
A.A.V.V., *Remapping World Cinema: Identity, Culture and Politics in Film*, edited by Stephanie Dennison and Song Hwee Lim (London-New York: Wallflower Press, 2006), 224 pp.

Shohini Chaudhuri, *Contemporary World Cinema : Europe, the Middle East, East Asia and South Asia* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 200 pp.

Reviewed by **Annalisa Spedaliere**

Remapping World Cinema and *Contemporary World Cinema* are two books that analyse, through very different approaches, several aspects of World Cinema. In the former, Stephanie Dennison and Song Hwee Lim have chosen a selection of sixteen essays by leading international film scholars that investigate theoretical debates and critical approaches to this complex field of study. Shohini Chaudhuri's work, on the other hand, has a schematic structure, planned first of all for students and cinema courses. Both volumes start with an interesting introduction that prepares readers – even those who are not experts in the field – by explaining the purposes of the work and giving some basic information about the subject.

Stephanie Dennison and Song Hwee Lim first of all explain how difficult is to answer the question “What is World Cinema?”, since this involves different theoretical contexts, contradictory discourses and political tensions. They begin their study by trying to situate the subject making useful analogies with World Music and World Literature. Thus they can affirm that “World” generally stands for non-Western cultural products viewed from a Western perspective. The introduction provides interesting insights into international distribution, explaining the differences between World Cinema and Third Cinema.

The editors of *Remapping World Cinema* disagree with theories that define World Cinema only as the antithesis of Hollywood cinema or as a “national” cinema, because these theories deny the potential of World Cinema to perceive the world in a different way, not defined by geopolitical boundaries, race and ethnicity. For this reason, Stephanie Dennison and Song Hwee Lim propose to rethink it in three ways: as a discipline, a methodology and a perspective. This is not to define a “correct” point of view but to stress the complexities of the subject.

The essays collected in *Remapping World Cinema* are divided into six sections. The first, “Remapping World Cinema in a Post-World Order”, includes essays by Dudley Andrew, Lucia Nagib and Michael Chanan:

Andrew composes an “Atlas of World Cinema” that shows how World Cinema’s main characteristic is displacement; Lucia Nagib talks about the flexibility and hybridity of this field in opposition to more restrictive definitions of this cinema; in a similar perspective, Michael Chanan shows the differences of this kind of cinema within such an apparently homogeneous continent, such as Latin America.

“Crossing Boundaries” is the title of the second part of *Contemporary World Cinema*; the focus, here, is the politics of representation in a post-colonial world. Keith Richard, Rob Stone and Rosanna Maule respectively analyse films by Pier Paolo Pasolini, Dennis Hopper e Werner Herzog. Maule also discusses propaganda movies from Cuba and Francoist Spain, focussing in particular on hybrid and transnational identities in a post-colonial world.

Part three (“Carnival and Transgression”) of the volume is dedicated to popular cinema. The authors of the essays, David Robb, Evelyn Preuss and Mark Goodall, analyse movies from four parts of the world, using “carnival aesthetics to engage with issues relating to modernity”. Part four, “Performing stardom and race”, is about actors and actresses that are not American but that have international success, thus becoming absorbed by the American star system. Stephanie Dennison and Guy Austin focus on the mechanism of the Western star system, and its imposition of race stereotypes on foreign stars. “Interrogating Gender” is the title of the fifth part of *Remapping World Cinema* and echoes the previous section. Hideaki Fujiki and Louise Williams talk about gender and sexuality in Japanese and Chinese cinema.

The last part, “Hollywood’s ‘others’”, is about the two nations that are the largest movie producers outside Hollywood: Japan and India. Rachel Hutchinson considers Kurosawa both a universal and an essentially Japanese director, whose style breaks binarisms and the “Orientalism vs Occidentalism” dynamic. In the same way Khaushik Bhaumik talks about the characteristics of Bollywood cinema, claiming that it is not a poor copy of Hollywood but a film industry with its own ideas and nationalistic stance.

Shohini Chauduri’s introduction to *Contemporary World Cinema* also gives basic information about World Cinema and its purposes, indirectly showing that the importance of Hollywood movies in the world is relative. Its cultural global monopoly is due in part to the politics of production and distribution, which tends to leave out most of non-Western movies. Chauduri also describes these strategies but also how some “globalising processes”, such as the spread of new technologies, have increased social exchange between different parts of the world and accelerated “the flow of films to diverse audiences internationally”. International co-productions are also important because they allow the distribution of movies in several countries.

Of particular interest is the author's analysis of multiplexes outside the USA and their contribution to control distribution networks. However, in this case, too, there is a "resistance" articulated through the use of VRCs, DVDs, satellite TV, independent distributors and independent theatre, that allow viewers to have a wider choice. Like Stephanie Dennison and Song Hwee Lim, Chaudhuri explains differences between World Cinema and Third Cinema but also refers to similarities. Moreover, she stresses the importance of post-modernism and post-colonialism in the development of both Third Cinema and World Cinema.

In contrast with *Remapping World Cinema*, *Contemporary World Cinema* is written expressly for cinema courses so the author's approach is more technical and less theoretical. Providing a considerable quantity of information about World Cinema, it amounts to a mini encyclopaedia on the subject. In four of the books eight chapters Chaudhuri provides a wide-ranging discussion of the cinema of four big geographical areas of the world. In the others she analyses the characteristics of a particular zone, in each of the major areas.

The first chapter is about European cinema, with an initial cultural and historical background, moving on to more specific analyses of British cinema, French cinema, "Post-Wall" German cinema, "Post-Franco" Spanish cinema, Polish cinema, Czech cinema, and films on the Yugoslav war. The second chapter of the book is an interesting analysis of Scandinavian cinema with particular reference to Lars von Trier, Aki Kaurismäki, and Swedish cinema after Ingmar Bergman.

In the third chapter, "Middle Eastern Cinema", Chaudhuri observes Egyptian and Lebanese cinema, New Tunisian cinema, New Turkish cinema and Middle East films about Palestinian-Israeli situation, followed by Iranian cinema in chapter four. "East Asian Cinema" occupies chapter four. The author gives an overview of Chinese cinema (with particular reference to the so-called "fifth generation" and "sixth generation"), Taiwanese New Wave, Thai cinema, South Korean cinema and Japanese Live Action and "Anime". Chapter six is devoted more specifically to Hong Kong cinema.

The last big geographical area selected by the author is South Asia. In the seventh chapter she talks about Popular Indian cinema, New Indian cinema, cinema of South Asia and Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bangladesh cinema. The book concludes with an interesting analysis of Indian cinema, referring in particular to Bollywood and Indian expatriate filmmakers.

Premises and purposes in *Remapping World Cinema* and *Contemporary World Cinema* are respected, and the analysis in these two books provides a significant background to the difficult and interesting field of World Cinema.