

Univerzita Karlova.

Filozofická fakulta.

Ústav anglistiky a amerikanistiky, 2009

Bakalářská práce

Havlíková, Vendula

vedoucí práce Soňa Nováková

2009

'Depicting Colonial and Postcolonial Attitudes to Imperialism in Film: *A Passage to India*'

Table of contents:

1. Introduction.....	2
1.1. Aims and Objectives.....	2
1.2. Survey sources.....	3
2. Imperialism.....	5
2.1. Defining Imperialism.....	5
2.2. The British Raj.....	6
3. Imperialism and the Media.....	10
4. Imperialism and Popular Culture.....	13
5. <i>A Passage to India</i>	19
5.1. The Adaptation.....	19
5.2. Play with the Visual.....	22
5.2.1. Britain vs. India.....	22
5.2.2. Britons vs. Indians.....	32
5.3. Game of Sound.....	39
6. Conclusion.....	43
7. Summary.....	45
8. Appendices.....	48
9. Bibliography.....	53

1. Introduction

1.1. Aims and Objectives

The aim of this thesis is to cast light on how cinematic depictions of historical, political, cultural and social events shape our perception of the past. As an example of a compact and comprehensive means of such representations, *A Passage to India* (1984), one of the famous films with colonial topic directed by David Lean shall be interpreted and analyzed, paying special attention to its visual and audio elaboration, with regard to its postcolonial character and attitudes to imperialism.

Colonialism and imperialism are the main political themes of this David Lean's filmic adaptation of the famous E.M.Forster's novel *A Passage to India*. Despite the proclaimed anti-colonial attitude of the novel's author, Lean's film is more or less a continuation of the traditional British depiction of the colonial era, saturated with nostalgic ideas of the authority, glory and glamour of the age of Empire, maintaining most usual stereotypes about the Indian peoples. The representation of India is typical for the time of the emergence of the novel - it is pictured as an extremely appealing and exotic territory with unsurpassable cultural differences. The contrast of chaos and order as well as one of wilderness and civilization are ubiquitous in the film, and tend to degrade the colonized country and her savage inhabitants to mere tools used for operating the Empire and objects of desire and fascinated observation. This particular film has been chosen as it serves as a relevant representation of the contemporary thinking of the British both of themselves and their Indian subjects at the beginning of the 20th century, and epitomizes the nostalgia for the 'colonial

romance' felt in the second half of the century and depicted in so-called 'heritage films'. The film is an important adaptation of an outstanding work of British canonical literature with distinct autobiographical elements, therefore, the topic, its interpretation and appropriation can be considered trustworthy and serious. *A Passage to India* is not a heroic epic, but a critical picture of the life and human relationships set in the uneasy times of the British imperial era in the 1920s, noticing the good and evil on both opposing sides. What is also important is the way the novel's plot and its interpretation have been manipulated to reinforce the stereotypes needed for creation of a traditional depiction of the Anglo-Indian relations.

1.2. Survey sources

Brief reference of the political, historical, social and cultural situation covered in the films shall be given with the support of scholarly publication focusing on particular fields:

The historical perspective will be drawn according to Winfried Baumgart's *Imperialism: The Idea and Reality of British and French Colonial Expansion, 1880-1914*; Bernard Porter's historical study on *The Absent Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain*, Gerald S. Graham's *Concise History of the British Empire*, while some of the social particulars are adapted from Jose Harris' social history of Britain *Private Lives, Public Spirit: Britain 1870 - 1914*.

Other aspects, cultural and political in particular, will be supplemented by the thoughts of Edward W. Said expressed in his famous works *Orientalism*, and *Culture and*

Imperialism. Important socio-cultural prospects shall be added by Jenny Sharpe's understanding of the figure of women in the colonial texts described in *Allegories of Empire*, and Laura E. Donaldson's *Decolonizing Feminisms*, while impulses adopted from John M. MacKenzie's *Imperialism and Popular Culture* and Stuart Halls's *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* will initiate a thorough analysis of the film with an insight to some postcolonial theories of representation of the 'Other' with regard to the postcolonial techniques of cultural representation and signifying practices.

2. Imperialism

2.1. Defining Imperialism

Prior to discussing imperialism, the meaning of this ambiguous term must be clarified. Thousands of pages have given account of the various definitions of imperialism, which proves it merely impossible to give a single satisfactory definition. However, this thesis shall refer to the basic explanation given by Edward W. Said, who defines imperialism at its elementary level as 'thinking about, settling on, controlling land that you do not possess, that is distant, that is lived on and owned by others.'¹, with regard to the cultural and social domination. Michael Doyle's description shall develop our idea further, saying that

Empire is a relationship, formal or informal, in which one state controls the effective political sovereignty of another political society. It can be achieved by force, by political collaboration, by economic, social, or cultural dependence. Imperialism is simply the process or policy of establishing or maintaining an empire.²

Imperialism is usually motivated by economic reasons and accompanied by ethnic, religious, racial and cultural oppression, and has various tools; one of those is colonialism, which helps to enlarge the Empire by setting up colonies beyond the borders of the particular state, often on other continents. This is done in order to make profit, expand the power, escape persecution or to convert the indigenous population to the colonists' religion. In the past, colonialism was repeatedly defended by actions connected with so-called 'white man's burden', which comprises civilizing and establishing order in undeveloped

¹ Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993) 7.

² Michael W. Doyle, *Empires* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986) 45.

parts of the world inhabited by primitive nations incapable of autonomy under the disguise of white men's courage, brotherhood and self-sacrifice. It is the very justification that necessitated the colonial/imperial expansion of the Europeans.

The usual by-products of colonialism are problems connected with the collision of two (or more) cultures of different status, origin and often religion. These usually have far-reaching consequences and produce legacy of bitter memories that foster subjugation, displacement and resentment for many decades to come.

2.2. The British Raj

The story of England and her former colonies constitutes one of the grand and central themes of modern history. Started in the 15th century, chiefly for trade purposes, the English overseas possessions evolved into a 'complicated international laboratory in which new nations, activated by the old world, were precipitated into independent existence'³. Various means of gaining new territory were used. The first steps were often rather violent, while the following stages usually imposed some kind of economic or cultural dependence, which enabled the colonist to dominate their colonies without heavy use of military power.

What is most relevant to this thesis from a historical point of view is the situation within the British Raj, which refers to the governmental rule over parts of Indian subcontinent after the Bengal Mutiny of 1858, when the control passed from the East India Company to the Crown. It is impossible to decide whether the British attempts to

³ Gerald S. Graham, *A Concise History of the British Empire* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1972) i.

bring civilization and order to India can compensate for the subjugation experienced by the natives, or whether it was the economic benefits or the urge of the 'white man's burden' that drew the British to India, and I shall not attempt to deliver such a judgment. Several historians agree (mind, British historians) that the company's governors-general (prior to the Mutiny) as well as the Crown's viceroys had always the welfare of India at heart and devoted their services to that. One of them, Gerald S. Graham, even asserts that from a material point of view India gained from Europe more than she lost:

During the 19th century, she acquired the techniques and equipment with which to begin to build the modern industrial state - at a cost in life, pain and labour probably a good deal less than that paid by the original operators and victims of the English Industrial Revolution (Graham 251).

Very well did the British realize that 'the education of Indians in matters of government must reach a stage when it would be impossible to confine them to subordinate employees' (Graham 253), therefore, it came as no surprise that the new system of education caused the gradual emergence of new western-trained, middle-class Indian intellectuals (lawyers, doctors, civil servants of businessmen), who became well acquainted with the European ideas and methods of democracy and started posing exasperated questions why these should not be applied also to India. Such development undoubtedly proves that the British rule in the Raj was relatively liberal and humane in comparison to other empires, such as the French or Portuguese. There were certainly moments when military power needed to be employed, but major excesses, such as the Amritsar massacre of 1919, were rather rare.

Apart from the general nationalist feeling that Britain is draining away the wealth of India, racial segregation (in trains, restaurants, shops, clubs and within the public service) was one of the most significant problems disturbing the Anglo-Indian relationships. The British civil servants, soldiers and missionaries were harshly criticized for their extreme aloofness that often grew into arrogance. According to Graham, the whole system had come to be based on a separation of the races, not upon assimilation. Upon these conditions the peaceful rule was little to compensate for the malfunctioning relations between the British and the Indians (Graham 255).

Yet it was not only economic interests that drew the British to India (repository of precious goods, such as tea, coffee, tobacco, gold, fabrics, silk, carpets, jute, opium and spices). The 'jewel in the crown' also had an immense sentimental value for the British, as it was the object of desire and admiration, and together with the Far East it represented the origin of all nations. Its civilization was a mystery dating far before the emergence of the European. Since antiquity, the Orient had been a place of remarkable experiences, romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes as Said points out in *Orientalism*.

The pertinent statement of Jean Paul Sartre which says the 'Only through the dominance of the Other can individual achieve an identity'⁴ gains a new implication when set in the colonial context. The general as well as individual sojourn of the British officers in India was highly esteemed for strengthening and refining the British

⁴ Jean Paul Sartre, quoted in Elena Oliete Aldea, 'Filmic Representation of the British Raj in the 1980s: Cultural Identity, Otherness and Hybridity' (Zaragoza: University of Zaragoza, 2009) 306.

character, which is one of the reasons why imperialism was so closely connected with patriotic, nationalist and racial notions. Fed by Disraeli's jingoism, imperialism had grown into a hectic expansion movement and in the 1890s escalated into a xenophobia that was first directed against France and Russia, then towards the Boers and after the turn of the centuries, against Germany (Baumgart 49).

The colonists were often deeply convinced of their superiority over the indigenous populations of the colonies. This was not only mechanical, economic and military superiority, but some sort of moral superiority that made them worthier than the inhabitants of remote colonies. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward W. Said quotes a famous French advocate of colonialism, Jules Harmand, who claims that 'our dignity rests on our quality, it underlies our right to direct the rest of humanity. Material power is nothing but a means to that end' (Said 17). Benjamin Kidd, a prominent sociologist of the second half of the 19th century, also argued that

'Given the inevitability of competition in human affairs, progress could only be achieved by social efficiency that depended on the development of character type that emphasized energy, resolution, application, self-control and single-minded devotion to duty.'⁵

These comments sufficiently prove that the Europeans considered themselves as superhumans, whose right and responsibility was to spread light on the rest of the world and civilize the undeveloped peoples, and during the centuries acted accordingly with their persuasion.

⁵ Samuel Smiles, *Self-Help* (London: John Murray, 1911) 450.

3. Imperialism and the Media

From the very beginning, media always provided a more or less biased and prefabricated account of the situation within the Empire, as it primarily functioned to promote the colonial policies with home population. Various channels of communication were used to address diverse classes, and the imperialist propaganda of the second half of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century was developed into an incredibly imaginative and flexible manipulator of representations.

Due to the imperial propaganda being closely connected with the system of secondary education, with the rise of the Empire and Industrial Revolution came new forms of patriotism and nationalism resulting in a new generation brought up within the public schools to be more courageous, more self-reliant, more perseverant, more honest, more restrained, more industrious and more dutiful than any of their ancestors - the new type of Britons who were to become the ruling elite in the years of Empire. As the development of character was crucial for the development of power, only the vigorous character of the English (less impact on the Scots or Irish) enabled them to rule a quarter of the globe.

The pride of an empire won by the courage and energies of their ancestors as well as the idea of British supremacy over other nations was widely encouraged by all mass media available in those times (pamphlets, magazines and newspapers in particular), which were to assure the Britons of the rightness of their foreign policy and justify its means. In the mid-nineteenth century *The Times* made a declaration, which summed up the contemporary self-esteem of the nation:

'That which raises, strengthens and dignifies a country, spreads her power, creates her moral influence, and makes her respected and submitted to, bends the hearts of millions, and bows down the pride of nations to her - this aristocracy is not an aristocracy of blood, fashion, or talent only: it is an aristocracy of character.'⁶

The reign of Queen Victoria also witnessed the emergence of mass media (in the form of national newspapers and magazines), which were available to much wider audiences due to urbanization and educational reforms. As a result of the series of laws introducing compulsory school attendance, newspapers and magazines became more accessible for all classes and the general readership enlarged by significant numbers.

In spite of the elitist idea of 'the new type of Briton' of supreme qualities having originated within the aristocracy, the contagious spirit of 'aristocracy of character' quickly expanded outside the blue blood society into all classes of the social spectrum. It was eagerly accepted by the newly educated working-class in particular as it gave them a new lease of social advancement. Their understanding of imperialism might have been slightly limited, however, in spite of this, or perhaps due to this very fact, their patriotism was even more staunch than the one of the middle- and upper-classes. As Robert Roberts puts it:

They didn't know whether trade was good for the Empire or whether the Empire was good for the trade but they knew the Empire was theirs and they were going to support it.⁷

With the decline of the Empire at the turn of the centuries, the imperial propaganda available in the mass

⁶ Jeffrey Richards, *Films and British National Identity* (Manchester: MUP, 1997) 31.

⁷ Robert Roberts, *The Classic Slum*; quoted in J.A.Mangan, 'The Grit of Our Forefathers: Invented Traditions, Propaganda and Imperialism', John M. MacKenzie (ed.), *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: MUP 1989) 120.

media grew increasingly vigorous in helping to spread the glory and popularity of the Empire. This happened not only by the means of newspapers and magazines, but in the period between the World Wars via newsreels, which were even better suited for efficient reinforcement of the imperial ideology. With the help of new technologies uniting music, images and slogans the impact on the audience was again greater.

4. Imperialism and Popular Culture

Imperialist propaganda penetrated all spheres of daily life, including most types of mass popular culture emerging from the second half of the 19th century. Its influence oscillated and changed the shape within the decades, but it was still ubiquitous in the period between the world wars. Talking about the 1930s and his boyhood spent in Britain, an English historian John Julius Norwich recalls that 'the Empire was all around us, celebrated on biscuit tins, chronicled on our cigarette cards, part of the fabric of our lives. We were all imperialists then.'⁸ Literature, music halls, variety theatres, children's comics, popular art, iconography as well as films all profited from the appeal, topicality and marketability of the imperial themes.

The necessity to simplify complicated political and social issues for the popular culture of the mass audiences as well as the need of their entertaining character provoked the formation and reinforcement of cultural representation using stereotypes to draw the black and white relation between the subject and the object of viewing. In his socio-cultural study *Representation*, Stuart Hall states that stereotyping is a part of maintaining social and symbolic order and clearly explains the dichotomy of binary oppositions stating that

'[they] have great value of capturing the diversity of the world...they are also a rather crude and reductionist way of establishing meaning...they are oversimplified and swallow up all distinctions in their rather rigid two-part structure.'⁹

⁸ John Julius Norwich, *The Listener*, 6th January 1983, 10; quoted in John M. MacKenzie *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: MUP, 1989) 7.

⁹ Stuart Hall, 'The Spectacle of the Other', *Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage, 2003) 235.

In the search for identity of the subject it is crucial to set up a symbolic frontier between the 'normal and acceptable' and the 'deviant, pathological and unacceptable', between what 'belongs' and what is 'Other', between 'insiders' and 'outsiders', Us and Them, as Hall puts it, adding that this distinction facilitates the 'binding' or 'bonding' together of all of Us who are 'normal' into one 'imagined community' (Hall 258). Within this community dominated the obsession of excluding (symbolically or physically) everything that is 'Other' to restore the purity of culture.

The popular culture use of the stereotypes was not very different from the one present in media and thinking today, but it must not be forgotten that in those times many of these stereotypes and deliberate prejudices were politically motivated. The tendency to categorize, identify and employ logical oversimplification related to all members of a class was common to all products of popular culture and it was widely accepted in these forms of entertainment as it could have never been in serious media. Here the stereotypes were employed in order to produce stories that would be compelling, short and easily understandable to a general audience (mainly of working-class origin). Simple swiftness was necessary to make events appear more vivid and dramatic and to create the stories of heroism and national glory, which were so welcome by the majority of the spectators, as they constituted a relief from the monotonous routine of their lives.

The political mood of the period required entertainment boosting the national pride, which is why Britain's intention was always depicted as just and inevitably

victorious. In his introduction to *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, John MacKenzie reminds us about the importance of social Darwinism that provided an ideological justification for colonial war and conquest, which is why it found its way into popular culture and school textbooks so swiftly.¹⁰

Another implication of the stereotypes used by popular culture was patriotic. In her essay 'Patriotism and Empire: Music Hall Entertainment', Penny Summerfield calls music hall the 'fount of patriotism' and claims that it manipulated working class opinion in favour of exploitative imperial policies.¹¹ Summerfield's writing traces in detail the tendencies of stereotype usage of the second half of the 19th century. While in the 1970s the music hall songs earned their reputation through obvious jingoistic character ('By Jingo'), in the following decade their message changed slightly as they pictured Britain resting peacefully having to fight occasional attacks of her jealous enemies, with special emphasis on the loyalty and gratitude of the colonial subjects ('Rule Britannia'). Patriotic spectacles of the 1890s presented the colonies as willingly subservient, while the desire for independence felt by many was completely ignored. Negative aspects connected with the Empire, such as the Indian tensions of the 1860s, were never acknowledged in the music hall version of imperial unity.

Predecessors to the films of romantic nostalgia which emerged soon after the introduction of public cinemas were the plays performed in variety theatres. Melodrama saturated with stereotypes of brave and honest personae loyal to the Crown fighting the evil of other races

¹⁰ John M. MacKenzie *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: MUP, 1989) 3.

¹¹ Penny Summerfield, 'Patriotism and Empire: Music Hall Entertainment', *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, John M. MacKenzie (ed.), (Manchester: MUP, 1989) 25.

personalized the virtues of the country and excited the spectators. Such plays celebrated the magnanimity of the English character towards the enemies, his inability to mock their misfortune, and often presented colonialism as a British mission for liberation of all world slaves in accordance with the notion of the 'white men's burden'.

Towards the end of the century the picture ceases to be so black and white, as spectators particularly from the middle and upper classes were beginning to criticize the imperialist practices as violent to democracy and humanity. Then natives were often 'enemies to be coerced under authority' (Summerfield 33) and even white men in far-flung Empire cannot always be trusted.

With the cinema boom of the 1930s came a new form of conveying entertainment and the adventures of colonialism shifted to the silver screen. The best known early films of ongoing popularity are undoubtedly those of Zoltan Korda (*Sanders of the River*, *The Drum*, *The Four Feathers*), Richard Boleslavski (*Clive of India*), Henry King (*Stanley and Livingstone*) or Berthold Viertel (*Rhodes of Africa*). What they all have in common is being centred around a heroic individualist character of British origin, with the whole plot revolving around him. The main hero is often a martyr - Christian, scientific or humanitarian, based on a real person featuring in the colonial history of Britain, usually deceased while performing his duty for the Queen/King.

After World War II, the British film industry faced serious crisis caused by the competition coming from Hollywood. The first renaissance came as late as the 1970s and 80s, with so-called 'heritage' cinema as one of its main pillars. The rational and unromantic post-war period, upcoming

Thatcherism, threats posed by the Cold War and Britain having lost her position of a first-rate world power prepared ground for the enthusiastic welcome of films that presented nostalgic remembrance of more glorious moments of British history and reminded the audience of once lost colonial romance. Best known British 'heritage' films were *Chariots of Fire*, *Another Country*, *Room with a View*, and last but not least Lean's adaptation of E.M.Forster's novel *A Passage to India*, all of which romanticise the past and provide nostalgic gaze. The 'heritage' nostalgia intervened also in the TV production and initiated the production of famous series such as *The Jewel in the Crown* and *The Far Pavilions*, or the TV adaptation of Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*.

Filmic adaptations of literary works are often subjected to harsh critique for resisting the ironic and social issues of their narratives and simplifying the plot issues in order to attract audiences. Andrew Higson blames films of being overly concerned with keeping up appearances rather than acting according to the passions of the heart. He claims that with their attempt to construct a delightfully glossy visual surface, the ironic perspective explored in the novels and the narrative of social criticism diminishes in their appeal for the spectator.¹² One reason for such severe criticism is perhaps the recency of film as medium connected with its low esteem in comparison with literature.

Nevertheless, there are also critics who realize that literature and film should not be compared, but studied separately, one of which is Neil Sinyard, who argues that successful screen adaptations of literature need to have one or all of these three qualities:

¹² Andrew Higson, 'Re-presenting the National Past: Nostalgia and Pastiche in the Heritage Film', *Waving the Flag: Constructing a National Cinema in Britain* (Oxford: OUP, 1993) 103.

- they aim for the *spirit* of the original rather than the literal letter
- they use the camera to interpret and not simply illustrate the tale
- they exploit a particular affinity between the artistic temperaments and preoccupations of the novelist and the filmmaker¹³

According to Sinyard, David Lean's adaptation of Forster's *A Passage to India* fulfills all these requirements which make it the most cinematically satisfying of all the Forster film adaptations to date (Sinyard 147).

¹³ Neil Sinyard, 'Lids Tend to Come Off: David Lean's Film of E.M.Forster's *A Passage to India*', *The Classic Novel: From Page to Screen*, Robert Giddings and Erica Sheed (eds.), (Manchester: MUP, 2000) 147.

5. A Passage to India

5.1. The Adaptation

David Lean, the Croydon born (1908) director, producer, screenwriter and editor appears to have had a particular interest in conveying historical motives and exotic settings on the screen. Apart from *A Passage to India* (1984), his *Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957), *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962) and *Doctor Zhivago* (1965) were also highly successful, achieving several Oscars between them. His big-screen epics are still high rated even half a century later.

Having had plentiful experience with film adaptations of British canonical literature, David Lean realized very well what an extremely difficult and ungrateful task he was taking on when planning to adapt E.M.Forster's last novel. In his *Reflections* he describes the author's worries about film adaptations of his novels, *A Passage to India* in particular:

He didn't trust movie makers. He thought they'd either come down on the side of the Indians or on the side of the English. He wanted the blame to be equally distributed and didn't trust anybody to do that.¹⁴

In this interview, Lean also expressed his wish to make a film, which in spirit would be true to the book, but pointed out that his foremost priority was to make a good film.

In spite of public acclaim, Lean's adaptation of E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* was criticized by contemporary critics for the lack 'of more radical, anti-colonial

¹⁴ Reflections of David Lean.

aspects of E. M. Forster's novel which had been lost in the adaptation from novel to film.'¹⁵ While softening the novel's anti-colonial message, Lean, on the other hand, paid more attention to the complexity of human relationships, the contrast of the two cultures as well as the impossibility of mutual understanding. According to Sinyard, Lean felt that Forster had too much of an Anglo-Indian bias in the novel and wanted to balance it a little more. 'Lean wanted to emphasize the personal not the political story' (Sinyard 155), goes on Sinyard's defense, adding that this is hardly a betrayal of Forster's intention considering that the novelist himself said the work was more about the failure of human communication than the horrors of imperialism (Sinyard 152).

David Lean's *A Passage to India* (1984) differs enormously from the nostalgic-historical films created between the World Wars. It is not centralised around one heroic individual figure any more, such as Korda's *Sanders of the Rivers*, nor does it present the black and white picture of colonist-native relationships like Boleslavski's *Clive of India* (and other films renowned for glorifying the strength and virtue of the British character). As well as Forster's novel, the film depicts the lives of ordinary Indian subjects and ordinary British colonists cohabiting in an ordinary town of Chandrapore. All the various partisan factions are presented be missing, as well as the pro-British and anti-British, all of which are essential for the generation of the colonial circus. The plot revolves around the central theme of the impossibility of Anglo-Indian friendship taking place on the colonized Indian subcontinent. During the struggle several characters

¹⁵ Cardwell, Sarah. 'Sir David Lean'. <<http://www.screenonline.org.uk/people/id/446899/>> , 24th February 2009.

develop and move from one camp into another, but all eventually arrive at the same conclusion (not quite so in Lean's film). Another extremely important theme is constructing India as the object of desire of the Westerners ('the jewel in the crown'), and a place of mystery and dangerous eroticism, which can often precipitate a confrontation within both the imperial and intimate identity of the British 'self'.

Forster wrote *A Passage to India* many years before the independence of India. The novel came out into the colonial context while sixty years later its adaptation was targeted to post-colonial audience, which is why Lean decided to introduce several changes in the narrative and modifies its message slightly. He felt that Forster's 'Not here, not yet...' at the end of the story referring to the impossibility of Anglo-Indian friendship was not true any more in multicultural Britain of the 1980s. This is why his film with a happy ending comes out as a little simplistic and nostalgically romantic in a comparison with the novel. In his article on David Lean's Asian epics Stephen Tao comments on the nostalgia present in *A Passage to India* and ascribes it to the filmmaker's British mentality:

At the core of this mentality is the notion of a colonial imperative manifested in Lean's work, for the most part, as nostalgia for Britain's colonial glories... which is why the film says more about Britain, the English and what it means to be English than about Asians living under colonialism.¹⁶

It must be taken into consideration that a film made by a British director picturing a British heroine on her journey, addressed to primarily British (or Anglo-Saxon)

¹⁶ Stephen Tao, 'Under the Noonday Sun: David Lean's Asian Epics', *Cinemaya*, Vol. 17-18/1992/3:20-23, quoted in Elena Oliete Aldea, 'Filmic Representation of the British Raj in the 1980s: Cultural Identity, Otherness and Hybridity' (Zaragoza: University of Zaragoza, 2009) 306.

audience pre-suppositions cannot help being subjective and ethnocentric. As a result of the whole story is being told through a Western lens it is noticeable that the Indian perspective, culture or way of life have been rather reared or nearly omitted.

5.2. Playing with the Visual

5.2.1. Britain vs. India

The introductory twenty minutes of *A Passage to India* are saturated with the usual stereotypes of Britain in India. Lean's favourite parallel montage of subsequent shots of similar structure is employed here, presenting the contrast of the British and Indian lives. Such '*distribution of geopolitical awareness*'¹⁷ represents the extreme polarity and the paradoxical voltage between these two cultures. The original novel does not contain any of these scenes - they were constructed by the director in order to intensify the otherness of the two setting and cultures and set context for their dramatic clash. Nevertheless, we must remember that his film was targeted for the post-colonial generations whose knowledge and understanding of the setting was much more limited than Forster's original audience. As Elena Oliete Aldea puts it '*Lean's opening sequences are presented as a window to the past*'.¹⁸ Therefore, what we should focus on is the question *how* Lean introduced the setting, not *why* he did it at all.

From the opening scene, Britain and India are pictured as two completely different worlds: the British world of culture, distinguished manners and society, source of order and knowledge opposes the Indian world of nature, simple

¹⁷ Edward W. Said. *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994) 12.

¹⁸ Elena Oliete Aldea, 'Filmic Representation of the British Raj in the 1980s: Cultural Identity, Otherness and Hybridity' (Zaragoza: University of Zaragoza, 2009) 317.

humanity, passion and mystery, which is why the exploration of the 'Other' realm is so extremely desirable and adventurous to the British. Lean employs the notion of 'gazing' with both his characters and his spectators. Apart from the fascination by the 'Other' as explained by Said's attitudes to Orientalism, Stuart Hall explains this phenomenon, often a by-product of power, as follows:

Psychoanalysis argues that psychically, we are never fully united as subjects. Our subjectivities are formed through this troubled never-completed, unconscious dialogue with - this internalisation of - the 'Other'. It is formed in relation with something which completes us but which - since it lies outside us - we in some way always lack. (Hall 238)

The surname of the main heroine is highly suggestive to serve this purpose - Miss Adela Quested is an intensely curious young English woman who sets off on a 'quest' to discover 'real' India, the reality of human relationships as well as the strengths and weaknesses of her own character. Her passage to India shall bring her closer not only to her fiancé working in the service of Queen Victoria in one of the provinces of the British Raj, but also closer to a series of 'romantic adventures'.¹⁹

The first contrast of the East and West presented by the film comes as soon as the credit sequence, where images of engravings typically associated with the East and often found in Hindu temples are shown accompanied by typically Western orchestra music (see the appendix - see Figure 1). Another discrepancy with Forster's India depicted in the book can be pointed out here, as this notion does not correspond with his imagining India more connected with Islam, due to his close relationships with Muslims.

¹⁹ Laura E. Donaldson. 'Colonialism and Filmic Representation: A Passage to "India"', *Decolonizing Feminisms* (London: Routledge, 1992) 90.

The depiction of Britain is clearly stereotypical from the very beginning as the director fully employed the game of light: the first scene takes the viewer in the midst of a dark, cold, watery and boring London inhabited by people dressed in sterile grey and black outfits captured in swift movement often associated with stress (Figure 2), only to prepare ground for the upcoming contrast with the Indian environment. The final scene of the film picturing Adela back in the permanently rainy London creates 'a neat cyclical structure that emphasizes her centrality in Lean's scheme of things' (Sinyard 152).

The spectators become acquainted with India even before the setting moves out of Europe - India is presented in the very first scene as the object of fascinated gazing and destination of fanciful tourism through the paintings decorating the walls of the Peninsula and Oriental Steam Navigation Company office. Adela's enthusiasm about her quest is evident upon her entrance and while the clerk is preparing the paperwork necessary for her passage, she is magically drawn to these pictures - a receptive viewer might be able to read the subtle hints of her upcoming adventures: first painting depicting a steamship sailing through the Suez Canal represents her own passage; the second portrays the spectacular mausoleum of the Taj Mahal, standing not only as a symbol of India with the Western audience, but also suggesting the mystery of Oriental romance; while the third painting presenting the Marabar Caves connect the two previous ones and anticipates Adela's own experience with them.

Laura E. Donaldson takes this fascination even further, claiming that the last painting, which catches Adela's attention most intensely, represents 'suggestively erotic

dark holes' causing her to react only with a strangled 'I see' when the clerk points out that these caves are located only 20 miles from her own destination. This hypothesis only supports Lean's presentation of Adela as an unbalanced human being facing her own sexuality for the first time in her life. Donaldson also asserts that the exaggerated opposition between England and India in the film's narrative, as well as the initial representation of 'India' as a painting, is done so as to enable the construction of India as an object of desire for both Adela and the film spectators. In terms of imperialistic processes, this is strategic for the creation and maintenance of an exotic 'Other' that legitimates, or indeed, necessitates, the 'civilising' presence of the Western colonizer (Donaldson 90).

After Adela's purchase of the tickets comes a swift crosscut into the magnificent harbour of Bombay (see Figure 3), full of sun, light and colours - antithetical with the gloomy streets of London. To reinforce the spectacularity of the experience Lean had put a viceroy onboard, to be able to 'liven things up', as the clerk suggests, and also to have an excuse for a pompous military reception parade exposing the typical British passion for order and immaculateness, paradoxically performed by the Indians, and also to emphasize the abysmal difference between the two cultures and imply their social and racial hierarchy. For this set, he introduces India by incorporating several architectonic symbols of India in the scene - The Gate to India, a monument which symbolizes Mumbai's openness to visitors; and the splendid Taj Mahal Palace Hotel, which was commissioned by an influential Indian industrialist at the beginning of the 20th century, after he was refused an entry to one of the city's grand hotels restricted for

'whites only'. The terrace of this hotel is paradoxically occupied by cheering crowds of English people to symbolise the British passion to possess the greatest and most splendid articles of India.

It is also the camera-eye prospective in this scene that suggests the segregation and unequal status of the two nations. Two different viewing angles of the crowds were used to influence the viewers' perception on the subliminal level: while the Indians are looked down at by the camera, the British are viewed from below, and they never mix with the Indian mob.

In the following scene Lean allows the two heroines, as well as his spectators, the voyeuristic pleasure of gazing at the strange habits of the 'Others'. After the military parade, the order imposed by the British disappears and the chaos associated with India is fully exposed causing evident uneasiness of the ladies. They look down upon the babel of half sweaty bodies in gay garments, shouting, waving, pushing each other, and before they reach the carriage that will take them somewhere safer they need to brush past a crowd of half naked brown men, peculiarized by flower and fruit sellers, or snake-charmers. The religious and ethnic variety of India is also illustrated here by the different outfits worn by the passengers disembarking the ship - a whole collection of Muslims, Sikhs, Parsees and Brahmins is there on show (Figure 4).

After scraping through the swarm of diversity, Adela and Mrs Moore find refuge at the Victoria Station, where British order dominates again. The English-looking train station, a synecdoche for the railway established by the British, is one of the representations of imposing

civilisation to India; the romantic elements connected with India are, however, still maintained in the exotic sounding names of the trains: *Frontier Mail*, *Flying Rani*, *Deccan Queen* and *Trans-India*. Later, when the afternoon tea and biscuits are served in the luxury of a first class compartment, there is not much more that would remind our visitors and the spectators of the Indian set (Figure 5).

In spite of inventing the introduction to his movie, Lean had borrowed several important dialogue passages from the first chapters of the book and inserted them dramatically into the introductory scenes of the film to define the mentality of the two nations. The first example is the dinner conversation with the Turtons, which has a special significance in drawing the social and cultural relationship of the colonists and their subjects. The chief administrator of Chandrapore, together with his memsahib wife, clearly represents the attitude of the British expatriates living in the British Raj. In particular Mrs Turton's patronising comments have a very bewildering effect upon the new arrivals and generate increased tension at the dinner table. These remarks were cleverly put in sequence with breathtaking shots of India's natural landscape to stress the dichotomy between Britain and India, culture and wild nature. After Adela's learning that 'Ronny has become a proper sahib', just the type needed, her discomfort is suggested by the sudden noise of the train resembling heart's throbbing, a shot of a mighty moonlit river surface and followed by a glimpse of the train that emphasizes the British penetration through the Indian inland. Mrs Moore's discomfort is expressed similarly upon her discovering that the Turtons not only 'don't come across [any Indians] socially', but even admit cultural exclusivism explaining that 'East is East, Mrs

Moore. It's a question of culture.' In this very moment the film crosscuts to another panoramic view of India's implied ontological body - a vast expanse of desert surrounded by mountains and traversed by the tiny figure of the train (Donaldson, 96), emphasising the pettiness of its passengers in comparison to the vastness of their surroundings.

Another contrast follows soon after: as Mrs Moore and Adela fall asleep in the luxury of their first class compartment, their noisy puffing train whirls up the desert dust and sand, awaking the choking Indians sleeping in one pile under a railway bridge. As the antithesis of this scene comes the following, picturing another ceremony, this time at the Chandrapore railway station, where the 'civilised' uniformed Indians support the merriness and festivity of the atmosphere by producing dulcet tones of European music.

As the introduction evolves, Adela and Mrs Moore are driven through a typical Indian market by which they are genuinely excited, breathing the spirit of India (see Figure 6). All the more bitter is their disappointment when they are shown Ronny's English Style villa, *Fairholme*, set in the British quarter - a model recreation of England - with its clean built houses, straight streets with English names, red post pillars, short-cut lawns, and local club. The place essential in every English town and village is even here predictably furnished with typical wicker-work armchairs, cotton tablecloths, muffled orchestra music playing waltz. Cucumber sandwiches and tea in blueprint China are served here, causing extreme disillusionment of the two female travellers, Adela in particular. With the desire to discover the 'real' India, she had travelled 6 000 miles to spend her time in a club completely identical to the one in

her hometown. Mrs Moore wisely comments on her obvious frustration with her usual pertinence: 'Adventures do occur, but not punctually.'(see Figure 7).

While some aspects of Forster's novel were moderated, others were emphasized This is the case of the 'Orientalization of the Orient' as described by E. W. Said in *Orientalism*. Not only is this issue attractive for spectators, but it also stands for the ethereal part of colonialism. Throughout the film, India is regarded as an exotic territory offering distinct experiences and adventures; it is pictured as the object of desire for the Westerners, the repository of the 'Other', which makes it so different from the Occident. As Said points out in *Orientalism*, the Orient was almost a European invention which had since antiquity a place of 'romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences'. It was also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of civilization and languages, its cultural contestants, and of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other (Said 1). In spite of the Orient's time being over in the second half of the 20th century, the Westerners still had a strong tendency to reminiscence and nostalgia. The distinction between the West and the East is the background for the whole film plot, source of all cultural clashes and misunderstandings. The film works with the oppositions of *subject* and *object* (or our and 'Other', or Occident and Orient), but always gives only the *subjective*/British perspective demonizing and orientalising the 'Other'/object.

The most significant theme using the notion of Orient in *A Passage to India* is that of desire. Adela's desire starts as a craving for knowledge, but later it evolves into an

erotic desire, as her sexual frustration becomes more evident. Since her fiancé is not being very helpful in releasing this tension, Adela transposes her desire onto India and eventually Aziz. The construction of India as a place of dangerous sexuality is supported by the scene of Adela's discovery of ruins of a Hindu temple decorated with figures depicted in different stages of sexual intercourse. Attentive spectators might again notice Lean's sense of detail - a natural entrance to the temple was made by a tamarind tree with its phallic-shaped fruits hanging everywhere around her (see Figure 8). As Donaldson reminds us, while for most sects in Hinduism, the embracing figures manifest both the presence of cosmogonic beings (especially Shiva and Parvati) and the continuing fertility of the earth, for Adela they manifest only the terror of her own displaced desire (Donaldson 94). Her repressed sexuality is challenged by the foreignness of the surrounding and the uneasiness of facing such a taboo is reinforced by her being chased by a pack of aggressive monkeys, which here represent the wild sensuality arrogated to the savage natives of other races by the European society - a theme which is used repeatedly in the novel. On her way to the court on the day of the trial a native disguised as a monkey pushes his head inside the car 'as if pushing the earlier incident to the forefront of the consciousness and linking the two events' (Sinyard 156). After the experience in the temple, Adela is forced to face her own frustration, which she fails to deal with and finally retracts her refusal to marry Ronny in spite of the lack of love and emotion. As is later pointed out by wise Mrs Moore 'India forces one to come face to face with oneself', suggesting that India makes people reveal their true character and the inner self, which 'can be rather disturbing' as it does not correspond with the rigidity and hypocrisy of the British

society. As Maria Davidis puts it in her essay in the *Journal of Modern Literature*:

Adela is unique among the characters in that she maintains both Victorian and modern aspects in herself and therefore disrupts both elements of Anglo-Indian society rather than fitting in.²⁰

This fact, together with her inability to face her own nature until the day of the trial, is the very cause of her Indian tragedy.

India as a country is represented through a number of scenes with spectacular landscapes - shots of the Ganges, views of and from the Marabar Hills, the painted elephant or the Majestic Himalayas at the end (see Figure 9). In general it can be said that while the camera emphasised the visual spectacle of the Indian landscape, the depiction of its inhabitants (but a few exceptions) is rather neglected. Lean's Indians are completely ignored as individuals and only presented as a colourful crowd in the background.

As has been already suggested, India is portrayed in two different ways in the film. Firstly, it is the exotic otherness typical for the Orient, extremely beguiling to the European 'sentimental' traveller, such as Adela or Mrs Moore. It contrasts to the order and civilization of Europe by its disarray, diversity, force of nature and humbleness, which is a set of qualities considered desirable by the British. However, on the other hand it is also confusing, wild, unpredictable, dangerous, indecent and mysterious - in other words a 'muddle'. By those Europeans inhabiting it already, it is perceived as a sweaty oven inhabited by

²⁰ Maria M. Davidis, 'Forster's Imperial Romance: Chivalry, Motherhood and Questing in *A Passage to India*', *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 23, 1999.

unworthy and retarded people incompetent of autonomy. What is truly missing in the film (not as much in the book) is any presentation of Indian culture. The only elements suggesting any distinct surviving civilisation are to be found at the very end of the film, after Aziz's 're-Indianisation' in Kashmir. Otherwise the Oriental civilisation is marginally pictured, in a corner of a vast scenery shot, or as already decayed, with most of its monuments ruined (the Chandrapore mosque, the Hindu temple) as well as Aziz's talks about the glory of the nation set in the past tense.

5.2.2. Britons vs. Indians

Prior to the personal analysis of characters present in the film, it must be stated that they were generally simplified and exaggerated in order to allow the mass audience to classify them easily, which is a usual procedure of creating cinematic adaptations of literary works and can be hardly avoided.

As for personal representations, what is most apparent in both the film and the novel is the critique of the English character. Forster strongly disapproves of the behaviour of the pompous racially aloof administrators of the British Raj, and most of his reproaches addressed to his own nation were expressed in his essay 'Notes on the English Character'²¹ (1920), all of which are evident in the story. He stated that England as a nation of middle-class, is often associated with solidity, caution, integrity and efficiency, but also with hypocrisy and lack of imagination. He also pointed out that while 'middle-class is the heart of England, public school education is the

²¹ E.M.Forster, 'Notes on the English Character', 1920. <<http://www.scribd.com/doc/14248355/Notes-on-the-English-Character-by-EM-Forster>>, 29th August 2009.

heart of middle-class. This is perhaps where the famous proverb 'The Battle of Waterloo was won on the play ground of Eton' comes from. Remembering very well the public school sociological tradition of duty, discipline and self-reliance, as well as the obnoxious classmates of his school-years he claimed that 'these boys enter a world of whose richness and subtlety they have no conception...they go forth into it with well-developed bodies, fairly developed minds and undeveloped hearts'. The last flaw was the most unbearable to Forster, himself a liberal humanist, and according to him it was largely responsible for the difficulties of Englishmen abroad.

In the film, the British arrogance and disrespect of the Indians is visually illustrated by the cars of the chief officers of Chandrapore, decorated with drifty Union Jacks, carelessly dashing along the bazaar. It is by no accident that this is the place of the first encounter with Dr Aziz, another of the main characters. Together with his friend Mahmoud Ali, Aziz is knocked off his bicycle by the passing vehicle carrying the Turtons. This striking mindlessness provokes a discussion between the two Indians, in which their sentiment on the English is revealed to counterpart that of the opposing party notified on the train by the Turtons:

Mahmoud Ali: *That was Turton!*

Aziz: *Turton?*

[Another car passes by hurriedly.]

Mahmoud Ali: *McBryde. When he first came, Hamidullah said he was quite a good fellow.*

Aziz: *But they all become exactly the same. I give any Englishman two years.*

Mahmoud Ali: *The women are worse!*

Aziz: *I give them six months.*

[The conversation continues few moments later in front of Aziz's house]

Aziz: *Why do we spend so much time discussing the English?*

Mahmoud Ali: *Because we admire them, Doctor Sahib.*

Aziz: *That is the trouble.*

It is important to notice that both men are dressed in Western clothes: while Aziz is wearing a suit with a tie, Mahmoud Ali is dressed in a barrister's uniform. However, no matter how 'civilised' they look, all elegance is gone when all their garments get soiled after one of the passing cars knock them off their bikes. This action is also extremely suggestive for the future development of the plot, which proves that the Indians' attempts to adapt themselves to the standards imposed on them by the Europeans are never genuinely appreciated and often genuinely obstructed in doing so. It should be also pointed out that both men are apparently western educated and speak fluent English, even though with a noticeable Indian accent. There is no doubt that their introduction is elaborated as to create a representation of the 'civilised' Indians, who have accepted most of the Western culture and taken part in the British control of their own country, but still fail to achieve self satisfaction or recognition of the British, since any other result is impossible, as Forster's novel suggests.

What is mostly to blame for the creation of the unbridgeable gap between the two nations is the collective British disrespect towards the Indians and their ignorance of the Indian way of life, as mutual understanding and appreciation between two different cultures is conditioned by interest and respect, both of which were lacking on the part of most Britons pictured in the film.

The first English people encountered in the film are a smiling clerk selling tickets opening 'new horizons', keen Miss Quested and kind Mrs Moore, who make a rather pleasant introduction suggesting the good intentions and genuine interest of the British. It is only after the arrival to

India and presentation of the Anglo-Indian sahibs already living there that the vices of the English begin to be exposed, as if the authors (both Forster and Lean) suggested that the British in Britain and the British in India were completely different people. This observation appears highly relevant, as this was one of the major arguments of contemporary anti-colonial critique. Sinyard also deals with this discrepancy saying that it was the phenomenon of 'Lids coming off':

Take [the English] from their natural habitat and put them somewhere hot where they can lose their inhibitions and to come face to face with themselves.
(Sineyard 152)

Such expatriate individuals residing far from their homeland were to a certain extent able to recreate their own society yielding practices convenient for their own social advancement and economic benefit. The officers and administrators of Chandrapore are clear examples of such behaviour.

The first day spent in Chandrapore is a sharp disappointment for both the women. Having seen the church, the hospital, the war memorial, the barracks and the club, the company is to be entertained by an evening performance of a rather tiresome notoriously known musical play. However, Mrs Moore manages to experience her private adventure in the near-by ruined mosque, where she comes across Dr. Aziz. After they exchange several words, he instantly recognizes that she is 'newly arrived in India' by the way she addresses him. What is more, Aziz also points out she has the most kind face of any English lady he has ever met, the reason for which is most likely to be the fact that she is the first English lady who has ever looked him straight in the eye, smiled at him and conversed

as with an equal. After her return to the club, accompanied by Aziz who wouldn't be allowed to enter even if she were a member, Mrs Moore again realizes the reality of racial and ethnic apartheid of everyday Anglo-Indian relations.

After confiding their frustration with this situation, a party which should 'bridge the gulf between the East and West' is thrown by the Turtons, for which they are really able to 'produce' all types of Indians: Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, even Parsees. However, this party turns out to be the purest form of segregation, and the Indians are expected to hate it as much as the British, as Mr. Turton points out. In spite of regarding socialising with Indians as her utterly unpleasant duty, she makes feeble attempts to introduce the new arrivals to the Indian women, still degrading their abilities as they try to communicate and show their knowledge of the English language and lands. This behaviour horrifies Adela, as she expresses later in a conversation with Mr. Fielding: 'I don't understand people inviting guests and not treating them properly'. According to her, Fielding and Mr. Turton were the only people who have made any attempt to be friendly, which is a notion that hardly corresponds with the celebrated English sociability. Mrs Moore has a similar observation when she complains to her son that the party is 'one of the most unnatural events [she] has ever attended', which he comments with patronising words of satisfaction that stand for the exclusive and nationalist approach to the British sojourn in the colony: 'We're not out here to be pleasant... India isn't a drawing room. We're out here to do justice and to keep peace. I'm not a missionary or a sentimental socialist; I am just a member of the civil service'. Only here Mrs Moore begins to grasp how power is being exercised

in the colony and how important is the feeling of personal superiority to her immigrant compatriots.

Adela's experience is another representation of the vices of the English. Adela is not so much victim of the dangers of the mysteries of India, but as Muraleedharan holds it she is the victim of her own society.²² Being brought up in a rigid and hypocritical world of taboos, upon her arrival to India she is suddenly forced to face the stigmatising part of her self. In the film, her vulnerability is represented by 'the translucence of her skin, her injured body, her scorned soul and her final loneliness' (Muraleedharan 157). This makes her the victim or perhaps a martyr of the dangers represented by the mysterious East. However, what is truly to blame for her personal tragedy is her greenhouse Victorian education, causing her to be incapable of fitting into either of the two societies and becoming an outcast. What follows her into the cave is not Aziz or any other lascivious Indian, but as Sinyard puts it

It is her English upbringing, the impact of India, her hostility to imperialism and the Anglo-Indians, the influence of Mrs Moore, her doubts about her fiancé, and the touch of Aziz's hand as he helps her up the cliff. (Sinyard 158)

Lean's visual mastery in conveying the English character is evident in the scene taking place at the polo, where Adela informs Ronny about her decision not to marry him. As an Englishman, he is not used to expressing his emotions directly, however it is still evident in the film by Lean's craftily letting one of the polo players fall off the horse. After a little moment of silence Ronny 'brushes himself of' all emotions and praises Adela coldly for

²² T. Muraleedharan, 'Imperial Migrations. Reading the British Cinema of the 1980s', quoted in Monk, Claire and Sargean, Amy (eds.), *British Historical Cinema* (London: Routledge, 2002) 145-161.

taking the right decision to come up. Adela's response to this is precisely what Forster held against the English talking about their undeveloped heart: 'We are being awfully English about this, aren't we?' pointing at the way the English accept misfortune and emotional upset.

Another example of Lean's masterly exploitation of the visual possibilities to express inner worries is his use of mirrors in scenes where Adela her literally 'faces herself' (her own reflection), struggles with sexual frustration and doubts about her physical appearance and attractiveness. This happens in her room the first night when she expects Ronny to come to her, but only receives a cold 'Good night' through the door. The second example of this is to be found in the scene taking place in the club bathroom, where Mrs Moore's comment inspires her to think that her 'bothers are to do with India'. After this reconciliation she returns into the assembly room and dances with Ronny accompanied by the melody of suggestive 'Lady be Good' again trying to meet the expectations of her society.

Lean's analysis of the character of the Indians is far less detail than that of the English. Very little is expressed about their mysterious nature, and most of the time they are presented as a crowd of half naked bodies and their individualism is denied for most of the film (see Figure 10). The simple and naïve nature is represented by the figure of Aziz, while the mysterious aspect of the Indians is embodied in the Hindu professor Godbole.

No matter what caste, religion or language group they belong to the majority of Indians are depicted as friendly, good-humoured and extremely obliging towards the British whom they admire as semi-gods. Their (or Aziz's) attempt to

show, share and impress often degrades them into the position of slaves. There are certain exceptions of proud educated intellectuals, who aspire to social contact with the British, but are ready to fight for their cause in case of bad treatment or injustice. This is demonstrated at the court through the characters of Mahmoud Ali and the notoriously anti-British barrister named Amritrao, who shocks all the English trail attendants by his perfect RP pronunciation, politeness, witticism and civility. These new independent intellectuals are members of the emerging Indian elite, which will take over the administration of their country after when India becomes independent, and which form the double-edge of cultural hegemony.

Aziz is pictured as a round character which undergoes certain development throughout the story. His starting point is evident at his visit to Mr. Fielding's house: the notion of gazing is reversed here, as he wanders around the villa and surveys its objects with admiration: gramophone, books, photos, all of which have a cultural significance new to the humble Indian doctor. Aziz's fascinated behaviour in Fielding's house makes the spectators realise that such a visit is a momentous event for him, since he doesn't come across any English socially, as has been suggested earlier by the Turtons. He is extremely excited by the unconventionality of their meeting and surprised by the fact that Englishmen don't keep their rooms tidy with everything arranged coldly on shelves as he has always thought which makes the admired nation more human in his eyes. It also shows that is not only the British who are prejudiced and confused by the Indians, but also vice versa - Aziz here demonstrates a typical example of stereotypical thinking, as he does later on with Mahmoud Ali in the scenes where arrangements of the Marabar expeditions are

made: they imagine that the 'English are big eaters' and don't drink anything but whisky-sodas and port. What this also demonstrates is the excessive hospitality of the East, which Aziz exaggerates into what is perceived as intimacy and causes the misunderstanding between him and Adela.

At Fielding's tea party, Aziz arrives dressed in his Sunday best, which for him means a Western suit with a tie but trying eagerly to satisfy the needs of his English host he gives up his own collar stud, for which he is later severely criticized by Ronny. Aziz's eagerness to satisfy the needs and desires of the English in general demonstrates an exaggerated attempt of some Indians to acquire higher status. However, this early misunderstanding suggests that even if Indians try to take on the Western culture they can never be fully accepted into the society and anticipates later development of the plot. No matter how hard they try, the Indians will always be regarded as a partially primitive and savage mob by their European counterparts.

What has been extremely disputed after the film's release was the controversial casting of Alec Guinness, one of the best known British actors of the time, for the part of Godbole. This director's decision was not one of the most fortunate, as the figure of the inscrutable Brahmin appears to be rather a caricature of Forster's mysterious and bewildering character, which is a fact that only supports the critiques of Lean's Europocentrism mentioned above.

Foster's initial anxiety about the film-makers coming down to one side of the argument (see above) was rather tangible, as Lean was apparently attached to his nation and therefore refined Forster's critique of the British. The

dialogues expressing contempt and assumed supremacy of the British were reduced or omitted, which might be partially ascribed to the temporal limitation he in the different medium used, but the question remains to what extent this explanation is satisfactory.

5.3. Game of Sound

Lean has taken the full advantage of the possibilities of motion picture and elaborated on the sensation for several senses. Apart from the spectacular settings and costumes, he also fully employed music and sound to emphasise certain moments of the plot and their interconnection. The melody opening the film (discussed above) is used repeatedly throughout the story in various realisations to illustrate Adela's changing perceptions of India and state of mind. After the credit sequence the next encounter comes when Adela set off for her first adventure alone - her bike trip. The allegro version echoed first suggests her excitement and joy (e.g. when she leaves Chandrapore), while the other version is more grave and dramatic, peeping out from the background to indicate the upcoming danger. She comes off the path (literally as well as metaphorically) and discovers ruins of a Hindu temple. The music here 'repeats the overture's opening theme and orchestrates it with reed instruments, which are often the West's musical evocation of the mysteriousness of the East' (Donaldson 98). At this point they anticipate danger coming in the form of the confrontation with her own feelings of frustration and insecurity represented by the enraged monkeys. The animal within herself has been woken up and attempts to get loose. This is why the same melody repeats at other moments of the film - during her sleepless night after the visit of Hindu temple, climbing up the cliff with doctor Aziz, as well as at the court.

Another acoustic device used by Lean to stress the extremity of some scenes was the thunder. He worked with this index of rain, which has different associations in Britain than in India. For the British, thunder indicated rain which is frequently undesirable. In Christian countries thunder also has the undertone of God expressing wrath or warning about human behaviour (such as Adela's sexual fantasies evoked by her experience by the temple, or her withdrawal of accusation). On the contrary, in India thunder and rain are associated with abundance, happiness and improvement, which is why Lean employed this symbol in the very moment of Anglo-Indian unravelment, in which the British side is considered defeated.

6. Conclusion

With regard to the novel I would like to conclude this analysis of David Lean's film pointing out that his *A Passage to India* as an adaptation is a personal interpretation of the literary work, and therefore is unable to correspond with other interpretations and to satisfy the expectation of all viewers familiar with the film. Looking for an explanation of what happened in the caves Lean decided it to be a hallucination of a haunted mind and had to restructure the preceding events of the plot and picture Adela as muddle-headed 'young girl fresh from England' coming to terms with her own repressed sexuality in order to be able to reach this conclusion. Some hold it against him that he falsified the protagonists and manipulated them in his own way to produce a more flattering picture of the British, however, I believe that most of the modifications he has undertaken were to serve the purpose of making a logically coherent story, not to express his own or current political attitudes. As in the case of all adaptations, the choice of actors, depiction of setting and focus on details as a part of interpretation must necessarily lead into certain modification.

What shall be also accentuated is the fact that Lean's film not only gives account of the events it represents, but also reflects the cultural and political situation of the period in which it was created. As Elena Oliete Aldea suggests in her work, the analysis of the film should also pay attention to the racial aspect of the film. It can be stated that there is an attempt at reconciliation between blacks and whites in the new post-colonial context, where imperial relations have disappeared and friendships can be based on equality (Aldea 343). This reading surely leaves

Lean's adaptation with double value for the cultural, social and historical study of the 20th century.

The new generation of films that came after the war was created by professionals who had their own experience with living in the Empire but who were not bound by its conventions and censure to such an extent any more. The most significant advantage of the post-colonial production is said to be the ability to look at the facts from a certain historical distance. However, as other creators of the 'heritage films' also Lean found it difficult to disengage from the tradition depiction of Anglo-Indian relations using certain dichotomy and classification condemned by most post-colonial theoreticians of culture. He employs the usual stereotypes associated with Britain and India, Britons and Indians, but creates a complex multilayered picture of both. In spite of this fact it must be admitted that Lean's film follows the ambivalent line of the Raj revival films and portrays Eurocentric perception of the colonial past.

7. Resumé

'Zobrazení koloniálních a postkoloniálních postojů k imperialismu ve filmu: *Cesta do Indie*'

Má bakalářská práce se snaží osvětlit způsoby, jakými filmová tvorba ovlivňuje naše vnímání historických, politických, kulturních a společenských událostí, které se odehrály v minulosti. Filmy, jakožto součást populární kultury, jsou příkladem celistvého a veřejně přístupného způsobu reprezentace naší minulosti. Jistým fenoménem 20. století je skupina filmů zachycujících příběhy dob dávno minulých - život v Britském impériu, úskalí kolonizace a lidské příběhy zachycující střet kultur. Má práce se zaměřuje na koloniální a post-koloniální aspekty těchto zobrazení v britském filmu, respektive ve filmové adaptaci románu E.M.Forstera *Cesta do Indie* britského režiséra Davida Leana, která je jedním z nejznámějších filmů s koloniální tematikou v rámci celého anglicky mluvícího světa.

První část práce je spíše teoretická a zaměřuje se na to, jak definujeme imperialismus a kolonialismus, co tyto termíny znamenaly v minulosti a co znamenají dnes. V rámci prvních kapitol zohledňuji politicko-společenskou situaci uvnitř Britského říše, která je relevantní k pozdější analýze filmu, s přihlédnutím k dvojsečnosti kulturní hegemonie.

Dále je pozornost převedena na spojení médií i imperialismu, využití politické propagandy, vznik společenských fenoménů spojených s růstem impéria a jejich vzájemnou propojenost. Zvláštní pozornost je pak věnována využití tématu imperialismu v populární kultuře, která jeho

atraktivitu a prodejnosti. Zmiňuji způsoby zpracování ve kabaretech, varieté i divadlech, později pak přesun tohoto tématu na stříbrné plátno.

Dále definuji typické představy předsudky spojené s kulturou a obyvatelstvem Anglie a Indie a snažím se vysvětlit jak tyto fungují v mezilidské komunikaci a proč jsou s takovou oblibou opakovaně využívány. Snažila jsem také zachytit psychologický charakter snahy vymezovat se vůči příslušníkům ‚jiných‘ kultur a civilizací, či těch, kteří nějakým způsobem vybočují z toho, co je považováno za ‚normální‘.

Po tomto teoretickém úvodu následuje samotná analýza Leanovy *Cesty do Indie*, která přes původní anti-koloniální charakter své předlohy navazuje na britskou tradici zobrazování koloniální éry. Jako taková je plná obrazů spojených s nostalgickým statusem Británie v období 19. a začátku 20. století, slávou a leskem impéria. Jeho zobrazení Británie i Indie koresponduje s představou, která panovala v době vydání Forsterova románu, tedy v polovině 20. let 20. století - Indie je vylíčena jako velmi přitažlivá a exotická destinace představující nepřekonatelné kulturní rozdíly. Lean kontrastuje chaos a pořádek, divokou přírodu i civilizaci v průběhu celého filmu prostřednictvím vizuálních i zvukových pomůcek, přičemž přitom mírně degraduje Indii i její obyvatele na pouhý předmět touhy a fascinovaného ‚zírání‘. Tento film byl vybrán, protože slouží jako relevantní reprezentace soudobého smýšlení Britů, a to jak o sobě samých, také o jejich indických poddaných. Je typickým představitelem nostalgie vůči ‚koloniální romanci‘ pociťované v druhé polovině 20. století a zapadá také do kategorie filmů ‚historického odkazu‘. Zároveň je významnou adaptací jedné

z předních knih britského kánonu se zřetelnými autobiografickými rysy, což mu přidává na serióznosti.

Cesta do Indie není heroický epos, ale kritický obraz života a mezilidských vztahů odehrávajících se v nepokojných 20. letech 20. století v britské kolonii a zaobírá se zobrazováním defektů na obou stranách - jak britské tak indické. Důležitou poznatkem k filmu je skutečnost, že režisér pozměnil vyznění některých postav i vyústění celého příběhu, čímž přispěl k posílení tradiční dichotomie předsudků.

V průběhu studie také cituji soudobé kritiky Leanova díla a snažím se je vyhodnocovat a reflektovat. Stojím si za názorem, že filmová adaptace je osobní interpretací literárního díla a jako taková nemůže uspokojit očekávání a představy všech diváků obeznámených s románem samotným. Přidávám komentáře režiséra samotného, jeho myšlenkové postupy a priority a vysvětluji svůj názor na změny provedené v příběhu i jejich důvody.

Domnívám se také, že Leanův film dokládá svědectví nejen o době, kterou zobrazuje, ale také o době, v níž byl natočen. Implicitně komentuje vývoj anglo-indických vztahů a událostí, které uplynuly od napsání Forsterovy knihy.

V závěru práce pak vyjadřuji přesvědčení, že film dokumentuje jak koloniální, tak i post-koloniální postoje k imperialismu s využitím tradičních topoi a zařazuje se tak do skupiny filmů zobrazujících nostalgii za ztraceným impériem, jimž často bývá vyčítána europocentrická zaslepenost. Co ovšem film činí výjimečným je mistrné vizuální i zvukové zpracování, stejně jako režisérovo detailní a logické zpracování příběhu.

8. Appendices

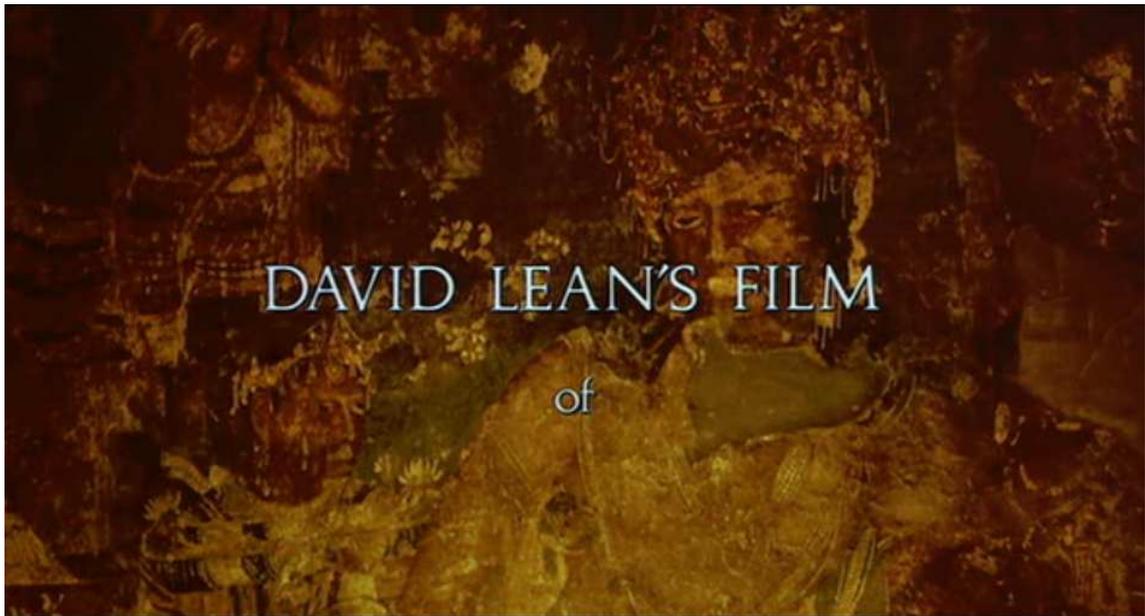


Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10

Bibliography:

- Aldea, Elena Oliete. 'Filmic Representation of the British Raj in the 1980s: Cultural Identity, Otherness and Hybridity'. Zaragoza: University of Zaragoza. 2009.
- Baumgart, Winfried. *Imperialism: The Idea and Reality of British and French Colonial Expansion, 1880-1914*. Oxford: OUP. 1989.
- Cardwell, Sarah. 'Sir David Lean'. <<http://www.screenonline.org.uk/people/id/446899/>>, 24th February 2009.
- Davidis, Maria M. 'Forster's Imperial Romance: Chivalry, Motherhood and Questing in *A Passage to India*', *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 23, 1999. *India*', *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 23, 1999.
- Donaldson, Laura E. *Decolonizing Feminisms*. London: Routledge. 1992.
- Doyle, Michael W. *Empires*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. 1986.
- Forster, E.M. *A Passage to India*. London: Penguin, 1999.
- Forster, E.M. 'Notes on the English Character', 1920.
- <<http://www.scribd.com/doc/14248355/Notes-on-the-English-Character-by-EM-Forster>>, 29th August 2009.
- Graham, Gerald S. *A Concise History of the British Empire*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Giddings, Robert and Sheed, Erica (eds.) *The Classic Novel: From Page to Screen*. Manchester: MUP. 2000.
- Hall, Stuart. *Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices*. London: Sage. 2003.
- Harris, Jose. *Private Lives, Public Spirit: Britain 1870 - 1914*. London: Penguin. 1997.
- Higson, Andrew. *Waving the Flag: Constructing a National Cinema in Britain*. Oxford: OUP. 1993.
- MacKenzie, John M. *Imperialism and Popular Culture*. Manchester: MUP. 1989.
- Monk, Claire and Sargean, Amy (eds.), *British Historical Cinema* (London: Routledge, 2002) 145-161.
- Porter, Bernard. *The Absent Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain*. Oxford: OUP. 2004.

Richards, Jeffrey. *Films and British National Identity*.
Manchester: MUP. 1997.

Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Vintage
Books. 1993.

Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books. 1994.

Smiles, Samuel. *Self-Help*. London: John Murray. 1911.

Filmography:

A Passage to India. Dir. David Lean. 1984.
Reflections of David Lean.