Elena Oliete-Aldea. *Hybrid Heritage on Screen. The ‘Raj Revival’ in the Thatcher Era*. 2015. London: Palgrave Macmillian. 227 pp. ISBN: 978-1-137-46396-8

Visual media can silence, epitomise, distort, stereotype or empower different social realities through films, TV series or commercials. Elena Oliete-Aldea’s *Hybrid Heritage on Screen. The ‘Raj Revival’ in the Thatcher Era* (2015) is a thorough study that analyses the films that, in the Thatcher era (1979-1990), represented the British Raj (the colonial occupation of India by the British Empire). The book recognises, as the author states, “the importance of the visual media as a cultural and ideological apparatus that both reproduces and constructs – or ‘refracts’ – social realities” (196). Oliete-Aldea analyses the cultural, political and social intentions behind these filmic re-visitations to the Raj. She illustrates how they intended to idealise the United Kingdom’s imperial past and foster a British nationalist identity that privileged white, male and upper class spheres. The writer gathers postcolonial terms such hybridity (Hall 1997), third space (Bhabha 1994) and diaspora space (Brah 1996) to survey how some of these productions enhanced a discourse of fear towards migrants but also how some of these and other movies entailed a desire to show the cultural ambivalence associated with social and racial conviviality.

The book should be praised as a seminal postcolonial, cinematic and gender analysis of Thatcher’s administration because it shows how power structures permeated British, Indian and British Indian societies. The volume offers a pioneering understanding of the British films that portrayed the Raj during these years exploring, through an interdisciplinary approach, the many variables that were involved in the production and reception of such features. It is true that previous volumes on British Film in the 1980s such as those by Lester D. Friedman (1993), Pam Cook (1996), John Hill (1999), Chantal Cornut-Gentille (2005) or Robert Murphy (2009) had referenced the films of this study, but the writer’s treatment is ground-breaking in its field because it is, as Rosa M. García Periago also states (2015), the first of its kind entirely devoted to representations of the Raj in British films during the 1980s, beyond the short revisions about the same topic offered by Prem Chowdhury (2000), Tharayil Muraleedhran (2002), Andrew Higson (2003) or Claire Monk (2012).

The compelling focus on the Raj revival undertaken by British films that represented the Raj during the Thatcher Era might be seen, at the same time, as the only arguable flaw of Oliete-Aldea’s study: that of ignoring Indian productions dealing with the concept of *making* or *reinforcing* an Indian national identity. García-Periago (2015) also recognises this fact and suggests a comparison between the British films and Indian films portraying Anglo-Indian identities such as Aparna Sen’s *36 Chowringhee Lane* (1981). I believe that considering, together with Sen’s feature, films like Shekhar Kapur’s *Masoom* (1983) and *Mr India* (1987), Mira Nair’s *Salaam Bombay* (1988) or Pradip Krishnen’s *In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones* (1989) could have provided a contrastive study on how a national identity both in India and in the United Kingdom was created during the 1980s. This comparison could have widened the study of the reception of the films in both countries, although it is true that the theoretical background of the present volume could have been blurred. This call might act as a stimulating point of departure for Oliete-Aldea’s future works.

The book is structured in six chapters that propose a complex, ambivalent and very informative reading of both history and its representations. The chosen films are James Ivory’s *Heat and Dust* (1982), Richard Attenborough’s *Gandhi* (1982), David Lean’s *A Passage to India* (1984), Christopher Morahan and Jim O’Brien’s miniseries for ITV *The Jewel in the Crown* (1982) and Peter Duffell’s miniseries for Channel Four *The Far Pavilions* (1984). Oliete-Aldea studies in Chapter 1 the “ethno-nationalist” passions of Thatcher’s new Conservative government representing the British Empire as well as the “ambiguity, inconsistency and contradiction” (Oliete-Aldea 20-21) that were inherently porous to the political and artistic representations of those times. In this sense, Paul Gilroy recently stated in the foreword to the catalogue for Tate Britain’s exhibition *Artist and Empire* (2015) that Britain remains “ambivalent about its imperial past, which was long a matter of national pride and a source of prestige as well as a litany of exploitation, famine, cruelty and slaughter” because “the inability to come to terms with these disputed legacies has been corrosive” (2015, 8). It is from this contemporary recurrence of the topic that the author uses the term hybridity (also questioning if the term is void of meaning or not) as a contesting term to explain the nostalgic and unfair power relations fostered in the films and TV series that are cases of study. The necessity and recurrence of the topic and approach of the book are, therefore, clearly clarified.

Oliete-Aldea shows how the Thatcherite Conservative government portrayed an image of Indians in the Subcontinent and British Indians in the United Kingdom that “forced [them] to experience themselves as ‘Other’” (10). The cultural, political and racist agenda of Thatcher’s government is perfectly explained in Chapter 2, where the author describes how its conservative politics promoted a nostalgic and mythical validation of the past so that the country could idealise Britain as a superpower. The book moves on to Chapter 3, where the genre of “The Raj films or production” is defined as a category that “reflects both the temporal and spatial dimensions of the cinematic representations without adding the negative connotations” (81). The writer finds and explains contradictory messages within Lean’s *A Passage to India* and Ivory’s *Heat and Dust* borrowing theoretical terms from British Film Studies and Postcolonial Studies so that the reader recognises racist clichés in the films but also some ambivalences in the approaches of the same features that, in Oliete-Aldea’s view, at least documented the complexities faced by British Indians in India (79).

The author enlightens these theoretical remarks in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, where she analyses these topics in the rest of her chosen movies. In Chapter 4, she assesses the orientalist, imperialist and patriarchal obsession to deify Gandhi as a Christ figure found in Attenborough’s *Gandhi*. She criticises how the past was “manipulated so as to convey specific images and representations that favoured certain ideological representations” (108). She then moves into analysing the chauvinist structure of British society in the 1980s in Chapter 5. She illustrates how these British films depicting the Raj portrayed British, Indian and British Indian women as victims of Indian savagery or as guilty of having a trouble-making female identity, which made them fall in love with the *imagined* wild Indian men and women. The author shows how Ivory and Lean’s adaptations portrayed women as victims of Indian savagery and having low morals but she also reveals a new subversive reading and representation in the adaptations in the way the characters of Adela or Daphne are presented as victims of their own society rather than victims of India (139). Oliete-Aldea sees in this alternative the possibility for these films to be signifiers of a developing third space that coexisted with the orientalist discourse of the 1980s. Chapter 6 follows this reading and finds a representation of cultural hybridity in the TV serials *The Far Pavilions* and *The Jewel in the Crown*. The author points out how both serials are ambivalent in the way they described interethnic relationships, diplomatic intricacies in the last days of the British Empire and the role played by women in the British Indian context. The reader may disagree with Oliete-Aldea’s understanding of the serials but her analysis is very well structured and presented.

Thus, *Hybrid Heritage on Screen. The ‘Raj Revival’ in the Thatcher Era* questions the presences, absences and misrepresentations of Indian, British and British Indian identities in the Raj revival films shot in the Thatcher era. Elena Oliete-Aldea studies these features in detail and highlights racist and chauvinist descriptions of characters, meanwhile she promotes that cohabitation in hybridity means to resist the violent silencing and stereotyping of the *other* on visual media. This is therefore an extraordinary contribution to the field of Postcolonial, Film, Culture and Gender studies because it brings theoretical and analytical light, as well as further questions to scrutinise not only the Thatcherite government but also movies such as John Madden’s *The Second Best Exotic Marigold* Hotel (2015), Ben Mor’s video from Coldplay’s song “Hymn for the Weekend” (2016) or other cultural representations that refract the social clichés and instability of our times.

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