

## BOOK REVIEW

Sarah Jilani. *Subjectivity and Decolonisation in the Post-Independence Novel and Film*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2024. \$110.00. Hardback. ISBN: 9781399507288.


Sarah Jilani's work presents an in-depth analysis of subjectivity and decolonization through literature and film from Africa and South Asia. The book explores the psychological and political shifts following colonial rule, emphasizing how colonialism reshaped material realities and the consciousness of the colonized. Jilani examines eight significant works: Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954), Ritwik Ghatak's *The Cloud-Capped Star* (1960), Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1969), Ousmane Sembène's *Xala* (1975), Souleymane Cissé's *Work* (1978), Buchi Emecheta's *Destination Biafra* (1982), and Satyajit Ray's *Home and the World* (1984). She investigates how the conflicts between psychological emancipation, class conflict, and national identity have been expressed via literature and film. She frames decolonization as an ongoing process rather than a singular historical event, drawing on theorists such as Fanon, Cabral, and Ngũgĩ to argue that true liberation requires both structural transformation and a reconfiguration of subjectivity. Her interdisciplinary approach, incorporating psychoanalysis, Marxist critique, and postcolonial theory, enriches her exploration of how literature and film depict postindependence realities. She examines how characters navigate fractured identities, internalized colonial ideologies, and struggles for self-reclamation.

The first chapter highlights how colonialism affects not just governance but society's fabric, pointing to Algerian resistance as a case of transforming colonial tools into instruments of liberation. Drawing from Fanon's analysis of Algeria's War of Independence, Jilani demonstrates how colonialism operates both materially and psychologically. She references *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and *Destination Biafra* to illustrate how postcolonial narratives tackle the unfinished business of decolonization, concluding that true liberation requires economic restructuring and a transformation of self-perception and agency. Chapter Two examines the role of women in nationalist movements, focusing on *Home and the World* and *A Grain of Wheat*. Jilani critiques how anti-colonial struggles, while seeking liberation, often marginalize women's fight for gender equality. In *Home and the World*, Bimala's journey reflects how nationalist ideologies confined women to symbolic roles rather than full political participation. Similarly, *A Grain of Wheat* portrays the tension between personal sacrifice and national aspirations, revealing the restricted agency of women in postindependence narratives. Chapter Three explores how postindependence societies fell into

neocolonial traps, with new elites perpetuating colonial structures. Through *Xala* and *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, Jilani examines corruption, betrayal, and disillusionment. *Xala* satirizes Senegalese elites who, despite achieving political independence, remain economically and culturally dependent on former colonial powers. *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* follows a protagonist struggling to maintain integrity in a society that rewards corruption, exposing the moral dilemmas of postcolonial subjectivity. Both works challenge the myth of post-independence progress, illustrating how neocolonialism continues shaping identity and agency.

In Chapter Four, Jilani analyzes the psychological impact of historical violence on personal and national identity through *The Cloud-Capped Star* and *Destination Biafra*. *The Cloud-Capped Star* portrays the trauma of Partition through Neeta, a refugee in postindependence India, whose suffering mirrors that of millions. *Destination Biafra* provides a gendered perspective on the Nigerian Civil War, centering on a female protagonist confronting colonial and patriarchal oppression amid war. Jilani argues that these works reveal how historical violence is internalized, shaping individual and national identities. In Chapter Five, Jilani examines how economic shifts disrupt personal and communal identities, analyzing *Nectar in a Sieve* and *Work*. *Nectar in a Sieve* follows a rural Indian woman whose traditional life is uprooted by industrialization, illustrating the personal consequences of economic change. Jilani questions whether true independence is possible without economic self-sufficiency, as both works highlight the entanglement between labor, land, and selfhood in postcolonial contexts. In her conclusion, Jilani reiterates that decolonization is an unfinished project rather than a singular historical event. She argues that literature and film serve as crucial spaces for examining and challenging colonial legacies while imagining alternative futures. Urging scholars and activists to prioritize both structural transformation and subjective reconstitution, she emphasizes culture's role in fostering a more inclusive form of liberation.

Jilani's *Subjectivity and Decolonization in the Post-Independence Novel and Film* provides a comprehensive examination of key theoretical ideas and essential texts. While some passages may be dense for readers unfamiliar with African and South Asian literature, the book remains an invaluable resource for scholars and students of postcolonial literature, film studies, and decolonial philosophy. Jilani's research is a significant contribution to postcolonial scholarship, offering a critical lens on how postindependence narratives construct, constrain, and redefine subjectivity. Her study sheds light on ongoing struggles for justice, identity, and agency in the Global South, making this book essential reading for those interested in the intersections of literature, film, and decolonial thought.

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