2

POSTCOLONIAL AND TRANSNATIONAL APPROACHES TO FILM AND FEMINISM

Sandra Ponzanesi

Since the 1990s, feminist film studies has expanded its analytic paradigm to interrogate the representation of race, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, and the nation (Wiegman 1998). This has included a new understanding of the role of audiences, consumption, and participatory culture, and a shift from textual analysis to broader cultural studies perspectives that include the role of institutions, reception, and technology. This is especially due to the contribution of black feminism in the US (see Hollinger 2012), and its critique of psychoanalysis as a Western universalistic framework of patriarchy (see Gaines 1986; Doane 1991; hooks 1992; Young 1996; Kaplan 1997), and the rise of postcolonial studies following the milestone publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and its aftermath.

The development of postcolonial studies strongly impacted the way of analyzing representations of the Other, asking for a rethinking of long-standing tropes and stereotypes about cultural difference, and also the gendering and racialization of otherness. This ushered in methodological interrogations on how visual representations are implicated in the policing of boundaries between East and West, between Europe and the Rest, the self and the other. The postcolonial paradigm is called upon to challenge the implicit and intrinsic Eurocentrism of much media representation and film theory (Shohat & Stam 1994), which implies a colonization of the imagination, where the Other is structurally and ideologically seen as deviant. Eurocentrism shrinks cultural heterogeneity into a single paradigmatic perspective in which Europe, and by extension the West, is seen as a unique source of meaning and ontological reality. Eurocentrism emerged as a discursive justification for European colonial expansions, making the colonizers, and their civilizational ideology, the lens through which the world is seen and value, judgment, and objectivity attributed (Shohat & Stam 1994, 2–3). It justifies imperial practices under the motto of the white man's burden and the need to bring civilization and progress to the rest of the world. Eurocentrism also generated the forging of race theories and race discourses in order to create a clear distinction between colonizers and the colonized. The eugenics of empire emerged by making the colonies the laboratories of the empire and the battleground in which to ventilate and develop white superiority and supremacy.

Empire cinema contributed to specific ways of seeing, making films that legitimated the domination of colonies by the colonial powers. Colonial images of gender, race, and class carried ideological connotations that confirmed imperial epistemologies and racial

taxonomies, depicting natives—in documentary or fiction films—as savages, primitive, and outside modernity.

Ella Shohat has written extensively on the crucial role of sexual difference for the culture of empire. In her seminal 1991 article "Gender and the Culture of Empire: Toward a Feminist Ethnography of the Cinema," she discusses how imperial narratives are organized around metaphors of rape, fantasies of rescue, and eroticized geographies. Gender and colonial discourses intersect with Hollywood's exploitation of Asia, Africa, and Latin America as the pretexts for eroticized images of the Other (Shohat 2006a, 47):

> Exoticising and eroticizing the Third World allowed the imperial imaginary to play out its own fantasy of sexual domination. … Indeed, cinema invented a geographically incoherent Orient, where a simulacrum of coherence was produced through the repetition of visual leitmotifs. Even as cinema itself evolved and changed over a century, The Orient continued to be mechanically reproduced from film to film and from genre to genre.
>
> *(ibid. 49)*

Orientalized representations of the Harem, with belly dancers and dark-haired women, allowed flesh to be shown without risking censorship. Popular culture and cinema extended the Eurocentric assumptions of scientific disciplines such as philology, anthropology, and historiography from the silent era on—from films such as *The Sheik* (George Melford, 1921) to *Lawrence of Arabia* (David Lean, 1962), *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (Stephen Spielberg, 1981), the *Sheltering Sky* (Bernardo Bertolucci, 1990), and *The English Patient* (Anthony Minghella, 1996).

Despite the fact that postcolonial analysis must take into account national and historical specificities, these tropes and stereotypes have stretched and extended to the present day relatively unaltered, signifying an enduring colonial legacy in the realm of visual representation.

Beyond the colonial legacy: Third Cinema, post-Third Worldist cinema, Fourth Cinema, and transcultural cinemas

In her incisive "Post-Third Worldist Culture: Gender, Nation and the Cinema," Shohat examines recent post-Third Worldist feminist film productions in order to see how the reversing of imperial and exoticizing representations takes place. In order to go beyond the binarism of First and Third Worlds, the term "post-Third Worldist" indicates a moving away from this dichotomy towards more intertwined and diasporic formations that signify transnational structures and modes of production. Though the nation is not surpassed or erased in the transnational, post-Thirdist analysis, these approaches propose an engagement with issues of nation, race, and gender, while critiquing national movements and ethnic communities that are exclusive and monocultural.

Post-Third Worldist feminist cinema goes beyond the First World feminist preoccupation with seeking alternative images of women and searching for new cinematic and narrative forms that challenge mainstream films and subvert the notion of "narrative pleasure" based on the "male gaze." Post-Third Worldist feminist films conduct a struggle on two fronts, both aesthetic and political, challenging historiography and proposing formal innovation. Yet post-Third Worldist feminist cinema engages with but also contextualizes the politics of the Third Cinema movement, the militant cinema proposed by Glauber Rocha's "Aesthetic

of Hunger" (1965), Octavio Getino and Fernando Solanas's manifesto "Toward a Third Cinema" (1969), and Julio Garcia Espinosa's "For an Imperfect Cinema" (originally written in 1969), all of which championed a kind of "guerilla cinema" that was produced with few means but sought to empower the underprivileged masses and contest the hegemony of Hollywood entertainment and escapism. Third Cinema embraced Fanon's vision of the "wretched of the earth" (1963) and the need to revisit politics and representations from the perspective of the colonized, who look and fight back with a vengeance. The camera assumes the military role of the weapon in order to shoot back the realities and conditions of disenfranchised and marginalized people, which are often neglected in the glossy and polished productions of the First Cinema. It is a cinema that engages with non-professional actors, independence movements, and collective actions that surpass the role of individual heroic narratives and oedipal structures.

Yet, stemming from revolutionary movements, Third Cinema foregrounds universal battles that are by default male, and proposes a priority of national principles, often to the detriment of gender and sexual minority issues, which become co-opted in a so-called united action. Like Shohat's "post-Third Worldist" critical approach, Ranjana Khanna has called attention to the ways in which gender politics and Third Cinema have sometimes missed each other with her concept of a "Fourth cinema," in which women's voices and gazes would not be assimilated in the political program of their male counterparts (Khanna 1998).

In her article "*The Battle of Algiers* and *The Nouba of the Women of Mount Chenoua*: From Third to Fourth Cinema" (1998), Khanna claims that guerilla cinema is inadequate for representing or documenting "the *feminine*, the *excess*, a profound enunciation or crisis in representation, sometimes known as *jouissance*" (14).

The Battle of Algiers

The Battle of Algiers, an Italian–Algerian coproduction made in 1965–6, is an obvious example of this shortcoming. Directed by the Italian Marxist Gillo Pontecorvo, the film was scripted with the collaboration of Third Cinema guru Solanas, after being commissioned by the leader of the Algerian *Front de Libération Nationale*, Yacef Saadi. Made to document the history of the clandestine army and its tactics of resistance, it uses a grainy black-and-white documentary style while putting a disclaimer in the very opening that challenges the realism we are solicited to believe in: "not one foot of newsreel or documentary has been used." The use of a hand-held camera and telephoto lenses, the realization of a negative from the positive images, which conferred a special graininess to the gritty reality, the use of non-professional actors, and the mixing of the French and Arabic languages, are all aspects complying with the immediacy and truthfulness of the documentary style of *cinema verité* or direct cinema. Yet this is set in contrast with the creation of fictional figures such as General Mathieu, a powerful editing style, the use of freeze frames, the crafting of fictional newsreel encompassing images of torture, and the use of the powerful and melodramatic music of Ennio Morricone, which go against the tenets of Third Cinema. The use of "Ali's Theme" as a musical leitmotif (referring to the character Ali La Pointe) and the use of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* are testimonies to the director's magisterial combination of Third Cinema with avant-garde European cinematic traditions. Pontecorvo managed to combine a "politics of truth" with a "documentary aesthetic" that requires an aestheticization and narrativization of reality in order to reach a more truthful impact than the classic documentary (Harrison 2007).

The film is an ode to people's decolonization struggle. Because of its portrayal of the French military and of torture, it was banned by the French government upon its release and shown only for the first time in 1971 (see Patricia Caillé 2007). The film is still used nowadays by the Pentagon to discuss the strategies and tactics of Islamic rebel groups (Briley 2010).

Khanna critiques the film in her appeal for a Fourth Cinema, as does Djamila Amrane-Minne in the article "Women at War" (2007). Both critics point out the shortcomings in the filmic representations of women's participation in the liberation struggle. *The Battle of Algiers* contains one of the most emblematic scenes of women's active role in the struggle for independence, showing three Algerian women undergoing a true makeover, bleaching their hair, and wearing Western French clothes, in order to pass unobserved at checkpoints between the Kasbah and the French city, while carrying bombs:

> *The Battle of Algiers* sets out to pay tribute to women activists. … However, their contribution to the struggle—unlike those of men and children—is severely under-played. Women appear on screen for a mere fifteen of the film's 121 minutes and, at times, the significance of their role in the war of national liberation is overlooked altogether.
>
> *(Amrane-Minne 2007, 342)*

The Battle of Algiers represents the most difficult period of the resistance and it gave women a vital role to play. Yet Amrane-Minne contends that the role of women in the film is not only short but also merely a supportive one to male militancy. In the film, Amrane-Minne points out, there is a "complete absence of speaking roles for women activists" (2007, 347). This is shown in the film by letting the FLN leader, Djafar, come and look at the three women after their makeover, in order to approve, and see whether they will be fit for the task. Amrane-Minne mentions that not only did women play a more significant role historically, and even partially replace men in the resistance, but there were also famous Algerian women leaders who risked their lives, were tortured, and even sentenced to death, such as Djamila Bouhired and Djamila Boupacha, who were both militants in the FLN. Djamila Bouhired was sentenced to death by guillotine for allegedly bombing a cafe, which killed 11 civilians in July 1957, and Djamila Boupacha was arrested in 1960 for an attempted attack in Algiers and sentenced to death on June 28, 1961. Both cases became notorious for the technique of torture to which the women were submitted during interrogation. Boupacha became a famous case thanks in part to the intervention of Simone de Beauvoir and Gisèle Halimi. Her confessions, which were obtained under torture and rape, changed public opinion in a trial by media of the methods used by the French army in Algeria (Quinan 2014); Bouhired's execution was indefinitely postponed and she was eventually released along with many other Algerian prisoners as the end of the war drew near. Boupacha was given amnesty and freed on April 21, 1962.

Even though *The Battle of Algiers* may have focused on the military strategies used by the liberation movements, choosing a specific theme and telling a partial story of a bigger truth, it is important to notice what remains unspoken, helping to write history. While Amrane-Minne analyzes the role and presence of women at war in cinema, Khanna concentrates on the more fundamental question of the crisis of representation in Third Cinema. *The Battle of Algiers* represents the birth of a nation in documentary style to redress the balance, given the dominance of propagandistic and stereotypical cinema. In the context of Third Cinema, Woman falls out of the system of representation. According to Khanna, this crisis signals a

self-reflective moment in representation in which subaltern figures cannot speak (to evoke Spivak (1987)), or report the trauma of memory through words,

> but can enact a space in which "silence" – not speech – is recognized as a symbolic space of political non-representation. A Fourth cinema, which moves beyond the guerrilla cinema where the camera is a weapon, is a revolutionary cinema of the cocoon, where the metaphor of the birth of a nation is not repressed into denial of the feminine, where film could give a voice, silence and image to women in the revolution, where this uncanny could become reified on the screen. Representation which reflects back on itself exists without a renegotiation of imagery, and brings the imagery to crisis.
>
> *(Khanna 1998, 26)*

This would be the example of *The Nouba of the Women of Mont Chenoua* (1979) directed by French-Algerian writer and filmmaker Assia Djebar and discussed by Khanna as an example of Fourth Cinema. Khanna defines Fourth Cinema as a stage of decolonization in cinema, in which the birth of a nation is described from the perspective of the women participating in the moment of decolonization. Fourth Cinema aims to be more inclusive, creating room for the subalterns and women, and therefore overcoming Third Cinema's inability to represent the violence experienced by women in the process of decolonization. It points to Third Cinema's inability to represent the different registers of symbolic violence played out by and upon the bodies of colonized women.

The related notions of post-Third Worldist and Fourth Cinema point to a dissatisfaction with existing analytical frames and the need to reorient cinema so that not only women's perspectives but also other ways of seeing and accounting for difference, otherness, and hybridity are tackled, in both aesthetic and political terms. After Third Cinema, a proliferation of new labels emerged: world cinema, exile cinema, accented cinema, haptic cinema, migrant cinema, diasporic cinema, intercultural cinema, transnational cinema, and border cinema, all attempting to indicate the porous character of a cinema that is no longer linked to national schools and traditions, and signaling the diasporic nature of its subject matter and of new global apparatuses, showing the disaffection with and overcoming of dominant paradigms such as Hollywood, Art Cinema, and Third Cinema, and the emergence of new modes of production that project the local onto the global (Bollywood, Nollywood) in diasporic and diffractive ways.

In *Accented Cinema* Naficy (2001) explores, for example, the characteristic of an "accented cinema" thematically but also stylistically, questioning the notion of belonging and identity, confinement and borders, while exploring language uses (multilingualism, orality, accents, and slangs), and modes of narration (epistolary, autobiographical, e-mailing), in addition to haptic elements that can express a sense of nostalgia and loss, through smell and touch. On this note, the "intercultural cinema" proposed by Laura Marks (2000) is a cinema that questions belonging and identity, but also engages with the phenomenological experience of homelessness and the politics of displacement, stylistically and visually engaging with nostalgia and the feeling of loss through haptic visuality. Transnational cinema as described by Marciniak et al. (2007) focuses on the intricate connection between the local and the global, the domestic and the foreign, questioning the legitimacy of national borders while critiquing the easy rhetoric of connectivity and progress, pointing out the operation of neocolonialism and how it undermines the emerging of new subjectivities across borders.

Postcolonial cinema

Postcolonial cinema has much in common with all these developments that contest ethnic, minority, immigrant, or hyphenated essentialist labels while pointing to more porous and layered dynamics. Yet the focus of postcolonial cinema is on the analysis of contemporary or past asymmetries as dictated by multiple and overlapping histories of conquest and colonialism. Postcolonial cinema is therefore to be understood not as a new genre, or a new rubric, but as an optic through which questions of postcolonial historiography, epistemology, subjectivity, and geography can be addressed (Ponzanesi & Waller 2012, 3). Postcolonial cinema refers to a conceptual space that opens up occluded frames and proposes a new engagement with the visual that is decolonized and de-orientalized, becoming a relational mode of representation, breaking down the *grands récits* and opening the space for specificities that refract larger, often repressed, omitted or deleted, unofficial histories of nations, communities, genders, and subaltern groups.

Feminist examples include Trinh T. Minh-ha, who pointed out in her groundbreaking documentary *Reassemblage* (1982) that she intends "not to speak about/just speak nearby," unlike more conventional ethnographic documentary films, signaling the need not to make the Other the object of interpretation but let cinema as a medium and post-colonialism as an epistemology connect to difference as an empowering and generative source of creativity.

If the postcolonial optic articulated by Trinh is less explicitly polemical than Third Cinema, it is still political and concerned with hegemony and oppression. Even though postcolonial filmmakers engage with the critique of institutions in more oblique ways than the iconic figures of freedom fighters and revolutionary leaders, they still engage with societal issues by questioning and problematizing the cinematic tools, media technologies, and distribution networks, through which we receive images and information:

> Postcolonial cinema, while maintaining engagement with collectives, refocuses on the specificity of the individuals. Protagonists are not present as ego ideals or everypersons, though, but as multi-dimensional figures—often marginalized, subordinated, displaced or deterritorialised—whose subjectivities as well as subject positions are open to the unexpected, the unpredictable, which may enter from somewhere beyond our particular epistemological ken.
>
> *(Ponzanesi & Waller 2012, 7–8)*

The challenge and denaturalization of the colonial episteme is the task of postcolonial film theory, which focuses on the unframing of occluded histories, breaking with universalisms, and learning to navigate more relational modes of knowledge production.

There are various examples of films, filmmakers, and productions that could rightly pertain to the realm of postcolonial cinema and also a series of films that might precede the technical definition of postcolonial cinema but which enter into that optic of critique that interrogates Eurocentrism, the bourgeois paradigm of filmmaking, negotiating with hege-monic structures. Within Indian cinema there are glorious examples that would qualify as predecessors to postcolonial feminist filmmaking: for example, Satyajit Ray's famous *Charulata* (The Lonely Wife, 1964), which is based on a novella by Rabindranath Tagore, *Nastanirh* (The Broken Nest, 1901). The film takes place in the 1870s, in pre-independence India, in the gracious home of a workaholic newspaper editor and his lonely wife, Charulata.

The film exposes the subtle texture of a traditional marriage and the tale of a woman attempting to find her own voice. It depicts the devastating love developing between Charu and the husband's brother Amal, a poet who is summoned to keep his brother's wife occupied and help her with her writing.

The slowness of the film, the sumptuousness of the camera and the delicate handling of ennui, passion, creativity, and loyalty create a real spectacle of banalities and larger feminist and universal themes.

The filming of the wealthy house with its restricted space and compressing walls expresses the loneliness and marginalization of talented women even in upper-class circles, a theme that would be taken up by the Indian feminist filmmaker Aparna Sen, with *Parama* (1984), defined by Sen herself as one of the most feminist of her films. The film is about Parama, a 40-year-old married woman, whose settled and very predictable life turns upside down when she meets an expat photographer, Rahul. He chooses her to pose for a magazine in order to make a photo-essay on "An Indian Housewife." When he asks her the simple question "What do you think, Parama?" her world starts to open up, and she rediscovers herself through his glamorous photos and the unleashing of a passion that will lead to their affair. The affair is more a symptom of her self-discovery, but when Rahul betrays her by publishing her semi-nude photos in the journal without her consent, she has a breakdown and is ostracized by the family. When the family accepts her back, she refuses to feel any sense of guilt and explores other venues of self-realization, such as looking for a job through a friend. Thus Sen adds a clear twist to Ray's ending, which was a stilted reconciliation between husband and wife, showing in *Parama* the uncompromising need for self-realization and growth. Many of these feminist themes have been picked up by Indian filmmakers in the diaspora such as Deepa Mehta, Mira Nair, and Gurinder Chadha, who have all received wide international acclaim. The Indo-Canadian Mehta has produced a successful oeuvre with her *Elements Trilogy*, which addresses issues of lesbianism (*Fire*, 1998), partition (*Earth*, 1998), and widowhood (*Water*, 2005) through a feminist postcolonial lens.

Similarly, Mira Nair has marked her international career in the USA through a critical take on South Asians in the diaspora, and on issues of gender and sexuality at home. Her *Salaam Bombay* (1988), on child prostitution in Bombay, has been accused of orientalism and confirming the stereotypical images of downtrodden Indian women and children. Yet the film's strongest feature is its political denunciation of child prostitution and the use of non-professional actors, which pays homage to the poverty and squalor of urban life for the underclasses. Her subsequent *Mississippi Masala* (1991) deals with the issue of interracial love between blacks and Indians in the US (starring Denzel Washington), and the internationally acclaimed *Monsoon Wedding* (2001) deals with themes of incest, arranged marriages, and diasporic connections, combining a Bollywood-style wedding spectacle with the raw reality of child abuse and family divisions. *Monsoon Wedding* won the Golden Lion in Venice, a rare achievement for women filmmakers.

Kenyan born, British-based Gurinder Chadha is another highly successful transnational and postcolonial feminist filmmaker whose work addresses issues of women's roles in Indian society, the intricacies of interethnic and religious relations, globalization, and the cultural industry. Chadha's early film *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993) is an excellent example of low-budget filming to great effect. Focusing on a community of South Asian women on a leisure trip to the seaside (Blackpool), the film unleashes all the generational, religious, sexual, racial, and gender problems of diasporic life, combining comic and tragic moments with dexterity and verve. Her more successful and

well-known *Bend it Like Beckham* (2002) launched Chadha into international fame, with the tale of an Indian girl wanting to become a footballer against all patriarchal and ethnic stereotypes. The film's overwhelming success allowed Chadha to make her own Bollywood blockbuster, *Bride and Prejudice* (2004), starring Miss World 1994, Aishwarya Rai—a tongue-in-cheek adaptation of Jane Austen's novel, where the dynamics of class and gender of the nineteenth century are transferred into a postcolonial response (Ponzanesi 2014).

Recent Indian productions such as *Queen* (Vikas Bahl, 2014) testify to the entrance of feminist and subversive topics such as homosexuality into mainstream Bollywood film-making. It is story of a woman abandoned at the altar by her fiancé who then travels to Europe for her honeymoon alone and discovers herself through a series of hilarious and heart-warming encounters; *Queen* became an instant hit, signaling for many the entry of feminism into Hindi-Bollywood cinema (Borpujari 2015).

Other postcolonial feminist filmmakers around the world can be mentioned, connecting different cinematic traditions, geographical specificities, and feminist concerns. *Measures of Distance* (1988), made by Palestinian video and performance artist Mona Hatoum, displays the fragmented memories of different generations of Palestinian women, mothers in the civil war in Lebanon and daughters dispersed in the West. The voice narrates a tale of geographical distance while communicating great emotional closeness, through the mixture of genres and media, letters, audiotapes, photographs, voice-overs, and past images played in the present, mixing Arabic with English, rendering the reality of multiple generations, geographies, and temporalities. As Shohat writes, *Measures of Distance* also probes issues of sexuality and the female body:

> In Western popular culture, the Arab female body, whether in the art form of the veiled, bare-breasted women who posed for French colonial photographers or the Orientalist harems and belly dancers of Hollywood film, had functioned as a sign of the exotic. But rather than adopt a patriarchal strategy of simply censuring female nudity, Hatoum deploys the diffusively sensuous, almost pointillist images of her mother's nakedness to tell a more complex story with nationalist overtones. She uses diverse strategies to veil the images from voyeuristic scrutiny. … The superimposed words in Arabic script serve to "envelop" her nudity. "Barring" the body, the script metaphorizes her inaccessibility, visually undercutting the intimacy that is verbally expressed in other registers.
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> *(2006b, 311–12)*

Fragments of letters, body, and dialogues superimposed create a sense of continuity and fracture between the personal and national, the experience of exile and the past of a country which no longer exists. This particularly aesthetic achievement, which has great political and affective overtones, has been also appropriated, but with very different effects, by Shirin Neshat, an Iranian-American artist, whose photographic series *Women of Allah* (1993–7) superimposed old, poetic texts and scriptures onto faces, hands, bodies, playing between the veiling and unveiling, the profane and the poetic, making the body speak out through unconventional techniques drawing on multiple media forms.

Shirin Neshat received many accolades for her first feature-length film *Women Without Men* (2009), a poetic rendition of four women's stories challenging patriarchy, politics, sexuality, and religion. A photographer by training, Neshat conveys the stunning power of

images through an oneiric and surreal visual style, which at times has also been accused of buying into Orientalist representations to win over Western audiences. Yet the road for women filmmakers is not an easy one. In order to find representations by women and about women, it is often necessary to rely on specific festivals or sections of documentary filmmaking.

There is of course a wealth of established and up-and-coming women filmmakers who are contributing to feminist postcolonial cinema in unique ways, sometimes in their struggle as cineastes in a male-dominated world, sometimes through subject matter that focuses on women's representation and the renewal of cinematic language. Euzhan Palcy, from Martinique, is notable for being one of the first black women directors to direct a major Hollywood studio production, with MGM producing *A Dry White Season* (1989), a South African apartheid drama based on André Brink's novel of the same name. The film explored themes of race, gender, and politics from an explicitly feminist perspective. Other up-and-coming directors from the Caribbean include Mary Wells from Jamaica (*Kingston Paradise*, 2013), Mariette Monpierre from Guadeloupe (*Le Bonheur d'Elza*, 2011), and Mitzi Allen from Antigua (*The Sweetest Mango*, 2001).

Moufida Tlatli from Tunisia has also established herself as a prominent African woman in cinema. Her *The Silences of the Palace* (1994) is a painful story of a singer who visits the palace where her mother was once employed as a servant, signaling the last days of French influence in Tunis and the rise of the independence movement. The visit to the palace unleashes many traumatic recollections of her mother's abuse and sexual harassment by the palace owners and her mother's attempt to spare her daughter from the same destiny at her own expense. The film speaks not only to the struggle of the past but also to the struggle of the future where women are not per se liberated from bondage in the new post-independence Tunisia, but are caught up with new militant rhetoric, therefore showing continuity with past oppression but also the transformation into new possibilities for emancipation.

These examples summarize the complexities of categorizing postcolonial feminist filmmaking in either a chronological or a consistent geographical pattern. They demonstrate that the postcolonial as an optic can be applied to the dialogue between the political and the aesthetic in different ways. It is an approach that does not just privilege the issue of women behind the camera, or their representation on screen, but interrogates the visual language used, and the innovations introduced, that can also be used to reflect on productions of the past and how they speak to the present through a postcolonial awareness and deconstructive gaze.

Identifying new visual registers that are not colonizing is important in order to account for how race, ethnicity, class, religion, and sexual desires can be articulated from new vantage points without losing the connection to different filmic traditions and political realities. Postcolonial approaches to film and feminism expand the postcolonial optic to films that are not simply engaging with postcolonial temporalities but deal in more general terms with the understanding of patterns of domination and resistance. The latter are linked to colonial and neocolonial dynamics that need to be read against the grain in order to offer a space for feminist interventions.

Related topics

Priya Jaikumar, "Feminist and non-Western interrogations of film authorship"
Anikó Imre, "Gender, socialism, and European film cultures"
Lingzhen Wang, "Chinese socialist women's cinema: an alternative feminist practice"

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