Disciplining the boundaries of South Asian women’s sexuality: an analysis of the representation of women in independent South Asian 'lesbian' cinema

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Abstract

The thesis analyses how same-sex desire is represented in independent South Asian 'lesbian' cinema. By using the medium of film, the thesis attempts to demonstrate how alternative cinema challenges the dominant cultural norms which are represented in Bollywood films. Central to this argument, is to analyse that whilst alternative cinema represents same-sex desire, it also reproduces normalised gendered and sexual ideologies.

The thesis explores issues of (in)visibility and (re)presentation from within feminist debates on race and ethnicity. By using black and post colonial feminism as a conceptual framework, the thesis demonstrates how historical discourses have shaped the construction of South Asian women as passive and obedient (Brah, 1992; Parmar; 1982; Rattanski, 1994). As such, the thesis considers how pathological constructions and representations continue to be perpetuated within Bollywood cinema and how independent South Asian lesbian cinema has sought to challenge such normative ideologies. Therefore, an exploration of the black female body and the ways in which essentialised ideologies construct South Asian femininities provides some insights into the ways in which such representations still continue to inform our understandings of South Asian women in contemporary society.

The thesis argues that whilst alternative cinema challenges normative ideologies, it also reproduces dominant norms and values through concepts of marriage, motherhood, religion and culture which continue to be perpetuated through nationalist discourses. Whilst the thesis demonstrates that South Asian women negotiate their identities within such complex arenas, the space afforded to them within all three films is often located outside of the 'sacred' and 'pure' of the domestic sphere.

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Women's Cinema. 1996. Real Plums in an Imaginary Cake: Mary McCarthy and the Writing of Autobiography. 1996. Single-Mother Poverty: A Critical Analysis of Current Welfare Theory and Policy from a Feminist, Cultural Perspective. 1996. Intra-household Resource Allocations in South Africa: Is There a Gender Bias? Whilst the thesis demonstrates that South Asian women negotiate their identities within such complex arenas, the space afforded to them within all three films is often located outside of the 'sanctity' and 'purity' of the domestic sphere. Type of WorkÅ This unpublished thesis/dissertation is copyright of the author and/or third parties. The intellectual property rights of the author or third parties in respect of this work are as defined by The Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988 or as modified by any successor legislation. Any use made of information contained in this thesis/dissertation must be in accordance with that legislation and must be properly acknowledged. Further distribution or reproduction in any format is prohibited without the permission of the copyright holder. JosÅ© Ignacio CabezÅ¡â€™s monumental work on sexuality in South Asian Buddhism will form the baseline of scholarly work on sexuality and Buddhism for years to come. It is a vast survey of the topic that draws extensively on canonical and scholastic texts in PÅ­li, Sanskrit, and Tibetan. No one can gainsay CabezÅ¡â€™s stunning achievement as a researcher. His book generously gifts the scholarly community a treasury of knowledge gleaned from deep textual exploration, the details of which the author documents in informative and meticulous footnotes.