

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

as simply positive representation of women but to look into and through feminist works that raze binaries to allow a spectrum of “fluid genders, spaces, and identities”(ibid, 38) as it also tries to reflect on the possibilities of doing affirmative critique.

Chapter 2, “Women’s Road Movies and Affirmative Wandering” is an analysis of *Messidor* through which Ceuterick tries to debunk the problematic depictions of the ‘dangerous’ and/or ‘lost’ women as represented in the male-centric road movie genre seeing the film’s aesthetics as transgressive and transformative. Through three contested spaces namely the car, the road and home the author shows how *Messidor* isn’t centred on ideas of self-transformation and realisations of the meaning of home but the wilfulness of becoming and being mobile. The question of mobility is addressed herein through *Messidor* to elucidate the limits of considering the mobility of women in the same terms as men’s necessitating new tools and vocabulary to understand space and affect where wilfulness becomes a vital political tool. Ceuterick’s micro-analysis of the diegetic spaces, the narrative and the relationship between the film’s two protagonists makes a remarkable point which reveals the film’s affirmative aesthetic in face of the negativity present within the diegesis, which through the characters’ affective relations to space, show that the film aesthetically extricates mobility from a masculinity, power and the idea of home.

Chapter 3 entitled “Cars: A Micro-analysis of Space and Bodies in *Vendredi Soir*” takes Appadurai’s contention of imagination as a social practice as quintessential to this chapter’s analysis of Claire Denis’ film *Vendredi soir* (2002) to illustrate the ways in which imagination takes urban space beyond gendered and power relations. Ceuterick reads the film as questioning the patriarchal structures of social spaces and mobility where Paris is brought to a standstill through a car stuck in traffic. The film is in a way read through three different spaces that of the apartment, the car, and the motel which Ceuterick argues is the interweaving of “representational, haptic, and magical-realist” (ibid, 60) spaces that give rise to affirmative and affective aesthetic. The author demonstrates how the protagonist’s car goes from being initially a domestic space to a liminal one and ultimately into a space of desire and intimacy. Ceuterick deems the ‘wandering’ cinematography to allow the protagonist a “magical or meta-cinematic mobility” (ibid, 74). This chapter shows how the continued shuttling between patriarchy and the embodiment of space is where the affirmative political intentions of the film lies as it effectively morphs the gendered nature of space and mobility.

Chapter 4, “Houses and Wilful Women: Wadjda” includes Ceuterick’s initial attempt to question the hetero-patriarchal rules that define the street and the context of where, how and by whom the film is shot. She traces the ways in which wilfulness effectively compels changes to filmic forms. This chapter shows how “the aesthetic construction of space” (ibid, 100) and the lived body of the protagonist and her mother assert their wilful forms in varying degrees depicted through the micro-relations within the home, the school as a space of manifestation of discipline and obedience, the roof of the house as a Foucauldian ‘heterotopic’ space and the street. Wadjda and her mother inhabit various places they are mediated by objects as well like plates, veils, phones, doors and bicycles which arbitrate wilfulness to allow for wilful forms to become expressed. The most pertinent assertion in this chapter is that of affirmative ethics which shows wilfulness as filmic forms and the ways in which affirmative ethics relates to understanding the many limitations and dimensions of freedom. Ceuterick regards the wilfulness of the protagonist as “micro-instances of activism” (ibid, 26) positing the *one who stays*, as wilfully inhabiting spaces while reshaping the complexes of power across spaces.

Chapter 5, “*Streets: Freedom, Diaspora, and the Erotic in Head-On*” builds on the arguments of the previous chapter where Ceuterick suggests that inhabiting space is contingent to time therefore context. Ceuterick reads the female body’s inhabitation of the cinematic space as going beyond gender expectations using the Deleuzian ‘cracks’ to demonstrate how the formal representations of bodies and space crack open, sever, or suspend the status quo that exists in the diegetic space though faintly or transiently. The author utilizes the term abjection to take a more complex look at the female body focusing on the street as a contested diegetic space. While the performance of

gender appears as a spiral from which one cannot escape, it also appears as a means to disrupt established roles and the myth of subject identities governed by gender and racial categories. This chapter shows how dancing, walking in the citystreets, connecting to the erotic and abjecting one's body as taking affirmative forms. The author through this chapter attempts to reveal the film's creation of space and bodies as processes in sustained transformation while being essentially focused on the ways in which the woman protagonist inhabits the city wilfully. The author tries to specifically demonstrate how different scenes of dancing in the film connotes the protagonists complete habitation of the cinematic space, her wilfulness, and identity. This chapter tries to argue that abjection can take a wilful form as an act of resistance to the ever complicating nexus of gendering and racialisation of the self. Recognizing the complexity of uninhabitable subject identities Ceuterick's propositions in this chapter that the erotic and abject forms affirmatively underscores the scope for the conception of subjects as 'deeply liminal'.

The women in Cauternick's book can be found in spaces that are historically exclusionary or legitimised as masculine. The book travels to filmic representations of women's spatialities and locates a language to extract affirmative movement from representations to challenge the problematic of replacing women through binary models of gender and mobility. The 'fluid' understanding of space designed in the book allows varied readings of gender on screen with a sustained focus on depicting women characters, their relationship to space, mobility and imagination.

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EXPLORATIONS IN CINEMA THROUGH CLASSICAL INDIAN THEORIES: NEW INTERPRETATIONS OF MEANING, AESTHETICS, AND ART. By Gopalan Mullik. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020. 351 pp.

The relationship between literary theory, philosophy and films is accurately summarised by Gopalan Mullik in the introduction to his book, with an initial focus on Western philosophers. Irrespective of the comprehensive nature of the introduction, the initial pages set the tone of the book and its purpose: to provide a stimulating Indian addendum in the Western understanding of films through its philosophy. Upon realising that "classical Indian theories would not make sense to the readers unless a Vedic paradigm of thought was constructed as its basis" (Mullik, 2020: 9), he sets out to construct this paradigm himself. This daring and novice attempt situates Indian philosophy in the picture of the world's understanding of cinema. The five chapters penned down by Mullik chart the progress of the book, from an overwhelming dependence on Western thinkers to understand cinema that might not be essentially Western, to developing a structure which could assimilate both Indian and international cinema from a decidedly Indian perspective.

The first chapter (after the Introduction) works its way through the methods of André Gaudreault and Tom Gunning in their representation of "Early cinema", after it critiques classical, contemporary and cognitive film theories for their shortcomings. This critique comes from an omniscient perspective, and substantiates itself with an internalised understanding of Indian and Western theories about appreciation of art and literature. Notwithstanding the development of film theories based on the narrative style, this chapter contradicts Ingmar Bergman's "The Making of film", "When I show a film I am guilty of deceit. I am using an apparatus which is constructed to take advantage of a certain human weakness, an apparatus with which I can sway my audience in a highly emotional manner - to laugh, scream with fright, smile, believe in fairy stories, become