

In Chapter 5, “Panoramic Flashbacks,” Hoeckner takes the example of ‘Letter from an Unknown Woman’ to explicate how cinematic tools such as flashbacks and/or frame-tale narrations use the perspective of death to study what he refers to as the ‘quasi-cinematic recall’ of someone’s life. He demonstrates how music, as something obsessive or the origin of an emotion, infiltrates modern life as a memento which harkens back to an encounter or acts to represent one.

The final section entitled *Affect* is the most complex and critical part of Hoeckner’s book for it expands the scope into far bigger socio-cultural questions for it deals with music’s relation with trauma (where music acts as a mnemonic callback to replay traumatic memories) and affective compartments (music implemented as a way to underline affective connections). In Chapter 6, “Freudian Fixations,” Hoeckner brings to notice the connections that complimentary histories of psychoanalysis and cinema as realised in the body of a musician who function as the exemplification of the ways in which events of a traumatic nature get located and locked into the mind and visage of the victim which can only be expunged by living through the trauma to arrive at a moment of ‘cathartic cure’. Hoeckner takes the examples of ‘The Seventh Veil’ and ‘Little Voice’ to demonstrate how the figure of the performer (most often female) work as a means to contain and communicate childhood trauma. This chapter plays a crucial role for Hoeckner to display the crucial role psychoanalysis persistently plays in cinema wherein Freudian models take front and centre as the way to understand the interlinked bonds that memory shares with culture and technology.

Chapter 7, “Affective Attachments” works as something akin to a foil to the previous chapters where he uses ‘I Remember Mama’ and ‘To Kill a Mockingbird’ to explicate how cinematic recollections pertaining to the non-traumatic and nostalgic childhoods perpetrated an aesthetic attachment within the realm of the detrimental aftermath of war or violence. Noting again the cinematic tool of flashbacks from the perspective of the erstwhile young daughter to tell the child-parent story where music guarantees those affective attachments to come to the fore as a representation of the generally trustworthy relationship between a child and their parent and allows the addressal of the trust of the spectator to acknowledge the abstract truth of the cinematic rendition. Hoeckner’s captivating conceptualization of the ‘Optical-Acoustic Unconscious Trust’ helps in the understanding of cinematic recollections maintained through music and films’ complicated yet omnipresent relationship to music and memory.

Hoeckner shows through the course of the book how sound has the innate ability to transform any image and their ability to store images and function as an indication to retrieve them. He sees the potential of the optical-acoustic unconscious as a medium working within a medium where it negotiates between the similarities of memory and imagination for music beyond recalling images also creating more whereby making the critical assertion that even though the psychoanalytic conceptions of cinema more often than not attempted to hide the cinematic apparatus, audiovisual memory when cinematically represented makes the mode of production a pivotal juncture.

One can easily echo Gunning’s comment that ‘Hoeckner does for the ear what Benjamin did for the eye’.

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RITWIK GHATAK AND THE CINEMA OF PRACTICE: CULTURE, AESTHETICS AND VISION. By Diamond Oberoi Vahali. UK: Springer, 2020. 250 pp.

A crucial signpost to the reading of the book is that the personal is political, in this case especially the personage is political. This book is about Ritwik Ghatak, his journey, politics,

ethics, aesthetics, and relationship to the arts especially to cinema. The questions in this book range from that of form and content in cinema, trauma and belonging with respect to the partition, and the politics and language of an artist and an art in its relationship to communism vis-a-vis praxis through the grit of a survivor. This book may be read in various ways beyond the structure of sections and chapters. With many thematic entry points placed across the book the attempt is a cohesive reading of Ghatak. Oberoi Vahali reconstructs and redesigns similar issues across different chapters much like Ghatak, who is regarded by the author as a teacher, through repetition and variation. The same visual motif or aesthetic device is developed and is read on different planes in different frameworks and arrangements.

Oberoi Vahali points to Ghatak bringing forth many contemporary deliberations on a filmic language entrenched in folk forms consociated to myths and legends in order to debunk the inordinately Brahminical (casteist), patriarchal and class discordances innate to the myths. In the author's efforts to study Ghatak's cinema there's a purposive cognition of ideological conceptualization of struggle as it infiltrates and defects through different implicitly inward arguments till it culminates while rallying for the need and search of praxis, though contextually located, that could revolutionise systems from the core. The book tries dedicatedly to connote Ghatak's growing ideas about the possibilities of the cinematic medium with respect to the question of aesthetics and variant aesthetic strategies in terms of lights, sounds and cinematography.

The book proposes Ghatak's cinematic oeuvre to be seen as an epic structure and the films as individual episodes in an epic of the ceaseless "ever moving exodus" (Oberoi Vahali, 2020: 76) where each film, as episodes are unified by thematic and formal motifs. Oberoi Vahali suggests that at the level of discourse Ghatak's individual films move from one to the other whereby each film functions as a chasm wrought into the epic format revisiting this point across the book to show Ghatak's epic form of cinema is workable on the plane of thematic and formal motifs throughout his filmography, finished and unfinished. Oberoi Vahali opines that by placing cinematic signs with innovations of light, sound and image alongside thematic codes, Ghatak creates a metaphor with dialectics at its core, giving rise to an "archi-tale" (ibid:45) where individual films function as variants.

Part 1: "The Making of an Artist" has two chapters, the first chapter in this section "An Overview: Resonances, Influences and Moorings" traces the chronology of Ghatak's artistic journey. Oberoi Vahali discusses many of his works in this chapter tracing the influences which shaped Ghatak's idea of cinema from not only the Indian context but the Soviet School, Japanese Cinema, Italian Neorealism and German Theatre. Oberoi Vahali notes Ghatak's inspiration from film-makers such as Eisenstein, Mizoguchi, Bunuel, Fellini, Hasting, Yuris Evans, Rasil Wright, Flahetry, Ozu, Kurusawa, Rossellini, Godard, Tore Neilsn, Kakoyanis, Bimal Roy and Satyajit Ray; the literary works of Neumann, Jung, Frazer, Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay and Tagore; the theatrical works of Brecht and Bijon Bhattacharya which created and culminated into his philosophical, aesthetic and ethical contention with respect to art, consciously and/or subconsciously. The chapter remarks on Ghatak's notes on and influences from Eisenstein's *Film Form and Film Sense* to Pudovkin's *Film Technique and Film Acting* to Kracauer, Rotha and Manvell's writings. Oberoi Vahali notes Ghatak's rooted connections to the Soviet School through his conversations with Pudovkin and his fellowship with Eisenstein and Kuleshov which influenced his fundamentals on film-making through editing, shot by shot construction, "conflict" as pivotal and the principle of counterpoints but vehemently rejecting "agitprop". This chapter is crucial to understanding the intellectual and philosophical journey and conversation that Ghatak embarked on.

Chapter 3, "A Search for a Personal Vision of Cinema" notes Ghatak's comeuppance as an artist who derived ideas on cinema from different schools to slowly build his own. The chapter meticulously charts his ideations on art, especially his focus on the principle of abstraction and its relationship to the subjectivity of the artist. A running theme in the book which is noted in this chapter is his idea of basing contemporary realities in the realm of folk forms and the correlations

between form and content. The chapter attempts to extract Ghatak's ideation from many of his writings and interviews by locating Ghatak as an artist shaping up in the shadow of partition. The chapter also notes Ghatak's rejection of western school of realism as a sign of modernity to unearth forms rooted in the context of the peoples. The author argues that for Ghatak the principle of abstraction was of the highest accord where a synthesis of the traditional and the contemporary was the ideal wherein dealing with an Indian reality has to be coded formally as something that can be regarded as Indian. Oberoi Vahali notes in this chapter and elsewhere Ghatak's assertions that contemporary reality can be addressed from the past and future which he refined on various levels by tying form and content and by citing the contemporary while locating it within the realm of myths generating discourses on different temporal levels. Oberoi Vahali sees Ghatak's creative journey as geared to search a language which could be "archetypal and realistic" (ibid. 35).

In the introduction to Parts 2 and 3 Oberoi Vahali further invests in the form of the epics. In "Ritwik Ghatak and the Epic Tradition: Themes, Form and Mythic Interventions" Oberoi Vahali notes the relationship to the epic form in endeavouring to create his own cinema and cinematic language by addressing the trauma of partition. Chap. 4: "An Embrace with the Epic Form" enumerates the ways in which many of Ghatak's films pursue an episodic structure. A striking point noted by the author is how the epic structure is the point of "distanciation" and "subversion" (ibid. 52) that shatters the ideas and assumptions of continuity in/of narrative and the idea of diegesis assimilated in Ghatak's cinema. Chapter 5, "The Magnum Opus of the Bengal Partition and Its Aftermath: Motifs and Antinomies", further examines the structure of Ghatak's oeuvre formulating his filmography as an epic on exodus. The crucial interjection that this chapter builds on is his continued search for praxis within his cinematic language. The questions regarding independence and partition resurge more thematically by investigating loss, exile, mourning, nostalgia, homelessness, class deterioration, political unrest, survival and memory to name some and how these themes are designed through concepts and resistances in his cinema. Chapter 6, "The Angst of Exile: Being and Non-Being" builds on the concept of exile from the previous chapter permeating into the being of the exiled person read through *Subarnarekha* and *Meghe Dhaka Tara* where the metaphor of exile is philosophised and in the analysis of *Jukti Takko Ar Gappo* the concept is taken to the crescendo where the exiled individual is reduced to a vagabond. The chapter draws on the many facets of the psyche of the refugee that is constantly splintering where the self is dismantled by exile through a thematic reading of the refugee psyche. Chapter 7 entitled "Recasting the Contemporary in the Crucible of the Myth: Interventions and Interpretations", is a continuation of Oberoi Vahali's formulations of Ghatak's epic structure by tracing the mythic context of his films. Oberoi Vahali notes references within *Komal Gandhar* to Kalidasa's *Abhijnanasakuntalam*, *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*; *Subarnarekha* to the legend of Nachiketa; *Titas Ekti Nadir Naam* to the legend of Lakhinder and Behula and the *Manasamangal* genre of Bengali medieval epic. The author reiterates in further detail Ghatak's intent to resculpt the contemporary in the etchings of myths to design a people's mode of expression that would be popular while proactively debunking the mythic stage formulating a contemporary discourse by virtue of the interventions of the spectators by being able to converse with them in not only their inherited cultural codes and collective memory but also trauma.

Part 3, "Ritwik Ghatak and the Epic Tradition: Cinematography, Movement, Lighting, Sound and Music" has four chapters which discuss the aesthetic strategies of lighting, sound and cinematography of Ghatak. The first chapter in this section, Chap. 8 "Lighting: A Self-reflexive Discourse" looks at Ghatak's lighting strategies and techniques in cognisance to the deliberations on the epic features of his cinematic oeuvre. The chapter displays the various methods of Ghatak's usage of lighting as diverging from the traditional ways of the classical narrative cinema. Through *masking*, *blurring*, *silhouettes*, *long shadows*, *chiaroscuro* among other techniques developed by Ghatak this chapter tries to maneuver the aesthetics and ethics of Ghatak's cinematic oeuvre through shot elucidations from *Bari Theke Paliye*, *Ajantrik* and *Nagarik* which Oberoi Vahali claims is a

reformulation of the 'real' devised against the classical codes of realism. The second chapter of this part "Sound: A Contrapuntal Melody" talks about the myriad methods of Ghatak's conception of sound and image figured as 'counterpoints' (ibid: 154) illustrated by scenes from *Yein Kyun*, *Komal Gandhar*, *Meghe Dhaka Tara* and *Nagarik*. Oberoi Vahali explores the various creative usages of sound by Ghatak in the form of 'relays' which innovatively weaves assorted sequences. Oberoi Vahali attempts to showcase how Ghatak's various innovations and techniques gear his very creative endeavour to translate the epic plane expressed through his resilient arrangement of sound signs functioning across his cinematic oeuvre to underline dialectics at the core of his politics. Chapter 10, "Cinematography: A Search for a New Cinematic Aesthetics" shows how the epic design of Ghatak's cinematic oeuvre was structured by developing visual motifs present in varying degrees across his films through the expression and utilization of *distance*, *movement*, *angle*, *duration*, and the positioning of camera lenses and movement of the characters by using techniques of light and shade. Oberoi Vahali elucidates how Ghatak conceptualised specific visual markers such as *slow turns*, the *upturned gaze*, *slow movements*, *below the knee shots*, placing objects and characters in the farthest corners of the frame and the creation of various spatial zones and contrarian movements for a single shot elucidated by Oberoi Vahali through shot analyses from his films. The concluding chapter of this part Chap. 11, "Metaphor: The Abstract Conceptual Domain" attempts to explore the ways in which Ghatak's cinematic technique gets ultimately transmogrified to metaphors. Oberoi Vahali demonstrates how many of Ghatak's pure cinematic signs are put together with loaded thematic motifs to develop the metaphors which account for history, myth and the contemporary.

Part IV, "Film and Praxis: Countering the Orgiastic Dance of Vested Interests" diligently invests in Ghatak's political vision of cinema which questions the traditional logics behind independence and ideas of nationalism and looks at Ghatak's quest for praxis rooted in the thematic and the subversive. Chap. 12: "Marxism and the National Question", the first in this section, looks at the nationalism question in Ghatak's cinema as the prime thematic issue. The author shows how Ghatak's cinema posits an argument to the question from a Marxist-Leninist perspective and how he locates his cinema through questions regarding the manufacturing of nationalism; the partition of India; and the everyday horrors of and on its citizens. Oberoi Vahali ruminates that Ghatak's cinema issues a powerful proclamation deeming the Indian state as betraying its people. The next chapter "In Search of Praxis: A Political Odyssey" delves into Ghatak's captivation with Left ideology since his early associations with IPTA and the changes in his understanding of the Left in his cinema across the years. Oberoi Vahali tries to show that Ghatak's reactions to the exercising of the left ideology is a criticism of the CPI. Through the example of his last film *Jukti Takko Aar Gappo* Ghatak lays his claims for a praxis demanding that the Left ideology obtain a form that is grounded in the peoples, their culture and context to ever be able to spark a people's movement. Chapter 14: "Film and Praxis: A Search for a Subversive Language of Cinema" tries to demonstrate the multiplanar devices in Ghatak's search for praxis. Oberoi Vahali attempts to analyse how his cinematic techniques arrive at praxis to charge into the arena of social, political and psychic metamorphosis. The author pertinently analyses how through different subversive aesthetic strategies Ghatak incessantly struggled against the conventional codes of classical narrative cinema.

Part 5: "Angst, Resilience and Survival: Who is it who thus Lives and Dies?" details Ghatak's struggle with the Communist movement and the role of art as an ideological machinery. The first chapter in this section, Chap. 15: "Marxism, Art, Culture and Praxis" gives a detailed analysis of the "Draft of the Policy Principles of Indian People's Theatre Association" (1951) that Ghatak co wrote with Surapati Nandi and "On The Cultural "Front" submitted to the CPI in 1954 situating these in the larger context of debates happening in Marxist circles around the world to note how Ghatak iterates the boundless aesthetic possibilities of art practices when Communist associations dialogue with 'humanitarian artists' which bear the potentials to radicalise different art practices in India that would then lead to praxis. Chapter 16, "The Angst of an Artist: In the

Shadow of Death”, takes off on the previous chapter locating Ghatak in the Left politics of late 1940s and early 1950s India. Oberoi Vahali cites Ghatak’s troubled relationship with the CPI and the IPTA leadership and his subsequent expulsions to see the psycho-social dimensions of Ghatak throughout his life journey and his many commercial/popular failures. Oberoi Vahali tries to analyse the angst of Ghatak who strived to stay committed as a filmmaker and to his politics and art, which were inextricably hinged onto the other. Chapter 17, “Resilience and Survival” is a befitting final chapter to a book on Ghatak read through the motif of the “survivor”. Oberoi Vahali builds on the metaphor throughout the book to this culminating chapter where akin to the protagonists of Ghatak’s cinema who may die but in death the struggle isn’t over but is rejuvenated creating the space for something new to spring.

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AFFIRMATIVE AESTHETICS AND WILFUL WOMEN: GENDER, SPACE AND MOBILITY IN CONTEMPORARY CINEMA. By Maud Ceuterick. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020. 186 pp.

Maud Ceuterick’s *Affirmative Aesthetics and Wilful Women: Gender, Space and Mobility in Contemporary Cinema* argues that theoretical considerations beyond the binary models of gender, space, and power in film theory requires a reassessment and a new vocabulary. Through fluid models of spatial relations taking on from Sara Ahmed, Rosi Braidotti, and Doreen Massey, this book tries to understand wilful, affirmative, and imaginative realizations of gender on screen. Through a micro-analyst approach of *Messidor* (Alain Tanner, 1979), *Vendredi Soir* (Claire Denis, 2002), *Wadjda* (Haifaa Al-Mansour, 2012), and *Head-On* (Fatih Akin, 2004) the author tries to locate and explicate affirmative aesthetics. Ceuterick’s affirmative aesthetics question the gender categories and power structures which have been seemingly determining habitation in homes, cars, and streets.

She propounds that cinematic forms have the potential to create affirmative ‘cracks’ (in Deleuzian understanding) in the patriarchy within realist narratives whereby she deems not only characters but also films as “bodies of affects” (Ceuterick, 2020: 13) that comprises space as being wilfully affirmative. The protagonists of Ceuterick’s critical analysis engage in processes of transformation of the ‘power-geometries’ that subdue them expressing their wilfulness through affective forms and shaping an aesthetics of affirmation. It is also through each film’s understanding of the patriarchal limitations on space and mobility for women that cinematic spaces become ‘spaces of wilfulness’ which the female bodies completely inhabit.

The first chapter is the “Introduction: Gender, Space, and Affects in Film” which is detailed in its theoretical and conceptual intent. Divided in two parts, the first part provides a methodological design through which the author explores the ideas of space as space-time in continual transformation to examine how cinema produces transformative affects hence discourses. Further how spaces on screen are created through filmic forms and bodies. The second part is an important revisit to Rosi Braidotti’s ‘affirmative politics’ and Sara Ahmed’s ‘wilfulness’ as conceptual and theoretical signposts. An important assertion from the introduction is the author’s understanding that cinematic representations of diegetic spaces add to a certain reclamation of space from ostensibly strict power-geometries as seen on screen. The affirmative aesthetics of cinema that the author is talking about takes wilful female bodies inhabiting spaces regardless of the normative and aesthetic strategies. The intent for the writer is not to pitch affirmative aesthetics