

Peacock's paper, however, is restricted to the consideration of just one aspect of these two long neglected texts. While Rūmī's poems, verse, discourses and sermons have all been studied and translated, his collected letters have received little attention. This paper provides a tantalising glimpse of the potential that these texts still retain for both social and political historians. It is clear that as the centre of a network of patronage, Rūmī dealt with a wide circle of people with a diverse range of interests and further study would illuminate anew the workings and the actors of the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum. Overlooked previously on account of the perceived poor quality of his verse, Sultān Waled's work needs to be studied from an historical perception. Peacock's investigations suggest that, like his father, Sultān Waled was fully involved with the society into which he had been born.

Conceived in the Istanbul conference of 2009, *The Seljuks of Rum* provides a variety of detailed images of the Rumi Sultanate. In academia as well as historically in the shadow of its namesake based in Iran, the Seljuks of Rum have not received the attention they deserve. They serve as the backdrop to the emergence of the Ottomans and it is with their decline that the infamous black hole of the Ottomans' birth formed. The thirteenth century, in particular, was a period of flux and great change, and Anatolia was the melting pot of the remnants, outcasts, fugitives and exiles from all its neighbouring states and countries. It was a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic mix out of which one of the world's great empires emerged and this short volume should do much to re-ignite interest in the region. gl1@soas.ac.uk

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SATYAJIT RAY ON CINEMA. By SATYAJIT RAY. Edited by SANDIP RAY. pp. 171. New York, Columbia University Press, 2013.

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In tandem with his film-making career from the early 1950s until his death in 1992, Satyajit Ray was a noted graphic designer, a distinguished book illustrator and a celebrated writer. His fiction in Bengali was commercially successful, especially a series of novellas about an Indian detective duo loosely based on Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson. Most of it was later translated into English. Two novellas were adapted into striking films by Ray in the 1970s: *Sonar Kella (The Golden Fortress)*, set in Rajasthan, and *Joi Baba Felunath (The Elephant God)*, set in Benares. As for his nonfiction, his occasional articles on the art and craft of cinema in both Bengali and English are among the most articulate, unpretentious and enjoyable written by any film director—on a par with the autobiography of his friend and admirer Akira Kurosawa.

One of Ray's best articles, 'A long time on the little road', about the trials and tribulations of making his first film, *Pather Panchali* (a title that translates roughly as 'The Song of the Little Road'), appeared in the British Film Institute's journal *Sight and Sound* in 1957. It was reprinted, along with two dozen other articles, in Ray's first collection, *Our Films Their Films*, published in India in 1976. Another article—possibly Ray's finest ever—'Under western eyes', about distorted European and American perceptions of Indian culture including Indian cinema—appeared in *Sight and Sound* in 1982. In 2012 it was published for the first time in a book, a second collection of Ray's articles released in India under the title *Deep Focus: Reflections on Cinema*. This second collection has now appeared in the United States from a university press with a longstanding interest in film, as *Satyajit Ray on Cinema*.

This regrettably lacklustre title aside, the book is valuable, both for its words and for its copious illustrations. *Satyajit Ray on Cinema* assembles most of Ray's remaining English articles, not included in *Our Films Their Films*, under the editorship of his son Sandip Ray, also a film director, with a foreword by the director Shyam Benegal. Many of these were buried in Indian newspapers, magazines and journals; it is good to see them disinterred. Stills from Ray's films, film posters designed by Ray and witty caricatures from his pen, and some unfamiliar photos of Ray at work by the documentary film-maker B. D. Garga, plus a few eye-catching photos by Ray himself, add to the interest.

The 22 pieces range in length from the substantial to the slight, and in subject from the craft of film-making to the dubious pleasures of sitting on a Soviet film festival jury, along with personal responses to fellow directors such as Charles Chaplin (with a wonderful sketch by Ray), Jean-Luc Godard and Ingmar Bergman (with a thoughtful photo-portrait by Ray). But it is true to say that every piece, however short, offers rewards. Many are deliciously ironic, somewhat in the manner of his 1970 classic, *Days and Nights in the Forest*.

There are, however, two puzzling omissions: 'My life, my work', Ray's revealing, autobiographical five-part lecture given in Calcutta in 1982, and 'Ordeals of the Alien', his sardonic 1980 newspaper account of the fate of his celebrated science-fiction screenplay in Hollywood in the late 1960s, widely believed to have been the source of the celebrated *ET*, made in 1982. Both of these pieces have been published in other books on Ray since his death. Even so, it would surely have been appropriate to have included them in *Satyajit Ray on Cinema*, too.

My own favourites, apart from 'Under western eyes', are a wistful piece from 1980 about the vanished silent cinema heritage of Bengal, and a trenchant lecture at India's first film school in Pune, from 1974. The first begins with a childhood memory of a Calcutta uncle who took Satyajit, aged nine, around 1930, to see the first Johnny Weissmuller Tarzan film. All the seats were sold, so the dismayed nephew was taken to a Bengali silent, *Kaal Parinaya* ('The Doomed Marriage'), which unfortunately turned out to be an "early example of Indian soft porn", writes an amused adult Ray. "The hero and the heroine—or was it the Vamp?—newly married, were in bed, and a close-up showed the woman's leg rubbing against the man's". Satyajit, curious and precociously dedicated to the cinema, greeted his uncle's urgent and periodic "let's go home" with "stony silence".

The Pune Institute lecture comments bluntly, apropos India's massive popular cinema generically known as 'Bollywood'—whether the films are made in Bombay, Calcutta or Madras—that, "in our country at least, films have been made with virtually no contribution from the director, or at least nothing of a positive nature. He does nothing because he knows nothing". Ray then advises the aspiring student film-makers: "If you are truly gifted, you will sooner or later create your own market. If not, and you still want to stay in business, the only rules you would have to follow would be the rules of compromise".

Ray was certainly contemptuous of most of Indian popular cinema, apart from some of the innovative songs and the talents of many of the actors, some of whom he used in his own films to wonderful effect, for example, Amjad Khan as Wajid Ali Shah, king of Oudh, in *Shatranj ke Khilari* (*The Chess Players*). Too contemptuous, thinks Benegal, who comments in his foreword that Ray's attitude was "somewhat elitist". As Ray's biographer, I often encountered hostility to him among Indian film-makers, which persists even two decades after his death. One can understand this attitude, and even sympathise, at least a little. Yet, as the intelligence, subtlety and cosmopolitanism on display in *Satyajit Ray on Cinema* demonstrate, without such a scorn for the crowd-pleasing mediocrity of 'Bollywood', *Pather Panchali* and Ray's other masterpieces of world cinema could never have come into existence.

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