

Colonial White Women and their Imperial Enterprise

(Extract from a Media Essay by a masters student in Film and Television)

Introduction

Since 1980s there are considerable number of films produced in the First World country nostalgically and retrospectively representing and introspecting view of the colonial history. With a backdrop of the zeitgeist of feminist criticism, an exploration of the image and voice of the colonial white women who are essentially ignored in previous colonialist cinema, is one of the conspicuous characteristics of these films.

A Passage to India is a British film set in 1920s, that depict an entanglement between the British colonizers and local colonized Indians as a consequence of accusation by a young British girl Adela of her attempted rape of an Indian man Aziz. *Out of Africa* is an American film that focuses on the experiences and lives of a Danish woman Karen in Africa before and after the First World War. *Indochine* is a French film that portrays a melodrama regarding a French white woman Eliane and her adopted Vietnamese daughter set during the Vietnamese national conflict in 1930s.

This essay is organized in three parts will analyze and discuss the protagonists in these films—colonial white women and their imperial enterprise. Firstly, in this essay the complex situation of colonial white women is briefly investigated and presented. Secondly, in this essay the three protagonists Adela, Karen and Eliane are each analyzed to determine how they implement their imperial enterprises and simultaneously confronts complicated condition experienced by colonial white female patriarchal context. Finally, I will discuss the assumption concerning the phenomenon of rewriting historical colonialism in terms of a female pathology.