meaning of the discourse is not the same. The relation between the speaker and the discourse is not eradicated but it becomes more extended & complex. For me, therefore these plays texts when devoid of its performative aspect are pieces of writing which talk about the author's relation to the Naxalbari Movement and are open to interpretation for further analysis just like any other form of written text would do. What Ricoeur argues here is that the life of the text exceeds the finite life of the author, and therefore what the text means now is more important than what the author had intended to – which means “only the meaning ‘rescues’ the meaning, without the contribution of the physical & psychological presence of the author”⁶⁰. Therefore it is necessary to further engage with the relationship between the author and his text and its relation to his world. Though theatrical texts are hardly ever read beyond its performance life, unless they are revived, it is still important to read these texts in the light of what Ricoeur proposes because the relation of the author to his world becomes more intensified when they are representing the event they are witness to. Therefore they eventually become important component in the history of the Naxalbari Movement. Ricoeur argues that man not only has a situation, he has a world. In spoken discourse the dialogue ultimately reforms to be in the situation is common to the interlocutors but a discourse always refer to a world. By saying this, Ricoeur does not imply the ideology of an absolute text, but rather of a text with reference and this reference serves the idea of world which is the ensemble of reference. Hence the world that the authors of the play or any author who has written on the Naxalbari Movement by referring to their world have created for us the idea of a

⁵⁹ Ricoeur, Paul, (1991) *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics, II*, trans. by Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson, Northwest University Press, Evanston, Illinois.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, pp148

world that was the Naxalbari movement. Borrowing from Ricoeur one could argue that the text is not without reference and the task of reading and interpretation precisely fulfills the reference otherwise it merely leaves the text 'in the air', outside or without a world. Therefore there is a complex relation of the author to the text, a relation which enables us to say that the "author is instituted by the text that he stands in the space of meaning traced and inscribed by writing. The text is the very place where the author appears."⁶¹

If such an intense relation exists between the author and his text then it again bring us back to the question: in what ways would he then represent his world and whether that is true to the happenings of the actual event? The author not only writes the text but also assumes the position of the narrator and tells his story, the story of his world. Marin argues that the author establishes himself as the legitimate subject by taking possession of the narrative voice simply by starting to write. Therefore he is the "pure factum" of a power which institutes its own right to rewrite, to recite which in effect grants him an authorized power⁶². To elaborate further of this role of the author in representing an event I would look at the work of Lang and his analysis of the limits of the literary representation of the genocide which Hayden White borrows to raise similar question on the limits of representation in the case of Holocaust. Literary writing and the kind of historical writing which inspires to reach the status of literary writing are objectionable to Lang because in them the figure of the author extends beyond the thing to be represented and the representation of it.⁶³ The figure of the author must intervene itself into the discourse as "the agent of that act of figuration without which the subject of the discourse would remain

⁶¹ *ibid*, pp 109

⁶² Marin, Louis, (2001), *On Representation*, trans. by Catherine Porter, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California.

⁶³ White, Hayden, (2000), *Figural Realism: Studies in the Mimesis Effect*, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London.

unpersonalize”⁶⁴ or else he transforms by humanizing the agents & the agencies involved in those events by transforming them into the kinds of the intending, feeling, thinking subjects with whom the reader can identify & empathize just like how one does with characters in a fictional story. In all the previous sections, we have tried to establish the extent of writing as a form of representation and to grapple with the question of representation—historical and literary, the various ways in which such distinctions become indiscernible. We concluded the last section where we witnessed the kind of writing that emerged out the Naxalbari movement by participants of the movement. Coming back to the original question with which we started our chapter, that is, how does the author represent an event when one is a witness to it and is caught up in a ‘materially transformative procedure’ that the event brings about? Moving beyond the distinctions of historical or literary writing, fact and fiction, let us now look at the role of the author irrespective of whether he claims to write history or fiction, in relation to representation in order to answer our original question. Through this section we would be moving towards a conclusion in which I would try to propose a kind of resolution to the question of representation and the subject it claims to represent. Agamben quoting Foucault said the “subject is a particular, vacant place that may in fact be filled by different individuals.... If a proposition, a sentence, a group of signs can be called ‘statement’ it is not therefore because, one day someone happened to speak them or put them into some concrete form of writing; it is because the position of the subject can be assigned. To describe a formulation qua statement does not consist in analyzing the relations between the author and what he says but in determining what position can and must be occupied by any individual if he is to be the subject of it.”⁶⁵ Therefore following Agamben one could ask what happens in the living individual when he occupies the ‘vacant place’ of the subject, when he enters into the process of enunciation and discovers that “our reason is the difference of discourses, our history the

⁶⁴ Ibid, pp 35

⁶⁵ Agamben, Giorgio, (1999), *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, Zone Book, New York, pp: 141.

difference of times, ourselves the difference of masks?"⁶⁶ As it happened during the Naxalbari Movement, when people were in effect writing about their own selves or for those whose voices have been for ever silenced.

Sumanta Banerjee in his interview to me mentioned the story behind writing his book.⁶⁷ He was commissioned to write this book in the early '70s when he was working for an English daily and even after completing his first manuscript he was still being nagged by doubts. His curiosity to probe deeper and a "desire for further commitment" brought him closer to the CPI (M-L) and threw him in the company of its cadres. The experience which he recounted as being unforgettable, of sharing the adventures of the cadres and living among the poor and landless peasants had helped him to look at the movement in a new way. He soon realized the errors and incompleteness of his existing manuscripts and rewrote the entire book which finished in 1974. Even though somewhere he felt that this was a more holistic idea of the movement, he nonetheless acknowledges that the picture presented in the book is incomplete, shadowy and inadequate. He writes that the lives of many who took part in the movement were cut short by events and many of the key figures had died without having told their stories and the ones who lived had way too opposing views for him to pin point and assert that it is true. Therefore he was writing a history of an event the way he witnessed it by being a part of it and also speaking for those who cannot speak. Not just he, most of the authors whom I have discussed throughout this chapter had done the exact same work towards representing the movement. Dialogues in plays like *Kolkata r Hamlet* or *Micchil* point to the reflect the incapacity of the author to say something decisive about the movement hence *Micchil* ends with the old man following the young man who in search of the path of truth, of change which they believe will be revealed when people will be seen marching towards it. This was the

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* pp: 142

⁶⁷ This incident is also mentioned in the preface of his book as well.

same dilemma that had emerged in Lefebvre's work while discussing about the May '68 revolution in France. He had played a very active role in the revolution and later when he engaged in a scholarly work his writings seem to such that he was unsure of what to exactly write about the events and how to respond to it thereby falling into aporias.⁶⁸ The precarity of the author's position vis-à-vis his text was then giving rise to what can be called subjectivity. Hence to borrow Agamben's argument the relation between what was said and its taking place, it was possible to bracket the subject of enunciation, since speech had already taken place. But the relation between language and its existence between langue and the archive demands subjectivity as that which, in its very possibility of speech bears witness to an impossibility of speech. This is why subjectivity appears as witness; this is why it can speak for those who cannot.⁶⁹

Therefore the representation we are talking about here is a form of representation in which the subjectivity of the author is induced. History with its claim to objectivity stands in direct opposition to this kind of writing. As Foucault would argue that the frontiers of a book are not clear cut. It is beyond the title or the last full stop, beyond its internal configuration and its autonomous form and caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts other sentences. It is impossible to assign in the order of discourse the irruption of a real event.⁷⁰ Hence, beyond any apparent beginning there is always a secret origin which is fundamental and cannot be grasped. If so be it the case then in what way does the writings of the books that we have till now discussed contribute in the shaping of the history of the Naxalbari movement. In addressing the question of what is history and what is historical Benjamin argues that historical is that which can be recognized as historical from its contingent possibility to yet

⁶⁸ Lefebvre, Henri, (2009), *The Explosion: Marxism and the French Upheaval*, trans. by Alfred Ehrenfeld, Aakar Books, New Delhi.

⁶⁹ Agamben, Giorgio, (1999), *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, Zone Book, New York

⁷⁰ Foucault, Michel, (2006), *Archeology of Knowledge*, trans. by A. M. Sheridan Smith, Routledge, London and New York, pp 26

have been different and can yet become different and therefore is always 'after history'.⁷¹ Therefore the one that can become historical is the one that is not yet historical. The historical is historical when it manifests itself between two possibilities of intention—the possibility that expires in its fulfillment or it passes away unseized. Hence it is the fleeting possibilities and not possibilities that are the substantial stock in the archive of potentialities.⁷² The potential that can be best located in the realm of theatre because it gives one the leverage of the theatrical imagination. Hence, Utpal Dutt could show the villagers winning their battle against the police and the tyrannical landlord, killing him in the process, or Badal Sarkar literally and metaphorically in the lieu of his character can start walking towards the 'path of truth, the other home' (Shotti barir poth, onno barir poth) or the other possible world. Therefore history doesn't operate within a developmental logic because there is no continue between the possible and the actual. Any continuum between the aforementioned would essentially de-potentialize the possible and turned it into a calculable principle necessity. Hence if one needs to locate the history of the Naxalbari Movement then one need to look for it in the one which believes in the missed possibility of seizing the moment. Benjamin further argues that history is not a connection of causes but rather of affect and intention, it is this connection which acts as a medium in which one affection recognizes itself in the other and how it is meant by the other, as an instance of realization of its missed possibilities of happiness. Therefore "The historical moment is a moment not out of auto-affection, but out of a hetero-affection, in which the autos—in which the kairos, the happy moment—crystallizes. This moment has to be the medium for itself as other."⁷³

⁷¹ Hamacher, Werner, 'NOW': *Walter Benjamin on Historical Time* in Benjamin, Andrew, (2005), *Walter Benjamin and History*, Continuum, London and New York.

⁷² *ibid*

⁷³ *ibid*, pp 51

Benjamin further argues that there is nothing specific that happens to historical objects and these objects do not have something specifically historical about them rather they are what they are only through the happening of their history: “nothing happens other than the happening itself – this is true for the events as well as for their cognition”.⁷⁴ History occurs only where there is a state of affairs which finds its intentional correlate in its cognition and cognition finds the very same in the political act and hence what did not happen moves towards the happening. He further argues that this movement does not happen to the object that can resist it nor is it under the authority of subjects that could be free to resist it and therefore this happening, more precisely its mere possibility as a pure happening appeared in no way other than as motionless. Therefore the movement of thought and of historical event cannot intervene in this movement from the outside and cannot be a mere element of the movement either but has to be based within the structure of the movement itself since it is motionless.⁷⁵ Hence the movement of the event of the Naxalbari Movement and the thought about it lie in the structure of the movement of history which is an archive of missed possibilities, hence the authors who are still to discern their position vis-à-vis the event and induces his subjectivity in order to grasp this pure happening of mere possibility can claim to represent the history of the Naxalbari Movement because it remained a contingent possibility yet to happen. Thereby, I would like to argue that it is through this subjective representation of the event of Naxalbari that one can imagine representing an event like that. Therefore the ‘teer’ piercing Satyaban Singh, Abhi’s predicament, Khoka’s finding the new path to redemption and the boy’s constant desire and belief that he can kill the king no matter how big the king is, are all subjective and only, hence has the potential of being a representation of the movement.

⁷⁴ Ibid, pp 53

⁷⁵ Ibid

Hamacher sums up Benjamin's argument by opining that "the gesture of thought as Benjamin grasps it does not bring to light a rigid image purged of the movement of events, but it is nothing other than the movement of events itself."⁷⁶ Therefore to conclude the chapter I would like to opine that as Foucault would argue, a statement is always an event that neither the language nor the meaning can quite exhaust. This is because firstly, on one hand it is linked to the gesture of writing or to the articulation of speech; on the other hand it opens itself to the residual existence in the field of memory or in the materiality of manuscripts, books, or any other form of recording. Secondly, like any event it is unique, yet subject to repetition, transformation, and reactivation, thirdly, it is linked not only to the situations that provoke it but also in accordance with quite different modality to the statement that precedes and follows it. It is not an interpretation of the facts of the statements that might reveal them but the analysis of their coexistence, their succession, their mutual functioning, their reciprocal determination, and their independent or correlative transformation.⁷⁷ Hence it is important to take into account what this ephemerality of statement does to the construction of history. Therefore what the capturing of the movement of work, lifework or era and history does is that it preserves the genuinely historical thought in its objects, which makes these objects possible, and also their preservation and continuation, and makes it contribute them and to bring back Benjamin, he argues that these objects are not just works they are the course of history itself. So the writings on the Naxalbari Movement do not only signify the way the world would know the history of it, but each of these writings is in themselves an account for its own history.

⁷⁶ Ibid, pp 54

⁷⁷ Foucault, Michel, (2006), *Archeology of Knowledge*, trans. by A. M. Sheridan Smith, Routledge, London and New York, PP:31

Subject of the Movement

“The thing the sixties did was to show us the possibilities and the responsibility that we all had. It wasn't the answer. It just gave us a glimpse of the possibility.”

~John Lennon

Sumanta Banerjee in “In the Wake of Naxalbari” ends the book with a note of belief in the happening of the event of Naxalbari and though acknowledging its apparent non-success, reposes his faith on the possibility it holds for the future generations, a possibility that the event may happen again and this time it would be seized. He writes in the section titled ‘The Prospects’, “...but occasional respites notwithstanding, the internal conditions in India may mature into an explosive aneurysm. Every failure of the Government’s economic policies can foster the push. The economic strife will deepen the political turmoil. There is a new generation that is germinating quietly in the furrows that the strife of 1967-72 had ploughed in the bleeding land of India. Will they draw inspiration from the rich experience of their predecessors, and be able at the same time to avoid the pitfalls?”¹ A subject is anyone carried by his or her fidelity to the consequences as rigorous as they are haphazard, of an event, while a truth is nothing other than the cumulative collection of such post evental consequences. The laborious case by case application of these consequences will then serve to transform the entire way the situation organizes and represents itself, in keeping with the implications of the event. Such a conclusive and declarative statement right in the beginning of the chapter might seem a bit inappropriate but the reason for it was to state very clearly and in an of course reduced manner, Badiou’s idea of the subject of the

¹ Banerjee, Sumanta, (1980), *In the Wake of Naxalbari: A History of the Naxalite Movement in India*, Subarnarekha, Calcutta. Pp 399

event. Given that we are moving along the argument of the Naxalbari movement being an event then the answer to the question of the subject is the obvious one. Notwithstanding my fidelity to Badiou's concept of the evental subject, an inquiry into the Naxalbari Movement can reveal the fissures in the already established notions of the subject. Moving on, "an ordinary individual or 'someone' only becomes a genuine subject insofar as he or she is caught up in a materially transformative procedure of this kind. The subject is something real but not a point of real like the event. Additionally there is the possibility of the subject to be in the fiction of a complete truth. A complete truth is a fiction because truth is never complete."² When we talk about the effective subject which emerged (?) out of the event of the Naxalbari Movement in the late 1960's we need concern ourselves with an idea of the subject space of a double negation. Firstly we need to understand the figure of the subject in context to an immediate necessity to reject the erstwhile arrangement of authorized codes and institutionalized values or in other words the ideological reality present before the event. But we also need to concern ourselves with the act of such a denial which itself is affirmative because it is a positive action maintaining a negation which is sustained by the incompleteness of the event. Thus a complete subject systematically emerges out of an inconsistency immanent to the situation. But the subject thus formed is a fragile one whose subjectification is solely determined through an attestation of the unknown, undecidable foundation of the event. It is my intention through my research to not only explore this fragile realm of the subject in case of the Naxalbari Movement but also to enumerate the various situations from within which they can emerge particularly that of politics and art. In order to do this we would be dividing this chapter into four sections. In the first section we would discuss some of the ideas regarding who constitutes the subject within which we would try to locate the question of the subject as

² Badiou Alain, (August 2002), *On the Truth- Process*, An Open Lecture at the European Graduate School, Switzerland.

it emerged through the Naxalbari Movement. In this section we would alongside also discuss some of Badiou's concept of the subject, or in other words, discuss the ways in which he departs from these ideas. We would elaborate on Badiou's concept of the subject as we proceed from one section to another. The next section deals with the question of the subject either being political or eventual and what are the possible relations and disrelations that we can observe between these two ideas of the subject especially in the situation of a highly motivated political event like the Naxalbari Movement. In this section I would take into account Jacques Ranciere's concept of the political subject and the eventual subject as proposed by Badiou. The last two sections would be where I would inquire into the relation between first, subject and history and secondly, subject and truth. The rationale behind delving into the relation between subject and history and subject and truth and the probable question it raises in our present context of inquiry is: history and its subsequent claim to truth is the question that we have been trying to grapple with in the previous chapters as well. Be it the question of representation of politics through action or art or the writing of the same, the moot question always remains that of the truth value of such representations and its contribution to history or to historicize the event. To borrow Badiou's argument, he opines that one should also differentiate meaning and truth. For him a generic procedure realizes the post-eventual truth of a situation, but this indiscernible multiple in which a truth consists yields up no meaning.³ Badiou brings out the point of how knowledge never encounters anything. He opines that knowledge presupposes presentation, representing it in language by perceptiveness and judgment. The subject he argues is neatly separated from knowledge by randomness because it is this randomness which is defeated term by term, but this victory, subtracted from language, is accomplished only as truth. This is the relationship we would explore in our last section.

³ Badiou, Alain, *On a Finally Objectless Subject*, in Nancy, Jean-Luc, Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor (ed), (1991), *Who Comes After the Subject*, Routledge, New York, London.

Who is the subject?

"A subject is neither a result nor an origin. It is the local status of the procedure, a configuration that exceeds the situation."⁴

The idea of the subject is in all probability one of the oldest questions haunting the minds of philosophers in all ages. We cannot conceive of any structure of society without conceiving an idea of who its subject is going to be. It is quite an impossible task for me to elaborate on the genealogy of ideas and questions raised on how we perceive the subject and even an entire book would fall short of this great task, hence in this section I would discuss some of the definitions of the 'subject' and see how we can thrash out the various notions which can then give us a direction of approaching the topic of the subject of the movement.

According to Nancy, the dominant definition of the philosophical (or 'metaphysical') subject is close to the one proposed by Hegel in which Hegel argues that a subject is "that which is capable of maintaining within itself its own contradiction."⁵ Borrowing from Hegel he further argues that the contradiction within the subject would be its own and here he refers to the dialectical law, even his alienation would be his own and that 'subjectivity' (he follows Heidegger here, and distinguishes the subject structure from anthropological subjectivity) would consist in "re-appropriating this proper being outside-of itself"⁶. If we posit the Naxalbari Movement within the argument put forward by Nancy, then we can argue that every one who was a part of the movement, right from the peasants to the tribal

⁴ Ibid, pp 27

⁵ Nancy, Jean-Luc, *Introduction*, in Nancy, Jean-Luc, Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor (ed), (1991), *Who Comes After the Subject*, Routledge, New York, London. Pp 6

⁶ Ibid, pp 6

communities to the students and factory workers, are a subject of the movement. In fact it is difficult to accommodate such a definition of the subject within a particular political movement because this idea of the subject is the one which exists in any hierarchical society. One can extend the argument by opining that not all who are ruled are subjects by Nancy's definition but only the ones who recognize the contradiction within himself hence we can argue that all those who were responsible for the occurrence of the event of Naxalbari are the subjects of the movement. But this does not answer the question of the subject who is created through the event and whether and how that subject can be looked at as the subject of the movement. To proceed forward from the classical concept of the subject, Badiou argues that a subject is not a substance. He further debates that if the word substance has a meaning, it designates a multiple that is counted as one in a situation. Therefore the inherent indiscernibility into which a 'generic procedure' determines eliminate a subject's being 'substantial'.

For Deleuze the subject can be understood in two ways. The subject is first a "function of universalization in a field where the universal was no longer represented by objective essentials, but by acts, noetic or linguistic"⁷ and secondly, the function of the subject is to fulfill the responsibility of "individuation in a field where the individual can no longer be a thing or a soul, but is instead a person, alive and sentient, speaking and spoken to (I-You)".⁸ Here again though Deleuze gives us a comprehensive understanding of the subject yet it falls short of ascribing a new meaning to the idea of the subject after the taking place of the event. In this also because the way Deleuze describes an event is very different from the way Badiou defines it. This we shall discuss later in the chapter. But it is worth noticing what Deleuze points out in his second definition of the subject where he is attributes a sense of

⁷ Deleuze, Gilles, *A Philosophical Concept...* in Nancy, Jean-Luc, Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor (ed), (1991), *Who Comes After the Subject*, Routledge, New York, London, pp 94

⁸ *Ibid*, pp 94

praxis to the subject. Hence subjects are not passive beings with only an ontological presence but are beings who are active and interacting with knowledge and credence which is an essential way of looking at the subject especially if inquiring into specific events like the Naxalbari Movement. For Deleuze further argues that, knowledge and even belief have been replaced by notions like “arrangement” or “contrivance” (in French, *agencement* and *dispositif*) which indicate an emanation and allocation of singularities. Such emanations, of which he called the “cast of the dice” kind, comprise a ‘transcendental field without subject’.⁹ According to him philosophy is a theory of multiplicities and does not refer to subject as preliminary unity but the events raise very complex questions about “composition and decomposition, about speed and slowness, about latitude and longitude, about power and affect”.¹⁰ Therefore for him the subject is not an empty exchanges between an ‘I and a You’ but rather the ‘nonperson or It’ in which we recognize ourselves and our community better.¹¹ On the other hand for Badiou a subject is not an invariant of presentation. For him the subject is rare in that the generic procedure runs diagonally to the situation. Badiou argues that one could add that each subject is rigorously singular, because it is the generic procedure of a situation which is itself singular. Therefore the statement “There is subject” is uncertain or haphazard: it is not transitive with respect to being.¹² Badiou further debates that if one considers the subject’s material which is multiple to be the terms submitted to the fidelity operator, it has no assignable relationship with the rule dividing the positive results (where connection is established) from the negative ones (where disconnection is established). Therefore as Badiou would argue, “conceived of in its operation, the subject is qualifiable though singular: it breaks down into a name (of the event) and an (of fidelity). Conceived of in its multiple

⁹ Ibid, 95

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Badiou, Alain, *On a Finally Objectless Subject*, in Nancy, Jean-Luc, Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor (ed), (1991), *Who Comes After the Subject*, Routledge, New York, London.

being, i.e., in the terms that figure in the actual evaluations, the subject is unqualifiable in that these terms are arbitrary with respect to its twofold qualification.”¹³

Hamacher borrowing from Benjamin argues that “Happiness” is not experienced in the present without the present relating to what he calls “Gewesenes”, but it is not also experienced on a past reality but as a not actualized possibility.¹⁴ By this he doesn’t mean past happiness but happiness that was possible in the past but was missed, he further argues that it does not recite in the event that could become the subject of objective cognition but it is rather a possibility only in its missed, and it is by the virtue of this miss that it preserves itself as a possibility for the future. Therefore happiness is the “festum post festum amissum”.¹⁵ This kind of happiness of the only ‘im-possible’, he argues provokes envy. Here envy is an affect not directed towards anything real but rather towards something that was possible but is disguised, not realized and hence is still open. For Benjamin this envy does not emerge from the happiness of someone else but rather by ones own happiness that could not be seized. “This good, happiness maintains itself as if according to the platonic formula *epekeina tes ousias*, beyond the recognizable essence in the realm of their mere possibility. It is the other that could have been, and it preserves in what became the actuality the possibility of its otherness”¹⁶. Therefore happiness according to Benjamin as Hamacher argues is always a contingent possibility and can only be grasped in its pure form, i.e., missed, deferred and unseized. Thus it can be said that this possibility jumps traditional boundaries of time and history since this possibility has not entered the series of historical events and have not become the components of historical tradition. “Historical cognition is cognition of that ‘which

¹³ *Ibid*, pp 27

¹⁴ Hamacher, Werner, ‘NOW’: *Walter Benjamin on Historical Time* in Benjamin, Andrew, (2005), *Walter Benjamin and History*, Continuum, London and New York.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, pp 38

¹⁶ *Ibid*, pp 39

has not yet become history, that which yet can become history,' because its possibilities, and that is possibilities of happiness, have not yet been actualized."¹⁷ Sumanta Banerjee about the setback of the movement in 1972 writes that it did validate the bitterness of the popular grievances that stimulated the movement, or the viability of the programme of armed struggle. He writes that the "the fiery eyed, frail Charu Majumdar, a victim of cardiac asthma, who was driven to death by police persecution—was fond of saying "no word ever dies. What we are saying today may not be accepted by the people at this moment. But our propaganda is not going in vain. Our words remain embedded among people""¹⁸ The kind of belief in the missed possibility that Charu Majumdar here opines, is what Benjamin tried to argue through the concept of happiness. Benjamin further argues that possibilities for someone are their intentions and life's possibilities are possibilities for those who could seize them and belong to the structure of their existence, the one who feels addressed by the continuing effect as intentions and demand their realization. Therefore to quote him, "the image of happiness that we cherish is thoroughly colored by the time to which the course of our existence has assigned us."¹⁹ Hamacher further argues that for Benjamin it is in the dimension of the possible to become an actual. But the addressee of this claim is not a pre-given, already constituted subject who perceives the claim and is bound by it but rather it is in the function of the claim to find its addressee, someone who is "thoroughly colored by the time", and asserts their demands towards this claim "not only in its time but as its time."²⁰ This Benjamin refers to as the Messianic power which is basically nothing other than the implicit idea that there would be an instance in which the missed possibility can be actualized, corrected or regained. In other words, "the messianic power is the postulate of the fulfilability and, in this sense of redeemability

¹⁷ Ibid, pp 39

¹⁸ Banerjee, Sumanta, (1980), *In the Wake of Naxalbari: A History of the Naxalite Movement in India*, Subarnarekha, Calcutta, pp xi

¹⁹ Hamacher, Werner, 'NOW': *Walter Benjamin on Historical Time* in Benjamin, Andrew, (2005), *Walter Benjamin and History*, Continuum, London and New York, pp 41

²⁰ Ibid, pp 41

that is immanent in each missed opportunity and distinguishes it as a possibility”.²¹ It is the one who has or believes in the messianic power that constitutes the subject for Benjamin. This in fact is almost in congruence with how Badiou defines the subject in terms of the fidelity operator. The one who believes in the messianic power is also the one who has fidelity towards the event. The discussion till now on the concept of subject brings us more close to the idea of the evental subject as Badiou defines it, as being the subject of the Naxalbari Movement. Since this movement was a political movement, we cannot completely overlook the concept and formation of the political subject in the case of the Naxalbari movement. Here again the word political cannot be taken a monolithic word but in its more than one meaning which we shall explore in the following section.

The Political Subject or the Evental Subject

“Politics is not the exercise of power. Politics ought to be defined on its own terms, as a mode of acting put into practice by a specific kind of subject and deriving from a particular form of reason. It is the political relationship that allows one to think the possibility of a political subject(ivity) [le sujet politique],³ not the other way around.”²²

So what is the political relationship that emerges during a political event and how does it shape the subject and can we call it a political or an evental subject? This is the question that we would address in this section. We would first inquire into what according to Ranciere is the political subject within the idea of democracy and then we would juxtapose it with Badiou’s idea of the subject when the ideas of democracy fail and something new is expected to emerge. The political event in question here is the

²¹ Ibid, pp 42

²² Ranciere, Jacques, *Ten Theses on Politics*, Translated by Rachel Bowlby & Davide Panagia, Theory & Event 5:3.

Naxalbari movement and therefore I would refer to my four main play texts, the lives of some of the authors, my interviewees to thrash out the arguments between the aforementioned philosophers and through that attempt to have a head way into reaching some kind of an understanding of the subject of the Naxalbari movement.

As I have mentioned before, Ranciere posits his argument of the political subject within the idea of democracy and its various mechanisms and the need for creating a rupture. Hence I would be drawing certain references from the plays where the authors and directors have tried to represent such an existent system of society and while critiquing that society offer a new path of redemption, in the need to create that rupture. However, the plays don't just end with this need or call for change but also asks for acknowledgement to that event which has already happened and happening and hence indiscernible and to commit to that idea or the power of that possibility. We will come back to this point in the next part of this section. Borrowing from the Aristotelian definition, Ranciere argues that there is a name given to the subject that is "politès" that is defined by a "part-taking (metexis) in a form of action (archein - ruling) and in the undergoing that corresponds to this doing (archesthai - being ruled)".²³ Therefore a political subject can be anyone who partakes in the process of governing, both the ones who rule and are ruled. Ranciere argues that a vicious circle is located in the link between the political relationship and the political subject: "The political relationship is subsequently deduced from the properties of this specific order of being and is explained in terms of the existence of a character who possesses a good or a specific universality, as opposed to the private or domestic world of needs or interests"²⁴. In other words, politics is thus explained as the triumph of a way of life that is proper to those who are meant for it and it is this partition which is actually the object of politics is considered to be its basis. Hence if

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Ibid

there is anything 'proper' to politics, it is to be found completely in this relationship which is not a relationship between subjects, but one between two contradictory terms through which a subject is defined.²⁵ A very strong example of this can be seen in the play *Rajrakta*, where in the opening scene itself, there is the establishment of the character of the king through the descriptions offered by his men. There 'character 1 and 2' and the female character all point to how invincible their king is, and the tremendous aura that he has which commands respect. All the three characters exchange a series of dialogues in the first scene where they argue that their king has the properness, the merits of being a king, and therefore he is the ideal to rule. They point to his culture, education, taste etc which make him suited for running a kingdom, and therefore he cannot be wrong. On the other hand someone of the likes of the character of the boy who is just a servant, a mere subject is a powerless and weak entity who can never cause any harm to the great invincible king and can never replace him because the boy doesn't have it to become a king. Politics here can be located within the separation of the one who rules and the one who should be ruled. Therefore politics according to Ranciere cannot be defined on the basis of any pre-existing subject because it is the political 'difference' that makes it possible to think its subject and must be located within the form of its relation.

Ranciere further argues that the opposition between praxis and poiesis in no way resolves the contradictory definition of the 'politès'. For him as far as 'arche' is concerned, there is the conventional logic that there is a particular temperament to act that is implemented on a particular nature to "be acted upon". Thus for him the logic of arche presupposes a "determinate superiority exercised upon an equally determinate inferiority".²⁶ Therefore in order for there to be a "political subject(ivity)", and for there to

²⁵ *Ibid*

²⁶ *Ibid*

be politics, there must be a rupture in this logic.²⁷ This was the exact model of idea that I believe the plays written and performed during the Naxalbari Movement were based on. All the four plays under investigation here began with the existent political system of a particular place, which was based on the same logic of *arche* as that proposed by Ranciere. Then these plays proceeded onto the necessity for creating the rupture in that political system. Hence characters like Abhi (Kolkata r Hamlet) or the boy from Rajrakta become figures which create the rupture to reveal politics. But for Ranciere the dichotomy between 'in ruling and being ruled' is not a matter of reciprocity. It is rather an absence of reciprocity that comprises the extraordinary essence of this relationship and it is in this absence of reciprocity that the 'paradox of a qualification' rests. He opines that the citizen who contributes 'in ruling and being ruled' is only thinkable on the basis of the 'demos' as a figure that ruptures the correspondence between this relationship. Democracy is therefore is not a political regime in the sense of a "particular constitution that determines different ways of assembling people under a common authority" but rather it is the institution of politics – "the institution of both its subject and its mode of relating".²⁸ Before we proceed further I would like to explain what Ranciere means as *demos* in this context. He debated that before being the name of a community, 'demos' is the name of a part of the community that is the poor. By 'poor', he does not assign an economically disadvantaged part of the population but rather it simply is the category of peoples who do not count, the ones who have no credentials to part-take in 'arche', and therefore do not qualify to be taken into account. This was the same kind of 'poor' that Badal Sarkar was trying to portray through his plays. As Sadanand Menon points out that what the flag wavers of the organized Left had failed to see was that while they kept themselves busy with picked up issues that concerned a narrow bandwidth in India called the "proletariat", Sarkar was speaking about a much more

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Ibid

capacious bandwidth called the “poor”.²⁹ For him, poor was the category of people who were not taken into account within the gamut of governmentality by the ruling government of our country and hence always remained a voiceless, faceless population and it was them and their silenced voices that Sarkar tried to represent through his plays. Therefore demos does not allocate a socially inferior category: “The one who speaks when s/he is not to speak, the one who part-takes in what s/he has no part in - that person belongs to the demos”³⁰.

“The ‘people’ that is the subject of democracy - and thus the principal subject of politics - is not the collection of members in a community, or the laboring classes of the population. It is the supplementary part, in relation to any counting of parts of the population that makes it possible to identify “the part of those who have no-part’ with the whole of the community.”³¹ By ‘people’, Ranciere here refers to the supplement that disconnects the population from itself, by suspending the various logics of legitimate domination. The ‘people’ is the supplement that inscribes ‘the count of the unaccounted-for’ or ‘the part of those who have no part.’³² Thus politics exists as a departure from this ‘normal’ order of things and it is in this anomaly that the nature of the political subjects is expressed, where the political subjects are not social groups but rather “forms of inscription of ‘the (ac)count of the unaccounted-for.’” Envisaging the gradual transformation of the struggle, from a single annihilation to full scale guerilla warfare, Charu Majumdar said “Without class struggle—without the battle of annihilation—the doors of the initiative of the poor peasant masses can never be increased, the new man never emerges, the people’s army can never be built. Only through carrying on the class struggle, the

²⁹ Menon, Sadanand, *Badal Sircar (1925-2011): A Curtain Call for Political Theatre*, Economic and Political Weekly, May 28th, 2011, Vol XLVI, No. 22.

³⁰ Ranciere, Jacques, *Ten Theses on Politics*, Translated by Rachel Bowlby & Davide Panagia, Theory & Event 5:3.

³¹ Ibid

³² Ibid

battle of annihilation, can the new man be born—the man who will defy death, and will be free of all self interests. And with this contempt for death, he will move up to the enemy, will snatch away his rifle, will avenge the murder of martyrs, and in this way the people’s army will emerge.”³³ Most of my interviewees also pointed to the fact that how during the Naxalbari movement, though the call of the Party was different for the peasants, workers and students, but in confrontation with the State, they were one, the ‘people’ in Ranciere’s words, who together represented the unrepresented and the crisis that they were addressing were not of either the peasant or students but rather of the ones who had no partaking in the arche. Ranciere further argues that there is politics so long as ‘the people’ is not identified with the race or a population, and the poor are not equated with a particular disadvantaged sector, and as long as the proletariat is not a group of industrial workers, etc...³⁴ Rather, for him there is politics as long as ‘the people’ refers to subjects celebrated as an enhancement to the parts of society, as a specific figure of ‘the part of those who have no-part.’

In the play *Micchil*, there is the character of the police, who keeps coming in the middle of almost all scenes. The police throughout the play have more or less similar dialogues which are of dispersing the crowd and announcing that everything is fine and no one was killed. To give an example, in the first scene itself, the police enter when there is a hullabaloo over someone being killed and slowly a protest was brewing, and says, “Wait! Where, who has been murdered? There is no one who has been killed.... This is all bullshit and a bunch of rumors. Move along! Go home everyone.” In her book, Ross writes about how “No one died in ’68”, which was a much repeated phrase and was in fact false. But as

³³ Banerjee, Sumanta, (1980), *In the Wake of Naxalbari: A History of the Naxalite Movement in India*, Subarnarekha, Calcutta, pp 145

³⁴ Ranciere, Jacques, *Ten Theses on Politics*, Translated by Rachel Bowlby & Davide Panagia, *Theory & Event* 5:3.

Ross argues, this reiteration must be read as a symptom of an attempt to lend a good natured, almost misty quality to the insurrection and its participants—both the militants and the State. Therefore the idea was that there was nothing political that happened during May, all that happened was at the level of culture—a transformation of lifestyle and habits of daily life which just shaped the public space in a slightly new way. It was never allowed to transform into a space of resistance which was in actuality. From this we can initiate a discussion on the way the ‘police’ functions in the words of Ranciere and here police is not restricted to the members of the institution of law and order but rather the essence of the police which can come through history or sociology and has a direct repercussion on the understanding of politics. Ranciere argues that political struggle is that which differentiates politics from the police that it by including that logic of its own thus bringing politics into being. Thus in his own words “politics is first and foremost an intervention upon the visible and the sayable”³⁵. He further debates that the function of police intervention in public spaces is not primarily that of the “interpellation of demonstrators, but in the breaking up of demonstrations”. He opines that the action of the police is first of all, to remind the obviousness of what there is, or rather, of what there isn’t: “Move along! There is nothing to see here!” By this statement what Ranciere tries to show is that the police says that there is nothing to see on a road, that there is nothing to do but move along. The police declare that the space of circulating is nothing other than the space of circulation and distinguishes itself from politics because the latter transforms this space of ‘moving-along’ into a space for the appearance of a subject: i.e., the people, the workers, the citizens—“It consists in refiguring the space, of what there is to do there, what is to be seen or named therein.”³⁶ Therefore if one extends the argument, it can be said that the way the character of the police was portrayed in *Micchil*, it was also a take on how the police perception of society and history make sure that certain things are remembered and others not lest it

³⁵ *Ibid*

³⁶ *Ibid*

transforms the unperceivable to the perceivable. This is because not only did the police come in scenes to announce that no one has been killed, but also to assure the masses that everything is in order and there is nothing to be scared of, thereby taking away the political aspect from the disruption in the city and reducing it to mere chaos created by some lumpens. In the other plays also where there is no such direct connection shown between the police and its role in subtracting politics from the public space, the police is always shown as the institution constantly delegitimizing the revolutionaries by taking away their political motivation and replacing it by activities of pathological youth. One can locate such an attitude in the dialogues between the police and Abhi in Kolkata r Hamlet, where Abhi's constant effort to recognize and appreciate the dedication and courage of the young revolutionaries is contested with vehemence by the spiteful and vulgar comments of the police on the worthlessness of the lives of the ones rising up against the state. The police then for Ranciere are less concerned with repression than with a more basic function: that of constituting what is or is not perceivable, determining what can or cannot be seen, dividing what can be heard from what cannot.

The essence of politics is dissensus."³⁷ By dissensus, Ranciere is referring to not the confrontation between interests or opinions but rather it is the manifestation of a 'distance of the sensible from itself'. He opines that politics makes visible that which otherwise had no reason to be seen and it houses one world into another. The Bengali magazine "Lal Tara" had published an article "Review of Debra Peasants' Struggle by a Group of Cadres" where they stated the broad economic slogan of "seize the crops of the class enemy".³⁸ They argued in the article that this slogan worked like magic in the villages and even the most backward peasant would come forward and joins the battle. Thus, the fight

³⁷ Ranciere, Jacques, *Ten Theses on Politics*, Translated by Rachel Bowlby & Davide Panagia, *Theory & Event* 5:3.

³⁸ Banerjee, Sumanta, (1980), *In the Wake of Naxalbari: A History of the Naxalite Movement in India*, Subarnarekha, Calcutta, pp 188

for the seizure of political power initiated by a few advanced sections was nourished by the tremendous initiative of the masses and mass actions, and the flames of people's war engulfed the whole countryside. Hence if one tries to locate the politics in the economic slogan which can be considered as their goal, we can argue that it not only brings out the voice of the voiceless, it also gives rise to a space where the most backward and therefore more invisible gets a chance to express themselves. Ranciere gives the example of the world where the factory is a public space within the one where it is also considered to be a private one, "the world where workers speak out vis-à-vis the one where their voices are merely cries expressing pain."³⁹ In the same way, looking at the spaces of political struggle by the peasants of Naxalbari and other villages, one can see that those spaces were not only of resistance and demonstration like how a public space is, but also a private domain in which peasants, tribal, students, workers would interact to assert their voices in a way where it cannot be ignored or rejected as mere cries of pain. Hence I would like to argue that the dissensus within the Naxalbari Movement created the subject who was eligible to argue for a possible world. Therefore political argument is at the same time both the "demonstration of a possible world where the argument could count as argument, addressed by a subject qualified to argue, upon an identified object, to an addressee who is required to see the object and to hear the argument that he or she 'normally' has no reason to either see or hear".⁴⁰ To conclude, he writes that politics thus has neither a 'proper' place nor does it possess any 'natural' subjects because a demonstration is political not because it takes place in a specific milieu or because it bears upon a particular object but rather because its form is that of a conflict between two panels of the 'sensible'. Therefore a political subject is not a group of interests or ideas: "It is the operator of a particular mode of

³⁹ Ranciere, Jacques, *Ten Theses on Politics*, Translated by Rachel Bowlby & Davide Panagia, Theory & Event 5:3.

⁴⁰ Ibid

subjectification and litigation through which politics has its existence. Political demonstrations are thus always of the moment and their subjects are always provisional.”⁴¹

Moving on from the various dimensions of the political subject as proposed by Ranciere, we would now proceed to investigate what is understood as the evental subject. According to Badiou, politics always lag behind events and the subject would remain the means of ‘propping up’ historical contradictions. For him even when Marxism no longer qualified sufficiently as a doctrine or a grand narrative, the crisis of Marxism still required a subject to think of it, a subject of the crisis. By doing this, Barker argued that Badiou faced the challenge of postmodernism by ‘liberating’ Marxism from the dogmatism of the party and also from that of the academicians, while at the same time he managed to avoid the dubiousness of postmodernism’s political side effects like nihilism and historical relativism. Hallward argues that for the early Badiou there is not just one subject and one force and the subject of the proletariat becomes the Party. But with the later Badiou he argues things are less clear because Badiou declares that “there is in effect not one single subject, but as many subjects as there are truths.”⁴² Badiou also further argues that the subject is rare and always singular. Therefore there are as many truths and there are subjects. Therefore “If dialectical thought [i.e. philosophy] breaks with the order of representations, it has no guarantee of reality other than its own experience.”⁴³ Hence theatrical text and the truth claim it has is as much as that of a respondent who was part of the movement can be considered the same. Badiou argues that philosophy must forever purify of hermeneutic relation between interpreter and interpreted, between subject and object.

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Hallward, Peter, *Generic Sovereignty: the Philosophy of Alain Badiou*, Angelaki: Journal of Theoretical Humanities, 3:3, 1998, Cartax Publishing Ltd.

⁴³ Ibid

Badiou's question is how can a modern doctrine of the subject be reconciled with an ontology? By the modern subject he means a subject not as the self identical, substance that brings about change or the one who is the correlate of an object. Badiou's definition of the subject is opposed to that proposed by other schools of thought especially that of poststructuralists. Badiou differs from Foucault in his definition of the subject because for the former the subject connects in a rigorously impersonal way the finite particulars of a situation to an 'infinitely generic universality' whereas for the latter the subject is the dandy who makes off himself a work of art. Badiou identifies two problems in the understanding of the subject- identity and agency.⁴⁴ The poststructuralists believe that there is no identity of the subject because the subject has no substantial identity but only an illusion of an underlying identity which is produced by the subject's representation to be able to grasp its own identity. For instance Derrida argues that the subject is nothing other than a continuous movement of translation and therefore there is no subject outside of text. But then it raises the question that how then one differentiates one subject from another without a definition of the subject. As a critique to the problem of identity the question of agency has been pitched against the poststructuralists. The question of agency then comes from the fact that if a subject has no identity then how s/he can have an autonomous rational mind. Badiou when faced with this challenge firstly distinguishes between the general domain of ontology and the theory of the subject. Secondly, for him the question of agency is more important than that of identity. The question then is of how a subject emerges through an independent chain of actions within a changing situation. In the early stage of the movement, in the years 1967-68, there were many who went to the countryside had no clear idea about the programme of the Communist revolutionaries, or the nature of the revolution planned by them. News of the uprising at Naxalbari had unleashed a process of soul searching among the youth, shaking them out of their indifference to rural poverty and militancy. Some

⁴⁴ Badiou, Alain, (2005), *Infinite Thought*, Continuum: London.

went to the villages with philanthropic intentions, some with vague notions of organizing the peasantry, some just to observe.⁴⁵ These actions are not everyday actions but rather extraordinary ones which separates an actor from their existing context, exerting the idea that human beings can actually act as a free agent and support new forms of actions and reactions. Because of this reason not all human beings can become subjects, but some become through establishing a fidelity to the chance encounter with the event in which the actor finds himself and that which disrupts his existing situation. Therefore a subject is born out of his own decision that something that they have encountered, no matter how new or out of the ordinary it is, it cannot be overlooked. But this fidelity to the event does not just stop at recognizing it as a disruptive happening but continues into an extensive investigation of such an event not in an academic fashion but through an active engagement with the situation to recognize the transformation in the situation as well as in the actor. To take the example of Badal Sarkar: his revolutionary transformation happened in the decade of the 70s. The director of “Evam Indrajit” finally realized the need for directing a play like *Micchil* and hence got down to the streets to actualize it. Many were happy to witness this change of heart but most of them never accepted his theatrical innovation as being an answer to the alienating and bourgeois proscenium theatre. For most of his critics Badal Sarkar’s *Anganmancha* was not revolutionary enough an intervention in the Indian theatre scene and was limited in catering to the educated urban or semi urban middle class and the intelligentsia. Hence his transformation was never considered as a genuine one but was rather seen as pretence to keep pace with the change in the political air⁴⁶.

A particular scene in the beginning of the play ‘Teer’ depicts the reactions of different people like the bourgeoisie, the businessmen, the army, the bureaucracy, middle class, intelligentsia post the

⁴⁵ Banerjee, Sumanta, (1980), *In the Wake of Naxalbari: A History of the Naxalite Movement in India*, Subarnarekha, Calcutta

⁴⁶ Roy, Amar (ed.) *Naxalbari Probhabe Shilpi-Shahitya-Challachitra*, Naya Itihash, 24th May, 1992.

happenings at Naxalbari. This particular scene comes across as a very strong one because it directly refers to how certain people come in contact with an event and what kind of transformation that event induces in that person. Clemens argues that, “in Badiou’s philosophy there is no such thing as a subject without such a process of subjectivization.”⁴⁷ One should not think that Badiou’s definition of the subject is exclusionary in any way because there is no ‘pre destination’ in Badiou’s account. This is because the chance encounter between particular actors and the situation is only a chance and a subject ‘may’ be born out of it but there is no higher order prescribes as to who will have a chance to encounter the event. Therefore, like it is shown in ‘Teer’, not all people would come in contact with the event, and the conversion which would create the subject does not happen to anyone and everyone confronting the event and thereby remains a chance which is motivated by various factors outside on the pure happening of the event. He further argues that even within that some human beings who become subjects not all can remain such for ever because they often break their fidelity and thus lose their subjecthood. The Editorial of the March ’78 *Deshabrati* argued that post 1972 there has been tremendous rift between the part members and mud slinging has been going on for sometime now. This editorial was written by the pro Lin Piao group of the CPI (M-L) led by Mahadeb Mukherjee. The editor of *Deshabrati* argues in this article that those who were the high priests of peasant revolution following the teachings and thoughts of “Chairman Mao and our respected leader Comrade Charu Majumdar” were now turning their back towards these people in ruthlessly criticizing them. In the article he implicated CPI (M-L) leaders like Kanu Sanyal, Ashim Chatterjee, and Souren ... are being the most modern representatives of revisionism whereas they should themselves be fighting revisionism. To quote from the article “They talk of the necessity of reviewing the situations and immediately announce their decisions to start everything anew. In this process they are seeking to negate the history of the last ten years’ armed

⁴⁷ See Introduction, Badiou, Alain, (2005), *Infinite Thought*, Continuum: London, pp 7

peasant revolutionary war. It is indeed a treat to watch these great men play political volte-face. It was this Kanu Sanyal who once on the Maidan declared that Charu Majumdar was the leader, that it was comrade Charu Majumdar who had in combating revisionism, applied Mao Tsetung Thought in Naxalbari. It was he who had then warned the Indian masses against those seeking to smash Comrade Charu Majumdar's Authority. ...and then in "More About Naxalbari" he suddenly discovered that in Naxalbari Charu Majumdar's politics had not been applied—a point he probably forgot to mention earlier. Ashim, the propaganda-in-charge of this Kanu Sanyal, is today posing as a great commentator of the Indian revolution. This Ashim Chatterjee once said that it was at the feet of comrade Charu Majumdar that they had learnt how to start guerilla warfare. It was he who once declared that even if there was no one to stand by Comrade Charu Majumdar he alone would do so till the last, he alone would apply Comrade Charu Majumdar's teachings to the letter. O Great Men! Don't think any of us has forgotten what you said in those days... Today you have set about organizing the proletarian movement under the patronage of Jaya Prakash Narayan, that U.S Agent, and Jyoti Basu. And you people accuse our respected leader Comrade Charu Majumdar of having led the proletarian movement into disarray." Excellent! Maligning our respected leader Comrade Charu Majumdar and praising, in the same breath, Jaya Prakash Narayan—that U.S Agent—and Jyoti Basu, you have made it clear whose class interests you are safeguarding..."⁴⁸ This excerpt from the editorial clearly demonstrates what Badiou meant when he argued about the fidelity operator. Without ascribing the status of the true subject of the movement, one can observe in the above extract that though the subjecthood of the mentioned leaders of opponent groups were formed due to their encounter with the movement, the way they decided to foster their fidelity towards the movement was very different. Therefore one could say that

⁴⁸ Sen, Samar, Debebrata Panda and Ashish Lahiri ed., (1978), *Naxalbari and After: A Frontier Anthology. A Moving Human Document of a Turbulent Decade*, Vol. 1 and Vol. 2, Kathashilpa, Calcutta and *Deshabrati Shankalan*, Vol 3 (July- September, 1999), Vol 4 (Jan- June, 2000), Vol 6 (July- Dec 2002), Vol 7 (Jan- June 2003), Vol 8 (Jan- June 2004), Vol 9 (Jan- June 2006), Ebong Jalark.

“if decisions are taken by the subjects to work out the consequences of such events, new situations emerge as a result of their work... thus the relation between the being of the subject and general domain of Badiou’s ontology is a contingent relationship, which hinges on the occurrence of an event and the decision of a subject to act in fidelity to that event.”⁴⁹

Therefore according to Badiou the subject proper is that which raps the whole package of the event its intervention, fidelity and generic subset into one process which is labeled with proper name. “Subjectivation counts what is faithfully connected to the name of the event...In the absence of signification affirmed by a proper name”.⁵⁰ Badiou subject is not itself a void by which he means “inhuman and a-subjective” but it is that which sustains an immediate relation to the void. Subjectivity is foremost an aspect of being which escapes signification and a subject is someone who is not given to knowledge but must be found. Badiou argues that the “political subject” of a revolution is not the working class which has the objective reality but the proletariat which is in its coming to be and destroys the class divided society which is based upon the working class as the object of capital. “Objectivity, representations are always the concerns of the State, or a state, a state of the situation”⁵¹ and therefore, Truth remains as a program of thought and the subject is that which can subtract itself from that objective status. Subject, Badiou insists is experience linked to the real but it always lacks it and therefore it cannot be objectively determined and always subjected to the anguish of non-relation. The subject exists in the “absence of an object” and it creates itself out of a self nomination based only on the edge of the void in a particular site which obviously here is the evental site of the Naxalbari Movement.

⁴⁹ Badiou, Alain, (2005), *Infinite Thought*, Continuum: London, pp 9

⁵⁰ Hallward, Peter, *Generic Sovereignty: the Philosophy of Alain Badiou*, Angelaki: Journal of Theoretical Humanities, 3:3, 1998, Cartax Publishing Ltd.

⁵¹ Ibid

Subject and History

In the previous section we tried to compare the ideas of the political subject and the evental subject in the context of Naxalbari movement and through the examples of some who were part of the movement as well as through the characters of the plays tried to show moments when they were political subjects or evental subjects. In the same section we also tried to open up the question of whether and how some of the leaders and members of the Naxalbari Movement lost their subjecthood though a very conclusive answer is yet to follow. Moving ahead towards answering the question of who is the subject of the movement, in this section we would be looking at the relation between subject and history. This investigation into the relationship between subject and history is important because the subject's (non) relation⁵² to the event has a direct effect on its being represented historically. Also there is another dimension to this relation, which is that of the subject of history which we shall also try to look at. In an event like the Naxalbari Movement the subject of the event is not necessarily a living subject who can speak for himself. There were many who died during the movement, whose voices have been silenced by some events, then how would they become effective subjects because they are the bearer of death and need someone else to speak in behalf of them. Hence in a situation like the Naxalbari movement, how would one link up the relation of subjects like this with the history that they want to represent? Ranciere argues that psychoanalytic theory made the first in road into after the time of the advent of the subject, and was perhaps successful in dissimulating the unfathomable task of "fidelity to the time to come hidden behind the visibility given to the parricidal event as origin of the meaningful sequence"⁵³. According to him, what followed next was the schema of annihilation which represents the obliteration

⁵² As I have argued in the previous section that since the subject is experience linked to the real but it always lacks it since it is not the real like the event and cannot be independently concluded and therefore has a relation of non-relation with the event.

⁵³ Ranciere, Jacques, *After What*, in Nancy, Jean-Luc, Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor (ed), (1991), *Who Comes After the Subject*, Routledge, New York, London, pp 247

of the subject, not simply in the form of the mass liquidation of individuals, but also “as a death without any remainder-no trace, monument, or immortality thus, opening the horizon of a beginning of the end, into the two probable dimensions of past and future”⁵⁴. Hence the need for the dead Abhi to come back as the ghost to tell his story. It is also interesting to note here that the important characters in the plays are either nameless, faceless like in *Rajrakta*, or dead as in *Kolkata r Hamlet* and *Micchil*, or have a very generic name like *Khoka* which can signify any random young guy like it was in *Micchil*. It is as if these subjects of history are the artifacts of death without trace who are now left on the mercy of those living to give voice to their silence. To move further, on the one hand, Ranciere argues there were the genealogies of horror which traced the beginning of an evil history from an always retreating origin, which is of the subject bearing death. For this school of thought this genealogy is to be followed in its most minute advances. Yet on the other hand, thoughts of future are established in the twilight times that begin with the initiation of the unthinkable. But behind the mystery and the horror of the aforementioned schemas, Ranciere argues that there comes a third schema, which is even more dominant, and it is of the “particular redemption that is involved in the development of patrimonial policy. The latter brings into play a new immortality, henceforth attached to a monument and no longer to that which the monument represents: a colossal assurance against death, the holocaust and parricide, an ability to immortalize anything, to restore any temple, but also to monumentalize every object, to familiarize any strangeness in the filiation of a meaning that has escaped death.”⁵⁵ Hence the necessity of having the dead come back, or giving the dead (the young revolutionary boy in *Kolkata r Hamlet*) the voice of Abhi, or to resurrect the dead *Khoka* to show way to the drunk old man in *Micchil*, where the old man tries to convince the world that *Khoka* is not dead, he has just gone missing, and is on his path to search the ‘*onno bari, sotti bari*’ (the other home, the true home). Therefore the question of representation here is

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 247

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, pp247-248

not of the subject bearing death, but rather escaping death. By this we do not mean literally escaping death but break away from death as finality. Here the question that arises is that for example, through becoming the voice of the dead boy, wasn't Abhi becoming the subject of history?

On the contrary to what Ranciere opines, Benjamin combines historical cognition and historical action since they both are directed towards the same goal which is the seizure in the present of missed possibilities of happiness of the past: "Neither history nor happiness which is striven for in the former is reliable only the existence of unhappiness is reliable".⁵⁶ Therefore in the context of Naxalbari, the unattested promise that it has for those who believe in the possibility of it being realized in the future is the only way for us to understand how history would grasp the Naxalbari Movement. Benjamin argues that historians and politicians take a stand for the historically possible and for happiness only if they do not see history as a linear and homogenous process whose form always remain the same and the content of which assimilated to a persistent form is indifferent. "The essential object and decisive yield of thinking, as of historiography and politics, is time"⁵⁷ and hence the idea of historical time is very important for Benjamin and for him with coming of historical time the historical subject appears and this subject is nothing other than time in its deepest layer as the happening of becoming definite through itself. [Kant]. The site of history is the interruption of the continuum of time and as the breaking off even of continuum of intentions, therefore expectation is not a certain moment of history but to every moment because it does not have to be fulfilled in one of the them but can be fulfilled in each hence the present can only be "expected and not anticipated". Therefore Benjamin writes that "if the historian and the politician—and everyone acts like a historian and a politician in their own history—are concerned

⁵⁶ Hamacher, Werner, 'NOW': *Walter Benjamin on Historical Time* in Benjamin, Andrew, (2005), *Walter Benjamin and History*, Continuum, London and New York, pp 47.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, pp 55

with the rescue and fulfillment of possibilities of happiness, then this is not a rescue in the face of time, but a rescue of time, redemption is not redemption from time, but a redemption of time. Happiness would not be to free oneself from time but to free time in oneself.”⁵⁸ This again brings us close to Badiou’s idea of the subject having fidelity in the event by the virtue of which his fidelity or his belief in the possibility of happiness transgresses boundaries of time for its fulfillment. Hence the historical subject can only be the subject retaining his fidelity, the evental subject.

According to Benjamin the subject of history cannot be mankind but only a class that is the class of the oppressed, the exploited and deprived of their rights and history cannot be an automatic process with a pre given form of time. History can only be the movement, i.e., not directed towards a pre given goal but rather a movement that is open to unforeseeable actualizations. Hence all those who came together and stood up against the state and the forbearers of repressive economic order, the peasants, tribal communities, students, in other words, the have – nots during the Naxalbari movement are all subjects of history. Therefore history is possible as a history of all such oppressed that has no place in any form and is still indispensable for its construction and it is in this condition that history happens for it is not fixed in unbearing forms but happens in unpredictable ways in between at least two moments that were not previously connected, therefore “history is the un-performable event in which one Now meets another corresponding Now.”⁵⁹ Bhabani Chaudhuri while commenting on the movement writes that after Naxalbari there were the formation of different groups—big and small which are poles apart. But this was in no way tantamount to the discontinuity between the movement and its present stage. He further writes that one pole might want to combine professed adherence to armed peasant struggle with practices like begging for election adjustments with reactionary parties—which smack of

⁵⁸ Ibid, pp 55

⁵⁹ Ibid, pp 63

parliamentarism at its worst. At the other pole are groups which are steadfast to armed peasant struggle under the most trying conditions but refusing to face reality and correct mistakes boldly, and are shrinking. But for him this does not detract from the essential political continuity of Telengana, Naxalbari and the birth of CPI (M-L). And without recognizing this basis there cannot be any genuine revolutionary unit.⁶⁰ In writing this he not only captured the happening of that period and how it can be cognized but also in recognizing its failure, keeping the hope of a future alive. For Benjamin the philosophy of history cannot be of a transcendental nature concerned with it as happening and as cognition of this happening. Rather it also has to address its possible failure, the de-constitution of its forms and hence addresses that which could have been successful and at the same time remains open to that which could not take any form but accompanies each form as that which is its exterior. Benjamin further characterizes history as something which is singular, unrepeatable, “repetition of what-has-been in the present Now”. It is this crisis of the Now in the historical experience, i.e, index of the possibility of its failing, or in his words “irretrievable image of the past which threatens to disappear in any present that does not recognize itself as intended in that image”⁶¹ that we can locate history.

“Articulating the past historically does not mean recognizing it the way it really was. It means appropriating a memory as it flashes up in a moment of danger”⁶² —By this Benjamin means that the moment of remembrance is a moment of danger for the act of remembering as well as for the one who captures it because in remembering there is always a danger of it not being seized or being conformistically assimilated to the good of the powerful if seized. Going by this argument, in my effort

⁶⁰ Sen, Samar, Debebrata Panda and Ashish Lahiri ed., (1978), *Naxalbari and After: A Frontier Anthology. A Moving Human Document of a Turbulent Decade*, Vol. 1 and Vol. 2, Kathashilpa, Calcutta

⁶¹ As quoted by Hamacher, Werner, ‘NOW’: *Walter Benjamin on Historical Time* in Benjamin, Andrew, (2005), *Walter Benjamin and History*, Continuum, London and New York, pp 65

⁶² *Ibid*, pp 65

to write about the history of the Naxalbari Movement, and in my taking interviews of theatre personalities and participants of the movement, both my respondents and I have fallen into the catch that Benjamin argues about. Therefore if danger is the index of the uniqueness and authenticity of remembering it is also an index of the possible failure of history and hence cannot be understood as an external threat. Benjamin opines that the subject who remembers runs the risks of not remembering, of not being demanded by a past, and with the claims of past and the historical possibilities that of missing the possibility and thus history in general. Hence he argues that a historiographer has been given a 'weak messianic power' only if he remembers the danger of not being able to remember, of not being able to reconstruct the past away time to represent it in the wake of the dead. To quote "only the one who is imbued with the idea that even the dead could be killed and could stop asserting their claims upon the living, will stand up against this cessation; only the one who remembers the possibility that the past could become silent for him will help to bring up its claim towards language; only the one who is aware of the danger that their could be no history can write history".⁶³ Therefore history is possible through the subjective assessment of those whose history people like us (academics/researchers) claim to write. It is through their act of remembering and forgetting, that we can understand history or even locate history which takes us back to our previous chapter where we argued for subjective representation as the one probable way to represent history and thereby its subject.

Subject and Truth

Along with a study into the relation between subject and history, an investigation into the relation between subject and truth is also very important. Badiou's definition of subject is never

⁶³ Ibid, pp 66

complete without its relation with truth. It is important to investigate this relationship because Badiou calls subject the local or finite status of a truth and therefore if we need to establish a relation between event—representation—truth in the case of the Naxalbari Movement then we need to involve ourselves with understanding subject and truth. A subject is what is locally born out. “The “subject” thus ceases to be the inaugural or conditioning point of legitimate statements. It is no longer—and here we see the cancellation of the object, as objective this time—that /or which there is truth, nor even the desirous eclipse of its surrection. A truth always precedes it.”⁶⁴ He further adds that a truth does not exist “before” it, because a truth is always poised upon an indiscernible future rather it is the subject who is woven out of a truth, it is what exists of truth in limited fragments. Hence the subject of the Naxalbari Movement can be located within the truth of the movement as perceived by different people coming in contact with the event and representing their truth either in form of historical accounts, novels, or theatre. Therefore a subject is that which a truth passes through, or this finite point through which the infinite being of truth itself passes and for Badiou this transit excludes every interior moment. As Hallward debates truth sets its own conditions, which are more rigorous than those of any “correspondence, coherence, or confirmation”. He elaborates on how truth is not knowledge, but neither is it independent of us but rather it is we who make truth, but precisely as something that exceeds our knowing. Therefore if for Asit Bose, who had closely witnessed the movement, the truth of Naxalbari was in the undecidability or the dilemma that it stirred in the hearts of those he could associate with like the intelligentsia, it gets represented through the creation of the subject called Abhi, and in effect created his own subjectivity vis-à-vis the movement. Hallward argues further that Badiou’s truth coheres, in the sense that a generic procedure must group an internally consistent set of investigations or conditions; “it is expressly founded on the real of the situation and implies the unrestricted application of bivalence;

⁶⁴ Badiou, Alain, *On a Finally Objectless Subject*, in Nancy, Jean-Luc, Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor (ed), (1991), *Who Comes After the Subject*, Routledge, New York, London, pp 25.

and it is effectively self- verifying, composed over time in a laborious series of incremental steps.”⁶⁵ Therefore for him, subjectivation itself provides, in the absence of an object, the confirmation of its own truth. Badiou establishes the relation between subject and truth in the following ways:⁶⁶

—A truth is always post-eventual. Its process begins when a supernumerary name has been put into circulation extracted from the very void that sutures every situation to being-by which it has been decided that an event has supplemented the situation.

—The process of a truth is fidelity (to the event), i.e., the evaluation, by means of a specific operator (that of fidelity), of the degree of connection between the terms of the situation and the supernumerary name of the event.

—The terms of the situation that are declared positively connected to the supernumerary name form an infinite part of the situation, which is suspended on a future, as this infinity only comes into being through a succession of finite evaluations, and is thus never presented.

—If this infinite part will have avoided coinciding with what knowledge determines as known, consistent, or discerned sets in the situation—if, thus, the part in question is indiscernible for knowledge, i.e., absolutely indistinguishable or generic then we will say the post eventual procedure produces a truth. A truth is therefore, in substance, a procedure of post eventual fidelity that will have been generic. In this sense, a truth (indiscernible within knowledge), is the metonymy of the situation’s very being i.e., of the pure or unnamed multiple into which this being is resolved.

⁶⁵ Hallward, Peter, *Generic Sovereignty: the Philosophy of Alain Badiou*, Angelaki: Journal of Theoretical Humanities, 3:3, 1998, Cartax Publishing Ltd.

⁶⁶ The following points are taken from Badiou, Alain, *On a Finally Objectless Subject*, in Nancy, Jean-Luc, Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor (ed), (1991), *Who Comes After the Subject*, Routledge, New York, London, pp 26-27
The points are mostly in Badiou’s own words.

“Philosophy is the means of seizing the truths.” Therefore truth is not interested in interpretation but rather truth reveals the gaps in our understanding. Here I would like to argue that because of the relation that exists between the subject of the event and truth, in this case the subjects of the Naxalbari Movement, there cannot be one truth about the movement and this liberty is not accorded only to those who write fiction (read play texts) but also to anyone who dares to represent his own history. To elaborate on this further, I would borrow what Barker argues, that unlike Deleuze who believed that events are a “pure empty form of time—always already passed and eternally yet to come”, and hence he calls them Aion, for Badiou the event marks a definite break in the situation and becomes the precursor to a ‘true phase’ of history. Hence according to Badiou once the incalculable happens and the philosopher pitches herself into the process of reclaiming the event from the level of just a natural phenomenon. For Badiou there is no guaranteed existence of an external rapport between subject and object but there is only the hypothetical existence of the subject. Therefore as far as the subject is concerned nothing can be taken for granted and it lies beyond the scope of science to verify it at the level of empiricism. As the subject is a local configuration of the procedure, it is clear that truth is equally indiscernible “for it” because truth is global. “For it” means exactly that a subject that effectuates a truth is nonetheless inadequate to it, the subject being finite, truth being infinite. Therefore as Hallward showed, it is a truth that “induces” its subjects, and not the other way around. Truths are infinite accumulations whereas subjects amount only to finite “points” of a truth: “The subject is nothing other, in its being, than a truth grasped in its pure point; it is a vanishing quantity of truth, a differential eclipse of its unfinishable infinity”⁶⁷. In case of the play texts this relation becomes more convoluted because the author or director of each of the plays being subjects of the movement bear a truth which takes the form of the represented subject in the plays. Moreover, the subject, being within the situation,

⁶⁷ As quoted by Hallward, Peter, (2003), *Badiou, A Subject to Truth*, University of Minnesota Press Minneapolis/ London, pp 142

can only know (i.e., encounter) terms or multiples presented (counted as one) in this situation. And finally, according to Badiou the subject can only construct his idiom out of combinations between the supernumerary name of the event and the language of the situation, the language being subjective and thereby representation being subjective as well. It is in no way assured that this idiom will suffice to discern a truth, a truth being in any case indiscernible by the resources of the language of the situation alone.⁶⁸ He further argues that since every truth transcends the subject precisely because its whole being consists in supporting the effectuation of that truth, therefore the subject is neither consciousness nor unconsciousness of the true. The subject believes that there is a truth, and this belief takes the form of knowledge. This Badiou termed as “educated belief confidence”⁶⁹. Hence the belief of the subject called Khoka in the new path to redemption, or the belief that Utpal Dutt showed through the successful rebellion against the landlord Satyaban Singh is the truth that the event of Naxalbari carried for them which can be perceived as a form of knowledge about the movement. The fidelity operator locally discerns connections and disconnections of multiples of the situation with or from the name of the event and this discerning is an approximative truth, for the terms positively connected are yet to come—in a truth. This “yet to come” is the distinctive characteristic of the subject who judges. Belief here is the yet-to-come that goes by the name of truth. That this belief may take the form of knowledge results from the fact that every subject generates namings⁷⁰. Therefore this ‘yet to come’ truth is the truth in which resides Benjamin’s missed possibility of the past which can be seized in the future. Hence the historical subject as argued by Benjamin is the one who generates the truth.

⁶⁸ Ibid

⁶⁹ Badiou, Alain, *On a Finally Objectless Subject*, in Nancy, Jean-Luc, Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor (ed), (1991), *Who Comes After the Subject*, Routledge, New York, London, pp 30

⁷⁰ Ibid

Badiou raises the question of what is the particular function of terms like “Party,” “revolution,” and “politics” (Lenin) and whether they simply designate terms presented in the situation? He answers his question by arguing that one can in fact distinguish ideological sects from truth’s generic procedures on the basis of the fact that whereas the words used by such sects only replace those declared appropriate by the situation, the names used by a subject in supporting a generic truth’s local configuration generally have no referent in the situation⁷¹. Hence they do not double over the established language. But then the question still remains as to what purpose do they then serve? According to Badiou they are words that clearly designate terms, but terms that “will have been presented in a new situation, one that results from the adjunction of an (indiscernible) truth of the situation to that same situation”⁷² thus forming the subject who is a fragile, the one whose subjectification is solely established through a testimony of the unknown, undecidable underpinning of the event. This is because for Badiou a subject is separated from this generic part (of this truth) by an infinite series of random encounters hence it is completely impossible to foresee or to represent a truth, as it comes to be only in the course of assessments or correlations that are incalculable, and their succession is solely ruled by encounters with the terms of the situation, thereby generating the indiscernible truth which in effect creates the ‘weak’ subject, but the one with a strong messianic power. Therefore these terms of the situation in this case were terms which were generated during the Naxalbari Movement. To borrow Badiou’s examples, terms like ‘Party’, ‘revolution’ no longer had a referent in the situation but in the situation which came in wake of the movement. However, these terms of the situation create the undecidable truth and therefore Utpal Dutt in 1969 itself, grants Naxalbari Movement as a success with the successful killing of the landlord and victory over the police force. In his later plays, like in “Tin er Tolowar”, Utpal Dutt takes a more subtle take on the movement because by then it was 1971, a lot had happened to the movement since

⁷¹ Ibid

⁷² Ibid, pp 31.

then, new terms of the situation had been encountered, contributing continually to the truth process. To follow Badiou here, from the point of view of the subject, the referentiality of the names remains forever suspended upon the uncompletable condition of a truth or as he argues “it is only possible to say that if such and such a term, when it will have been encountered, turns out to be positively connected to the name of the event, then such and such a name will be likely to have a certain referent, for the generic part that remains indiscernible in the situation will have such and such a configuration or partial property.”⁷³ Thus a subject is that which uses names to make hypotheses about truth. Hence ‘Teer’ becomes a hypothesis about the truth of the Naxalbari Movement as the referentiality of the situation by the subject, here the author and director Utpal Dutt. But as it is itself a finite configuration of the generic procedure from which a truth results, Badiou argues that one can equally maintain that a subject uses names to make hypotheses about itself, “itself” meaning the infinite of which it is the finite. A subject he then defines as the one which “fends off the generic indiscernibility of a truth—a truth it effectuates in discernible finitude by an act of naming that leaves its referent in the future anterior of a condition.”⁷⁴ A subject is thus, by the charm of names/ nouns, at once the real of the procedure—“the assessor of the assessments” and the hypothesis of that which it’s unachieved result which would introduce itself once again into presentation. Hence what we see in the other three plays apart from Teer which were written and staged later, the Naxalbari Movement is either not named like in Micchil or when named, like in Kolkata r Hamlet, it is never deemed as a success or failure. It is precisely this indiscernibility towards the event of Naxalbari that seems to motivate the main characters of these plays, the possibility that appears through the fissures in the truth look like the universe yet-to-come. There is no naming that can be done of the Naxalbari Movement; but if there is one naming it is the possibility of it happening again. Therefore Badiou opines that because there is an indiscernible truth which supplements the situation, a

⁷³ *ibid*, pp 31-32

⁷⁴ *ibid*, pp 32

subject emptily names the universe yet-to-come. The subject according to him is concurrently the finite real, the local stage of this supplementation. He also adds that naming is only empty insofar as it is loaded with what its own possibility sketches out which makes a subject the antonym of an empty idiom. Badiou calls subject the one who in its declared fidelity to an event maintains the articulation of a wholly “generic” truth which is the truth of the situation and is beyond the supervision of the state. Therefore the truth of a situation is as “subtracted” from what can be represented of that situation, as something that is “indiscernible” to the language of that situation.⁷⁵

Through the reading of Badiou’s concept of the subject and its relation to truth, one can discern that the operation of a truth can be divided into a number of closely related moments: the naming of the event; the intervention that imposes this name and makes it stick; the division of those elements of the situation that affirm or fit the name from those that do not; the establishment of an enduring fidelity to this name.⁷⁶ Hallward borrows from the work of Benjamin and opines that the subject is the agent or instance of the aforementioned process as a whole, a process that can be compared to what Benjamin described, as a moment of deliberate crystallization, “singled out by history at a moment of danger. . . . Where thinking suddenly stops in a configuration pregnant with tensions, it gives that configuration a shock, by which it crystallizes into a monad. A historical materialist approaches a historical subject only where he encounters it as a monad.”⁷⁷ Therefore Badiou’s subjects are always solitary, singular, always endangered, which is something similar to what Benjamin argued for. In conclusion I would like to point out that Badiou borrowing from Althusser in his “Lenin and Philosophy” draws a dividing line between

⁷⁵ Hallward, Peter, *Generic Sovereignty: the Philosophy of Alain Badiou*, Angelaki: Journal of Theoretical Humanities, 3:3, 1998, Cartax Publishing Ltd.

⁷⁶ Hallward, Peter, (2003), *Badiou, A Subject to Truth*, University of Minnesota Press Minneapolis/ London

⁷⁷ As quoted by Hallward, Peter, (2003), *Badiou, A Subject to Truth*, University of Minnesota Press Minneapolis/ London, pp 124

philosophy as the 'unnamable' and science as the domain of knowledge. Whereas for Althusser the event is the 'intervention' in philosophy whose 'tendency' is a 'process without a subject', for Badiou it is akin to the "Pascalian wager" on truth which initiates a 'generic fidelity procedure' during which the subject finds its name. Since the event is undecidable, therefore the subject's integrity is always questioned and there is an imposing of a linguistic norm on a community. Within the dichotomy of the past and future, the subject is overcome with the idea that something indeed took place overcoming the police conception of history or of events wherein nothing happens anywhere. Therefore Barker argues that in the post eventmental fidelity procedure there lies the spontaneous expression of philosophy 'as' politics, art, science and love not just a philosophy 'of' the same.

In this chapter we tried to understand what constitutes the subject of an event and its relation to history and truth. Through our discussion of the various ideas put forward by philosophers in the likes of Badiou, Benjamin, Ranciere et al, we do see that answering the question of who is the subject of the Naxalbari movement cannot be given in a simple way. Through my interaction with some of the people who were part of the movement, the directors and actors of the plays that we have been looking at, the reading of various writings on Naxalbari, what comes across is the multiple ways in which the movement has been represented and thereby exhibiting multiple truths giving rise to more than one kind of subject. For instance Sumanta Banerjee towards the end of his book writes that "the tempestuous years of 1967-72 have shown that the serenity of the Indian countryside is in appearance only; it hides the inflammability of desperate hungry masses—the burning fuse which is laboriously winding its way to reach the wild explosive that will bring down the present order. It is threatening the ruling powers with forebodings of a fatal judgment"⁷⁸ whereas Marius Damas quotes in her book an excerpt from a

⁷⁸ Banerjee, Sumanta, (1980), *In the Wake of Naxalbari: A History of the Naxalite Movement in India*, Subarnarekha, Calcutta, pp 399.

newspaper where the journalist while commenting on the setback of the movement writes "... The CPM is on the run, the revolutionary slogans are all gone from the West Bengal walls, and Charu Majumdar is safely in prison. Meanwhile however, so many careers are in total ruins and so much lost for the traditional leftist movement in the country. Who knows what historical process has been served by this fearsome catharsis?"⁷⁹ As Hallward argues that Badiou maintains, " 'Since the being of the situation is its inconsistency, a truth of this being will present itself as indifferent [quelconque] multiplicity, anonymous part, consistency reduced to presentation as such, without predicate. . . . A truth is this minimal consistency (a part, an immanence without concept) which indicates in the situation the inconsistency that it is' (MP, 90). Each truth 'represents, in sum, what is most anonymous, or least specified, in the situation (whose truth it is).'⁸⁰ Also for Badiou true theater is one whose audience must represent "humanity in its very inconsistency, its infinite variety. The more it is united (socially, nationally) . . . , the less it supports, in time, the eternity and universality of an idea. The only audience worth the name is generic, an audience of chance"⁸¹. Therefore the theatre of Naxalbari can only be the theatre which represents this very inconsistency in the situation, truth, and also in human beings. Hence a play like *Rajrakta*, where the four actors shift characters, along with that reflected inconsistencies in each of the characters, seem to point towards Badiou's idea of true theatre.

As Ranciere argues, philosophy proposes it self as ceaseless future and offers, as the destiny of any given era, the rewriting that marks every phrase of the text with the threat of death and very utterance of a present event with the displaced repetition of a phrase of the text.⁸² Hence these comings

⁷⁹ Damas, Marius, (1991), *Approaching Naxalbari*, Radical Impression, Calcutta

⁸⁰ Hallward, Peter, (2003), *Badiou, A Subject to Truth*, University of Minnesota Press Minneapolis/ London, pp 154

⁸¹ Ibid, pp 154

⁸² Ranciere, Jacques, *After What*, in Nancy, Jean-Luc, Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor (ed), (1991), *Who Comes After the Subject*, Routledge, New York, London.

and goings between the text and an event, between the past and the future, between death and immortality, define the representation of an infinite store of the possibility of history and hence of its subject and truth. For Ranciere what today is most forgotten or undermined is not Man, Thought, Rationality, Meaning, but simple reason in its nuclear definition: the art, which he says is for each one of us, that of settling accounts with the “confusion of times and the passions of expectation and regret that spring from it”.⁸³ He further adds that this is an art of the present which is all the more necessary because it is in the art that we have lost the promise of the clearly demarcated presence of a subject capable of preceding itself. A nonsubject is thus one who is unable to distinguish the specific schemas of forgetting, distress, or death, and is free from the obligation of voicing this acumen of those schemas and of doing something that is based on that declaration. Ranciere also points out that because we give an overly generous credit to the appearances of the subject’s consistency, especially when this subject takes on the aspect of the other whom supposedly is at rest in its blessed presence, it becomes one with its representation. Truth is sparked by an event, but bursts into flame only through a literally endless subjective effort therefore the truth is in no sense the void made present. Of the void, “there can be no experience, for what results from its— invariably eventual— convocation is only the laborious work of a procedure, a procedure of truth.”⁸⁴ Therefore in the context of the Naxalbari movement we can argue that the truth is constructed, bit by bit, from the void and as a result, as Hallward pointed out a truth and the subjects it supports will indeed be the truth of a particular situation, but will not be recognizable as one of its state- sanctioned parts: “as exceptions, subjects are always in literal excess of their situation, but they are exceptional only in and with regard to that situation”.⁸⁵ It is the vulnerability of our rational

⁸³ Ibid, pp 249

⁸⁴ As quoted by Hallward, Peter, (2003), *Badiou, A Subject to Truth*, University of Minnesota Press Minneapolis/ London, pp 122

⁸⁵ Hallward, Peter, *Generic Sovereignty: the Philosophy of Alain Badiou*, *Angelaki: Journal of Theoretical Humanities*, 3:3, 1998, Cartax Publishing Ltd.

community that holds together the speaking beings and allows them the leisure to search for the exact word while protecting itself from its wounds at any cost. Hence if one needs to answer the question as to who is the subject of the Naxalbari Movement, then the subject of the movement is the one who speaks its truth in division and finds its peace in connection.

Conclusion

This research has been an attempt to explore the way in which the Naxalbari Movement can be looked at as an 'event', as defined by Badiou and the event of theatre that came to be the late 1960s and 70s in Bengal. Here we tried to examine the Naxalbari Movement through the paradigm of performance, and resolved and raised some questions regarding representation and subject. As I had mentioned in my introduction, the way we used theatre in this work was within the logic of performance, which appears in its disappearance and hence is has been used as a paradigm of philosophy understood as an act. It is only through the use of theatre as a philosophical tool could we make relevant connections with the play texts and the happenings of the movement. Through the reading of the four play texts; Teer, Micchil, Rajrakta, and Kolkata r Hamlet and how they have challenged the established boundaries of performance, how the subjectivity of the authors and directors of the play have a role to play in capturing the thought of theatre at that time, how they grapple with their subject position vis-à-vis the movement which gets represented through the characters of the play creating the subject of the play who can be looked as being the subject of the movement as well; I have tried to bring out questions pertaining to representation, thereby rendering theatre as a point of gathering that happens only in the present, but repeated over and over again, out there on the stage, which by the virtue of being so singular in nature, is capable of producing ideas or thoughts, and hence theatre can be considered an event: event of theatre or in other words event of thought. Therefore it was through this idea of theatre and its various codes that I tried to look at real life political demonstrations, speeches, writings, posters and wall paintings, historical accounts, and also theatre; theatre which has drama as its being. The underpinning to the entire work has been to grapple with the question of how does one talk about a situation, that is, write it, verbalize it, perform it, or in one word represent it, when there were happenings that exceeded

daily life possibilities making it difficult to grasp it within the language of ordinariness, but something that could only be done through expressions of heightened state of being. Throughout the working out of the three chapters, I have thus tried to bring up this relation between event and theatre to answer my first research question of how the event of Naxalbari is related to the event of theatre at that time.

In the first chapter of the dissertation we examined the concept of performance understood as the ever vanishing point hence comparable to the idea of event. Through the reading of the various kinds of protests and political actions and tactics, I tried to establish how these were being performed in everyday life, on the streets of Calcutta during the Naxalbari Movement, creating what is called 'city as action'. The political dramaturgies of the Naxalbari Movement as it unfolded on the street of Calcutta and in various parts of the state then get represented in various writings and were performed as we illustrated through our four play texts which require us to rethink of the ways in which we understand the dramatic and how catharsis is carried out. Through the discussions on the mixing up of form and content in the performance of plays like *Rajrakta* and *Kolkata r Hamlet*, the documentary theatre style of *Teer* in which Utpal Dutt was moving away from his earlier models of theatre making which could be compared more to the Brechtian model; there was the blurring of the divide between the actors and the spectators, I attempted to show the many ways these plays were challenging the set notions of representation. In that chapter, I tried to argue through the performance of the plays and through the act of wall painting and posters, how we need to revisit the ways in which we understand performance, performativity, theatricality and theatre. Though the questions that I had posed in the introduction, have been brought up and attempts have been made to resolve them throughout the three chapters, the first chapter more or less deals with the second question which is of understanding how performance percolates the domain of politics and art. The third research question is my main thematic question, that is, of the possibilities and

impossibilities of representing an event. In the first and my second chapter I have thus looked at this problem of representation through the act of performing and the act of writing.

The questions revolving around representation of an event like the Naxalbari Movement become more interesting in the case of writing because it brings in the dimension of the witness writing its own history and also for them who have been silenced by the happenings of the event. This is my fourth research query which I tried to deal with in my second chapter where I argued how in writing about an event, there is very less possibility of being objective and that is also not required or desired. By doing a comparison between the ways of emplotment of theatrical texts considered as fiction and of historical accounts regarded as being factual, I endeavored to show how these categories are false markers of understanding an event and thereby its representation. Event as we argued in this work inherently has no objectivity, in fact it is through an event that the divide between a subject and object is laid vacant, and therefore I tried to argue for a representation that is subjective. In this section of my work, I tried to point out the lacunas in the way we distinguish between literary and historical texts, especially when we talk about 'modernist event', events which evade representation not because they are inherently unrepresentable but they require new models of representation. The authors of the academic texts that I referred to, the playwrights and directors whom I have discussed in this work have all been either a direct participant of the movement or have witnessed the movement, and through their work have tried to tell their stories as they saw fit. Each and every one of them have an independent relation to the event, which generates a truth process, and to authenticate one over another wouldn't be fair and hence I argued in the second chapter how each of these lives and artworks are histories of the Naxalbari Movement in itself. Therefore in the last analysis, what I intended to show in this chapter was that if one requires to locate the history of the Naxalbari Movement, one needs to look for it in the subjectivity of the representation of the same, the one text which believes in the unattested anonymous promise,

because the remaining of the text are created through the multiple encounters that stands between the subject and its truth.

If event materially transforms subjecthood then what remains of a subject and is it ever possible to represent such a subject was my last research question which I addressed in my last chapter. As I had mentioned in my introduction, an engagement with the idea of event cannot be completed without initiating a discussion on the subject of the movement. In the last chapter I tried to show how evental subject is formed and in the context of Naxalbari Movement, who can be called the evental subject. The concept of the fidelity operator and the relation of subject to history and truth have been examined in the light of the plays we have been discussing and through the writings of Sumanta Banerjee and articles in Liberation and Deshabrati. The reason why the inquiry into the question of subject of the movement is necessary because given that the Naxalbari Movement in an event, firstly, it cannot be grasped wholly without knowing who its subject is, secondly, it being such a highly politically motivated movement, there is bound to be the subject which is created through politics, and thirdly, if we are struggling with issues of representing the event called Naxalbari, representation cannot be devoid of the subject that it claims to represent. Through the examination of the post evental truth procedure, which creates the subject and establishes its relation to truth we can locate the representation of the subject of the Naxalbari Movement in the fragmented and fragile spaces of art and politics which is the realm of the evental subject. This evental subject has its veracity questioned because it is created through something undecidable and indiscernible like an event, and therefore there I would like to argue that there can never be a complete or singular representation of the subject of the movement.

Therefore to conclude, I would like to argue that in my effort to write on the Naxalbari Movement, I have come across the many ways in which forgetting and remembering has been made

possible by the work of various commentators of the movement and the various narrative configurations and models of identity that have been employed by them. They together shape the contours of the Naxalbari Movement. The movement at times has been deemed as something defanged, not amounting to any political gain or motivation but rather as “existential anguish of individual destiny”¹, and there are times when it has been appropriated by the few so called leaders, spokesperson, or representatives of the movement or by some personalities on whom the media bestows its attention. There is no denying that a society might find it very difficult to place its demand for ‘historical knowledge’ when an event is so indefinite. What I have attempted to do in my research through the analysis specific language, subjectivity, ways of participating in the streets, ways in which the peasants, tribals, students posed questions not only at the level of their individual interest but the interest of the society at large, tried to examine the Naxalbari Movement beyond the established discourses but rather in the radical, fragile realm of the event which sets off the creation of its various discourse and representations.

The resolutions to the questions that have opened up through this Mphil in the realm of representation in the context of an event like the Naxalbari Movement will be my pursuit in the next phase of my work. The argument posed in the first chapter of how Calcutta became a city-as-action, and it shaped the urban space can be further probed into. It would be interesting to find out the ways in which resistances during the Naxalbari Movement transformed certain spaces of circulation in the urban setting, giving it a consecrated character; how the naming of those places or the architectural symbols either helped in constructing those as space of resistance or aided in the collapse of the same. Also in the same context there can be an attempt made into finding out what kind of relations exist between these spaces and the collective memory surround that space or the event, such as the Naxalbari Movement. The performative quality that I attempted to locate within the production of posters and wall painting,

¹ Ross, Kristine, (2004), *May '68 and Its Afterlives*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago. pp 4.

can be used in formulating further research questions such as: Whether the violence that surrounds the production and reading of the posters and wall writings highlight the notion that texts themselves are sites of conflicted readings which would mean that both reading and writing are culturally and historically situated social practices; Whether we can even talk of wall paintings as a singular phenomenon, or could we say that different forms of marking interact with their urban contexts in ways that are shaped by their linguistic, iconic, and territorial significations. The argument for subjective representation, which I placed in the second chapter, can be further put to test by reading other texts and accounts of the Naxalbari Movement. Apart from the four plays that I have discussed in this work, there have been many other plays that has been written and/or staged by other playwrights, from which we can further develop the concept of subjective representation or find gaps in the understanding of the idea. It would also be interesting to look at later works of the playwrights that we have discussed and compare them with their productions during the Naxalbari Movement, to be in a better position to argue for or against their fidelity towards the movement, thereby raising questions on their position of being the subject of the movement. In the last analysis, I would like to say that this work has just been a small attempt in looking at the possibilities through which the Naxalbari Movement can be examined. Even the idea of the Naxalbari Movement being an event can be and has to be sharpened through the incorporation of other ways of defining an event, which may altogether give a new dimension to my work. A more in depth study into the available literatures on the Naxalbari Movement, writings of that period on the movement, articles in journals of that that period and now etc, will open up more avenues of queries, sites of resolution, changes in paradigm, which would make further research on this work interesting because it will open to newer ways of looking at politics and art and the relationship they share.

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