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Elena Oliete-Aldea. 2015. *Hybrid Heritage on Screen. The 'Raj Revival' in the Thatcher Era*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 227 pp. ISBN: 978-1-137-46396-8.

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Visual media can silence, epitomise, distort, stereotype or render powerful different social realities through films, TV series or advertising. Elena Oliete-Aldea's *Hybrid Heritage on Screen. The 'Raj Revival' in the Thatcher Era* is a comprehensive study that analyses films that depicted the British Raj. As the author states, the book recognises "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 revisitations to the Raj, and illustrates how they attempted to idealise the United Kingdom's imperial past, thereby fostering a British nationalist identity that privileged white, male and upper class spheres. The writer resorts to postcolonial terms such as "hybridity" (Hall [1996] 1997), "third space" (Bhabha 1994) and "diaspora space" (Brah 1996) to assess the ways in which some of these productions enhanced a discourse of fear towards migrants, but also how others entailed a desire to show the cultural ambivalence associated with social and racial conviviality.

The book should be praised as a seminal analysis of Thatcher's administration with a focus on postcolonial, cinematic and gender analysis, showing how power structures permeated British, Indian and British Indian societies. The volume offers an unprecedented understanding of the British films that portrayed the Raj during the Thatcher years, exploring, through an interdisciplinary approach, the many variables that were involved in the production and reception of such features. Previous articles and volumes on British film in the 1980s, such as those by Salman Rushdie (1984; 1991), Lester D. Friedman (1993), Pam Cook (1996), John Hill (1999), Prem Chowdhry (2000), Tharayil Muraleedharan (2002) and Robert Murphy ([1999] 2009), had simply referenced the films examined in Oliete-Aldea's study, without conducting an in-depth analysis of their relevance and interconnectedness. It is in this regard that Oliete-Aldea's book offers a pioneering and comprehensive study of these films, fusing Film and Cultural Studies to explore the social and cultural backgrounds, modes of production and audiences that surrounded portrayals of the Raj in the 1980s.

The book comprises six chapters that propose a complex, balanced and highly informative reading of both history and its representations. The films discussed 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). In chapter one—"The Porosity of Identity Boundaries"—Oliete-Aldea studies the "ethno-nationalist" passions of Thatcher's new Conservative government, depicting the British Empire in the context of the "ambiguity, inconsistency and contradiction" inherent in the political and artistic representations of the times (20-21). In this regard, Paul Gilroy recently stated, in the foreword to the catalogue for Tate Britain's exhibition *Artist and Empire* (2015), that Britain today remains ambivalent and unable to come to terms with its imperial past and legacies (8). It is as a result of this contemporary recurrence of the topic that the author uses the term "hybridity" (whilst also questioning whether the term is in fact void of meaning) to explain the nostalgic and unfair power relations fostered in the films and TV series that her book examines.

Oliete-Aldea shows how Thatcher's 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 two—"Britain in the 1980s: The Thatcher Decade"—where the author describes how its conservative politics promoted a nostalgic and mythical validation of the past, so that the country could idealise the notion of Britain as a superpower. Following this, in chapter three—"British Cinema and the Raj Revival"—Oliete-Aldea moves on to define the genre of "[t]he Raj films or production" as a category that "reflects both the temporal and spatial dimensions of the cinematic representations without adding the negative connotations" (81). The writer identifies and explains contradictory messages within Lean's *A Passage to India* (1984) and Ivory's *Heat and Dust* (1982), borrowing theoretical terms from British Film Studies and Postcolonial Studies so that the reader recognises not only racist clichés in the films but also some ambivalences in the approaches of the same features that, in Oliete-Aldea's view, similarly documented the complexities faced by British women in India (79).

The author expands upon these theoretical remarks in chapters four, five and six, where she further explores these topics in the remainder of her chosen works. In chapter four—"On Heroes': Bapu Goes West"—she assesses the orientalist, imperialist and patriarchal obsession with deifying Gandhi and his portrayal as a Christ figure in Attenborough's *Gandhi* (1982). She criticises how the past was "manipulated so as to convey specific images and representations that favoured certain ideological representations" (108). In chapter five—"History in Literary Adaptations"—Oliete-Aldea proceeds to analyse the chauvinist structure of British society in the 1980s. She illustrates how, in depicting the Raj, these British films 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 imagined and wild Indian men and women. The author demonstrates how Ivory's and Lean's literary adaptations, *Heat and Dust* (1982) and *A Passage to India* (1984) respectively, portrayed women as victims of Indian savagery and as having low morals. However, she also offers a new subversive reading and interpretation of the way in which the main female characters of these two movies, Olivia and Adela, are presented as victims of their own society, rather than victims of India (139). Oliete-Aldea sees in this alternative the possibility for Lean's and Ivory's adaptations to be signifiers of a developing third space that coexisted alongside the orientalist discourse of the 1980s. Chapter six—"The Raj on TV"—follows this reading and finds a representation of cultural hybridity in the two TV miniseries *The Far Pavilions* (1984) and *The Jewel in the Crown* (1982). The author highlights the way in which both are ambivalent in their descriptions of 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 or may not agree with Oliete-Aldea's interpretation of the miniseries, but her analysis is soundly structured and presented.

Thus, *Hybrid Heritage on Screen. The 'Raj Revival' in the Thatcher Era* questions the presence, absence and misrepresentation of Indian, British and British Indian identities in the Raj revival films of the Thatcher era. Elena Oliete-Aldea studies these features in detail, highlighting racist and chauvinist descriptions of characters. She sustains the idea that cohabitation in hybridity means resisting the violent silencing and stereotyping of the *other* in visual media. Conversely, this exclusive focus on the Raj revival undertaken by British films is arguably the only flaw in Oliete-Aldea's study, in so far as it ignores Indian productions that were simultaneously *making* or *reinforcing* an Indian national identity from within India itself, with films such as Shekhar Kapur's *Masoom* (1983) and *Mr India* (1987), Mira Nair's *Salaam Bombay* (1988) and Pradip Krishnen's *In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones* (1989). It is true that an analysis of these Indian films might have blurred the theoretical background and scope of the present volume, but I believe that a contrastive study on how a new sense of national identity was created during the 1980s, both in India and in the United Kingdom, could act as a stimulating point of departure for Oliete-Aldea's future works. Such a comparison could broaden the scope of the study of these films in both countries and offer a comprehensive exploration of the intentions behind the Raj Revival in British productions, in contrast to the Indian films that were being released simultaneously.

Oliete-Aldea's book represents an extraordinary contribution to the field of Postcolonial, Film, Culture and Gender Studies because it casts new analytical light under which to scrutinise the Thatcher government. Moreover, its theoretical approach may prove fruitful in raising further questions about works that portray India and Indian people as static communities, including John Madden's *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* (2011) and *The Second Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* (2015), Ben Mor's video for

Coldplay's song "Hymn for the Weekend" (2016), and other cultural representations which refract the social clichés and instability of our times, and echo stereotypes from times gone by.

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