Bachelor's thesis

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# Nostalgia towards the empire in the TV-series 'The Jewel in The Crown' and the film 'Viceroy's House'

Bachelor's thesis in Cultural Studies
Supervisor: Dr. Astrid Rasch

**June 2022**

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Norwegian University of Science and Technology
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# Abstract

Decades after decolonisation, interest towards the empire seems to be increasing in Britain. Moreover, its legacy continues to be a subject of, at times, heated debates pointing to the contested nature of imperial memory. Among the debaters are also those who look nostalgically back to the imperial past while at the same time acknowledging its wrongdoings. Cultural expressions tend to reflect current societal trends as do British films, books and other forms of cultural expression reflect the presence of nostalgic sentiments towards the imperial past in British society. This thesis examines whether longing for colonial past is reflected in the British television series *The Jewel in The Crown* (1984) and the British film *Viceroy's House* (2017), and if so, how they are manifested in these cultural products. It draws on Salman Rushdie's criticism of the Raj fiction and Edward Said's ideas about Orientalism, as well as the concept of postcolonial nostalgia developed by Astrid Rasch, to investigate whether the colonial ideas these authors are documenting are also repeated in these two cultural products. It finds that both the television series and the film recycle discursive patterns of colonial rhetoric, thus contributing to the resurrection of the vision of the empire.

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# Introduction

In an article published in *The Guardian* in 2015, Stuart Jeffries expressed his astonishment observing an abundance of cultural and commercial enterprises that were "catching a wave of colonial nostalgia" in Britain. "Echoes of empire can be seen everywhere from TV's *Indian Summers* to Dishoom, London's hottest new restaurant chain", he wrote and asked: "but why this colonial nostalgia now?" (Jeffries). About thirty years earlier Salman Rushdie wrote similarly in his 1984 essay *Outside the whale*: «[a]nyone who has switched on the television set, been to the cinema or entered a bookshop in the last few month will be aware that the British Raj, after three and half decades in retirement, has been making a sort of comeback» (Rushdie 87).

Both Jeffries and Rushdie view this comeback of the Raj (British rule) within a wider social-cultural and political context of their times. These are Britain's diminished global stature, economic downturn combined with a growing skepticism towards immigration following decolonization in the 1970s, and, later, uncertainty about Britain's political future, the gloom of austerity blended with anti-immigration sentiments prior to Brexit in the 2010s. Despite a lapse of time there is a resemblance between the two periods, at least, in one aspect. It is a resurgence of imperial rhetoric in British politics and as a response to it a burgeoning of nostalgic sentiments towards the empire in Britain. In the 1970s, this was seen especially in the aftermath of the Falklands War, while in the 2010s, the tendency intensified during the political campaigns related to Brexit. Resurgence of imperial rhetoric in these two particular periods show that the memory of the empire lives on in Britain manifesting itself on many levels of societal life – from politics and academia to entertainment and everyday life. In bringing up the political and historical context in which Rushdie and Jeffries place the phenomenon of nostalgia for the British Raj, this thesis is relying on work that other authors have done on that area. The focus in the thesis will be made on the series and the film themselves and less so on their political and historical moment of production, leaving it beyond the scope of this paper.

This thesis will focus on a close reading of the 1984 television series *The Jewel in The Crown* and the 2017 film *Viceroy's House*, with the goal to examine whether nostalgia towards the empire is manifested in them. Despite the fact that these two cultural products are produced in two different eras, they both contribute to what Rushdie called "a sort of comeback" of the British Raj. By drawing on Rushdie's criticism of the Raj fiction and Edward Said's ideas about Orientalism, as well as by looking into the concept of postcolonial nostalgia introduced by

Astrid Rasch, this thesis will investigate whether discursive patterns documented by these authors are repeated in the television series, and whether similar structures are recycled over three decades later in the film. It argues that the series as well as the film distance themselves from wrongdoings of the empire while at the same time endorsing it through resurrecting the vision of the benevolent empire. In this regard both the series and the film can be viewed as examples of postcolonial nostalgia.

## Criticism of the Raj fiction

Rushdie's general concern in the 1984 essay *Outside The Whale* is a growing interest in Britain, especially since the early 1980s, in Britain's imperial past, manifested in, among others, what he calls the comeback of the Raj through the mass media (87). Echoing Rushdie's concern, McBratney too points out that during this time, "[t]he spirit of the Raj" was brought "into the bookstores, theaters, and living rooms of millions" of people both in Britain and beyond (204). A list of popular entertainment products from this period, especially movies for television and the cinema "proliferating imperial images" is impressive (McBratney 204). It includes *Gandhi,* a biographical film directed by Richard Attenborough in 1982; *A Passage to India*, a 1984 film by David Lean, and two British TV productions, mini-series *The Far Pavilions* and a television serial *The Jewel in The Crown*. Commenting on the success of the television series *The Jewel in The Crown*, McBratney writes that a sweeping wave of nostalgia for the British Raj took over the British public when the series went on air in 1984, "drawing an average of eight million viewers for each of its fourteen episodes" (204).

In the essay, Rushdie elaborates on what this nostalgia for the British Raj is about, making one of his main statements about the necessity to pay attention to the context in which cultural expressions are made. Works of art, he claims, are echoes of social and political developments of their time. "The rise of Raj revisionism exemplified by the huge success of these fictions" should therefore be viewed in the context of "the rise of conservative ideologies in modern Britain". He is referring in particular to "a revisionist enterprise" of Thatcherite Britain and "the euphoria" following the victory in the Falkland War, prescribing the success in the war to the greatness of the British people " 'who had ruled a quarter of the world' ", and enhancing the imperialist rhetoric with the "calls for a return to Victorian values" (91-92). The process of the "refurbishment of the Empire's tarnished image" on the other hand, took place against a backdrop of a declining living standards in Britain and a loss of country's international standing, which, according to Rushdie, contributed to the rise of the nostalgia towards the Empire among Brits (92).

For Rushdie "[i]t matters, to call rubbish a rubbish, to do otherwise is to legitimize it" (88). It matters especially when such "rubbish" builds on producing and reproducing stereotypes. It matters also when the culture that is represented does not have "the power to counterpunch against stereotypes" (Rushdie 89). Drawing on the concept of Orientalism developed by Said, Rushdie views the popular television series from this period as one of many examples of "fake portraits inflicted by the West on the East". For Rushdie as for Said, "the purpose of such false portraits was to provide moral, cultural and artistic justification for imperialism and for its underpinning ideology, that of the racial superiority of the Caucasian over the Asiatic". Rushdie's intention is to disclose "a number of notions about history" that the Raj fictions propagate, "above all the fantasy that the British Empire represented something 'noble' or 'great' about Britain", as well as depicting the Empire as "fundamentally glamorous" despite acknowledging "colonial violence, racism, and exploitation" and knowing the prize of the glamorousness to be subjugation of millions of people (101).

## Orientalism

The rapid process of decolonization and emergence of new independent states following the second World War changed the lives of millions of people. In academia, an increasing number of scholars engaged themselves in studies of many aspects of colonialism from a new, postcolonial perspective. Their writings were later grouped under the term postcolonial studies. The work regarded to be a pioneer in this context is *Orientalism: Western Representations of the Orient*, written by an American-Palestinian scholar Edward W. Said in 1978. Said's study gave impetus to the process of a thorough reassessment of dominant narratives about the Western empires' engagement in their colonies, about the relations between Western and non-Western people and their cultures, and intensified efforts among scholars, as well as writers and activist to "decolonize" these narratives (Young 40-41).

According to Said, orientalism represents a long Western tradition of dealing with the Orient, comprising, in the first place, its colonies. Being "almost a European invention", Orient in Said's words, represents Europe's "cultural contestant" and its "image of the Other" (1). The Orient is thus both a product of European imagination as well as "an integral part of [Europe's] *material* civilization and culture" (Said 2).

In a more general sense, Orientalism is, in Said's words, "a style of thought" based on the acceptance of "the basic distinction between East and West  and using this as starting point for" scholars of different disciplines, writers, economists and imperial administrators to develop their ideas about the Orient and its inhabitants (2). Said draws on Michel Foucault's notion of discourse to argue that "the representation of Europe's 'others' has been institutionalized since at least the eighteenth century as a feature of its cultural dominance" (Ashcroft 48). The merits of Orientalism, Said claims, is not exclusively its "intellectual or artistic successes", but also "its later effectiveness, its usefulness, its authority" (123).

Said's findings based on his study of a wide range of sources from fiction to travel literature, from academic writings in various disciplines to the language of colonial administrators, is to reveal a closed system of assumptions and beliefs about the East, unaltered and unaffected by empirical evidence, to which representatives of the Western culture subscribe. The key question is then what sort of assumptions Western accounts of the Orient, including the writings of orientalist scholars, are based on. As Said demonstrates with numerous examples, these accounts are permeated with racist assumptions about the Orient and its inhabitants, projecting Westerners' own creation of East as a phantasmagoric and exotic world with all the implications these notions might bring, from "Oriental despotism" to "Oriental splendor", from Oriental "cruelty" to Oriental "sensuality" (Young 42; Said 4).

Racism, in general, is not exclusive to one particular culture, people or region.  Different forms of racial hierarchies can be found in many societies around the world (Young 94). The Western ideas of racial differences are of particular interest for postcolonial studies as these ideas were developed and advanced parallel to imperial expansionism. Providing, initially, rationale for slavery, theories of race "were elaborated  into a justification of colonial rule of allegedly 'backward' peoples", thus becoming ideological basis of colonialism and imperialism (Young 90-91). Throughout his analysis of Orientalist ideas, Said repeatedly demonstrates that to think of Orientals was never too far from thinking of them from the pedestal of superiority. Some ways of expressing "Orientalist wisdom" was to present the Orientals as opposite of the Europeans, to call the European "a close reasoner" and "a natural logician" whose "trained intelligence works like a piece of mechanism" while describing Orientals as being "incapable of drawing the most obvious conclusions from any simple premises" (Said 38). Orientals are not only characterized as exact counterparts of Europeans in terms of reasoning capability, they are presented as their opposites also in terms of behavior and moral criterions.

In the ideas about the Orient and the Orientals, Said points out, there was no place for the Orientals' own voice. They were described, spoken of and represented by Europeans as, for instance, in the case with Flaubert's encounter with Kuchuk Hanem, an Egyptian courtesan, which according to Said "produced a widely influential model of the Oriental woman" (6). Flaubert possessed Kuchuk Hanem not only physically by virtue of being a relatively wealthier, white male, but also by "speaking for her and representing her", by telling "his readers in what way she was 'typical Oriental' ". Said goes on to argue that such a demonstration of dominance symbolizes something more than a particular story can tell. He views it as "the pattern of relative strength between East and West, and the discourse about the Orient it enabled" (Said 6).

The contrast between the European "self" and the Oriental "other" in which "the other" is represented as a simpler, savage, but also as romanticized figure, is one of the key traits of Said's oriental discourse. Said operates with an expanded notion of racism in which complex patterns of racist attitudes are displayed, such as representing non-Western people as aliens, reducing their humanity, depicting them as intellectually and morally inferior, while at the same time depriving them of the possibility of speaking for themselves.

## Nostalgia towards the postcolonial past

Nostalgia towards the imperial past is one of areas scholars of postcolonial studies have been engaging with. This thesis will look into the concept of postcolonial nostalgia developed by Astrid Rasch. But before turning to Rasch's concept, a brief review of the meaning of nostalgia itself would be appropriate.

Nostalgia is a cultural phenomenon that, in Dennis Walder's words, "in an uncanny way connects people across national and historical as well as personal boundaries, yet remains to be fully understood or explained" (935). Elaborating on his use of "uncanny" Walder considers it to be a suitable word for describing "the strange mix of individual and social desires that prompts the search for past experiences that constitutes nostalgia" (935). While the phenomenon itself has a long history and could be traced as early as in "Homer's *Odyssey*, as well as ancient Chinese texts", the word is a creation of a relatively recent time (Walder 939). Nostalgia is a compound of two Greek words: *nostos*, meaning home, and *algos*, signifying pain or longing (Walder 939; Lorcin 97). The earliest case of its use goes back to the seventeenth century when the Swiss doctor, Johannes Hofer, employed the notion to describe "an epidemic of longing among displaced Swiss students and soldiers" (Walder 939). In its present-day use the word nostalgia denotes a condition in which a person, experiencing "discomfort with the present" tends to "an embellished recollection of the past" (Lorcin 97). Scholars studying the phenomenon try to disentangle "a distorted memory of the past" by examining contexts within which it emerges (Walder 939).

## Postcolonial nostalgia

Distinguishing the concept of postcolonial nostalgia from other related concepts describing longing for the imperial past, among them, concepts of imperial and colonial nostalgia developed by Patricia Lorcin, Rasch points out that Lorcin's two concepts "describe that which is longed for rather than the moment of longing". "In contrast", she writes " 'postcolonial nostalgia' focuses our attention on the way in which contemporary recollections of empire orient themselves toward a postcolonial discourse in the present" (Rasch, "Postcolonial Nostalgia", 150). By "postcolonial" Rasch implies a temporal as well as moral aspect, pointing out that the latter is premised on a condemnation of the colonial system by society at large. Colonial tropes, she argues, are absorbed even by those who position themselves as postcolonials by distancing themselves from colonialism (Rasch, "Postcolonial Nostalgia", 149).

One of the genres that flourished following decolonization is postcolonial life-writing "produced for and by Westerners" (Rasch, "Postcolonial Nostalgia", 148). In her article "Postcolonial Nostalgia: The Ambiguities of White Memoirs of Zimbabwe", Rasch discusses two white expatriate Zimbabwean, Alexandra Fuller and Peter Godwin's memoirs of their childhood experiences in Africa. What Rasch, from the perspective of a postcolonial scholar, finds particularly noteworthy is ambiguity in Fuller's and Godwin's accounts manifesting itself in contrasting images of a straightforward condemnation of colonial wrongs on the one hand, and deploring of the present day condition of Zimbabwe on the other hand (Rasch, "Postcolonial Nostalgia", 147 and 149). Rasch argues that this ambiguity is conditioned by the postcolonial context within which Fuller and Godwin's nostalgic accounts are produced, hence the term postcolonial nostalgia. Elaborating on the nature of a memory practice deployed by Fuller and Godwin, Rasch views "the contemporary discursive distancing toward the colonial record as defining for the way the past is remembered. It is, in other words, a nostalgia *in spite of itself*", she writes ("Postcolonial Nostalgia", 150, italics in original). Rasch goes further to argue that criticism of the white supremacist regime of the past "may in itself be part of a rhetorical strategy enabling postcolonial nostalgia", examples of which she finds in the memoirs of Fuller and Godwin ("Postcolonial Nostalgia", 149).

## Methodology

The two primary sources that have been selected for the analysis in this thesis are the British television series *The Jewel in The Crown* from 1984, and the British-Indian film *Viceroy's House*, released in 2017. The method chosen for the analysis is a close reading of the two sources in which this thesis will draw on the theoretical frameworks that have been already introduced.

*The Jewel in The Crown* is an epic fourteen-part drama in which events take place against the backdrop of India's struggle for independence from the declining British Empire in the years 1942-1947. The mini-series is based on Paul Scott's *The Raj Quartet*, which is a collection of four novels written between 1965 and 1975. The television rendition of Scott's work is titled after the first novel, though the series uses the material from all the four novels.

The main events in the first two episodes take place in the city of Mayapore, focusing on the relationship that develops into a love affair, between a newly arrived English nurse Daphne Manners, residing at the home of a wealthy Indian friend of her family, Lady Chatterjee, and an Indian born English journalist, Hari Kumar. Another central figure, partly responsible for the dramatic development of the events involving the two lovers, is a prejudiced District Superintendent, Ronald Merrick. The story of Daphne and Hari ends with the death of Daphne caused by complications following the childbirth. This tragic event is preceded by her brutal rape in the Bibighar Gardens by a gang of local Indian residents and a subsequent imprisonment of Hari Kumar by Merrick on the false charges of having been involved in the rape of Miss Manner.

While Hari is no longer an active participant in the subsequent episodes, Ronald Merrick, now serving in the Indian Army in Mirat after being removed from his position as a policeman, continues to be part of the events that take place in the plot. From this point on, the series focuses on the British family of Laytons living in Pankot, and especially on the lives of the two young sisters, Sarah and Susan Laytons. The series ends with Laytons leaving Pankot following the outbreak of the civil war.

The second primary source selected for this thesis is the film *Viceroy's House,* made by the British film director of Indian origins, Gurinder Chadha. It is a historical drama based on a non-fiction book *Freedom at Midnight* by Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, as well as on *The Shadow of the Great Game: The Untold Story of Partition* by Narendra Singh Sarila. *Viceroy's House* chronicles the final months of British rule in India with the arrival of the last Viceroy of India, tasked with overseeing the transition of British India to independence, as its starting point. A few months after its release in Britain, the film, dubbed as *Partition: 1947* in the Hindi version, had its Indian premier "on 18 August 2017, three days after its 70th Independence Day". According to Wikipedia "the film was banned in Pakistan" (Wikipedia).

There are two intertwined stories in the film, both revolving around and being shaped by the political crisis that intensifies as the Independence date approaches. The first is the story of Lord Dickie Mountbatten and his family trying to cope with the crisis while being under growing pressure from all the involved sides. The second is the story of two young Indians that are in love with each other, Jeet Kumar, a former policeman from Punjab, and Aaila Noor, a daughter of an old Muslim Indian freedom fighter. Both working at Viceroy's House, they are faced with the necessity to be parted following the political agreement on the partition of the country into two states, India and Pakistan, forcing millions of Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs to flee their homes. On her way to what will soon become Pakistan, the night train Aaila and her father have boarded, is attacked, leaving her father dead and her injured. An elderly Hindu woman finds and brings her back to Delhi insisting on taking care of her as her own daughter. The story ends with Aaila and Jeet being reunited in, now partitioned, devastated and independent India.

The reason for selecting *The Jewel in The Crown* as one of the two primary sources for this thesis is the series' immense success in Britain, and as a result of this success, the attention it attracted among critics, including Rushdie. Selection of the *Viceroy's House* as the second primary source is based on the following considerations: It too chronicles the end of the Raj, thus having the common historic context with the series. And it too should be added to the list of the Raj fictions, coming out during a new wave of nostalgia towards the British Raj in the 2010s. Featuring a list of famous actors, including Hugh Bonneville, Gillian Anderson and Om Puri, and co-sponsored by BBC Films, its budget, according to Wikipedia, was $8.5 million, earning $11.8 million at the box office. The film "was selected to be screened out of competition at the 67th Berlin International Film Festival" (Wikipedia).

This thesis will investigate how these two cultural products represent expressions of postcolonial nostalgia. It will look for those colonial patterns and narrative strategies that were identified and described by Rushdie, Said and Rasch, to find out whether they are repeated in the series as well as in the film. This thesis will in particular focus on the persistent use in them of the trope of a noble and benevolent empire while allowing the criticism of the empire to come forth. It will try to answer how this narrative strategy might reveal nostalgia towards the colonial past. Selecting the primary sources from two different time periods will make it possible to examine also whether patterns of colonial narrative have been altered in the course of the time and whether one can speak of postcolonial nostalgia in the 2010s to the same degree as in the1980s.

## *The Jewel in The Crown*

While the series enjoyed great success among British viewers when it was first aired in 1984, others, such as critics and scholars, among them Salman Rushdie and John McBratney, were more concerned about the causes of this success. Echoing Rushdie's criticism of the Raj fiction in his article "The Raj Is All the Rage: Paul Scott's The Raj Quartet and Colonial Nostalgia", McBratney claims that Scott's novels too played an "important, though indirect" role in resurrecting the vision of the empire (205). Despite exposing the dark sides of the Empire in the novels, "in a deep sense *The Raj Quartet* is nostalgic", McBratney writes (205). He goes on to argue that in "resurrecting" a particular vision of imperial past, "Scott unconsciously undermines the force of his indictment of the Empire" (205). Behind this vision lies the liberal philosophy that envisions "some kind of partnership between Indian and Briton" (McBratney 205). Despite vanishing of this vision together with the Raj, on a smaller scale, McBratney argues, it continues to live in Scott's novels, mainly through the efforts of a few representatives of the two races (McBratney 205-206).

It is true that the circle of those adhering to this liberal philosophy is small in size both in the series and in the novels. Mainly, it includes two young girls from privileged British families, Daphne Manners and Sarah Layton, as well as a few British missionaries in India. But despite its size, the presence of this circle in the series is significant. It runs as a red thread throughout the series thus persistently balancing empire-criticism with empire-endorsement, achieving it through these few, but significant voices, as well as through making their lives the focus of the story. The best example of this "double movement" (Rush's expression), is the ultimate indictment of the legacy of the British empire coming out of the mouth of the liberal representative of the same empire, Sarah Layton (Rasch, "Keep the Balance", 215). Horrified by witnessing the sectarian violence that erupted following the partition of India, her words in the last episode of the series summarize the criticism of the British Empire in just one sentence, saying: “[a]fter three hundred years of India, we made this whole damn, bloody, senseless mess”. Unable to stop thinking about the incident on the train, during which Kasim, a young Muslim acquaintance of Sarah fleeing Mirat amidst the outbreak of the violence, with the same train as the Laytons, was abducted by a group of Indians pursuing him, Sarah, with the feeling of guilt and deep regret for not had been able to help him, admits: there was “nothing we could do”, echoing Daphne’s words from the earlier episode. This helplessness makes both Sarah and Daphne as vulnerable as other victims of the empire which seems to become something more abstract than the empire they represent, that is the empire with a human face.

The empire is not spared for the criticism neither in the novels nor in the series. Centuries long presence in India is a quintessential part of British colonial history that is marked by domination and exploitation of the country and its people, justified by the ideology of superiority of the British over the Indians. One of the least flattering sides of British empire is racism towards the colonized, including discrimination on the ground of the skin color. The person who epitomizes racist attitudes in the series is probably the most negative character of the story, the antihero, Ronald Merrick. But in Merrick’s racism we can sense widespread racist attitudes among the Brits generally, treating dark skin as a stigma, while viewing whiteness as an indivisible part of the British identity, that anything other than that is to pretend to be British. Merrick is not the only one noticing closeness between Daphne and Hari. “People” in Mayapore, that is the British colonial residents of the city, “have started talking” about their friendship. The ongoing political unrest is only an additional threat against which Merrick wants to warn Daphne while reminding her basic wisdom that “it is always tricky going out and about with Indians” (Merrick’s words in the series).

There are several reasons for Merrick to be suspicious of Hari Kumar. Merrick sees in him a rival in relation to Daphne despite the lack of sincerity in his own devotion to her. Besides, another aspect of Hari’s background, that is his education at the prestigious British public school at Chillingborough, is an unpleasant reminder for him of his own humble background. And still, the worst of all is Hari’s attempt “to make capital out of the fact that he lived in England for a while” (Merrick’s words). A black Indian such as Hari, Merrick argues, cannot possibly think that this gives him the right to think himself British. The idea itself that skin color doesn’t matter, as Daphne tries to claim, simply “revolts” him. For Merrick it not only “does matter”, it’s basic, it matters like hell” (Merrick’s words). By making Merrick a mouthpiece for the most primitive form for racism widespread among the British colonials, that is discrimination of people on the ground of their skin color, the series both distance itself towards racism showing it to be repugnant, and discloses this abhorrent attitude to be a part og the imperialist culture. Moreover, the series makes racism one of the central aspects of its criticism of the empire, returning to it over and over again, viewing it from different perspectives, including from the perspective of its main victim, Hari Kumar.

Being split between two cultures, Indian born Hari himself struggles to fully identify with either culture (Hari was brought up in Britain since he was a toddler and lived there until he had to move back to India as an adult). Hari speaks, feels and behaves like British, but he is at pains to fit into what is defined to be British because he doesn't look British. It seems as if it is first after moving to India Hari in earnest realizes that his skin color makes a difference in the face of English culture. He acknowledges it in the moment of utter disappointment over being neglected by his closest friend Colin Lindsay, with whom he had been connected with many years of friendship while at school in Britain. Colin not only broke his promise to seek Hari out as he said he would if his regiment ever came to India. He walked by Hari without even noticing him when the two met by chance during the cricket game in Mayapore. “[...] he saw me, … under my topee, he didn’t realize there was one black face he should remember". “Didn’t you know we all look alike?”, “I’ve become invisible, even to him”, Hari tells Sister Ludmila in a conversation that resembles more to a confession. To have become invisible can be paraphrased as to have become Oriental, or that “other” which as an opposite image of Occidental defines what it means to be British. To be British means to be white according to Merrick, and it also means to have strength to dominate.

While representing power by virtue of his position to be a policeman, Merrick views the subordination between himself and Hari Kumar whom he has imprisoned on the false charges of raping Daphne Manners, as a symbol of the subordinating relation between Britain and India. The best place for Merrick to demonstrate this power relation is the investigation room at the police department where he physically and psychologically abuses Hari. “It is not enough to say that I am English and you are Indian”, Merrick says to Hari, explaining how this translates into the balance of power between them and their prospective nations. To be English, he claims, means “to rule”, while to be Indian means “to be the one that is ruled”. Comradeship between the two kinds of people that he and Hari represent is, in his words, nothing else than “comradeship based on fear and contempt”, “Contempt on my side and fear on your side”

(Merrick's words). Hari, in other words, is not only dark skinned, unfit to be British, he also belongs to the race and the people that are supposed to be ruled over, belittled and dehumanized. Reiterating, in an orientalist manner, existence of a "causal relationship" between skin color, race, a question of superiority/inferiority and belonging to a nation that either dominates or is dominated, the most negative character of the story, Merrick, is given the honor of representing the empire that is racist and exploitative in its core. By distancing from it, the series then shows and celebrates the very opposite qualities of the "alternative" empire, the empire that is color blind, caring, reflecting and willing to treat Indians as equal partners, the empire that is represented by those few Brits we never miss out of sight or forget in the series, represented, in the first place, by Sarah and Daphne.

Neither Merrick, nor his attitudes find any sympathy or approval among these characters. Later, after being removed from Mayapore due to suspicion of abuse of power as a policeman, when Merrick meets Sarah and Kasim, the two remind him of Daphne and Hari. Realizing the two are not in love with each other, Merrick admits to Sarah he was mistaken. He thinks both Kasim and Sarah, unlike Hari and Daphne, know "where the line has to be drawn" (Merrick's words). The line of liberally minded characters in the story that are not blind towards explicit racism of the colonial mind and sometimes even ask the reason for Brits to be in India, goes thus, from Daphne to Sarah. Like Daphne, Sarah's reaction to Merrick's attitude is to question the rectitude of "the social pressure that keeps the ruled at arm's length from the rulers, or the biological pressure that makes a white girl afraid of being touched by an Indian" (Sarah's words). For Merrick on the other hand, the biological aspect is a fundamental part of his imperialist mindset which is based on the idea of superiority of the white race over the non-white people. From his point of view white race, as well as a man's masculinity, is associated with power, dominance and ultimately with the Empire. The persistent association of these qualities with each other by Merrick reminds us of the Orientalist tradition of dividing the world in two opposite categories: white race vs non-white people, superiority vs inferiority, empire vs colony, the Occident vs the Orient. The series too disclose similar racist attitudes purported by the defenders of the empire while being constantly challenged by Daphne, Sarah and the other representatives of the same, but better version of the empire.

Daphne, among others, is the one who goes the furthest to challenge this whole system of racial divide by falling in love with Hari. But what might seem to be a radical move at the first sight, on closer scrutiny, might turn out to be less controversial. McBratney, in particular, offers a more subtle analysis of Scott’s version of overcoming racism in the novels which also applies to the series. According to him, by breaching the “taboo” of the black man associating with white girl, the interracial lovers, Daphne and Hari, are the two characters in the story who most bravely “risk crossing these boundaries” of the divisions that “British officialdom draws between the two races". “For Scott”, McBratney argues, “these two represent the quintessential East-West meeting” (206). But there is in the story, he points out, another, probably less obvious dimension of racial antipathy that is “internal” to the two lovers, revealing itself in their “unwillingness or inability to identify with the other” (207). In Daphne’s own words, she “makes Hari an exception”, which “does not mean to love him in spite of his blackness”. “In loving him”, she writes in her diary, “I’d invested his blackness with a special significance or purpose, taken it out of its natural context instead of identifying myself with it in its context” (Daphne’s words, qtd. in McBratney 207). Despite Scott’s intention to tell that racial antagonism can be overcome by the example of Hari and Daphne’s love, patterns of imperial mindset, McBratney argues, “intrude more than Scott seems to realize" (207). As he points out, Daphne’s love of Hari might seem “less radical” taking into account that “Hari’s natural context is England" and by upbringing he is a privileged Englishman with a black skin. Thus, Daphne’s ideal affirms upper-middle class English values and its conception of universal love, McBratney claims (207). In his view, “all the moments of ostensible synthesis” between East and West in the novels (to which we shall also add the series), are permeated with “the implicit privileging of English values” and the philosophy through which the British themselves understood equality (208). Despite Scott’s criticism of the Empire, McBratney argues, he at the same time reintroduces and idealizes the same liberal values with which the British could justify their presence in India (208).

Drawing on McBratney’s analysis, we can view Scott’s novels, as well as the series, as an example of manifestation of postcolonial nostalgia. The implicit privileging of colonial values is also what Rasch finds in Fuller and Godwin’s memoirs. We can draw parallels between Fuller and Godwin on the one side and Scott on the other, by saying that, Scott too, in a similar manner as the two Zimbabwean writers, absorb patterns of colonial mindset while at the same time distancing himself from colonialism. In the series, criticism of the empire might seem to be “overshadowed”, or “suppressed” by frequently challenging it through the voices of the benevolent Brits, as if “forgetting” or “downplaying” the fact that they too represent the same empire enjoying the privileges Indians can’t. Unlike Fuller and Godwin who deplore the current condition of Zimbabwe, Scott does not say anything about the independent

India. But like Fuller and Godwin, he too looks nostalgically back to the empire by reviving its "'rose-tinted' version " (Rasch's expression), that is the image of the benevolent empire, thus, echoing many Brit's nostalgic feelings revealed in their inclination towards or need for seeing the British empire in a positive light (Rasch, "Keep the Balance", 215).

To end the analysis of the series, this thesis will once again return to Said, McBratney and Rushdie to pay attention to one final point concerning representation of Indians in the series as well as in the novels. Disapproving interaction between British and Indians when the demarcation line between the two people is not upheld, Sarah's aunt asks her sister whether it was "wise of [her] to let Sarah go riding alone with Mr. Kasim", as she thinks, these days, it is difficult to know what goes on the young Indians' minds. Annoyed by her aunt's remarks, Sarah "agrees" it was unwise, but for other reasons. Under the tour she realized that "it was the first time [she'd] been alone with an Indian who wasn't a servant", and "there seemed to be nothing to talk about " (Sarah's words). Not knowing what goes on Indians'/Orientals' mind, or even trying to understand it, has never been the colonials' intention, Said has claimed. Indians in the series, like Orientals in European's works, are mainly represented by the colonials. Depriving Orientals possibility of speaking for themselves, is, in Said's view, one way for Europeans demonstrating their strength and dominant position. Viewing the world predominantly through the British eyes is what also the novels and the series do. As McBratney claims, this is true of even those moments that celebrate visionary leveling-out of racial hierarchy between Indians and Britons (208). As he points out, "[n]o Indian is shown to have comparable power to return these Britons' spiritual embrace" (McBratney 208). Indeed, we cannot know whether there is readiness for such a reciprocity on Indians' side. Moreover, it is not only Sarah's circle of contacts with Indians that is limited almost entirely by servants. Readers and spectators too, meet Indians predominantly at the background of the main events in the story. One of Rushdie's points in his criticism of Scott's novels which also applies to the series, is the point about "a *form*" in which the novels are written (90, italics in original). In the narration of the end of the Raj, Indians are mostly presented as "bit-players in their own history" (Rushdie 90). Most of them are silent servants filling the background spaces in the scenes. Those few Indian characters representing other than servants, appear for the most in episodic roles and disappear when their British connections leave. We do not, for instance, hear much about Lady Chatterjee after Daphne's death. Hari himself does appear only twice after the second episode, first, in a short scene where he, still imprisoned, is being questioned again, during which he learns that Daphne has died. The last time, it is in the last episode we see him, now released from prison, sitting in his room, and silently looking at Daphne's portrait on the desk. It is the exclusion of Indian voices from the narrative, or reducing them to masses filling the background landscapes in the scenes that Rushdie criticizes. The form that is established, he argues, tells that the Brits "*are the ones whose stories matter*" (90, italics in original). For Rushdie, as for Said, to tell a half-story means to tell a half-truth, that is to distort history.

## Viceroy's House

Nostalgia is not the first thing that comes to mind when one thinks of a film that tells the story about the last weeks of the Raj with the focus on dramatic events surrounding India's partition and the civil war. Besides, taking into account that *Viceroy's House* is made by a British film director of Indian origin, one might not expect nostalgic sentiments towards the empire to be displayed in the film. But some of the colonial patterns that have been discussed in this thesis, do appear also in this film. To begin with, *Viceroy's House* can be viewed as a part of the recent spate of cultural expressions in Britain reminiscent of the 1980s "comeback of the Raj". More importantly, *Viceroy's House* is reminiscent of, once again, Rushdie's point about the form playing a major role in how we perceive what we see. Despite larger emphasis on Indian characters and Indian's lives in *Viceroy's House* compared to the series, it is the family of Mountbattens, that is Lord Mountbatten, his strong-willed wife, Lady Edwina and their warm-hearted and open-minded daughter Pamela, that are the most important characters in the film, and it is their kindness, selfless efforts and best intentions to help India and the Indians in this difficult period of transition, that occupies the central place in the story that is told. In *Viceroy's House*, as in *The Jewel on the Crown*, the voices of the benevolent representatives of the empire are never disrupted, balancing empire-critic views throughout the story. The fact that Lord Mountbatten is the representative of the British Empire and the British Royal family at the same time (as Aalia's father notices, "[h]e is the King's cousin. He has the Empire in his blood"), gives an additional dimension to the film's focus on the goodness of the members of the Mountbatten family. Despite many instances of empire-critique views displayed in the film, the image of the benevolent Viceroy and his family, serves as a counterbalance to this critique. Lord Mountbatten is not only the benevolent Viceroy, he and each of his family members represent a better version of the empire. Commenting about Churchill's dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs, that is the inevitability of India's independence, he represents, in Edwina's words, "a part of the past", while Lord Mountbatten "[is] bringing the future". Ready to take her own responsibility as a co-facilitator in the process of India's transition into an Independent nation, Mrs. Mountbatten's words "let's not make a mess of it" sound encouraging and show her determination. Apparently, there is not much they, or at least she can do. Discovering that “92% of the population is illiterate”, and “almost half of babies born [in India] die before they are five”, the only thing she can do is to acknowledge that “India's problems are not just political, they are social and economic”. But Lady Mountbatten, rather naively, believes “[they] can change a lot” and “[they] absolutely have to”, arguing that “[t]hat cannot be the legacy when the British leave India after three centuries”. Reminding us of Sarah Layton’s words from the last episode of the series, these words coming out of Edwina's mouth make a strong impression shaping our perception of the story. What we see is the empire that has two sides, the one that has made the mess, being somewhat abstract, and the other that tries to fix it, the empire represented by real people, such as Edwina, Dickie and Pamela.

The legacy of the empire is no doubt the matter of concern for Dickie as well, but as he explains to Edwina, their obligations are other than to improve infrastructure in India. Asked by Nehru directly on what “his orders” are there, later in the film, Lord Mountbatten’s answer is “to bring independence to India, as smoothly as it is possible”. The way events developed shows that India's independence was brought neither smoothly, nor in accordance with Lord Mountbatten’s initial hopes, at least according to the film’s manuscript. Whatever his good intentions, necessity of compromise or lack of power to influence the situation in a more positive direction, the image of the benevolent family does not fade. On the contrary, we perceive the events that develop through the prism of Mountbatten's experiences, in which each step in a wrong direction is conceived as their personal defeat each time. The final stroke in the portrayal of the glossy image of the Mountbattens is a promise they give each other to stay in India and help the country in this difficult period. The independence India achieved turned out to be bittersweet, overshadowed by the violent outbursts in the streets of the country leaving tens of thousands of Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims dead, while forcing many millions to flee their homes. The blame, according to the film, lies elsewhere than the last Viceroy. As we will see, Lord Mountbatten is relinquished of the responsibility of this catastrophe.

Each member of the Mountbatten family represents the benevolent, or the better version of the empire. Edwina especially is the one that epitomizes this image. Besides her sincere concerns regarding India’s social problems and her tireless efforts to help suffering refugees, it is her, like many Indians, that clings to the idea of an Independent and united India to the very last moment, being left, in the end, with no other option than to give Dickie “[her] support”, but not “her approval”. Partition of India and the conspiracy involved in the political talks about it, taking place behind the scenes, constitutes the main dramatic event in the film, which plays out not only in the streets of India, but also inside the walls of the Viceroy's House. The partition issue divides not only Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs and India's political elite, it also divides the British empire into what we perceive as a cynical, exploitative, deceitful and selfish empire on the one side, and a honest, benevolent and selfless empire on the other side. The central figure representing the first of "the two empires" is Churchill (referred by Edwina previously as a symbol of "the past"), standing behind what turns out to be a secret decision, known to Jinnah, supporting the idea of creation of Pakistan in exchange for political cooperation between Britain and the future Pakistan. When details of the secret decision come out, we learn that Britain's move is guided by geopolitical considerations, such as the threat of expansion of Soviet influence in the region, especially in the face of the communist friendly Indian political elite, and, not least, Britain's need for maintaining access to oil resources. On the other side, we see the Viceroy that is furious about being deceived and misled by his own leadership and left with no other option, but finding himself in the role he had been given and in the situation that has been orchestrated by others. Criticism of the empire is probably at its climax at this point, but we are again exposed to the two contrasting images of the empire leaving us with mixed feelings about how we interpret the events. As mentioned previously, the story revolves around the compassionate Viceroy and his family, their wholehearted desire and attempt, though failed, to help India and its people to avoid the worst crisis. No one can be in doubt of the Viceroy's best intentions when no less than Nehru himself says "I believe in your sincerity, Dickie, and I believe that you love my country".

Besides politics, there are also other aspects of colonial rule that are exposed to criticism in the film, such as racism, with Edwina, depicted as a crusader against it. Impressed by her insightful reflection on politics, Mr. Nehru, when left alone with Dickie, describes her as being "well-read", to which Dickie responds, admitting that "she is far more of a political animal than [he is"]. "She is an idealist; tends to the left. I am more of a military man". Knowing these characteristics of Edwina, it does not come as a surprise that she is eager to change some of the rules at the Viceroy's House that keep Indians and Britons apart. Her insistence to get known with the kitchen staff personally leaves Britons and Indians equally bewildered. Even more shocking is her announcement that "from now on there will be more Indians of all fates around our tables", which implies that "their culinary needs must be [accommodated]". When reminded that "many of them eat with fingers", she calmly replies: "if that is custom, that is perfectly acceptable”, thus not leaving anyone in doubt of her intention to make Viceroy’s House an inclusive place.

Based on this portrayal, we can easily place Edwina in the gallery of the liberal characters that also include Daphne and Sarah. But the fact that Edwina represents the political establishment and the Royal family, adds a symbolic value to her image of a benevolent representative of the empire. In this respect we could draw a parallel with the portrayal of Queen Victoria in Stephen Frears’s 2017 film *Victoria and Abdul*, described by Rasch as “the newest addition to the catalog of nostalgic costume dramas”, (Rasch, “Keep the Balance”, 215). Both the Empress of India and Edwina, challenge discrimination based on skin color and cultural belonging, setting themselves at odds with the establishment of the court or the conventions at the Viceroy’s House. In *Viceroy's House* the confrontation is less dramatic than in the case with Queen Victoria. In both films we are exposed to experiencing the empire from both sides, the empire that is imbued with racial prejudice and the empire that “crusades against discrimination”. In *Victoria and Abdul*, the crusader is no less than “the figurehead of Victorian imperialism herself”, the Queen, in *Viceroy's House*, it is the high representative of the political establishment as well as the Royal family, Edwina (Rasch, “Keep the Balance”, 216). What could be more powerful than to counterbalance the criticism of the empire by such symbolic figures perpetuating the benevolent image of the empire, leaving viewers with mixed feelings about the legacy of the empire and providing an excuse for Britons to indulge themselves in their nostalgic feelings towards it? Ironically Queen Victoria’s “crusade against discrimination” is less effective than Edwina’s, because unlike Queen Victoria, Edwina can take measures against it, while Victoria seems to be powerless.

The way racism and discriminatory treatment of ordinary Indians is handled in the *Viceroy’s House* by the Mountbatten family, and the way Indians themselves respond to such a treatment, differs this film from both *Victoria and Abdul* and *The Jewel in the Crown*. In *Viceroy’s House* racism is either not tolerated at all (Edwina) or is ridiculed in a subtle way (as we will see it in the case with Jeet in *Viceroy’s House*). Mrs. Hudson, one of the members of the British staff at the Viceroy’s house, gets immediately fired when Edwina notices her frustrated reaction over being approached by an Indian servant too closely. Edwina's instant response to Mrs. Hudson’s behavior shows her intolerance towards discrimination of Indian servants and her readiness to take measures against it by telling her “[p]erhaps [her] very able gifts would be better to use in Surrey", asking her politely “to pack [her] bags and go home”. To dismiss Mrs.

Hudson demonstratively, in front of the Indian servants, can be interpreted as Edwina's intention to show both to Mrs. Hudson and the Indian servants that such a discriminatory treatment can no longer be tolerated or go unpunished, or that discrimination is not what the empire stands for, at least not the empire Edwina represents.

Ordinary Indians too, show the courage to respond to imperialist arrogance in the film. Being told he is going to work in the inner circle as a personal assistant of the incoming Viceroy, the new recruit Jeet is asked by the head of the staff at the Viceroy's house whether he understands that "it is a position of great trust". Jeet's honest but rather naive response: "it is a privilege" to serve "a hero who freed Burma ", and "now he has come to free India", sounds bold and unexpected. But Jeet not only dares to speak from his heart, he is also able to both express, and defend his, as well as Indians' dignity. Provoked by Jeet's straightforwardness, the head of the staff asks him rather rhetorically whether "[he thinks, they] Indians are ready to run [their] own civil service, courts of law, [their] own armed forces". Jeet's response: "[Indians] have learned from the best Sir", leaves the Englishmen chanceless to say more. His attempt to speak with the Indian servant from the pedestal of superiority, fails, as does Mrs. Hudson's insistence on maintaining the strict subordination between the Indians and the British.

*Viceroy's House,* like the series, clearly criticizes one vision of the empire, while also reproducing nostalgic ideas about it, thus qualifying as postcolonial nostalgia. But the way it is manifested does also reflect the changing historical context in which the film is produced. This change is exemplified by the larger emphasis on the Indian characters in the film and in how they are represented. While in the series Indians are mostly portrayed as obedient servants, in the film they are granted more agency, shown in the way they express themselves and handle situations. This change could be also viewed as part of the criticism of the empire.

## Conclusion

To begin with, the series as well as the film were viewed as cultural expressions reflecting nostalgic feelings towards the empire within British society. This thesis argued that they both manifest postcolonial nostalgia in that while distancing themselves from the wrongdoings of the empire they at the same time endorse it though persistently evoking the vision of the benevolent empire. Besides this similarity they also have differences. Unlike the series, the Indians are given more agency in the film, which also broadens the scope of the criticism of the empire.

Because of the focus on close reading of the series and the film in this thesis, some areas that could be interesting to bring into the analyses were left out. One further line of research could be to put the series and the film in a larger context and see how they are products of the political and historical atmosphere of their times (the Falklands War and Brexit). Another area of further research would be to see whether the difference in, for instance, portrayal of the Indians in the series and the film, could be related to Chadha's Indian background. *Viceroy's House* has been criticized for being overly focused on the Hindu population. Besides the British context, it would be interesting to explore how the film reflects and politicizes the Indian context.

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