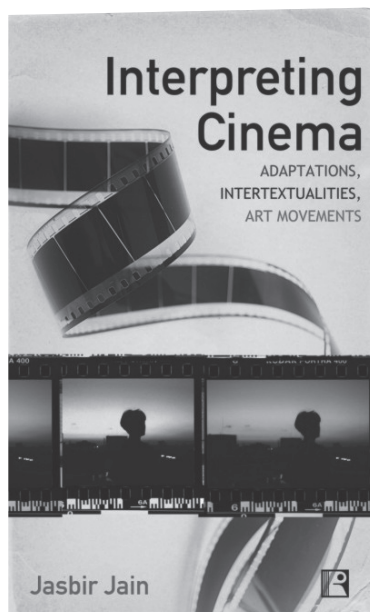


Book Review

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Title	: <i>Interpreting Cinema : Adaptations, Intertextualities, Art Movements</i>
Author	: Jasbir Jain
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Jasbir Jain, a well-known critic of both, literature and cinema, has made a fresh critical exploration of the multiple interconnections between Cinema, literature and culture in her new book *Interpreting Cinema : Adaptations, Intertextuality, Art Movements*. The book examines a variety of film adaptations of literary texts, Experimental and Parallel Cinema as modes of artistic creative cultural products. For the modern age Cinema has become one of the most easily available and affordable forms of entertainment, offering a rich diversity - of themes, styles and technical virtuosity. The acceptance of Film Studies in the universities is the Academia's recognition of its formal institutionalization. This new book provides well researched and carefully argued analysis of films as being closely woven into the public imagination and its participation in the making of public discourse. Taking up for the most part films produced in Hindi, in Mumbai, the book raises several issues and questions around culture and the making of art.

Taking films to be an important mode of "Cultural representation" as well as "means of cultural production", Jain considers the diverse ways

in which films reflect “power relations, political conditions and social disturbances...” Films, she says, use “the individual psyche as a medium of expression” of the human emotions, the “unconscious of the nation” (cover page blurb).

The impact of cinema upon the public imagination is derived, Jain argues, to a large extent from the use of well-written, well-known literary texts. When woven together the two art forms reflect existing socio-political and cultural situations, the emotions, and moral values of people. She traces out the recurrence and continued readaptations of characters, songs and themes from popular films - acquiring at times an independent status. Such intertextualities - between films, and films and literature are probed in detail. Divided into sixteen chapters, the book looks into the diverse ways in which films portray the themes of creativity, its suppression, and articulation within the power structures within a patriarchal society, religious and political shifts in the post-partition India, and, the emergence of terrorism in the late twentieth century. Raising issues related to women’s condition within the society Jain examines how films deal with conservative values related to marriage and women’s sexuality, only some daring to challenge the conservative views. The discussion of “Fathers and Daughters: An Enigmatic Bond” highlights a relationship usually ignored in such critical studies. The author’s sensitivity towards such unusual aspects of relationships is seen throughout, exploring such silences and nuances

The discussion of adaptations (of films and literary texts) brings out that no “set formula” is followed by all. Adaptation revises, and erases, adding and transforming the earlier text. While some of the films discussed are not adaptations, some films, Jain points out, have resulted in the writing of a new text, the film *Water* being an example. The films selected range from the 1934-35 ones, like *Sulochana* and *Pehli Nazar*, down to recent ones like *Krrish* (2008), *Dev. D* (2009) and *Delhi Belly* (2011). Jain’s familiarity with the wide variety of films from which she has selected and her critical organization makes the book an impressive and inclusive study. The attractive cover page and the flawless production make the whole reading experience a pleasure!

In the history of film making in India the several remakes of texts like Sarat Chandra’s *Devdas*, and Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* stand out as favourites of directors and the public. Jain brings out, through a close comparison in the chapter “Travelling Memories”, the differences of treatment of the emotional currents and cultural values that are reflected in different remakes. She relates the changed public sentiments, with the changes in pri-

orities and national atmosphere and shows how they affect the re-adaptations, showing how the director's decision "to treat classics, literary texts, folk tales" and others emerge from a variety of artistic personal intents (18). The diversity of method seen in Satyajit Ray's use of Prem Chand's short story for the film *Shatranj Ke Khilari* (1977) and the use of Mahasweta Devi's story by Kalpana Lajmi's in the film *Rudali* (1982), Deepa Mehta's use of Bapsi Sidwa's novel for the film *Earth 1947* (1990) are critically juxtaposed. Satyajit Ray adds some new narratives to the original story, making it a more inclusive depiction of that political and historical moment (79-81). Putting together the different remakes of *Devdas* from over almost a century Jain elaborates upon the ways the new director's remake reflects the cultural atmosphere of his own times, these remakes relating the romantic hero to the divergent postcolonial and postmodernist eras.

In some films Jain finds the significant erasures that change some of the literary texts' political meanings. In the film *Ek Chadar Maili Si* (1962) where Rajinder Bedi's novel written in 1962 with same title, the change of a character's identity is pointed out as a mode of changed religious mood of the nation, and Punjab in 1980s (60-64). Through a careful study of the details in films and texts she comments upon noticeable shifts in the power equations between diverse social groups, and in the nation, on the whole.

Hindi cinema enjoys a huge popularity among wide spread audiences, now even on a global scale. One of its most important features is the regular appearance of songs and dances, which Jain recognizes, bringing together the music, lyrics and their visual presentation play in Indian films. She points out their dramatic use in building up the film's emotional atmosphere. Many chapters in the book refer to the popular music, beginning with films from the earliest period, including *Mirza Ghalib*, *Baiju Bawra* and others. A detailed analysis of a song sequence in *Lamhe* shows the continuing popularity of film, music and its central place even in personal lives. Her own fondness for older films, songs will definitely find an echo in the hearts of many senior readers!

A film that draws attention to the construction of the urban culture in metropolitan cities, and the decline of some of the values upheld earlier, *Jagte Raho* (1956) is an entertaining and deeply moving portrayal, and in Jain's discussion the film's restrained social satire and artistic finesse are foregrounded, in the chapter "Surrealism in an Anonymous city : Raj Kapoor's *Jagte Raho*". The treatment of physical disability is linked, with cultural difference as she deconstructs the concept of difference in the chapter "Constructing the Nation through the Semiotics of Difference". She brings together films like *Aurat* (1940), and *Mother India* (1956) both by

Mehboob Khan, *Upkar* (1967), *Salim Langde Pe Mat Ro* (1989), *Fanaa* (2006), and *Maine Gandhi ko Nahin Mara !* Quite a heterogeneous lot ! In films like *Dor*, *Maachis*, *Panchvati* and *Mirza Ghalib* questions about women's new perspectives on their self construction, the relation of political turbulences of the present and past are raised. Questions are raised, disturbing settled approaches to these matters. She uses judiciously perceptions from the film theories, Gaze theory and other theoretical stands such as Postcolonialism, Feminism and theories of nation construction. As she believes that "Films are not self enclosed narratives" and that they "draw on real life's individual experiences, the localized narratives" which "counter the dominant interpretation prevalent in the society (66), she treats films as serious matter, critiquing and reflecting the cultural tunes to which they belong.

The last chapter deserves a line to itself, as it deals with autobiographies and biographical material on some sensitive fine cine artists like Balraj Sahni, Hansa Wadkar, and Guru Dutt. This inclusion highlights once again Jain's interest in the individuality and personal thinking of the cinema related persons. The book is adequately equipped with a very detailed Bibliography and list of films, in "Filmography". A highly engaging book, it will be of great value to further research on Cinema and its role in culture.