

DOMICILE AND DIASPORA: ANGLO-INDIAN WOMEN AND THE SPATIAL POLITICS OF HOME by Alison Blunt. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005.

Recent geographical interest in questions of identity, home, and belonging has been sparked in part by the increasing number and importance of ethno-national diasporas. Often romanticized, these and other mobile groups have been often described as post-modern nomads whose attachment to place – and, therefore, sense of home – is inherently flawed. The current book explores conceptions of home and identity among women of the Anglo-Indian Diaspora since the early 20th century. An impressive qualitative research, the book spans three countries in investigating these mixed descent (British fathers /Indian mothers) women's feelings of being at home – and not – in India as well as Britain and Australia (the last two had been major destinations for Anglo-Indian migrants in the 1950s and 1960s).

The Anglo-Indian community emerged in the 19th century as the British army colonized the sub-continent and many of its soldiers married local women. The book tells the story of the daughters of these mixed couples and their conceptions of home in their native India and in diasporic communities across Britain and Australia. It relies on a broad range of primary sources, including historical documents, personal interviews, oral histories and focus groups. Taking a feminist post-colonial approach, it traces the spatial politics of home among Anglo-Indian women at the domestic (as a site of social reproduction), national (as a site of national identification), and diasporic (reproducing home in the Diaspora) scales. It draws on their personal and collective memories and explores their material and imaginative geographies and their 'homing desire' for India, Britain and Australia. Home for this minority group is not merely a site of everyday social reproduction, but rather a place through which to deploy their complex, multilayered identities. It is, the author argues, "a politicized and contested site for claiming and articulating an Anglo-Indian identity, culture and sense of place and belonging" (p. 205). Discursively constructed as white in Imperial, multi-ethnic India and racially-mixed in predominantly white, post-Imperial Britain and Australia of the 1950s and 1960s, Anglo-India women have encountered innumerable difficulties in feeling at home in both. At the same time, though, home was used as a site of resistance to these exogenously assigned social categories (white, mixed descent) and reproduction of new identities.

Chapter 1, which sets the theoretical framework of the book, is followed by six substantive chapters and a concluding section. Each chapter examines Anglo-Indian women's conceptions of home in a different geographical setting. Chapters 2 and 3 focus on pre-independence India and the discursive process through which the country has been both accepted and resisted as home for Anglo-Indian women. Chapter 4 examines attempts to establish an Anglo-Indian homeland in the Indian state of Bihar. Focusing on the post-Independence era, Chapters 5 and 6 look at Anglo-Indian women who migrated to Britain and Australia and examine their feel-

ings of home in light of the British Nationality Act of 1948 and the shift from the White Australia Policy to multiculturalism. Chapter 7 considers the place of the domicile Anglo-India community in post-independence India.

The book is a compelling and rich account of the meaning of home for a group of women of mixed descent. It avoids a stereotypical presentation of home as a place of birth or a mythical fatherland, and engages instead with the intricacies of home as a site "that is shaped by, and situated in relation to, different axes of power that are mobilized and resisted across a range of scales" (p. 207). It shows how broad social categories (race, ethnicity) and political constructs (nation, homeland, Diaspora) alike constantly infuse and connect with the seemingly private, domestic space of the home. While the Anglo-India case is indeed unique in its complexity, the book could have benefited from drawing comparisons with the experience of other mixed descent or racialized groups.

Still, the sophisticated analysis of the post/colonial home as a multi-scalar and gendered site and the wider forces that have been shaping in throughout most of the past century make the book a worthy reading for those interested in theoretical debates about diaspora, migration, identity and home, and an important contribution to the specialized sub-fields of cultural, post-colonial and feminist geographies.

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